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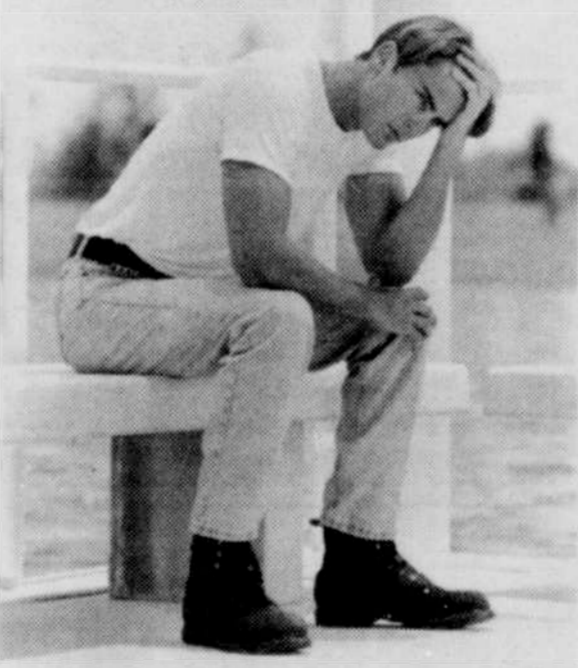
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world briefs

BRAZIL

Fifteen gay men and lesbians will run for office in Brazil's October municipal elections, the IPS news service reports.

Several of the candidates met Feb. 12-13 in Salvador, in Bahia state, to plot strategy. The Forum of Gay Men, Lesbians and Transvestites in Politics will emphasize equality for homosexuals, sex education, control of sexually transmitted diseases, and reducing violence and social inequality.

"We must have our own candidates," said Luiz Mott of Salvador, president of the Bahia Gay Group, who is seeking a municipal-council seat. "We can be as good at politics as we are in the arts, fashion and music."



Mott's group tracks anti-gay murders in Brazil and has recorded more than 1,300 since 1981. One of the "patron saints" of the new Forum is Renildo Jose dos Santos, a councilor from the small city of Coquero Seco, who was murdered and dismembered after coming out publicly in 1993. Parts of his body were burned and his head was found in another province, IPS said.

Most of the gay candidates are affiliated with left-wing parties, nine of them with the Workers Party. Five will stand for election in the southern state of Parana.

A recent survey in the Parana capital, Curitiba, found that 56 percent of respondents supported the idea of gay candidates.

CANADA

Canada's Immigration and Refugee Board said in late February that homosexuals from Algeria, Colombia and Russia seeking asylum in Canada could qualify to have their cases expedited because of the violently anti-gay climate in their homelands.

In Colombia, gays are targeted by guerrilla groups, death squads, paramilitary groups, drug traffickers and criminal organizations, the board said.

Algerian gays face violence from the police, the army, the secret service and several Islamic fundamentalist movements.

In Russia the threat comes from criminal organizations, right-wing groups and the police, the board said.

CYBERSPACE

A gay World Wide Web site banned by Germany's University of Cologne is back on-line, and the administration apologized for having equated homosexuality with pornography.

On Feb. 6 the university ordered the Internet provider CologneNet to delete the "MacMan-online" site or lose its Net connection, which is provided by the university.

The German Gay Association and a gay student group protested, saying gay men had been cut off from information on AIDS, gay studies and legal issues. The university relented on Feb. 12.

The incident follows German police activity against CompuServe, America Online and other Internet service providers that allegedly have allowed access to obscene and/or pro-Nazi writings and images.

The URL for MacMan is <http://www.cologne.de/~macman>.

FINLAND

Finland may become the fourth country to legalize gay marriage, following in the footsteps of Denmark, Norway and Sweden.

The Minister Groups of four of the five parties in the Cabinet—the Social Democrats, Left Alliance, Greens and Swedish National Party—said in late

February that they favored passage of a Scandinavian-style registered-partnership law for same-sex couples that grants all the rights of marriage except access to church weddings, adoption, artificial insemination and in-vitro fertilization.

The fifth party, the conservative National Coalition, has taken a neutral position on the legislation.

FRANCE

Squeaky French wheels get the grease.

French Prime Minister Alain Juppe on Feb. 28 blasted U.S.-based Abbott Laboratories, makers of the anti-HIV protease inhibitor Ritonavir, for planning to send only enough of the experimental drug to France to treat 100 people with AIDS.

Juppe also denounced his own National AIDS Council for proposing a lottery to choose the 100 patients, and demanded that officials get enough Ritonavir for everyone who wanted it, whatever the cost.

Forty members of ACT UP chained themselves to Abbott's French plant outside Paris on Feb. 29, halting production for six hours.

"Abbott in the United States holds the key to the crisis," one protester told France-Info radio. "They must send more products to Europe."

And Abbott did. Juppe announced on March 13 that enough Ritonavir had arrived to treat everyone who wanted it. France has about 18,000 AIDS cases.

"We already have sufficient supplies of the drug to satisfy demands from centers treating AIDS," Juppe said.

MEXICO

Some 40 gay and lesbian leaders from around Northwest Mexico will gather in La Paz, capital of Baja California South, April 12-14 for the Fourth Northwest Mexico Gay and Lesbian Conference.

Delegates are expected from the cities of Tijuana, Culiacán (Sinaloa), Ciudad Obregón (Sonora), Mexico City, Cabo San Lucas and La Paz.

For more information, contact Tijuana activists José Navarro or Alejandro García at (direct dial) 011-52-66-80-99-63.

La Paz is 925 miles south of San Diego.

NEW ZEALAND

Three lesbian couples in New Zealand filed suit in February demanding marriage licenses, correspondent Mark Proffitt reports.

New Zealand's 1955 Marriage Act does not state that spouses must be of opposite sexes. The lawsuit also charges the government with violation of the national ban on discrimination based on sexual orientation.

The women are trying to raise \$20,000 for their legal battle. For more information, e-mail proffitt@iconz.co.nz

SWEDEN

Sweden's top female rock star, Eva Dahlgren, who came out of the closet and married her girlfriend on Jan. 25, won the Swedish Grammy Award for "artist of the year" Feb. 19 in Stockholm.

It was Dahlgren's ninth award, making her Sweden's Grammy record-holder.

At the ceremonies, Dahlgren performed her hit "When a Wild Red Rose Unfolds It Spreads Its Fragrance to the Whole Forest," which, correspondent Bjoern Skolander said, "gays and lesbians understood as a metaphor for the effect her coming out and marriage will have on the Swedish gay, lesbian and bisexual community."

One in 17 Swedes owns Dahlgren's 1991 album *The Heart of a Faded Blonde*.

WORLD PRIDE DATES

Here are some dates for gay and lesbian pride parades around the world: London, July 6; Mexico City, June 29; Quebec City, July 7; Tijuana, June 29; Toronto, June 30; Vancouver, B.C., Aug. 4; Victoria, B.C., July 7; Vienna, June 29. For more information and other dates, visit the World Wide Web site <http://www.tde.com/~ialgpc>.

Compiled by Rex Wockner