PROPHETIC TIMES

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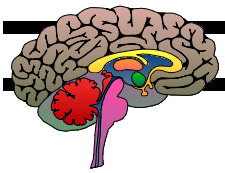
EUROPEAN UNION TO SEND POLICE FORCE TO BOSNIA

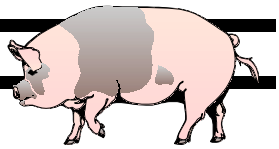
Feb 21, 2002 The Washington Times reports: "The European Union agreed yesterday to take over a police task force in Bosnia-Herzegovina from the United Nations next year in what would be the first crisis-management operation for the 15-nation bloc.

'This is a historic decision,' said Spanish Foreign Minister Josep Pique, whose country holds the EU's rotating presidency. 'The mission will start on January 1, 2003, and will last three years, though its mandate could be extended,' he told reporters after the EU's foreign ministers approved the move.

The 500-strong mission will train, supervise and inspect the police in the ethnically divided Balkan state, helping to 'institute the rule of law,'…"



TRANSPLANTS BETWEEN SPECIES HAVE VIRAL RISKS



Feb 20, 2002 CBS News reports: "It's one thing to be a guinea pig for medicine, but in 1996, Jim Finn agreed to be part pig. Finn was a victim of Parkinson's disease and allowed surgeons to inject his brain with 12 million brain cells from a pig. Researchers hoped that the fetal pig cells might replace functions he lost from the disease. 'This gave me my life back,' said Finn. 'By now, I'd be unable to drive a car, unable to walk. Now I can walk.' Finn's improvements made him the self-described poster child of a science called xenotransplantation – a process that uses animal cells or organs to treat human disease. Despite Finn's progress, the process that saved his life can put others in danger from a virus.

Some are worried that xenotransplantation allows viruses to jump within species, reports CBS News Correspondent Wyatt Andrews. Dr. Jonathan Allan, an expert in the transmission of viruses, said, 'My major concern in that a pig virus may find its way into a human recipient.' Allan helped convince the FDA to halt monkey-to-human organ transplants. While he calls monkey viruses lethal, he calls pig viruses a mystery. 'The most important danger is the risk of a new epidemic,' said Allan. In the lab, pig cells are known to transfer 'pervs,' porcine endogenous retroviruses, into human cells. But, unlike monkeys, no pig retrovirus has ever made a human sick that is known. It gets in, but seems to go nowhere. 'I don't know what to expect. The perv virus may do nothing, but these are questions that need to be resolved,' cautioned Allan. The risk of pervs, however small, makes Jim Finn a guinea pig for life. Doctors must routinely check him and more than 100 other pig-cell-patients worldwide for infections. So far, none have contracted a virus to be alarmed about.

Some are worried that patients like Finn could be carriers of sleeper viruses that could infect the rest of the population. 'That's the possibility. It can't be denied,' responded Finn. .."

UNKNOWN AVIAN VIRUS SPREADS IN HONG KONG

Feb 19, 2002 Reuters reports: "Hong Kong will destroy another 192,000 chickens as the still-unidentified avian virus spread to another five farms 'The exact strain of the H5 virus has yet to be identified,' a government spokeswoman told *Reuters*. A scientist studying the virus said earlier this month it was of the type that could mutate into a threat to humans. An avian flu virus mutated and killed six people in 1997.

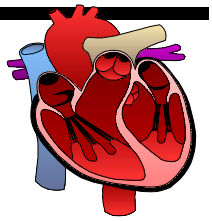
Five farms, located near previously-infected farms, had been quarantined, examined and found to be infected with the H5 virus, the Agriculture, Fisheries and Conservation Department (AFCD) said in a recent statement.

‘As the newly-confirmed infected farms have been put under quarantine from February 5, no chickens have left these farms for sale since then,’ the AFCD said. Hong Kong, which has slaughtered hundreds of thousands of birds to try and stop the spread of the fast-mutating virus, said earlier this month the outbreak was under control.

About 20 percent of some 100,000 live chickens sold each day in Hong Kong are raised locally while the rest come largely from mainland China.

The poultry trade has said business plunged about 80 percent in the usually busy run-up to last week's Lunar New Year, when fresh chicken is served as a main dish…”

ORGANS BUILT IN LABORATORY ON THE WAY



Feb 18, 2002 *BBC News* reports: “A leading surgeon in the US has told *BBC News* that he is ready to perform the world's first transplant of an artificially grown organ. Tissue engineering... should help reduce the number of patients on a transplant list. Dr Anthony Atala, of the Boston Children's Hospital, says he hopes to put a laboratory-engineered bladder into a patient once he has obtained the necessary regulatory approval. He believes permission for the procedure, which has been pioneered in dogs, will come within the next few months. Dr Attalla says that if he is successful with the bladder transplant, he will attempt to repair damaged hearts with new muscle and possibly even try to grow a kidney.

‘I think over time there will be no limit,’ Dr Atala said. ‘I think it is just a question of figuring out all the different tissue types and cell types and how they work best, but eventually I think that following the same strategies just about every organ in the body will be repairable at the very least.’ Dr Atala is seeking approval for human trials from the US Food and Drug Administration. Although tissue engineering has huge potential, Dr Atala believes there will always be a need for donor organs. ‘I think tissue engineering is just another solution but it should help reduce the number of patients on a transplant list.’ And, he believes, tissue engineering will prove to be a useful ally to the emerging field of stem cell medicine, in which ‘young’ human cells are injected into ailing tissue to regenerate it. ‘For example, with a patient who has a failing heart, where obviously it would be very hard to get a biopsy because they would not tolerate the procedure; then I think stem cells would be the ideal answer.’…”

ROBOTS MAY SOON BE ABLE TO TRACK YOU LIKE A HOUND

Feb 16, 2002 *New Scientist* reports: “Big Brother may not only be watching you, he may be following you too. Researchers in California have developed a robot called an Autonomous Observer (AO) that could lead to surveillance systems that follow people wherever they go.

Other systems can't follow moving objects that are trying to evade detection. If an object disappears from view, the tracking system loses it. To overcome this, computer scientist Jean-Claude Latombe at Stanford University has developed small mobile robots that not only watch targets but also work out their potential escape routes. The robots can then position themselves for an optimum view.

This task may be simple for humans but it is a huge challenge for robots since they must ‘understand’ exactly what is around them. To work out where objects are, the AO uses a laser rangefinder to add depth to images captured by a video camera. That way, it constructs a three-dimensional representation of its environment that it can refer to as it follows a target.

As an AO tracks a target, it uses this model to look for the structure that the target is most likely to hide behind, such as a wall or a corner. The AO then moves to give its video camera the widest possible field of view, making it harder for any target to escape. And since the AO updates its 3D map four times a second, in tests human and robot targets have found it very hard to escape detection…”