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in their work to pass legislation guaranteeing equal rights to Lesbians and Gay men in Vermont and insuring protection for People With AIDS and HIV+ persons. Contribute to our cause and add your name to our mailing list. We need your help.

Yes, I want to be a part of making Vermont safer for Gays and Lesbians. Add my name to your mailing list.

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Travels

Changes in Eastern Europe

by Ken Nabilow
Director, Russia/East Europe Studies Program, University of Vermont

Having just returned from a month's travel through Poland, Czechoslovakia, and Hungary, I thought the following might interest readers of *OITM*.

History is written almost daily in Eastern Europe. The movement toward democratization and market-based economies is exciting for the Free World. These changes cause palpable electricity in the East Bloc, the residents of which informedly discuss politics and upcoming votes in Poland and Czechoslovakia.

But political change occasions social change - sometimes dramatic, often disturbing. As the lid of decades of Communist domination is loosened from the jar of social and political life in Eastern Europe, perennial problems have reappeared. Anti-semitic and homophobic attitudes which were forcibly quelled by authoritarian regimes are surfacing.

It seems that many in the Eastern Bloc have not yet connected democracy and freedom with responsibility. Disagreements among political factions have given rise to what locals describe as anarchic activity; thus, former members of the Communist Party have suffered verbal as well as physical abuse. Similarly, anti-

semitic and homophobic slurs, graffiti, and physical violence are present.

For gay men and lesbian women, Hungary is the most open of the three countries I visited. Currently Budapest has but one busy, operating gay bar (mostly male clientele); the Egyetem (University) Cafe is located on Felszbadulas ter 1, Budapest VII. Most meetings take place not at this establishment, but in the baths for which Budapest is famous. Members of the gay community whom I met decry the fact that most are still closeted and that the comparative openness of Budapest is not representative of the rest of Hungary.

Czechoslovakia and Poland present a different scenario. No bars or gay/lesbian liberation organizations exist. (Hungary's gay lib group, Homeros Lambda, was founded in 1988). People are closeted and in Poland I saw crude homophobic and anti-semitic graffiti in prominent locations where one would hope that local authorities would have removed them. (Editorial comments left to the reader.)

Gay as well as liberal straight individuals seem dissatisfied with this situation, but indicate that like the East Bloc economies, these problems will probably worsen before improvement occurs.



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