

The Murder of Marthadinata

Marthadinata was 18 years old. She was a straight-A student at her school in Jakarta, Indonesia. A member of the ethnic Chinese community, Marthadinata and her mother, Wiwin, had been active volunteers with the Tim Relawan Korban Kerusakan Mei, a volunteer group set up by a Catholic priest to give support to Indonesian Chinese women and girls who survived gang rapes and assaults during the May riots (see *Kinesis* September 1998).

As soon as Tim Relawan and other groups began publicizing the rapes and murders, they were subjected to continuous threats—by phone, by mail with photos of brutally raped and murdered

women, and by groups of men lurking outside their homes. They were told that if they did not stop their work, they too would be raped and murdered.

On 9 October 1998, days before Marthadinata and her mother were to go to the United States to testify about the rapes, Marthadinata was sexually assaulted and brutally murdered in her home, with such violence that her head was nearly severed from her body.

The police have refused to call the murder anything other than a “pure crime.” They claim their autopsy proves Marthadinata was a heroin addict who had turned to prostitution to support her habit.

The police have since arrested a young neighbor and acquaintance, Suryada, for the crime. While nothing was taken from the house, Suryada has apparently “confessed” that he was in the midst of an attempted burglary, and when he was surprised by Marthadinata, he killed her.

Nothing in the police accounts fits any known “profile” of such killers, but it does fit the pattern of the rapes that occurred during and since the May riots. It is also consistent with the threats received by members of the voluntary support groups.

Source: *Kinesis*, November-December 1998

Toiletries Dangerous: Wildlife Endangered



British scientists say some chemicals used in toiletries mimic the effects of xenoestrogen, the artificial female hormone that has been linked to a drop in sperm count and an increase in breast and testicular cancer.

The chemicals are found in thousands of products ranging from sunblock and cosmetics to baby creams. They prevent the products from spoiling, but are also responsible for causing allergic reactions such as skin rashes, swelling and itching.

John Sumpter of Brunel University in London says that while there is no proven link between the

chemicals and adverse effects on humans, further research is certainly in order.

Sumpter and his colleagues believe hormone-disrupting compounds used in plastics, pesticides and detergents can disrupt biochemical pathways and natural hormones in the body, causing birth defects and damage to wildlife.

In fact, recent studies have found populations of animals living in highly polluted water

to have bizarre sexual defects. British researchers say they have uncovered very compelling evidence that sewage treatment plants routinely release hormone-like compounds into rivers that are “feminizing” a surprisingly large proportion of wild fish. The estrogen-like chemicals are potent enough to cause fish to be born half-male, half-female.

Hundreds of widely used man-made chemicals are believed to be disrupting the endocrine system that is critical to sexual development by mimicking estrogen or blocking testosterone.

Source: *Kinesis*, November 1998

