

Wrangling over the EU budget reflective of deeper malaise

Next year's budget will harm the EU's strategic priorities unless the whole system gets a radical overhaul

Pieter Cleppe

UK Election: Capitalism vs Socialism

When the United Kingdom goes to the polls next month it will be the most important democratic exercise in the country's modern political history

p.4-5

Madeline Grant

New generation of protestors lacks practical solutions

Iraq, Lebanon and Haiti are not crippled by any one institution, but by corrupt behaviours which have become endemic

p.10

Jack Dickens

Spiral: French cop drama with universal appeal

Now in its eighth season on Canal+ in France Spiral merits the acclaim it has won in 70 countries across the globe, including the United States

p.12

Walter Ellis

p.18



Issue #13 | November 2019

THE CONSERVATIVE

A fortnightly Newspaper by the European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Party | theconservative.online



Macron declares NATO brain dead. Von der Leyen wants a Euro army. The British are leaving. Europe needs to wake up.

p.2 / p.10

Macron

MISFETURES



CONTENTS

- NATO under friendly fire
- *Maggie Pagano* - **p.2**
- Wrangling over the EU budget
reflective of deeper malaise -
Pieter Cleppe - **p.4**
- Conservatives connect traditional
values with new policies - **p.6**
- ECR Party's first ever Liberty Prize
goes to Crimean Tatar leader - **p.6**
- Croatian presidential hopeful
visits Strasbourg - **p.6**
- Nord Stream 2 network comes
under fire at ECR Party's Liberty
Conference, Kyiv - **p.7**
- Ukraine must stamp down on
corruption to earn EU trust - **p.7**
- Instead of demonising fossil fuel
companies, we should work with
them - *Bill Wirtz*, **p.8**
- Spanish election dominated by
Catalan question gives boost to
Vox - *Gerald Warner*, **p.9**
- British general election turning
into a two-horse race - *Jack
Dickens*, **p.9**
- Leader column: Reform and
rebuild NATO - **p.10**
- Capitalism vs Socialism - *Madeline
Grant*, **p.10**
- New generation of protestors
discovers you can't always get
what you want - *Jack Dickens*, **p.12**
- Inside Lebanon's protest
movement - *Mattie Brignall*, **p.12**
- A new generation of refugee cities
can help prevent another migrant
crisis - *Pieter Cleppe*, **p.13**
- The EU must stop making up the
rules as it goes along - *Daniel
Hannan MEP*, **p.13**
- Louis de Bonald: The musketeer
who invented sociology - *Gerald
Warner*, **p.14**
- Old spymaster Le Carré hasn't lost
his touch - *David Waywell*, **p.15**
- The Order of the Day by Eric
Vuillard - *John Freeman*, **p.15**
- Don't look back in anger - *Gerald
Malone*, **p.16**
- Music journalism hasn't died -
it's just changed channel - *John
McKie*, **p.17**
- Jesus saves and Kanye misses the
rebound - *Joseph Rachman*, **p.17**
- Spiral: French cop drama with
universal appeal - *Walter Ellis*, **p.18**
- Doctor Sleep:worthy sequel to
The Shining lacks the genius of
Kubrick's masterpiece - *Alexander
Larman*, **p.19**
- Scorsese and Ford Coppola are
right - Marvel films aren't real
cinema - *Alastair Benn*, **p.19**
- The Charterhouse of Parma by
Stendhal - *Gerald Warner*, **p.20**
- Beirut: The Paris of the Middle
East has reinvented itself - *Mattie
Brignall*, **p.21**
- Vercelli: The rice capital of Europe
- *Bruce Palling*, **p.22**
- Speaking the language of wine -
Guy Chatfield, **p.22**
- Culture Digest: The best of
Europe's art and culture - **p.23**

THE CONSERVATIVE

The Conservative is a fortnightly newspaper available in print and online published and owned by the ECR Party, formerly known as Alliance of the Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE).

The Conservative can be read online at:
theconservative.online

REPRODUCTION RIGHTS

All content and materials of The Conservative are copyrighted, unless otherwise stated. For permission to republish articles appearing in The Conservative, please contact the Managing Editor:
editor@theconservative.online



DISCLAIMER

ECR Party, formerly known as Alliance of Conservatives & Reformists in Europe (ACRE) is a Belgian EUPP No: 0820.208.739, recognised and partially funded by the European Parliament. The views and opinions expressed in the publication are solely those of individual authors and should not be regarded as reflecting any official opinion or position of the ECR Party, formerly known as Alliance of Conservatives and Reformists in Europe (ACRE), its leadership, members or staff, or of the European Parliament.

