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THE EUROPEAN UNION - NOW 25

MAY 1, 04. With joyful celebrations, the EU has welcomed ten new nations to its ranks as full members, eight of them from the former communist bloc. In doing so, it has buried the unhappy and artificial division that defined the Cold War for nearly half a century. The new members are ...

POLAND

HUNGARY

THE CZECH REPUBLIC

SLOVAKIA,

the former Yugoslav republic of **SLOVENIA,**

the former Soviet republics of

LITHUANIA, LATVIA and ESTONIA,

and the Mediterranean islands of

Greek CYPRUS and MALTA.

The United Nations was striving to reunite the two parts of Cyprus before May 1st, so that the whole island would enter the European Union. (The deal to admit Cyprus into the EU has been negotiated with the Greek part of the island only.)

A referendum on 24th April asked both the northern Turkish Cypriots, and the Greek Cypriots in the south, to vote for or against reunification. 65% of the Turks voted for, while 75% of Greeks voted against. So for now, the island remains divided, and only Greek Cyprus has entered the EU.

With the 10 new nations, the EU's population increased from 378 million to 453 million, to become the world's third largest entity after China and India.

The enlarged Europe stretches from the arctic forests of Finland, to sunny Malta in the Mediterranean, from quaint Killarney in western Ireland to the far-flung frontiers of Russia.

It is too early to call the EU a “single nation.” It is a confederation, in which the individual nations are mostly unwilling to give up their national sovereignty in such vital areas as foreign policy and defence.

The new members do not have a lot, economically, to bring to the Union, as all of them are significantly poorer than the 15 older members. The new members add only 5% to the gross domestic product of the EU – equivalent to that of the Netherlands. Compared to Germany and France, which dominate Europe, they are all economic midgets.

But in the long term, these weaker and poorer nations will not remain so. At present, the former communist countries of Eastern Europe are, in fact, the only part of the continent that is showing the potential for rapid economic growth. With the aid of the European Union, these new democracies are already making a determined effort to catch up with Western Europe.

FURTHER EXPANSION?

How many more nations could be added to the EU? Well, in 2007, Bulgaria and Romania are scheduled to join the Union.

(P.S. Jan 07. Bulgaria and Romania have become members. So now there are 27 members. See MHG#29 January 2007)



Other aspirants are Turkey and Israel, and then possibly Macedonia, Serbia, Montenegro, Croatia, Bosnia, Kosovo, and Albania.

But as the number of nations increase, so does the problems of the multi-lingual, multi-cultural Union. The reviving Roman Empire in Europe is very much a mixture of iron and clay. (Daniel 2:41)

It will now take enormous strength to weld so many diverse people into a harmonious unity. Or I should say, it will take a superman to hold the Union together.

I am reminded of the words of Dr Henri Spaack, one of the early planners of the European Common Market, and Secretary-General of NATO. Years ago Spaack said;

“We do not want another committee. What we want is a man of sufficient stature to hold the allegiance of all people, and to lift us out of the economic morass into which we are sinking. Send us such a man, and be he God or devil, we will receive him.”

Europe has evolved from the original six in 1957 to 27 nations IN 2007, and although it has made powerful strides towards gaining superpower status, the “man of sufficient stature” has not yet arrived.

REACHING TOWARDS ITS DESTINY

THE European Union is not yet the prophesied kingdom of the beast, but it is racing towards that destiny. It will ultimately become - peaceably or by upheaval - the seventh head of the 7-headed beast of Revelation 17.



“The beast that you saw was, and is no more, and is about to come up out of the abyss (*the bottomless pit*) and to go to destruction. And those who dwell on the earth will wonder, whose names have not been written in the Book of Life from the foundation of the world, when they see the beast, that he was and is no more, and yet is *to come*.” (Revelation 17:8)

The prophesied “beast” is a confederation of nations that has its origins in the ancient Roman Empire and the “Holy Roman Empire.” The old Roman Empire (the 6th head) disintegrated long ago, but Daniel, and Revelation, indicate that that iron kingdom would be revived in the endtimes to become the 7th head. And at that time a powerful ruler – a king – would arise.

