

OLD-SCHOOL JOURNALISM - REPORTING YOU CAN TRUST

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THE CONSERVATIVE

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LEADERSHIP IN EUROPE

Last week, Ursula von der Leyen, President-designate of the next European Commission, released details of the policy portfolio that each commissioner is set to be allocated.

The von Der Leyen Commission will take over on the 1st of November, a day after the expected exit date of the United Kingdom. The former German Defence Minister and mother of seven will take over the Berlaymont at a time of great

change for Europe. It will therefore be important for her to have a team around her that she can rely on. In this issue, The Conservative hosts a special feature that looks in detail at the candidate Commissioners, their strengths, weaknesses and backgrounds. Some are familiar faces, others are brand new. Some are old, and another is the youngest ever nominated. And for the first time ever, the Commission is close to a full gender balance.

The EU treaties stipulate that each EU Member State can nominate a

Commissioner who before taking office in their designated role must pass through a series of scrutiny steps in the European Parliament.

Each candidate Commissioner must first submit to the parliament a mission letter and declarations of financial interests, together with their CVs, before they are subject to a three hour hearing in the relevant Parliamentary Committee(s), which will take place between 30th September and 8th October. Parliament's Committees can

also submit a series of written questions to the candidates which must be responded to at least 48 hours before the start of their hearing.

Following each hearing the Committees responsible will evaluate the performance and suitability before submitting a letter of recommendation to the Parliament's Conference of Committee Chairs, before the hearings are declared closed. Then on Wednesday 23rd October, Parliament votes on whether to endorse the whole college.

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When the Green Revolution comes

by Andrianos Giannou

As 16-year-old climate-activist-of-the-moment Greta Thunberg's zero-emissions, solar-powered sailboat docked at North Cove Marina in Manhattan on 28 August, following a two-week trip across the Atlantic, gathered crowds erupted in cheers and applause. Inspired by her decision to skip school to picket the Swedish Parliament last August, millions of pupils around the globe have skipped off classes on Fridays in what has come to be known as

the School Strike 4 Climate. The young Swede, who shuns air travel, is in New York to address the United Nations Climate Change Summit later this month. In this past year, she has become a staple of leadership gatherings: she has spoken at Davos, the European, British and French Parliaments and has also shaken hands with the Pope. As she stepped off the boat onto the yacht-filled harbour, the press corps was at hand to record a short statement: "Let's not wait any longer. Let's do it now." the message commenced. Do what exactly?



Conservative Books Homer's THE ILIAD

by James Delingpole

Written sometime between 760 and 710 BC, and originally designed, of course, to be recited rather than read, The Iliad came before the main Greek philosophers, the Roman Empire, Christianity, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. This is Western civilisation in its rawest, wildest, most untutored state.

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Reforming European Conservatism

It has been ten years since the founding of a new conservative movement in European politics and a great deal has changed. The world has moved on in many ways, governments have changed and events have taken hold. The agenda has shifted since 2009, from the aftermath of the ‘Great Recession’ to the migrant crisis and Brexit; and with those changes, so must the conservative movement.

During their council meeting in June, the Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe approved statute changes which, amongst other things, included a name change. Henceforth the European conservative movement will be called the European Conservatives and Reformist Party.

The name change reflects the need for both Party and Group to work closer together towards reformation of the European Union. It also brings the ECR Party in line with the rest of the ‘establishment’ since the European Peoples Party, the Greens and Socialists all bear the same name as their respective group in the European Parliament.

Despite the name change, the European Conservatives and Reformist Party will continue to stand for those same principles that we have championed for the last ten years. Because now, more than ever, there is a need for pragmatic policy-making that keeps the interests of the people at heart.

The European elections earlier this year showed us that European people are not happy with the status quo, and that they are ready to see fundamental change to the political system in Brussels and Strasbourg. The ECR’s message during the last election was one that chimed with the electorate, proposing a move towards a Europe that “does less but does it better”.

This message remains important as we move into the new mandate and MEPs begin to work on new policy. With the other political groups abandoning their traditional positions in blind support of ever closer integration, and the Commission being given a blank cheque to carry out its plans, it’s clear that only the ECR stands ready to offer a constructive and workable alternative. This can be achieved without abandoning the ECR’s traditional values, as set out in the Prague and Reykjavik declarations.

On economic issues, we will continue to advocate a policy of freer trade, not just within the common market, but also with the rest of the world. For we, as an alliance of conservatives and classical liberals, understand that trade is what makes the lives of others better. Free trade, with less and smarter regulation, can bring prosperity to people by lowering the cost of household goods. It is the position of the ECR that by reducing the regulatory burden on businesses, companies can work to create more goods for people in Europe and beyond, whilst at the same time creating jobs. It is, after all, businesses that create jobs, not the state.

So it is with this notion in mind that we must also ensure that the European Union does not grow beyond its means. The EU does not need to be as large as it currently is, especially if it is serious about

governing less from the centre and upholding the principle of subsidiarity. The cost of running the European Union has continued to increase with each passing administration in the Commission. With the United Kingdom set to leave the European Union before the end of the year, it is clear that there will be a substantial hole in the budget. We do not believe, as the Socialist, Greens and some Liberals do, that this means that the European Union should levy pan-European taxes to fill this gap. Such a move would only harm ordinary Europeans by increasing their tax burden. Instead, we believe that the European Union should take steps to economise, and use this opportunity to cut back on some of the reckless spending that has been allowed to take place over the last few decades.

Not only would doing so send a clear message to the people of Europe that the EU is in touch, it would also offer a chance to restructure the Union in a more efficient way. Many European resent the fact that whilst they have had to endure strict austerity since 2009, the EU institutions have continued to expand in Brussels, Strasbourg and Luxembourg. Many voters in the last election used the ballot box as a means of expressing their dissatisfaction at the luxuries and indulgences that bureaucrats have awarded themselves, whilst others have had to tighten their belts.

And on social issues as well, the European Conservatives and Reformists will continue to be the defenders of traditional values and the principles of the enlightenment. It is not for the European Union to dictate social policy, but for member states, whose sovereignty is constantly being eroded without just cause. Whilst the ECR believes in cooperation between member states on areas of mutual importance, such as the external border and the fight against terrorism, it is hard to justify the creation of new bodies that oversee social policy issues which could easily be managed from a local level.

Finally, on foreign policy, the ECR will continue to lead the way. In the last mandate, ECR MEPs together with members of the Council of Europe were instrumental in opposing Russian aggression in Europe. We have established ourselves as the staunchest friends and allies of the United States, Canada, Israel and Ukraine. This is because we continue to believe in the importance of the trans-Atlantic relationship, and the importance of engaging with our near neighbours, especially those with which we share common values.

The European Conservatives and Reformists will continue to be the natural home of conservative and classical liberal parties in Europe. And as we continue to expand in the future, we will ensure that we never compromise on our core beliefs. At the same time, however, we want to ensure that the ECR continues to be at the centre of European politics and leading from the front on the issues that matter to us and our voters. The coming years will be challenging ones for the European Union, and we are committed to find common ground wherever it exists, in order to ensure that the citizens of Europe can continue to live in peace and growing prosperity. ■

by Richard Milsom



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Welcome to the 9th edition of The Conservative. In this edition, we take a look at the faces that will make up the new European Commission, profile the new British Prime Minister and a look at the recent elections in Ukraine. All of this and more from Brussels premium conservative publication.

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With MEPs due to vote on the College of European Commissioners nominated by EU Member States over the Summer recess, we have taken a look at future faces of the Von Der Leyens Commission. In our in depth profiles of each nominee you will find where they stand on the key issues, what experience they bring to the table, and which nominee has released their own Christmas album.

The vote for the new European Commission will shape the direction of European Policy over the next five years, and we believe that it is our duty to give our readers a fair view of who it is that will run the European Union. Perhaps made more important by the fact that once again the Commission seems to be gearing up to become more intrusive in the daily lives of European citizens.

...

We also focus on the shift of power that has taken place in the European Union, as almost all of the top jobs in the European Commission, Council, Parliament and European Central Bank have gone to politicians from Western Europe. Only two of the Committee Chairmanships in the European Parliament have gone to people from Central-Eastern Europe. We look at what this shift means for European unity, as it starts to look more and more like the EU is governed from the West.

...

In our European news section, we have extensive coverage of the recent elections in Ukraine, that have seen the country receive its first Parliamentary majority in history. The ‘Servant of the People’ party, led by the recently elected President Volodymyr Zelensky, won 254 seats in the recent elections, seeing long-standing politicians replaced with relative newcomers. We look at what these elections mean for the country that is still facing economic hardships and a war with Russia.

...

Boris Johnson has taken over as leader of the Conservative Party and Prime Minister of the United Kingdom – we take a look at the background and upbringing of the man who will lead the country out of the European Union in a few months time. We also look at what his background in the Classics tells us about his views towards governing and Europe.

...

Since we launched the Newspaper back in March, we have had an overwhelmingly positive response from our readers. However we are constantly looking to improve, including by welcoming submissions from our readers. We hope that you'll enjoy our next edition, which will be a Special Edition for the Conservative Party Conference in the United Kingdom.

ECR Committee Chairs appointed

The European Conservatives and Reformists Group in the European Parliament has successfully elected two new Committee Chairs. Lucia Duris Nicholsonova from Slovakia has been elected as the Chair of the Employment Committee, whilst Flemish MEP and former Belgian Finance Minister Johan Van Overtveldt has been elected to chair the Budgets Committee.

Both Members of the European Parliament were elected for the first time this year, and both bring a wealth of experience to their roles. Mr Van Overtveldt served as the finance minister of Belgium from 2014-2018, when his NVA Party was in coalition. Before that he had written extensively on economic matters, including a book about the Chicago School of Economic thought that boasted members such as F A Hayek and Milton Freidman, both of whom are thinkers that underly the ECRs approach to economic issues.

Ms Duris Nicholsonova on the other hand was previously a Secretary of State

for Labour in her native Slovakia, and also served as a Vice-Chairwoman of the Slovak National Assembly. She has been a staunch activist on issues related to minority inclusion, an area that the European Union has historically been incredibly weak on.

As well as bringing experience to their respective committees, they also help to balance out the distribution of Committee Chairs. As it stands, Ms Duris Nicholsonova will be one of only two legislative leaders in the European Parliament from central-Eastern Europe. And Mr Van Overtveldt will be the only Committee Chair representing the interests of regional parties.

We have no doubt that between them they will serve as strong role models for a more classically liberal approach to European politics, and help to find consensus on two very important areas for the centre-right, namely ensuring fair employment practices and reigning in control of excessive government spending. ■



ECR MEPs discuss Mobility Package

ECR Group MEPs met in Brussels with transport ministers before the Summer. Ministers from Bulgaria, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania and Poland came to discuss the EU’s controversial Mobility Package.

During the last parliamentary term a small majority of MEPs endorsed the package during a vote. It also sharply divided Member States, predominantly along East-West divisions, and was rejected by 10 countries within the Council of Ministers. When announced the Package was originally claimed to necessary to improve the working conditions of truck drivers throughout the EU, however if approved its clauses would be reintroduce barriers within the single market. It would do this by putting

in place rules that restrict international transport services which would exclude hauliers from operating cross border.

The ECR have always the European Parliament’s leading voice in support of the EU’s single market and Group Vice-Chair and Transport spokesman, Roberts Zile, said after the meeting:

“The Single Market is held up as a great success of the EU but the Mobility Package would drive a wedge right through it. Some countries like the single market when they can freely export their cars and vehicles but seem to like it a loss less when it works the other ways. It’s a double standard and we cannot accept regressive and protectionist measures that are designed purely to thwart cross border operators.” ■

ECR MEPs hold meeting on Iran

ECR MEPs Bert Jan Ruissen and Anna Fotyga hosted a conference on ‘Iran, Europe and the United States’ at the European Parliament in Brussels where Dr. Dan Schueftan from the University of Haifa was the main guest speaker.

Dr Schueftan reflected on the current tensions between the US, Europe and Iran but extended his scope to the Arab region and the position of Israel. He expressed his worries about the current ‘very violent and structurally unstable’ situation in most of the Arab world.

He shared his deep concern at the current situation in Iran with its ‘barbaric regime’ trying to influence the larger region via proxy wars, military expansion and economic pressure. He warned: “if Iran takes the power, not only the Middle East will be in trouble, but the whole world”. In this light, he welcomed the tough stance of the US towards Iran: “the US president cannot afford to be nice. We have to face the reality despite we don’t like it. The Middle East is in a stage of hopelessness. Looking not only from position of Jerusalem, the environment

is really depressing” said Schueftan as he described the situation in the region.

At the same time he strongly criticized the role of the EU as it is “missing realism”. On the recent EU action to circumvent the US sanction regime on Iran via the Instrument in Support of Trade Exchanges he is clear:

“Europe pretends they play a role in Iran, but they do not. Europe makes promises but cannot keep them. They’ll lose respect”. In his view Europe should refrain from its peace and democracy policy in the Middle East and rather focus on assisting the countries in their needs on areas like agriculture, environment and infrastructure. “The rest of the world is not Europe. And does not want to become as we are. Democracy is a sexy thing, but not in today’s Middle East. Different cultures have different priorities. That’s the reality. Cultures matter and differ from each other. I, as an Israeli, feel part of the Western civilization, in Europe I feel like home, but it’s not the case of the whole region” - said Schueftan.

Schueftan concluded by praising the Iranian people for their courage to stand up against the radical policy of the regime. With this in mind he ended



with a positive note by arguing that Israel and Iran (after the regime) are the two countries in the Middle East that are the most promising: “ In the long run I draw a silver lining around a black cloud”

Dr. Dan Schueftan is the Head of the International Graduate Program in National Security at that university of Haifa and was the Director of the National Security Studies Center at the University until last year. ■



Faroe Islands The other disunited Kingdom



General elections took place in the Faroe Islands on the 31st of October. The islands 36,000 voters cast their votes in elections for the Logting – the Faroese Parliament. The elections played out the usual divisions within the island over whether they wish to continue as a dependent state of Denmark, or go it alone as an independent nation. The pro-independence ‘Peoples Party’, who are affiliated to the ECR Party, came in first place.

The Faroe Islands, which are closer to Scotland than Denmark, have been a self-governing region since 1948, when they were granted autonomy at the same time as Greenland. Throughout the Islands history, the chain of islands have belonged to Sweden, Norway and now Denmark. The Danes gained control of the territory in 1812 as part of the Treaty of Kiel at the end of the Napoleonic wars, in which Denmark fought alongside the French. As retribution for being on the wrong side of history, Sweden took control of Norway – which had owned the Faroe Islands since 1035, leaving the Islands in Danish hands. In recent years

Faroese people have expressed a desire to break their ties with the Kingdom of Denmark and become an independent state.

The Logting is argued to be one of the oldest parliaments in the world, with records of it meeting dating back to the 900’s – with the first reference being made to it in writing in 999 when Christianity was introduced to the Islands. The most recent sitting of the Parliament was a divisive one, with the government and opposition both having 16 seats each. These elections have changed the balance slightly, giving the Independence Party, an ECR Affiliated Party, more seats than in the previous Parliament.

The calls for independence don’t just come from the right – the socialist ‘Republic Party’ also gained seats during the election. Despite this, no clear majority exists in Parliament for independence, with most parties taking a more pragmatic approach of favouring regionalism.

The next challenge for the island is to form a stable majority and nominate a Prime Minister. ■

Health

Measles back in Europe

The World Health Organisation has reported that the disease measles has returned to Europe after cases were reported in the UK, Czech Republic, Greece and Albania. The disease had previously been declared eradicated. Measles is a highly contagious and potentially fatal illness that causes coughing, rashes and a fever.

Close to 365,000 cases have been reported worldwide this year, the WHO said, almost three times as many as in the first half of 2018. All regions of the world saw an increase in measles except the Americas, which saw a minor decline - however the USA registered its highest number of cases in 25 years.

The resurgence of the disease has been attributed to the spread of fake news about vaccinations. In 1997, a British gastroenterologist published a fraudulent paper claiming that the MMR vaccine caused autism and bowel cancer. The paper, authored by Andrew Wakefield, was later revealed to be false, and attempts to replicate his



results failed. The paper was deemed to have been improperly peer-reviewed and was discredited. But the damage was already done.

The media had caught on to Mr Wakefield’s paper and the idea that MMR caused autism was rapidly catching on. This was because the media had found the story and run it, long before the facts were clear. This meant that millions of people who saw it, believed that it had some validity. Even today, despite almost over 3,000 peer reviewed papers

pointing to the truth that MMR doesn’t cause Autism, people continue to believe that they do because the media gave that view a platform.

