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A MAGAZINE RESTORING PLAIN UNDERSTANDING



EUROPE'S SEA CHANGE

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ON GUARD: Soviets preparing to ward off a German assault in Stalingrad's suburbs in an archival photo circa 1942.

PHOTO: BATTLE.VOLGADMIN.RU

The Future of Russia – Part 2

Clues to understanding soon-coming events for Russia are found in examples of national character—both past and present.

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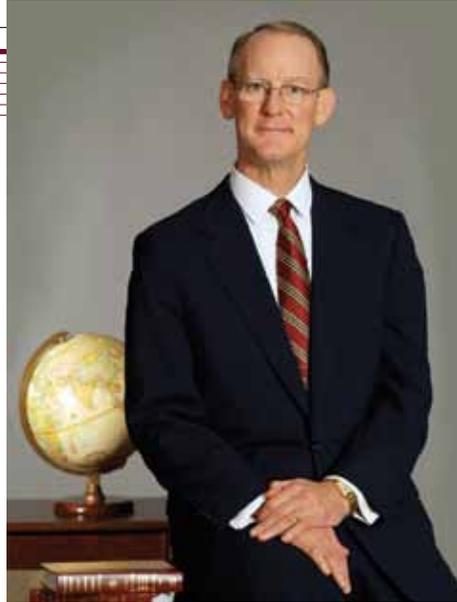
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PERSONAL FROM

David C. Fack



Why Extreme Weather Is Increasing! – Part 2

MILLIONS HAVE HEARD of Bible prophecies involving the Middle East. Others know worsening war, famine, disease and earthquakes are foretold. But God also recorded specific prophecies regarding extreme weather. This Personal covers what you have never heard. What you are about to learn is some of the most chilling information in the Bible. This article series reveals the impact that weather has on world conditions.

Part 1 showed that experts do not know what causes severe weather. It also examined devastating hurricanes, storms, floods, tornadoes and wildfires. But there is much more to understand!

The connection between wildfires, drought and famine must first be briefly examined. In previous decades, wealthy Western nations made a general push to eradicate hunger worldwide. The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) reported, “Progress was made in reducing chronic hunger in the 1980s and the first half of the 1990s.” However, it stated, “For the past decade hunger has been on the rise.”

The Christian Science Monitor reported that the Famine Early Warning Systems Network projects that

hunger in Ethiopia could “dramatically increase” in spite of economic growth. The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations estimates 41 percent of Ethiopia’s population is undernourished. And the IFPRI gave the nation a 2011 Global Hunger Index (GHI) rating of “alarming.”

Thirty years ago, the world began to experience something new: pockets of *permanent* famine. For instance, despite years of foreign aid, hunger still grips Ethiopia. Farm production has fallen while the population *doubled*. Even worse, continual crop failure has meant the nation must rely largely on aid groups for survival.

Increasing Drought Around the World

But Ethiopia is far from alone. Chad, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea and Burundi all received GHI ratings of “extremely alarming.” All these populations remain under threat of famine because of inconsistent rains, civil unrest, war and infertile land.

According to the Department of International Development, last year up to 100,000 people starved to death in the famine stretching across the Horn of Africa, and 13.3 million people are still in need of emergency assistance.

Somalia is experiencing the worst drought and famine in 60 years. “The US government estimates more



■ **DRY EARTH:** A Chinese farmer touches the drought-stricken soil in Guiyang, Guizhou province (Aug. 27, 2011).

PHOTO: STR/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

than 29,000 children under age 5 died in 90 days from May to July, 2011” (*Telegraph*). The United Nations reports that approximately 325,000 Somali children are *acutely malnourished*, meaning the death toll will soon explode.

Bloomberg had a sobering report of crop failures throughout Western nations. For example, Spain, Europe’s third-largest grower of barley and sixth-largest producer of corn and wheat, is undergoing its driest season in 65 years. An analyst from the Union InVivo group, France’s number-one farming cooperative, told *Bloomberg* that “southwest Europe is bad...The further south you go, the worse it gets.”

The article also stated, “France had an average of 28 percent less rain than normal since the start of September [2011]...Soil moisture levels were at record lows...from the Pays de la Loire in the west to Alsace in the northeast.”

“About 660,000 hectares of winter crops, mostly wheat and barley, were

damaged in Germany by freezing temperatures in February...Some farmers are tearing up and replanting as much as 70 percent of their fields, and there is concern that dry growing conditions may cause further damage.”

In addition, the United Kingdom is also “facing the worst drought in two decades.” And another *Bloomberg* article reported that “Ukraine lost 20 percent of its winter grains after a cold snap killed plants weakened by a drought.”

AOL News article “Is the Next Global Food Crisis Now in the Making?” detailed the result of such widespread weather upsets: “To see the effects of a bad year for food—and what the world could be in for if the present trend persists—one only has to look to 2008...[when] a confluence of environmental causes compounded by rising fuel costs and a global credit crunch caused food prices to skyrocket an average of 43% worldwide, leading to starvation and riots from Mexico to Bangladesh. Some are worried that was just a warning.”

While Western nations have not recently experienced the plague of drought in life-threatening levels, this longstanding accelerant to famine is emerging—and it is directly related to weather. Severe drought is now hammering the Southwest and much of the Southeast. Last year, Texas saw the highest temperatures in 150 years of record-keeping, and conditions there have intensified. Professor Travis Miller of Texas A&M stated, “This drought is just strangling our agricultural economy” (*Time*). So far, losses are at a staggering \$7.62 billion *just in Texas*—toppling the previous record of \$4.1 billion in 2006. The state lost more than half its cotton crop, resulting in skyrocketing cotton prices globally, and “millions of acres of Texas crops [have not] received enough rain to germinate the planting seed,” according to Texas A&M’s *AgriLife Today*.

In 2011, Texas ranchers were selling off cattle in record numbers because they could not feed and water them, and “low cattle supplies in 2012 are

expected to drive up beef prices for the second year in a row” (*USA Today*). Water shortage is acute, with whole reservoirs and lakes drying up.

Now notice this: “Through June... [2011], Del Rio had the driest October to June in the 1906-2011 record, San Antonio had the second driest October-June in a period of record beginning in 1871, and Austin Mabry was third driest for October-June in records going back to 1856...For Texas, 80% or more of the pasture and rangeland was rated in poor or very poor condition, and half or more of the winter wheat, corn, soybeans, cotton, peanuts, and oat crops were rated poor or very poor” (National Drought Mitigation Center).

Severe Conditions Foretold

Extreme—devastating!—drought across the entire country is long overdue. More than just a fact of science, God actually promises such drought among His many forms of punishment. Let’s read: “I will break the pride of your power; and I will make your heaven as *iron*, and your earth as *brass*” (Lev. 26:19).

Understand. Iron heavens bring no rain, and brass earth is the result. I have dug many postholes in drought-hardened ground where even a power auger would not penetrate the earth with my full weight on it.

God declares, “I have smitten you with *blasting* and *mildew*: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmerworm *devoured them*: yet have you not returned unto Me, says the LORD” (Amos 4:9). Blasting (hot, dry winds) and mildew (too much rain) are both mentioned. These two extremes produce the same thing—low crop yield and famine. So do worms.

Consider the power of drought in just the 20th century—only the run-up

to grinding droughts soon to sweep Earth. 1930s America saw a near 10-year drought affect 65 percent of the country—two-thirds! Drought in China killed five million people—*just in 1936!*

Consider a single day during this decade: on April 14, 1935, called

by dangerously low grain reserves. There were only “64 days of carry-over stock [harvested grain stored in stockpiles and silos] in 2007” (Earth Policy Institute). Wheat reserves fell to a 60-year low, and the price per bushel of Chicago wheat futures surged to over \$11 for the first time.

In September 2010, carryover stock hovered around 72 days, dangerously close to the levels that ignited the crisis three years before. This was in part caused by a chain reaction: heat waves, drought and wildfires in 2010 in Central Europe and Russia led to a 32 percent grain output decrease in Kazakhstan, a 19 percent decline in the Ukraine, and a 27 percent decrease in Russian wheat production over the previous year—which in turn resulted in a government-imposed wheat export ban. Given that Russia and its neighbors account for a fourth of *all wheat exports worldwide*, prices for this staple crop spiked sharply in 2010.

The Black Sea region is not the only place where wheat supplies have been dwindling. Canada—which has been receiving *too much* rain—has been lagging in production and exports. Germany and Poland have also been suffering.

According to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization, world food prices for basic commodities—wheat, corn, dairy products, meat and sugar—hit record highs in 2010, and kept going. The UN fears another crisis could lead to food riots, increased tensions between competing nations, sudden inflation, and growing hunger, particularly in the world’s poorest nations.

Coming Locust Plagues

Another factor related to severe weather and its effects can be seen in how God declares He will use locusts. He

Going Hungry

What a starving body experiences:

In the first few days without food, the body loses water and salt; weight drops quickly

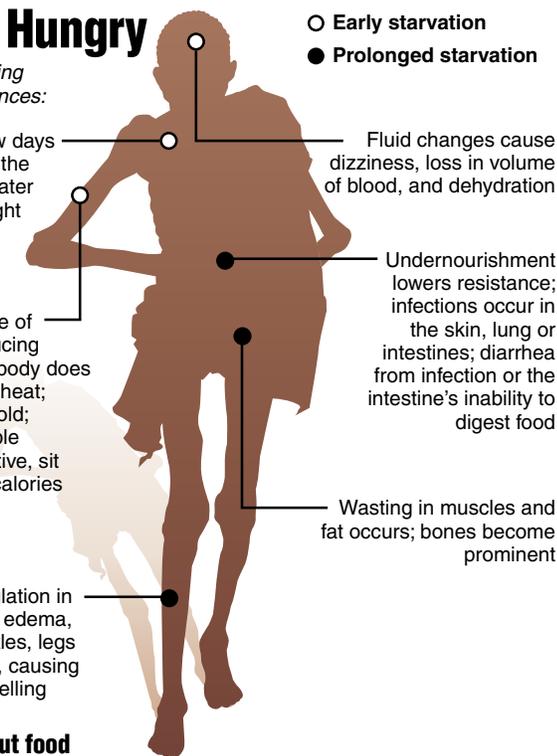
With no intake of energy-producing calories, the body does not generate heat; victim feels cold; starving people become inactive, sit to conserve calories

Fluid accumulation in tissue, called edema, occurs in ankles, legs and stomach, causing excessive swelling

Going without food

Sixty days without food can result in death from infection or heart failure.

Source: BBC, Reuters



“Black Sunday,” a massive dust storm more than 8,000 feet high engulfed the *entire lower Midwestern United States*—Kansas to Texas—with winds over 70 mph.

Pollution, misuse of the land, overwatering and *sin* will give rise to disasters of epic proportion. Drought—paling America’s “Dust Bowl” years into near insignificance—lies just over the horizon! *God* says this, not I.

Dwindling Food Supply

Drought can mean sudden widespread famine. Let’s see why.

Recent years have seen record increases in grain prices, with supplies reaching record *lows* because expanding nations such as China bring ever-growing demand. In 2007 and 2008, a global food crisis was marked

warned ancient Israel, 4,000 years ago, of this tool of punishment: “You shall carry much seed out into the field, and shall gather but *little in*; for the *locust* shall consume it...*All* your trees and fruit of your land shall the locust consume” (Deut. 28:38, 42).

The book of Joel calls hordes of locusts a “great army” sent by God (2:25). Joel describes *successive waves* of crop destruction wrought by this “army”: “That which the *palmerworm* has left has the locust eaten; and that which the *locust* has left has the cankerworm eaten; and that which the *cankerworm* has left has the *caterpillar* eaten” (1:4).

Note the connection of locusts to famine and disease: “*If* there be in the land famine, *if* there be pestilence, blasting, mildew, locust, or *if* there be caterpillar [Hebrew: ravager]; *if* their enemy besiege them in the land of their cities; whatsoever plague, whatsoever sickness there be” (I Kings 8:37).

This passage is part of a longer prophecy that describes how “if” a series of punishments are sent, God will pull back the punishment “if” the nation repents. Prophecy indicates the nations today, even *one*, will likely *not* repent. But *individuals* can.

Some countries are already seeing the front edge of these prophecies coming to pass. In 2010, one of Australia’s largest carrot producers said, “You’ve got to see it to believe it...One centre pivot [plantation] got destroyed completely. We had about 25 million carrots in there. That gives you an idea of how many locusts there are” (*The Age*).

