

the Front Page

FREE!

May 8—May 20, 1980

Vol. 1, No. 14

The News & Entertainment Paper for N.C.'s Gay Community

Laws and Attitudes Regarding Homosexuality Around The World



Article compiled from reports provided by the International Gay Association; and from IGNA reports by Cesar Albini, Johannes Werres, Pat Donnelly, Harald Nybo, Daniel Curzon, and others

For those who are concerned with the status of gays in American communities, it is often easy to forget that the United States is only one country out of many in the world. The International Gay Association, which has thirty-five member organizations in twenty countries, sums up the situation thus:

"In less than a decade Gay men and Lesbians in the United States have come from nowhere to everywhere. In many areas of the country we wield considerable political clout. In 1980 we are seeing the genesis of a national American movement.

"But as we enter the second decade of fighting for our rights, we Lesbians and Gay men should not confine ourselves only to the liberation of Americans. We are everywhere. . . and the oppression we face because of our sexual orientation is universal."

To promote greater American awareness of world situations, IGA opened an American Liaison Office in Washington, D.C. on November 26, 1979. Since that time a great deal of information has been disseminated. What follows in this article is a quick review of laws regarding homosexuality around the world, along with some of the most notable stories from other countries which have come to light in the last six months.

It is interesting to note, in scanning this article, that even in those countries which have no laws against homosexuality, strongly repressive attitudes persist. At the same time, many countries with strict anti-gay laws on the books seem to tacitly condone such behavior.

Algeria—Homosexuality is illegal.

Argentina—Legal after the age of 22. The official attitude is one of scorn, seldom tolerant.

Australia—Gay sex is illegal except in southern Australia, where the age limit is 18.

• The Australian Press Council last fall censured an Australian newspaper for attempting to influence public ideas about homosexuality, and failing to allow free discussion.

According to the newsletter of CAMP NSW (a gay liberation group), the censure arose because of a deceptive anti-gay letter to the editor which appeared in *The St. George and Sutherland Shire Leader*, supposedly written by an influential Anglican bishop.

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Gays & The Holocaust

During an April 15 ceremony held in the District of Columbia to proclaim April 13-19 as Days of Remembrance of Victims of the Holocaust, the president of Gay Activists Alliance (GAA), Melvin Boozer, spoke out about Nazi oppression of Gays, according to a recent story in the *Blade*. The presence of Gays at this even is the most recent result of an ongoing combined effort by GAA and the International Gay Association (IGA) to have the German Third Reich's persecution of homosexuals recognized.

The special April commemoration, proclaimed by D.C. Mayor Marion Barry, contained the first official governmental recognition of the fate of homosexuals under Hitler's regime. While Mayor Barry properly gave emphasis to the six million Jews who "were sentenced to death collectively and individually as part of an official and 'legal' plan unprecedented in the annals of history," he also went on to say that "millions of other innocent people were singled out for imprisonment and death." He included in this latter group Slavs, Gypsies, homosexuals, the handicapped, and political and religious opponents of the Nazi regime.

GAA President Boozer, speaking before the predominantly Jewish audience assembled for the ceremony, noted that homosexuals were among the first victims of the Nazis. He

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Amnesty International Position Clarified

Several gay publications, including *The Front Page*, carried a report last fall concerning support for gay rights by Amnesty International—winner of the 1977 Nobel Peace Prize for its work on behalf of people imprisoned, tortured or otherwise persecuted for expressing beliefs of which their governments disapprove. Unfortunately, the reports were not entirely accurate, either exaggerating or understating the degree of AI's commitment to the principle of gay equality.

The National Gay Task Force publication, *It's Time*, recently published an article which clarified the situation, as did a letter received by *The Front Page* recently.

A reader in Taylors, South Carolina wrote to Amnesty International on this issue and forwarded a copy of the reply to us:

"Thank you very much," reads the letter from AI, "for sharing your concern over AI's work on behalf of those imprisoned because of their homosexuality. We want to make sure you have the correct information on AI's position with regard to this serious human rights problem. The 1979 Amnesty International Council Meeting in Leuven, Belgium, passed the following resolution:

"The International Council, recognizing that the persecution of persons for their homosexuality is a violation of human rights, AFFIRMS that anyone imprisoned for the advocacy of homosexual equality. . . (or) imprisoned on

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