

“BEYOND THE RHETORIC”

Harry C. Alford □

Swiss Chocolate, English Tea and Dutch Oil – HA, HA, HA!□

The above is an oxy-moron. More so, it is an indictment on what happens to Africa the continent with the richest resources on earth. It is an historical pity that we can't get our minds together in the 21st century and harness vast amounts of resources so that nearly a billion children of Africa can enjoy a quality of life replete with healthcare and economic vitality.

There is not one cocoa plant growing in Europe let alone Switzerland. Cocoa is harvested in Western Africa and the raw product is shipped to Europe for processing. A citizen of Ghana or Cote D'Ivoire has to pay a precious price if he wants to buy chocolate from his corner store and it has the moniker "Swiss Chocolate". Swiss hell! The cocoa was grown down the road.

There is not one tea plant grown in Europe especially not in England. Yet, the British have the monopoly on the finest tea. The "finest tea" – that would be the tea from the highlands of East Africa. Like coffee, the finest tea comes from the mountainous regions of East Africa. Ethiopia, Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania, Rwanda and a few other nations have been blessed with the earth, air and weather that blends together a product that cannot be produced as well in any other place on earth. Millions of tons of it are shipped to Europe and other places for processing and packaging and denied its birthright – Africa.

What is the Dutch Oil Co. AKA Shell Oil? There isn't one oil well in Amsterdam. Yet, boat loads of crude oil from Nigeria, Angola and other areas along the western shoreline of Africa go to Amsterdam for refining. A person in Lagos, Nigeria will pay about \$3.50 per gallon for gasoline even though it was generated down the road from the gas station. Conversely, a person in Venezuela pays about 20 cents for a gallon of gasoline because his nation has enough gumption to refine and control its own resources.

The above are just a few examples as to why Africa is poor and Europe is not. We can talk about diamonds, gold, coltan, platinum, flowers and hundreds of other items that are easily marketed in the Western Nations that come from the earth of Africa. Here we are in 2007 and the matter should be simple Economics 101 and straight out good government. Uh oh, that's a problem – straight out good government.

There are over 40 nations on the African continent. That is way too many to manage and coordinate commerce. Many of these governments should be merged and common trade languages such as Swahili instituted for the sake of viable commerce. Ten super nations could make Africa a very manageable place for economic growth and stability.

Mexico got tired of foreign companies manipulating its oil industry so they nationalized it. Africa, after it consolidates its sovereignty structure should consider the same for all of its major resources. This should happen for a distinct period of time while it organizes systems to process its resources and direct them to fair markets that will match the value with the price. As they fade away from nationalizing its industries, home grown corporations can be formed and the entrepreneurial spirit can kick into gear and generate wealth to the savvy and jobs to the millions.

These new nations must have banks who can deal in “hard currency”. Money that will not fluctuate in value on a daily basis and has the trust of the people. Right now, with the exception of South Africa, only western banks can offer hard currency in sub-Saharan Africa. Perhaps there could be a multi-nation standard like the Euro is used in Europe. The economy could also have one gigantic stock exchange to compete with the rest of the world. □

There is enough African brain power living abroad to staff and assist in this major transformation. If all the educated Africans living in North America and Europe were to return home, the educational indicators of Africa would sky rocket. There would be a need for strong, consistent democracy amongst the new nations. With this, would come intolerance for corruption and a very strict judicial system to handle it.

Right now, China looks to Africa as its new farmland and direct resource for oil. The Chinese are leasing millions of acres for farming and are buying oil above the market rate – just to get it. The United States buys 10% of its oil from Africa and that will change to 25% within the next 10 years. Africa should do what Saudi Arabia has done. It took control of its resource, oil, and turned a poor desert nation into one of the richest nations in the world. Do it Africa. Do it now!!

Mr. Alford is the co-founder, President/CEO of the National Black Chamber of Commerce.

Website: www.nationalbcc.org.