Quick-breeding locusts, which multiply after periods of severe drought followed by intense rain, have stripped crops, pastures, orchards, gardens and sports fields from Queensland (that’s northeast Australia) to Melbourne (the far south) and Adelaide (in the center). A single swarm can cover up to 186 square miles. These insects can fly 300 miles in *one day* searching for food. A *small* swarm, just 0.4 square miles, can have over *50 million* locusts, which can devour 11 tons of forage in 24

hours. Big swarms can exceed 20 *billion* locusts!

This is one time when the reader must stop and make himself ponder the sheer power and impact of such events!

Certainly, given today’s headlines, a far-worse “perfect storm” of compounding weather catastrophes, followed by famine and disease, now looms. An array of weather calamities have been occurring—record floods in the American Midwest, Australia and China, increasingly violent hurricanes and typhoons in uncommon locations, massive dust storms, and crop-eradicating droughts and forest fires. This will ultimately result in increased pest infestation, wild animals looking for food, and severe famine. Increasingly turbulent natural disasters will bring food shortages, disease—and DEATH!

God’s Word Reveals More

We are now ready to grasp more fully what God’s Word says about weather. Is God in control, or has He deserted mankind?

From ancient times, people have turned to spiritual explanations to understand the weather. This led to extreme measures, including human sacrifice, to appease gods they felt controlled the sky. Of course, such vain worship brings no answers.

Three thousand years ago—long before modern meteorological advancements—Scripture recorded that “He [God] causes the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; He makes lightnings for the rain...” (Psa. 135:7). The water cycle process, including evaporation, cloud formation, and precipitation, were known *millennia* prior to its discovery by scientists.

King Solomon spoke of the complexity of Earth’s wind currents: “The wind goes toward the south, and turns about unto the north; it whirls about continually, and the wind returns again according to [its] circuits” (Ecc. 1:6). But weathermen could not explain these wind circuits until the 1800s! Solomon also understood a big, global water pattern: “All the rivers run into

the sea; yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers come... they return again” (vs. 7).

If mankind would stop neglecting knowledge only revealed in God’s Word, then it would understand the wild weather it has been unable to comprehend for centuries—and the God who *creates* weather patterns.

The Bible also reveals another factor regarding weather: “...*time* and *chance* happens to them all” (9:11). Here is what Jesus said: “[God] makes His sun to rise on the *evil* and on the *good*, and sends rain on the *just* and on the *unjust*” (Matt. 5:45). That God is in control does not mean He directly causes every weather event, small or large.

Most weather throughout man’s history has been the result of natural patterns. When a farmer has too much or too little rain, it is generally due to normal shifts in weather. But God will use weather to fulfill His purpose. In Part 1, we saw Jesus explained that natural disasters would increase and intensify in what are called the “last days.” The 2011 tornado swarm is but one example. Ask: When have 800 tornadoes hit the U.S. in *just one month*? The answer: Never!

Jesus specifically warned that weather-related calamities—famine and disease—would be one part of a succession of events that would overwhelm the world—including the most affluent nations: “...there shall be famines, and pestilences [disease], and earthquakes, in [various] places” (Matt. 24:7).

God has both protected and punished His people by controlling and guiding the weather. This is the element that mankind fails to understand. When people please God, He uses weather to bless, protect and even save them. When their ways displease Him, He uses the elements to get their attention.

God declares that “He brings the wind out of His treasures” (Psa. 135:7). In Hebrew, *treasuries* can also mean “armory.” God intends weather

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EUROPE'S Sea Change

Political transformations have rocked the continent's balance of power—as some expected.

BY JEFFREY R. AMBROSE

THE EUROPEAN UNION is now over two decades old, so it is easy to forget what an unlikely, ambitious and historic endeavor it is. With 27 countries spreading east to west across the storied continent, over half a billion people within its borders, a growing array of languages and dialects, diverse economies, and a patchwork quilt of cultures, it is a marvel—seemingly the answer to centuries-old yearnings for a peaceful, unified Europe.

Within the EU, the Schengen Zone allows free “borderless” travel between 22 states. This has been one key to the strength of its economy. While its growth has been modest when compared to shooting stars like China, its gross domestic product surpassed that of the United States years ago. This made it the world's largest economy—partly due to the convenience of trade between EU nations and a common currency, the euro.

But the global financial crisis threatens to topple the union from that lofty position, with repeated credit downgrades and the specter of bankruptcy now hanging over Greece, Portugal, Spain, Italy and Ireland.

Europe takes pride in being a prosperous, enlightened and civilized place—the Old World, rich in history and tradition, yet still firmly positioned at the forefront of mankind's progress. In the post-World War II era, it was overshadowed by a young, giant United States as the lone superpower. But now, amid the threat of financial meltdown and the vacuum left by a weakened America, opportunity presents itself to Europe—or at least to those with power to determine the EU's direction.

Since the contagious crisis-bailout-crisis cycle struck the power bloc in early 2010, governments have been ousted, anti-bailout/anti-austerity parties have gained ground, and leaders have resigned or lost confidence votes in many member-states—Slovakia, Ireland, Portugal, Finland, Spain, Italy and Slovenia.

The trend for 2012 appears to be an uprising against nearly all incumbent office-holders and majority parties. But will the EU's real power brokers lie down and accept this?

Dutch Government Collapses

Recent months have seen a continued routing of “old guard” political leaders and governments, even if they have not been around long at all. On April 23, the Netherlands' 18-month-old coalition government, led by Prime Minister Mark Rutte, fell apart. The cause was the Freedom Party, led

by controversial right-wing MP Geert Wilders, withdrawing its support for a plan to meet the requirements of the EU Commission's March 2011 fiscal pact, which formalizes EU austerity standards. The small party's votes had been required for the plan to become law.

The Netherlands projects a 4.5 percent budget deficit for 2012, while the fiscal pact imposes a 3 percent annual cap. This violation could subject the country to EU sanctions and endanger its highly valued, and increasingly rare, AAA credit rating.

What kind of conditions preceded the political turnover?

“The \$800 billion Dutch economy, the fifth largest in the euro area, entered its second recession in three years during the second half of last year,” *Bloomberg* reported. “House prices have fallen more than 10 percent since 2008. While unemployment is less than half the euro-area average, it rose to 5 percent in March from 4.1 percent last June, according to Eurostat.

“Unemployment among non-western European foreigners living in the Netherlands was about 13 percent in 2011, compared with 4 percent for native Dutch citizens, according to figures provided by the Central Bureau of Statistics...

“Standard & Poor's changed its outlook on the Netherlands on Jan. 13 to negative, saying it sees at least

a one-in-three chance that the country will lose its top grade in 2012 or 2013 should the economy deteriorate further.”

Mr. Wilders has cited the state of the Dutch economy, the European economy as a whole, and the pressures of the austerity pact as evidence that the euro—and even the union itself—should be dismantled.

Greece Rejects Austerity

Greece, one of the EU’s most cash-strapped nations, has struggled with its internationally supervised financial restructuring since 2010. In a country not known for financial discipline, citizens resent the idea of outside groups—the so-called Troika of the European Central Bank, the International Monetary Fund, and the European Commission—dictating the terms of their recovery.

On May 6, the electorate vented their ire by ousting Lucas Papademos’ unity government after less than six months. However, its replacement is a disorienting band of strange bed-fellows—the center-right New Democracy party thrown together with radical leftist former adversaries—and far-right groups (including one that has been called neo-Nazi).

Bloomberg reported, “New Democracy leader Antonis Samaras is trying to put together a government after a Greek election that raised fresh questions about the country’s euro membership and triggered the biggest stock-market rout in four years.

“Samaras will be given three days from today to put together a coalition from an assembly split down the middle on whether to renege on the terms of bailout agreements negotiated since May 2010.”

“As voters across Europe rebel against austerity measures imposed to stamp out the debt crisis, Citigroup Inc. said today that the risk of Greece leaving the euro by the end of 2013 has risen as high as 75 percent. [The] election propelled into parliament one party that wants to put land mines on the border with Turkey to stop illegal immigrants and another that



■ **SEEKING COMMON GROUND:** German Chancellor Angela Merkel and newly elected French President Francois Hollande discuss the European debt crisis at a press conference in Berlin, Germany (May 15, 2012).

PHOTO: SEAN GALLUP/GETTY IMAGES

wants Germany, the country’s biggest donor, to pay World War II reparations. [Greece’s] benchmark ASE Stock index plunged 6.3 percent.”

Greece faces choices that are bad or worse—either leave the eurozone and face economic isolation, or continue under austerity measures that virtually guarantee that the nation’s economy will stagnate. This will spark more violent unrest among the youth, over half of whom are unemployed—stewing in a dangerous brew of limited opportunity, an entitlement culture, and too much free time.

France’s About-face

While smaller nations such as Greece are considered to be at Europe’s fringes (the “southern periphery”), at the heart of the union stand two nations: Germany and France.

Recent allies but historical foes, the pair has the EU’s biggest populations, are among the largest in territory, and are considered the dual engines of the eurozone—nations using the euro. They have long been Europe’s pacesetters and decision-makers.

On May 6, while Greece went to the polls, a robust turnout of 80 percent of France’s voters denied President Nicolas Sarkozy a second term, the

first incumbent to lose office since Valery Giscard d’Estaing in 1981.

A conservative with the UMP (Union for a Popular Movement) party, Mr. Sarkozy maintained themes of limited government, boosting France’s economy, and a tougher stance on immigration, spurred by tensions in the nation’s *banlieues* (city suburbs with large immigrant populations). He expanded the nation’s entrenched 35-hour workweek and raised the retirement age from 60 to 62, which he maintained was necessary for France to stay competitive.

But Mr. Sarkozy was elected just ahead of the global economic downturn of 2008. While he is credited with taking measures to address the crisis, he presided over a country in an extended rocky period: “Public debt is high and rising, the government has not run a surplus in over 35 years, the banks are undercapitalised, unemployment is persistent and corrosive and, at 56% of GDP, the French state is the biggest of any euro country” (*The Economist*).

In yet another vote seen as a rejection of EU-led austerity, French voters replaced Mr. Sarkozy with Francois Hollande, their first socialist president in 17 years. Mr. Hollande has

not previously held a national office, but is familiar with this type of campaign—the mother of his four children, Segolene Royale, ran against Mr. Sarkozy as the socialist presidential candidate in 2007.

Much of his rhetoric could not be more different from his opponent's. He stated in a speech, "My real enemy doesn't have a name or a face or a party. He'll never run as president, and so he'll never be elected, although he does govern. My enemy is the world of finance" (*Democracy Now!*).

Mr. Hollande plans to implement a 75 percent tax rate for those making more than one million euros per year, prompting many affluent French to prepare for an exodus across the Channel to London. He also intends to raise the minimum wage and hire 60,000 teachers—an aggressive move in the best of times, but with France having serious exposure to toxic eurozone debt, it is even more surprising.

Franco-German Ties

The French election can be seen as a rejection of the EU fiscal pact but also as a thumb in the eye of this plan's prime architect and advocate—Germany.

During Mr. Sarkozy's time in office, France and Germany reached a high level of cooperation. His partnership on many issues with German Chancellor Angela Merkel led media to dub the pair "Merkozy." This partnership included the French commitment to comply with the German-led austerity pact. Ms. Merkel even endorsed Mr. Sarkozy for re-election, a highly unusual step across a neighbor's border.

Ahead of the vote, Mr. Sarkozy floated the unpopular idea, in lock-step with German Interior Minister Hans-Peter Friedrich, of reintroducing border controls in the Schengen Zone, stating, "At a time of economic crisis, if Europe doesn't pick those who can enter its borders, it won't be able to

finance its welfare state any longer... We need a common discipline in border controls... We can't leave the management of migration flows to technocrats and tribunals" (*The Wall Street Journal*). While such border checks would slow commerce, this was seen as a necessary tradeoff to limit an influx of immigrants displaced during the Arab Spring.



■ POSITIONS OF AUTHORITY: European Council President Herman Van Rompuy (right) and European Commission President Jose Manuel Barroso (left) speak at a joint press conference following a European Union summit in Brussels (Jan. 30, 2012).

