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WORLD news

GREECE

A lesbian tour group from Britain was welcomed at Sappho's hometown on the Greek island of Lesbos in mid-September after organizers agreed to tone down some of their activities.

Among other changes, a "Wet Pussy Pool Party" was renamed. Mayor Polydoros Abatzis had objected to brochures that "cast our town in a vulgar light" and threatened to ask a court to ban the tour.

"Everyone should enjoy the sexual life they want, and all are welcome in Eressos," he told Britain's *The Guardian*. "But what is not acceptable is to insult the image of our entire community and for tour operators to plan trips here with profit as their only motive. It is unfair that Lesbos and lesbianism should always go together."

Tour organizer Rachel Woodgate commented: "Not all lesbians want that staying-in-a-muddy-tent-in-Cornwall experience. What we are offering wouldn't have raised an eyebrow in the gay men's resorts in Mykonos."

"It's outrageous talking about [moral] corruption. Greece invented the word homosexual. You go into any museum and it's filled with pictures of women with huge breasts and men buggering each other."

AUSTRALIA

Australia let open gays into the military in 1992, and they haven't caused any problems.

That's the finding of a new study by Aaron Belkin of the Center for the Study of Sexual Minorities in the Military at the University of California at Santa Barbara and Jason McNichol, a doctoral student in sociology at the University of California at Berkeley. Prior to the lifting of the ban, Australian Defence Forces leaders argued that allowing homosexuals to serve openly would jeopardize recruitment, troop cohesion and combat effectiveness; spread AIDS; and encourage predatory behavior.

Now, senior officials, commanders and military scholars admit that lifting the ban has contributed to greater equity and effective working relationships within the ranks, the report said. Gay soldiers and commanders served successfully in recent active deployments in East Timor, the study found.

"The Pentagon claims that lifting the American gay ban would undermine the military," Belkin said. "Data from the 23 nations that allow known gays to serve—including Australia, Israel and Britain—suggest that the lifting of a gay ban does not jeopardize military performance."

The report, "The Effects of Including Gay and Lesbian Soldiers in the Australian Defense Forces: Appraising the Evidence," is on the Internet at www.gaymilitary.ucsb.edu.

CANADA

Police raided a lesbian event Sept. 15 at Toronto's Club Baths.

Five male officers walked around the premises for an hour, took the names and addresses of a few of the 300 patrons, then left. Police officials said afterward that bathhouse patrons were drinking alcohol in areas of the club that were not covered by the organizers' special-event liquor license and that disorderly conduct

charges might be filed.

Organizer Janet Rowe is angry. "There are hundreds of special-occasion permits issued every day in this city, so we have to question why they would choose this particular one to investigate," she told the *Toronto Star*. "Our women report feeling intimidated, violated and humiliated by this experience."



GUATEMALA

Between six and 10 transvestites are murdered each year in Guatemala, the International Gay & Lesbian Human Rights Commission reports. The two most recent victims were Beverly Lineth and AIDS activist Astrid La Fontaine.

According to the commission: "Astrid was a sex worker in Zone 1 of Guatemala City. She was attacked with gunshots while working on a street corner in the early hours of May 20, 2000. Her attacker and murderer stepped from a car nearby and shot her."

"Beverly Lineth was murdered in the early hours of July 5, 2000. Beverly was known to her companions as a calm, shy and highly ethical person. Her colleagues say that she had been a sex worker for only one year and a half."

Lineth was beaten beyond recognition, apparently with a pipe. Activists blame "paramilitary forces" for the attacks and say the police are of no help.

According to the commission: "The National Civil Police (PNC) hound and harass transvestites, taking away the money they earn, arresting and abusing them, and, in some cases, raping them. The PNC offers this vulnerable group only terror, not protection. Obtaining justice for the victims will be difficult. Those who file complaints do so in the face of a long history of impunity, in which paramilitary brutality and other criminal acts went unhindered by official inquiry or investigation. And the friends of the victims fear retaliation."

For more information, e-mail alejandra@iglhc.org and iglhc@iglhc.org.

NETHERLANDS

The Netherlands' lower house of parliament voted to legalize gay marriage Sept. 12. Not registered partnership, like several countries have done, but marriage itself.

However, married gay couples still will not be able to adopt children from foreign countries while married heterosexual couples can, so it's still not absolutely the same laws for gays and straights.

The vote was 109 to 33. The measure still must pass the Senate, but that is considered a formality.

It is expected the law will take effect Jan. 1. Couples, gay or heterosexual, from other countries cannot get married in the Netherlands.

"We will be able to call it what it is, and that's marriage," said Henk Krol, editor in chief of the magazine *De Gay Krant*. "[It is] the first in the world."

Evan Wolfson, director of the Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund's Marriage Project in New York, added: "What the Dutch parliament has done is...create a marriage for same-sex couples...on the same footing as other people. That's a wonderful recognition that love is what counts."

Gay couples who previously got hitched under the Dutch registered-partnership law simply can convert their partnership to full marriage.

MEXICO

The head of Mexico's National Action Party (PAN) has denounced a PAN official in the state capital of Aguascalientes who OK'd the posting of a sign banning gays and

