

A POWERFUL INCENTIVE FOR REVOLT

Political unrest is gathering momentum around the world, due, in the main, to the knock-on effect from 2 unrelated, international factors:

1. The international recession for which, at this time, there appears to be no definitive answer from the world's most-advanced economies; and,
2. The rapid fall in the price of crude oil which is causing the members of the **Organisation of Petroleum Exporting Countries (OPEC)** to dip deeper and deeper into their reserves in order to placate the masses in their countries.

Last Sunday, it was reported that thousands of people in Mexico City were protesting about their government's inability to respond to the growing economic problems, caused by the country's flagging economy.

The majority of the protestors were said to have been from rural areas.

In other words, people on the bottom end of the financial totem pole.

In Russia, last Sunday, there were rallies of many thousands of disenchanted citizens, all complaining about the alleged mismanagement of the Russian economy.

They were calling for the resignation of Prime Minister Vladimir Putin.

Unemployment in Russia is rising and the prices of basic food items and utilities are, also, on the rise.

If there is one thing that can cause civil disobedience within a country, it is the people's inability to afford, what used to be known as, 3, square meals per day.

TARGET () fully expects more and more rallies of disenchanted people of various countries in the not-too-distant future, some of which rallies could well turn out to be very nasty.

Some of the leaders of the countries, in which the rallies are violent, could well be toppled from power.

The position of President Hugo Chavez of Venezuela, for instance, a man who has been in power since 1999, must be considered very precarious because his political power could well be swept away in very short order if his Administration is unable to put food on the tables of the rural poor, which is the President's power base.

President Hugo Chavez has gone out of his way to tell the people of Venezuela that hatred of the United States of America is almost expected of his loyal supporters.

Along with hatred of the United States, hatred of the Jewish minority of the country and of the State of Israel is, also, being encouraged.

Last Sunday, also, an armed gang ransacked the oldest Jewish synagogue in Caracas, the Capital City of

Venezuela.

The gang called for the Jewish people to be expelled from the country.

Anti-Jewish slogans have been appearing in Caracas.

Less than one percent of the entire population of the country, numbering about 27 million people, is known to be Jewish. That is less than 250,000 people.

In July, Venezuela ordered the expulsion of the Israeli Ambassador along with a number of the Ambassador's diplomatic staff.

Israel responded by ordering the Venezuelan diplomats to leave the country.

Diplomatic relations between the 2 countries have been completely severed and, it appears, repairing the breakdown in diplomatic relations is not likely to be on the cards in the near future.

Regardless of the reasons that caused the rift between Israel and the Government of Venezuela and the very small Jewish community of Venezuela and the non-Jewish majority, it is convenient for President Hugo Chavez to have a common enemy.

Shades of Nazi Germany under Chancellor Adolf Hitler!

Chancellor Adolf Hitler made anti-Semitism a keystone of his propaganda and policies and he built the Nazi Party into a mass movement in Germany.

It is estimated that Germany killed some 50 million people, during World War II, a war that lasted from 1939 until 1945.

Many aspects of the Government of Venezuela, of late, resemble the actions of Germany, prior to World War II, with the nationalisation of petroleum, communications and electricity in the country.

And, of course, there is the centralisation of authority through President Hugo Chavez's 21st Century Socialism.

Revenues from oil exports, over the past few years, have accounted for about 90 percent of the country's exports earnings, about 50 percent of the Federal Budget, and about 30 percent of the **Gross Domestic Product (GDP)**.

Inflation in the country is said to be about 30 percent per annum.

The present, lower price for crude oil on world markets, at about \$US40 per barrel, relative to last July's price of nearly \$US150 per barrel, is quite likely to play a major role in unseating President Hugo Chavez: With inflation, running at 30 percent or more and with the economy of the country, deteriorating, feeding the people will become a major problem, somewhere down the road for the colourful President.

The daily oil production of the country is known to be about 2.67 million barrels and, with domestic oil consumption, put at about 738,300 barrels per day, it leaves oil exports at a maximum of about 2.20 million barrels per day.

Unemployment in Venezuela in 2008 stood at about 8.50 percent.

It is quite likely to rise quickly in 2009 as the lack of revenue from oil exports starts to cut into President Hugo Chavez plans to placate the poor of the country.

Over-dependence on oil revenues is likely to be the undoing for the present Administration.

Putting Mexico Under The Microscope

The economy of Mexico is not as dependent on oil revenues as is Venezuela, but the country does produce about 3.50 million barrels of crude oil per day, of which amount, about 2.20 million barrels are exported.

The country's unemployment rate is known to be about 4.10 percent and, coupled with underemployment, the level is thought to be about 25 percent.

