

the ground surface freezes the birds could starve. Yet they return to Holland ahead of a thaw, their arrival linked to a pressure change presaging an improvement in the weather.

A witness to Divine wisdom

In each natural region of the world, in each country, birds come and go with the seasons. Many, like the swallow, take on lengthy and arduous journeys, returning each year to the same traditional places to breed, but spending much of the year travelling back and forth to their wintering grounds in another hemisphere. On the way they

face constant danger and a daily requirement to find food, water and safe roosting sites. Swallows and millions of other birds perform this annual miracle of bird migration, observed so long ago by Jeremiah, obeying instincts and using the astonishing abilities implanted in them by the Creator. Truly they witness to the wisdom and providence that lies behind all of the creation, as we are reminded by the Lord Jesus: "Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Mt. 6:26, NKJV).

The developing brass mountains

Nigel Bernard

The increased self-confidence of Russia, shown in a recent speech by President Putin, and the increase in military spending by Gulf Arab states, are signs that the brass mountains in Zechariah 6 are fast developing.

IN ZECHARIAH 6 the saints setting out from Israel to establish the Kingdom are described as chariots: "And I turned, and lifted up mine eyes, and looked, and, behold, there came four chariots out from between two mountains; and the mountains were mountains of brass" (v. 1). The two brass mountains represent the disposition of the kingdoms of men around Israel immediately after Armageddon.

In Daniel 2 the Greek empire is referred to as the "kingdom of brass" (v. 39). In Daniel 11, the break up of the Greek empire following the death of Alexander the Great is described. Two parts in particular are dealt with. These are the Seleucid empire, called the king of the north in Daniel 11, and the Ptolemaic empire, known as the king of the south. These two 'brass' empires, the two thighs in Daniel 2, located, as they were, either side of the Land of Israel, are used as a pattern to describe the powers around Israel at the time of the end: "And at the time of the end shall the king of the south push at him: and the king of the north shall come against him like a whirlwind, with chariots, and with horsemen, and with many ships; and he shall enter into the countries, and shall overflow and pass over" (v. 40).

The "king of the north" at the time of the end will be the Gogian force, coming from "the north parts" (Ezek. 38:15). The original king of

the south, the Ptolemaic empire, was based in Egypt. At the time of the end the king of the north enters Egypt: "He shall stretch forth his hand also upon the countries: and the land of Egypt shall not escape" (Dan. 11:42).

However, the king of the south is still able to exist in other Middle Eastern countries. In Matthew 12, Christ refers to the queen of Sheba as "The queen of the south" (v. 42). Sheba is one of the countries that question, with Tarshish, the invasion by Gog (Ezek. 38:13). Therefore, if a queen in Sheba can be called "The queen of the south", it is reasonable to conclude that the power at the time of the end based in the area of Sheba and Dedan can be called the king of the south; that is, Tarshish, Sheba and Dedan are the latter-day southern brass mountain.

In this article we look at recent signs relating to the development of the king of the north and king of the south powers.

The king of the north

On 10 February 2007, at the Forty-third Munich Conference on Security Policy, the Russian President, Mr Putin, made a speech which, according to the BBC, "may well be remembered as a turning point in international relations".¹ As the *Economist* notes, some are comparing it in significance to Churchill's 'iron curtain' speech in 1946.²

1. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/6349287.stm>.
2. "Not a cold war, but a cold tiff", *Economist*, 17 Feb. 2007, pp. 65-6.



The Forty-Second Munich Conference on Security Policy (2006)

(Picture: Belfer Centre for Science & International Affairs)

The key feature of his speech that led to these assessments was his criticism of America. He said, "Today we are witnessing an almost uncontained hyper use of force—military force—in international relations, force that is plunging the world into an abyss of permanent conflicts".³ He went on to say, "One state and, of course, first and foremost the United States, has overstepped its national borders in every way. This is visible in the economic, political, cultural and educational policies it imposes on other nations. Well, who likes this? Who is happy about this?"

His criticism of America was not new. However, as the *Economist* stated, "the tone, forum and concentration of his criticism distinguished this outburst".⁴ The speech manifests a new self-assurance in Russian thinking. The economic revival taking place in Russia, not least through the sale of its oil, together with the way power is increasingly being concentrated in the Kremlin, has led, says the *Economist*, to "a self-confidence unprecedented since Soviet times".

Russia has yet to move south into the Middle East to become the northern brass mountain. However, the growing strength of Russia, and its increased confidence as shown in the speech, indicate that the country is fast developing into a position where it will be ready to take on such a role. As the *Economist* comments, the comparison with Churchill's speech may be overstating the case; nevertheless the speech is an important milestone with regard to the time of the end.