MANAGING EDITOR

Richard Milsom

PRODUCTION

Reaction Publishing (reaction.life)

DESIGN

VIDEOR o.o.d. (videor.ba)

CONTACT

European Conservatives and Reformists (ECR) Party
Rue du Trone 4, B-1000, Brussels, Belgium
theconservative.online
info@theconservative.online

INFORMATION FOR AUTHORS

Please address submissions and letters to the Managing Editor:
editor@theconservative.online

NATO under friendly fire

The military alliance formed after the Second World War to protect Europe is at a crossroads, with some in the EU wanting it strengthened and others pushing for a European army and a dangerous accommodation with Russia. Europe needs a proper debate about its defence needs

Last week, NATO chief, Jens Stoltenberg, was crowned “Diplomat of the Year” by Foreign Policy, one of Washington’s most influential global affairs magazines. On accepting the honour on his visit to Washington earlier this month the secretary general hailed NATO as a “unique diplomatic force multiplier,” making the case that “when 29 nations speak with one voice, their voice is more powerful than any other in the world”.

But has Stoltenberg spoken too soon? Not all NATO members are speaking with one voice. Some are speaking with many tongues: President Emmanuel Macron in particular, with his latest comments that we are currently experiencing the brain death of NATO, and that the alliance is on the “verge of redundancy.”

Even allowing for linguistic confusions, the French president knew exactly what he was saying. He is well-known for harbouring grand ideas for a new order in European defence arrangements, and has privately told his closest circle that NATO will be gone in five years time.

With Chancellor Angela Merkel on her way out and Britain exiting the EU, the ambitious Macron is itching to carve a grander role for himself, and for France, on the continent and the wider world. It's why he is cosying up to President Putin and has suggested bringing Russia in from the cold, believing that cooperation is preferable to confrontation and that sanctions against Russia have had their day.

With the UK heading out of the EU, France becomes Europe's biggest military spender, giving Macron the chance to build a Gaullist vision with him as the leader of a beefed up European Defence Union. His veto of Albania and North Macedonia for accession shows he wants to stay in control.

by **Maggie Pagano**

Macron's timing could not have been worse. His remarks about NATO came just days before the 30th anniversary of the Berlin Wall coming down and went down across Europe like an old lead Zeppelin. As well as being ungrateful, his remarks were simply rude considering how much NATO has done to keep Western Europe safe during the Cold War years.

“

With Chancellor Angela Merkel on her way out and Britain exiting the EU, the ambitious Macron is itching to carve a grander role for himself, and for France, on the continent and the wider world. It's why he is cosying up to President Putin and has suggested bringing Russia in from the cold, believing that cooperation is preferable to confrontation and that sanctions against Russia have had their day.

Yet Macron may have a point when it comes to the fragility of the NATO alliance. This is what he also said in the Economist interview: “Just look at what's happening. You have partners together in the same part of the world, and you have no coordination whatsoever of strategic decision-making between the United States and its NATO allies. None.”

He went on: “NATO is only as strong as its member states, so it only works if the guarantor of last resort functions as such... I'd argue that we should reassess the reality of what NATO is in the light of the commitment of the United States.”

But Macron is not naive or stupid enough to knock down either the Trumpian tower or US might. He did also say that the United States remains our “major ally, we need them, we are close and we share the same values”. However, what he does believe is that a Trumpian America is more

isolationist, and wants to prepare for the potential collapse of the alliance by bolstering Europe's capabilities. More pertinently, he shed doubts on the security guarantees enshrined in Article 5 of the North Atlantic Treaty, claiming: “I don't know what Article 5 will mean tomorrow.” His eyes are perhaps on Turkey.

Macron is not the only one to question the integrity of the alliance. President Trump himself has been even ruder about NATO's existence, arguing only a few years ago that it

was obsolete. He has also criticised states such as Germany for freeloading off US dollars which have provided the country with their security.

The US president also appears to agree with Macron that Russia might be better brought inside a new coalition, rather than left on the outside brooding. He sees his real enemies as China and Iran, and that Russia could

be part of a broader American coalition rather than ganged up with his enemies in an alternative alliance led by China. The Poles and others, with experience of Russian aggression, point out that forging an alliance with Putin is a dangerous idea.

There are other political alliances underpinning NATO which are fraying. Turkey is straying further from the West as tensions along the Syrian border have shown, and there are growing divisions over trade between the US and Germany.

Germany itself is attempting to take a fresh approach to defence, as demonstrated by comments by its defence minister and heir apparent to Merkel, Annegret Kramp-Karrenbauer, known as AKK.

In a recent speech to a German defence college, AKK warned of the threats to the transatlantic relationship from within the Trump administration and from outside, mainly

Russia's Putin. She pointed out that Europe - France and Germany - must stand up and defend itself.

At first, AKK's comments were perceived to be at odds with Macron but most commentators now realise they were in the same vein: Europe must stand up for itself. She also said that Germany would not meet its NATO 2% spending target until the 2030s.

“We intend to strengthen European cooperation in the field of defence. We have ambitious plans that we want to implement with the other EU members,” she argued, although she acknowledged the role of NATO too. “The European Defence Union is always oriented towards cooperation with NATO, which remains the anchor of security in Europe. We want complementarity, not competition.”

This was a critical about turn by AKK as for decades Germans have been taught - and have accepted the view - that Germany's interests as a geopolitical force are not to be pursued. That no longer seems to be the case.