Inflation is running at about 6.20 percent per annum.

The country has a population of about 110 million with a workforce of about 46 million people.

President Felipe de Jesus Calderon Hinojosa was elected on December 1, 2006, and he stated, on taking the oath of office, that the most-important objective of his Administration was to tackle the country's poverty.

He, also, promised to create more jobs.

Unlike Venezuela, also, Mexico has diversified its industrial base and its industries include food and beverages, tobacco, chemicals, iron and steel, mining, textiles, clothing, motor vehicles and consumer durables.

Its biggest trading partner is the United States which is responsible for about 82 percent of all of the country's exports.

More importantly is that the Mexican Administration is known to be a friend of the United States, not its enemy.

The problems that face this country are low wages, underemployment, inequitable income distribution, and the problems, facing the impoverished southern states.

OPEC's Headache

OPEC is a cartel of some of the world's largest producers of crude oil.

It comprises 12 active members, representing their respective countries.

The OPEC members are: Iran, Iraq, Kuwait, Saudi Arabia, Venezuela, Qatar, Indonesia, Libya, United Arab Emirates, Algeria, Nigeria, Ecuador, Angola, and Gabon.

Some of OPEC's members are dependent on oil revenues, as already pointed out in the case of Venezuela.

The aims and objects of OPEC are claimed to be:

'OPEC's objective is to co-ordinate and unify petroleum policies among Member Countries, in order to secure fair and stable prices for petroleum producers; an efficient, economic and regular supply of petroleum to consuming nations; and a fair return on capital to those investing in the industry.'

However, many people believe that OPEC has been holding the world to ransom for many years, controlling oil prices to the detriment of the economies of the Western World.

President Barak Hussein Obama is out to break the back of OPEC under the guise of the US, ridding itself of the dependence on OPEC's crude oil.

For many of the Middle Eastern countries, those that are active members of OPEC, that is, if the revenues from oil exports were to dry up, almost completely, it would, ironically, be good for their respective

countries' economies because, then, drilling holes in the sand in order to pump out more black ooze would cease and the governmental administrations of these Middle Eastern countries would be forced to supplement their respective countries' lost oil incomes from some other revenue sources.

In fact, this is something that should have been started a long time ago.

Iran

Iran has gone on record as saying that it would like to wipe the world's slate clean by disposing of Israel, once and for all.

This statement was made by President Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad, who rose to power in Iran in August of 2005.

He is due to run for re-election this June.

The country has ambitions of becoming a member of the international nuclear club, something that the Western World is trying to thwart, by hook or by crook.

President Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad has thumbed his nose at the West and he states that Iran will have nuclear energy for peaceful purposes, no matter what.

The West takes a different view of Iran's avowed intentions with regard to nuclear technology.

This country, with a human population of about 66 million people, is a theocracy, headed by Supreme Leader Ali Hoseini-Khamenei.

The country's economy is very dependent on oil revenues to the extent of about 85 percent.

The State controls most of the economic activities within the country.

Private-sector involvement in the economy is kept in check and typically is restricted to small-scale workshops, farming, and the provision of various, non-essential services.

The 73-percent drop in the price of crude oil, internationally, over the past 7 months, will, no doubt, take its toll of the economy of the country.

The coffers of Iran are known to have amassed about \$US70 billion, brought about by gains from the previous high price of crude oil, but, even with this war chest, unemployment in the country is in double digits.

Inflation is running at about 28 percent per annum.

There is known to be a dire shortage of skilled labour in spite of the country, having a labour force of about 24.35 million people, representing about 37 percent of the total population of about 66 million people.

Oil production is about 4.70 million barrels per day, of which figure, about 2.80 million barrels are exported; the country consumes about 1.60 million barrels of oil per day.

Aside from crude-oil exports, the country sells fruits and nuts and some carpets.

The heavy reliance on revenues from the exportation of crude oil is going to make things very difficult for the Supreme Leader and for President Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad – if he survives the June elections.

The people of Iran are staunchly 98-percent Muslim, but when the stomach growls for sustenance, it is a strong incentive for the plebeian to demand a change of leadership.

The days of President Mahmud Ahmadi-Nejad, therefore, may be limited.

Saudi Arabia

Saudi Arabia is an oil-based economy, the revenues of which account for about 90 percent of export earnings and about 45 percent of the Gross Domestic Product.

The population of the country is about 28 million people, all of whom claim to be Muslim.

The unemployment rate is somewhere between 12 percent and 25 percent, according to various estimates.

The inflation rate is about 10.30 percent per annum.

The country, which is a kingdom, has about 20 percent of the world's proven oil reserves and it produces about 10.25 million barrels of crude oil per day, consuming about 2.31 million barrels of that amount.

