

Report from Bonn by Rainer Apel

What kind of post-communist Europe?

Conservatives say they want a "Christian" design, but won't use the new papal encyclical 'Centesimus Annus.'

This author and a colleague were invited to the annual meeting of the Weikersheimer Forum, a political initiative group that has worked, for the past decade, as a spiritual rallying point for those layers of the conservative constituency who are broadly opposed to the advance of liberalist views on the political scene in Germany.

One may not agree, as this author does not, with many of the views put forward, but the group's meetings are always informative. This gathering, on June 1-2 in the Württemberg town of Weikersheim, dealt with the "spiritual renewal" of Eastern Europe after the fall of communism.

Meetings of the group in earlier years featured leading representatives of the Eastern reform movement, like the Soviet Union's Vyacheslav Dashchichev or Poland's Wladislaw Bartoszewski. When they addressed the Weikersheim gatherings, a strictly communist regime was still in power in their countries.

This year, the scene was changed. Representatives of the first elected parliaments of Hungary, Czechoslovakia, Croatia, and the Russian Federated Republic were attending as speakers.

Speakers frequently called for Christian, or occidental European values, to provide the cornerstone for the post-communist societies of Eastern Europe. Yet there were only marginal references to the new papal encyclical on this very topic, *Centesimus Annus*. There were, on the other hand, frequent allusions to "market economy" or "social market economy" as the model for economic reform. Neither

the "Christian values" aspect, nor the "market economy" system were discussed enough at this meeting to allow a definite evaluation as to why the new encyclical was not made the fulcrum of the debate.

Seen against the background of strong opposition of many Catholics in Germany to the Vatican, and to this Pope specifically, one may say that there is still a spiritual deficit in the conservative spectrum of German politics. Less explicable is that even the East European representatives at Weikersheim did not refer to the Vatican, or the new encyclical, as important—and this at a time when Pope John Paul II was just beginning a tour of Poland. Nor was there any Polish representative at this conservative meeting.

On the first day, the Austrian ex-archduke, Otto Hapsburg, conservative member of the European Parliament, spoke on the reform of political and economic structures of the (western) European Community needed, he says, to open the door also for the Eastern Europeans. Hapsburg criticized the Brussels Commission as over-centralized, and proposed setting up a new body between the European Parliament and the Commission—a chamber of the European regions modeled on the British House of Lords. Hapsburg called for an end to the rotation, every six months, of the chairmanship among the 12 EC member governments, and the creation of a longer-term, continuous presidency.

It is no secret that Hapsburg is a proponent of constitutional monarchy. One may assume that his proposals for

reforming EC institutions aimed at something very close to the concept of an all-European constitutional monarchy.

This may sound absurd, but it has to be taken seriously. Given the intense campaign in post-communist Eastern European countries like Romania, Bulgaria, and Hungary, but also Yugoslavia, for a return of the respective monarchies after an exile of 45 or more years, Hapsburg's "trial balloon" is not entirely off the scene. The young democracies of post-communist Eastern Europe are not stable enough yet, to be safe against monarchist revivals. There are certain echoes of the post-Napoleonic Europe a century ago, when the British revived, or created anew, puppet monarchies all over Europe.

The other aspect of the Weikersheim event worth watching, is the controversy over what "Europe" actually is. Some refused to consider most of the Balkan states part of Europe; others would not view the three Baltic states as belonging to Eastern Europe, but rather listed them as part of "Nordic" Europe.

Some speakers even recommended that the Balkan states form an economic community of their own, distinct from Central Europe. The dividing line between Central Europe and the Balkans would run along the border between Croatia and Serbia. Where would Greece fit in this picture? Once the mother of European thought, would Greece be part of Europe today? This question was not answered at the Weikersheim meeting.

The three Baltic states should be dealt with, one speaker said, as part of Europe's Nordic zone, a problem not concerning Central Europe or the West in the first place, but rather, something to be discussed between Russia and the Scandinavians. Moscow, which is refusing to give up the countries it illegally annexed, would no doubt agree.