

WorldWatch

by Staff

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Europe

Germany's Foreign Minister, Joschka Fischer, is calling for a European federal superstate with its own elected president and written constitution. Warning that European Union enlargement "will hopelessly overload" the current system, he proposes a European government with "far-reaching executive powers." "If we are to meet this historic challenge," he says, "we must put into place the last brick in the pace towards integration in defense and security." Accepting that not all EU member states share his ambitions, he proposes that France and Germany press ahead with full federal integration, and the rest of Europe will follow.

French misgivings about Fischer's proposal became public when Jean-Pierre Chevènement, France's Interior Minister, said that Germany had not recovered from Nazism. His remarks reflect widespread annoyance in the French political world with the German Foreign Minister's grabbing of the EU agenda with his speech. "We are in the presence of a German tendency to imagine for Europe a federal structure based on its own model. At the bottom of this, Germany is still dreaming of the German Holy Roman Empire," Chevènement says.

Disease

The deaths of heroin addicts have sparked an anthrax scare in Britain. Tests at the nation's lab for dangerous pathogens have found signs of anthrax infection in two Scottish victims. Nine more Scots are ill, and doctors fear the disease—difficult to monitor among drug users—may be far more widespread. "Heroin can contain almost anything in small amounts," says Les King of the Forensic Science Service, which analyzes seized heroin in Britain. However, no one checks it for infectious agents, he notes. "There could be a long history of this, and we just haven't observed it till now."

Pornography

Explicit pornographic videos can legally be sold in Britain after the High Court ruled that exposure to them would not harm children. In a test case, the judge dismissed the British Board of Film Classification's (BBFC) move to stop seven "extremely explicit" videos from going on sale in licensed sex shops. The BBFC had argued that children could be harmed by seeing the videos, but the justices ruled that the risk was "insignificant."

Homosexual "Holy Unions"

The 2.6 million-member Presbyterian Church (USA) will now permit its ministers to conduct religious holy union ceremonies for same sex couples. The decision, made by the denomination's high court, ordered church districts to clarify the distinction between weddings and holy unions.

Germany

»Germany is considering a radical restructuring of its military. Plans exist to reduce the overall number of troops while increasing the number of professional soldiers versus conscripts. This move breaks a number of taboos established during German rearmament in the 1950s by disconnecting the military from civilian life and potentially re-establishing a form of the vaunted General Staff.

» The proposed merger between the London Stock Exchange and Frankfurt's Deutsche Bourse is about to become a reality, and Deutsche Bourse could end up in the driver's seat. The German bourse will own about two-thirds of a combined German and London stock exchange, according to current plans.

Anglican-Catholic Union

Twenty-six church leaders—13 Anglicans and 13 Catholics—took part in a weeklong conference in mid-May. The meeting, chaired by Anglican Archbishop of Canterbury George Carey, as well as Catholic Cardinal Edward Cassidy, the president of the Vatican's Pontifical Council for Promoting Christian Unity, ended with a joint communiqué that suggested a commission further explore the possibility of reuniting both churches. Thirty-five years ago, the pope and the Archbishop of Canterbury decided the faiths should come together again, and took the first steps towards reunification. Major differences remain, however, especially over the ordination of women and allowing clergy to marry.

China

Russia has reportedly sold China the aircraft carrier *Kiev*. If the sale goes through and a refitted ship is delivered, Beijing will achieve a long-sought goal: joining the ranks of the world's power projection navies. By itself, the carrier—actually a hybrid cruiser with a 900-foot flight deck—will not be enough to allow the buyer to tip the regional balance of power, but the carrier will catch the attention of both regional and global players.