PHOTO: GEORGES GOBET/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

With Mr. Sarkozy's exit, a "Merkollande" pairing looks unlikely. Just one day after Francois Hollande's victory, Ms. Merkel dismissed his proposition that Europe's fiscal pact—signed after prolonged talks by all EU countries minus the Czech Republic and United Kingdom—could be revised to be less austere. Volker Kauder, the leader of her parliamentary party, added sharply, "Germany is not here to finance French election promises" (*Reuters*).

France has the second-largest economy in the EU. This gives it considerable clout in policy discussions. But when the largest economy, by a margin

of almost 30 percent, is Germany, a showdown is inevitable.

Between its economic shakiness and its subordinate position under Brussels' umbrella, France is no longer in a position to chart its own course: "The creation of a monetary union was, among other things, supposed to harness the economic strength of a reunified Germany and the strong political will of France. Berlin would gain a powerful driver of growth, and Paris would keep a measure of control over its historically troublesome neighbor. However, after 20 years of the German economy outperforming France, this relationship is out of balance. Paris' political power is no longer commensurate with Berlin's economic strength" (*Stratfor*).

Germany truly holds the cards, and is playing them. Its rebuke of Mr. Hollande was followed by this message to Greece, recipient of a bailout largely funded by Germany: "Aid can only flow if the [austerity] conditions are met" (*Reuters*).

Europe in Prophecy

While few understand it, the Bible identifies two sets of peoples who live side-by-side in modern Europe. One is a group of nations that descended from the 10 "lost"

tribes of Israel, now occupying most of North America, much of Europe, and certain other areas. (The modern Mediterranean nation known as Israel is mostly comprised of descendants from only one tribe—Judah.) These nations are allies.

This inspired Book also describes a non-Israelite ("Gentile") world power that would reappear in various forms over millennia. The book of Daniel describes Chaldean King Nebuchadnezzar seeing a symbol of this power in a dream: "This great image, whose brightness was excel-

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DRUG ABUSE

A Global Epidemic

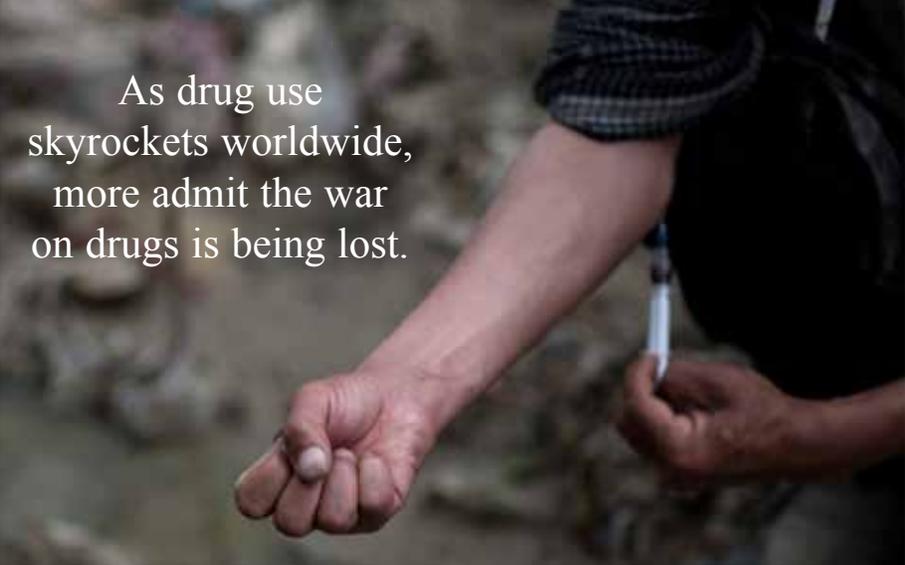
Part 1: Painting the Picture

A FARMER SCATTERS poppy seed across a field. It is early spring in the mountains of Ipiales, Colombia.

After three months of sun, beautiful white and red flowers bloom. The petals fall off and growers return to the field to start the harvesting process. The seed pod is cut and raw opium oozes from the bulb. Workers skillfully wield knives to gather the sticky white substance. It is then formed into bricks, which are wrapped in plastic and collected in piles.

With the harvest complete, a local black-market merchant arrives at the farm. Money exchanges hands as a crew of men tosses bricks of the raw substance into the back of a truck. The material is then delivered to a nearby refinery. There, the opium is dumped into a large, weathered oil drum and combined with boiling water and lime. The morphine separates and rises to the top. After further processing, it is poured into molds and set out to dry in the sun.

The morphine is then sent to a laboratory for more treatment and purification. The result is a white powder known as heroin, which is packaged in small bags and placed into a larger container. A distributor within a drug cartel is contacted and the heroin is brought to Mexico through an intricate multi-tiered distribution chain. Once the highly addictive drug arrives near the border of the United States, drug couriers, or “mules,” are paid thousands of dollars to hide the packages and transport them.



As drug use skyrockets worldwide, more admit the war on drugs is being lost.

■ **DEADLY GAME:** A drug addict injects heroin at a waste water canal in Kabul (April 25, 2012).

PHOTO: JOHANNES EISELE/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

After entering America undetected, another contact is made and the drugs switch hands again, this time traveling to the distribution hub of New York City—more than 2,700 miles from the small farm in Colombia.

In New York City, a longtime heroin addict rouses herself out of bed with one thing on her mind. She flips open her cellphone and makes a call. Fifteen minutes later she knocks on the door of her dealer, who just received a new shipment. She trades a wad of cash for a tightly rolled plastic bag of heroin. The routine is the same, but this time will be different.

A few days later, local police enter the young woman’s apartment after receiving a report of a missing person. Her lifeless body is sprawled across the floor, a needle by her side. She

leaves behind a family that will mourn the loss of a daughter, a sister, a niece, a cousin, but who will also feel a strange sense of relief that her long, painful battle is over.

This account could describe any number of deaths that occur as a result of drug addiction, from uptown penthouses to neighborhood slums. The statistics are mind-boggling. *Millions* are hooked. Some are lifelong addicts. Others first-time users. Still others are in rehab, teetering on the brink.

Scientists have failed to find a quick-fix cure to addiction and governments are growing desperate to eradicate this scourge. Despite huge amounts of money being poured into drug abuse prevention, information about the harmful effects of illicit substances being more available than ever before, and

stricter enforcement, the global drug epidemic only spreads.

The United Nations “War on Drugs – Report of the Global Commission on Drug Policy,” released in June 2011, gave a sobering report of the reality of worldwide abuse: “The global war on drugs has failed, with devastating consequences for individuals and societies around the world. Fifty years after the initiation of the UN Single Convention on Narcotic Drugs, and 40 years after President Nixon launched the US government’s war on drugs, fundamental reforms in national and global drug control policies are urgently needed.

“Vast expenditures on criminalization and repressive measures directed at producers, traffickers and consumers of illegal drugs have clearly failed to effectively curtail supply or consumption. Apparent victories in eliminating one source or trafficking organization are negated almost instantly by the emergence of other sources and traffickers. Repressive efforts directed at consumers impede public health measures to reduce HIV/AIDS, overdose fatalities and other harmful consequences of drug use. Government expenditures on futile supply reduction strategies and incarceration displace more cost-effective and evidence-based investments in demand and harm reduction.”

The war appears unwinnable.

Growing Impact

Every year, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime also releases a “World Drug Report,” which analyzes current trends and statistics. The 2011 edition revealed the scope of the problem: “Despite increased attention to drug demand reduction in recent years, drug use continues to take a heavy toll. Globally, some 210 million people use illicit drugs each year, and almost 200,000 of them die from drugs. There continues to be an enormous unmet need for drug use prevention, treatment,

care and support, particularly in developing countries.”

How prevalent is the problem?

The report revealed that while certain drugs are decreasing in popularity in some areas, their use is surging on other continents.

For example, the report stated that there has been “a large increase in cocaine use in Europe and South America over the last decade... Meanwhile, new drug use profiles are

drug types,” the same research showed. “Between 1998 and 2009, seizures of cocaine, heroin and morphine, and cannabis almost doubled. ATS [amphetamine] seizures more than tripled over the same period” (ibid.).

According to the report, in 2009, around 10,600 amphetamine labs were busted, most of which were producing methamphetamine.

These staggering numbers are strictly based on arrests, surveys and a few other means. The *actual* numbers are much higher!

The annual report also revealed that drug-related death rates are rising, especially in America: “North America seems to experience a large proportion of drug-related deaths (45,100 deaths)... The United States saw an estimated 38,400 deaths from illicit drug use in 2006...”

The report also concluded, “...overdoses from prescription opioids have been steadily increasing from 4,000 in 2001 to 11,000 in 2006 (the most recent year available), an increase of 175%” (ibid.).

The drug industry is a multibillion dollar a year business. The Vienna-based International Control Board reported that the drug trade generates “several hundred billions of dollars a year and exceeds the gross national product (GNP) of most countries... Most of the money stems from illicit drug production, trafficking and abuse throughout the world.”

The worth of the cocaine market in North America is \$37 billion, and \$33 billion in Europe. The drug industry has increased to such proportions that it can now impact global financial markets. For instance, “In some countries and regions, the value of the illicit drug trade far exceeds the size of the legitimate economy,” the report stated.

Reasons for the Rise

An increase in drug use leads to more crime and death. Armed robberies,

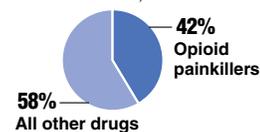
Abusing Prescription Drugs

Prescription drug abuse is the nation’s fastest growing drug problem. Drug overdoses are the leading cause of accidental death in 16 states and D.C.

Painkillers dominate

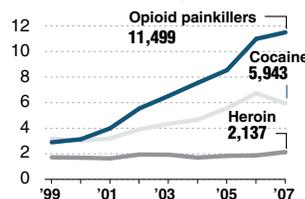
Prescription opioid painkillers, such as OxyContin, caused the largest share of accidental overdose drug deaths in 2007

Total deaths 27,658



Comparing killers

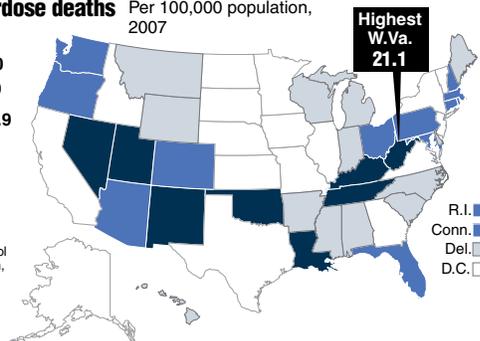
Deaths from prescription opioid painkillers were almost twice as high as those from cocaine; in thousands



Drug overdose deaths Per 100,000 population, 2007

- Less than 9.0
- 9.0-10.9
- 11.0-13.9
- 14.0 or more

© 2011 MCT
Source: U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, McClatchy Washington Bureau
Graphic: Judy Treible



also emerging: consumption of combinations of drugs rather than just one illicit substance is becoming more common, and this increases the risk of death or serious health consequences.”

“In 2009 (the year with the most recent data available), an estimated up to 272 million people around the world used illegal drugs at least once that year.”

In addition, up to 203 million people globally used marijuana in 2009, and “non-medical use of prescription drugs is reportedly a growing health problem in a number of developed and developing countries...” (ibid.).

“The long-term trends show increased seizures for all the major



■ **DEALING WITH THE PROBLEM:** Top, anti-narcotics police officers blow up a laboratory for processing cocaine to prevent anyone from using it further in Colombia (Jan. 25, 2011). Bottom, Dominican National Direction of Drugs Control press officer Roberto Lebron speaks behind more than 800 kilograms of seized cocaine during a press conference in Santo Domingo, Dominican Republic (March 14, 2012).

PHOTOS: GUILLERMO LEGARIA/AFP/ (TOP); ERIKA SANTELICES/AFP/ (BOTTOM) GETTY IMAGES

assaults, forgery, money laundering, burglaries, rapes, kidnapping and prostitution are often drug-related.

No country has seen this more than Mexico. Since President Felipe Calderon ordered a crackdown on drug cartels in December 2006, over 50,000 people have been killed, including police officers, cartel members, smugglers and innocent bystanders. Kidnappings are commonplace on the U.S.-Mexico border. Cartels are becoming bigger, bolder, wealthier, more technologically advanced, and better at evading police and Drug Enforcement Agency officials.