The World Health Organisation recommends that all children are vaccinated against measles, amongst many other diseases, at an early age. The return of Measles to Europe and the rest of the world is a sign of a deeper failure to tackle fake news and educate people on the importance of vaccinating children. ■

Poland

Poland boosts Transatlantic relations

On 31 August 2019, the second meeting of the U.S. - Poland Strategic Dialogue on Energy was held in Warsaw. The meeting was attended by a delegation of the Polish government led by Secretary of State in the Chancellery of the Prime Minister Piotr Naimski and a delegation of the U.S. government chaired by Secretary of Energy, Rick Perry, along with U.S. Ambassador to Poland Georgette Mosbacher.

The agreement concerns cooperation in the area of introducing reforms to the Ukrainian gas market, the Republic of Poland’s infrastructure for import of natural gas, Ukraine’s infrastructure for storage and export of American LNG, as well as gas connections within the region. The agreement was signed on 31 August 2019 by the Republic of Poland, the United States of America and Ukraine.

In another trip earlier in September, American Vice President Mike Pence visited Warsaw. The visit included the signing of a “Joint Declaration of Poland and the United States of America on 5G”. The declaration pertains to the network which will be of paramount significance for national security. Poland and the United States of America have declared to intensify their cooperation in this regard.

As part of the same visit, Vice President Pence also visited Polish Soldiers near the border with Russia. During his speech he paid tribute to the Polish



armed forces: “The President asked me to be here in Poland simply to say thank you. First and foremost, thank you to all of you for stepping up to serve, for standing united to defend our freedom and our collective security. You come from the rest of us, but you are the best of us. You are heroes all.”

The Vice President went on to say: “Under President Trump, the United States will always put the security and

prosperity of America first. But as the President has made clear, and as all of you demonstrate each and every day, America first does not mean America alone. And the United States will always stand with the people of Poland”

Both Poland and the United States are working towards a deepening of relations in the face of the ongoing threat from Russia – a threat mostly ignored by Western Europeans. ■

Russia

Russian Government covering up nuclear accident



The Russian Government has been accused of attempting to cover up a nuclear accident on its Northern border with Finland. The explosion which took place at a missile testing facility on the 8th of August led to an evacuation of a neighbouring town and the death of five nuclear scientists.

Locals also reported that the government had been handing out iodine tablets to residents of areas near the explosion. Iodine tablets is used in the event of nuclear accidents to prevent people from absorbing too much radiation into their thyroids and developing thyroid cancer.

In an equally puzzling move, Russian nuclear monitoring stations, as well as those of several allied central Asian countries, stopped reporting back results in the aftermath of the explosion. The last reported results of which showed a spike in radiation coming from the area of the explosion.

The woes of the Russian state over the Nuclear Accident only worsened when

doctors from a hospital treating patients that had been effected by the incident spoke to the BBC and stated that they themselves were worried about having been irradiated from contact.

All the signs seem to point to a failed test of a new nuclear powered cruise missile. The existence of these missiles was only made known to the public after President Putin announced the creation of a new nuclear programme during his state of the union address in 2018. The development of these missiles demonstrates a dangerous departure from Russia’s compliance with international treaties governing nuclear weapons.

As details continue to emerge around the scale of the nuclear accident, many Russia watchers can’t help but feel that history is repeating itself. Although the scale of the incident doesn’t seem to be anywhere near as bad as the Chernobyl disaster, it is clear that the Kremlin is putting the same amount of effort into covering up any wrong doing. ■

Germany

Regional gridlock



On Sunday 1st of September, German citizens living in Saxony and Brandenburg went to the polls to elect representatives for their federal council. The results turned out to be a disappointment for the centre-left and centre-right as the rise of the populist Alternative fur Deutschland (AfD) cut into the vote share of all the major parties according to exit polls. In both states the AfD came in second place, making coalition building more difficult.

The regions that make up the former East Germany have long been a hot bed of political radicalism and the far right, in previous years the neo-Nazi National Democratic Party won seats in the Saxonian legislative chamber. The Party has seen it’s vote share collapse, with the rise of the Alternative fur Deutschland. The elections themselves were some of the most hostile and controversial in recent years. A court ruling initially blocked the AfD from running part of their list, due to the fact that the party had failed to fill out the correct paperwork. A higher court later ruled that they could run a longer list of candidates as they were expected to win more seats than they had candidates for. The tone of the elections was only darkened when it emerged that one candidate of the AfD had attended a neo-Nazi rally in Greece according to a report by Der Spiegel.

The former East Germany has also for the longest time been a hot bed of socialism on the other end of the spectrum, with the far-left Die Linke often performing well on the back of pre-1989 nostalgia. Die Linke, came second in Brandenburg in 2014 and formed a coalition with the Social Democrats, however this year they seem to have fallen back to fourth place, having lost votes to the Greens. In Saxony their vote share went down, however they still managed to come out ahead of the Greens and Socialists.

The ruling CDU Party also took a hit on election night, with a 7% swing against them in both regions. However, the Classically Liberal Free Democrat Party suffered the most, failing to win enough votes to enter either legislature. The party has long struggled to find its place in the new political environment in Germany, despite its best attempts at modernising.

The task of forming coalitions in both Brandenburg and Saxony will now take place, with parties trying hard to ensure the cordon sanitaire is maintained around the AfD in order to prevent the far-right from once more playing a role in German politics. ■



Ukraine

Third Maidan: AN ELECTORAL REVOLUTION



On the 21st of July, Ukrainians went to polls for the third time in 2019. The results astonishingly saw a 73% win for Volodymyr Zelensky: and for the first time of Ukrainian history, a single party won enough mandates to govern on their own with 254 seats of which 226 came from single member constituencies. It gives the party an enormous amount of power not only to assign ministers and pass legislation but to “govern” in every sense of this word.



Viktor Karvatsky
CEO of the Ukrainian think-tank “Ad Astra”

The victory of “Servant of the People” in single-mandate districts was near total. A vast majority of the constituencies ended up being won by Mr Zelensky’s party, including a few surprise victories. A wedding photographer standing for the “Servant of the People” in one district beat the incumbent MP and local oligarch Zaporizhia Boguslaev.

What does it mean for Ukraine?

First of all, it is important to take into account that “Servant of the People” doesn’t have a clear ideology on which to base its next steps. Although they claim libertarianism as an ideology, it is highly doubtful that many voters knew what that meant in practical terms. The left-right paradigm doesn’t bother anyone in most of Ukraine who worry more about personal welfare, peace, and economic prosperity. Whether a party supports Marxist or Keynesian policies doesn’t matter. The fact that the *ancient regime* couldn’t provide safeguards for people was the main reason why it failed three times in 2019.

Secondly, Ukraine now has a power model in which the checks and balances system fall behind not because of a power grip but because of people’s firmest belief that only “the strong leader” may help in our situation. Mr Zelensky called the elections because he was unable to command a majority in the Parliament.

In the near future, Ukraine will experience a short-term disruption period, as hastily implemented

reforms are implemented. Zelensky said over and over during the election campaign that he is running only for one term. Recently while abruptly firing the interim head of the fiscal service he repeated that his team didn’t have enough time to linger. Consequently, Ukraine will witness a similar shock therapy, as that which took place in much of Eastern Europe in the 1990s. It was Timothy Snyder who said communist elites who were ruling the country after the collapse of the USSR didn’t fit the role of European reformers.

The local elections in 2020 will be important to ensure that these reforms can take place on a regional level as well. For “the Servant of the People”, it is of particular importance to demonstrate fast results in order not to upset people who have voted for the party. The lack of public support would transform the Third Maidan into a massive disaster as the whole system of the new Ukrainian political reality is based on hope. If something goes wrong, people will notice and this will negate the President’s idea of inscribing his name into history.

In the realm of foreign policy, Zelensky will remain pro-European. It is crucial to understand that to be pro-European is mainstream and morally right in the society that without supporting the EU and NATO a party has no chance to govern. The result of 13.05% of the pro-Russian party “Opposition Platform – For Life” obviously confirms this.

Ukraine will be trapped in an endless conflict with Russia, as Putin is still the president and is unwilling to sacrifice Russian national interests. Kyiv will continue, more intensively in the realm of obligation fulfillment of the Association Agreement, its Euroatlantic integration process. However, negotiations without mediators between Kyiv and Moscow or Donetsk/Lugansk may happen but it’s doubtful that they can be successful. In any case, peace is the paramount priority and its presence or absence will determine success of Zelenskyy’s foreign policy. ■



TRAINING ACADEMY

13th-15th DECEMBER 2019 ■ GRANADA ■ SPAIN



Hong Kong Protests continue



Wide scale protests in Hong Kong have continued throughout the summer. Originally started in opposition to the introduction of a new extradition law – that would have seen Hong Kong lose some of its special status as a self-governing region. The controversial proposals would have allowed judges to extradite people from Hong Kong to mainland China. Many critics feared it could be used as a tool of oppression by sending critics of the Chinese government to mainland China where they would not enjoy the same rights that they do in Hong Kong. It would be the greatest erosion of Hong Kong’s autonomy since the introduction of the current constitution in 1997 – when the territory was handed over from the United Kingdom to China.

Large scale protests have blocked the streets of the former British territory, with estimates of attendance as high as 1 million people. Chinese police have refused that claim and said that the protests only drew crowds of several hundred thousand. The protesters have been growing increasingly bold in their

Brazil Brazil rejects G7 aid

The government of Brazilian President Jair Bolsonaro has rejected aid that the G7 has agreed to put forward. The G7 had offered to put up \$22million in both logistical and financial support. The agreement to send the aid came at a meeting of the G7 countries in Biarritz, France. British Prime Minister Boris Johnson had stated ahead of the summit that he would raise the issue of the “horrific loss of habitats and species around the world” and not just in the Amazon.

Fires started by ranchers and logging companies in Brazil have quickly spread out of control and caused large scale destruction of one of the world’s most diverse regions. A record number of fires were reported in the Amazon Rainforest in the month of August, with blame being aimed at reckless logging companies and ranchers. There have even been some suggestions that the fires were started as a means to push indigenous people off land that agricultural and mining companies wanted for illegal exploitation of natural resources.

Of course there is nothing new about logging in the Amazon, especially illegal



harvesting of trees. Just as there is nothing new about the Forest Fires. The reality is that the fires are less severe than in previous years – there were more forest fires of higher intensity between 2001-2007 that destroyed much larger areas.

One of the many issues on the agenda of the G7 was growing concern for the health of our planets environment. In particular concern for endangered species and the growing amount of man-made waste in the Oceans.

United States Cherokee Nation to appoint Representative to Congress

For the first time in over 200 years, the Cherokee Nation – a federally recognised tribe of first nation Americans – has appointed a delegate to attend the US House of Representatives. Under the terms of the ‘Treaty of New Echoda’, signed in 1835, the Cherokee Nation was uniquely granted the right to send a non-voting delegate to the House of Representatives, however up to this point they had never expressed a desire to do so. The controversial treaty also moved the tribes from the Southeast of America to the ‘Indian Territories’ beyond the then borders of the United States, and the land that they used to occupy became part of modern day Georgia. The movement of the Cherokee people became part of the trail of tears, an apology for which didn’t come till 2009.

The New Cherokee announced on 25th August that they would now take up the seat in the House of Representatives and would nominate Democrat Kimberly Teehee, a former advisor to President Obama. If Ms Teehee is able to take her seat, she will join six other non-voting members of the House of Representatives who represent Guam, Puerto



Rico, American Samoa, the US Virgin Islands, the Mariana Islands and the United States Capital – Washington DC.

A number of these other representatives spend their time lobbying for statehood for their delegates. Both Washington DC and Puerto Rico have voted in referenda on applying for full statehood but have yet to receive

official responses from the United States government. Statehood would give them full voting rights within the United States House of Representative, entitle them to two Senators and in the case of Puerto Rico allow citizens free movement to the rest of the country as well as the right to vote for the US President. ■



India Autonomy stripped from Kashmir



Jammu and Kashmir has had its autonomy stripped in an unprecedented move by Prime Minister Modi. Mr Modi and his BJP passed legislation through the Lok Sabha that revoked the ‘Special Status’ of the autonomous province of Jammu and Kashmir, effectively annexing a disputed territory and turning into a state of India.

The move had long been on the books, as Mr Modi, who won re-election earlier this year, promised in his manifesto to reorganise the disputed North Western province into a state of India. The province of Jammu and Kashmir is an internationally disputed territory with claims on the land pressed by India, Pakistan and China.

An earlier agreement, ratified by the United Nations had stated that Jammu and Kashmir was to be an autonomous province of India, until such time that India, Pakistan and China could come to an agreement about the official status of the territory, either as a state of India, a region of Pakistan or an Independent Nation. According to Article 320 of the Indian constitution, the Lok Sabha can give the Indian President the power to decide the status of the region.

As a result of this special status, Kashmir was governed by its own laws, and

had its own judiciary. Laws governing property rights in the region mean that only Kashmiris can buy and own land within the territory.

The move to strip autonomy was welcomed in India by Hindu Nationalists, many of who celebrated what they saw as the completion of the Indian federation. However the response in Kashmir has been much colder, with protests being suppressed and the Indian government issuing a lockdown in an attempt to maintain order within the province. A full scale media blackout is in effect, with internet and phone lines being cut. These were finally restored on the 28th of August after external pressure.

On 7 August, a meeting of the National Security Committee decided to downgrade Pakistan’s diplomatic relations with India. Pakistan’s ambassador from India was recalled and the Indian ambassador to Pakistan was expelled. The Ministry of Information and Broadcasting decided to ban all cultural exchanges with India, including banning the screening of Indian films inside Pakistan.

There are currently no signs that situation will diffuse in the near future, with the region now in an uncertain place. ■

United States Democratic Primaries heat up



The big political news from the United States over the summer continued to be the race to see which Democrat would take on incumbent Republican President Donald Trump in next year’s presidential elections. The Democratic primaries have seen over twenty candidates face off against each other in a bid to become the parties nominee for the country’s highest office.

The unusually crowded field has seen a number of high profile veterans of American politics come up against lesser known newcomers. The early frontrunner has been former Vice President Joe Biden, who is widely seen as the moderate choice. However he has faced tough competition from hard-line socialist candidates Massachusetts Senator Elizabeth Warren and Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders – both of whom are seen as representing the future direction of the party.

Mr Biden has also faced tough criticism from California Senator Kamala Harris, who questioned the Vice Presidents record on race related issues, after he praised two former colleagues from his time in the Senate that were opposed to the desegregation of schools by bussing.

Other surprising candidates have also managed to capture the attention of Democrat Party Members in the early debates. The youngest candidate on the stage, Pete Buttigieg, has gained a core following as being an openly gay mayor from a traditionally conservative state.

The other candidate to attract a great deal of recent attention, and build momentum, is Andrew Yang. Mr Yang has managed to build up a strong support base after several successful appearances in the media and during the debates. An entrepreneur by background, he has never held public office, but instead runs a non-profit organisation that helps new tech start-ups. He is a strong defender of what he calls ‘Human-Centred-Capitalism’ and his flagship policy is a version of Universal Basic Income that he describes as his ‘freedom dividend’.

As the race intensifies, it is clear that the battle between the top candidates will only become more fractious. There have already been warnings that if the Democrats don’t come up with a unifying candidate, that whoever enters the race will struggle to defeat President Trump in the race for the White House. ■

Bangladesh Fire leaves 10,000 homeless

A fire in one of Dhakas largest slums has left at least 10,000 people homeless. The blaze tore through the mostly tin shacks that made up the homes of people in Mipur, one of the most densely populated areas of Bangladesh. Many homes had plastic roofs, which helped the fire to spread. No deaths have been reported.

The Country has long faced difficulty in dealing with growing poverty. Most of the residents of the slum work as low paid employees at a textile factory that provides fabrics for the clothes industry. Thankfully most of the residents were not in their homes as the fire struck, as they were away for the Eid al-Adha holiday.

It is feared that as many as 50,000 people may be displaced by the fires and in the mean time the government is offering those affected temporary accommodation in schools that are closed for the holidays. Others tried to take cover under temporary tarpaulin covers, however rain brought about by the Monsoon season caused many of the fields to turn to mud.



Dhaka is already facing a shortage of humanitarian aid due to the large number of refugees the city took in as a result of the Rohingya crisis across the border in neighbouring Myanmar. Attempts are being made by the Bangladeshi government to guarantee the safety and rights of the Rohingya people as they prepare to move some of the refugees home. More than 700,000 Rohingya fled to Bangladesh after the military began to crack down on them in Myanmar. ■

New Direction report CYBERSECURITY EXPENDITURE IN THE EU MEMBER STATES

Technology brings huge benefits to all of our daily lives. It shapes how we travel, how we work and how we spend our free time. But at the same time, the threat of cyber-attack risks our economies, private enterprises and personal wellbeing.