“And in the latter period of their rule, when the transgressors have run their course, a king will arise, insolent and skilled in intrigue. He will become very strong, but not by his own power. He will destroy to an extraordinary degree and prosper and perform his will.

“He will destroy mighty men, and also the holy people, and through his shrewdness, he will cause deceit to succeed under his hand; and he will magnify himself in his heart. He will destroy many while they feel secure and are at ease. He will even rise against the Prince of princes. But he will be broken without human agency.” (Daniel 8:23-26)

After the Antichrist is revealed, there will be an upheaval that will bring ten of the most powerful EU nations under his total sovereignty. Daniel 7:20 speaks of three horns (nations) that fell. This indicates an upheaval, but we are not given more details about it. What is clear, though, is that there will be ten horns on the beast – on the seventh head of the Beast – the endtime Roman Confederation.

“The **ten horns** you saw are **ten kings** who have not yet received a kingdom, but **who for one hour will receive authority as kings along with the beast**. They will have one purpose and will give their power and authority to the beast.” (Revelation 17:12-13)

Just how the European Union evolves into the endtime Roman Confederation remains to be seen. The EU could be torn apart, or it could even become a two-tier structure, with a basic core of ten nations.

In the meantime it is interesting to see the struggles going on in the European Union.

EU CONSTITUTION IN DOUBT

THE main problem facing the EU at present is the ratification of the newly-framed constitution.

Several nations, last year, blocked the ratification of the constitution, claiming it was weighed against the smaller nations. And now, since Tony Blair, and seven other governments have decided to put the constitution to a referendum, the danger is that it may not be ratified at all.

When and if it is ratified, the constitution would establish a long term president, as well as a foreign minister for the whole Union; and this would introduce greater federal control.

The British will almost certainly vote ‘No’ because they fear their freedom, national sovereignty, and limited government will be threatened. They are apprehensive that EU sovereignty will be extended into many new areas including defence and criminal law. The British believe there are already enough regulations, and they do not believe it is in their interests to give Europe powers to make more.

The British vote will be decisive for all of Europe, but the referendum could be delayed for as long as three years. The constitution issue is different to that of the euro which allowed for some countries to not adopt it if they so wished. All 25 nations need to ratify the constitution for it to come into effect.

What we see in Europe is a beast, seeking to give birth to the Beast kingdom of Revelation 13 & 17.



ISRAEL AND GAZA

ISRAEL'S NUCLEAR DETERRENT

ARIEL Sharon came close to ending Israel's secrecy about the country's nuclear-arms capability, saying the US recognizes that Israel needs a credible deterrent to Iran and other hostile countries.

"They (the US) understand that Israel's existence is still in danger," Sharon said. "Iran represents an existential threat, one of the existential threats or maybe the main existential threat. But the recognition of Israel's right - and of the importance of Israel's ability - to defend itself, by itself, these things are clearly understood."

Since acquiring a nuclear reactor from France in the 1960s, Israel has maintained a policy of "ambiguity," refusing to confirm or deny that it has nuclear weapons. But based on information whistleblower Mordechai Vanunu gave in a 1986 newspaper interview, experts concluded that Israel has the sixth-largest arsenal in the world.
– Jerusalem / A.P. / Apr 24, 04

SHARON'S GAZA DISENGAGEMENT PLAN

APRIL 29. The Israeli Prime Minister announced, "The Road Map is dead," and therefore he had decided to implement his own measures.

"I would have preferred to negotiate an agreement, but several months ago I realised it is not possible to move the road map forward because the Palestinians do not respect their commitments."

With the Oslo Accord, and the Road Map, in tatters, and with no expectation of peace with the Palestinians for at least 20 years, Ariel Sharon's plan is to uproot the hard-to-defend Jewish settlements with their 7,500 Israelis in the Gaza area, to remove Israeli troops from the Gaza Strip, and to abandon the entire Gaza to the Palestinian Arabs – all in the coming year.