While drug dealing was once more commonly associated with gangs or the mafia, dealers now range from teens to the elderly, from pregnant mothers to couples with children. Children are even used to transport drugs from dealer to buyer. If caught, they can often avoid prosecution because of their age.

Hard economic times have pushed people to seek other means to earn an income. Many even use selling drugs as a “night job.” In fact, the average drug dealer maintains a low-wage job and sells part-time to obtain drugs for his own use. Thus, selling becomes a means of satisfying his own appetite *and* making a profit.

The drug world has evolved from a street-corner “try-to-outrun-the-police” business, to a worldwide underground franchise. How has the impact of drugs grown so wildly out of control?

Drugs in the Media

One factor of increased drug addiction is the way these substances are portrayed in the media. Although commercials, programs and documentaries attempt to prevent drug abuse by describing its consequences, children and teenagers receive mixed signals from *other* media sources—movies and music. In reviewing 43 movies featuring illicit drug use, the Office of National Drug Control Policy found that approximately 60 percent portrayed it occurring at parties, in luxurious settings, or in humorous contexts. Instead of realistically showing tragic results of illicit drug use, popular actors and recording artists glamorize it.

The entertainment industry, which puts profit first, understands that teenagers are a major part of sales. This carefree representation of drugs is a marketing ploy to appeal to a teen’s sense of rebellion.

The director of the National Youth Anti-Drug Media Campaign stated, “It’s pop culture, it’s the talk-show hosts that make light of drugs...It’s also the mixed messages you get from movie stars and sports celebrities who beat somebody up or crash their car because they were under the influence or used drugs, and still make \$20 million a year. If you go to some stores, you see marijuana T-shirts and jewelry.”

On April 20, 2012, *The Wall Street Journal* reported, “April 20 marks a high holiday for marijuana enthusiasts, who have long used ‘420’ as code for cannabis and who celebrate the date’s appearance on the calendar...with concerts, stoner-film marathons and controlled substances.

“This year...marketers are trying to get in on the buzz. Marijuana advocates say the commercialization just proves that pot is gaining mainstream acceptance; there were some 17.4 million users in 2010, up from 14.4 million in 2007, according to government data...”

“Film studios hope to capitalize on the day with pot-themed film releases, while television networks and small businesses are running promotions.”

With such a drug-saturated environment, it is no wonder more young adults are experimenting with illicit substances. From hip-hop, rock and

electronic music, children and teens—from inner cities to small towns—are seeing and hearing about the “excitement” surrounding drugs.

Yet the reality of drug abuse is far from the rosy picture seen in music and movies.

Inside the Science

The meaning of the word “drug” varies. Scientifically, a drug is any substance (other than food) that affects an organism’s structure and function. Most drugs were developed for therapeutic reasons but abused later. An example of this is morphine. During the Civil War, morphine was a pain-killer for amputations and wounds. After it was used extensively, it was discovered to be extremely *addictive*—but much too late. Many soldiers became addicts.

In the 1970s, the federal government passed the Controlled Substance Act (CSA), which provided a set of guidelines for the classification of drugs.

The CSA regulates five classes of drugs: narcotics, depressants, stimulants, hallucinogens, and anabolic steroids. Each class has distinguishing properties. Drugs within each class often produce similar effects. These classifications allow the Food and Drug Administration to administer guidelines for drugs “acceptable” for medical usage.

In the context of drug abuse, drugs become *social* rather than scientific. *Illicit* drugs are those used for anything other than their medically designed purpose, such as mood-altering drugs, called *psychoactive drugs*. These are substances that affect and alter the mind or behavior through pathological or functional changes in the central nervous system (brain and spinal cord). Of course, the more pleasurable the sensations produced by a drug, the more likely it will be abused. Psychoactive drugs affect senses, emotions, thoughts and consciousness. Users lose track of time, experience feelings of disorientation, or hallucinate.

Through abuse, a user can become dependent on a drug’s effects. Various “experts” claim that some are genetically born an alcoholic or drug abuser. But unless a child is born to an addicted mother, this statement is false. *Dependency* is what makes millions become addicts—not their genes!

The two types of dependency are *physical* and *psychological*. Physical dependency occurs when heavy drugs such as heroin, alcohol and tranquilizers are repeatedly used, causing the body to chemically change. Unless the body receives regular doses of the drug, it suffers withdrawal symptoms—ranging from unpleasant to life-threatening.

Psychological dependency occurs when the user abuses a substance as a means of coping with life, believing he cannot function without it. The drugs are used to relax, relieve stress, or for escapism. This dependency is more common and can happen with almost every drug. Psychological dependency lasts much longer, leaving a person craving a drug’s effects. It is one of the chief reasons for relapse after rehabilitation.

Recall the example of the woman who overdosed. Around the world, millions like her struggle daily with drugs, unable to completely break free from their pulls and temptations. Some are overcome by their addictions, and eventually pay the ultimate price. Others are just beginning their long, dark journey into the world of drugs.

All of this is only the tip of the iceberg regarding the growing problem of drug abuse. Part 2 will bring in-depth analysis of the major drugs and the devastation they cause. For instance, is marijuana harmless, or a dangerous gateway drug? What impact do methamphetamines have on a user’s life?

Be sure to read the next installment of this three-part series! □

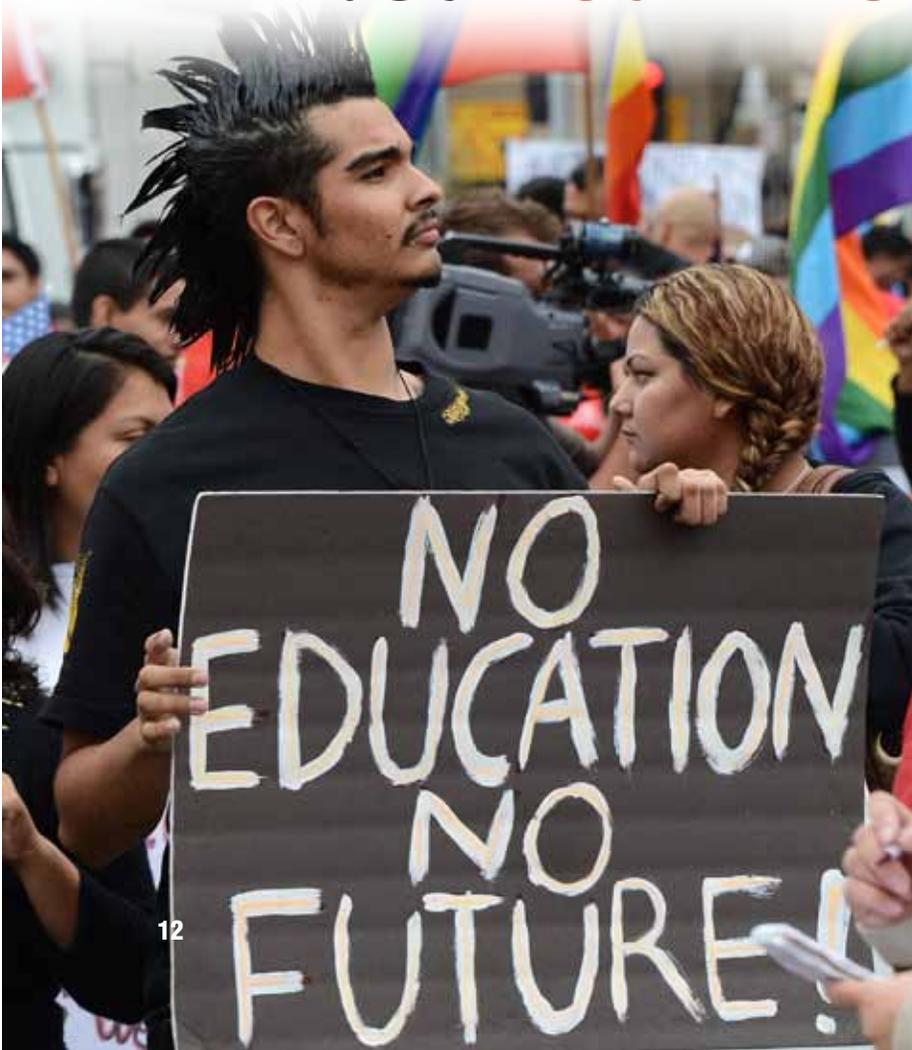


■ **CRACKDOWN:** Top, a soldier and an officer of the Civil National Police stand guard next to 555 kilograms of cocaine in Puerto Quetzal, Guatemala (May 2, 2012). Middle, a medical marijuana advocate holds a sign while demonstrating outside a fundraiser for U.S. President Barack Obama in San Francisco, California (Feb. 16, 2012). Bottom, packages containing confiscated cocaine are seen at a press conference in Hamburg, Germany (March 4, 2012).

PHOTOS: LUIS SOTO/AFP/ (TOP); JUSTIN SULLIVAN/ (MIDDLE); JOERN POLLEX/ (BOTTOM); GETTY IMAGES



May Day Riots Spark Concern About Summer of Unrest





■ **DAY OF PROTESTS:** Opposite page, top, Occupy Wall Street participants stage a march down Broadway as part of May Day celebrations in New York (May 1, 2012). Bottom left, demonstrators shout slogans during a rally in downtown Los Angeles, California, where thousands of workers, immigrants-rights activists and other protesters took part in May Day marches and rallies. Bottom right, top, union members and other workers voice their desires during May Day celebrations in Asuncion, Paraguay. Bottom right, bottom, Taiwanese students display placards to demand the government stop raising school fees during a May Day rally in Taipei. Above, Tunisians protest outside the headquarters of the Union of Tunisian Workers during a May Day rally in Tunis.

PHOTOS: EMMANUEL DUNAND/AFP/ (OPPOSITE PAGE, TOP); JOE KLAMAR/AFP/ (BOTTOM LEFT); NORBERTO DUARTE/AFP/ (BOTTOM RIGHT TOP); SAM YEH/AFP/ (BOTTOM RIGHT BOTTOM); FETHI BELAID/AFP/ (ABOVE, CURRENT PAGE) GETTY IMAGES

MAY 1, traditionally recognized as May Day, was marked with violent protests in cities across the globe. Boosted in large part by the Occupy Wall Street movement that seized worldwide attention last fall, some considered the date to be a restart of the group's operation, which lost momentum over the cold winter months.

Thousands swarmed the streets across Spain, Portugal, Italy, France and Greece, showing their anger over austerity measures by vandalizing buildings, looting shops, and blocking roadways. Likewise, demonstrations in Oakland, California, and Seattle, Washington, turned violent as protesters smashed windows, and were chased through the streets by police in riot gear, according to *Reuters*.

Disruptions took many different forms. Five anarchists in Cleveland attempted to blow up a heavily traf-

ficked bridge "in order to send a message to corporations and the United States government," according to *USA Today*.

In New York City, several banks received threatening letters containing a "white powder," an apparent play on the anthrax scare of a decade ago. A spokesman for Occupy Wall Street claimed in an *Associated Press* article that the "prank" had nothing to do with its protest movement. Others in the New York area vandalized banks and blocked people from accessing money through ATMs.

"In Santiago, Chile, police blasted demonstrators with water cannons, and in Bogota, Colombia, activists ran through a flooded street to escape tear gas fired by authorities," another *Associated Press* article stated. "Demonstrators in the Philippines and Bolivia burned effigies of their countries' leaders."

May Day, which is an ancient spring festival, was more recently co-opted as International Worker's Day by the global labor movement. The day is typically observed with demonstrations by workers around the world.

One participant shared with *Reuters*, "Right now I'm really excited about laying the groundwork for a long-term struggle. That's what I see May Day as being. I'm really looking at May 1 as a catalyst for the rest of the month."

Analysts warn this may be just the beginning of a summer of unrest, similar to what occurred in Britain in August 2011.

"Many newspaper articles have said that one cost of enforced austerity will be social unrest," *The Wall Street Journal* quoted Bill O'Donnell, RBS Securities lead treasury strategist, as saying. "Think back to the Villiers-le-Bel riots in France in 2007, the Clichy-sous-Bois unrest in France in 2005 and the Brussels riots of 2006. All this unrest was a possible precursor to the so-called Arab Spring and the participants were typically unemployed youth, many of whom were 'disenfranchised' immigrants."

He likened the 50 percent unemployment rate for those under 25 years old, as seen in Spain and Greece, to "a pile of tinder waiting for a match." □



The Future of RUSSIA

Part 2

Clues to understanding soon-coming events for Russia are found in examples of national character—both past and present.