The threat of cyber-attack has become increasingly dangerous with both states, and non-state actors demonstrating an ability to cause a great deal of damage.

Cybersecurity is a classic example of a policy area that can neither be analysed nor solved within one sector exclusively. In order to ensure the digital security of the state, its institutions and its citizens, it is vital to establish both dialogue and partnership among many entities.

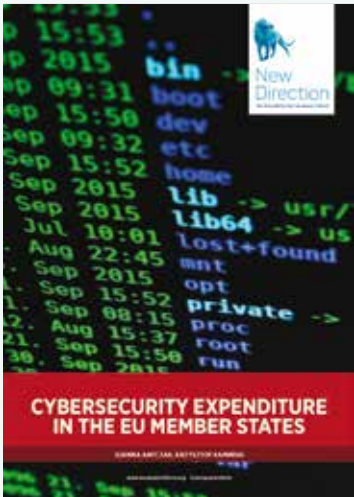
What’s needed is a common strategy to be developed in cooperation with representatives of the administration responsible for action plans and with entrepreneurs experienced in tackling online threats.

There is also a need to manage operational activities undertaken by

administrators of public offices and their counterparts in the private sector. Therefore such a dialogue must take place. The European Union and its Member States need to devise a coherent protection system based on standards that apply to the areas affected by cybersecurity, which is almost all of them. Cybersecurity is a matter which cannot be considered in isolation.

The importance of strong cooperation amongst Member States can be demonstrated by the Three Seas Initiative. The group, inaugurated in August 2016 by presidents of twelve countries is an economic and political project aimed at deepening integration processes in region’s states while strengthening their position in the European Union and North Atlantic Alliance. The initiative is chiefly to enable collaboration on many levels, guaranteeing common economic, infrastructure and security undertakings.


The European Union needs to play a considerable role in the field of cyber security. This applies both to a



regulatory domain as well as financial aid to the Community’s scientific and technological potential. Therefore it will be vital to plan the EU’s Multi-annual Financial Framework (MFF) to be properly implemented after 2020.

This publication by New Direction is devoted to the analysis of cyber security expenses at the macroeconomic level. The report reviews and analyses international cyber security strategies and estimates spending in this domain by EU Member States. The report contains conclusions and recommendations that can serve as a reference for discussion on cyber security expenditure in state budgets. ■





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DISCOVERING

What do Boris Johnson, the United Kingdom's new Prime Minister, and Ursula von der Leyen, the President-elect of the European Commission, have in common, you might wonder? No, it is not solving the Brexit conundrum: the German politician will take over her duties only the day after the 31st of October. Yes, you might need to know that for the next EU pub quiz. The answer is: they both attended European School, Brussels I, situated in the European capital's leafy – and posh – suburb of Uccle and set up for the offspring of Eurocrats. Kudos to those of you who chose “they both speak English, German and French” or “they have both lived in the United States” as the right answer. Close enough, but not as surprising.

It might come as a shock to many, but Boris Johnson's background is the most culturally rich of any British Prime Minister: he counts Ali Kemal, an Interior Minister of the Ottoman Empire, Karoline von Rothenburg, an illegitimate daughter of Prince Paul of Württemberg (who in turn was a son of Frederick I, king of the land that today makes up the German state of Baden-Württemberg), Jules Arnoux de Rivière, a 19th Century French chess master, and Elias Avery Lowe, a distinguished Jewish Russian-American Oxford and Princeton palaeographer, as ancestors. Described as a “one-man melting pot,” his family background was the subject of an episode of the BBC “Who do you think you are?” genealogy documentary series.

Does this confer him the title of a “serious Euro-toff”? His full last name is de Pfeffel Johnson, after all. This is not how Johnson feels: “I can't hide it from you, even in this, you know, European – in our common European home, I am particularly thrilled to find that I have some British royal ancestry as well.” King George II is Johnson's great-times-eight grandfather, through the Württemberg lineage.

Importantly, the Prime Minister takes pride in being “a product of incomers, a product of newcomers to Britain.” This ease and contentment with his foreign background might explain why his cabinet is the most ethnically diverse in British history. He basks in being “the product of many countries.”

In what seems to be an omen of things to come, Boris Johnson, at the sight of the splendour of Ludwigsburg Palace, the residence of the monarchs

of Württemberg, exclaims: “There are various other castles that I will have to capture in the course of my general Hoovering-up of the thrones of Europe, but this is a good start.” In a light moment with the cameraman who follows him, approaching the entrance of the palace, he says of the rest of the filming crew: “Obviously they have gone ahead to tell them that I am coming back, haven't they? I am bringing the luggage later.” He might not be picking any fights with European royal houses over ancestral property, but he faces a seemingly equally colossal task of persuading Brussels, Berlin and Paris to re-open the Withdrawal Agreement negotiated by Teresa May in attempt to remove the Irish backstop. It will certainly not be easy.

The documentary also reveals compelling leadership traits of Johnson's: his determination to deliver, and his sense of purpose. His paternal great-grandfather, Ali Kemal, an ethnic Turk, played an important role in the events around the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire and the foundation of the modern Turkish republic. During his short-lived tenure as a Minister of the Interior in 1919, he signed off on the dismissal of Mustafa Kemal Atatürk – who went on to found the Republic of Turkey in 1923 – a powerful and popular Major General of the Ottoman Army, in an attempt to quell vocal dissatisfaction among nationalist military ranks with the Ottoman government in Istanbul. That move cost him his position and eventually his life: soon after his resignation, he was lynched by an angry mob loyal to Atatürk. Official modern Turkish historiography portrays Ali Kemal as a traitor. But Johnson, upon learning of the events, concludes: “It was not so much a political blunder that he created, but the natural conclusion of his opposition to the nationalists.”

Boris Johnson might be seen by Eurocrats as another figure of the English establishment, seemingly insensitive to the higher ideas behind the European Union's *raison d'être*: peace and harmony among the peoples of Europe. However, throughout the documentary, it becomes obvious that Johnson not only takes pride in his family's multi-ethnic ancestry, but importantly, his background has come to shape his worldview: he is an offspring of newcomers who were embraced by the same British tolerance and openness that he has been actively promoting as a politician. ■

MISUNDERSTANDING

It is easy to misunderstand Boris Johnson. One does not need to look any further than the plethora of bitter polemic editorials against him, authored by the global progressive press corps upon his recent appointment as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom. In equal measure, the bitter tone of the myriad of lines written on social media by leftist in reference to the future of the country under his leadership could be equally catalogued as superficial knee-jerk reactions of the kind he is accused of, not unlike the criticism of United States President Donald Trump's election.

But what is Boris really like? What would be fairer than letting the Prime Minister speak for himself? What he certainly cannot be accused of is laconicism or diffidence. A masterful wordsmith, he is a prolific writer: he has published no less than eleven books – including historical nonfiction volumes, a guide to cars, poetry on family life, and political prose – and has been writing for world-class newspapers – first as a reporter and more recently as a columnist – for more than three decades.

He is the opposite of camera-shy. A 2016 live-streamed debate between Boris Johnson and Mary Bread, a Cambridge University classicist, on Greece against Rome, might go a long way in revealing the ideas and ideals that have influenced Boris' thought. The discussion was hosted by Intelligence Squared – “the leading forum for live, agenda-setting debates, talks and discussions around the world” that seeks to “[engage] with the most brilliant minds in the world,” per their own account – and is available on YouTube.

What is frequently mistaken as goofiness – to use an American term – or English eccentricity, his proclivity to gaffes and a tendency for colourful language might as well be the “arsenal of intellectual fireworks” – an expression used by the debate's moderator for both participants – of a brilliant mind that does not abstain from self-deprecating jokes either as a form of defence or a way of being. Is self-sarcasm a sign of intelligence? Oscar Wilde would think so. After all, Johnson's inclination to freely speak his mind might be sourced in an otherwise very English interpretation of what freedom of speech amounts to, which is nothing else than the right to offend.

Boris Johnson answers that question himself during the debate, in his exaltation of the rationality of pre-Socratic philosophers, who were the first to write about the superficiality of the ancient Greek gods. Johnson equates their “uttering of the most shocking profanities” –

Anaxagoras believed that the until-then venerated sun was a rock – with a

“studied insult to ordinary Greek feeling but intellectually honest.” He carries on claiming that “early Greeks are challenging, they are original, and they are willing to express their feelings in a way that has never happened before,” continuing that “Greeks were the first to express their vulnerable egos, and as all egotists, they were extraordinarily competitive.” Isn't that the very same freedom-loving, unconventional yet enlightened, and ambitious if not egocentric approach that one can discern in Boris Johnson?

More than that, one could also explain his contempt for what the European Union has become based on the same principle: they did not like “to be bossed around,” he says of the Athenians of the Age of Pericles, in the very same way he believes good old Britain should not be patronised by self-serving bureaucrats ensconced in Brussels. It is his love of that pure form of freedom – reasoned and educated – that clashes with what he probably sees as an ill-defined model of paternalistic federalism (contrary to the well-defined efficiency of the American model, which one could assume that he might trust).

Further, his performance at this debate is an additional testament to some of the most poignant differences between him and Donald Trump, to whom he is often compared by his critics. They are quick to point out an atavistic instinct in both men. But Boris Johnson is an erudite, a scholar and an expert. Trump's articulacy has been compared to that of a Queens car salesman. Trump could as well be a philistine. Johnson is none of that: he will take on anyone who is willing to have a go at debating him – for the sake of argumentation and the logical process – and will do an intellectually brilliant job at it.

He might be pleased to have won. His scruffiness might often cause a kerfuffle. His idealisation of former British glory – not unlike his idealisation of Athens – occasionally amounts to cherry-picking. Europeans might find it difficult to understand his absurdity and dramatic flair. But he is not an actor. He is a character. One with a brilliant mind of an intelligence that flirts with self-destruction. European leaders have an obligation to understand him. They owe that to European citizens; that also includes the British. That process does not only go through modern Britain, but Ancient Greece as well: it is the “fecundity, generosity, openness, and originality” of the Athenians, and its modern transposition in Great Britain, that Boris believes the European Union has taken away and he has a historic duty to restore. ■



THE NEW EUROPEAN COMMISSION

The Von Der Leyen Commission will take over on the 1st of November, a day after the expected exit date of the United Kingdom. The former German Defence Minister and mother of seven will take over the Berlaymont at a time of great change and difficulty for Europe. It will therefore be important for her to have a team around her that she can rely on.

The nominations for European Commissioners from the 27 remaining member states has now closed, and we have taken a look at those individuals who have been put forward for the top jobs in the European Union. We believe that it is important for our readers to know who will be governing Europe for the next five years, and ensure that they are the right people for the job.

This special feature by *The Conservative* looks in detail at the new Commission, their strengths, weaknesses and backgrounds. Some are familiar faces, others are brand new. Some are old, and another is the youngest ever nominated. And for the first time ever, the Commission is close to a full gender balance.



Ursula von der Leyen

It is unclear whether there had been a plan to nominate Ursula von der Leyen for the position of the President of the European Commission all along. But when her name was officially announced on 2 July after a marathon Council session, it caught many by surprise. The initial Franco-German proposal that would have seen Frank Timmermans – the Dutch Social-democratic Spitzenkandidat – take over as Jean-Claude Juncker’s successor did not make it much further than the EPP pre-Summit meeting of heads of state, at which the Croatian and Hungarian leaders, in particular, voiced significant opposition. It was enough for Italy’s and Poland’s rebuke to bury the Timmermans presidency for good as soon as it reached the Council.

French President Emmanuel Macron rushed to take credit for putting forward von der Leyen’s name. She has “the DNA of the European community,” he enthusiastically claimed. In other words, she ticks all the boxes.

Ursula von der Leyen was born Ursula Albrecht on 8 October 1958 in leafy Ixelles, an affluent Brussels neighbourhood. Papa Albrecht, Ernst, the offspring of a prominent Hanover family, was one of the Eurocrats to join the European Commission upon its establishment in 1958. His first role was as Chef de Cabinet of German European Competition Commissioner Hans von der Groeben, before rising to the position of Director-General for the Directorate-General for Competition, a post he held between 1967 and 1970. Young Ursula – known as Röschchen, a diminutive of Rose, among her family – was raised bilingual – speaking German and French – and was educated at the European

School, Brussels I, an institution set up for the children of the new bureaucratic elites. Her father went on to serve as Prime Minister of Lower Saxony from 1976 to 1990. Ursula had to flee to London in 1978, where she lived for more than a year under a different name and Scotland Yard protection, due to the increased risk of kidnapping by communist terrorists she faced as the daughter of a prominent politician. While in London, she enrolled at the London School of Economics, before continuing her studies in a new field, that of medicine, at the Hanover Medical School, after her return to Germany in 1979. A Doctor of Medicine, in 1986 she married a fellow physician, Heiko von der Leyen, born to a wealthy silk merchant family, with whom she has seven children, born between 1987 and 1999.

Her profile is far from that of the average European citizen. Is that the DNA of the European Union? Ursula von der Leyen is the product of German and European aristocracy. She does not hide that. But if that is the idea of a European identity that President Macron has, then it looks highly unlikely that the urgent need to bridge the gap – if not rupture – between the European establishment on the one hand, and the European citizens on the other, will be addressed. Does she symbolically embody President Macron’s understanding of the European Dream? Then there is no doubt that the new Franco-German alliance will primarily strive to maintain specifically that, a Europe of the elites.

There are more worrying signs coming from von der Leyen’s side: her reputation at the helm of the German Federal Ministry of Defence – a position she held from 2013 until her nomination as President of the European Commission this

summer – was tarnished by a series of internal scandals that paint an image of nepotism and maladministration. What is known in Germany as the “Consultant Affair,” significant questions have been raised as to the powerful role that external consultancies have gained in the affairs of the ministry. Another red flag that a Federal Audit Office report raised – the document was leaked to the media in August 2018 – concerns the lax implementation of procurement rules and procedures. It is unclear whether von der Leyen had any direct involvement in the scandal. A parliamentary investigation is ongoing, and she could be called to testify at any point. (Imagine the impact that such a development could have upon the fragile relationship between European citizens and the Brussels elite: any smidge of trust towards the establishment would evaporate.) However, what is certain is that the culture that the leadership of the Ministry has instilled, with von der Leyen at the top, is one of opacity, a system based on personal connections and favours.

More, in 2015, researchers alleged that 43.5% of the pages of von der Leyen’s 1991 doctoral thesis contained plagiarism. She was cleared by a Hanover Medical School committee of which the director she knew personally and had previously worked with, on the basis that no proof existed of an intention to deceive.

The overall image that is drawn is the stereotypical one disenfranchised European citizens have of the status quo: elites that serve their common interests and protect each other, trading favours and sharing the spoils of a captured state. That is an ominous start for a Commission that will be afforded no grace period by events. ■



Frans Timmermans

Frans Timmermans is a Dutch Social Democrat, who has served in the previous Commission as First Vice-President of the European Commission and European Commissioner for Better Regulation, Interinstitutional Relations, the Rule of Law and the Charter of Fundamental Rights. He was also the so-called “Spitzenkandidat” of the the Party of European Socialists, before EU leaders decided to bury the idea, acknowledging voters made up their minds based on national figures.

Before that, he served as Dutch Foreign Minister, from 2012 to 2014 and as State Secretary for Foreign Affairs, from 2007 to 2010. Timmermans should be considered as a “real European”.

He went to elementary school in Brussels, Belgium, before attending, from 1972, the private Saint George’s English School in Rome. His secondary education took place in the Netherlands, hometown of Heerlen. He speaks six languages: Dutch, which is native, apart from English, French, German, Italian and Russian. During the EP campaign, he went into debate with EPP “Spitzenkandidat” Manfred Weber on German TV.

He went to university in Nijmegen, where he obtained an MA degree in French Literature, before reading European law, French Literature and History

at the Nancy-Université in Nancy, France. During his Dutch army service, he worked for the Dutch Military Intelligence and Security Service as a Russian Prisoner of War interrogator.

His nomination is quite unique due to the fact that his social democratic party is not part of the Dutch governing coalition. The reason is that for a long time, he was in the race to become EU Commission President, so PM Mark Rutte’s government decided to continue to back him as EU Commissioner after the Visegrad countries had managed to block him and von der Leyen was chosen instead.

When he was Foreign Minister, he condemned an anti-Islam sticker campaign started by Dutch rightwing populist Geert Wilders, saying that “The Netherlands cannot be held responsible for the adolescent behavior of a single parliamentarian” and that Saudi Arabia is “deeply offended by the sticker action.”

