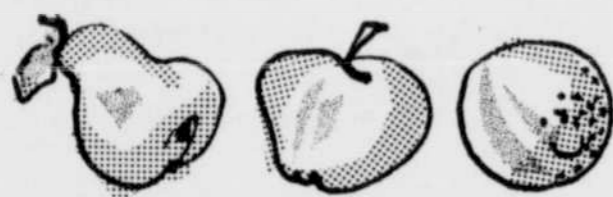


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world briefs

BRAZIL

One hundred twenty-six gay men, lesbians and transvestites were murdered in Brazil in 1996 because of their sexuality, according to data collected by Grupo Gay da Bahia.

That is a 12 percent increase over 1995.

Eighty-five of the victims were gay, 37 were transvestites and four were lesbians.

Meanwhile, a day after GGB issued its report, an actor known as Sandro, who plays a gay man on a popular television show, was gay-bashed in Rio de Janeiro, said GGB spokesman Luiz Mott. No details were available at press time.



Brazil's new official AIDS-information campaign will teach children aged 7 to 9 how to use a condom, Reuters reports.

The government will also distribute 250 million rubbers to groups perceived to be at high risk for HIV infection.

Brazil is believed to have one of the world's highest AIDS rates.

BRITAIN

British-based Glaxo Wellcome, makers of 3TC, AZT and other anti-HIV drugs, now controls over 50 percent of the global \$1.3 billion HIV-drug market, according to *Business Week*.

AZT alone brought in \$400 million last year, while 3TC generated income of \$260 million.

Most of the world's HIV-positive people cannot afford the company's drugs, and even in the United States the cost of anti-HIV drugs has bankrupted some local government assistance programs—and some uninsured HIV-positive people go without.

Meanwhile, as was publicized late last year, Glaxo Wellcome Chief Executive Officer Richard Sykes takes home a salary of \$2.3 million a year.



Lothian Health Authority in Edinburgh, Scotland, has told area doctors to stop prescribing combination anti-HIV drugs for the next two months because there is no money budgeted to pay for them, reported the BBC's *Radio 5 Live*.

The nucleoside analogue/protease inhibitor combos can cost up to \$20,000 a year.

CANADA

AIDS-related deaths in British Columbia have plummeted thanks to the new protease inhibitor-based combination anti-HIV therapies.

The death rate in the last three months of 1996 was 23 per 1,000 people with AIDS compared to 70 per 1,000 in early 1994.

COSTA RICA

The assistant director of Costa Rica's nationalized health care system, Dr. Julieta Rodriguez, told 25 HIV-positive people Jan. 22 that the system will not pay for anti-HIV drugs.

In a meeting held in the offices of the agency, the Caja Costarricense de Seguros Sociales, Rodriguez said the drugs are too expensive and do not cure AIDS anyway.

One of the 25 attendees, who called himself Antonio, told reporters afterward: "Since we started meeting three weeks ago, two members of our group have died. But the authorities here don't care. We are young, productive members of this society who have contributed [via mandatory payroll deductions] to this [health care] system as workers during many years. But they won't give us anything. It is a horrible situation."

ICELAND

Six months after becoming the fourth nation to legalize marriage-like same-sex partnerships, Iceland has banned mistreatment based on sexual

orientation.

One new law criminalizes any action that humiliates, degrades, slanders or defames an individual or group based on sexual orientation. A second law makes it a crime to deny a service or commercial transaction based on sexual orientation.

INTERNATIONAL

The International Lesbian and Gay Association announced a boycott of Romanian wine Jan. 23 to protest against the nation's continued penalization of homosexuality.

Gay sex in private apparently is now permitted in Romania, but in the process of passing the decriminalization measure, legislators created new laws banning gay bars, gay organizations, gay media, and gay sex that creates a "public scandal"—defined as anything two or more people find offensive. Violators face up to five years in prison.

Wine is Romania's most visible consumer export. Twenty-five million liters are sold abroad annually.

ISRAEL

A gay man has won his fight to receive an Israeli Defense Force spousal pension.

A Tel Aviv District Court Appeals Committee ruled Jan. 8 that the military engaged in illegal gender-based discrimination when it withheld benefits from Adir Steiner after his male lover, Col. Doron Meisel, died of cancer in 1991.

Israeli businesses are required to provide equal benefits to lesbian and gay employees' families, but the military was not covered by that law.

ITALY

"The idea that attributing homosexuality to someone is an insult to the honor, in the sense of an assault on the dignity of their person, must be rejected decisively.... Calling someone homosexual cannot constitute in itself a diminishment of the person."



So ruled an Italian court in mid-January, in a case brought by the Brescia Blues women's soccer team.

Club members sued for defamation after amateur league Chairman Michele de Caminata disbanded the team, charging that the players had become distracted by lesbian sex.

THE PHILIPPINES

The Philippines will see its first national gay conference in May.

The event, organized by the Progressive Organization of Gays, known as PROGAY, is expected to draw delegates from 11 provinces.

Meanwhile, on Jan. 14, PROGAY members staged a public protest against government plans to issue citizen ID cards.

PROGAY head Oscar Atadero labeled the scheme "one dangerously small step away from encrypting in magnetic code the privately kept gender orientation, sexual preferences and HIV/AIDS status of gays."

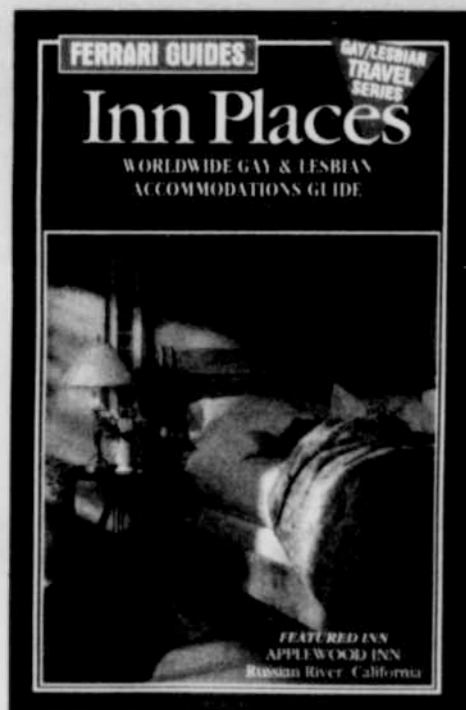
THAILAND

Thai Education Minister Sukavit Rangsitphol said Jan. 24 he will not back down from the nation's new ban on lesbian and gay students at teacher colleges.

"The ministry has not violated human rights," Rangsitphol said. "The ruling is only aimed at banning people with improper personalities from being models for youngsters."

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