

AUSTRALIA

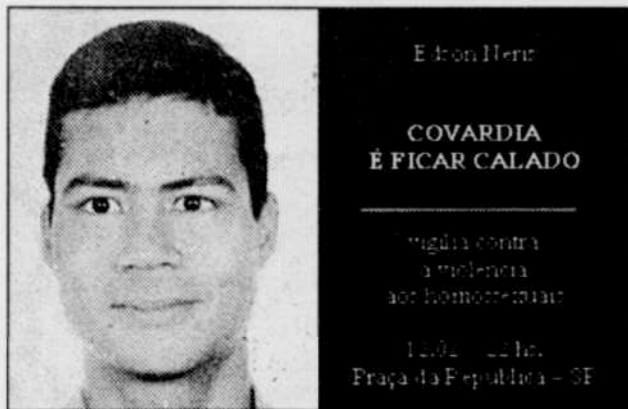
Teen-age bashers have beaten at least seven gay men in Melbourne's cruisy Alma Park recently, police said Feb. 10.

The police force has responded with a special operation to patrol the park after dark.

According to news reports, several closeted married men also have been bashed but did not report the attacks for fear their wives would learn they have homosexual sex.

BRAZIL

Skinheads in São Paulo killed a gay man in the city's Republic Plaza on Feb. 6 by beating him with brass knuckles and kicking him with steel-toe boots while they shouted anti-gay epithets.



A poster for a Feb. 12 rally in the São Paulo, Brazil, plaza where Edson Nêris da Silva was murdered by gay-bashers six days earlier

Dog trainer Edson Nêris da Silva, 35, died in a nearby hospital shortly after the attack.

Police promptly swooped down on a nearby bar and arrested 30 people. Those who were adults were charged with aggravated homicide and illegal congregation. Witnesses have fingered three of the adults as participants in the beating.

Gay groups, politicians and human rights activists staged a large anti-violence rally Feb. 12 at the site of Silva's death.

According to activists, 1,600 gays and transvestites have been murdered in Brazil in the past 10 years.

Brazilian soccer legend Pelé has acknowledged that his first sexual experience was with a man, the *London Evening Standard* reported Feb. 2.

"It was with a homosexual," Pele said. "I was scarcely 14. But let's be fair, it wasn't just my thing. It was with a homosexual that all our team used to go out with. But after that I never again started this type of relationship."



CANADA

The federal government introduced legislation to grant same-sex couples all the benefits given common-law opposite-sex couples.

The measure, which was introduced Feb. 11, also extends to same-sex and straight common-law couples many marriage rights that neither group currently has.

The bill is a response to a string of recent court decisions. The legislation will rewrite more than 60 federal laws in areas ranging from pensions and insurance to income tax and prison visits.

"This is a historic day for our communities," says Kim Vance, president of the national lobby group Equality for Gays and Lesbians Everywhere. "The federal government has recognized in unequivocal terms the right of same-sex couples to equal treatment before the law."

Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia already give gay and lesbian couples the rights accorded common-law opposite-sex couples.

FINLAND

Finnish voters elected a former head of a national gay group as president of the nation Feb. 6.

Tarja Halonen was president of SETA, a national gay organization, in the early 1980s. She now has a male partner, Pentti Arajärvi.

Halonen, 56, is a Social Democrat with a radical past as a follower of revolutionary icon Che Guevara. She is popular among left-wingers, union members and communists.

INTERNATIONAL

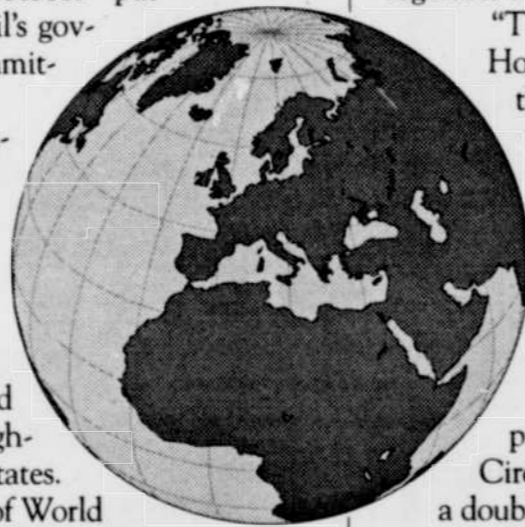
Parliamentarians from across Europe voted Jan. 26 to recommend that anti-gay discrimination be banned via the European Convention on Human Rights.

