

world

ASIA/PACIFIC

Georgian Rally Canceled Over Gay Rumors

The Council of Europe's second annual "All Different, All Equal" rally in Tbilisi, Georgia, was canceled in late July after local media incorrectly reported it was a Gay Pride parade, which provoked outrage in religious and other circles.

Similar pro-diversity rallies have been held since 1995 in many of the Council of Europe's 47 member nations.

"This was a demonstration targeted at youth for intercultural and inter-religious dialogue, where children could have shown their views on mutual respect and love with their songs, pictures and creativity," local organizer Paata Gachechiladze told *The Messenger*, a Georgian English-language newspaper.

The confusion started after the local *Alia* newspaper ran a story headlined "Pederasts Are Getting Ready for a Parade in Tbilisi." Other media then repeated the story without doing their own research.

Gachechiladze called the *Alia* report a total fabrication, commenting, "The filthy gossip of one journalist caused such a big mess."

Key Russian Activist Charged with Slander

Well-known Russian gay activist Nikolai Alekseev, chief organizer of the nation's two ill-fated Pride celebrations, was charged with criminal slander Aug. 1 for outing federal legislator Alexander Chuev on a live TV news affairs program June 21.

Alekseev made the claim in a joint appearance with Chuev on the NTV network's *K baryeru!* program.

According to GayRussia.Ru, Chuev has made anti-gay statements and supported anti-gay legislation, including a bill that would have recriminalized gay sex. He reportedly authored a bill that would have banned pro-homosexual propaganda.

"According to Russian Criminal Code, slander-ing means dissemination of lies which spoils someone's reputation or dignity," Alekseev said. "Russian authorities were caught in their own trap by opening this criminal file. On the one hand they are saying all the time that no one is discriminating [against] gays in Russia and that there is no problem being gay, and on the other hand they are investigating whether the word 'gay' can be insulting."

Alekseev said he believes the criminal case is political retribution for his many court challenges to Moscow Mayor Yuri Luzhkov's bans on this and last year's Gay Pride parades. One of those cases is pending before the European Court of Human Rights.

"It is clearly another example of Russia becoming an authoritarian state where people do not have any right to express themselves and speak freely," Alekseev said. "And Russian authorities particularly do not like those who reveal bitter truth about them."

For details on the two disastrous attempts to hold Gay Pride parades in Moscow, see tinyurl.com/2nkl7p and tinyurl.com/2lt8pl.

EUROPE

Most Finns OK with Gay Neighbors

About 80 percent of Finns have no objection to living next door to gays, people with HIV or immigrants, according to a survey carried out by the *Väli-Suomi* newspaper.

However, 92 percent do not want to have



Russian gay activist Nikolai Alekseev believes the criminal case against him is political retribution.

neighbors who use drugs, 78 oppose living beside an alcoholic, 56 disapprove of criminals as neighbors, and 44 percent reject the notion of an emotionally unstable neighbor.

La Cage aux Folles Star Dies

French actor Michel Serrault, who played gay nightclub owner Albin Mougeotte in *La Cage aux Folles*, died of cancer July 29 in Honfleur, France. He was 79.

In a statement, French President Nicolas Sarkozy called Serrault a "monument of the world of theater, cinema and television." Serrault, who was straight, appeared in 130 other films and won three César awards, France's version of Oscars.



Michel Serrault

Gay Bulgarian Pop Star Fathers Girl

Famous Bulgarian pop-folk singer Azis became the father of a baby girl Aug. 5.

The child, Raya, was born to Azis' friend Gala, the Sofia News Agency said. Last October, Azis, 28, and his partner, Niki Kitaetsa, staged an unofficial wedding in Sofia.

Outgames to Give It Another Go

Despite losing \$5 million in its initial effort last year in Montreal, the World Outgames will be staged a second time in 2009—July 25 to 29 in Copenhagen, Denmark.

"Thousands of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender sports enthusiasts, cultural movers and shakers, activists, their families, friends and supporters will gather in the Danish capital for nine absolutely fabulous days of serious sport, serious culture and totally serious fun," gushed a press release issued Aug. 1.

Organizers expect 8,000 athletes to compete in 30 sports. An "Out Human Rights conference" will run concurrently with the games, focusing on "sports, culture and media, education, families, politics, business and workers and LGBT history."

The Outgames were born in 2006 after Gay Games organizers in Montreal and the Federation of Gay Games got into a nasty, prolonged argument over financial planning and other matters. The federation eventually moved the 2006 Gay Games to Chicago, and the Montreal organizers launched the competing Outgames under the auspices of the relatively young Gay and Lesbian International Sport Association. 19

REX WOCKNER 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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