During his mandate as EU Commissioner for Better Regulation, he has failed to deliver. The Brussels regulatory machine could simply continue with business as usual. From 2014 until 2018, the Juncker Commission came up with 370 legislative proposals, which represents a drop from the period between 2009 and 2014, but is in line with the problematic situation before 2009.

After 2008, Brussels came

up with a huge amount of new financial regulation. This has been branded by some as hysteric, given how not lack of regulation but expansive monetary policy is seen by many experts as the cause the 2008 financial crisis. The number of proposals may tell one thing, but the actual overall impact of regulations matters in the end. On that front, the regulatory impact institute has complained that a lot of proposed EU legislation has still been issued without proper impact assessments being undertaken.

Apart from that, Timmermans has also been very active in attempts to supervise member states on possible breaches of rule of law, something where he has clashed with the visegrad countries, who deny that their judicial reforms undermine the rule of law. Timmermans has stated that he has “no doubt” the new commission will be tough on rule of law.

He has also been vocal in his support for the EU’s mandatory migrant quotas within the EU, which created a lot more hostility against the EU in central and Eastern Europe. Many at the EU level have now abandoned support for this idea, also following the failure to redistribute people within the Schengen area in a voluntary manner, which was always going to be difficult, given the lack of border checks within Schengen. ■



Margrethe Vestager

Margrethe Vestager is a Danish politician who has been the EU’s Competition Commissioner since 2014. Before that, she was a member of the Danish national Parliament, since 2001, representing the Danish Social Liberal Party (Radikale Venstre), which she has been leading from 2007 until she entered the European Commission in 2014. She has also been Danish Minister of Economic Affairs and Danish Interior Minister from 2011 to 2014. She speaks Danish, English and some French. Her first job was an internship in the European Parliament. She was the inspiration for the main character in “Borgen”, a popular Danish TV series about a female Prime Minister.

During her term as Minister of Economic Affairs in the government led by PM Helle Thorning-Schmidt, she has been implementing cuts in unemployment benefits, in response to an economic downturn. She then also decided to grant some tax cuts for start-ups. During this time, as she was chairing the EU’s Council of economic and finance ministers of the European Union (ECOFIN) during Denmark’s presidency of the Council of Ministers, Vestager announced that the European Union would cede two of its seats on the board of the International Monetary Fund to emerging economies. She then also fought EU policies for stricter liquidity rules for banks, which were an implementation of the international Basel III standards. This was partly due to the high Danish levels mortgage debt. She then however also didn’t slow down steps towards stricter rules for systemically important banks.

When entering office as EU Competition Commissioner, she declared that she found ‘it only natural that competition policy is political’, while adding that when it comes to enforcement, ‘there is simply no room for political interference’. But the Commission has in fact been making clear political choices when deciding whether to take action against countries it feels have violated its competition policies. In practice, this meant a further politicisation of competition policy, very much in line with Jean-Claude Juncker’s view that the EU Commission should be “political”.

This however led to increased tensions with both EU member states and the United States.

Belgium, the Netherlands, Luxembourg and Ireland have all been attacked by Vestager over their tax agreements – ‘rulings’ – with big companies, often from the US. In the case of Belgium, Vestager was overruled by the EU Court of Justice in Luxembourg.

U.S. President Trump, angry over her persecution of U.S. firms, dubbed her the ‘tax lady’ and the CEO of Apple, which she saddled with a retroactive tax bill of billions of euros, called her policy ‘total political crap’. She had ordered Apple to pay a fine of €13 billion, plus interest, in unpaid Irish taxes for the period between 2004 and 2014. This constitutes the largest tax fine in history. The Irish government dragged it feet in implemented this, fearing that big corporations would no longer invest as much in the EU. Also Google, Fiat, Starbucks, Amazon.com and Gazprom have been singled out by Vestager’s administration. Google was fined €4.3 billion for entrenching its

dominance in internet search by tying together their service and other mobile apps with Android. This year, Mastercard received a €570 million fine, for preventing European retailers from shopping around for better payment terms.

As motivated as Vestager was when it comes to enforcing the grey areas of competition law, like the question whether a tax ruling is open to all, she has been much less visible when it came to fighting clear violations of the rules, like bailouts or nationalisation.

She allowed the Italian government to bail out banks – despite new EU rules aiming to hit investors instead of taxpayers first. Also French president, Emmanuel Macron, wasn’t too concerned, as his government was allowed to nationalise a French shipyard to prevent it from being bought by an Italian company.

It may be one of the reasons why for a long time, Macron appeared to support Vestager to succeed Juncker.

Vestager further also rejected plans by German companies Siemens and France’s Alstom to merge. Arguments that they had to be stronger to stand up against a Chinese mega competitor were not accepted. This put her on a collision course with France and Germany. It is also one of the reasons why von der Leyen intends to create a 100 billion euro sovereign wealth fund, which goes against the spirit of the EU Treaty which intends the EU Commission to be an actor to fight state aid and not organise it.

Ursula von der Leyen stated in July that Frans Timmermans and not Vestager would remain First Vice-President, contrary to initial rumours. ■



Josep Borrell

The nomination of Josep Borrell – who has been serving as Spain’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, European Union and Cooperation since June 2018 – to the position of the European Union’s top diplomat – which carries the title of the High Representative of the European Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy – might have raised flags in different quarters in Brussels and beyond but should not have come as a surprise to anyone who has closely followed the veteran Socialist politician’s career.

First elected to political office in the late 1980s – a period of high tension that was marked by Spain’s transition to democracy in the aftermath of the collapse of the Francoist regime – the 72-year-old’s involvement in successive scandals and proneness for gaffes are only matched by a seemingly permanent ability to reinvent himself and reemerge on the surface.

Born in 1947 in the region of Catalonia’s mountainous ridge, the son of bakers who had returned from Argentina, he was a gifted student who progressed to obtain multiple degrees in different disciplines – aeronautical engineering, applied mathematics and economics – including postgraduate degrees from Stanford University and the French Institute of Petroleum and a PhD in Economics from the Complutense University of Madrid.

A member of the Party of European Socialists-affiliated Spanish Socialist Workers’ Party, between 1982 and 1991 he occupied the positions of General Secretary for the Budget and Public Spending and Secretary of State for Finance in

the Ministry of Economy and Finance, before taking on the portfolio of Minister of Public Works and Transport, a post he held for five years until 1996. He rose to prominence in 1998, when he ran against PSOE President Joaquín Almunia in the party’s first primary for the designation of the prime-ministerial candidate for the 2000 election, a context he unexpectedly won. His success did not last long: he had to resign the nomination in May 1999 after a fraud investigation was launched against two officials he had appointed to senior positions during his time at the Ministry of Economy and Finance.

He kept his mandate as Member of the Spanish Congress of Deputies for Barcelona – a position he was first elected to in 1986 – until 2004, when he made a shift to European politics, accepting the invitation of José Luis Zapatero to lead the party’s list in the European Parliament elections. He went on to be elected President of the European Parliament, a position he held for the first part of the legislature’s five-year term. His next role as President of the European University Institute – a position he assumed in 2010 – also ended in disappointment, being forced to resign in 2012 over conflict of interest allegations, having failed to declare his paid position as director of the board of Abengoa, a Spanish energy company. In 2018, he was fined €30,000 by the Spanish security regulator for ordering the sale of Abengoa shares a person close to him held only a few days before the company declared bankruptcy in 2015, information the regulator deemed he was privy to thanks to his position with the

company and he had misused.

His short tenure at the helm of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs – he assumed that office in June last year – has not been without controversy: reports have surfaced of his ordering of the monitoring of personnel of Catalan governmental representations abroad (he is a vocal opponent of Catalan secessionism). The spying scandal known as Borrellgate is expected to cause him difficulties in the Committee on Foreign Affairs (AFET) hearing, a part of the confirmation process: Diana Riba MEP, a member of the committee, is the wife of imprisoned Catalan leader Raül Romeva.

His recent praise of the Iranian government on Twitter – he commended improving literacy rates under the theocratic regime and their role in the Syrian conflict, among other things – will not help him in his new duties either, if confirmed: he will be expected to handle the US-Iran fallout and the disagreement between the United States and the European Union on how to proceed.

To top of it all, in his previous capacity as the Spanish Parliament’s pointman on the Convention for Europe – which drafted the Treaty establishing a Constitution for Europe back in 2003 – he unsuccessfully tried to include a call for a “federal model” in the text, as well as remove any mention to Europe’s “Christian heritage.” Should he choose to promote similar views in his new role, he is guaranteed to draw the ire of many Member States.

Most Brussels insiders expect a rocky ride, both at the state of the hearings but also in Borrell’s potential tenure as High Representative. ■



Didier Reynders

Belgium has nominated Foreign Minister Didier Reynders as a candidate. He's by far the longest serving Minister in the Belgian government, having managed to be a Minister for 20 consecutive years, since 1999. First, he has been serving as the country's Finance Minister, presiding over some modest income tax cuts and the 2008 financial crisis, which saw two major Belgian banks, Dexia and Fortis, collapse. Reynders has been accused of carrying the responsibility for the sale of Fortis at an unacceptably low price to French bank BNP Paribas, while at the same time agreeing for the

Belgian state to guarantee an overly large part of Dexia, which had been lending excessively and is currently being wound down as a "bad bank".

At the end of 2011, when a Belgian federal government was finally formed after one and a half year without a government, Reynders became Minister for Foreign Affairs, Trade Foreign Affairs and European Affairs, which he once again became in 2014, when a new coalition entered office. Following the government crisis of December 2018, he also obtained the Defense portfolio.

Given how Belgium still hasn't got a new federal government

after the May election, which produced a stalemate, the current government coalition does not have a majority in Parliament, but as Parliament isn't needed to nominate a Commissioner, the three governing parties decided to put Reynders, forward. This means that the Francophone liberals, to which Belgian PM, who's about to succeed Donald Tusk as EU Council chairman in November, will have two EU top jobs.

At the moment, Reynders is still one of the two politicians who were charged by the Belgian King to start the informal coalition talks for a new federal government, so far without success. ■



Elisa Ferreira

Deputy central bank Governor and former leftist MEP Elisa Ferreira has been put forward as Portugal's candidate to become EU Commissioner. She has held ministerial posts between 1995 and 2002. Since she became an MEP in 2004, she has served on the Economic and Monetary Affairs Committee of the European Parliament, until 2016, when she was appointed at her country's central bank.

During her time as an MEP, she has drafted the EP committee's own-initiative report on closer coordination of economic policies, calling for the European Central Bank (ECB) to be granted

powers to monitor "financial stability in the euro-area" and to be involved "in EU-wide macroprudential supervision of systematically important financial institutions." In 2015, she co-authored a report complaining that "in the European internal market capital flows freely and large companies report their activities on a consolidated basis but tax is collected nationally by tax authorities exchanging very little information among them." Last year, she complained in a speech on financial stability in the eurozone that "Europe has stopped moving and currently stands in the middle of a very sensitive and unstable 'bridge'." She

specifically suggested to "ensure effective financing of the deposit insurance systems for deposit transfers", even remarking that "for that, a revision of the applicable state aid rules would be required."

She'll be the first Portuguese woman to become European Commissioner. Because of the fact that Portugal already has the post of Eurogroup chairman, with its Finance Minister Mário Centeno, it may not be possible for her to get a financial portfolio, despite her background.

She holds economics degrees from the universities of Porto and Reading, where she also obtained her PhD. ■



Janusz Wojciechowski

Janusz Wojciechowski, aged 64, is Poland's nomination for the position of the country's European Commissioner. The Polish politician has been serving as a Member of the European Court of Auditor since 2016.

A lawyer by training, he served as a judge before leading Poland's Supreme Audit Office as its President between 1995 and 2001. He was first elected to the Sejm – Polish Parliament's lower house – in 1993, a position he held up until his appointed

to the Supreme Audit Office. He served as Under-Secretary of State in the Cabinet Office with responsibility for Legislative Affairs between 1994 and 1995. He returned to the Polish Parliament in 2001, becoming its Deputy Speaker and leading its Committee on Codification Changes until his election to the European Parliament in 2004, where, among other responsibilities he has served as a member of the Committee on Budgetary Control and Vice-Chairman

of the Committee on Agricultural and Rural Development. He resigned his position in the European Parliament to join the European Court of Auditors in 2016, where he serves in the Chamber for the sustainable use of natural resources and on the Audit Quality Control Committee.

He is a member of European Conservatives and Reformists-affiliated Law and Justice political formation, Poland's governing party. ■



Johannes Hahn

Johannes Hahn, a member of the centre-right Austrian People's Party, has been the Austrian EU Commissioner since 2010, first serving as European Commissioner for Regional Policy under Barroso and after that as European Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations under Juncker. In Austria, he has been minister for science and research from 2007 to 2010.

When active in the youth wing of his party, he was among the pro-EU wing, while many then were still in doubt about EU membership. He's a survivor of cancer, which he was diagnosed with at the very young age of 22.

As Austrian minister for science and research, he proposed ending Austria's 50-year membership of CERN, a European research organization that operates the largest particle physics

laboratory in the world. He argued that the cost was too high as it took up 70% of the Austrian government's budget for membership of research associations, but the Austrian Chancellor blocked the plan.

When responsible for EU Regional Policy before 2014, he implemented some reforms, linking it closer with EU economic governance and macro-economic conditions, however staying clear of proposals whereby richer member states would no longer have to pay for funds that would go to their own poorer regions.

This proposal, issued by the think tank Open Europe, would have benefited both richer and poorer member states, as richer member states would have been able to transfer funds directly to their own poorer regions, without having to transfer the funds to the EU first.

While responsible for enlargement and neighbourhood policies, he has been arguing to start EU accession negotiations with North Macedonia and Albania, while urging Serbia and Montenegro to improve the rule of law first.

As the one responsible for EU relations with Switzerland, he has not been successful in convincing Switzerland to agree to an update of their relationship with the EU. Instead, an escalation occurred, with the EU cutting off access for Swiss stock exchanges, because the Swiss have so far refused accepting the arbitration mechanism former UK PM Theresa May accepted for the UK, while also ruling out that Switzerland would need to automatically take over updates of EU regulations. In a leaked letter, it has appeared Hahn refused to be more flexible towards Switzerland, fearing that this may otherwise help the UK. ■



Jutta Urpilainen

The Finnish government has nominated social democrat Jutta Urpilainen, who served as Finance Minister from 2011 to 2014, during the height of the eurocrisis.

Then, she threatened that "Finland would prefer to

consider leaving the Eurozone rather than to pay other countries' debts in the currency area." In the end, however, she agreed with eurozone bailouts.

She's a strong proponent of the EU, having been president of the Young European Federalists of Finland in 2001.

Urpilainen went on to become the leader of the Finnish social democrats from 2008 until 2014. Before she went into politics, she worked as a school teacher.

In 2002, she came out with a CD of her own Christmas carols. ■



Dubravka Šuica

62-year-old Dubravka Šuica has been a Member of the European Parliament since 1 July 2013: she was part of the first batch of MEPs to join that European institution after Croatia's accession to the European Union and she was subsequently re-elected in the 2014 and 2019 scrutinies, occupying the second place in the EPP-affiliated Croatian Democratic Union's list both times.

A linguist by education – she studied English and German at the University of Zagreb's Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences – she started off her career as a teacher in her native city of Dubrovnik. She went on to serve as director of Dubrovnik High School. She also was a professor of German at the city's American College of Management and Technology.

She was the first female mayor of Dubrovnik, a position she held between 2001 and 2009, which coincided with the emergence of the historic port city as an international tourist

destination. She was recognised in the 2016 World Mayor Top 10 list and won the World Mayor Award in 2009. She also served as a Vice-President of the Council of Europe's Congress of Local and Regional Authorities between 2004 and 2014.

She was elected a member of the Croatian Parliament on three separate occasions, serving between 2000 and 2011. She was a member of that assembly's Tourism Committee and Vice-Chair of the European Integration Committee between 2008 and 2011.

Having served as Vice-Chair of the European Parliament's Delegation for relations with Bosnia and Herzegovina, and Kosovo (DSEE) in the previous legislature, she is now a member of the Committee of Foreign Affairs (AFET), among other positions. She was also elected the First Vice-Chair of the Group of the European People's Party in June and has been a Vice-President of EPP Women since 2012. ■



Helena Dalli

56-year-old Helena Dalli is one of Malta's most successful Labour politicians. She was first elected to the Parliament of Malta in 1996, succeeding in every election ever since. She was appointed a Parliamentary Secretary for Women's Rights in the Office of the Prime Minister immediately after her first election, championing gender equality and progressive issues ever since. First appointed a minister in 2013, she was serving as the Minister for EU Affairs and Equality until her nomination by embattled Party of European Socialists-affiliated Maltese Prime Minister Joseph Muscat, a position she immediately resigned to focus on the upcoming hearings in the European Parliament (her successor in the Ministry was sworn in a day after her nomination was officially announced by the Prime Minister).

