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Fueling an Empire

Massive trade deals with South America and Africa give Europe the resources it needs.

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For the Roman Empire, Egypt was special. It was not governed like the other provinces—rather, it was the personal property of the Roman Empire. No aristocrat was allowed to even set foot in the country without the permission of the emperor. Why? Egypt fed the empire. Control of this breadbasket gave enormous power, and the emperor did not want to risk anyone taking it away.

Two thousand years later, the principle remains the same: Control of resources means power.

In an era of open trade, open oceans and the United States Navy, we have had the luxury of forgetting this principle. But as tariffs multiply, trade war looms and nations stake out ocean passages as their own, reality is roaring back.

This is why the European Union's involvement in two giant trade blocs is so significant. It is gaining access to the world's most important sources of raw material. The news has been little remarked upon, but it is a major step for Europe toward world power.

The World's Largest Trade Area

On June 28, the European Union and the Latin American trade bloc MERCOSUR announced agreement on a draft of the world's largest free-trade area. When the deal was under negotiation earlier this year, *Trumpet* editor in chief Gerald Flurry wrote, "This trade agreement will impact the whole world! It is going to affect your life dramatically" (*Trumpet*, March 2019).

Why is this deal so important? Because it is about so much more than trade. It's about the arrival of a dangerous empire in America's backyard.

The new agreement is a major, official step toward a European-Latin American alliance. European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker called it "a truly historic moment." Argentine President Mauricio Macri, who led the negotiations for MERCOSUR, said that it is "the most important agreement we've signed in our history."

The agreement creates a free-trade area with a population of 780 million and an annual economic output of \$21 trillion. It covers the four core nations of MERCOSUR (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay) and will abolish \$4.5 billion worth of duties. Over the next 10 to 15 years, it will phase out more than 90 percent of the tariffs the EU and MERCOSUR currently have on each other.

MERCOSUR typically places very high tariffs on goods from outside countries. These tariffs will continue on goods from other advanced economies like the United States, but not those produced in Europe. Meanwhile, it allows MERCOSUR to sell cheap raw material and agricultural goods to Europe. These are huge new advantages for German industry.

But this is about much more than economics. The small print of the deal isn't out yet, but the outlines show that MERCOSUR is

signing up to several of the EU's rules and regulations. The deal will also lock the biggest economies in the region, Brazil and Argentina, into an economic and political relationship with Europe. EU Trade Commissioner Cecilia Malmström said it brought "closer ... friends and allies with whom we have long historical ties and with whom we work very well in many other areas."

The two blocs already have close economic links. The EU is MERCOSUR's top source for investment and second-biggest trading partner in goods.

Europe's strong noneconomic links to the region will make it easier for it to continue drawing closer to Latin America. The region's strong cultural links with Europe date back to its conquest by Spain and Portugal. These powers used religion to cement their hold on the region. The populations of Argentina, Paraguay, Bolivia, Chile, Peru, Colombia and Venezuela are all at least 70 percent Catholic today. About 40 percent of the world's Catholics live in Latin America, and a man born in Argentina leads the Catholic Church in Rome.

The two also have a strong military relationship. Between 2002 and 2011, more than 49 percent of weapons imported by South American nations came from the EU. Between 2014 and 2018, France and Germany sold significantly more to the region than did the United States.

The continent is full of secondhand European warships and German tanks.

"South America has clearly avoided being dependent on America for critical weapons systems. But it is dependent on Europe," states our booklet [He Was Right](#). "South America is welded to Europe's military system." (Request your free copy.)

Nicholas J. Spykman, one of America's great geopolitical thinkers, warned about the power a united Europe would have in Latin America. Brazil and Argentina are so far from the U.S., it is difficult for the U.S. to project power there, he explained. For all practical purposes, it's as easy to travel from Buenos Aires to Spain or Portugal as it is to travel to Washington, D.C.

He warned that one of America's top priorities should be to stop Europe's unification. With such close links to South America, a united Europe would be difficult for the U.S. to keep out of Latin America. And once a united European power is there, it can threaten the U.S. This is why Spykman was an early supporter for war with Hitler and the Nazis. He warned against isolationism, arguing that "even if the U.S. could have avoided war with Germany over Europe, it could not have avoided a struggle with Germany for hegemony over South America."