Like Macron, AKK fears the threat of a rising China and that the EU will become marginalised. While both accept the role of the US within NATO, they also fear America's resolve to be part of a broader alliance is diminishing.

Timothy Less from the University of Cambridge's Centre for Geopolitics and Grand Strategy, says: “Without political unity, there are no common interests to defend - hence Macron's comments that NATO is brain dead.”

Paradoxically, at the same time that tensions are rising within the NATO family, so have relations between Russia and NATO become more tense. Some specialists say that they are at their worst since the end of the Cold War, as witnessed by the recent strengthening of NATO “battlegroups” along the Baltic States.

The four NATO battlegroups stationed in the Baltic have recently been strengthened in the biggest reinforcement of NATO's collective defence in a generation. These moves have been prompted by Russia's annexation of Crimea and heightened political espionage and cyber security risks from Russia.

Yet despite NATO strengthening its forces, and EU sanctions, it's pretty clear that Russia is never going to return Crimea and is unlikely to give up occupation of eastern Ukraine. NATO also knows that attempts by Ukraine to join will be resisted by Russia.

So Stoltenberg will need his legendary charm when leaders from NATO's 29 members meet on December 3rd and 4th for their meeting at the Grove Hotel in Hertfordshire on the outskirts of London. It's the former home of the Earls of Clarendon, the first of whom was Britain's ambassador to France. Here's hoping some diplomatic skills will have rubbed off on the brickwork.

After a dinner at Buckingham Palace the night before to celebrate NATO's 70th anniversary, Stoltenberg and heads of state including President Trump, Chancellor Merkel and President Macron, meet on the Wednesday to thrash out some of these more sensitive issues.

The former Norwegian prime minister knows that NATO is having a dodgy moment but will attempt to walk tall by addressing these issues head-on. He will have hoped to have Trump on side after meeting him in Washington last week.

He knows the score. On the day before Macron's comments, the NATO chief made an important and powerful speech to the Korber Global Leaders Dialogue in Berlin, in which he said: “Any attempt to distance Europe from North America will not only weaken the transatlantic Alliance, it is also risking dividing Europe itself. European unity cannot replace transatlantic unity. I strongly welcome efforts to strengthen European defence ... which can enhance capabilities and burden sharing within NATO. But the European Union cannot defend Europe.”

“This is partly about military might,” he said. “After Brexit, 80% of NATO's defence expenditure will come from non-EU Allies. And Germany will be the only EU member leading one of NATO's battlegroups in the east of the Alliance. It is also about geography. From Norway in the North, to Turkey in the South, and the US, Canada and the UK in the West. All are key to keeping Europe safe.”

Those are strong words from Stoltenberg. But will they be enough to stop France and Germany from beefing up the European Defence Union to replace NATO? One of the problems with a more meaty European military capability is that defence goes deep into the psyche of national sovereignty. Few EU countries want to give up that sovereignty lightly, and many will be wary of allowing the EU

“

However much Macron may desire a bigger EU defence force, he is unlikely to be able to bring all 27 EU members along with him. Indeed, the chances of getting a unified European Army which would have anything like the clout of Article V off the ground are remote, if not delusional. Don't forget that 22 of the 27 EU countries are also members of NATO.

to order troops into battle in pursuit of a cause which that state may not be in agreement with.

There are also many EU members that are neutral: the constitutions of Sweden, Finland, Ireland and Austria stop them from joining an EU defence force. What's more, the Baltic States, Poland, Romania and Bulgaria, which are on the front-line with Russia, still primarily trust the US with their security and are unlikely to commit to an EU force which excludes US commitment.

However much Macron may desire a bigger EU defence force, he is unlikely to be able to bring all 27



Photo: Shutterstock.com

members along with him. Indeed, the chances of getting a unified European Army which would have anything like the clout of Article V off the ground are remote, if not delusional. Don't forget that 22 of the 27 EU countries are also members of NATO.

Stoltenberg knows this, and will play to Europe's sensibilities at the Grove Hotel next month. In his Korber speech, he also acknowledged conflicts between the allies over “trade, energy,

climate change, Iran ... and northeast Syria.” But he also pointed out that NATO has faced - and overcome - many challenges in the past such as those over Suez in 1956 and Iraq in 2003. And will do so once again.

By far the biggest area of controversy is NATO's relationship with Russia, the hot spot where there is most friction between Macron and NATO's other members. Macron also argued in his recent interview that NATO still has the containment of Russia as its primary strategic objective and that NATO's expansion - up to Russia's borders - left the country without a security zone.

De facto, Macron was backing Putin's view that Russia has the right to veto actions of the West in the old Soviet states, such as Ukraine, a view which sets him apart from most of his EU neighbours.

For his part, Stoltenberg is clear about NATO's role but also its ambitions: “We will do whatever is needed to keep our citizens safe. But we will

not mirror what Russia is doing. We do not want a new arms race. We do not want another Cold War. And we have no intention of deploying new land-based nuclear missiles in Europe.”