Dr Dalli has made a name out of her strong support for civil liberties, introducing ground-breaking legislation, including the Civil Unions Act of 2014, which introduced equal rights for same-sex couples, including adoption rights,

the 2015 Gender Identity, Gender Expression and Sex Characteristics Act, which simplified gender assignment procedures, including the introduction of binary and non-binary forms of identification in public documents, and the Marriage Act 2017, which – for the first time – conferred the right to marry to same-sex couples, beyond civil partnership. In 2017, she introduced an Equality Bill, as well as a Human Rights and Equality Commission Bill, both acts currently under consideration before the legislature. As the Times of Malta reports, in 2016, "she won the Hero of the Year Award during the sixth edition of the European Diversity Award held in London." Prime Minister Joseph Muscat expects her to obtain a portfolio that "will reflect her experience."

A once Miss Malta beauty pageant winner and action film actress – she portrayed a policewoman in 1972 Italian-American production Final Justice – Dalli holds a doctorate degree in Political Sociology and has lectured extensively on social justice and public policy at the University of Malta. ■



Janez Lenarčič

Janez Lenarčič, who serves as Slovenia's ambassador to the EU, has been nominated by the former Yugoslav republic, which is also the place of birth of Melania Trump. This year, his country clashed with the ECB over legislation protecting investors who lost money during a 2013 bank bailout, ignoring warnings from the European Central Bank that this breaches euro-area rules.

The dispute involved EU legal action over Slovenia illegally seizing confidential ECB documents.

Lenarčič is a career diplomat without outspoken political affiliations. He used to be

Director of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights within the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE).

In between his diplomatic roles, he has been working as advisor to the foreign minister of Slovenia (from 2000 to 2001) and from 2002 to 2003 he was State Secretary in the Office of the prime minister. From 2006 to 2008, two years after the country joined the EU, he was State Secretary for European Affairs.

In 2014, he was also secretary of state in the cabinet of the Slovenian Prime Minister Miro Cerar. ■



Kadri Simson

Estonia's Prime Minister Jüri Ratas – serving a second mandate since 29 April 2019 – moved swiftly in nominating Kadri Simson – a Minister of Economic Affairs and Infrastructure in his first cabinet – once it became apparent that incumbent Andrus Ansip might vacate his seat on the College of Commissioners early to take up his position as a Member of the European Parliament following May's elections. On 6 June, Simson was voted by Estonia's government as the country's choice for the remainder of Juncker Cabinet's term as well as the new mandate. Ansip resigned his Commissioner's portfolio on 17 June.

European Commission President Juncker initially opposed the idea of new nominees temporarily filling the vacancies left open by the resignation of outgoing Commissioners who had chosen to take their seats in the European Parliament after the elections. However, his objection was overruled by the Council of the European Union, and a compromise was reached: the replacement Commissioners

were to serve without taking on any duties. That did not work either: her confirmation by the European Parliament was postponed until autumn, given that the Committee on Employment and Social Affairs (EMPL) failed to elect a chairperson in time for her scheduled hearing (the Committee twice rejected former Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydło's bid on 17 July, before electing Lucia Duriš Nicholsonová as Chair a day after). Given that no portfolio was allocated, the hearing was expected to take place in front of the Conference of Committee Chairs, instead of the corresponding Committee in the absence of one. However, the Conference could not be constituted until all Committees – including EMPL – had returned a chairperson.

It seems that 42-year-old Simson might have another reason to worry, beyond the delay, though: Eesti Päevaleht, one of Estonia's most circulated daily newspapers, in an article published this August, accuses Simson of dishonesty, claiming irregularities uncovered in an

investigation. According to the newspaper, she once claimed medical reasons to justify her absence from the Riigikogu, Estonia's Parliament, while she was holidaying in the Caribbean. More, her partner, Teet Soorm, falsely claimed business travel expenses for holiday trips with Simson, as well as other executives of HKScan – Estonia's largest pig farming company of which he was the CEO – and their families. Simson failed to provide any proof to substantiate her claim that no rules were breached. (There are several lawsuits pending before the courts on different grounds against Soorm initiated by his former employer.) In the past, she has also been accused of conflict of interest, arising out of her role as a Minister in awarding financial support to pig farmers. The politician – whose Center Party is affiliated to the Alliance of Liberals and Democrats for Europe (ALDE) and the Renew Europe group in the European Parliament – might have some explaining to do, however late the time comes. ■



László Trócsányi

László Trócsányi, Hungary's proposal, has a rich resume: a lawyer by profession – specialising in constitutional law – he taught law and politics at the University of Szeged before taking residence in Brussels as Hungary's ambassador to Belgium and Luxembourg from 2000 to 2004, and then again until his next assignment as the country's top diplomat in France. A fluent French speaker, he served as a member of the Venice Commission of the Council of Europe between 2005 and 2013 and as a member of the Hungarian Constitutional Court from 2007 to 2010. Interestingly, the 63-year-old succeeded Hungary's current European Commissioner, Tibor Navracscs, as the Minister of Justice in 2014, a position he held until he was asked by Prime Minister Orbán to head Fidesz's European elections party list. He has yet to resign his seat as a Member of the European Parliament.

There might be a reason for that. On 2 September, he had to withdraw his candidacy for the fourth vice-chairmanship

of the European Parliament's Committee on Constitutional Affairs (AFCO), ahead of a meeting of the Committee's coordinators the following day. He had already taken the item off the agenda twice before in July. As he wrote to ACFO's chair, former Parliament President Antonio Tajani, he was unable to take on such a responsibility, given the increased workload his role as Hungary's pick for Commissioner entails. However, it is speculated that the reason might be different altogether: since the Socialists and Liberals decided – in July – to vote down all of Fidesz's candidates for higher office in the European Parliament, the Hungarian governing party's proposals for Committee leadership positions have struggled to get off the ground. Two other MEPs, Andrea Bocskor and Balázs Hidvéghi have faced similar problems in the Committee on Culture and Education (CULT) and Committee on Civil Liberties, Justice and Home Affairs (LIBE), respectively. Will Ursula von der Leyen put his nomination forward? And, in that case,

will the Parliament approve it?

Trócsányi, who is known to be close to Orbán, in response to criticism over the concept of “illiberal democracy” put forward by the Hungarian Prime Minister, declared for Euractiv in 2015: “Democracy is a very important European value. It exists in the European treaty. But in constitutional law, there is debate surrounding democracy. There are two different interpretations: the neo-liberal school and the more conservative school. These are two completely different approaches centered largely on individual rights and collective rights. We should respect the common good. How do we find the right balance between individual rights and the common good? That is debatable.” In May last year, the Brussels-based Laic Jewish Community Centre expressed their consternation at the invitation addressed to Trócsányi to speak at a colloquium on migration hosted at the city's UCLouvain Saint-Louis – Bruxelles university, labelling him “xenophobic, racist and anti-Semitic.” ■



Mariya Gabriel

Bulgarian national Mariya Gabriel – her maiden name is Nedelcheva – assumed the office of the European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society in July 2017, following the resignation of Bulgaria's Commissioner Kristalina Georgieva, who left the European Commission to lead the World Bank. She was 38 years old at the time of her appointment,

making her the youngest Commissioner in the history of the institution.

Gabriel is a linguist and political scientist by education, having held the position of teaching and research assistant at the Bordeaux Institute of Political Studies.

She was elected to the European Parliament in 2014 with GERB, a Bulgarian European People's Party-affiliated

political formation led by Boyko Borisov, the country's Prime Minister. She was Vice-President of the EPP Group and Head of the Bulgarian Delegation to the same political grouping in the European Parliament. She resigned her MEP position upon her nomination to the European Commission. Earlier this summer, she was re-nominated by Borisov as Bulgaria's choice for the European executive. ■



Margaritis Schinas

Margaritis Schinas is a European Commission insider who has been nominated to serve as Greece's incoming Commissioner. With a background in legal and political studies, Schinas started working for the European Commission in 1989, where he held various positions until 2007 – including as Head of Cabinet to former Cypriot Commissioner Markos Kyprianou – when he resigned his position to serve as a Member of the European Parliament as first runner-up, following the departure of Antonis Samaras.

He was not included in the lists of Greek EPP members of New Democracy in the 2009 European elections. He returned to the European Commission in 2010, when he was appointed Director of the Bureau of European Policy Advisers – as the European Political Strategy Centre, the Commission's think tank, was known then – by then-Commission President José Manuel Barroso. In April 2013, he was promoted to the position of director with the Commission's Directorate-General for Economic and Financial Affairs,

serving as its Resident Director in Athens.

In November 2014, upon the assumption of the Commission presidency by Jean-Claude Juncker, he became the European Commission's Chief Spokesperson. Since December 2015, he has also been serving as the Deputy Director-General of the Directorate-General for Communication.

57-year-old Schinas is married to Mercedes Alvargonzález, who works as the Head of the EPP Group Chairman's Cabinet – that is Manfred Weber – in the European Parliament. ■



Maroš Šefčovič

Slovakia's Maroš Šefčovič has been member of the European Commission since 2009. As he served for a few months in the first Barroso Commission, he's about to enter his fourth term, making him a true Brussels insider.

First, he was responsible for Education, Training, Culture and Youth, in 2009 and 2010, before he became Vice-President of the European Commission for Interinstitutional Relations and Administration (2010–2014), when he negotiated administrative reforms within the EU Commission.

Since 2014, he has been the Vice-President of the Energy

Union, a job he may keep. During his term, secured that fifteen countries from central, eastern and southeast Europe signed a deal to speed up the building of gas links, improve security of supply, reduce their reliance on Russia and develop a fully integrated energy market.

He has been studying in Moscow from 1985 to 1990, at Moscow State Institute of International Relations, and before the fall of the Iron Curtain, he was also a candidate for membership in the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which he became on 1 June 1989, just before the collapse of Communism.

As a diplomat, he has served as the first Permanent Representative of the Slovak Republic to the European Union, from 2004 until 2009. In 2019, he stood as a candidate in the Slovak presidential elections, which he failed to win, even if he enjoyed support by the governing Smer-SD party, which has been recently suffering a significant drop in public confidence for, as an LSE scholar puts it “at best, being unable to stem the tide of crime and corruption, or, at worst, being accomplices to it”.

Šefčovič has said he is “against creating European superstate” and also opposes the EU's sanctions against Russia. ■



Nicolas Schmit

Already in 2018, the government of Luxembourg agreed to nominate Nicolas Schmit, a social democrat, as the next Commissioner. He's an economist, trained in France, at the Institut d'études politiques d'Aix-en-Provence. He is the chairman of the EPSCO network of the Party of European Socialists.

He has served as the country's Minister-Delegate for Foreign Affairs and Immigration and after that as Minister

of Labour, Employment and Immigration of Luxembourg. During this time, in 2015, the government lost a referendum over the question whether to grant voting rights to residents without Luxembourgish nationality who have lived in the country for more than ten years. At the moment, there is a requirement to take mandatory Luxembourgish lessons if one wants to obtain citizenship, which only just over half of the inhabitants of Luxembourg have. ■



Phil Hogan

Ireland's Phil Hogan has been serving as EU Commissioner for Agriculture and Rural Development in the outgoing EU Commission. Before that, in Ireland, he was Minister for the Environment, Community and Local Government and Minister of State at the Department of Finance. During that period, he was responsible for implementing some of the measures of the so-called EU “Troika”, after Ireland had been requesting a eurozone bailout. This included introducing a full property tax based on site valuations.

As EU Agriculture Commissioner, being responsible for the biggest spending post in the EU budget, which amounts to around 30% of the EU's near-1 trillion budget, he spent €500 million in assistance to help producers in the European Union cope with Russian sanctions, especially in the dairy and pigmeat sectors. He also proposed improve a school scheme to offer free fruit and milk to children throughout the EU and pushed for overall simplification of the Common Agriculture Policy.

He hasn't been pushing for major changes to the EU's agricultural spending. Even if he

claims to want to “modernise and simplify” it, he has not called for the complete abolishing of “direct payments”, which are EU subsidies for owners of agricultural land, without any requirement to actually produce. Direct payments account to more than 70 percent of the €340 billion that is spent over seven years. Particularly troubling is that 2% of beneficiaries (121,000 farms) receive 30% of the total direct payments envelope. When EP President Tajani suggested to abolish this, he quickly changed his opinion, following protest coming from the “European Landowners' Organisation”, a well-connected lobby group.

Hogan did defend the EU's free trade deal with Mercosur, which had been causing unrest among Irish beef farmers, saying compromises had to be made. In the past, he has also firmly defended free trade, arguing that trade “deals have not harmed European agriculture”, explaining that “as people in Asia and Africa have more disposable income, we see they want to consume European food and drink, and our trade agreements open up these growing markets.” ■

Paolo Gentiloni

Former Italian PM Paolo Gentiloni has been nominated by the new Italian government as the country's Commissioner. Under a Council agreement, he would be appointed as vice-president and new competition Commissioner, but it is unclear to what extent this will be honoured, as it was a deal with the previous Italian government.

Gentiloni has the titles of Nobile di Filottrano, Nobile of Cingoli, and Nobile of Macerata and one of his relatives was an important conservative politician. He has studied political sciences at the Sapienza University of Rome and was a journalist, before he entered politics. He speaks English, French and German. During his student days, he was part of the far left Movimento Studentesco and after that, he was also regional secretary of the Workers' Movement for Socialism, a far-left Maoist group. This was at a time when the atrocities of the Mao regime, which caused 50 million deaths, were already widely known.

While moderating his views, Gentiloni became involved in

the ecological movement and he became the director of ecologist newspaper La Nuova Ecologia (“The New Ecology”). During these days, he got to know Francesco Rutelli, for whom he became the spokesman when the latter was elected as Mayor of Rome. Gentiloni then became Tourism Councillor until 2001, when he was elected as a Member of the Italian Parliament. In 2006, he became Minister for Communications in Romano Prodi's second government for two years. He managed to enter government again in 2014, after having backed Matteo Renzi as leader of the center left, and was appointed Minister for Foreign Affairs. During this term, he declared that “if needed, Italy will be ready to fight in Libya against the Islamic State, because the Italian government can not accept the idea that there is an active terrorist threat only a few hours from Italy by boat.” For this, he received death threats from ISIS. In 2015, he then also backed normalisation of relations between Cuba and the U.S., by visiting Cuba.



After Renzi resigned in 2016, Gentiloni was asked by President Mattarella to form a new government. On the following day Gentiloni was officially sworn in as the new head of the government, continuing with the same coalition, which was then defeated in the 2018 elections by the Five Star Movement and Lega. As PM, he signed a deal with the governments of Libya and Tunisia whereby both countries pledged to try to halt migration, something that had only limited effect.

He also forced NGOs to subscribe to a code when rescuing asylum seekers at sea. In 2017, his government also decided a peacekeeping mission which included sending 450 soldiers to Niger, to help local forces in the fight against human smuggling and Islamic terrorism.

Gentiloni is a strong supporter of the EU and has also been engaging with China's leaders regarding their Belt and Road initiative, as well as with Russian President Putin, urging to loosen sanctions against Russia. ■



Rovana Plumb

Rovana Plumb, aged 59, is the pick of Romania's government – led by the Social Democratic Party, a Party of European Socialists member – to serve as the country's European Commissioner. She has been serving as a Member of the European Parliament in the new legislature, where she has also been elected a Vice-Chair of the Socialists and Democrats group.

Plumb is a veteran politician of the PSD, the Romania's dominant Social Democratic Party. She joined the party in 1994, going on to hold a number of powerful positions: she was elected Vice-President of the party and President of the women's organisation in 2005, before taking over as President of the PSD's National Council in 2015 and interim party President in the summer of the same year. She has also served as a Member of the Romanian Parliament in three legislatures: 2004–2007, 2012–2016 and 2016 until today. She also has a long record of ministerial responsibilities: she was the Minister of Environment and Climate Change between

2012 and 2014, Minister of Labour and Social Justice from 2014 to 2015, and Minister of European Funds, a position she held between January 2018 and April 2019. She also served as a Member of the European Parliament between 2007 and 2012.

