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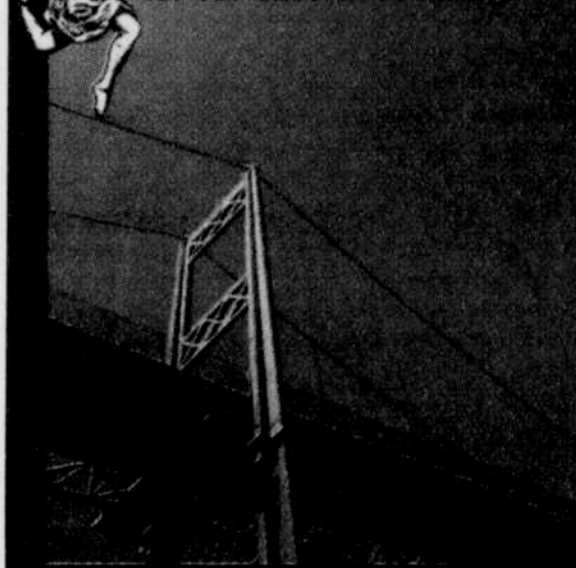
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# world

## EUROPE

### Portuguese Lesbians Try to Get Married

Two Portuguese lesbians were turned away when they tried to get married at the Lisbon public registry office Feb. 1.

The rejection had been expected, and Teresa Pires, 28, and Helena Paixão, 35, already had launched a legal case based on the constitution's prohibition against discrimination based on sexual orientation—a protection that was added in 2004.

At the same time, the Portuguese Civil Code states that "marriage is a contract celebrated between two persons of opposite sex." The matter will wind through the Portuguese and possibly the European court systems.

Neighboring Spain is one of four nations in the world where same-sex couples have access to regu-

lar marriage, along with Belgium, Canada and the Netherlands. A court ruling legalizing same-sex marriage in South Africa will take effect next Dec. 1 unless Parliament makes the change sooner.



Helena Paixão (left) and Teresa Pires have lived together for three years.

"I think the most important thing was that [MPs] actually saw us and that they saw that we are no different, that we are just normal people," activist Tereza Kodickova told Radio Prague. "And then of course we used the argument of the European Union a lot and of equal rights and equal treatment and the fact that registered partnerships of this kind exist in other countries."

A recent poll by the Public Opinion Research Center found that 62 percent of Czechs support same-sex registered partnership.

## AMERICAS

### Canadian Same-Sex Marriage Faces Threat

Canada's new Conservative government, elected Jan. 23, is threatening to undo the nation's legalization of same-sex marriage.

The party platform promises to "hold a truly free vote on the definition of marriage in the next session of Parliament [and], if the resolution is passed, [to] introduce legislation to restore the traditional definition of marriage while respecting existing same-sex marriages."

But the move apparently is not an immediate priority and, according to polls, would not be supported by a majority of Canadians. The party's

press officer told *The San Francisco Chronicle* that "things like same-sex marriage [are] on the back burner."

Turning back the clock also might not be possible. The government probably does not have the votes to pass the resolution, and even if it does, the fact remains that courts in nine of Canada's 13 provinces and territories have ruled that prohibiting same-sex couples from marrying violates the nation's Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

To get around that, the government would have to utilize the charter's "notwithstanding clause," which has never been used. It allows provinces or the federal Parliament to enact temporary laws (for five years) that violate the charter's protections.

## ASIA/PACIFIC

### China Publishes Gay Sex Report

The first report on "men-to-men sexual behaviors" has been published in China, the Xinhua news service reported Feb. 9.

*MSM in China: Surveying Sex and Self-Identity* examines the sex lives of Chinese gays via 400 in-depth interviews and case studies, Xinhua said. The study's 15 chapters also look at gay feelings and self-expression among several social and cultural groups.

The research was funded by the Ford Foundation. The report was written by a scholar who is known in the media as Tong Ge, the pen name he has used when writing gay novels.

### Australian P.M. Opposes Civil Unions

Australian Prime Minister John Howard opposes not only same-sex marriage, which has been banned in Australia,

### Czech Republic Passes Gay Partnership Bill

A same-sex partnership bill passed the Czech Republic Senate on Jan. 26.

The vote was 45-14 with six abstentions. Sixteen senators were absent.

The measure previously passed the Chamber of Deputies and now awaits a decision by President Vaclav Klaus, who has hinted he might veto it. The legislation extends to registered same-sex couples many of the rights and obligations of marriage but does not provide access to marriage itself or to adoption.



President Bush and Laura Bush stand with Australian Prime Minister John Howard and his wife, Jannette Howard, at the Parliament House in Canberra, Australia, Oct. 23, 2003. Howard opposes same-sex marriage as well as civil unions, which he calls a "cop-out."



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