Robert Kaplan, another top geopolitical thinker, discusses Spykman's ideas in his book *Revenge of Geography*. He warns that "already one can see that the more united Europe becomes, the greater its tensions with the United States. A true European superstate with armed forces and a single foreign policy at its command would be both a staunch competitor of the U.S. and possibly the dominant outside power in the equidistant zone of southern South America."

In 1962, Herbert W. Armstrong's *Plain Truth* magazine wrote, "[T]he United States is going to be left out in the cold as two gigantic trade blocs, Europe and Latin America, mesh together and begin calling the shots in world commerce."

On June 28, those two blocs meshed together.

How did the *Plain Truth* forecast such a specific development so long ago?

Making Africa in Europe's Image

It didn't take long for the EU-MERCOSUR record as the world's largest free-trade zone to be broken. After nearly 20 years of negotiations and intermediate steps, 54 African nations signed up to activate the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) on July 7. This massive bloc with a population of 1.3 billion aims to improve trade among African countries, introduce visa-free travel, and integrate transport.

China dominates most of the trade news in Africa. It is true that China is becoming more active in Africa, usually by debt diplomacy. No one knows exactly how many billions it has lent to African countries, though it is clearly a lot. But Europe is still also a major player. According to the European Commission, China's foreign direct investment to Africa in 2017 was \$40 billion; the EU's investment was \$325 billion.

The EU is also Africa's largest trading partner. In 2017, Africa exported 38 percent of all its goods to EU nations and imported 37 percent from the EU, according to Eurostat. After the EU, the next biggest source of imports to Africa was China, at 19 percent. The U.S. accounted for 15 percent. The African Union members conduct four times more trade with the EU than they do with each other. In 2018, trade between the EU and Africa was worth €271 billion (us\$302.2 billion).

The EU is Africa's number one source of development aid, according to the International Monetary Fund. African nations received 54 percent of all their official development assistance from EU member states in 2017, whereas only 27 percent came from the U.S.

This gives the EU a lot of leverage. And it is pushing Africa to remake itself in Europe's image. The significance of Europe and Africa's relationship is often buried in official jargon, but at its most basic level, it is the story of the European Union financing the EU-style integration of the African Union, all while making Africa more dependent upon Europe in the process.

The AfCFTA is styled on the EU. Like the EU, it is led by a commission. It aims to create the same kind of single market, with free movement of people and capital. The African Union is working on a passport that would allow all citizens of member nations to avoid the web of fees and bureaucracy currently associated with travel in the region—just like the EU has with its Schengen Zone.

Europe has been pushing—sometimes forcefully—for the AfCFTA's creation, and has helped finance the project. "The EU has been supporting African economic integration politically, technically and financially since the very beginning," states the official Africa-EU website. "To prepare the AfCFTA, the EU has supported the African Union Commission (AUC) on negotiations, technical expertise and technical studies."

The push for this free-trade zone in Africa began in 2007 at the Lisbon Summit, where 54 African and 27 European leaders convened to create the Joint Africa-EU Strategy. Since then, this agreement has served as the basis for millions of euros in EU development aid for Africa. Currently, Europe has budgeted €62.5 million (\$69.7 million) for support of the AfCFTA.

Europe also instituted the Aid for Trade fund. Nations around the globe chip into a common fund that is spent on trade-related development. Europe contributes the largest share (32 percent). Through Aid for Trade, Europe has given €92 million (\$1 billion) to West Africa specifically to help prepare for the new free-trade area. This is just one handout of money. The EU has regularly invested tens of millions in the AfCFTA.

EU money has funded the negotiations. EU bureaucrats have advised African nations on how to draw up the rules for the trade bloc. And it appears it was a promise of EU investment that persuaded Africa's most populous country to sign up. It looked like Nigeria would sit the trade deal out—a major blow to African unity. But then the EU dangled a promise of \$45 billion worth of investments, a windfall Nigeria would miss out on. Days later, Nigeria announced it would join.

Europe is willing to pay if it is able to strengthen its presence in Africa. Though other countries like China invest in Africa, none has made as many major long-term contributions as Europe.