The exportation of crude oil is put at about 9 million barrels per day.

Nigeria

Nigeria has one of the highest mortality rates on the African Continent.

Life expectancy in the country is about 46 years.

The infant mortality rate is about 9.60 percent of live births.

According to the World Health Organisation, about 5.40 percent of the 146 million human inhabitants of the country have contracted **AIDS – Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome**.

Political instability has hobbled the country for many years.

The country's various governmental administrations have been fraught with corrupt politicians, resulting in inadequate infrastructure, having been completed over the years.

Inflation is running at about 11 percent per annum.

The country is awash with crude oil and exports about 2.47 million barrels per day, while consuming about 312,000 barrels per day.

About 95 percent of all export earnings come from the sales of crude oil.

The country's human population is about 50 percent Muslim and 40 percent Christian.

In the south of the country, in the Niger Delta, especially, tensions have been stretched to the breaking point as it is claimed that the country's wealth is going into the pockets of members of the successive, governmental administrations – while the minority ethnic groups of the region remain mendicant and, in some cases, even starving.

With the price of crude oil, now at about \$US40 per barrel, Nigeria's impoverished and marginalised minorities could well step up their campaign to obtain a slice of their birthright.

Because of the location of the rich oil wells in the country, it is unlikely that the present government of the country, or any other government for that matter, could police the Niger Delta District, effectively.

About 32 percent of the total human population of about 146 million people is illiterate.

Education is woefully inadequate.

United Arab Emirates

The United Arab Emirates is one of the smallest nations of OPEC, with a population of about 4.62 million people.

The average life expectancy is about 76 years.

The country's population is about 96 percent Muslim.

The inflation rate was about 14.40 percent, as at December 31, 2008.

The unemployment rate is thought to be about 2.40 percent.

The country's oil production is about 2.95 million barrels, daily, of which amount about 381,000 barrels are consumed, daily.

Crude-oil exports are about 2.70 million barrels, daily.

The country's income from oil and gas exports is about 25 percent, today.

Per capita, The United Arab Emirates is one of the richest countries of OPEC, with the government, focusing on diversification and the creation of more opportunities for its people, improving education, and increasing private-sector employment.

Black Gold Turned To Dust

For many of the impoverished and marginalised peoples of the world, the chasm between the haves and the have-nots is vast.

They can go hungry for a time, but when push comes to shove, these peoples can become a strong force with which to be reckoned.

The Nigerian, ethnic minority group of the Ijaws formed The Niger Delta People's Volunteer Force, led by Mujahid Dokubo-Asari, and the Niger Delta Vigilante, led by Ateke Tom.

All that the members of these groups ever wanted was a piece of the crude-oil '*pie*' that they claimed they were not getting.

Dissatisfaction at being neglected and marginalised by successive Nigerian governments, these groups armed themselves and caused havoc to the governments.

They continue with their activities to this day.

The Nigerian Government of today alleges that both of these groups are merely cults.

But, with a life expectancy at less than 50 years, with AIDS, sweeping through the country, and with abject poverty, being a major problem, the people's lot is not a very happy one.

The Government of the People's Republic of China (PRC) is well aware that civil disobedience is probable in the country unless the Government can deliver on its promises of a better life for the 1.30 billion human inhabitants of the country.

It was reported, only last Monday, that some 20 million workers from rural areas, those who had been working in cities, had lost their jobs and cannot find other work.

In 15 provinces of the PRC, about 15 percent of the total migrant labour force is unemployed.

Thus far, the PRC Government has performed admirably in creating the necessary infrastructure for the creation of jobs.

For 3 decades, the country's annual growth of the Gross Domestic Product has been the envy of the Western World.

However, the international recession has chipped away at this infrastructure, leaving tens of millions of workers, walking the streets of the major cities of the PRC, looking for alternate employment.

When a man is hungry, he is often irrational: Social unrest could well follow in the wake of irrationality.

As William Shakespeare wrote in his famous play, Julius Caesar: *'The evil that men do lives after them, the good is oft interred with their bones'*.

Some of the world's dictatorships of today, those dictatorships that have ignored the pleadings and aspirations of the people that they claim to govern, may well fall before the year is out.

For fanatical political regimes that disregard the needs of the people, they do so at their peril.

With the world's recession deepening, these dictatorships will be able to do little to ameliorate the situation; and, this will result in the people, rising up and demanding action.

Hunger is a powerful incentive for revolt.

For a number of OPEC members, as the oil revenues turn to dust, there could well be material changes in the leadership of some of the members of this oil cartel ... assuming that it is not usurped in due course.

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