More positively, he added: “NATO allies remain committed to effective arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation. And to open and meaningful dialogue with Russia.”

That's the key question. Is there room for dialogue? This is the challenge for Stoltenberg and his allies to resolve if he wants to keep NATO alive.

And what changes will we see to Europe defending itself over the next decade? Timothy Less predicts that NATO will continue with its existing framework but that there will be new twists to its shape. “NATO's Article V

guarantee will be conditional, and real security will derive from ad hoc alliances among NATO members with common interests.”

These alliances will operate at the regional level, with the Nordics and the central Europeans tightening their collective security arrangements, he says, and that small states in eastern Europe will try to enlist large states, such as the US and the UK, as allies.

And what of Britain, NATO's second biggest military spender? Who knows. But once the UK sits outside the European Union again, maybe it will decide to become again what historian Professor Brendan Simms calls “the principle ordering power in Europe.” ■





TRAINING² ACADEMY



13th - 15th December 2019 ■ GRANADA ■ SPAIN
ECRPARTY.EU ■ @ECRPARTY

Photo: Wojtek Radwanski - Getty Images



WRANGLING OVER THE EU BUDGET REFLECTIVE OF DEEPER MALAISE

Next year’s budget will harm the EU’s strategic priorities unless it gets a radical overhaul

By the summer of next year, EU member states aim to agree upon a new long-term EU budget, or “Multiannual financial framework” (MFF), to be spent from 2021 until 2027. Over seven years, EU spending amounts to around 1 Trillion euro. Much wrangling over the shape of the budget will take place before it is finalised. At the moment, spending priorities seem geared towards inflaming the deep divisions in the European body politic – does that have to be the case?

At the moment, the EU’s biggest spending area is agriculture, amounting to 420 billion euro, estimated at 41% of its budget in 2017, down from 71% in 1985. For 2021-2027, the European Commission has proposed that this drops to less than 30%, which would mean it falls to 365 billion euro. That’s a five percent cut in current prices – or a 12 percent cut at 2018 fixed prices.

A part of that spending, around 300 billion euro, goes to “market related expenditure and direct payments”, whereby the link between subsidies and production of specific crops has largely been removed.

Originally, EU agricultural funds were tied to production, which led to overproduction, with surplus produce then being dumped on the markets of developing countries, distorting their internal markets.

As a result of these “direct payments”, farmers receive EU funds per hectare of agricultural land, with beneficiaries including the Queen of England and industrial concerns, like Nestle.

There are conditions linked to receiving the money, like keeping land in good agricultural condition and complying with some environmental requirements, but many commentators question why a subsidy system which patently creates significant market distortion has to be replaced with another subsidy system. Precedents outside of Europe, for example in New Zealand, have demonstrated how cutting subsidies to farmers can actually make them a lot more competitive. Troublingly, environmentalists have claimed that because there are requirements for the land to appear agricultural, some owners have been destroying wild-life habitats in order to be eligible.

The direct payments don’t end up in the right hands – a lot of the funding is going to a handful of receivers, with one estimate finding that in 2015, 2 percent of beneficiaries, or 121,000 farms, received 30 percent of all direct payments.

The President of the European Parliament, Antonio Tajani, has proposed drastic cuts to farmers, instead deploying the funds more towards migration policy and border protection. Soon after, however, Tajani withdrew his proposals, reportedly following pressure from the Italian farming lobby *Coldiretti* and the “European Landowners’ Organisation” as well as from Irish and Polish MEPs.

A further challenge is how to deal with the departure of the United

Kingdom from the EU. According to think tank Bruegel, freezing agriculture and cohesion spending in nominal terms, which would mean a real-terms cut, would already fill the Brexit-related hole in the EU budget and would also generate enough to cover most “new priorities” including border control.

A lot of uncertainty remains. An internal EU Commission note revealed in May 2018 that in the next budget period, agricultural funds

the claims of more powerful neighbours. Hence, the EU’s “regional policy” – between 2014 and 2020, the EU allocated 366 billion euro intended to promote “economic, social and territorial cohesion”.

In Portugal and Croatia, these funds are good for about 80 percent of all public investment. That percentage is close to zero for Germany, France, the UK, Ireland, Benelux, Austria and the Scandinavian countries.

In theory, poorer regions should be given a boost to catch up with richer areas, but the evidence for that is mixed at best. In 2016, a study by German economists for the reputed Centre for Economic Policy Research even concluded that “EU structural funds [are] negatively correlated with regional growth” and “[do] not seem to contribute effectively to foster income convergence across regions.”

In 2018, three scholars of the Italian Central Bank, looked at the effects of EU cohesion funds on the south of Italy, concluding that “EU funds’ disbursements significantly increased the number of white collar crimes”, even provide a precise estimate of the increase, putting it at “about 4% on average per year”.