Only a single military patrol road would remain along Gaza's border with Egypt, in order to prevent weapons smuggling into the area.

Sharon has said [Israel would reap security benefits by leaving its Gaza enclaves](#).

Under the same plan Israel will dismantle four small isolated settlements in the West Bank, but would strengthen the major settlements in the West Bank and incorporate them into Israel.

The Palestinians claim the Israeli plan is an attempt to redraw the borders. Gaza is home to about 1.4 million Palestinians.

PALESTINIAN AUTHORITY IGNORES U.S. WARNING

THE US State Department had warned the PA not to pursue partnership with groups, particularly Hamas, which it said should be “ostracized and stripped of power.”

Saeb Erekat, a minister with the Palestinian Authority, accused the US of trying to interfere in Palestinian affairs with its warning about Hamas.

PA Chairman Yasser Arafat expressed support for the inclusion of the militant organization in the Palestinian leadership. - Ramallah, West Bank / UPI / 7 April 04

THE three largest terror groups in Gaza met early April to discuss forming a united leadership for the Gaza Strip.

Hamas, which is believed to enjoy the support of the majority of Gaza Arabs, has welcomed the idea of being a part of the PA. Its leadership made it clear, however, that the group would not be restricted to a merely symbolic role, but wanted partnership “along new guidelines which take into account the weight of the various movements.”

The smaller but equally violent Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ), as well as the PLO’s Fatah faction, appear to have opted to work together with Hamas, rather than wage a bloody war for control of Gaza.

All three organizations have declared that Israel’s withdrawal will be a victory for the “Palestinians” and will vindicate their 3 ½ year terror war against the Jews.

But the battle will be far from over!

Both Hamas and the Palestine Islamic Jihad (PIJ) have sworn that, after Israel leaves the Strip, they will continue their violent efforts to drive the Jews out of all the land of Israel.

The PLO remains committed to its 1974 Phased Plan, which commits itself to using any part of the land over which it gains control as an attack base from which to “liberate” the rest of “Palestine.”

After Israel’s withdrawal, it is expected that the Palestinians will declare independence in Gaza, and then continue their battle for the West Bank from that beachhead.

“Disengagement” means Gaza first. The next stage will be a disengagement from the West Bank Palestinians. Thus the urgency to complete the Security Wall which will also serve, at least temporarily, as an imposed boundary.

By the way, “the wall” is more of a fence than a wall. We have seen pictures of the 10 metre high concrete wall, but actually only 20 km of the eventual 720 km fence is concrete. The rest is a chain link (wire) fence with a dirt road on both sides to check for footprints, and electronic sensors to detect infiltration.

Gaza already has such a defence fence around it.

If, following the Gaza withdrawal, the Arabs in the Strip continue waging their terror war against the Jewish State, (as no doubt they will), Israel will consider

cutting off all water and power supplies to them. That measure, of course, would ensure constant conflict.

But Sharon has warned that Israel's response to continued Palestinian violence after the plan was put into effect, would be harsher than the current military operations.

Some observers believe that behind Sharon's disengagement idea is the fact that Israel, as the "occupying power" of "Palestinian lands" is obligated to be restrained in its response to the intifada. But after a Palestinian state comes into being, it will be a different ball game. If, as a sovereign state, the Palestinians continue to attack, Israel will have the right to declare war, and hammer them as an enemy state.

BUSH ENDORSES SHARON'S WITHDRAWAL PLAN

IN a letter to President Bush, Ariel Sharon said full implementation of the road map, which charts reciprocal steps toward the creation of a Palestinian state by 2005, "represents the sole means to make genuine progress." But, Sharon said to Bush: "As you have stated, a Palestinian state will never be created by terror, and Palestinian Authority must engage in a sustained fight against the terrorists and dismantle their infrastructure."

