

JAPAN

Famed director Nagisa Oshima returned from a 13-year hiatus on Dec. 6 with a gay-themed samurai movie called *Gohatto*.

"The samurai in this movie were a group of men who were intently involved in the business of killing," Oshima said. "I think that in this extremely intense situation, for love to live among the members, whether it is homosexual love or not, seems to be entirely natural."

NEW ZEALAND

Auckland's annual gay Hero Parade has been canceled for 2000 due to money troubles.

Organizers said the celebration will return as a festival in February 2001.

SOUTH AFRICA

The nation's Constitutional Court extended the spousal immigration provisions of the Aliens Control Act to same-sex couples Dec. 2.

Gay men and lesbians are now permitted to bring a foreign lover to live with them.

The ruling upheld a decision by the regional Cape High Court that had been appealed by the Department of Home Affairs.

UKRAINE

After months of bureaucratic delays, the gay group Our World was officially registered Nov. 30, the first queer organization to achieve such status in Ukraine.

A group spokesman thanked Amnesty International for helping flood the Department of Justice with letters supporting the registration.

UNITED KINGDOM

Prosecutors dropped charges Dec. 10 against gay activist Peter Tatchell for his attempted citizen's arrest of anti-gay Zimbabwean President Robert Mugabe in London on Oct. 30.

Tatchell could have been sentenced to 18 months in prison for using threatening, abusive and insulting words and behavior, and for assaulting a police officer during the attack on Mugabe's motorcade.

The Crown Prosecution Service said there was insufficient evidence to proceed with the case.

Lesser charges against the other protesters were dropped as well.



British heterosexuals have caught up with gays when it comes to HIV transmission.

In the first half of 1999, 47 percent of those newly diagnosed as HIV-positive were straight and 48 percent were gay, the Public Health Laboratory Service reported Dec. 1.

Conservative former British Defense Secretary Michael Portillo, who recently acknowledged having had gay sex during his college days, was elected to Parliament in a special election to fill the London seat of the late Alan Clark.

Portillo won 56 percent of the vote in the upscale Kensington-Chelsea district, with the remainder split among 17 other candidates.

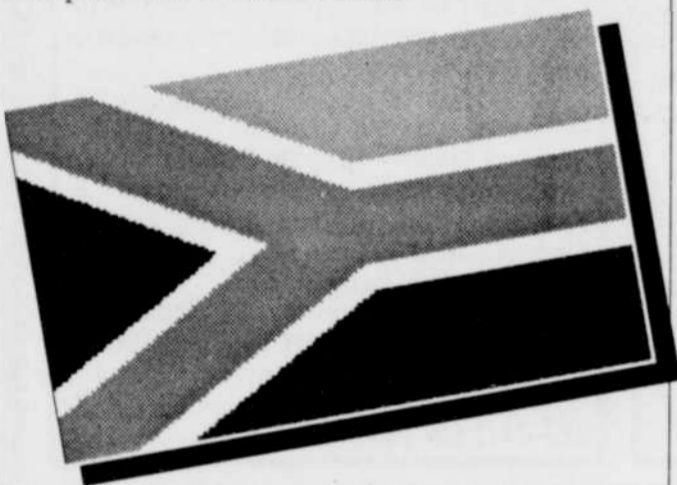
Portillo, 46, was heckled repeatedly during the campaign by gay activist Peter Tatchell, who was upset that, as defense minister, Portillo had supported Britain's ban on gays in the military.

The ban was struck down Sept. 27 by the European Court of Human Rights.

Tatchell and others also claim Portillo has not been fully honest about his gay experiences—that, in fact, Portillo had at least one long-term gay relationship after he left university.

Nonetheless, Portillo remains the likely successor to Conservative Party leader William Hague, according to British newspapers.

■ Compiled by REX WOCKNER, who has reported for the gay press since 1985. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Drake University and started his career as a radio reporter.



The Constitutional Court said: "Gays and lesbians in same-sex life partnerships are as capable as heterosexual couples of expressing and sharing love in its manifold forms. They are capable of constituting a family including affection.... The Aliens Control Act, by omitting to confer on persons who are partners in permanent same-sex life partnerships the benefits it extends to spouses, unfairly discriminates, on the grounds of their sexual orientation and marital status, against partners in such same-sex partnerships."

The National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality commented: "The Department of Home Affairs has persistently acted in a cruel and unjustifiable manner against lesbian and gay people. The sad history of this case is that lesbian and gay couples have been harassed, detained and threatened with deportation for the past two years. This is typical of the high-handed and bureaucratic bullying of all immigrants and refugees. This decision is the first step in holding the department accountable to all people for its actions."

SRI LANKA

An estimated 40 women formed Sri Lanka's first lesbian organization Dec. 5 in the capital, Colombo.

The fledgling group is called Companions.

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