OLAF, the EU’s anti-fraud body, has stated that “the structural funds sector remains at the core of OLAF’s investigative activity”. Another EU body, the European Court of Auditors (ECA), openly criticised OLAF this

year, stating that when it comes to dealing with misuse of EU expenditure, “OLAF’s results are truly, very surprisingly weak.” The ECA itself sees EU cohesion funds as vulnerable to fraud, having pointed out that “cohesion policy represents one third of EU budget but accounts for nearly 40% of all reported fraud cases and almost three-quarters of the total financial amounts involved in these cases.”

The central apparatus of the EU sucks in resources that could be better deployed elsewhere. Almost 2 billion euro are spent per year to sustain 751 MEPs and 7,000 civil servants. Members of the European Parliament relocate from Brussels to Strasbourg each month for a plenary session, costing up to 180 million euro every year.

Among the most controversial arrangements are the lifelong “expat allowance”, whereby EU officials enjoy a 16 percent tax-free bonus on their normal salary for the rest of their careers.

32,000 officials work for the EU Commission but in effect, the figure is much higher for, over the years, more than 50 EU agencies distinct from the main EU institutions have emerged. Many of these agencies duplicate the work of each other, of the core EU institutions, as well as of member states’ organisations and civil society.

Europe has made a play in recent years of being the newest power bloc on the world stage. The EU does indeed have a strategy for EU enlargement and a “Foreign Ministry”, or “External Action Service”, as well as

portfolio for aid spending, with the EU being the world’s second biggest aid donor. The latter has run into some difficulty. The European Court of Auditors complained last year that the EU “was not sufficiently transparent regarding the implementation of EU funds by NGOs” and “does not have comprehensive information on all NGOs supported” by taxpayer funds.

There have been the occasional high-profile scandals, like spending used to install broken toilets in Haiti or providing computer systems for empty offices in Jamaica. A more fundamental criticism of the EU’s coordination on aid is that it is insufficiently focused on real needs, with a large share still not going to the poorest countries and resources sometimes used for non-aid related projects, like supporting the police in Senegal to crack down on migrant smuggling.

Europe must sort out its debt financing. Even if the EU is not legally allowed to go into debt, it has built up a mountain of “unpaid bills,” now amounting to a record 281 billion euro, which is almost twice the EU’s annual budget.

Since 2011, this has increased by 36 percent and the European Commission expects it to rise further, to 313 billion euro in 2023. The European Court of Auditors has warned that if this is not

dealt with, especially in case of a no deal Brexit, there will be insufficient means to fulfil all its various spending commitments.

There is not enough accountability either. The European Commission resists making its “spending reviews” public so we cannot test its claims properly that it has “looked at the efficiency of every current programme.”

Every year the European Court of Auditors gives the Commission a lash-ing. Although this EU body has been



“32,000 officials work for the EU Commission but in effect, the figure is much higher for, over the years, more than 50 EU agencies distinct from the main EU institutions have emerged. Many of these agencies duplicate the work of each other, of the core EU institutions, as well as of member states’ organisations and civil society.

giving the EU budget a “clean bill of health” since 2007, it has continued to criticise an unacceptably high error rate in spending.

In 2018, 2.6% of EU spending was affected by errors, meaning the threshold of 2% whereby there is a “material level of error” was reached. This 2.6%, or 4 billion, should not have been paid out from the EU’s 2018 budget, for example, when public procurement rules were not followed. In

recent years, only the UK, Sweden and the Netherlands refused to approve EU budget discharge because of this, with Swedish Finance Minister Magdalena Andersson stating last year: “I welcome the reduction in error rate for EU payments, but errors have still not come down to acceptable levels.”

In May 2018, the EU Commission came up with its proposal for the new Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF), to be spent between 2021 and 2027, suggesting that the 7 years budget would amount to 1.11% or 1.14%, when certain off-budget items are included, which would be 1.279 billion euro. In effect, this means that the EU long term budget would remain more or less as big as it was, despite the fact that the UK, the second biggest net payer, is leaving the organisation.

Savings would be made on agricultural and regional spending, while spending would be shifted towards new priorities such as defence, border control and the digital economy. Also, spending would be made more conditional on implementing economic reforms and respecting the rule of law. The Commission also wants to phase out “rebates” over five years. These are to be framed as “corrections” for big contributors.

To plug the holes, the EU now wants to increase the maximum that it is able to raise from member states, from 1.2 percent to 1.29 per cent of GNI annually. This is meant to underwrite a new “stabilisation instrument for the euro area” or an embryonic “Eurozone budget”. Ostensibly, the EU is shifting to a more continent-wide debt financing machine but the move could well lead to a more unstable economic picture. The plan is for the budget to be used to issue cheap loans to Eurozone governments that would

not require a full bailout. In October 2019, Eurozone finance ministers agreed that Eurozone countries will be required to pay capped contributions into the fund, whose actual size and scope has yet to be determined. Cash-strapped member states could be allowed to only contribute half.