The king of the south

After Mr Putin had made his speech, he dealt with questions from the audience. The BBC com-

The Testimony, March 2007

mented: "Several delegates did not like his rather brusque brushing off of questions about Russia's own commitment to democracy and his defence of Moscow's decision to sell an air-defence system to Iran".⁵ The growing threat from Iran is causing increasing concern amongst the Arab states. The journalist Gethin Chamberlain reported that "leaders of Sunni Arab states are embarking on a military spending spree in an attempt to contain the growing threat from Iran".⁶ The increase in military spending is dramatic and is an important element in the development of the power to the south of Israel.

Chamberlain was commenting on a major arms fair to begin on 18 February 2007 in Abu Dhabi, in the United Arab Emirates (UAE). He wrote that "Saudi Arabia . . . has a shopping list that runs to almost \$50 billion, including fighter aircraft, cruise missiles, attack helicopters and more than 300 new tanks". He went on to say that the UAE "has earmarked \$2 billion for a rapid reaction brigade—possibly to take a lead role in a regional protection force. Another \$6 billion will go on missile defence batteries, airborne early warning systems and aircraft". Other Gulf states, such as Bahrain, Qatar and Kuwait, were also planning to make significant purchases of weapons.



The palace of the ruler of Abu Dhabi

(Picture: © iStockphoto.com/Klaas Lingbeek van Kranen)

3. http://www.securityconference.de/konferenzen/rede.php?menu_2007=8&menu_konferenzen=8&sprache=en&id=1798.
4. *Op. cit.*
5. <http://news.bbc.co.uk/1/hi/world/europe/6350847.stm>.
6. Chamberlain, G. (2007), "Gulf states load up on weapons of war", *Sunday Telegraph*, 11 Feb., p. 28.

These countries belong to the Gulf Cooperation Council. The increased militarisation is contributing to the development of this group of nations as a distinct power which matches the brass mountain to the south of Israel.

The role of Britain as the Tarshish component of the king of the south continues to be important. Britain has recently halted an investigation by its Serious Fraud Office into the deal concerning the sale by BAE Systems of seventy-two Eurofighter Typhoon aircraft to Saudi Arabia. This decision is no doubt ultimately underpinned by “the love of money” (1 Tim. 6:10), for Britain would lose out on millions of pounds if the deal fell through, but

the desire of the British Government to preserve the deal is a sign of the close ties between Britain and the Gulf states.

Conclusion

In his speech Mr Putin spoke of a “unipolar world . . . in which there is one master, one sovereign”. Of course, this is an exaggeration. America is not really sovereign of the world. However, the words are ironic, for when Christ returns there truly will be “one master, one sovereign”. The developments to the north and south of Israel show that this time is fast approaching.

Milestones to the Kingdom 2006

Many students of the signs of the times look forward eagerly to Brother Don Pearce’s annual survey of the signs of the times, *Milestones to the Kingdom*, and they will certainly not be disappointed in the latest edition. The best way to give a flavour of the topics covered in what was a most exciting year for those that watch for our Lord’s return is to quote some extracts from the first chapter, which gives a synopsis of what is covered in subsequent chapters.

“What a year! Eight out of the voted top ten *Associated Press* articles for 2006 had some connection with the Middle East! With the dramatic outbreak of the Lebanon War in July, the eyes of the world were once more focused upon Israel! It was increasingly obvious that Israel was being cast in the role of the aggressor—not the victim. As the war continued Israel became increasingly isolated in world opinion. It was a verbal ‘all nations gathered against Jerusalem’. The longer-term outcome has been quite remarkable. It is too soon to be sure, but it may mark a turning point in the Middle East situation. We have long wondered how the circumstances of a period of peace and prosperity for Israel can come about. We may be at the start of such a situation”.

“As this exciting year draws to a close we have the prospect of Saudi Arabia working with her neighbours in a bid to work with Israel for a solution to the Palestinian problem in order to strengthen Israel’s position as a bulwark against Iran!”.

“Germany’s steady growth and desire to lead Europe and to reach out to Russia are matters that we have long been looking for and now see becoming realities. With Germany’s intention to reinstate the European Constitution, we can foresee deep clashes between Britain and her neighbours”.

“With Papal backing for the Constitution, we see the remarkable beginnings of the (Papal) Woman riding the (European) Beast. Germany is openly looking to a restoration of the type of Europe that existed under the Holy Roman Empire!”.

“Putin’s increasingly autocratic leadership of Russia and his consolidation of power bring Russia into line with the expectations of a latter-day Assyrian who will be broken on Israel’s mountains! With his heaping to himself control of Russia’s energy supplies he has put Russia in a commanding position”.

Milestones 2006 is available in the UK at £3.00 **inclusive of postage** from Milestones, 76 High Street, Hillmorton, Rugby, CV21 4EE. Cheques payable to ‘Milestones’. Copies are available overseas from CSSS agents (see ALS diary page 226 for details). Orders and enquiries can also be sent to milestonesuk@aol.com. Various books and other items are also available, mainly on Creation and on the influence of Catholicism. For more details see www.MilestonesUK.org.