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world briefs

AUSTRIA

After the mayor of Dornbirn expressed outrage at the very idea, Austrian gay men and lesbians made sure to go ahead and hold their sixth annual activist conference in Western Vorarlberg state, reports correspondent Ines Rieder.

The 200 attendees at the Nov. 1-3 event declared 1997 "The Year of Partnerships" during which they will execute a campaign for legalization of same-sex unions.

BRAZIL

Even the Roman Catholic church now admits that Brazil's same-sex partnership law is going to pass.

The National Conference of Catholic Bishops says it will stop fighting the entire measure and work instead merely to prevent homosexual adoption, to set the minimum age for same-sex partnerships at 25 or 30, and to keep the word "marriage" out of the law.

The legislation is expected in part to grant same-sex couples legal status and extend joint-ownership and inheritance rights to same-sex partners.



The Bahia state branch of Brazil's Federal Police seized AIDS education materials from the Grupo Gay da Bahia in November, charging the matter is "pornographic."

"The police would rather have the youth dying of ignorance than to have accurate information on how to prevent HIV, the AIDS virus," said GGB Chair Luiz Mott.

GGB requests protest letters to Superintendente, Policia Federal, Salvador, Bahia, Brazil. Send a copy to Grupo Gay da Bahia, Caixa Postal 2552, 40022-260 Salvador, Bahia, Brazil.

BRITAIN

Despite protests, more than 2,000 gay men and lesbians gathered at London's Southwark Cathedral on Nov. 16 to celebrate the 20th anniversary of the Lesbian and Gay Christian Movement.

The Anglican Bishop of Guilford, John Gladwin, led the service, saying: "The experience of the 20th century has been one of a changing understanding of sexuality for all of us. Christian moral reasoning cannot proceed as if none of this had happened."

The head of the Anglican Church, Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, declined to support or condemn the celebration.

CANADA

Canadian Customs has a decades-long habit of censoring or confiscating U.S. gay erotica as it crosses the border.

But oddly, certain photos and text which may not enter Canada from abroad are acceptable when produced inside Canada.

So Pink Triangle Press, publisher of the chain of Xtra! gay newspapers, figures there'll be quite a market for its new title, *Canadian Male*.

An article in Vancouver's *Xtra! West* announcing the launch of the magazine was headlined, "Nyah, Nyah Customs."

EUROPE

The European Parliament Nov. 12 approved spending \$56 million to fight AIDS in the Third World over the next three years.

By the year 2000 there will be nearly 40 million AIDS cases in developing nations.

More than 90 percent of people with AIDS worldwide cannot afford the new treatments that reduce viral load and increase CD4 cells.

INDONESIA

The government of Indonesia will not promote condom usage because Muslim religious leaders believe it would encourage promiscuity, reported the official Antara news agency.

Health Minister Suyudi says Indonesia has seen 465 HIV cases. The World Health Organization estimates the number is probably near 50,000.

RUSSIA

Siberia's first lesbian and gay film festival, held Sept. 6-15, was a great success, reports correspondent Vladimir Pershin.

"The Pink Flamingo Film Festival," a project of the Siberian gay group Astarta, the Film Arts Foundation and San Francisco's Frameline, offered such movies as Gus Van Sant's *Mala Noche*, Monika Tret's *My Father Is Coming*, Wieland Speck's *Westler: East of the Wall*, Zelimir Zilnik's *Marble Ass* and Richard Schmeiken's *Changing Our Minds*.

One hundred twenty people attended the opening ceremonies and 15 additional screenings drew 40 to 50 viewers each. An ordinary movie in Tomsk draws three or four people, Astarta said.

Russia has seen a four-fold increase in people testing HIV positive this year compared to 1995.

Eight hundred HIV cases have been registered in 1996, 560 of them among intravenous drug users, said Russian Center Against AIDS epidemiologist Irina Savchenko.

"When the disease enters the environment of drug addicts, it starts to spread like a forest fire," she told the Interfax news service.

Gay men and prostitutes had passed on HIV at a much slower rate, Savchenko said.

Only a small fraction of Russia's HIV cases are believed to be reflected in the official numbers.

AIDS Infoshare Russia, which runs the nation's largest AIDS library, is seeking updated materials from abroad.

Books, articles, tapes and pamphlets are welcome on such topics as prevention/education, diagnosis, treatment, policy and law, human rights and medical ethics.

Materials may be sent to a U.S. address: Infoshare International, 743-A Addison St., Berkeley, CA 94710; e-mail info2intl@aol.com or call (510) 204-9099.

TAIWAN

Taiwan saw its first public same-sex wedding Nov. 10. Author Hsu You-sheng married his longtime American boyfriend, Gray Harriman, before 500 guests, including several city officials.

Cable TV carried the ceremony live—and one of the state TV networks is planning a special program on the couple.

Taipei Mayor Chen Shui-bian sent a letter of congratulation which was read aloud during the celebration.

VIETNAM

Vietnam has 4,534 HIV-positive citizens, the government says, but the United Nations believes the number is more like 60,000.

Jamie Uhrig of the UNAIDS office in Hanoi told Reuters the government figures for reported infections "are meaningless, as the detection work is compiled from information from police records and death certificates."

Compiled by Rex Wockner

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