

WORLDnews

nation based on sexual orientation, the International Lesbian and Gay Association reported.

"Today's announcement... is a major and historic step towards the complete elimination of all laws criminalizing same-sex relationships in Europe," the group said. "It brings to an end nearly 10 years of campaigning.... All legal provisions which discriminate against lesbian, gay and bisexual relationships have now been eliminated from Romania's criminal law."

Adrian Coman, executive director of the gay organization Accept, promised to stay on the lookout for violations. "Accept will carefully monitor the effects of this political will in the judicial practice and will provide free-of-charge legal assistance to the eventual victims of discrimination, since changing the text of laws will not automatically eliminate the situations of discrimination based on sexual orientation," he said.

Decriminalization of homosexuality was a precondition of Romania's pending acceptance into the 15-member European Union. According to ILGA, three other nations that hope to join still ban gay sex—Cyprus, Hungary and Bulgaria.

SLOVENIA

Slovenia's official entry in this year's Eurovision Song Contest—a huge deal in Europe—is "Only Love" by the transvestite trio Sestre (Sisters). "The song apparently addresses a closeted gay man, encouraging him to abandon his fears and to accept love," said Ales Pecnik of the Slovenian Queer Resources Directory.

The lyrics include: "There are many ways in life, don't look for happiness where there is none, just listen to your heart.... Look into my eyes and stop worrying. I know you feel the same way as I do. What you desire is not a sin. It's love."

The contest—to be held May 25 in Tallinn, Estonia—was won by a transvestite singer, Israeli diva Dana International, in 1998. Other past victors include Abba, with "Waterloo" in 1974, and Celine Dion, who represented Switzerland in 1988.

NEW ZEALAND

The Family Planning Association has set up a fertility clinic in Auckland for gay men and lesbians who want to have kids, the *Evening Post* reported. The facility will advise clients on screening for sexually transmitted and hereditary diseases and on legal issues surrounding matters such as custody and child support payments.

"I know of a couple who were very close [to doing a home insemination] and were not going to check the guy out," clinic head Liz Harding said. "At the last minute they decided to, and that was when he found out" he was HIV-positive.

Law splitting property 50/50 when all non-married couples, gay or straight, break up took effect Feb. 1. It applies to people who have been together for more than three years unless they set up complicated and expensive alternative arrangements through an attorney.

SOUTH AFRICA

The Film and Publication Board has ruled that an anti-gay book can be sold only to people

older than 18, the SAPA news agency reported.

The Pink Agenda: Sexual Revolution in South Africa and the Ruin of the Family by Christine McCafferty and Peter Hammond "is not desirable for those under 18 who might not be able to separate fact from fiction," senior executive officer Iyavar Chetty said. "The committee was concerned the book has made assertions that are questionable to say the least, and the [authors'] leap from homosexuality to criminal conduct is cruel and completely without justification."



Peter Hammond

The Lesbian and Gay Equality Project called *The Pink Agenda* "the worst example of homophobic hate speech ever published in South Africa."

SPAIN

A Catholic priest who came out as gay and noncelibate Feb. 1 was defrocked Feb. 6.

Father José Mantero García, 39, broke the news in an interview with *Zero* magazine. He was a parish priest in the village of Valverde del Camino in the southwestern Huelva province.

"You have to defend such issues from inside" the church, Mantero said. "It's impossible from outside. And the love of the institution is an essential factor in this internal struggle.... I love the church, and love has to be belligerent."

Huelva Bishop Ignacio Noguer said the remarks had placed the priest "outside the discipline of the church on a subject of



The transvestite trio Sestre is competing in this year's Eurovision Song Contest

extreme gravity and scandal for the faithful.... This obliges me, not without deep regret, formally to withdraw all ministerial licenses from Mr. José Mantero."

Juan José Asenjo, a spokesman for the Spanish bishops conference, added, "I don't think it is plausible for a priest to live an active homosexual life."

YUGOSLAVIA

The nation's first gay radio show is on the air. *Gayming* is broadcast from 1 to 4 a.m. Tuesdays on Radio 202.

The program includes calls from listeners, news, interviews and features. "Due to [the] high level of homophobia countrywide and lack of activities on LGBT issues, this radio show is of great value and importance to the LGBT community in Yugoslavia, particularly in small provincial areas," said Milan Djuric, who is the co-host along with fellow longtime activist Dusan Maljkovic. [M]

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.



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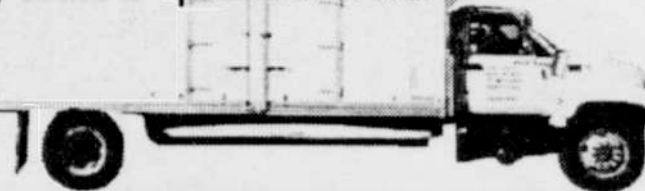
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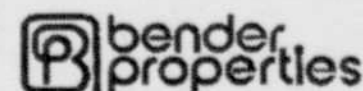
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