

A Message from the Honorable Madeleine Kunin, Governor of Vermont

The following letter was sent to Vermont's 5th Annual Lesbian and Gay Pride organizing committee on June 11, 1987. The organizing committee expresses regrets that the letter was not read at the Lesbian & Gay Pride Rally on June 20, 1987

Thank you for your invitation to make a statement at the Gay Pride Rally on June 20 in Burlington. As you know, I attended last year, but I have a commencement address to give in the Southern part of the state on that day.

I would like to convey my greetings to the group through this letter. I think particularly, at this time, it is important to establish good communications with the gay/lesbian community, as the AIDS epidemic becomes increasingly prevalent.

I am pleased that the AIDS Task Force includes such representation. We will do everything within our power in the State of Vermont to try to contain this deadly illness. Your continued assistance in this regard is much appreciated.

I am sure that you also recognize that I believe it is inappropriate to discriminate on the basis of gender or sexual orientation.

I would also like to reaffirm my commitment to civil rights for all Vermonters. As Governor, I have firmly believed in that principle and have acted accordingly. I know that when discrimination is permitted to exist against any group, it endangers the freedom of all.

With best wishes,

Madeleine M. Kunin
Governor



Movie Review A Virus Respects no Morals

by Burton Rubenstein

From the rooftop of what is probably Montreal's only gay bar to brace the midnight heat in open air, polite conversation hovers above tiny streets in the poor east end, remnants of century wallfronts and steeples greet the brawling garishness of Ste. Catherine Street, and the Molson brewery looms disconcertedly off the horizon of the Saint Lawrence seaway. Only a faint breeze. The ironic bustle of Rue de Montcalm.

Across the city, at the partially gentrified intersection of Westmount and Notre-Dame-de-Grace, Cinema V is showing the North American premier of A Virus Respects No Morals, a "black comedy about AIDS," by German director Rosa von Praunheim, to mostly non-gay audiences of middle class sympathizers. A film with a look and feel for the burlesque, where exaggeration and slight of hand are indistinguishable and playfulness is inevitable, seems out of place from this side of Montreal. If it is to be seen (here), then it is to be lived (there).

Do not expect any sort of storyline or narrative from this kind of low budget, 16mm production. A Virus Respects No Morals comprises a series of skits in an extended 82 minute montage of social satire relating to the impact of AIDS, all of it quickly paced and brutally penetrating. What makes the film unique is its combination of equivocation and anger, its relentless levity, its pseudo-dramatic partially experimental idiom, its open-endedness.

If the medium is the message, this film doesn't leave any particular message about AIDS, nor any particular statement, but does transmit waves of feelings (of bitterness, frustration, and rage) exemplifying gay consciousness pushed to its most extreme limits. Director-writer-star Rosa von Praunheim is said to be the "ultimate angry young man of Germany's male homosexual community," and his presence in the film is devastating, not only as persona, a gay bathhouse owner with AIDS, but as director-spectator, the ironic consciousness consuming even its own corroding points of view.

Visual images, as arresting and detailed as Fellini's, are strongly counterpointed with caustic verbal interplays and repartees. Nothing is too rude to remain unexplored or unexpressed; not even the most vapid, not the most outrageous thoughts and actions

are hidden from us. The German language accentuates this frankness with a brisk, down to earth quality reminiscent of Kurt Weill's Mahagonny, as in Brecht's lyrics:

Oh moon of Alabama,
We now must say goodbye...
We've lost our good old mamas,
Now we must say goodbye...

But A Virus Respects No Morals carries the recurrent theme of the "red death" further with these familiar folk cadences sung in drag:

In the evening when desire overwhelms you,
You have your fate (Schickte) in your hands...
When the catastrophic situation becomes known,
You have your fate (Schickte) in your hands...

AIDS contains the perfect metaphor for mortality in this film, the presence of death in life, which cannot be shut off by convenient therapeutic disguises or manipulated out of existence by religious fantasies, moral wish fulfillments, or the fraudulent reassurances of the medical establishment. The film goes so far as to suggest AIDS has already become a cash product of the establishment, as "death-therapy" for psychotherapists, as "rehabilitative quarantine center" for politicians and bureaucrats. Even "AIDS power" is given a brief shot with the onslaught of "Hellgayland."

The catalytic brutalization of homosexuals with the advent of the disease reflects a more generic capacity for brutalization within the species, including gays themselves, their sexual habits, politics and dispositions. But A Virus Respects No Morals allows one to fathom these predilections for what they are, explicitly, without judging them, in the bathhouse, bedroom, or on the trails, and this kind of openness makes the film as engaging as it is terrifying.

The crusading consciousness of those who would scapegoat the victims, exemplified best by the veritable "cruising mother," falls flat on its face, making A Virus Respects No Morals a very black comedy indeed, filled with deep and profound resentment.

Nat'l Attorney's Directory for L/G Rights to be Updated

The National Attorneys' Directory for Lesbian and Gay Rights is being revised and expanded for its Fourth Edition. The directory published by Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders (GLAD), lists lesbian and gay attorneys, legal organizations, and attorneys who are knowledgeable about

lesbian and gay legal issues. Listings, on a state by state basis, enable gay people to find lawyers in their area who understand and are sympathetic to their legal needs.

For ordering information write to: Park Square Inc. Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, PO Box 218 Boston, MA. 02112 or call (617) 426-1350.