

world briefs

BERMUDA

In a 22-16 vote, the Bermuda House of Assembly has legalized same-sex relations between men. The vote followed a tense and bitter debate. The proposed legislation must still pass the British colony's Senate.

CHINA

The millions of gay men in China live miserable lives, according to a groundbreaking report by the Taiwanese magazine *China Times*.

Journalists from the magazine spent two months surveying the gay scene in the cities of Shenzhen, Guangzhou, Beijing, Tianjin, Shenyang, Harbin, Dalian, Qingdao, Shanghai, Nanjing, Chongqing, Chengdu, Wuhan, Zian and Urumqi.

The reporters found that gay men can meet only in public toilets, parks and baths, due to the cramped housing situation and police arrests.

They also found that gay men are treated with drugs, acupuncture and electroshock to change their sexual orientation. At one hospital, the Nanjing Psychiatry Research Institute, 1,832 gay men were treated between 1981 and 1991. Only 11 became heterosexual, according to the staff.

Nearly every gay man interviewed said he could survive only by marrying a woman, with the option of divorcing later and not remarrying.

The reporters found that most gay men do not use condoms because, as one man in Shenzhen said, "If I love someone, I am ready to die for him. Who cares about AIDS?"

They found gay men unwilling to be tested for AIDS for fear of being caught in a government "trap."

"The most difficult part of our work was to gain their confidence," the reporters wrote. "Every gay man feared exposure because they have known others who lost jobs or were jailed on charges of 'hooliganism.'"

Only three gay men agreed to be photographed for the magazine. One was Gao Yanhai, the China Health Research Institute employee who formed the Men's World gay support group and launched China's first AIDS hotline in Beijing in 1992. Gao was fired in 1993, and the group and hotline were discontinued, *China Times* discovered.

ENGLAND

After being criticized by Conservative politicians, the British Broadcasting Corporation has currently suspended its policy of giving a wedding gift and one week paid vacation to its employees who marry. The BBC had recently started giving the benefits to its gay and lesbian employees to be "in line with our equal opportunity policy." The BBC has said it will re-evaluate its policy in light of the criticism.



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Minister of Parliament Michael Brown resigned after detailed reports appeared in newspapers regarding his alleged sexual relationship with a 20-year-old man. The reports, which Brown disputed, are the latest in a series of sex scandals involving ranking members of Prime Minister John Major's government.

INTERNATIONAL

The International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission will honor a South African queer rights group, a lesbian Serb and a gay Colombian with its first Felipa da Souza Awards, to be presented during the Stonewall 25 celebrations in New York City.

ABIGALE, a South African queer rights group in Cape Town, organized the country's 1993 pride march and does HIV education in the townships.

Belgrade lesbian Lepa Mladjenovic is co-founder of Arkadia, Serbia's first queer rights organization.

Juan Pablo Ordonex is a civil rights attorney from Bogotá who has been persecuted by the government for investigating murders of "disposable persons," including sexual minorities, said a spokesperson for IGLHRC.

"These are the unsung heroes of the human rights movement," said IGLHRC executive director Julie Dorf. "They have put themselves on the line, at great personal risk, and achieved results."

The awards are named for a Brazilian woman who was tortured by the Portuguese inquisition in 1591 for having had lesbian sex.

ISRAEL

The daily newspaper *Yediot Aharonot* reported in mid-May that a new curriculum will be implemented by the Ministry of Education in the coming school year. According to the report, the Ministry said the revised curriculum will "provide reliable information on homosexuality to school staff and students, and help young people develop tolerance toward a different way of life." Gay men and lesbians will visit schools to talk to students and teachers as part of the new program. Israel repealed its anti-sodomy law in 1988, and banned discrimination in the workplace in 1992. In 1993, the Israeli military strengthened its policy to allow gay men and lesbians to serve.

JAPAN

In a sharp departure from what Japanese government officials had promised, a U.S. citizen who is an AIDS activist was detained at the border after stating he was gay and HIV positive. The news deeply embarrassed the organizers of the 10th International Conference on AIDS, who have been declaring for months that no one would be turned away from Japan "simply because he or she is HIV positive." Japanese laws forbid entry by all former and current sex workers and convicted drug users, and those HIV positive people whom immigration authorities deem "likely to infect the general public." The International Conference on AIDS is expected to draw thousands of scientists, activists and educators, many of them HIV positive, when it opens in Yokohama on August 7, 1994.

