

world news

Two thousand march in South Africa

by Rex Wockner and Gerry Davidson

Two thousand gays and lesbians took to the streets Oct. 12 in the country's—and Africa's—second ever gay and lesbian pride parade.

In bright sunshine, marchers stepped off from the Great Hall at Witwatersrand University and headed through the Braamsontein and Hillbrow neighborhoods to Peter Roos Park.

There were contingents from Cape Town, Durban, the Orange Free State and Pretoria—from Gazankulu, Rop and neighboring Swaziland, Lesotho and Zimbabwe.

The marchers—40 percent black, 60 percent white—represented gay political groups, gay sports teams, AIDS care providers, the Johannesburg Health Department, unions, student political organizations, the African National Congress, and the gay newspaper *Exit*, Africa's only gay newspaper.

Police provided a motorcycle escort. Riot squads were sprinkled along the route to protect marchers.

"This is a protest march," said Tanya Chan-Sam of the Gay and Lesbian Organization of Witwatersrand (GLOW) at the kick-off rally.

"What's the good of being proud for one day a year only? We protest our status and we are proud of who we are."

Activist Edwin Cameron called for the decriminalization of homosexuality.

"Every time two gay men make love in the

privacy of their own home, they become criminals," he said.

The post-march party in the park featured organizational booths, food, beer, a puppet show, singing, dancing, "and a general re-affirmation of our identity," according to one lesbian.

Last year, 800 people turned out for Johannesburg's first pride parade. Both marches were organized by GLOW, the Soweto-based gay group founded by internationally known anti-apartheid and gay activist Tseko Simon Nkoli.

AUSTRALIA: The Tasmanian Gay and Lesbian Rights Group will ask the U.N. Human Rights Committee in Geneva to prod the Australian government to overturn Tasmania's sodomy law. Tasmania is the only state where gay sex remains illegal.

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Radio Filzhaus is the nation's first pirate gay radio station. The station is believed to operate from a mobile van.

BRAZIL: Rio de Janeiro's IPS news bureau reports there have been 715 anti-gay murders nationwide in the past 10 years and almost no one is ever punished. "Those who are responsible...belong to groups that operate on behalf of 'social hygiene' just as the nazis did," said Paulo Nogueira, a gay activist.

COSTA RICA: The nation's first gay theater group, La Galleta (The Cookie), performed at the National Theater Workshop last month. Their play *Love, Homosexual Love*, "won applause from critics and others in the auditorium, most of whom were heterosexual," said the San Jose gay newspaper *Confidencial*.

ENGLAND: A new Gallup poll found that 53 percent of 937 members of the general public consider homosexuality an acceptable lifestyle

and 66 percent believe gay sex should be legal (which it is). In addition, 55 percent feel gays should be allowed in the military (they are not). Supporters of gays in Britain are most likely to be Labour or Liberal Democrat women aged 18-34 who have professional or skilled blue-collar jobs. Those opposed are Conservative Party males aged 45 or older who have unskilled, manual labor jobs or no job.

FINLAND: The Helsinki City Court handed down a two-year prison sentence last month to a man who did not tell his lover he was HIV-positive. The lover later died of AIDS.

The defendant was also ordered to pay \$19,000 to the lover's relatives. The case was Finland's first criminal prosecution related to HIV.

ISRAEL: The Labor Party's Young Guard placed a full-page ad in the gay magazine *Maga'im* last month marking the first outreach to gays by a political party.

ITALY: The mainstream news magazine *Panorama* devoted the cover, five pages and 15 photos to lesbians last month. Among the revelations: Italian lesbians are not impressed with "the American model of lesbianism" because it is overly influenced by Puritanism.

LATVIA: Gays and lesbians talked to the media for the first time Sept. 26 in a press conference staged at the Arts and Literature History Museum in Riga, the capital.

Latvian Association for Sexual Equality President Elmars Borins told reporters that "a new age has dawned for our nation...and we have to begin our battle for the equal rights of gays and lesbians right now."

Latvia was granted independence from the USSR this fall, along with Estonia and Lithuania.

LITHUANIA: News articles about AIDS have caused an increase in gay-bashing, says

activist Alfredas Zapotoiustar, who was interviewed by the Stockholm gay newspaper *Kom Ut*.

"Previously the general public was not really aware that homosexuals existed," Zapotoiustar said. "Now they have a negative...attitude and blame gays for the whole problem of AIDS."

NETHERLANDS: Justice Minister Aad Kosto says homosexual refugees may receive permanent residence. He urged gay refugees to be honest about their reason for seeking asylum. Five gay refugees have completed the process to date.

SWEDEN: Kent Carlsson, an openly gay man from the Social Democrat party, was elected to the national Parliament, representing a section of Stockholm. He is Sweden's first openly gay Member of Parliament.

Other countries who have or have had openly gay MPs or congressmen include Canada, England, Ireland, Norway and the U.S.

USSR: Gays made a strong showing at the Conference on the Human Dimension of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, held in Moscow Sept. 10 to Oct. 4. But a gay rights platform authored by the International Lesbian and Gay Association was not put to a vote. ILGA's proposal was carried to many of the 38 delegations by Kurt Krickler of Homosexual Initiative Vienna. Krickler said all the delegations he approached said they would support the proposal but none was willing to introduce it.

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About 100 gay men demonstrated last month in the city of Makhachkala in the Dagestan region of the Russian Republic, reported the Moscow gay newspaper *Tema*.

Police decided not to intervene after seeing the sons of some prominent citizens among the demonstrators, *Tema* said.

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