Plumb's nomination has not been without noise: Romania's largest opposition parties have called for the withdrawal of her candidacy and have already announced that will vote against her in the European Parliament's confirmation process, due to her involvement in a series of controversies. In 2017, a National Anticorruption Authority investigation for alleged complicity to abuse office was blocked by the PSD-dominated Parliament, which voted against the removal of Plumb's immunity. In what is known as the Belina case, the prosecutors accused Plumb of facilitating the transfer of state property – as a Minister of the Environment – to a company controlled by now-imprisoned former PSD President Liviu Dragnea, who used it as his fishing estate. ■



Stella Kyriakides

President of Cyprus Nicos Anastasiades took Brussels by surprise when he nominated Stella Kyriakides as the choice of the island republic's next Commissioner. Cyprus' outgoing European Commissioner Christos Stylianides – who holds the Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management portfolio – is well-regarded in Berlaymont circles and he is considered to have had a successful term in office. His performance at the Parliamentary hearings in 2014 was labelled as impressive. What raises further questions is the fact the Stylianides comes for the same party as the President, the EPP-affiliated Democratic Rally, as does the new candidate. After all, it was Anastasiades who put Stylianides' name forward back in 2014, then lamenting the loss of a valuable comrade to the European cause.

Adding to the controversy, Cyprus has expressed the desire to keep the same portfolio for their incoming Commissioner. Why would anyone remove their own successful Commissioner while aiming to retain the same position for their country? Wouldn't it have made much more sense for Stylianides continued? And wouldn't that have increased Cyprus' chances of retaining the Aid portfolio? In a sign of strained relations with President Anastasiades, Democratic

Rally President Averof Neofytou requested the eventual candidate Commissioner to first run for an MEP position, but his suggestion was overruled. There are more storm clouds on the horizon: the two men seem to disagree on whom – out of the runners-up – should succeed Kyriakides in Parliament.

63-year-old Kyriakides has been serving as a member of the House of Representatives for Nicosia since 2006. She was elected Vice-President of the Democratic Rally in 2013, a position she still holds today. The chairperson of the Cypriot delegation to the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) since 2012, she has occupied various executive functions in the institution, having also served as its 30th President for a four-month period in the aftermath of Pedro Agramunt's resignation in October 2017.

A British-educated psychologist, she specializes in the psychological effects of childhood and teenage cancer. Between 1979 and 2006, she served as a clinical psychologist in the Department of Child and Adolescent Psychiatry of the country's Mental Health Services. She has also held the position of President of Europa Donna – The European Breast Cancer Coalition, as part of a lifelong dedication to the fight against cancer. ■



Photo: European Union 2019 - Source: EP



Sylvie Goulard

Sylvie Goulard, the deputy governor of the French Central Bank and a former MEP, has been proposed by French President Emmanuel Macron to enter the European Commission. She aims to secure the trade or climate portfolio. She was an adviser to Romano Prodi between 1999-2004, when was involved with the European Convention presided by Valéry Giscard d'Estaing, something that ultimately resulted in the Lisbon Treaty. In 1989, she worked in the French foreign ministry on German reunification. As an MEP between 2009 -2017, she

was a member of the Committee for Economic and Monetary Affairs and substitute member of the Committee for Constitutional Affairs. In 2017, she was appointed as Macron's Defense Minister, but she was forced to resign after less than a month following an investigation into potentially fictitious employment of European Parliamentary assistants by her political party, MoDem. Goulard herself isn't however subject of the investigation, which is continuing. She's a European federalist, having been involved with the creation of the so-called

"Spinelli Group", which advocates transferring more powers and financial resources to the EU level. She is also the former president of the European Movement in France. She has studied at the Ecole nationale d'administration (ENA), the French elite school which Macron has decided to shut down in a bid to appease "yellow vests" protestors. She also holds a law degree from the Université Paul Cézanne Aix-Marseille III and has studied at Sciences Po in Paris. She has been a teacher at the Collège de Europe in Bruges. She is fluent in French, English, Italian and German. ■



Valdis Dombrovskis

48-year-old Valdis Dombrovskis currently holds the position of the European Commission Vice-President for the Euro and Social Dialogue, Financial Stability, Financial Services and Capital Markets Union, and has been re-nominated as his native Latvia's candidate Commissioner for another term. He returned to Latvia in February 2009, this time to serve as the Baltic country's Prime Minister. The coalition he had put together received the green light on 12 March 2009, but Dombrovskis resigned his position in November 2013 in the aftermath

among other roles. Upon his first election to the Saeima – the Latvian Parliament – in 2002, he was appointed Minister of Finance, a position he held until 2004, when he was elected a Member of the European Parliament, serving in the Committee on Budgets (BUDG). He returned to Latvia in February 2009, this time to serve as the Baltic country's Prime Minister. The coalition he had put together received the green light on 12 March 2009, but Dombrovskis resigned his position in November 2013 in the aftermath

of the Zolitūde Maxima shopping centre roof collapse that resulted in the death of 54 people, Latvia's worst disaster since the 1950s. He denies he was forced by the Latvian President to do so. A parliamentary investigation committee later found him and another six individuals, including the mayor of Riga, morally and politically responsible for the tragedy. In 2014, he threw in his name for the position of the European People's Party's Spitzenkandidat, before withdrawing to Jean-Claude Juncker's favour. ■



Photo: Reuters

Věra Jourová

The Czech government has nominated Věra Jourová, who has been responsible for Justice, Consumers and Gender Equality in Juncker's team. She would reportedly be interested in moving on up to the trade or internal market portfolios. When the Czech Republic entered the EU, she was leading the Czech team that negotiated EU funds with the European Commission and European Investment Bank. She has been accused of corruption with EU funds and then spent more than a month in pre-trial detention, but the prosecution was halted in mid-2008, when she was cleared of any wrongdoing. Between 2006 and 2013, Jourová was an independent consultant offering services in the

area of EU regional funds. Before she became EU Commissioner, she was Minister of Regional Development for about half a year in the Czech government. She is a prominent member of the ANO party, which is led by current Czech PM Andrej Babiš, who is being investigated by both Czech Police and the European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) for irregularities with EU funds. During her term as EU Commissioner, she was responsible for implementing the so-called General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR), which came into force in 2008 and provoked fierce debates between opponents and proponents, as implementation looks patchy, also due to the unclear nature of some of its provisions. ■



Photo: Paulius Pelckelis/Forbanikas

Virginijus Sinkevičius

Where he to be approved by Parliament, Lithuania's pick, Virginijus Sinkevičius, will only celebrate his 29th birthday three days after taking office, on 4 November. Aged 28, that will make him the youngest European Commissioner in history, beating the current record holder – serving Digital Economy and Society Commissioner Mariya Gabriel was 38 when she took over from Kristalina Georgieva – by a good ten years. Age is definitely a concern: "I cannot dispute the argument about my age as I cannot do that. And in terms of my work, it's been visible over the past three years," Sinkevičius declared for The Baltic Times after his nomination. "I am not a perfect candidate and will never be one. I am self-critical and know I will need to work hard and make an effort as issues at the European Commission are really very complex."

Currently serving as Lithuania's acting Economy and Innovation Minister, a position he has held since November 2017, Virginijus Sinkevičius was first elected as a Member of the Seimas, the Lithuanian parliament, in 2016, representing a Vilnius constituency. He is a member of the Lithuanian

Farmers and Greens Union, the country's largest political party. Even though the party sits in the Greens/European Free Alliance group in the European Parliament, its membership does not extend to the European Greens. It has no international affiliation. However, the agrarian party – the policies of which can better be described as center-right – has little green credentials. This might sour Ursula von der Leyn's attempt to portray Sinkevičius' nomination as an overture to the Greens, who will otherwise gain no other commissionership. "This does not at all satisfy our requests," group co-chair Ska Keller declared for Politico. "I don't know [Sinkevičius] personally and I hope we're going to meet in September. It's great that he's going to be there, definitely. But he's not a member of the European Greens."

Gitanas Nausėda, the President of Lithuania, hopes for an important portfolio for Sinkevičius, based on his competence. The candidate holds an undergraduate degree in Economic and Social Studies from Aberystwyth University and a Master of Arts in European Studies from Maastricht University. ■



Photo: Henrik Montgomery/TT

Ylva Johansson

Ylva Johansson is now a social democrat but once was a member of the far left, even having elected as a member of the Riksdag for the Left Party - Communists (VPK) in the 1988 general elections. She is still considered to be part of the left wing of her party. She has been Sweden's Minister for Employment since 2014. Between 1994 to 1998 and between 2004 to 2006 she already served as a Minister, respectively for schools and for Welfare. She is a fan of football and has been chairman of the Stockholm's Football Association. She was also elected honorary member of Hammarby football club in 018. Swedish think tank Timbro has criticised her policies, stating that Sweden would have the lowest unemployment rate in the EU by 2020, but that due to her policies "locking the unemployed into programmes that keep them away from the labor market", this wasn't realised as "Sweden is now one of the countries in the EU that has the lowest per capita GDP growth and the unemployment figures are considerably gloomier than the government is aware of", further noting that "the government is hiding the actual unemployment figures, through unemployment subsidies". ■



WHEN THE GREEN REVOLUTION COMES

CONTINUED FROM THE FRONT PAGE

There is nothing wrong with a teenager fighting for her ideas; on the contrary, it is admirable. It takes courage, dedication, perseverance and sacrifice. Yet, the radicalism of her message – panic is the appropriate response to the climate emergency according to the young activist – is often been obscured by a utopian ignorance of how the world goes around. Idealism might be a distinct – or even desirable – characteristic of youth. Greta Thunberg is doing the right thing. What is alarming and should raise questions is the propagation of the same message by the adults in the room who should have known better (not to mention the exploitation of the mediatic value she carries by political leaders, who otherwise intend to as much for climate as any of their credible electoral opponents). Pragmatically, the role of activists like her is to raise awareness and make a point, however symbolic. (No one expects World Economic Forum participants to take a 32-hour train ride to Davos as she did. But by doing so, she set a counter-standard.) Transforming that into a global movement that can carry enough political leverage to translate beliefs into actions is of a totally different order. More, for such transformation to steer clear of inequitable disruption, it requires wisdom. That is what is demanded of those actors – not of Greta Thunberg, at least for now, but of the political actors – that have chosen to ride the climate bandwagon.

There are several questionable aspects – if not outright wrong – with this message of panic – expressed in radical and simplistic terms – that we are being served. First, what has ended up becoming green populism shares the exact same traits with other populist movements Green parties claim to offer an alternative and be opposed to. In an increasingly polarised world, radical, abstract, simple solutions to complex issues – such as the many proposed bans – will only sow and nurture division, they will not bridge it. It is another dividing line that is being drawn, another wall raised. It is understandable that there is urgency in fighting climate change: the result could prove to be catastrophic. However, radical solutions seldom work for all. Given that both sides of this argument claim to possess the absolute truth on climate matters, the risk of societal cleavages on the issue is rather high.

It should come as no surprise that the most likely victims of this radicalism are the poor. Take the Amazon rainforest fires: a probable cause is the increased need for land cultivation due to overpopulation or financial need, through forest clearing. In Brazil and elsewhere, slash-and-burn agriculture or fire-fallow cultivation is a common practice. Condemning developing countries for employing methods the developed world used in our earlier developmental stages and as late as the last century – in Thunberg's native Sweden, slash-and-burn was widely practiced at least until the early 20th century – amounts to bigotry, unless we are willing to share our wealth to increase living standards elsewhere, beyond mere humanitarian aid. On top of that, the criticism targets counties we have been outsourcing our production to, while our economics have been focusing on the service industries. But one need not go that far away in order to get a sense of the economic impact such practices will have. Despite the fact that research has shown that the vast amount of plastic in oceans comes from Asia and Africa, earlier this year,



“ Human activity has accelerated – not created – a natural process of global warming that started with the end of the last ice age 20,000 years ago. Climate changes are nothing new.



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the European Parliament endorsed a plan to ban certain types of single-use plastics by 2021, along with other similar measures. All plastic bottles should contain at least 25% recycled material by 2025, for example. A study conducted by the Helmholtz Centre for Environmental Research – a research centre based in Germany – found that ninety percent of all the plastic that ends up in the ocean comes from 10 river systems, the Yangtze, Indus, Yellow, Hai He, Ganges, Pearl, Amur and the Mekong rivers in Asia and the Nile and the Niger in Africa.

Switching away from plastic packaging will increase the cost for producers. Such increases are more often than not passed on to consumers, disproportionately affecting the poor. As the BBC reported last year, "more than one third of the food in the EU now comes packaged in plastic." An alternative to PET packaging could be biodegradable plastics – made from starch, from example – that can completely disintegrate in nature within weeks or months. However, it costs significantly more. In the United Kingdom, the price of a biodegradable takeaway fork is 3.5 times higher than that of a plastic one, according to the British broadcaster. When it comes to the soft drink industry, switching to glass bottles from the current PET standard will require 40% more energy only for their transportation, given the significantly higher weight of glass bottles compared to plastic alternatives. It is not only the direct financial cost: in a report by the American Chemistry Council and Trustcort – an environmental accounting firm – "the environmental costs would be five times higher if the soft industry used alternative packaging like glass, tin or aluminium instead of plastic." A switch will also impact food waste: the technology of plastic materials has developed over time to extend the shelf-life of food. "The shrink wrap used on cucumbers for instance, can more than double the length of time the vegetable

can last, allowing it to be kept for up to 15 days in the fridge and cutting food waste in half. An unwrapped cucumber would last just two days at room temperature and 9 days if refrigerated," according to the BBC. "Putting grapes in their own individual plastic boxes has been found to cut food waste by 75%." Another controversial element of this polarising rhetoric is that it nurtures illusions: first, it is the illusion that solutions can be immediately implemented. Switching away from plastic packaging, an industry that has developed over seventy years, will require a complete overhaul or even substitution of the supply chain. This could take decades. More, the green narrative that is being promoted puts forward the idea that the radical changes required will be beneficial to all. This might be the case in the long-term. But the victims of the economic shock that will have to take place for such change to take effect might think otherwise. Further, the same narrative feeds the illusion that a green revolution could eradicate global warming. Human activity has accelerated – not created – a natural process of global warming that started with the end of the last ice age 20,000 years ago. Climate changes are nothing new. The Earth has been getting warmer. Certainly not at this pace, but it has. Humanity would eventually have to face phenomena such as rising sea levels or desertification. Perhaps not in this generation or generations to come in hundreds or even thousands of years. But our descendants – however distant – will have to deal with such issues. Today's green environmentalism should be stripped of any moral considerations about future generations and just be called what it is: our worry about our own quality of life and survival. As with all dogmatic belief systems, radical or authoritarian environmentalism tends to exclude theories – and in this case, solutions – that do not fit the established narrative. One such case is the improvement or efficientisation of internal combustion engines (not to mention nuclear power). In the past few years, engineers at Formula One – of all places – have made strides towards enhancing the thermal efficiency of the engines of their racing cars. Thermal efficiency indicates the fraction of the heat that is put to work. In the case of international combustion engines, which belong to the category of heat engines, thermal energy from fuel combustion or burning is transformed into mechanical energy. What portion of that thermal energy is transformed into mechanical energy is what the efficiency of the engine essentially is. The Second Law of Thermodynamics stipulates the limitations of heat transfer, and specifically, "it sets out the specific idea that heat cannot be converted entirely to mechanical energy." What is not transformed into mechanical energy is waste heat. In cars, that waste heat is dissipated in the coolant and exhaust fumes. An average car's thermal efficiency ranges between 20 and 30%, and it has remained so for the last 50 years. It means that 70-80% of the heat from burning fuel is lost – or rather transformed into other forms that are irrelevant to the car's primary function. Attempts have been made to develop waste heat recovery systems in cars. Most importantly, in the last five years, Formula One cars have broken the 50% efficiency barrier. That means that they

use less fuel to achieve the same result, reducing CO₂ emissions along the way. As a result, they could be more environmentally friendly than electrical cars, were the electricity used to charge the car produced from less efficient sources. Laurence Edmondson, ESPN's Formula One Editor was writing in 2016: "in a country like the USA, where at least 66 percent of electricity comes from coal- and oil-fired energy stations and just 13 percent from renewables, an F1 car is arguably greener. The thermal efficiency of Mercedes' class-leading hybrid F1 engine has now [2016] exceeded 45 percent, with 50 percent thermal efficiency a very real target in the next couple of seasons. By contrast, coal and oil power stations achieve thermal efficiency of around 33 percent, meaning the power used to drive an electric car is likely to come from a less efficient source than an F1 engine." In Europe, conventional thermal power plants run at an efficiency of 50%. This does not mean that electric cars are not the vehicle of the future. It simply means that for those to reach that potential, a series of other conditions will have to be fulfilled, such as greener electricity production. That renders oversimplification and generalisation – for example, absolutisms such as "electric cars are better than fuel ones" – dangerous, at least now and in the foreseeable future. If the carbon footprint of sourcing materials for, producing, assembling, transporting, assembling and operating wind turbines and solar panels is added into the equation, such green mantras might turn out to be rather misleading, for now. The same applies to other generalisations: the environmental efficiency of trains, Greta Thunberg's preferred transportation medium, varies across types, the number of passengers, routes and countries. According to research from the BBC, "a train trip from Paris to Bordeaux (about 500km) emits just 4.4kg of carbon dioxide per passenger, while a journey between the Polish cities of Gdansk and Katowice (about 465km) emits 61.8kg." That is because 75% of the electricity in France comes from nuclear power. In Poland, 80% comes from coal. Were Poland to start building nuclear reactors, Greta Thunberg – she opposes nuclear power – and other activists like her would protest. Diesel locomotives in the United Kingdom emit 90g. The electric Intercity 225 emits about 45g. An average car with four passengers emits about 43g. Is carpooling more efficient than train travel? It could be. But such fact is not promoted, given that it does not fit into the prescribed narrative. Where does this leave us? If one lesson is to be taken away from previous dogmatic movements that sought to implement their agenda is that the aggressive and authoritarian pursuit of their goal, and the societal division such an endeavour will bring about, might derail the project itself. The climate cause might be an exception: our survival and well being depend on it. However, what is needed is a middle-of-the-road approach when asking people to sign up. Spreading panic will not work. Explaining the benefits to each one of us, as well as the risks, might be a better strategy. Shunning other ideas that might bring about the desired effect simply because they do not serve the interests of the pack or the promoted narrative will not help either. Most people will be willing to help. Unless they are pushed to. ■



THE GREAT EUROPEAN DIVIDE

In the early hours of Friday, 23 August, Hong Kong's pro-democracy activists – well into their sixth month of anti-government demonstrations – united in holding hands to form a human chain that stretched fifty kilometres in length. It was a unique gesture, unlike any other in their prolonged struggle to safeguard the territory's autonomy from Beijing's interference. Unlike the unprecedented violence since riots erupted last March, this protest was peaceful; not even the notorious Hong Kong traffic was disrupted.