Access is important to the activists who are committed to the conference being held in Asia, where every day there are some 2,000 new HIV infections. Japanese lesbian and gay activists met with the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the Ministry of Justice, members of the Japanese Diet, and conference organizers in an effort to make the conference more accessible to those that Japan's immigration laws seek to keep out of the country—sex workers, drug addicts and people who are HIV positive. These efforts met with qualified success June 3, when the Ministry of Justice announced that it would grant special, one-time permission to former sex workers and drug users if the Ministry determines they would play a key role in conference proceedings.

LITHUANIA

More than 100 delegates attended a gathering of gay and lesbian activists from former communist countries which was held recently in the coastal town of Palanga.

"The conference was solid, enjoyable and well-organized," Dr. Aare Raudsepp told the Swedish newspaper *Reporter*. Raudsepp works with the Estonian group *Eosti Gaylift*.

Attendees came from Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, the Czech Republic, Romania, Ukraine, Russia, Serbia, Croatia, Sweden and Finland. The World Health Organization sent representative Henning Mikkelsen.

Raudsepp lamented that no one attended the safer sex workshop and only four people came to a panel on "Sexual Minorities and Medical Problems."

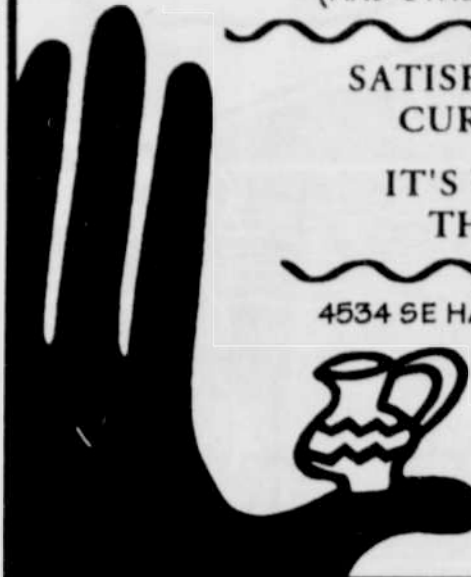
Another conference is set for next spring in Tallinn, Estonia, to discuss cooperation among sexual minorities in Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia.

Compiled by Jann Gilbert and Rex Wockner

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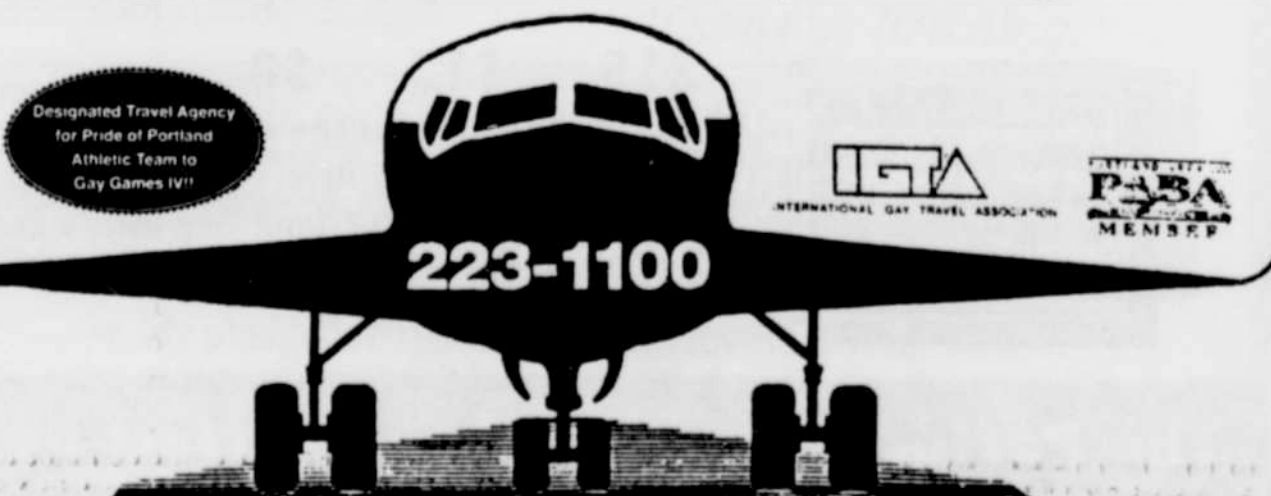
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