BY SAMUEL C. BAXTER

■ **TRIUMPH:** Russian soldiers march at the Red Square in Moscow during a Victory Day parade, which marks the date Germany surrendered to the Soviet Union during World War II (May 9, 2012).

PHOTO: KUDRYAVTSEV/AFP/GETTY IMAGES



ARMED WITH shovels and metal detectors, a group of young Russians dig in the flat-open plains outside the town of Rossoschka—about 30 miles from Volgograd, formerly known as Stalingrad. The children are assisting with a program to unearth and properly bury soldiers who lost their lives during World War II.

Nearly everywhere they sink shovels into dirt they find human skulls in rusted helmets, as well as rib cages, femurs and finger bones. After just a few hours, the small group finds the skeletal remains of about a dozen combatants from the Eastern Front—Russians and Germans alike.

A *History Channel* special detailed this scene. Just under the surface of the plains in this region lie thousands upon thousands of abandoned bodies, which have remained there since 1943.

In the winter of that year, frozen corpses made a macabre blanket far and wide across the area, sometimes three bodies deep. Today, the bone fields echo what took place nearly 70 years ago.

A documentary based on the book *Aftermath: The Remnants of War* showed an interview with a Russian man who has made it his life's work to unearth the remains of the fallen and identify them. He described the scene around Stalingrad after the battle's conclusion: "You would not have been able to walk through this field. It was full of rotting, stinking corpses. Unburied. Why? Let me tell you. There simply weren't enough people.

They were all cleaning up Stalingrad. Then these fields were full of mines that had to be removed. The crows had a feast here."

Many historians point to the Battle of Stalingrad as a major turning point in the war between Germany and Russia. Others mark it as *the* catalyst event that began the downfall of the Third Reich. From that point forward, the Soviets slowly drove back Adolf Hitler's armies until they marched into Berlin in April 1945.

Yet there is another lesson to learn from Stalingrad. When the German *Wehrmacht* first entered the Soviet Union in 1941, military planners thought Russians would wave a white flag in a matter of months. After all, Nazi *blitzkrieg* attacks had made quick work of Europe.

Before entering Russia, the National Socialists seemed unstoppable. Poland



Long Legacy

Part 1 of this article series showed how Russia has always longed to enact an idealized government that it can spread over the entire globe. It quoted French Historian Francois Guizot: “When nations have existed for a long and glorious time, they cannot break with their past, whatever they do...they remain fundamentally in character and destiny such as their history has formed them. Even powerful revolutions cannot abolish national traditions...therefore it is most important, not only for the sake of intellectual curiosity, but also for the good management of international relations, to know and understand these traditions” (*The Mind of Modern Russia*).

No matter who holds the lead position in Russia, whether today’s president of a controlled democracy, the iron fist of the Soviets, the czars, or warlords before them, the nation has remained virtually the same at its core.

Therefore, a key to understanding Russia’s future is found in examples of that same national character—both past and present.

Russian Warriors

When Hitler decided to redirect efforts on the Eastern Front to the oil-rich Caucasus Mountain region, the Soviets held their own. This move essentially became a case study in Russian will.

The Nazi Wehrmacht pounded Stalingrad with 1,000 tons of artillery from the ground and bombs from the air. When this attack was in full swing, historian James Burns wrote that flames from the city were so bright “that a newspaper could be read at night forty miles away” (*Roosevelt: Soldier of Freedom*).

After four months of being ruthlessly pummeled, the Soviets seemed far from demoralized. They secretly amassed a *one million man* army designed to encircle the overstretched German and Romanian Axis forces in the region.

In November 1942, Red Army forces moved to secure a 100-mile perimeter around Stalingrad. Assisted by well-placed Soviet artillery fire and thousands of infantrymen and cavalry,

fell in 27 days; Denmark, less than 24 hours; Norway, 62 days; Netherlands, six days; Belgium, 18 days; France, 44 days; Yugoslavia, 12 days; Crete, 11 days; and Greece, 21 days. During these campaigns, Germany suffered about 50,000 casualties—few by comparison.

Partly due to this incredible military momentum, Hitler smugly declared of the USSR, “We have only to kick in the door, and the whole rotten structure will come crashing down” (*The Life and Death of Adolf Hitler*).

Germany did catch the nation off guard with a massive surprise attack. At first, the Third Reich easily pushed into Russia, destroyed much of the Soviet air force, took thousands of prisoners, and routed Josef Stalin’s forces.

Yet Deutschland’s soldiers quickly realized this was a warfront unlike any-

thing they had experienced in Europe. There was the sheer size of Russia—some villages were over 100 miles apart. There was the weather: from 100-plus degrees Fahrenheit in the summer to 35 below zero in winter. In between these extremes were rainy seasons that reduced roads to muddy slop.

What was most unexpected—and should serve as a cardinal lesson from this operation—was the fortitude of the Soviets. Frequently, Germans would see Russians fighting to the last man, and the last bullet, in the face of overwhelming defeat.

The Germans ran into something that had stymied other great military forces, including the Vikings, Mongols, and the army of Napoleon Bonaparte: the Russian will to win. This national characteristic has served the people of *Rossiya* for centuries, and continues to do so today.



the operation, codenamed Uranus, successfully shifted the tide of battle. On January 31, the Germans surrendered—marking the first major defeat of the Axis powers.

This would be the beginning of the end of perhaps the most brutally effective army the world had ever seen. No battle has surpassed the incredible carnage of Stalingrad. By some estimates, three million fought there, and only one million lived to tell about it.

Throughout their time on the Eastern Front, the Germans learned to have a healthy respect—and in some cases, fear—for Russian soldiers. In *The Greatest Battle: Stalin, Hitler, and the Desperate Struggle for Moscow That Changed the Course of World War II*, author Andrew Nagorski quoted an eye-witness account that demonstrates Russia's grit.

"A German soldier who was sent to the Eastern front in August 1941 described his shock in discovering that the Red Army was employing the same kind of human wave tactics that were used in World War I. The Soviet assaults 'were carried out by masses of men who made no real attempt at concealment but trusted in sheer weight of numbers to overwhelm us,' he wrote."

"Describing the vision before him as 'an unbelievable sight, a machine gunner's dream target,' he added, 'It was rumored that the [Russian] commissars worked out the number of machine guns which we had, multiplied that number by the number of rounds per minute that we could fire, calculated how many minutes it would take a body of soldiers to cross the area and added to the final total a couple of thousand men. Thus some men would get through our line...'"

The Nazi soldier continued, "'At 600 meters we opened fire and whole sections of the first wave just vanished, leaving here and there an odd survivor still walking stolidly forward,' he recalled. 'It was uncanny, unbelievable, inhuman. No soldier of ours would have continued to advance alone.' As German machine guns overheated from the continual firing, the Soviet side kept sending in more waves of troops. 'The

Ivans,' as he called them, kept up their attacks for three days, and he never saw a stretcher-bearer during the entire time."

In addition to using "human waves," Russian forces favored tactical retreats—using the vastness of their country to their advantage. In this way, the Soviets could direct where battles would be fought, and could use their familiarity and preparation for the harsh weather to their advantage. German military planners knew this before entering the Eurasian nation and even had plans to stop this maneuver. Despite this, the immense size of Russia and the extreme swings in weather were still formidable assets for the Red Army.

The Soviets also bolstered their fighting forces by tapping into a demographic other nations refused to even consider: women. Females made superb snipers in the defense of Stalingrad, and some women aviators were so effective in their nighttime harassment bombing raids that Germans infamously dubbed them the *Nachthexen*, or Night Witches.

Using female soldiers on the front line meant Stalin could increase the size of his standing army up to 40 percent. This fact, along with tactical retreats, the people's willingness to sacrifice, and the ability to survive harsh weather all gave Russia a fighting chance against Germany.

Land of Superlatives

Another feature unique to Russia is its size. The nation stretches 5,600 miles from east to west, and about 2,000 miles north to south—covering an area of 6.3 million square miles. That is nearly *twice* the size of the United States. Because of this, *Encyclopaedia Britannica* dubbed it the "land of superlatives."

"By far the world's largest country...It extends across the whole of northern Asia and the eastern third of Europe, spanning nine time zones and incorporating a great range of environments and landforms, from deserts to semiarid steppes to deep forests and Arctic tundra."

This means the nation shares borders with Poland, Lithuania, North Korea, China, Mongolia, Kazakhstan, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Ukraine, Belarus, Latvia and Estonia, as well as Finland and Norway. Such a wide variety of next-door neighbors complicates the nation's foreign policy.

"Russia contains Europe's longest river, the Volga, and its largest lake, Ladoga. Russia also is home to the world's deepest lake, Baikal, and the country recorded the world's lowest temperature outside the North and South poles" (ibid.).

These unsurpassed landholdings come with an added benefit: natural resources. The *CIA World Factbook* states that Russia has a "complete range of mining and extractive industries producing coal, oil, gas, chemicals, and metals." The nation supplies a substantial portion of energy to Western Europe and increasingly to China, which is Russia's largest trading partner and second-largest export destination.

Moscow and Beijing

Although Sino-Soviet relations were shaky during the Cold War, China and Russia have shared increasingly close ties since the fall of the USSR.

The Wall Street Journal reported, "China and Russia have signed 27 trade contracts worth \$15 billion, as the two countries seek to deepen their trade and investment links..." The paper stated that exclusive trading between the two nations in 2011 was up 43 percent over the previous year.

In addition, Moscow and Beijing are regularly in lock-step over issues involving the global political landscape. *Reuters* stated, "The two veto-wielding permanent U.N. Security Council members use their clout to blunt U.S. power, advocating what they call a 'multipolar' world rather than one dominated by any single country."

The nations have repeatedly held joint military operations since 2005 under the Shanghai Cooperation Organization, formed in 2001. The organization works to strengthen military cooperation, intelligence sharing, counterterrorism drills, and good rela-

tions among its member countries, which include Kyrgyzstan, Tajikistan, Uzbekistan, China and Russia.

Most recently, the two performed naval exercises, which retired Chinese Major General Yin Zhuo told *The Associated Press* generated a “high degree of trust between the sides.”

China Daily reported that the joint naval drills demonstrate “warming ties between their militaries and growing cooperation in international affairs.”

Together, the two nations are a formidable military alliance. While Russia has a standing army of approximately 641,000 and China 2.5 million—the *CIA World Factbook* records that, when considering “manpower available for military service,” Moscow and Beijing have over 68 million (including women) and 385 million persons, respectively, whom both countries can draw from to bolster their ranks.

Families Grown Large

Russia’s national characteristics and problems today are often traced exclusively to the policies of the communist USSR. While this explains some of the current conditions, many of these attributes have deeper historical roots.

Metalworking has long been a trade associated with Russian excel-

lence. Before the 1917 Red Revolution, Russia’s abundance of natural resources allowed it to hone the skill of metalworking.

“In [Southern] Russia...a very vigorous metallurgical industry has grown up since 1860 in conjunction with the iron and coal mining,” the 1911 edition of *Encyclopaedia Britannica* stated.

Blacksmiths in the nation did produce practical pieces, such as iron tools, but they also created works of beauty, such as intricately designed keys, and ornamented lanterns and lighting stands.

Women were also used in the armed forces before the Soviets took power. According to the book *Russia’s Women: Accommodation, Resistance, Transformation*, females fought for the country in the first world war.

“Exact numbers are impossible to ascertain; but even if they were only a few dozen, the phenomenon of women soldiers in battle does not seem to have occurred in any other country during World War I (except for a Scottish woman who fought in the ranks of the Serbian army with great distinction).”

The book also mentions a Russian women’s military company during the reign of Catherine II, a woman who fought in the cavalry in the Napoleonic Wars and rose to the rank of captain,

and reports of women fighting in the Crimean War.

In addition, tactical retreats have long been used by Russia throughout history. When Napoleon invaded the country in the early 1800s, he hoped to winter in Moscow. Yet the czar’s forces burned the city to the ground before abandoning it to leave the French conqueror with few options to survive the cold.

Moreover, mounted cavalry troops have always been an earmark of Russian military defense. So-called *Cossack* horsemen were effective against Hitler’s forces because of the speed at which they could patrol areas and report to commanders.

In all of this, there was a much older culture at work than what was born in the minds of communist leaders, such as Vladimir Lenin and Josef Stalin. This should have been especially known to Stalin, who was of the Ossetians—a people who hold to the traditions of the ancient Scythians.