In mid-April Ariel Sharon visited Washington, seeking support for his unilateral Gaza "disengagement" plan, as well as his plan for Israel to permanently hold onto the majority of the settlements with around 230,000 Jewish settlers, in the West Bank. He came away with the endorsement he needed.

President Bush not only endorsed Sharon's unilateral Gaza pullout plan, but, taking note of what he called "new realities," he broke with decades of US policy by also agreeing that Israel should keep parts of the West Bank in any future peace. And to upset the Palestinians even further, he denied Palestinian refugees the right of return to territory that is now Israel.

In a surprise statement, British PM Tony Blair joined Mr Bush in endorsing Israel's claim to a disputed portion of the West Bank, saying it was "not a unilateral attempt to impose a settlement."

Mr Bush's endorsement of Sharon's plan enraged the Palestinians, the Arab world - and others. The UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan also criticised the West Bank part of the plan.

President Bush's statements, and an exchange of letters with Sharon in the same vein, were likely to go down well with conservative supporters of Israel, and Jewish voters in the US presidential election in November. But they could also harm US interests in the Arab world and hurt efforts to stabilize Iraq.

Opinion polls in Israel have shown strong support for a move out of the Gaza Strip, but settlers and right-wingers, including many in Sharon's own Likud party, are opposed to any withdrawal.

This would be the first time Israel has ever uprooted settlements in Gaza and the West Bank - areas it captured during the 1967 Mideast war.

To gain the political backing of his party, Sharon put the disengagement plan to a vote amongst the 193,000 members of Likud on May 2. But . . .

SHARON LOSES REFERENDUM

ARIEL Sharon has said, in the absence of other peace moves, his plan to evacuate Gaza's 21 settlements and four small West Bank settlements was vital in reducing the ongoing violence with the Palestinians, and defusing international pressure on Israel. But in a stinging blow, a majority of the Likud, rejected his controversial plan.

Supporters of the "disengagement plan" argued that the violence underscored the hopeless burden of staying in Gaza. Opponents said any withdrawal would be seen as a reward for terror and encourage more attacks on Israelis.

Earlier Sharon said that he would consider the referendum a vote of confidence in his leadership, and that the vote among the 193,000 Likud members would be binding. But in recent days he backed away from that position.

The result has left the future of the "unilateral disengagement" in doubt, and his leadership in disarray. It could lead to a major political crisis — a Cabinet reshuffle, a split within the party, or early elections.

Likud members make up only 4% of the Israeli electorate, and as less than 50% of them turned out to vote, Sharon is not going to allow a 2% minority of the electorate to decide Israel's future.

SHOCKING RETALIATION ATTACK

ISRAEL was on high security alert ahead of the referendum, dividing Gaza into three sections and restricting Palestinian travel. That did not prevent the deadliest attack in two years on Gaza settlers.

Tali Hatuel, 34 - who was eight months pregnant - and her four daughters, ages 2 to 11, were driving into Israel when gunmen fired on their station wagon. The car spun off the road and the attackers charged it, shooting the five inside at close range. Soldiers killed the attackers in a gun battle at the scene.

The militant Islamic Jihad and Popular Resistance Committees, an umbrella group, claimed responsibility for what it called the "heroic" attack. They said it was retaliation for Israel's recent assassinations of Hamas founder, Sheik Ahmed Yassin, and his successor, Abdel Aziz Rantisi. Hours later, Israeli helicopters fired four missiles at the 14-storey building housing a Hamas radio station in Gaza, lightly injuring seven Palestinians.

Another air strike, in Nablus, killed four Palestinian militants in a car, including two leaders of a group with ties to Yasser Arafat's Fatah movement. Israel said they were responsible for several terror attacks.

SHARON WILL PUSH AHEAD

Ariel Sharon says he will consult with Likud and government officials on his next steps, and that he will make some changes to the plan, and present it directly to the Knesset.

