

Court Clears Gay Marchers

Courts in Poznan, Poland, refused in late December and early January to begin criminal proceedings against 75 people who were arrested at a Nov. 29 Gay Pride march that had been banned by Mayor Ryszard Grobelny, the Campaign Against Homophobia reported Jan. 5.

The marchers were charged with taking part in an illegal gathering.

A few hundred people joined the demonstration. They were harassed by members of the group All Polish Youth, who shouted "Let's gas the fags" and "We'll do to you what Hitler did with Jews."

Warsaw's Gay Pride parade also was banned by local officials last year and the year before. Mayor Lech Kaczynski, who is now Poland's president, called last year's planned march "sexually obscene." An improvised parade took place June 10 anyhow, with more than 2,500 participants.

Marriage Battle Hits Estonia

An update to Estonia's family law is set to ban same-sex marriage and block recognition of same-sex marriages from elsewhere.

Several nongovernmental organizations have banded together to fight the legislation and to demand passage of a civil partnership law for same-sex couples.

In a letter to government officials, the organizations state: "We demand you...stop ignoring the issues and problems of same-sex families and help to develop a more tolerant and equal society, an appropriate society of a member state of the [European Union]...4 [percent] to 6 percent of Estonian society has sent a clear message of having a strong need for an institution that would define the partners' rights and obligations in same-sex families. Family...means love, safe home, socially secured position, common values of humanity, protection of children and assets—what kind of country would not want to support such an initiative?"

Activists elsewhere are asked to join the campaign. Contact Lisette Kampus at lisette@diversity.ee.

AMERICAS

Kissing Gays Kicked Out of Los Cabos Hotel

A gay couple from Mexico City say security guards from the Hotel Presidente InterContinental in Los Cabos beat them up and threw them and their luggage into the street last month after they briefly kissed in the swimming pool, Reuters reported.

The couple said the guards told them, "We don't like faggots." But a hotel spokesman claimed Gerardo Eliud, a 27-year-old public relations officer, and Samir Habdu, a 24-year-old air steward, were evicted for making "inappropriate advances" to other guests.

The couple filed a criminal complaint against the hotel for assault and for alleged theft of belongings. They also plan to complain to Mexico's national human rights commission, Reuters said.

Man Chased by Bashers Drowns

A Jamaican gay man, Nokia Cowen, drowned Dec. 28 after he jumped into Kingston's harbor while being chased by gay-bashers, according to the Jamaica Forum for Lesbians, All-Sexuals and Gays, the country's best-known gay group.

"In an attempt to flee this mob, the young man jumped into the Kingston harbor and perished because he could not swim," the organization said. "JFLAG condemns the prevalence of incidents



Bishop Fred Henry of Calgary, Alberta, suggested politicians should opt for martyrdom rather than support same-sex marriage.

such as this and...we implore the highest members of government to clearly indicate that violence based on sexual orientation, both perceived and actual, is unacceptable in Jamaica."

Anti-gay violence is unusually common in Jamaica. In another recent incident, leading AIDS activist Steve Harvey was murdered Nov. 30 in Kingston. According to police, at least four assailants forced their way into his home and abducted him in his Jamaica AIDS Support company car. His body was found in a rural area with gunshot wounds to the back and head.

Gay activists in Jamaica and elsewhere also have been fighting a years-long battle with several famous dancehall reggae singers whose lyrics, activists say, support anti-gay violence or, in some instances, the killing of homosexuals. Among those targeted by the protests have been Elephant Man, Vybz Kartel, Beenie Man, Buju Banton, T.O.K., Bounty Killer, Capleton and Sizzla.

Bishop Suggests Politicians Consider Martyrdom

The Roman Catholic bishop of Calgary, Alberta, has suggested that Catholic politicians should opt for martyrdom rather than support things that contradict church doctrine, such as same-sex marriage, *The Globe and Mail* reported Jan. 9.

"Catholic politicians have a duty to be morally coherent. They cannot live as spiritual schizophrenics," Bishop Fred Henry told the Zenit Catholic news agency. "All Catholic politicians would do well to imitate the example of St. Thomas More, who by his life and death taught that man cannot be separated from God, nor politics from morality."

More, chancellor to King Henry VIII, was executed in 1535 for refusing to acknowledge the king, rather than the pope, as head of the English church.

Canada is one of five nations where same-sex couples have access to full marriage. As the nation debated the issue in recent years, Prime Ministers Paul Martin and Jean Chrétien, both Catholics, made clear distinctions between their personal faith and their political duty to ensure that all Canadians are treated equally.

"[This] is about the Charter of Rights," Martin said in June 2005 after the House of Commons voted 158-133 to legalize same-sex marriage nationwide. "In a nation of minorities, it is important that you don't cherry-pick rights. A right is a right."

In 2004, Henry said Chrétien might go to hell because of his support for gay marriage. "He's putting at risk his eternal salvation," the bishop said. 10

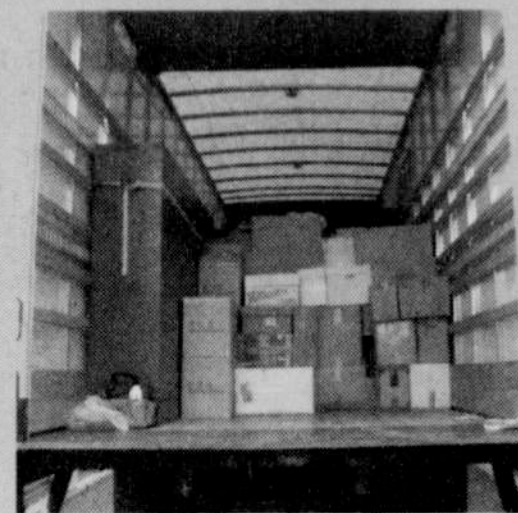
Compiled by REX WOCKNER, who has reported for the gay press since 1985. He has a bachelor's degree in journalism from Drake University and started his career as a radio reporter.

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