

billion cubic feet of Algerian gas; so, whether the average British person realises it or not, this country is heavily dependent on Algeria for energy.

If there is a change of government in Algeria to a less friendly régime, then European nations will be in trouble. Who else is there that can meet their enormous energy requirements? We need look no further than Russia. If North African gas dries up or the supply becomes unreliable, then Europe will be forced into the arms of the Russian bear.

Egypt has long been a reliable ally of the West and passive towards her close neighbour Israel. However, the only real alternative to Mr Mubarak's government would appear to be the Muslim Brotherhood, sister organisation to Hamas, just over the border in Gaza. Currently there do not appear to be any other political groups who are organised enough, or popular enough, to win the support of the people and govern Egypt. We will have to wait and see what God has in store for Israel's near neighbour, and how this fits into His purpose.

“World leaders warn on rising food prices”

WE can expect much more unrest amongst the nations if the Lord delays his coming. With the world's population expected to rise to more than nine billion in the next thirty years, pressure on food, energy and water will increase dramatically as these basic necessities become increasingly

scarce resources, warned Nicolas Sarkozy when speaking to the World Economic Forum meeting in Davos (bbc.co.uk/news/business-12301261; 27 Jan. 2011). The world is hurtling towards population overload, says Roger Harrabin of the BBC. Climate change has been largely touted in the media as the biggest challenge facing mankind, whereas in fact the far less fashionable but more imminent issue of population explosion has been somewhat overlooked. Unmanaged population growth will condemn vast swathes of the world's population to “hunger, thirst and slum housing,” concludes the report.

To mankind these appear to be insurmountable problems with no solution; but we know that there is a God in heaven for Whom nothing is too hard. We know that these are the birth pangs of a new and glorious age, and that our Lord Jesus will soon be here. “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!” (Mk. 13:32-37, NKJV).

Prophecy

Courting a young lion

Geoff Henstock

The renewed interest of Britain in the Commonwealth is an interesting development. The aim is to increase trade between the members and to present a united front against terrorist threats. This increasing cooperation would be expected to continue in the event of the Gogian invasion of Israel.

STUDENTS OF prophecy have long identified Britain and the dominions of her former empire, along with the United States, with the “Tarshish, with all the young lions” of Ezekiel 38:13, the force which, together with the nations

of the Arabian Peninsula (Sheba and Dedan), will challenge the Gogian host when it invades Israel at the time of the end.

Britain's decline as a world power through the twentieth century led some to question this interpretation. Scepticism only grew when the United Kingdom formally joined the European Community, especially as membership of the European Community appeared to be accompanied by a loosening of Britannia's ties to her partners in the Commonwealth.



The Commonwealth 'young lions' depicted as standing beside the old British lion in a World War I poster.

(<http://www.mccord-museum.qc.ca>; access number M24608.34; courtesy of Brother Don Pearce, www.milestonesuk.org.uk)

Stronger ties with the Commonwealth

Although there have always been prominent Euro-sceptics in British politics, both sides of politics have been committed to remaining in Europe. The election of a coalition government in May 2010 has not altered Britain's willingness, at least for the time being, to remain in Europe, but it has brought renewed interest in the Commonwealth. The new government under David Cameron expressed a determination to strengthen trade with members of the Commonwealth. This policy was manifested in August 2010, when the Prime Minister led a delegation of six cabinet ministers to India to promote trade. Later that month a British minister for the Foreign and Commonwealth Office, Lord Howell, visited Australia to promote investment in the United Kingdom by Australian companies.

In January 2011 two senior British cabinet ministers, Foreign Secretary William Hague and Defence Secretary Liam Fox, undertook a joint visit to Australia for discussions with their local counterparts. This was the first visit to the antipodes of a British Foreign Secretary in nearly twenty years. On 18 January 2011 the *Sydney Morning Herald* published an article jointly authored by the visiting ministers. Its heading was, "Stronger alliance required to meet modern challenges"; the sub-heading read, "The ties between Britain and Australia should be strengthened."

While the article stated that "We are not turning away from Europe or from our indispensable alliance with the United States," it went on to argue that "we believe we must pursue a distinctive foreign policy that is aligned with Britain's other

national interests and geared to its security and prosperity." The ministers cited the strong historical links between Australia and Britain, but hinted at the distance that had emerged between the two nations in recent decades when they identified the need to "reconnect with Australia and open a new era in our relations"

Defence for continuing trade

The presence of the Defence Secretary underlined the fact that, unlike the earlier visit of Lord Howell, this visit was not merely about trade. Talks between the two governments looked at how, in the words of the article, "we can increase our security by working together on global issues." Curiously, one item for discussion during the formal bilateral negotiations managed to combine both trade and defence: the Australian government expressed its possible interest in purchasing one or more of the warships Britain is mothballing in an effort to reduce defence spending in the wake of the global financial crisis.

As both nations are significant trading nations it was inevitable that security issues that affect trade and the stability of the world economy would be of paramount concern. As the ministers wrote, "Changes in power balances bring opportunities as well as threats. In an entwined global economy, economic shocks in one part of the world can destabilise all economies." These words would have been penned in the context of the recent global financial crisis, but it is not hard to see their relevance to the disruption to Western economies, dependent as so many are on Middle East oil supplies, that would be caused by the invasion described by Ezekiel.

Preparing responses to terrorism

Ezekiel 38 gives us every reason to expect that the cooperation of Australian and British forces, which was evident in Iraq and currently is being seen in Afghanistan, may be repeated, if in a less effectual manner, when Gog invades the Middle East. The article by the two ministers made references to shared Anglo-Australian interests in relation to terrorism, and specifically mentioned their shared concerns about the threat posed by Iran, another of the protagonists in the Gogian invasion.

There will be symmetry with the past when Britain and her Commonwealth allies challenge the Gogian host when it invades the Middle East. Britain's initial interest in this part of the world came about because of the need to protect

communications links with India and Australasia via the Suez Canal from external threats, in particular from Russia, who in the nineteenth century was seen as a major threat to the tottering Ottoman Empire. At the time of the end, Russian threats will again trigger Britain's involvement in the conflict, no doubt with a view to protecting her commercial interests and those of her trading partners.

Looking east

In a later report in the *Sydney Morning Herald* (20 Jan. 2011) under the heading, "Hague breathes new life into Commonwealth," a journalist reported on speeches made by Mr Hague at two gatherings of business and community leaders in Sydney. In the speeches the Foreign Secretary emphasised again that, without turning her back on Europe, Britain recognised the need (as summarised by the journalist) "to look east for new sources of prosperity, making the most of new and old connections." He spoke of the Commonwealth as an important but under-used network of fifty-four countries which, significantly, is comprised

of 800 million Hindus, 500 million Muslims and 400 million Christians.

The Foreign Secretary spoke of the work of an eminent persons group which is examining ways to reinvigorate the Commonwealth. The conclusions of this group will be considered at the next Commonwealth heads of government meeting in Perth, Western Australia, in October. He noted that the Commonwealth includes many of the fastest growing economies in the world—nations such as India, Malaysia, Singapore, South Africa and Nigeria—as well as five members of the Group of 20. For these reasons he sees the Commonwealth as well placed to become more proactive and help the world to extricate itself from the economic problems arising from the global financial crisis.

One ministerial delegation does not necessarily guarantee a long-term diplomatic realignment. It will be interesting to monitor any further steps in this renaissance of Britain's ties with the young lions, in Australia and elsewhere, although our watching of these steps is very likely to be interrupted by the return of the Master. "Even so, come, Lord Jesus."