Some Scythians (a broad term for a number of tribes who lived north of the Caspian Sea) had similar earmarks to Russian culture as seen during the Soviet era and today. Other branches of Scythians, from a different stock, migrated to Europe and the British Isles. (Read *America and Britain in Prophecy* at rcg.org/aabibp to learn more.)

These were also a horse-riding people, who had substantial skill in creating intricately decorated metal objects.

These warriors stymied foreign conquerors by using tactical retreats, and are thought to have pioneered this maneuver. They were known to poison wells and set the plains on fire to gain the upper hand against enemies.

The tribe also allowed women to fight in battle. Burial mounds found in Eastern Europe and southwestern Russia contain remains of women dressed in armor.

The modern-day nation of Georgia, which borders North Ossetia, claims ties to a tribe similar to the Scythians—the Meskhetians—who also lived between the Black and Caspian seas. This people has been variously called Meskhi or Moschi throughout history.

■ **ANCIENT WEAR:** A woman looks at reconstructed Scythian clothes on display in Berlin (July 4, 2007).

PHOTO: AXEL SCHMIDT/AFP/GETTY IMAGES





Bible historians almost unanimously believe that Moschi equates with Meshech, a tribe mentioned throughout the Old Testament. In the Bible, nations, which are merely families grown large, are named after their ancestors. Meshech slowly moved north, along with his brother Tubal's descendants, until they settled in modern Russia.

Notice Genesis 10: "The sons of Japheth"—one of Noah's three sons—"Gomer, and Magog, and Madai, and Javan, and Tubal, and Meshech, and Tiras" (vs. 2). Interestingly, Tubal (sometimes spelled Tabal) and Meshech (Moschi) are phonetically similar to the modern-day Russian cities of Tobolsk and Moscow.

These brother nations were renowned for their "vessels of brass" (Ezek. 27:13), and the Bible calls to mind human-wave military tactics when mentioning, "Meshech, Tubal, and *all her multitude*" (32:26).

Climactic Events

Yet the Bible is not merely a history book, from which can be gleaned only a few interesting tidbits of information. A full *one-third* of it contains prophecy, which can be likened to history *written in advance*. It lays out events *yet to happen*. This includes Russia's future.

Some of the most momentous events coming soon will be epic clashes in the Middle East. These military battles will include many nations of Earth.

Daniel 11:44 references coming tensions between two power blocs: a unified Europe and a Eurasian confederation. Notice: "But news from the *east* and the *north* shall trouble him [the leader of Europe]; therefore he shall go out with great fury to destroy and annihilate many" (*New King James Version*).

The European military leader will move his forces to the Holy Land, likely under the guise of a peace-keeping force (vs. 45). (To learn more about Europe's future, read David C. Pack's *The Bible's Greatest Prophecies Unlocked! – A Voice Cries Out*, available free at rcg.org/tbgpu.)

Russia and Asia are *north* and *east* of Jerusalem. God uses this city as

a starting point from which to reference the location of other geographic regions.

Revelation 9:13-21 reveals the reason for this troubling news. An immense Eurasian army of 200 million "horsemen" will have been gathering and then move into the Middle East, perhaps in an effort to seize the region's oil fields and cut supplies to the burgeoning European empire. This multitude of eastern soldiers will likely be led by Russia or China and be allied with India and Japan—all of whom descended from Japheth. Ezekiel 25 calls this army the "men of the east" (vs. 4, 10).

This will lead to a showdown near Jerusalem, popularly, but mistakenly, called the battle of Armageddon. The forces in the Middle East, including Europe, eventually join together and unknowingly fight against God. This military skirmish does not turn out well for *any* of the armies on the losing side. (Read "What Is Armageddon?" at rcg.org/wia to learn more.)

This massive army will retreat, likely after seeing they cannot win the current battle.

The prophet Ezekiel describes that this military force eventually returns to attack Israel: "And I [God] will *turn you back*, and put hooks into your jaws, and I will bring you forth, and all your army, horses and horsemen, all of them clothed with all sorts of armor, even a great company with bucklers and shields, all of them handling swords... and you shall come from your place out of the north parts, you, and many people with you, all of them riding upon horses, a *great company*, and a mighty army" (38:4, 15). (Also read Joel 2:4.)

"Thus says the Lord GOD; Behold, I am against you, O Gog, the chief prince of *Meshech* and *Tubal*: and I will turn you back, and *leave but the sixth part of you*, and will cause you to come up from the north parts, and will bring you upon the mountains of Israel" (Ezek. 39:1-2).

God declares to the army that He will "smite your bow out of your left hand, and will cause your arrows to fall out of your right hand. You shall fall upon the mountains of Israel, you,

and all your bands, and the people that is with you: I will give you unto the ravenous birds of every sort, and to the beasts of the field to be devoured. You shall fall upon the open field: for I have spoken it, says the Lord GOD" (vs. 3-5).

Of this immense army, only a "sixth part" (vs. 2), or one-sixth, will remain alive. At that time, a new bone field will have to be cleaned up by the locals in Israel. "And they that dwell in the cities of Israel shall go forth, and shall set on fire and burn the weapons, both the shields and the bucklers, the bows and the arrows, and the handstaves, and the spears, and *they shall burn them with fire seven years*" (vs. 9).

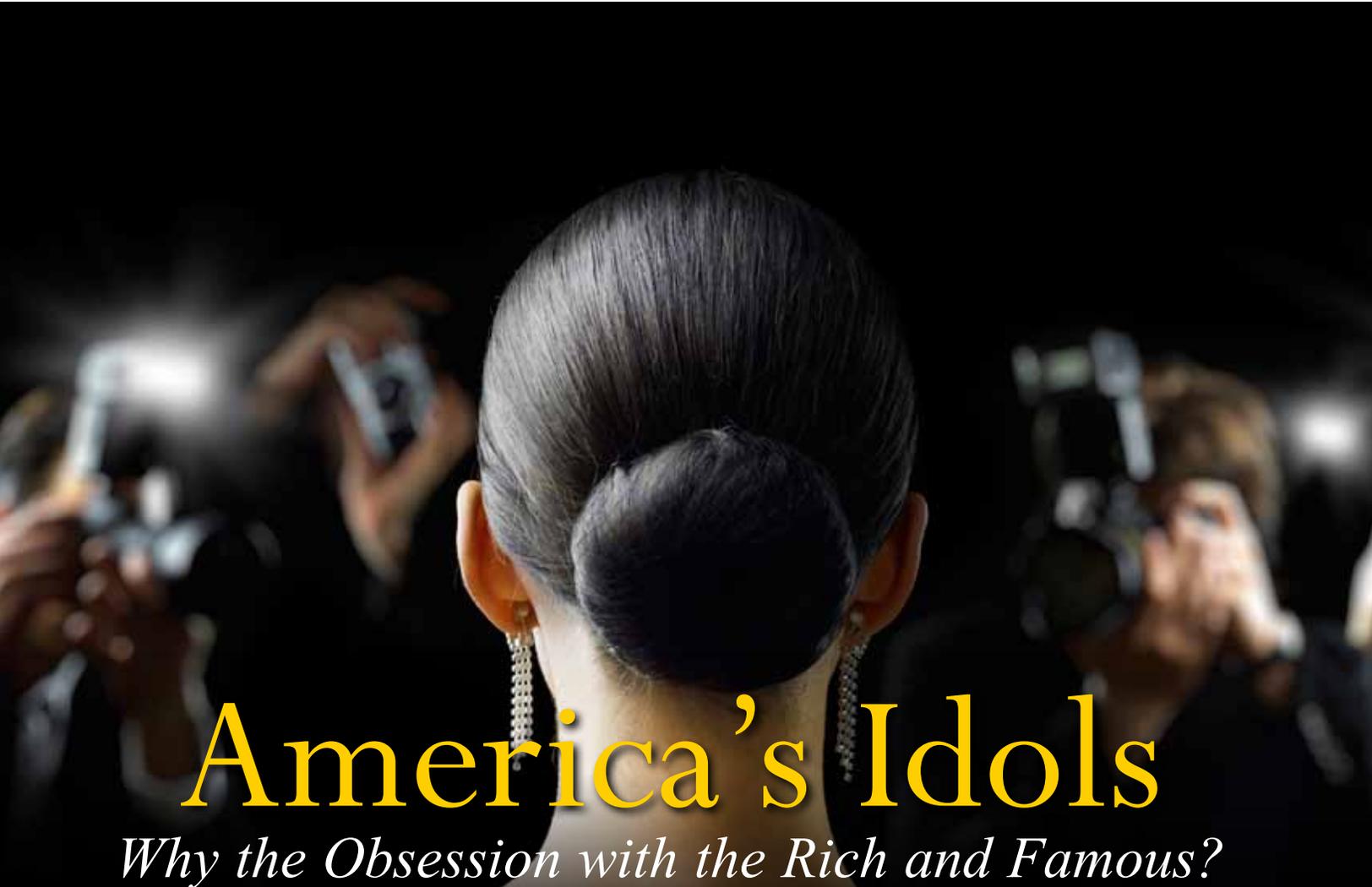
The passage continues, "And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will give unto Gog a place there of graves in Israel, the valley of the passengers on the east of the sea: and it shall stop the noses of the passengers: and there shall they bury Gog and all his multitude: and they shall call it the valley of Hamongog. And seven months shall the house of Israel be burying of them, that they may cleanse the land" (39:11-12).

The End?

Many self-appointed Bible prophecy experts label this 200-million-man army as *godless Eurasian hordes*—who receive their just punishment when they fight against Israel and God. In other words, they believe that the "battle of Armageddon" is the end of the story for much of Russia and China.

For the Russian people—if this view were correct—this would be an utter failure for their national desire to bring solutions to the problems plaguing mankind. But this is not the case! American historian Albert Jeremiah Beveridge noted this yearning in his 1904 book *The Russian Advance*. Beveridge stated that Russians believe it is their duty to preserve "order, form, and authority in civil affairs" and then "to restore to the confused, hopeless, struggling peoples of the earth those forms of social order and political authority which the [Russian] thinks

Please see **RUSSIA**, page 23



America's Idols

Why the Obsession with the Rich and Famous?

While millions follow mundane details of celebrities' lives, few stop to think about what motivates this desire.

BY JUSTIN T. PALM

THEY ACT. They sing. They dance. They give award-winning performances in dramas and comedies. Magazines glamorize them. The public envies them. Off screen, they marry, have children, and get divorced. Some get arrested, “find religion,” or take on a political cause. They adopt, fight poverty, or combat the spread of AIDS.

Actors become directors. Musicians become actors. Singers become authors. Sports superstars sign movie contracts. There are seemingly no limits or bounds to what celebrities can do.

The media hype surrounding these “beautiful people” is like nothing else. Magazines report the latest celebrity news, and the Internet is swarming with it. Celebrity faces are splashed across advertisements and billboards for all to see. Their lives are on constant display.

People are entranced by celebrity news—why?

Media Frenzy

The advent of the Internet has changed entertainment news. Websites report the latest on who divorced whom; who gained weight; who was seen where; who is pregnant. People's craving for intimacy with the famous can even be satisfied by cellphone news alerts. The most searched Internet phrases are almost always celebrity names.

Fascination with celebrities is nothing new; it has only grown more pervasive. The public cannot seem to get enough of every intricate detail of their lives—and from an endless array of sources. Many cannot go a day without reading the latest juicy morsel of celebrity gossip. Drawn like a magnet to trivial facts about other people's lives, many turn straight to the “Life” or “People” section of their newspaper.

Incidents in a celebrity's life often make international news. When a highly popular actor is arrested for driving under the influence and lets loose a drunken tirade, the reports can dwarf news coverage of vastly more important world events. Other celebrities are interviewed about their opinions of the actor

in question. Even politicians are queried for their opinions. Media pundits ask, “Is his career over? Will he be able to bounce back?”

We *hear* about celebrities, *read* about celebrities, and *watch* celebrities in virtually every medium. Why do so many millions care?

Paparazzi

Fueling people’s interest are the infamous photographers behind the photographs. Similar to private investigators, paparazzi use tips to track down and photograph famous people doing mundane, day-to-day activities. These photographs can sell for thousands of dollars. Although some are among the highest paid in the photography industry, paparazzi are generally looked down upon for the intrusive methods they use.

