

sex marriage."

A second document refused to confirm that Kakucska was single.

The Netherlands ultimately let the couple marry anyway, when presented with the Australian refusals and Kakucska's affidavit that he was single.

Gay activist Rodney Croome of the Australian Coalition for Equality called the government's actions "mean-spirited and bloody-minded."

EUROPE

U.N. Rejects Gay Groups

The United Nations Economic and Social Council has rejected the applications for consultative status submitted by the International Lesbian and Gay Association and Denmark's National Association for Gays and Lesbians.

The council's Committee on Non-Governmental Organizations dismissed the requests Jan. 23 without even holding the customary hearing.

The applications were opposed by Cameroon, China, Cuba, Iran, Pakistan, Russia, Senegal, Sudan, the United States and Zimbabwe. Voting not to dismiss the applications were Chile, France, Germany, Peru and Romania. Abstaining were Colombia, India and Turkey. Côte d'Ivoire was not present for the vote.

"It is an absolute outrage that the United States has chosen to align itself with tyrants—all in a sickening effort to smother the voices of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people around the world," said Matt Foreman, executive director of the U.S. National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "Apparently Iran, which President Bush has deemed part of the 'axis of evil,' is a suitable partner when it comes to discriminating against gay people."

ILGA said, "The Bush administration found fit to vote alongside countries they have considered international pariahs in all other contexts."

And the group's co-secretary general, Rosanna Flamer-Caldera, said the council's refusal to hold a hearing was "a clear violation of due process and an attempt to discriminate against LGBT NGOs on procedural grounds."

A coalition of 40 organizations, led by the Human Rights Campaign, Human Rights Watch, the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission and NGLTF, wrote Jan. 25 to U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice calling "for an explanation of the vote which aligned the United States with governments that have long repressed the rights of sexual minorities."

ILGA had council status from 1993 to 1994 but was stripped of it after a scandal, orchestrated by the U.S. right wing, in which a small number of ILGA's member organizations were accused of not taking a strong enough stance against pedophilia.

Achieving consultative status is the only way nongovernmental organizations can participate in discussions among member states at the United Nations. Nearly 3,000 groups have the status.

Czech Churches Oppose Partnership Bill

Ten religious denominations published a letter on the Czech Bishops Conference Web site Jan. 16 urging Parliament and

President Vaclav Klaus to reject a same-sex partnership bill that has passed the lower house and awaits consideration in the Senate.

The letter said such a law would "weaken family life" and "cause chaos in values." It was signed by Czech officials of the Roman Catholic Church, Orthodox Church and eight Protestant churches.

Observers believe the bill is unlikely to pass in the Senate regardless.

Euro Parliament Demands Clampdown on Homophobia

The European Parliament passed a resolution Jan. 17 demanding that its 25 member states clamp down on homophobia, protect queers from discrimination and extend them equal rights. The vote was 468-149 with 41 abstentions.


The resolution was aimed in particular at nations such as Poland, Latvia, Lithuania and Romania where governments, religious leaders and anti-gay organizations have stepped up oppression of the gay community in recent years. The document cited "a series of worrying events...in a number of EU member states...ranging from banning Gay Pride or equality marches to the use by leading politicians and religious leaders of inflammatory or threatening language or hate speech, failure by police to provide adequate protection or even breaking up peaceful demonstrations, violent demonstrations by homophobic groups and the introduction of changes to constitutions explicitly to prohibit same-sex unions."

The parliamentarians urged the European Commission "to ensure that all member states...are correctly implementing Directive 2000/78/EC [establishing a general framework for equal treatment in employment and occupation] and to start infringement proceedings against those member states that fail to do so." They also told the commission "to consider the use of criminal penalties in cases of violation" of directives based on Article 13 of the European Community Treaty, which empowers the Council of the European Union to ban discrimination based on sexual orientation and other factors.

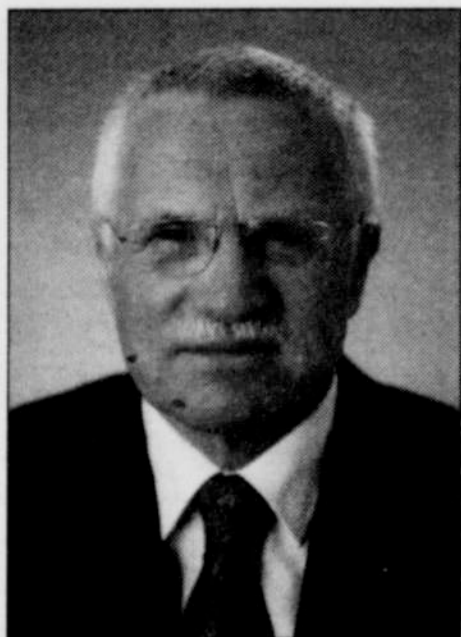
Pope Blasts Same-Sex Unions

In a Jan. 12 speech to political leaders from the Rome area, Pope Benedict XVI spoke against government recognition of same-sex unions, calling it a grave mistake.

"It is a serious error to obscure the value and function of the legitimate family founded on matrimony, attributing to other forms of unions improper legal recognition, for which there really is no social need," Benedict said.

The day after his remarks, about 40 gay activists staged a protest outside Vatican City's St. Peter's Square. The next day, around 1,000 people rallied in Rome, demanding legal recognition of same-sex relationships. 

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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