According to a poll, the majority of Israelis would support the plan. And Opposition leader, Shimon Peres, has advised the Prime Minister not to scale back on the plan for Gaza and the West Bank in an effort to salvage it.

A political analyst said; "There will be a certain government crisis for a few weeks, but the basic plan will continue and Sharon will find alternative routes to try to get it across."

THE QUARTET URGES WITHDRAWAL

WITH their hopes shattered by recent events, the Quartet, (the EU, the US, the UN and Russia) - the sponsors of the "Road map" - met on May 4, 04, in New York, seeking to pursue the "peace process."

The Quartet's mediators urged Ariel Sharon to stick to his plan, calling it a "rare moment of opportunity" for regional peace. But in a statement after the meeting, the mediators emphasised the Israeli pullout plan "must lead to a full Israeli withdrawal and complete end of occupation in Gaza."

The mediators also said that the pullout should not prejudice a final settlement, despite President Bush's assurance to Israel that it would not be expected to give up all its West Bank settlements or accept the return of Palestinian refugees to what is now the Jewish state.

ARABS OPPOSED TO UNILATERAL WITHDRAWAL

APRIL 22. The Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC) issued a declaration denouncing Israel's plan to unilaterally withdraw from the Gaza Strip and parts of the West Bank, saying it violates the internationally-brokered "Road Map for Peace."

The "Road Map," which was supposed to establish a Palestinian State living in peace with Israel before the end of 2005, has been a disaster, primarily because the Palestinian Authority has been unwilling to rein in the terrorist organisations. And the reason for that is because the extremist organisations are unwilling to live alongside a Jewish state.

Sharon now says the Road Map is dead! And in fact, Israel's unilateral decision to withdraw from Gaza and parts of the West Bank, bypasses the Road Map.

Ariel Sharon's plan, however, will not solve the issues; but it will be a calculated, temporary measure, to contain the relentless attacks on Israel.

Since Sept 2001, there have been more than [20,500 attacks](#) in Israel. 931 Israelis have been killed, and 6,232 wounded - up to March 2004.

But during the past 7 months, security forces prevented over 70 suicide bombing attacks in Judea, Samaria & Gaza. In addition, during the same time period, at least 35 shooting attacks were thwarted in Gaza alone.

The tragic prospect is that ...

ISRAELIS MAY SOON HAVE A FULL-FLEDGED PALESTINIAN TERROR STATE ON THEIR BORDER

WITHIN hours of Ariel Sharon revealing his intention to withdraw from the Gaza Strip, Hamas, the Palestinian Islamic Jihad and Yasser Arafat's Fatah faction of the PLO came together in Gaza City.

Throwing off the differences that have divided them, the three organizations openly discussed merging into a single leadership movement to control the Strip when Israel leaves. How much of his power Yasser Arafat is willing to give up to the others remains to be seen.

An agreement between the terror groups would see the US-backed Palestinian Authority (which is under Fatah's control) linked to the other two groups that are at the very top of the State Department's list of terrorist organizations.



AFRICA

SUDAN SLAVE 'CRUCIFIED'

AFTER being nailed to a board by his master and left for dead, a Sudanese Dinka boy was rescued, and escaped from his bondage and lived to tell his horrific story.

The story of "Joseph," a Christian, is told in a recent newsletter of the *Persecution Project Foundation*, an organization that monitors Christian persecution in Africa.

PPF's Brad Phillips recently returned from visiting Joseph, who originally was sold into slavery at age 7 in 1987. "I had the privilege of spending a day with this amazing boy who is now called Joseph," Phillips wrote. "I spoke with him, I interviewed him, I saw his scars, and I saw his eyes. What I saw moved me, and it still haunts me."

Phillips explains that since the 1980s, the Muslim National Islamic Front government has sanctioned the taking of Christians and animists from the south part of the nation to be sold to Muslims as slaves in the north. The two sides have been engaged in a civil war for several years.