The day picked for picked for the protest was the anniversary of thirty years ago when in the two million Lithuanians, Latvians and Estonians formed what came to be known as the Baltic Way: a human chain across the three then-Soviet republics, in an effort to draw attention to the cause of independence.

That symbolic act – its strength found in the emotionally and visually-captivating picture of citizens of all ages and from all walks of life, raising hands, holding flowers and flags, bringing the world around them to a silent standstill, in a demonstration of their desire for freedom and self-determination – ranks along other equally powerful images that came to symbolise the plight of Europeans against the two evils that faced the continent in the second half of the previous century: communist totalitarianism and the division it brought about.

The symbolic power of the images taken on the 23 August 1989 have had such an impact as to motivate protesters in Hong Kong, but the message seems to have fallen on deaf ears closer to home in Brussels, where, in parallel to the demonstrations in the Asian city-state, the elites of European power have been scrambling to put together a new administration following May's European Parliament elections.

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One could potentially explain or overlook such an alarming paradigm in the early years of accession: mistrust and the lack of experience in the ways and means of the European bureaucracy could provide a borderline-tenable justification for the absence of appointments.

This year provides the opportunity for a total change of direction at the top level: a new President of the European Commission will take over on 1 November, as will a new High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the second most coveted position in the executive branch of the European Union. On 1 December, a month after the new Commission will be sworn in, the next President of the European Council will also take office. A new President of the European Parliament has already started his mandate on 3 July. In a rare coincidence, which makes the reshuffle complete, the position of the President of the European Central Bank – an office that carries a term of eight years – is also up for grabs. All five top jobs at the European Union level were

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negotiated largely among heads of state in a marathon session at the beginning of July.

As white smoke emerged from the Europa building where the leaders met, it was confirmed that those member states that sat on the wrong side of the Iron Curtain thirty years ago had been – once again – left out. None of the five vacancies that were negotiated went to an Eastern European. The newly-appointed head of the European Commission who will succeed retiring President Jean-Claude Juncker – a Luxembourgian – is Ursula von der Leyen, a – West – German. The proposal for the new High Representative is Josep Borrell of Spain, who, unless voted down by Parliament, will take over from Federica Mogherini, an Italian. Incoming Council President Charles Michel comes from Belgium; the outgoing President is Donald Tusk, a Pole and the only East European to have ever occupied one of the five high offices. The newly-elected President of the European Parliament is David Sassoli, an Italian who has replaced Antonio Tajani, a co-national of his. Unless anything changes, at the helm of the European Central Bank will sit Christine Lagarde, a Frenchwoman, as the fourth President. The third President, whose term expires on 31 October 2019, is Mario Draghi, an Italian.

All but one come from the club of the Original Six. None of them comes from any of the countries that have joined the bloc after 1986, when Spain and Portugal became members. They also share borders: one could travel on land to all five countries the new leadership comes from without crossing any other state's borders. Since the first wave of enlargement to include Eastern European states in 2004 – fifteen years ago – a single East European has occupied any of the top five positions: Donald Tusk. Since 2004, when the first eight East European countries accessed the European Union, the top four positions in the three main institutions of the European Union have been negotiated for a total of twenty times (there have been seven terms of Parliament presidencies, five terms of Council presidencies, four terms of Commission presidencies and four terms of High Representative tenures). Donald Tusk has occupied his position for two consecutive two-and-a-half-year terms. Since 2007, when the first Eastern member joined the Eurozone – Slovenia – there have been two appointments of ECB Presidents. None has been an East European. That sums up to two appointments out of a total of twenty-two. That is nine percent of all appointments. That is to say that the

jobs and positions of responsibility have been given out to Westerners? A big theme of the election that has just gone, is that all Europeans, no matter where they are from, would have a voice in the new administration. But so far it looks as though that voice has been smothered.

One might argue that the stance of Western States – led by either France or Germany, or, at times, by both countries under the auspices of an ambivalent Franco-German alliance – is motivated by revenge. The new Eastern members, in unison, smaller groupings or even unilaterally have caused many a headache to Western leaders: the opposition of the four countries of the Visegrád Group (Poland, Hungary, Czechia and Slovakia) to refugee relocation quotas throughout the 2015 migrant influx and the crisis that ensued is seminal. Accusations of “blackmail and diktat” over the attempt to link future disbursements of EU funds to participation in the scheme were directed towards Brussels and key capitals, most importantly Berlin. The German Chancellor reciprocated by noting what she perceived as

leadership of the European Union very firmly seems to belong to Old Europe.

Even the division of Committee chairmanships in the European Parliament has an anti-Eastern bias. Only two of the twenty-two Committee and Subcommittee chairmanships went to members from Eastern Europe in the newly-constituted legislature. Again, that is equal to 9%. The chairmanship of the Employment Committee was prevented from going to a former Polish Prime Minister. At the end of previous term, there were eight Committee Chairs from Eastern Europe.

The consolation prize that was offered to the East adds insult to injury: in another of French President Emmanuel Macron's not-so-carefully-choreographed pirouettes aiming to blow smoke in everybody's eyes, Kristalina Georgieva, a citizen of Bulgaria, has been nominated to head the International Monetary Fund, an institution in which the United States of America has the unique power to veto major decisions by itself. Unless there is another bailout of a European Union member state in the near future, the effective impact on the daily lives of European citizens that that position can bring about cannot be even remotely compared to the power that any of the other positions on offer can yield.

What emerges is a clear pattern of division. It is neither a recent phenomenon nor a change: the systematic exclusion of Eastern European politicians from the top jobs has been present from the very beginning of their integration into the bloc. It is only getting worse. A divide that was thought to have been brought down over a quarter of a century ago has re-emerged.

One could potentially explain or overlook such an alarming paradigm in the early years of accession: mistrust and the lack of experience in the ways and means of the European bureaucracy could provide a borderline-tenable justification for the absence of appointments. (Yet, even this logic is greatly problematic: why would anyone accept new members that they would not trust in their exclusive club? One is legitimately entitled to enquire about the motives.) But what about this summer's appointments? Could one claim that East European leaders are still learning the ropes? Roy Jenkins, a Brit who served as European Commission President between 1977 and 1981, was appointed to that position only four years after the United Kingdom had joined. What is wrong with the East? Or, perhaps, what is wrong with the West?

What kind of message does it send to Eastern Europe, when all of the top



the lack of solidarity.

The list of factors that have caused a rift continues into questions over respect for the rule of law, a fundamental value of the European Union, with both Hungary and Poland currently facing potential suspension of certain rights as members for flaunting the rules, under the procedure foreseen in Article 7 of the Treaty of the European Union. (Poland is subject to three infringement proceedings under Article 7 for breaches of the bloc's founding values.) Romania has also faced criticism for the same reason. It is telling that prior to the European elections last May, in early April, France and Germany presented a common statement at a meeting of EU Affairs ministers in Luxembourg calling for further hearings on this matter after the elections.

Further, there is the emergence of a new European culture war frontier: most Eastern states oppose what they see as a new form of cultural imperialism stemming from Brussels, which seeks – in their opinion – to undermine Christian values and morals in favour of a liberal agenda. The Eastern members strenuously protest to dress a strait-jacket – made in Brussels – on their perceptions and social norms, whereas the West and the Commission reads that attitude as Euroscepticism and an appetite for cherry-picking, blaming the protesting members for an opportunistic, transactional approach against the wholehearted belief in European progressive federalism that until recently went unchallenged in the West.

If it is not revenge that guides the exclusion of Eastern politicians from the European Union's top jobs – which will imply the existence of intent – it might be simply the inability and unpreparedness of the dominant Western forces to deal with an unexpected rebellion in the East. If the possibility that the will to share power never existed – which will amount to another proof of mens rea – is excluded, giving the Western leaders the benefit of the doubt, the architects of the Union and their heirs might have never contemplated that the East would become critical to the gift of membership and its conditionalities following fifty years of totalitarian rule. Weren't newly-liberated members states simply expected to rejoice at rejoining the free world from which they have been violently unrooted in the dark days of World War Two, no questions asked?

If one excludes systemic challenges associated with modern democracies (corruption, the drive of elites to maintain power, political planning that lacks long-term focus and only revolves around the electoral cycle, or the self-interest of national leader to bash Brussels for electoral gain, for example), the explanation could be found in unfulfilled expectations. The promise of membership in the late 1990s was formulated around the basic tenet of catching up: open up your markets – and societies – on our terms and your people will soon enjoy the same standard of living the West

does, the rhetoric went. The citizens of the East bought into the offer. However, fifteen years into this exercise, the promise of catching up has yet to materialise. People in the East will claim that the four freedoms of the Single Market have only worked to the benefit of the West: Western companies and goods now dominate their markets, and their offspring have left for richer shores. What's in it for them? If there

As federalisation by stealth was the tactic of choice in the development of the European Union before the Eastern enlargement, so is exclusion to the challenges to the status quo that come from the East. What is alarming is that the new leadership lacks answers or a plan to address such fundamental questions, and one in particular that can be echoed both in the West and the East: what is in it for me? The erstwhile selling point of peace will not cut it anymore, particularly with the younger generations. It is security – both financial and physical, or even cultural – that is required. The new leadership was chosen on the wrong criteria: it is a compromise by people of the status quo for people of the status quo. There is no agenda that all member states have rallied behind. In reality, there is very little policy at all. That remains to be seen.

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However, ruling by dividing is a short-sighted strategy. The challenge has moved from the periphery to the core: the Eastern front has moved to the home front. Eastern Europeans as much as Western Europeans demand answers.

is nothing in it materially beneficial to them, anyway, why should they accept – on top of that – to be criticised about their beliefs?

The same logic has spread to a good part of the West, where the social contract was tacitly based on another – yet very similar – foundation: stealth decisions – towards more Europe – were tolerated or even legitimised by the electorate as long as the promise of prosperity and security was acted upon delivered. The financial and migration crises have shattered that narrative; the pact is all but undone.

What is crucial at this point is for the agenda that will be drawn up to be truly inclusive. The interests of Eastern member states, as well as those of the people left behind in the West, will have to be taken into account for the European project not only to thrive, but – first – to survive. The first signs are discouraging. A focus on the environment – to counter a perceived surge of the Greens – will ignore a far bigger challenge that even climate change

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is dependent upon: poverty. A predominantly Western – and politically, almost entirely Franco-German – middle-class question, the environment is a post-materialist issue that ignores the struggle for what most of the Eastern members and a big part of Western societies still face: material wealth. (Among the 2004, 2007 and 2013 enlargement cohort, the Greens only elected Members of the European Parliament in three: Czechia, Latvia and Lithuania, from the Pirate Party, the Russian ethnic minority party and an agrarian party with little green credentials, respectively.) An unfettered focus on green issues could become a new dividing line. Another dividing line can be discerned in Emmanuel Macron's earlier attempt to rebuild a core nucleus around the common currency, further institutionalising an implicit variable geometry at the expense of Eastern European states.

Western states have managed so far to exploit cleavages between Eastern states. It is telling that both Hungary and Poland voted in favour of Ursula von der Leyen's nomination, despite the fact that she has previously criticised both states' stance on migration and rule of law issues, respectively. (They did so to avoid a Timmermans presidency, seen as a bigger evil.) However, ruling by dividing is a short-sighted strategy. The challenge has moved from the periphery to the core: the Eastern front has moved to the home front. Eastern Europeans as much as Western Europeans demand answers. Despite ominous signs, the new leadership has the benefit of starting off with a clean state. It would be wise to use it to their advantage. ■

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Next weekend in

KYIV

Ukraine is a country that is often overlooked by European travellers, and yet in recent months there has been a renewed interest in visiting one of the continents biggest best kept secrets.

When to go?



Ukraine is a country of extremes in a lot of ways, least of all when it comes to the weather. In the Summer months temperatures can reach the high 30's whilst in the Winter temperatures drop to around -5 with heavy snow storms.

It is best to visit Kyiv between March and November as the weather tends to be on the warmer side, however visiting during the winter is an experience all of it's own as the golden domed cathedrals take on a new form when they are capped with snow.



Where to go?

A highlight of any trip to Kyiv is a visit to the cities Orthodox cathedrals, all of which are elaborately decorated with golden icons of the saints, in that delicate Greco-Roman style that only the Eastern Orthodox Church can offer. The recent split from the Russian Orthodox Church created a renewed passion within Ukraine for their ecclesiastical history. Must see Cathedrals include St Sophia's, St Michael's Golden Domed Cathedral and the Kyiv Pechersk Lavra – the largest Monastery in the country.

Aside from the Cathedrals, there is also an abundance of public monuments dedicated to the various stages of Ukraine's history. From the monument to the founders – a statue dedicated to the early leaders of the Kievan Rus, to the Friendship Arch – a monument erected by the Russians during Soviet times that has since had a crack painted on it to reflect modern sensitivities within the country. However by far the most impressive of the national monuments continues to be the Monument to the Motherland, one of the tallest statues in the world of Ukraine incarnate as protective mother holding a sword and shield in defence of her children.

As well as having a viewing platform, the Monument to the Motherland also plays host to one of Ukraine's best museums, the museum of military history. Which mostly focuses on the involvement of Ukrainian troops in the red army, but also touches on the military history of Ukraine during both the years of the Russian Revolution and the more recent illegal occupation of Crimea. A large collection of military aircraft and armoured vehicles are also held as part of the museum.

Independence Square – perhaps made all the more recognisable by images shown of the Euromaidan protests on the news – is worth a visit for those after a taste of modern Ukraine. The underground Globus shopping centre is a regular hangout for younger Ukrainians. Whilst above ground stands the make shift memorials to those who died during Ukraine's recent struggle for freedom.

The recent success of the HBO mini-series Chernobyl has seen an increased popularity in day trips to the exclusion zone. Such trips used to be rare, by the Ukrainian government has recently made moves to open up the area to tourists. Visits to the exclusion zone are well worth the journey, as you leave behind modern Kyiv and enter a decaying time capsule of life in the Soviet Union.

For a taste of Ukraine's smoother night life, 32 Old Fashioned Bar and Jazz Club is worth a visit, not just for the regular live performances by jazz bands but also for the expertly mixed cocktails and warm atmosphere.

Where to stay?



When visiting Kyiv it is better to stay in the larger hotels, as they can offer much more to foreign visitors than local hotels can. The Premier Palace is a historic hotel in the centre of the city that boasts fine dining, a spa, fully equipped gym, and a cigar lounge.

The Hyatt hotel on the banks of the Dnieper offers an equally luxurious stay. With friendly staff and plenty of facilities to cater to guests every need, it stands out as one of the best hotels in the city and is no wonder that it's the favourite for high profile international guests.