The vote occurred as the Council of Europe's Parliamentary Assembly reviewed a draft of a new "Convention Protocol" put forward by the council's governing body, the Committee of Ministers.

The recommendation now moves back to the committee for consideration.

The Council of Europe's main role is to strengthen democracy, human rights and the rule of law throughout its 41 member states. Founded in the wake of World War II, it is the continent's most important human rights organization.

The European Convention on Human Rights is the most significant of the council's



many human rights treaties. The European Court of Human Rights settles violations of the convention.

The council is governed by the foreign ministers of its member states who form its decision-making body, the Committee of Ministers, and by representatives from national parliaments, who make up its Parliamentary Assembly.

PANAMA

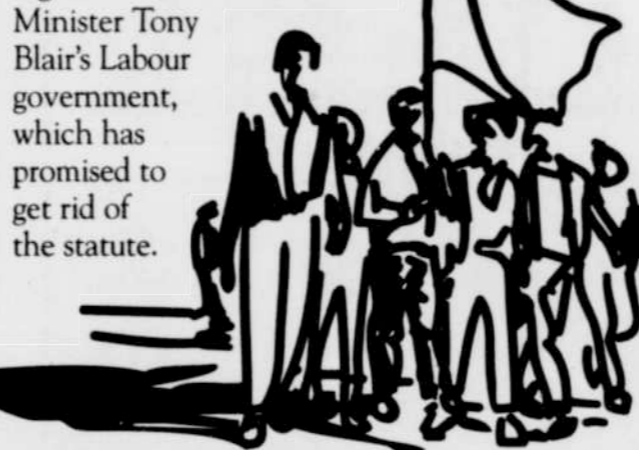
The gay and lesbian group New Men's and Women's Association of Panama has been denied official registration.

Government and Justice Minister Winston Spadafora says the group's goals run contrary to the nation's morals and customs.

UNITED KINGDOM

Britain's House of Lords has blocked repeal of Section 28, a 10-year-old law that prohibits cities from "intentionally promot[ing] homosexuality" or teaching "the acceptability of homosexuality as a pretended family relationship" in schools.

The Lords' 201-165 vote, which occurred Feb. 8, was a big defeat for Prime Minister Tony Blair's Labour government, which has promised to get rid of the statute.



Opponents say they will not repeal the section unless it is replaced with another law that regulates the teaching of sexuality in schools.

"The government cannot get past the House of Lords, and they cannot put this on the statute book until the Lords agree," said Member of Parliament Stuart Bell.

Ordinarily, Britain's elected House of Commons can vote to overrule the unelected House of Lords, but not this time, since the bill originated with the Lords.

Meanwhile, anti-Section 28 protesters halted traffic in Piccadilly Circus the day of the vote by hijacking a double-decker bus and painting it pink.

A man from Dronan, Scotland, who was kicked out of the United Kingdom's Royal

Air Force for being gay, was awarded a \$16,000 payout Feb. 2 in the wake of the European Court of Human Rights ruling that struck down the nation's military gay ban.

Technician Michael Stalker, 27, was booted from the Air Force in 1998. His discrimination complaint was scheduled to go before an employment tribunal at the end of February.



According to the *Glasgow Daily Record and Sunday Mail*, Ministry of Defence bosses are bracing for a flood of similar settlements with other gays who were kicked out of the military.

VATICAN CITY

The Vatican is irritated by gay activists' plans to stage World Pride Rome 2000 during the Roman Catholic Holy Year.

Thousands of gay men and lesbians are expected to descend on the city June 28 to July 9 for the festivities, which will include a large parade.

On Jan. 28, the pope's No. 2 man, Vatican Secretary of State Cardinal Angelo Sodano, urged the Rome city government to ban World Pride because thousands of Catholic pilgrims will be in the city at the same time.

"Rome is...a city apart because of the presence of the Roman Pontiff," Sodano said. "I am sure the authorities will reconsider the matter. The civil authorities know how to deal with public order. They know the rules and know how to avoid things that can harm the sensibilities of a city such as Rome."

The city has given \$180,000 to pride organizers to help fund cultural activities, and Mayor Francesco Rutelli said Jan. 28 that the event continues to have his support.

"You might not go along with the gay pride event, but it would be a mistake to ban it," he said. "Rome has a millennium-old code of welcome and respect that won't change in 2000."

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.

MARDI GRAS MADNESS
 March 7th
 Mardi Gras Madness
 21 COMES WITH MANY BENEFITS
 COME SEE WHAT WE'VE DONE
 April 1st & 2nd
 March 31st
21ST ANNIVERSARY PARTY
SCANDALS PORTLAND

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