Accidents sometimes result from the famous trying to avoid paparazzi, as was the case with Princess Diana in 1997. Her tragic death was due in part to being chased by the paparazzi.

Further, the line between celebrity reporting and paparazzi is being blurred. A *People* magazine reporter was arrested for trespassing on a celebrity’s property. Searching for the latest exclusive photo, *reporters* are now stalking celebrities.

Celebrity Couples

Nothing creates more media frenzy than celebrity couples. Millions are enthralled by which popular actor is dating which famous singer, or which movie star was seen with which sports star. Ridiculous nicknames are coined, combining their first names to create hybrids.

Not content with just the couple, their babies are brought into the public eye. According to *CNN*, “Few recent celebrity subjects have produced as much table-thumping tabloid copy as questions about the existence and well-being of [celebrity baby].” The report continued, “But after the baby was born...[celebrity couple]...disappeared from public view, leading to a tabloid outcry as to why the child was not being seen.”

Magazines will pay millions for photograph rights. For instance, *Variety* magazine reported that one well-known couple sold photograph rights of their newborn to a magazine for \$4.1 MILLION.

These pictures are actually worth the cost to the magazine due to public demand. For example, one website hosting such photos broke a single-day traffic record, attracting 26.5 million page views!

Revered as Gods

In a *National Public Radio* interview, one journalist said, “With celebrity journalism...we really are one giant high school and they’re the cool kids, and everyone on the Internet can comment on them, can envy them, despise them, emulate them. So I understand why you [the public] feel a familiarity with them.”

Millions tune in to “American Idol” and “The X Factor” to watch the newest “average Joe” be transformed into a pop star.

The Nielsen Company reported that “American Idol” regularly reaches over 18 million viewers. “The Voice,” on the other hand, has less than 11 million viewers.

“It comes down to the audience’s emotional investment in the outcome,” *Chicago Tribune* reported. “‘The Voice’ is about established stars helping pro singers climb a rung in the music-industry ladder...Though ‘Idol’ is becoming increasingly infested with power brokers and middle men...it still comes off as a show about fans voting for singers who appear to be a lot like them—in other words, their peers.”

These celebrity icons are admired and worshiped by millions due to their fame, power, wealth, status and achievements. America bows to these prominent figures. They are truly—and without shame—made into idols and revered as gods.

Measure of Success

Shallow minds often focus on people. It is this interest that fuels the ever-increasing wealth of celebrity news

and gossip, most prevalent in Western media.

Many people envy the “perfect” lives of celebrities—their posh, multimillion-dollar mansions—expensive cars—monstrous bank accounts—and the freedom that comes with wealth and fame. They seem happy, successful and invincible at times. Celebrity personalities are routinely given special privileges, and often are allowed to live above the law (when compared to the average person) due to their high-profile status.

Consider the popular singer who was reportedly able to bypass the normal legal restrictions surrounding adoption and received permission to adopt a child from Africa.

Such privileges explain part of the reason the public so desires fame, and the riches and power that come with it. Many are willing to do almost anything to get into the media’s spotlight.

While people envy the celebrity lifestyle, they also take joy when a megastar comes crashing down. An actor or singer is arrested, checks into rehab, or goes through a messy divorce, and people take pleasure in reading about it. It is a love/hate relationship many fans have with the celebrities they idolize. This feeling of happiness at a celebrity’s downfall comes from envy or jealousy. Yet followers find themselves suddenly rooting for the famous individual to make a career comeback.

Following a celebrity’s life also serves to divert attention away from one’s own. When focusing on someone else’s problems, thoughts of one’s financial difficulties go away and marriage problems are forgotten (at least temporarily). It is much easier to escape to someone else’s life.

In an article by *AFP*, a man was quoted as saying, “...celebrity in many ways is defined by how much exposure you get.” The fame celebrities achieve most often has nothing to do with their accomplishments, talents or successes.

Few understand that fame and wealth are not all there is in measuring *true* success. To learn more, read our booklets *The Laws to Success* at rcg.org/tlts and *Why Do You Exist?* at rcg.org/wdye. □

PERSONAL

Continued from page 4

be a blessing, but He will use it as a weapon of punishment on those who oppose Him. Here is a verse no one else will show you: “I have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain upon *one* city, and caused it *not* to rain upon another city: one piece was rained upon, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered” (Amos 4:7).

While this may sound harsh, God is loving and merciful. He wants man to enjoy life’s good things. But He realizes this means people must obey His laws. Following their own ways leads to destruction and every evil evident in the world.

Blessing or Cursing

Deuteronomy 28 is considered the *blessing* and *cursing* chapter. God specifically says that if we OBEY Him, He will *bless* us. He also records what will come to pass if one does not obey Him. Two long portions of the chapter are necessary to grasp its full impact. First notice how God blesses those who obey Him: “If you shall hearken diligently unto the voice of the LORD your God...*blessed* shall you be in the field. *Blessed* shall be... the fruit of your ground, and the fruit of your cattle, the increase of your kine, and the flocks of your sheep. *Blessed* shall be your basket and your store...The LORD shall command the *blessing* upon you in your storehouses...[and] make you plenteous in goods...in the fruit of your cattle, and in the fruit of your ground...The LORD shall open unto you *His good treasure*, the heaven to give the rain unto your land in [its] season...” (vs. 1, 3-5, 8, 11-12).

But God CURSES those who *disobey* Him: “...it shall come to pass, if you will NOT hearken unto the voice of the LORD your God, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes...*all these curses* shall come upon you, and *overtake* you...*cursed*

shall you be in the field. *Cursed* shall be your basket and your store. *Cursed* shall be...the fruit of your land, the increase of your kine, and the flocks of your sheep...The LORD shall smite you with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation, and an extreme burning, and with the sword, and with *blasting*, and with *mildew*; and they shall *pursue* you until you perish...”

“The LORD shall make the rain of your land *powder* and *dust*: from heaven shall it come down upon you, until you be destroyed...you shall plant a vineyard, and shall not gather the grapes thereof...The fruit of your land, and all your labors, shall a nation which you know not eat up; and you shall be only oppressed and crushed always...You shall plant vineyards, and dress them, but shall neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. You shall have olive trees throughout all your coasts, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil; for your olive shall cast [its] fruit.”

“The LORD shall bring a nation against you from far...And [it] shall eat the fruit of your cattle, and the fruit of your land, until you be *destroyed*: which also shall not leave you either corn, wine, or oil, or the increase of your kine, or flocks of your sheep, until [it has] *destroyed you*” (vs. 15-18, 22, 24, 30, 33, 39-40, 49, 51).

May this sober all who read it!

Why then are today’s weather patterns so odd? Because the nations of this world are not pleasing God—and they are *cut off* from Him (Isa. 59:1-2; Jer. 5:25). The apostle Paul wrote, “*The god of this world* [Satan] has blinded the minds of them which believe not” (II Cor. 4:4). The devil has deceived the whole world into disobeying God (Rev. 12:9).

The Bible also describes Satan as “the prince of the power of the air” (Eph. 2:2). The devil does have a certain limited control over the weather. Sometimes this is under God’s overall direction, while at other times his hatred of mankind is the cause. Job 1 is an example of Satan being

given permission to cause disruptive weather—in this case, a great wind-storm killed all 10 of Job’s children. The devil had power to bring a tornado or hurricane-like wind. So says the Bible.

Good News Ahead

Mankind has put itself under a curse! Our farmlands are cursed with upset weather, drought, floods, insects and disease. The soil has become like rock in many places, with all its nutrients depleted. Food reserves are at all-time lows. When shipped to starving people around the world it is no more than a momentary quick fix to hunger. Our cities are open wounds, which will not heal. They are *filled* with hatred, poverty, violence, riots, crime, pornography and pollution. Driven by covetousness, their inhabitants do not know what produces peace and happiness.

Only God Almighty can bless nations with rain at the right time—the growing season—and stop damaging weather patterns: “Then I will give you *rain in due season*, and the land shall *yield her increase*, and the trees of the field shall *yield their fruit*” (Lev. 26:4).

Man cannot stop the weather. But he can obey God and be protected from it.

In all of this there is good news. The solution to all weather-related problems will come, but only after Christ’s Return. He will make the earth able to be cultivated—will smooth out desolate, snow-covered mountains—will raise ocean floors and deep desert valleys—and God will completely change the world’s weather. Deserts will become green and fertile. The Sahara in North Africa, the Gobi in Asia, and the Kalahari in South Africa will support life. So will wastelands in Saudi Arabia, Mongolia and Siberia. Planet Earth will be able to sustain many billions of people throughout Jesus’ 1,000-year reign.

All problems stemming from bad weather will be solved. (To learn more, read my book *Tomorrow’s Wonderful World – An Inside View!* at rcg.org/tww.)

Prepare Now

While weather conditions will worsen before later getting better permanently, humanity is still in the relative quiet before the storm.

Cities build systems to warn local populations, but the prophet Isaiah warned that the only way to escape what is coming is to seek God *before* the most devastating conditions arrive: “Seek you the LORD *while He may be found*, call you upon Him *while He is near*: let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts: and let him return unto the LORD, and He will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon” (Isa. 55:6-7).

God is using severe weather—floods, mildew, plagues, drought and famine—to serve as a wake-up call to return to Him. Allow the mere *front edge* of end-time events to awaken you to the reality of what is coming. God commands you to seek Him while He may be found. This means there will be a time when people will, as a last resort, attempt to find God, but He will not be available.

While food shortages will soon plague nations of the earth, another famine will also strike: “Behold, the days come, says the Lord GOD, that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of the LORD” (Amos 8:11).

Most hear God’s warnings and do nothing. Others hear and think they do not apply because Jesus has supposedly done away with the Law, and the

punishment that comes from breaking it. Still others think they can wait until the last minute to seek God.

Do not let these describe you!

Heed what Jesus said, using weather to make His point: “Why call you Me, Lord, Lord, and *do not the things which I say*? Whosoever comes to Me, and hears My sayings, and *does* them...he is like a man which built a house, and digged deep, and laid the foundation on a rock: and when the flood arose, the stream beat vehemently upon that house, and could not shake it: for it was founded upon a rock. But he that hears, and does not, is like a man that without a foundation built a house upon the earth; against which the stream did beat vehemently, and immediately it fell; and the ruin of that house was great” (Luke 6:46-49).

During times of disaster, many die for lack of prevention, often out of ignorance of impending danger. Do not wait to seek spiritual shelter when the shutters are already flapping, debris is shattering windows, ceilings are cracking, power lines are collapsing, and the storm is upon you. Rather, be like those who looked outside—saw dark clouds—believed the weather forecast—and took immediate action.

The world today is lurching from one weather disaster to another. With each new report of tornadoes, hurricanes and other natural disasters, you are witnessing what was foretold millennia ago.

Now is the time to seek protection by obeying God. Twice God’s Word declares, “A prudent man foresees the evil, and hides himself: but the simple pass on, and are punished” (Prov. 22:3; 27:12).

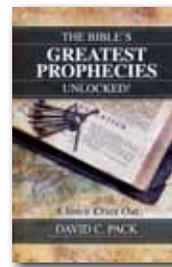
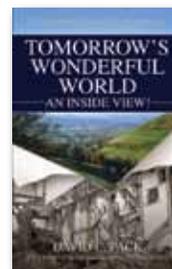
As more weather-related disasters strike, an attitude will prevail. The apostle Peter wrote, “...there shall come in the last days *scoffers*...” (II Pet. 3:3).

Presented with the facts of Bible prophecy, most scoff and laugh. God knew this and recorded their pooh-poohing response: “Where is the promise of His coming? For since the fathers fell asleep, all things continue as they were from the beginning...” (vs. 4). As weather conditions grow worse, do not deceive yourself into thinking things will get better.

They will not!

To understand the big picture in prophecy, read my book *The Bible’s Greatest Prophecies Unlocked! – A Voice Cries Out* at rcg.org/tbgpu. Also, my personal “Why Does God Allow Suffering?” found on realtruth.org explains *why* a loving God permits human beings to go through so much suffering and pain, including extreme weather.

Let news reports of devastating weather hit home. Seek the true God while He may be found. *Hear* and *obey* Him before the greatest storm of events in world history crashes into an unsuspecting populace. □



EUROPE

Continued from page 7

lent, stood before you; and the form thereof was [formidable]. This image’s head was of fine gold, his breast and his arms of silver, his belly and his thighs of brass, his legs of iron, his feet part of iron and part of clay” (Dan. 2:31-33).