IS IT OK TO ENJOY MARXIST MUSIC



Not long ago, the New York Philharmonic began a concert with *The Chairman Dances*, a 1985 piece by John Adams, the American composer. It has a subtitle: *Foxtrot for Orchestra*. (Shostakovich wrote a *Tahiti Trot* – his orchestral treatment of the popular song “Tea for Two.”) *The Chairman Dances* springs from a bigger Adams work, *Nixon in China*, an opera.

The smaller piece has long been popular on American orchestral programmes. And Peter Martins, the Danish choreographer, made a ballet of it.

In the manner of other Adams works, *The Chairman Dances* begins with peppy minimalism. It grows screwy, psychedelic, corny, yawpish and eerie. It is a strange and clever piece. And an enjoyable one. Few can dislike it.

I myself am uneasy with it. There is a shadow over the piece, for me. Why? Well, because of the Chairman: Mao Zedong.

If you'll forgive the arrogance, I simply know too much about him. He is more than a figure in an Andy Warhol print. He is more than the Great Helmsman. He is one of the great tyrants, murderers, and horrors of all time. Even in the line-up of totalitarian dictators, he stands out. I know many Chinese whose greatest dream is this: the tumbling down of Mao's portrait in Tiananmen Square.

Now, the rule is, you're never supposed to mention Hitler. This is not a rule I always follow. What if there were a piece called *The Chancellor Dances*? Or *The Führer Dances*? No one would sit still for it, right?

There are no words to *The Chairman Dances*. It's just music. Yet I have a hard time divorcing the music from the person named in the title. The piece leaves a bad taste in my mouth, I guess.

On another night in New York, Igor Levit played a recital. He is a Russian-German pianist (and superb). He champions Frederic Rzewski, another American composer (whose name is pronounced “ZHEV-ski”). Rzewski likes to write music on political themes: mill workers, prisoners, war, etc. He is a man of the Left.

Levit played movements of a piece

“What if there were a piece called *The Führer Dances*? No one would sit still for it, right?”

called *Dreams*, which is apolitical, so far as I can tell. It's true that Rzewski employs a tune of Woody Guthrie, the old singer-songwriter-activist. But it's a children's song, and innocuous.

Rzewski's magnum opus is *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!*, a set of 36 variations. Levit has recorded this work to considerable acclaim alongside two canonical works: Bach's *Goldberg Variations* and Beethoven's *Diabelli Variations*.

The tune came from Chile in 1973 (“¡El pueblo unido jamás será vencido!”). It is an anthem of the Latin American Left. Two years later, Rzewski composed his variations, in solidarity. Speaking of solidarity, there are other tunes in these variations – including “Solidarity Song”, whose words are by Bertolt Brecht and whose music is by Hanns Eisler.

A curious fact about Eisler? He wrote the national anthem of East Germany – or the “German Democratic Republic,” as the Communists styled it.

The very notion of this work – the Rzewski “People” piece – is obnoxious to me. But... it is a commendable, admirable piece of music. The variations are interesting. They are various, as variations should be. They are unified (like the People?), they compel. In fact, *The People United Will Never Be Defeated!* is one of the best long works for piano in the modern era.

Where does that leave me? A little “conflicted,” as the shrinks say.

Sometime ago, I gave a talk to college students. Its theme was: “Cool it on the politics. There'll be time enough for that later.” Not everything need be political, I said. There are zones that should be free, or relatively free, of

politics – such as music. When I was a student, there was a slogan: “The personal is the political.” This I rejected emphatically and I recommended that others do too.

The students would have none of it (many of them). They had never heard the slogan “The personal is the political” but they liked it. Believed it. Right down to one's musical preferences. This I found sad and a little alarming.

In 2004, President George W. Bush was running for reelection against Senator John Kerry, and Linda Ronstadt was giving concerts. At each one, she dedicated a song to Michael Moore, the Leftist documentarian and a great foe of Bush. She let it be known that she was uncomfortable with Republicans and fundamentalist Christians in her audience.

Okay. But a lot of people, of many stripes, have always loved Linda. Does she really mean to kick them (us) out?

The other day, I was in a restaurant or a store when an oldie came on: “Steal Away”, from 1980. It is a song by Robbie Dupree. A marvellous song, it filled me with gladness and warmth. I decided I would tweet about it – and look up Dupree on Twitter. I found him, and read some of his tweets. They were scaldingly political. He is no fan of the likes of me, politically speaking. But I'm a fan of his. I tweeted that, as far as I was concerned, “Steal Away” was as timeless as a Schubert song.

Politics casts a shadow over so much. I say, keep it at bay, when you can. ■



Jay Nordlinger

is a senior editor of *National Review* and the music critic of *The New Criterion*. He is the author of *Peace, They Say: A History of the Nobel Peace Prize* (Encounter Books). His latest book is a study of the sons and daughters of dictators: *Children of Monsters* (also Encounter). He lives in New York.

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Poster's adapted from those used by the UK's Conservative Party c1877-2007. New Direction is a not-for-profit organisation and is partly funded by the European Parliament. The European Parliament assumes no responsibility for the opinions expressed in this publication. Sole liability rests with the author.



Homer's THE ILIAD



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@jamesdelingpole

A century ago this review would have been unnecessary. As a civilised, educated person you would already have been more than familiar with Homer's Iliad – probably in the original Greek. Perhaps, like the doomed poet Rupert Brooke, you would have declaimed it across the Aegean on your way to Gallipoli; or carried the copy you won as a school prize to the trenches, as both consolation and inspiration. It is, after all, the first and arguably greatest work in Western literature about men and war.

So why is it so relatively little-read today? One reason, perhaps, is that it has become a victim of its own near-legendary status. It has a reputation so dauntingly huge that few dare broach it for fear of being either tragically disappointed or bored rigid by its epic worthiness.

“

Written sometime between 760 and 710 BC, and originally designed, of course, to be recited rather than read, The Iliad came before the main Greek philosophers, the Roman Empire, Christianity, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. This is Western civilisation in its rawest, wildest, most untutored state.

But The Iliad, which I read only in full (and in E.V. Rieu's Penguin translation) myself the other day, is not remotely disappointing, boring or worthy. For lovers of literature it's a thrilling opportunity to witness the birth of the canon, for movie buffs it's a chance to meet those Greek gods and heroes in their original incarnations, for war enthusiasts it has violence that makes Saving Private Ryan look like Mary Poppins, and for drugs connoisseurs it's quite possibly the trippiest thing you'll experience outside the influence of LSD.

It's a strange, fragmentary work which begins in medias res. The Trojan wars have been raging for years in virtual stalemate, with the Greeks still camped by their ships on the beach, and the Trojans still secure in their city of Ilium.

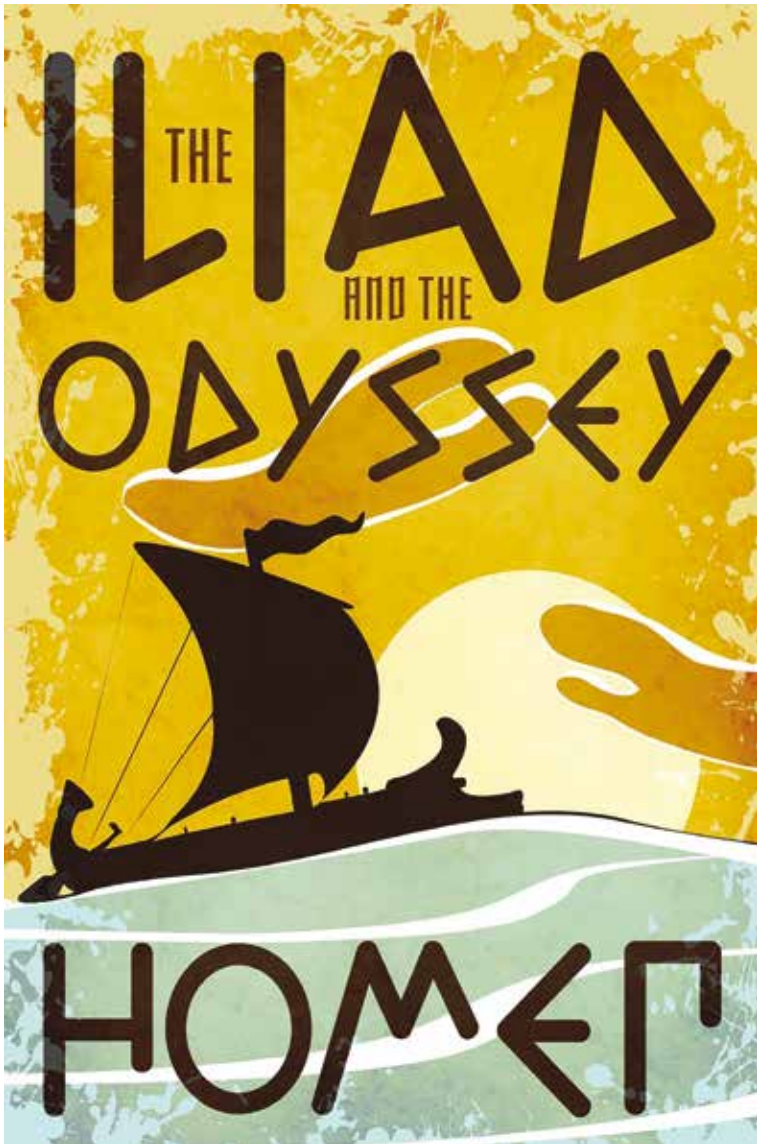
At this point the Greeks are in trouble. Though fate has decided they're eventually going to win, they've just lost their best fighter – the arrogant, petulant, angry, fickle, cruel and deeply unlikeable Achilles – who has downed tools and retired to his tent in an epic sulk, having been slighted by King Agamemnon, who has stolen his mistress.

We have entered a world whose values and outlook predate almost all the cultural influences that have shaped the way we think. Written sometime between 760 and 710 BC, and originally designed, of course, to be recited rather than read, The Iliad came before the main Greek philosophers, the Roman Empire, Christianity, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment. This is Western civilisation in its rawest, wildest, most untutored state.

What, then, are its priorities? One, definitely, is piety. Neglect the gods, who control everything, and you are doomed. Show them real devotion, on the other hand, and they'll see you right,

as for example Zeus does to his beloved Achilles. (Well, until Achilles's luck runs out – as the Fates have decreed it must, for not even gods can overrule the Fates). There's a delightful moment in Book One, where Homer describes in loving detail how an ox is ritually slaughtered and its choicest bits are cooked over an open fire, put on skewers and offered to gods. "Wow," you think. "This is literature's first kebab barbecue."

Equally important is personal courage. This, remember, is the Age of Heroes and wars appear to be won not by massed troops in disciplined formation,



but rather by the extraordinary prowess of mighty individuals. They operate according to a pagan rule book rather shocking till you get used to it. For example, having killed their enemy in single combat their aim is to strip him of his valuable armour and then mutilate his body. In order to avoid this collective dishonour, those on the opposing side will resist with equal ferocity. "But he's dead, it's over!" you want to protest. No one's listening to you, though. Their world, their weird code.

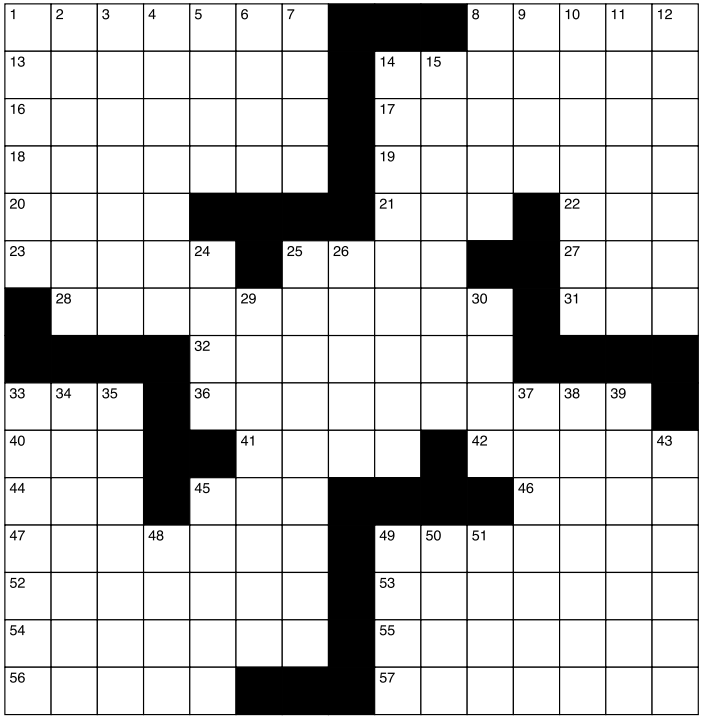
Apart from quality armour, horses, weaponry, ancestry, extreme weather, and predatory wild beasts – you can tell the preoccupations of the era by the detail lavished on them – The Iliad has an obsession with the physical details of death bordering on the surgical, or autoptical. No man dies in The Iliad without your being told precisely what the spear did to his teeth or the sword

to his entrails. You're struck by how intimate both author and audience would have been with the niceties of violent death, inured almost to the point of indifference.

Almost. There's a wonderfully moving moment towards the end when Andromache, wife of the recently slain Hector, prophetically laments the miserable future of poverty and loneliness now to be endured by their son Astyanax "who used to sit on his father's knees and eat nothing but marrow and mutton fat and when he was drowsy and tired of play slept in his bed, softly cradled in his nurse's arms, heart full of contentment".

This moment of human empathy reaches to us across the millennia in a way the stylised battle clashes never can. Deep down, you realise, our ancestors were just like us, really. They just needed a couple of thousand years more civilisation to polish up a few rough edges. ■

crossword & sudoku



ACROSS

1. "It's possible"
8. Latin dance
13. Large wardrobe
14. First American in space
16. Controversial music-sharing Web site
17. Had a yen
18. Bears witness
19. Where rails come together
20. Stag mates
21. Certain undergarment
22. ___ Mae (Whoopi's "Ghost" role)
23. Analogy words
25. Old geezer
27. ___ the ramparts..."
28. Got out of control
31. Eminem's mentor
32. Delta, but not alpha
33. 1971 Piers Anthony book
36. It cooks meat to a turn
40. Corp. bigwig
41. Haiku, for one
42. Not at all brave
44. Inits. before several golf course names
45. Seminole place (abbr.)
46. Veni, ___, vici
47. "The Passion of the Christ" language
49. Rosie the ___ (WWII icon)
52. Ancient Assyrian capital
53. Remove from a box
54. Back
55. Unpredictable
56. Mall component
57. Do a biolab assignment

DOWN

1. P.E.I place
2. Platform pundits
3. Indefinitely large number
4. Finishes behind
5. Morse signals
6. "Maverick" brother
7. Suffixes for mountain and musket
8. Red-headed comic Anne
9. Auto loan figs.
10. Adult life, for some
11. Kennel club member
12. In all likelihood
14. Use of metaphors
15. Bucks up
24. Man
25. Oval containing Egyptian characters
26. Basic skateboarding trick
29. Some screenings
30. Insect repellent
33. Pump figures
34. New edition
37. "Sorry, that's impossible"
38. Gerald and Diego
39. Appear like
39. Like clear mental images
43. Straightforward
45. Quarterback Brett
48. "It's ___ him" (relationship ultimatum)
49. Was sorry
50. Letters on a cross
51. TiVo forerunners
64. Starter for come and fare
66. Old records

6	5				2		
	1			3			5
8			4	7	1		
			4	2		3	7
		8	3		9		
			7			1	
3	7			1			
	4			9	3		
		9	2	7			

8			1	6		2	7
						5	8
	1				9		6
2	1		3	4		7	
	3		1				
5			8				2
		6			1	2	
9		2					1
	7			2	9		



TRAINING ACADEMY



Over the weekend of the 5th to 8th of September, more than 120 ECR Party delegates from over 20 countries gathered on the island of Madeira off the southern coast of Portugal for ECR Party's Training Academy. Delegates were introduced to on strategic communications, successful campaigning and effective fundraising from professional campaigners and political experts brought in from across Europe and the world. Panels ranged from discussions about the role of traditional media and the growing influence of social media – as well as the impact that they have on successful campaigning. There were also talks about how to run street campaigns, and how to effectively fundraise for political parties and individual campaigns. Additionally, delegates were given a chance to take part in a series of proactive mock interviews, in which journalists gave them conducted individual assessments on how to improve their style and presentation. On the second day of the Training Academy, the delegates participated in a series of group break-out sessions and other networking activities. The ECR Party is planning its next Training Academy in early December, open to all its members.



LEADING EUROPE'S CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT



THE CONSERVATIVE