Plans for next year’s budget are symptomatic of the EU’s malaise and its failure to coordinate its own priorities. Unless the budget is given a radical overhaul, European governance will remain a mess. ■





New Direction Academy, Dubrovnik, 8th-9th November 2019

Conservatives connect traditional values with new policies



The New Direction Academy took place in Dubrovnik on 8th-11th November. It brought together conservatives from across Europe in a convivial and cooperative atmosphere, and everyone at the conference was eager to learn about how conservatism can meet the challenges of modern politics. Ruža Tomašić MEP, the Vice President of New Direction, said this event was about learning and sharing. In particular she expressed that it was an opportunity for the European Union's youngest member, Croatia, to learn from older member states. It was a chance for ECR members to work together to strengthen European conservatism. The Academy was opened by the Executive Director of New Direction, Naweed Khan, followed by a lecture delivered by Robin Harris, a policy adviser in Margaret Thatcher's government between 1979-1990. He is also a distinguished historian of the UK's Conservative party and the city of Dubrovnik itself. The theme of his discussion was "Understanding policy making and thinking like Conservatives", during which he shared his thoughts on the philosophical origins of Conservatism and reflected upon the policy-making successes and failures of the Thatcher government. Robin Harris confessed at the beginning of his speech that he felt "like a voice from the past", but his wealth of practical experience from one of the most successful governments of the last half century was welcomed by the attendees in Dubrovnik. One key lesson for Conservatives

imparted by Harris was that values must be reflected in policy, and he was clear that successful campaigning "is not just about ideas – it is about ideas, policy, and polemic". He said that Conservatives must learn to re-connect "seriousness" in campaigning with their sincere convictions. The next speaker, Afzal Amin, a former British Army Officer and international businessman, discussed how Conservatives can provide effective leadership in the EU and in the world more broadly. He urged that the ECR should seek not only to lead Europe on questions of economic statecraft but also provide moral leadership in the international scene. Mr Amin provided many interesting examples from his experience in Iraq and Afghanistan with NATO which have shaped his thinking on how organisations can successfully lead a broad civic-minded coalition which unites people from diverse national and cultural backgrounds. Matthias Karlsson, the leader of the Swedish Democrats, expanded upon this theme of moral leadership. In his talk, he spoke candidly of the difficulties faced by his party in a country where social democracy is deeply-rooted. It is, he admits, "a tough environment" for conservatives. He urged conservatives to take inspiration from local and national perspectives, and find new ways of seizing the initiative on sensible immigration policies, defending a patriotic nation state, and environmental issues. Karlsson also argued that conservatives have a lot to learn when it comes to cooperating on an

international level and adopting new campaigning methods. He urges Conservatives to form new think tanks, civil society initiatives, and cultural movements to challenge globalist liberals on their own terrain. He believes that "politics is downwind from culture", and that conservatives need to work together to catch up with the left when it comes to communicating their values in the cultural sphere. He is launching Sweden's first conservative think tank, *Hereditas* (meaning "heritage"), in February 2020. The Academy was then rounded off with two fascinating insights into developments taking place in the host country, Croatia. Ivan Barać, who runs a volunteer, not-for-profit, Mountain Rescue Service shared an inspiring success story – a public service which is both effective at saving lives and independent from the state. After Barać's talk, Draženka Buntak presented on the ways in which being a member of the EU has changed the Croatian legal system since the Croats joined in 2013. After much discussion and debate, the Academy was then rounded off on Saturday 9th November with the Margaret Thatcher annual dinner in the Old Town of Dubrovnik. Robin Harris concluded affairs with another insightful speech about the strengths of the Thatcher Premiership. At a time when Britain and Europe were in crisis, he said, she won the arguments against socialism and communism both at home and abroad. This lesson was a thought-provoking final note for all those present. ■

ECR Party's first ever LIBERTY PRIZE goes to Crimean Tatar leader

The first ECR Party Liberty Prize was awarded to Mustafa Dzhemilev in Kyiv last week by the Polish MEP, Anna Fotyga, and vice-president of the ECR, at a gala dinner to mark the group's Liberty Summit. Ms Fotyga described Dzhemilev, who is the exiled leader of the Crimean Tatars living in Kyiv, as a great fighter for freedom who has spent his lifetime opposing the enemies of liberty. As a child, he was deported with his family from Crimea by the Stalinists in the Communist Empire of the USSR. As a teenager, Dzhemilev founded the Union of Young Crimean Tatars and had since then dedicated his life to fighting oppression in his homeland. Arrested on many occasions by the Soviets for his anti-Soviet activities including protests and publishing in dissident newspapers, he is famous for going on the longest hunger strike in history. His hunger strike lasted for 303 days and only ended because Russians guards forced him to eat. At the end of the Cold War, Dzhemilev led a small group of



Crimean Tatars back from exile in Russia to Crimea and another 250,000 Tatars eventually followed them. He has since been a member of the Ukrainian Parliament and chaired the Crimean Majlis. In honour of his suffering and lifetime's work, he has been awarded the Nansen Medal by the UNHCR and was the first to receive Poland's Solidarity Prize. He has been nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize and the Sakharov Prize. ■