The publishers of this magazine have for decades explained that this

“metal man” image represents a series of empires, beginning with the Neo-Babylonian (head), continuing through the Medo-Persian (breast and arms), Greco-Macedonian (belly and thighs), and finally the Holy Roman Empire (legs of iron). Its final revival, the last of seven, is represented by the feet of iron and clay. It is to appear in the near future, situated in that empire’s historical stronghold.

The mixture of clay and iron shows that it will be both weak and strong—

weak because it forces together very different peoples; strong because it has access to manpower, resources, capital, technology and industry. Remember that munitions have historically been made with iron, or iron alloys such as steel.

Though this image represents many millions of people, it takes the form of a *single man*. So where is the figure-head, the clear leader in the EU?

At present, nowhere. But that will soon change.

British newspaper *Daily Express* reported that "...two senior EU bureaucrats, Mr Barroso and Mr Van Rompuy, are locked in a bitter power struggle to determine who is the true big cheese or 'grand fromage' in Europe. Former Portuguese premier Mr Barroso, who heads the EU's executive arm and was elected to his post by members of the European Union, is understood to resent the rival fiefdom of Belgian Mr Van Rompuy, who was chosen by the heads of government of EU member states to represent them.

"Under the plan, a single figure would be elected by Euro-MPs to perform both roles.

"Supporters of the move believe that the rival presidencies are undermining the EU's ability to speak with a single voice. They argue that merg-

ing the two jobs will create a powerful European leader who is capable of pursuing the federalist dream of a united Europe which has been severely shaken by the eurozone crisis."

This does not surprise those who understand prophecy. The following appeared in the January 2010 *Real Truth* article, "New Face of the EU: What Does the Future Hold?"

"Ultimately, Mr. Van Rompuy will be as strong as the 27 leaders behind him make or want him to be. This new position paves the way for the 'one voice' Europe has lacked on international issues that could rival the power of the United States president—especially since no provisions are made to stop the European Commission president from being elected president of the Council, effectively combining two leading positions into one."

The *Express* article also stated, "Opponents fear the plan could create a modern-day equivalent of the European emperor envisaged by Napoleon Bonaparte or a return to the Holy Roman Empire of Charlemagne that dominated Europe in the Dark Ages."

Europe's sea change, in development for years, is now appearing and accelerating. In the years ahead, European nations will have to choose: stay in the eurozone, or leave. Remain a member of the European Union, or depart. The alliances and rivalries of history will reappear and shape this process.

To understand Europe's future, keep reading *The Real Truth*, and read David C. Pack's book *America and Britain in Prophecy* at rcg.org/aabibp. □

RUSSIA

Continued from page 18

are, after all, the foundation-stones of civilization."

The common view held by prophecy writers and preachers overlooks many specific, detailed Bible passages. The Creator is "no respecter of persons" (Acts 10:34), and He desires "all men to be saved, and to come unto the knowledge of the truth" (I Tim. 2:4). God sees all human beings as potential sons and daughters, and wants everyone to learn to lead lives of prosperity and happiness.

God will give all men—*everyone* who has ever lived—a chance for salvation. This includes Russia and its people.

A prophecy in Ezekiel 37 depicts how this will happen, and it involves the bones of the dead. In this biblical account, God takes the Old Testament prophet Ezekiel—in a vision of the future—and sets him "down in the midst of the valley which was full of bones" (vs. 1).

Ezekiel walks through this area in verse 2 and finds there "were very many [skeletal remains] in the open valley; and, lo, they were very dry."

God then declares, "Behold, I will cause breath to enter into you [the bones], and you shall live: and I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the LORD" (vs. 5-6).

The account continues, "...there was a noise, and behold a shaking, and the bones came together, bone to his bone...the sinews and the flesh came up upon them, and the skin covered them above...and the breath came into them, and they lived, and stood up upon their feet, *an exceeding great army*" (vs. 7-8, 10).

The Eternal God tells Ezekiel that the bones "are the whole house of Israel" (vs. 11). But this physical resurrection of Israel is an example, or type, of what will happen to *all of mankind*—recall that God wants "all men to be saved."

God will "lay sinews," "bring flesh upon," "cover with skin," and "put breath in" countless billions, including those who lay in the bone fields of the battle of Stalingrad and those buried in the valley of Hamongog.

By this time, a SUPERGOVERNMENT led by God will have long been established and will be teaching all nations

a way that leads to peace and prosperity. Under this perfect system, Russia's national trait of uniting to support a common cause will be fully realized.

Micah 4 describes this time: "And *many nations* shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, and to the house of the God of Jacob; and He will teach us of His ways, and we will walk in His paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the LORD from Jerusalem.

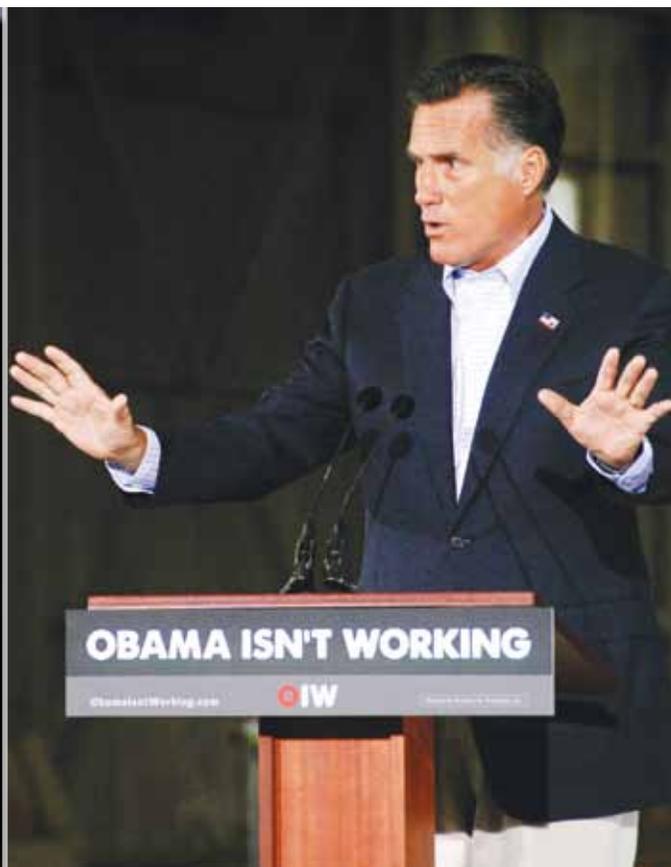
"And [God] shall judge among *many people*, and rebuke *strong nations* afar off; and they shall beat their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruninghooks: nation shall not lift up a sword against nation, *neither shall they learn war any more*. But they shall sit every man under his vine and under his fig tree; and none shall make them afraid..." (vs. 2-4).

(To learn more about this time, read *What Is the Kingdom of God?* at rcg.org/witkog.)

During this period, Russia will *finally* be part of a perfect government that spreads over the entire globe—and they will help fulfill the long-held national desire to bring order and peace to the world. □

AMERICAS

U.S. Presidential Race Heats Up in Ohio



■ **OPPOSING VIEWS:** Left, United States President Barack Obama speaks about job training at Lorain County Community College in Elyria, Ohio (April 18, 2012). Right, Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney speaks to a crowd at the now-closed National Gypsum Company plant in Lorain, Ohio.

PHOTOS: MICHAEL FRANCIS MCELROY/GETTY IMAGES (LEFT); STACEY L. PALM/THE REAL TRUTH (RIGHT)

American President Barack Obama and likely challenger Mitt Romney are ratcheting up campaign appearances ahead of this November's election, targeting Midwest cities hit hard by unemployment.

Near Lorain, a Northeast Ohio city of around 64,000 once defined by manufacturing, Mr. Obama appeared at the local community college, drawing attention to the school's "Transformations" job training program and interacting with several students.

The White House's website stated, "Lorain County has been greatly affected by plant closures over the last three decades. Between 2001 and 2010, the county lost 11,500 jobs overall,

with manufacturing losing 10,500... The programs at Lorain County Community College...rely on critical federal funding provided to their local area (\$4.5 million in 2012, for Lorain County) through the Workforce Investment Act..." Mr. Obama touted the college's program as an example of federal dollars used on his watch to address the Rust Belt's labor drain in the outsourcing era.

The next day, in a short-notice follow-up visit, Mr. Romney spoke to supporters at the city's defunct National Gypsum plant. The plant's cavernous interior was nearly empty aside from a front-loader, some wood pallets, and several towering stacks of new drywall in one corner.

Speaking in front of a banner reading "Obama Isn't Working," the presidential challenger used the setting to draw attention to what he termed "unfulfilled promises" from the Obama administration. The crowd, mostly middle-aged and above, paid rapt attention to Mr. Romney's 15-minute speech, and most stayed afterward to shake the former Massachusetts governor's hand.

The fall election is expected to be a hard-fought contest, featuring massive ad spending, extensive voter registration initiatives, and frequent appearances by both candidates in battleground states such as Ohio and Virginia. It is also expected to highlight the deep division between the right and left in America. □

AFRICA

Large Water Reservoirs Discovered Under Africa

Underground aquifers containing 100 times the amount of fresh-water available on Africa's surface have been located by researchers from the British Geological Survey and University College London. Scientists found the water in the Sahara desert area, which receives less than three inches of rain per year, with the largest reservoirs under the North African countries of Libya, Algeria, Egypt and Sudan.

"There is sufficient groundwater under Africa to support low yielding water supplies for drinking and community irrigation," reported hydrogeologist Helen Bonsor, who contributed to the research.

Currently, 5 percent of Africa's arable land is irrigated, and more than 300 million Africans are without safe drinking water.

Scientists estimate that with proper drilling, including the use of smaller holes to extract a modest amount of water, the supply could last 20 to 70 years for rural communities on the continent. If the reservoirs were used on a larger scale, such as to supply water to heavily populated areas, researchers warn

the aquifers could be rapidly depleted. Because northern Africa receives little rain, they are not naturally replenished.

But other factors come into play regarding water accessibility.

Roger Calow of the United Kingdom's Overseas Development Institute stated in a *Reuters* article that "water shortages in large parts of Africa do not stem from scarcity...a third of hand pumps across Africa have broken down due to a lack of maintenance."

Internal conflicts and lack of funds have also affected water extraction programs. For instance, drilling costs and logistics have been the main factor in halting groundwater irrigation projects in Nigeria.

Representatives of aid agencies, including Nick Nuttall, spokesman for the United Nations Environment Program in Nairobi, Kenya, are guardedly optimistic about the find.

"The discovery of substantial water reserves under parts of Africa may well be good news for the continent but it may prove hard to access in the near term and, if not sustainably managed, could have unforeseen impacts," he told *Reuters*. □



■ **DESPERATE SITUATION:** Somali internally displaced persons receive water from a local NGO at the Tarbun camp in the nation's capital of Mogadishu (April 25, 2012).

PHOTO: ABDIWAHAB/AFP/GETTY IMAGES

EUROPE

Report: 100,000 to Lose Jobs in UK

Unemployment in the United Kingdom is expected to rise by 100,000 through the summer, according to the Institute for Public Policy Research (IPPR).

The report stated that "50,000 more men and [50,000] more... women will become unemployed... with 100,000 public sector jobs lost and the 200,000 new jobs created in the private sector being matched by the increase in the number of people looking for work in the UK."

Cuts in public sector jobs are in reaction to the struggling economy.

"The government has been relying on private firms to create enough employment to make up for the estimated 700,000 jobs it is cutting in the public sector as part of its austerity programme, aimed at erasing the country's huge budget deficit over the next five years," *Reuters* reported.

Research from the Office for National Statistics revealed that the number of unemployed in the UK hit 2.67 million—a rate of 8.4 percent—and those claiming Jobseeker's Allowance increased by 7,200 to

1.61 million. *Nasdaq.com* wrote that jobless claims are the highest since October 2009.

Kayte Lawton, a senior research fellow at IPPR said, "The risk is that high unemployment becomes a permanent feature of the UK economy, as it did in the 1980s."

In addition, *Sky News* reported that unemployment is at a 17-year high.

"...unemployment is a lagging indicator: and so as the economy weakens in the coming months, it suggests that unemployment will increase even further." □

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