MIN BOX

Would Jesus Join the EU?

On June 8, 2003, Poles will face one of their most important national decisions since the fall of communism: whether to join the European Union (EU). And in its crusade to win entry, the Polish government of ex-Communist Prime Minister Leszek Miller has found an unlikely ally: the Vatican. The pro- and anti-EC camps are fighting fiercely for each vote. Three quarters of the voting population are expected to turn out in the referendum, whose outcome is uncertain. In March 2003, only 58 percent of Poles had declared their support for EU accession.

Enter the Roman Catholic Church. In a society that is 95 percent Catholic, a thumping 43 percent of those surveyed about the EU referendum said they would follow the church’s lead. Problem is, the church is divided on the issue. The Vatican has supported Poland’s entry, seeing it as an opportunity to extend the church’s influence on social affairs in Europe. Whence Pope John Paul, who traveled to Poland at the government’s invitation last summer, he expressed his hope that his native land would “find its place in the structures of the European Union, and will not lose its identity but enrich the continent.” At the parochial level, however, local priests often deliver anti-European sermons blaming the West and the Internet for the secularization of Polish youth. “Globalization is the communism of the 21st century,” said right-wing commentator Andrzej Leszek Szczeniak, arguing against EU integration on Radio Maryja, an extreme-right Catholic station that reaches nearly 3 million Poles. And unfortunately for the government, the audience for such views is exactly the one that it most wants to win over for the referendum—vital voters who tend to be the most isolated and least educated.

Prime Minister Miller and Polish prime minister Jozef Glemp have worked hand in hand on the European question, following the endorsement in March 2002 by the Polish episcopate of plans for EU integration. But the political price of this partnership may be higher than anticipated. In December 2002, the government postponed its commitment to change Poland’s restrictive antiabortion law. And in January 2003, it approached the EU and undermining the French policy of independence since 1989. Jagdish Bhagwati Beyond NAFTA: Clinton’s Trading Choices Americans prefer to see other countries enjoy the same liberties they do. That desire is especially strong when other people show that they too want to decide their fate by democratic means. . . . Further, if Americans saw that the foreign policymakers were promoting democracy around the globe, they would be likely to support American policy with financial commitments and military action when necessary to accomplish these foreign policy objectives.

Morton H. Halperin Guaranteeing Democracy

Mine Weeder

The innovative use of e-mail and the Internet to win a treaty banning antipersonnel land mines has made the International Campaign to Ban Landmines one of the most hackneyed examples of high-tech in action. But deminers themselves are still stuck with World War II technology to do their jobs, according to a February 2003 RAND report, “Alternatives for Landmine Detection.”

Ten Years Ago in FP

One day the United States may have to decide how committed it is to the seemingly contradictory goals of protecting the borders and preserving Iraq’s territorial integrity. . . . Many believe the Western-defined Karishu autonomous zone endangers the albanians of Turkey’s own north. . . . Turkish leaders are therefore not likely to prevent the West from maintaining its protection, nor will they initiate what could be a break with the United States and others over Kruja. Morton I. Abramowitz Dateline Ankara: Turkey After Ocal

Atlanticists in Britain and the United States preferred to see Britain link its destiny with the United States rather than with the European Community (EC). . . . De Gaulle’s opposition to British entry (by the EC) was, of course, driven wholly by the fear that Britain would act as the Americans Trojan horse within the EC, bringing in the interests and influence of the United States and undermining the French policy of independence from the US. Henry Kissinger Beyond NAFTA: Clinton’s Trading Choices

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AFGHANISTAN For every soldier in the new Afghan National Army, at least 100 military members still operate in various corners of Afghanistan, thanks to funding from neighbors like Iran and Uzbekistan. So writes Mark Sedra in Afghanistan: Between War and Reconstruction (Foreign Policy in Focus, March 2003). In Afghanistan: Women and Reconstruction (March 2003), the International Crisis Group notes that although the Taliban’s defeat promised an end to the systematic oppression of Afghan women, most aid is being channeled to projects likely to prove at most symbolic.

EAST TIMOR The growth of military groups and an upsurge in violence, including a deadly riot last December in the capital Dili, could undermine progress in East Timor, according to the Special Report of the Secretary-General of the United Nations Mission of Support in East Timor (March 2003). The United Nations has recommended continuing its current timeline for a gradual exit of the roughly 4,000 U.N. peacekeepers.

KOSOVO Kosovo’s final status is the subject of the U.S. Institute of Peace’s Kosovo Decision Time (February 2003). The report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations Interim Administration Mission in Kosovo (January 2003) highlights the difficulty of building effective, representative, transparent, and accountable civic institutions with a divided population. From running power plants to introducing the euro, the assistance efforts of the European Union are detailed in its periodic newsletter, Commitment to Kosovo.

Mining for Gold: Will dogs always have to do the dirty work?

Land mines are perhaps the most pernicious obstacles confronting poor countries trying to put their conflicts behind them. In Afghanistan, for example, an estimated 5 million to 7 million still litter the landscape, maiming children, killing livestock, and rendering vast stretches of territory unfit for habitation or development. To find and remove these flowers of death, today’s deminers still use metal detectors and prodding devices. But metal detectors also pick up any scrap of metal, producing time-consuming false alarms. In some cases, deminers may also have mine-detection dogs. Unfortunately, these dogs are as expensive as they are trustworthy—breeding and training costs between $13,000 and $25,000 per animal. And as Jackie MacDonald, one of the RAND report’s authors, explains, “People still have to follow up with a metal detector after dog goes in.” New approaches such as training bees to detect mines or using systems that reflect sound or seismic waves off mines are in the works. But none of these, argues the author, can alone effectively reduce false alarms in the various conditions and terrain of the roughly 90 mine-infested countries. At the current rate, ridding the world of all mines would take 45 to 500 years—and that’s only if no new mines are laid. The U.S. Army is currently testing bees to detect mines or using systems that reflect sound or seismic waves off mines are in the works. But none of these, argues the author, can alone effectively reduce false alarms in the various conditions and terrain of the roughly 90