CROATIAN PRESIDENTIAL hopeful visits Strasbourg

In June, Miroslav Škoro posted a video message on Facebook announcing his decision to run for the Croatian Presidency in the upcoming elections, due by 20 January 2020. Škoro is targeting the duopoly of power enjoyed by Croatia's two main parties: the centre-right Croatian Democratic Union (HDZ) and centre-left Social Democratic Party (SDP), who have alternated in government since the country declared independence in 1991. Already one of Croatia's most popular musicians, Škoro is no stranger to politics. He was elected to the *Sabor* – the country's parliament – in 2007 on the lists of the HDZ. He resigned his seat after less than a year, disillusioned by the unwillingness of the main political forces to bring about meaningful change. Škoro is unequivocal in his belief that it is now or never: according to him, the elite's mismanagement of Croatia's prospects has reached a tipping point. If no action is taken now, Croatia will be on an irreversible path of stagnation, if not failure. His agenda focuses on expanding the constitutional powers of the office of the president: he wants to confer upon the head of the state the power to call referenda, convene government sessions and appoint Constitutional Court judges. He wishes to restore an effective system of checks and balances and a separation of powers, which he believes has been undermined by the current parliamentary system. The President – elected by universal suffrage every five years – has the largest direct mandate of any official



in the republic. Škoro believes that this direct relationship – and the legitimacy it confers upon the office – should be translated into political power, allowing the president to unite a nation fragmented by partisan divisions. Out of seventeen candidates running, Škoro consistently ranks in the top three in the polls, together with the HDZ and SDP nominees. Should he manage to enter the second round, he might well change Croatia's politics forever. The Croatian Conservative Party (HKS), an ECR member, has thrown its weight behind Škoro, who attended the ECR conference in Strasbourg on 21-24 October to present his vision. He met with MEPs and addressed the ECR Group Meeting on Tuesday 22 October, calling for better solutions to the migration crisis. Škoro described himself as pro-European with a strong reformist agenda, one who will champion national sovereignty, Christian values and free trade if elected. The entire ECR family is here to support him. ■



Nord Stream 2 network comes under fire at ECR Party's Liberty Conference, Kyiv



Europe will be hit by surging gas prices and serious energy shortages unless Russia and Ukraine renegotiate their gas transit contract which runs out at the end of the year. Dr Alan Riley, Senior Fellow at Atlantic Council's Global Energy Center, warns that EU countries face their third gas crisis since 2006 unless the Russians and Ukrainians break the deadlock over talks to renew the gas contract. "At 10am Moscow time on January 1st next year, the three-quarters of what Russia sent through last year. But Dr Riley is not optimistic that Gazprom and Naftogaz, Ukraine's state-run oil and gas conglomerate, will be able to tie up a deal covering new tariffs, volumes and fees by the deadline. The signs are not good: the two countries have been talking since July 2018 and, despite mediation by the EU Energy Commission Maros Sefcovic, negotiations have so far been inconclusive. Brussels is hoping to secure an agreement that would allow at least 60 bcm of flows a year, equal to about three quarters of what Russia sent through last year. On a more political note, Dr Riley described President Putin's attitude towards negotiations with the Ukraine on gas flows as "deeply flawed," and one that would result in pushing other countries such as Poland towards even greater self-sufficiency in energy supplies. Dr Thomas O'Donnell, energy political strategist at the Hertie School of Governance in Berlin, who was also taking part in the ECR panel debate, went further, arguing that: "Russia's decision to build Nord Stream 2 – with the collusion of Germany – is driving deeper division about energy security across Europe. Russia is behaving fecklessly." "Gas has become the new power game in Russia which is behaving like the old Soviet Union. The problem for Putin is that he has failed to re-industrialise the country as he had hoped." Dr O'Donnell added: "That's why Putin is still relying on gas as a leverage. Unfortunately, you can make money but you can't influence with actions like these." So far a mild autumn has helped Naftogaz store 21.6 billion cubic metres of natural gas ahead of the winter. But if the contract expires at the end of the year, and the mid-winter weather worsens in January and



February, there could be severe shortages across the EU. Yet there is some positive news from across the Channel. Dr Riley added that both the UK and the US have enough LNG spare capacity to 'come to the rescue of EU countries if there are shortages." Dr Riley added: "There is spare natural gas capacity at UK LNG terminals such as Milford Haven, with the UK overall having 51bcm LNG capacity, which is mostly under-used. As a result the UK could dispatch approximately 20bcm across the cross-channel interconnector to the continent." The US is also said to be on standby, ready to ship LNG across the Atlantic to European countries. "Even if there were a no deal Brexit, I can't see that this would stop gas flows into the UK from the US and then across the channel." Russia is close to completing the Nord Stream 2 pipelines – with the help of German companies – being built under the Baltic Sea, and which they hope should be running by the end of next year. Gazprom's plan with Nord Stream 2 is to diminish its dependency on Ukraine. It is also building TurkStream 2, which will also circumvent Ukraine and deliver gas to Bulgaria, Serbia, and Hungary to the south. But the Nord Stream 2 network has angered many EU countries which fear an even greater Russian domination of the continent's energy supplies. Dr Riley added that Russia could find itself at odds with the EU rules which demand greater competition. Ukraine itself has not bought Russian gas directly since 2015, a year after Moscow sent the military into the country's Crimean Peninsula, and its occupation of the two easternmost regions of Luhansk and Donetsk in a war in which more than 13,000 people have died. ■