As a 7-year-old, Joseph, was sold to his master, Ibrahim. Though Joseph was given an Arab name, Ibrahim referred to him only by the pejorative “Abid,” which means black slave. For ten years, Joseph remained in bondage to his master.

“During his enslavement,” Phillips wrote, “he was often beaten, tortured and abused by his Arab master. African slaves, especially Christians, are viewed as lower than animals.

“Joseph was raised Christian. His desire to worship was mocked by his master, who told him every day for 10 years that he had no business worshipping since he was of no more value than a donkey.”

One Sunday morning, Joseph heard the hymn singing of a Christian service. He joined into the worship, remembering church services from when he was a young boy.

While Joseph was at church, some of the camels he was in charge of escaped, and his master flew into a rage. Ibrahim swore he would kill Joseph and do to him what had been done to Jesus ... he would crucify him.

After brutally beating Joseph on the head and all over his body, the master laid him out on a wooden plank. He then nailed Joseph to the plank by driving nine-inch nails through his hands, knees and feet. He then poured acid on Joseph’s legs to inflict even greater pain, and finally left him for dead.”

Miraculously, Joseph did not die, even though he lay on the plank for seven days. He survived through the kindness of his master’s son, who brought him food and water, and eventually took him to a medical facility.

“In case you are wondering,” wrote Phillips, “no criminal charges were brought against Joseph’s master, because he acted within his ‘rights’ under currently practiced ‘sharia law.’ To say that Christians are second-class citizens in much of the Islamic world (not just the Sudan) is a cruel understatement.”

After Joseph returned from the hospital, his master saw little value in him since he was crippled from the nails being driven through his knees. Joseph was “redeemed” by Christian slave redeemers who arranged his return home to his village in Bahr el Gazal.

When he arrived back in his home village, the elders thought he should have a new name, so they named him after Joseph of the Bible, who was sold into slavery but later was used mightily by God.

“Joseph still desperately needs your prayers,” writes Brad Phillips. “By God’s grace Joseph survived kidnapping, the loss of his parents, ten years of enslavement, and near death by crucifixion. But while Joseph is free in body, he is still in great pain physically and emotionally. He bears the marks of his crucifixion in his body and the scars of his torment in his soul. He is wounded and broken in his spirit. And he is haunted by the memories of hundreds of other children from his community who perished or remain enslaved.

“Joseph is one of a small number of people in the 21st century who knows what it means to be crucified because of his Christian faith. But the reality is that hundreds

of thousands of our fellow Christians in the Sudan have been enslaved, driven from their homes, hunted and murdered by devoted followers of Islam.”

This war of Islamic cruelty has raged for [centuries](#) in the Sudan. Please remember our Sudanese brethren in your prayers, and do all you can to aid us in the relief of their suffering.” - PPF / WorldNetDaily.com / April 04

“CHILUBA DIDN’T MAKE ZAMBIA A CHRISTIAN NATION”

ONE African nation where there is some good news - where national leaders acknowledge God and are committed to the Bible, is Zambia.

Vice-President Nevers Mumba has told his people, “Zambia is not a Christian nation because of President Chiluba’s declaration.

“Without the Bible,” Mumba said, “the country’s cherished status as a Christian nation will be meaningless.”

The Vice-President said there was nothing as powerful as the Word of God because it never fails. “Kingdoms, political parties and presidents come and go, but the one who heeds the will of the Father abides forever. The Bible was God’s wisdom relevant to people’s lives.”

Mumba said Zambia’s problems are many, but answers do not lie in the eloquence of leaders, but depend on how people respect the Word of God. Even the fight against corruption would not be won because of good people in the Task Force. Corruption would be won if the nation subjected itself to translating the power of God.

He warned that if the Word of God was not widely spread, prisons would be full of people caught committing crime. “If we can spread the Word of God in Zambia, we will be putting the greatest treasure in the restoration and healing of our society,” he said. - <http://www.allafrica.com>

“Blessed is the nation whose God is YHWH, *and* the people He chose for His own inheritance.” (Psalm 33:12)