What happens when African nations refuse to conform to the EU's wishes? In 2014, Kenya declined to sign up to an EU Economic Partnership Agreement (EPA), which the EU describes as a trade and development aid deal tailor-made for the needs of the developing country. However, the EU was in no mood to negotiate. It resorted to economic pressure tactics, imposing strict tariffs on certain imports from Kenya. This led to financial difficulties and layoffs at several major African firms. Unsurprisingly, Kenya signed up the next month.

"Developing countries have a gun pointed at their chest—either they sign or their market access to the EU is restricted," said one German politician. "The EPA is the opposite of development cooperation."

Though the language all makes it sound like the EU is trying to do Kenya and others a favor, launching a trade war is a strange way to respond to someone turning your favor down.

Europe's Economic Partnership Agreements are cause for concern. Researchers have pointed out the risk that African industries and agriculture are not ready for tariffs to fall, because European competition could drive them out of business. Africa is still underdeveloped, and industries that previously depended on government protection to survive may fail under the pressure of European competition.

Peace and security were also a priority at a summit in 2014. This makes Africa likely to continue receiving European military training and deployments, especially because the Sahel region continues to battle radical Islamic terrorism.

A Rising Empire

Free access to resources is one of the most underappreciated blessings of our lifetimes. In a developed world, food is always available and, by historic standards, incredibly cheap. We spend our whole lives never having to worry about where the fuel to run our cars or heat our homes will come from. Electronics that require thousands of tiny parts and lots of rare metals are cheap and plentiful.

The EU is forging links with its *sources* for these materials. It wants to make sure it controls these materials. Meanwhile in Britain and the U.S., we don't give it a second thought. In fact, we don't even give it a first thought.

This is a dangerous consequence of decades of easy access to anything we want.

The Bible gives the overview of God's plan for the world, including all the major nations in it. As part of that plan, He intended the descendants of ancient Israel to set an example of how to obey God. He poured out blessings on the modern descendants of ancient Israel, which include the United States and the United Kingdom. (For proof, request your free copy of [The United States and Britain in Prophecy](#).) This is why we can access whatever materials we want from anywhere in the world. We assume this easy access is the natural state of the world. But it is a blessing from God.

But instead of obeying God, our nations have set an example of lawlessness. Thus, God promises to punish. Deuteronomy 28 lists some of the blessings He gave and the curses that are coming because of our disobedience. Verse 52 states that America's enemies "shall besiege thee in all thy gates, until thy high and fenced walls come down, wherein thou trustedst ..." God prophesies that America's enemies will launch a siege against it, cutting it off from global trade.

Other passages show that a rising European power will play a major role in this siege.

This European empire is prophesied to take control of a large part of the raw materials of the world. And we can see it laying the groundwork for that now.

Revelation 17, written 2,000 years ago, gives an overview of history and prophecy. It describes a beast power ruled at times by “kings.” It is some form of political entity: an empire, state or kingdom. Verse 3 shows it is ridden by a woman. Other passages, such as Revelation 12 and Ephesians 5, show that a woman in biblical symbolism is a church.

So here is a political power closely allied with a church. Revelation 17 gives more details. Verse 10 says this political power continually rises and falls. At the time that this passage was revealed, this power had risen and fallen five times. Its sixth incarnation was about to fall, and it would be followed by a seventh.

Where do we see an empire, led by a church, that rises and falls repeatedly? This is a perfect description of Europe’s repeated attempts to re-create the so-called Holy Roman Empire and its close ties to the Catholic Church. There are more scriptures you can put together with Revelation 17 to confirm this explanation. Request your free copy of *The Holy Roman Empire in Prophecy* to prove this for yourself.

The sixth resurrection (led by Nazi Germany and the Vatican) was there when Herbert W. Armstrong taught the world what these verses meant. It fell, and after he died, the seventh began to rise.

This same empire and this same church has long links with Latin America. When the *Plain Truth* warned Europe would form a new trade alliance with Latin America, it did so in part because of Europe’s history. This is *the* most important area of the world to control if you want to besiege America. And the Holy Roman Empire has often had strong links to this part of the world.

The Habsburg Empire brought this region to Catholicism through a massive influx of missionaries and by importing the Spanish Inquisition. On the recommendation of the Inquisition, thousands of “heretics” on the continent were tortured until they died or confessed. In Lima, Peru, alone, 1,000 were executed.

But European powers also have a history of forging links with Latin America in order to get at the United States.

