

World watchman

The sea and the waves roaring

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The recent political earthquakes in North Africa may, to some, seem like insignificant events in insignificant countries, in an insignificant part of the world. This perception is misguided.

Unrest and revolution

“UNREST and revolution—led by Tunisia—highlights the fragility of European energy supplies,” reported BullionVault (http://goldnews.bullionvault.com/algeria_gas_01272011; 27 Jan. 2011) under the headline, “North Africa’s Politics, Europe’s Gas.” In recent weeks, Yemen, and, more significantly, Egypt and Algeria, have fallen into unrest and political upheaval. This state of affairs perhaps reminds some of us of the domino effect that occurred with the end of the ‘Iron Curtain,’ when Eastern European nations emerged from the Soviet era in a sudden and unexpected (yet, to students of Bible prophecy, reassuring) fashion. These Arab nations have all been governed by the autocratic ‘strongmen’ of the Arab world. With ubiquitous corruption, combined with increases in the cost of basic foods and rising unemployment, people are not happy and want change. ‘Democracy!’ is the cry from the people on the streets; ‘democracy!’ is the cry from the nations of the West—or perhaps in our ears we hear the words, ‘liberty, equality, fraternity!’

The end of the Iron Curtain brought about highly significant developments with regard to the expansion of the European Union and the rebirth of an autocratic Russia, developments that were long expected by those who love God’s Word and wait patiently for Him to reveal His purpose. He reveals to us the end result, and often some of the key events along the way, but much of the time as events occur it is not clear what part they play until (sometimes many years later) the loop is closed.

The same applies now with regard to North Africa. We are perhaps unable to understand the exact significance of these events, but we believe they are significant, and can perhaps speculate as

to what their purpose may be in God’s plan—for they certainly do have a purpose; the angels are hard at work in these nations!

Some of these supposedly impoverished countries are in fact far from impoverished. They are all characterised by powerful, corrupt ruling élites who siphon off wealth from the sale of the natural resources that many of these nations are blessed with, while leaving the masses to a life of abject poverty. Algeria is a particular case in point. This country supplies twenty per cent of Europe’s natural gas and more than thirty per cent of her liquid natural gas (LNG) imports. This winter, so far, Britain has imported seventy-three



President Hosni Mubarak of Egypt, forced out of office by mass popular uprising in his country just as we went to press.

(Picture: Wikimedia Commons)

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).