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world

EUROPE

Italian Deputy Mayor Calls for 'Ethnic Cleansing of Faggots'

The right-wing deputy mayor of the northern Italian city of Treviso, Giancarlo Gentilini, plans to order police to carry out "ethnic cleansing of faggots." He said he is sick of gays having sex in a particular parking lot.

"I will immediately give orders to my forces so that they can carry out an ethnic cleansing of faggots," he told local television. "The faggots must go to other [cities] where they are welcome. Here in Treviso there is no chance for faggots or the like."

A video clip of the outburst was posted on YouTube.

In response to the incident, hundreds of gay and gay-supportive demonstrators picketed City Hall on Aug. 11, calling for Gentilini's resignation. The remarks also were denounced by politicians from several parties, and prosecutors said they will investigate whether Gentilini's language violated criminal law.

Bulgarian Gays Gather to Educate Citizenry

Members of the Bulgarian Gay Organization Gemini gathered Aug. 11 in Sofia's Actavis Park to distribute brochures on gay issues and HIV prevention to the general public.

The "Pink Point" project aims to correct "misconceptions" about gay people and deliver "accurate and fair information," said Gemini head Aksinia Gencheva. The group also has begun handing out condoms and safe-sex information at gay bars.

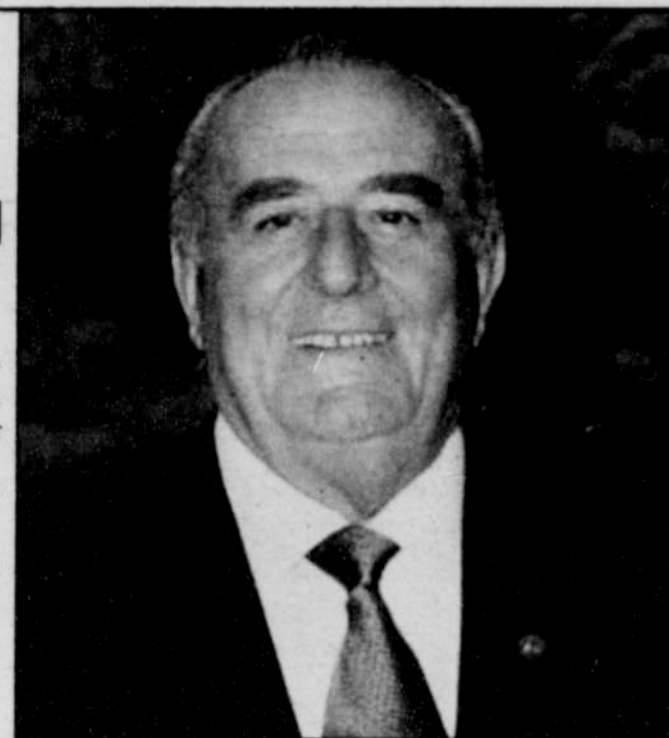
AMERICAS

Brazil to Fund Sex-Change Operations

Brazil's national health care system will pay for sex-change operations after a decision by a regional federal court in Porto Alegre that the surgery falls within the constitution's guarantee of access to medical care.

The court said transsexuality is "a sexual identity disturbance where individuals need to change their sexual designation or face serious consequences in their lives, including intense suffering, mutilation and suicide." Candidates for the procedure will have to undergo psychological evaluation for two years and receive approval from a medical panel.

The government had argued it could not afford to offer the surgeries but opted not to appeal the ruling.



Giancarlo Gentilini, deputy mayor of Treviso, Italy, told television stations gays are not welcome in his city.

A sex-reassignment operation costs approximately \$1,000 in Brazil and could be sought by one in every 10,000 residents, the Ministry of Health said.

ASIA/PACIFIC

Hundreds March for Marriage in Sydney

Several hundred people marched Aug. 12 on Sydney Town Hall demanding legalization of same-sex marriage.

Australia's national government specifically banned same-sex marriage three years ago, just prior to a federal election. As another election approaches, the government now has proposed banning same-sex couples from adopting children from overseas.

"It's a clear pattern of the prime minister trying to garner votes from the conservative religious fundamentalists and in doing so seeking to scapegoat a particular section within our community," Greens Sen. Kerry Nettle told local media.

Gay Church Launched in Malaysia

Malaysia's first gay church held its initial service Aug. 12 in a Kuala Lumpur hotel. About 80 people attended.

The church—loosely affiliated with the U.S.-based, gay-oriented Metropolitan Community Churches—is headed by the Rev. Ou Yang Wen Feng, who is believed to be Malaysia's first openly gay Christian pastor. He was ordained in May in the United States.

Advance media reports on the service caused Ou Yang to receive a flood of hate mail and nasty SMS text messages, he said. He also was criticized by leaders of other Malaysian churches, who think gay sex is sinful.

MIDEAST/AFRICA

Gay Ugandans Launch Media Campaign

Queer activists staged a groundbreaking press conference Aug. 16 in Kampala, Uganda, to launch a media campaign called "Let Us Live in Peace." They hope to engage the nation in a public conversation, humanize gay people and reduce routine police abuse.

"We step into the public today to give a face to the many who are discriminated against every day in our country," the group Sexual Minorities Uganda said in a statement. "You see homosexuals and transgender people every day with-



Aksinia Gencheva (left) of the Bulgarian Gay Organization Gemini is joined by leaders of pro-gay groups from Canada and Romania.