Even with modern technology, attacking the U.S. across the Atlantic Ocean would be difficult. So European powers have looked for bases in the New World.

Napoleon launched a major military operation to conquer Haiti so he could create a French colonial empire there. During the American Civil War, France tried to move into Mexico while the U.S. was distracted. In the early 1900s, Germany tried to establish a naval base in Venezuela, at the same time as the German High Command was working on plans for a land invasion of the U.S. During World War I, Germany infamously tried to secretly persuade Mexico to go to war with the U.S.

After World War II, many Latin American nations welcomed ex-Nazi war criminals. During the Cold War, Soviet Russia established close links with Cuba, deployed nuclear missiles there, and brought the world to the brink of nuclear war.

This is why the U.S. government has historically upheld the Monroe Doctrine, which states that European powers must not interfere in the Western Hemisphere. But the Obama administration openly abandoned the doctrine.

The Bible says that this empire will once more use Latin America to strike at the U.S.

This is what the EU-MERCOSUR agreement is really about. “The reality though is that by linking itself with Europe in this way, Latin America is contributing to the rise of a modern resurrection of the medieval Holy Roman Empire!” Mr. Flurry wrote in that March article.

The majority of America’s ocean-borne trade travels through its ports on the Gulf of Mexico. It is simply not possible to besiege America without a presence in Latin America.

Now Europe is moving in, forging close trade links. This is why Mr. Flurry warned, “Few Americans are paying attention to the situation that is developing to our south. But I guarantee they won’t be able to ignore it indefinitely. This trade agreement will impact the whole world! It is going to affect your life dramatically. The seeds are being sown for a trade war and an economic siege that will help destroy America. This trade deal is that important!” (ibid).

Europe can’t launch this kind of siege on its own. Isaiah 23 describes a “mart of nations”—a trading alliance that excludes the U.S. Tyre—a biblical label for this common economic superpower—is a pillar of this alliance. But so also is Chittim—a biblical name for China. Both powers will work together in trade and cut out the U.S.

The Bible describes this siege and its results. It is a grim forecast. As curses from God hit America, society will break down and many will die. Foreign powers will quickly take advantage of the weakness, and America will be conquered.

A New Superpower

In America’s place, Europe will become a raw materials superpower. Revelation 18:3 states that “the merchants of the earth

have become rich through the abundance of her luxury” (New King James Version). European merchants will become “the great men of the earth” (verse 23).

This passage even tells us which resources this European power will control: gold, silver and precious stones (verse 12). The richest gold field ever discovered is in South Africa. The second-largest gold mine in the world is in Peru. Africa is a rich source of diamonds and other gems. The verse also lists ivory, a commodity not readily available in Europe. The inclusion of ivory tells us something important about the nature of this trade. This isn't about sustainable development, it's a smash-and-grab. Large-scale trade in ivory could lead to the extinction of elephants. But this empire doesn't care.

This scripture also singles out a couple of different types of wood, a key export of the Amazon region. Iron is also listed, which is an important export of Brazil. Verse 13 lists several different food commodities including wheat, flour and beasts, which probably includes cattle. Brazil and Argentina are both important wheat exporters. Brazil is the world's top beef exporter, and Argentina also plays an important role.

But the most chilling trade commodity in this passage is “slaves, and souls of men.” In part through control of world trade, this empire is powerful enough to conquer nations and trade in human lives!

Europe is laying the groundwork for this empire right now. It is signing deals that would allow it to trade in many of these commodities already. Its intent is clear: It wants to dominate trade with Latin America and Africa!

But this dominance will not last. Revelation 18 emphasizes this. Three times it states this power's destruction comes in just “one hour.” “For in one hour so great riches is come to nought” (verse 17). This power has its moment in the sun, but that's all it is: a moment.

God allows this because He is teaching some crucial lessons. Real, lasting prosperity does not come from grabbing the world's raw materials. Nor does it come from America's current hedonistic lifestyle, using those resources to generate every fleeting pleasure imaginable.

Lasting prosperity comes only from God. He gave a taste of this to Britain and America, but both powers refused to live the way that leads to continued blessings.

After the siege and conquest of the Holy Roman Empire, however, the world will learn this lesson. Mankind will be forced to recognize that prosperity and happiness come only from God. And this will lead to an era of unprecedented prosperity for all mankind. ■

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