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world briefs

BOLIVIA

There is organized gay life in Bolivia. A group called the La Paz Gay Freedom Movement has established communication with the International Lesbian and Gay Association. But its report was not particularly rosy.

"In Bolivia," the activists wrote, "homosexuals are viewed...as undesirables that are outside society's normal moral code.... The sort of social clubs, community and health centers and gay press that are so common in many countries...do not exist in Bolivia."

The group hopes "to protect the rights of its members, promote gay solidarity, fight for social recognition to destigmatize homosexuality, and deal with the threat of abuse and discrimination."

There are other gay groups in the Bolivian cities of Santa Cruz (UNELDYS, or United in the Fight for Dignity and Health) and Cochabamba (Dignity), the report said.

EUROPE

The European Commission's poky drug-approval process is killing people with AIDS, says Raffi Babakhanian of the European AIDS Treatment Group.

EATG demanded that European Union Council of Health Ministers Chair Brian O'Shea, who is Ireland's health minister, "pick up the phone and tell the Commission to get its act together."

Among the drugs awaiting approval are 3TC and the protease inhibitors indinavir, saquinavir and ritonavir.

INTERNATIONAL

Afraid of losing half its members, the International Lesbian and Gay Association has revoked an ultimatum that all organizations which belong to the association sign a letter stating they do not condone pedophilia or be expelled.

The history of this is somewhat involved. In 1993, ILGA was granted consultative status at the United Nations. This upset anti-gay forces in the United States,

who eventually dug up the dirt that a few of ILGA's hundreds of member organizations did not oppose all sexual contact between adults and persons under the age-of-consent, which varies from 12 to 21 worldwide. This revelation led Congress to threaten to cut off U.S. funding of the U.N. unless the U.N. guaranteed that no groups associated with it condoned pedophilia. The U.N. in turn demanded that ILGA prove that none of its members condone pedophilia. ILGA responded by revoking the membership of the North American Man/Boy Love Association and two European pedophile organizations. But this was not enough, replied the U.N., which claimed that at least one other ILGA member, a mainstream German gay group, condoned pedophilia. The U.N. suspended ILGA's consultative status until such time as ILGA could prove it is pedophile-free.

But now ILGA has apparently abandoned that task. In a letter to the president of the Canadian chain of Xtra! newspapers—which resigned from ILGA rather than sign the anti-pedophilia document—ILGA's Secretariats' Committee wrote: "Just less than half the letters [of confirmation] have not been returned.... While the Secretariats' Committee cannot go against decisions made at [an ILGA] World Conference by the [general membership], a responsible board of an international federation cannot take a decision to suspend so many of its members. The decision [on any suspensions] is therefore suspended until the next World Conference."

ILGA asked the Xtra! papers, which have donated over \$12,000 to the perennially cash-

strapped association, to rejoin the group. Xtra! responded that it too will wait until the next World Conference to make any decision.

ILGA is a federation of several hundred groups and individuals from more than 80 countries. Recent ILGA initiatives have increased lesbian and gay clout within the European Union, Council of Europe, World Health Organization and Amnesty International.

THE NETHERLANDS

Dutch officials are less than thrilled with the April vote by parliament instructing the Labour-led coalition government to present legislation to legalize gay marriage.

Parliament voted 81-60 in favor of the move. A second vote of 83-58 signaled support for gay and lesbian adoption as well.

"There is no objective justification for the ban on marriage of couples of the same sex," the legislators declared.

Among those who remain unconvinced are Queen Beatrix (according to reports) and Junior Justice Minister Elizabeth Schmitz, who is assigned the task of steering the same-sex-marriage legislation through parliament.

Schmitz is worried, in particular, about the fact that homosexuality is taboo in many Third World countries from which the Dutch adopt children. She has set up a committee to study the matter. It must report back by August 1997.



RUSSIA

The Third All-Russian Gay and Lesbian Conference drew 150 delegates to Moscow from June 7 to 9, including representatives of more than 20 gay organizations from 14 regions of the country.

Attendees urged Russian gay men and lesbians never to vote for Communists and defined the Russian gay movement's immediate goals as passage of anti-discrimination and domestic-partnership laws, according to correspondent Vitali Joumagaliev.

They sent open letters to the Duma detailing their demands.

SWEDEN

Sweden's Aliens Appeals Board is preparing to deport three gay Iranians back to their home country—where same-gender sex is sometimes punished with the death penalty—and activists are angry that the Foreign Office will not release the report on which the board's decision is based.

The "confidential" document, prepared by Sweden's Iranian embassy, reportedly concluded that homosexual Iranians are not persecuted.

TURKEY

Police harassment of transvestites and gay men in Istanbul, is becoming more aggressive, reports Britain's *The Guardian*.

Homosexuals have been burned, dancers and street-walkers are being beaten, and court cases against police have been dropped due to threats, the newspaper said.

The crackdown intensified during the recent United Nations Habitat II summit. Transvestites were told to disappear and several of their homes were allegedly torched.



Compiled by Rex Wockner

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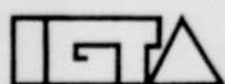
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