UKRAINE MUST STAMP DOWN ON CORRUPTION TO EARN EU TRUST

Ukraine must crack down on smuggling, domestic corruption and introduce customs and border controls if it is to be fully accepted into the European fold of nations, claims one of Europe's top academics. Professor Hannes Gissurarson said that if Ukraine is serious about applying to become a member of the European Union – or its affiliated associations – then the government must first tackle internal reforms. He added that there are three big areas which Ukraine must take seriously if the EU is to trust the country: these are introducing laws that make corruption illegal, taking more drastic action to crack down on cigarette smuggling which was one of the inevitable consequences of war and new proposals to improve customs authorities and border controls. The Icelandic professor made his comments at the ECR Group's panel debate on Ukraine's Trade with Europe at its Liberty Summit in Kyiv last week. Professor Gissurarson went on to say that if he were asked whether there is a solution to Ukraine's present problems, he would reply: "Yes, there is a solution. It is freedom." In order to achieve this freedom, he added, Ukraine must open up its markets, liberalise its businesses and promote free trade wherever it can. He also suggested that the best route for Ukraine to become more fully entrenched into the European markets would be for the government to consider joining the European Economic Area – the EEA – and then to look at joining an organisation such as EFTA, the European Free Trade Association, whose members include Iceland, Norway, Switzerland and Liechtenstein as a way into opening up its markets. "Joining the EEA and Efta is an interesting option. It brings economic integration but not political," he added.

Daniel Dalton, former British Conservative MEP and chair of the session, asked whether there were lessons to be learnt from the past experience of many eastern European countries which had seen indigenous companies being swallowed up by foreign rivals, like the big German supermarkets. "Is there a danger that Ukraine would suffer like this?" But Gissurarson said the only way to introduce more flexible markets is to increase competition, and remove all hindrances to competition. "We have seen that with the fishing industry in Iceland. The transfer from public to private should provide enough for everyone. There is so much gain and enough to compensate the losers." James Wharton, former UK international development minister, agreed: "Of course you have to be mindful about how you open up markets. But free trade in itself is the best driver to drive out losers and to force out corruption." At present, the EU and Ukraine have operated a provisional Deep and Comprehensive Free Trade Agreement since 2016 which is part of a wider Association Agreement struck in 2014 but there are growing hopes that the country can apply eventually for full membership. The EU is by far Ukraine's biggest trading partner, accounting for more than 40% of its trade in 2016 although Ukraine accounts for 0.9% of the EU's trade. Figures for 2016 show that Ukrainian exports to the EU – mainly raw materials such as iron and steel, chemical products and machinery – totalled 13 billion euro. Since then, total trade and exports both ways have been rising sharply. Trade between the EU and Ukraine rose nearly a third in the first half of 2016, and by a similar amount vice versa. The EU is also the biggest investor in Ukraine with investments worth around 16 billion euro and rising. ■





INSTEAD OF DEMONISING FOSSIL FUEL COMPANIES, WE SHOULD WORK WITH THEM

Barring fossil fuel companies from having access to public officials shows a deep misunderstanding of how research and business development works

by *Bill Wirtz*



A concerted effort is being launched by 189 NGOs to lobby against all advocacy of fossil fuel companies in EU institutions. “We demand fossil free politics,” reads the mission statement of the environmentalist alliance, that was probably supposed to read “fossil FUEL free politics”. This coalition proposes barring oil, coal, and gas companies from access to politicians, by banning all lobby meetings, excluding the industry from climate negotiations and international delegations, and precluding politicians from attending fossil fuel sponsored public events, or any other partnerships.

The group believes that fossil fuel companies have been instrumental in destroying the current ecosystem, and should therefore be banned – for life – from all engagement with our political system. These activists assume responsibility for dusting off a spider web of dark money haunting the corridors of Council, Commission, and Parliament.

Oxfam has 8, *Transport & Environment* has 22. Fifty lobbyists in just 6 out of the 189 NGOs complaining about fossil fuel actors – while adding the overwhelming public perception in favour of stigmatising these companies – is rather a David versus Goliath scenario.

It is more than just the numbers of public affairs experts. While environmentalists make a constant case for reducing consumer choice, free trade, and incentives to innovation, the fossil fuel industry is an essential partner in implementing climate change policies, and helping find the solutions of tomorrow. Be it carbon capture or alternative fuels: the fossil fuel industry is one of the important innovators and researchers in the effort of reducing carbon emissions.

Other industry players, such as airplane manufacturers and automobile constructors, are reducing the amount of fossil fuels needed for transport. Airbus’ new A321XLR, for example, has 30%

less kerosene consumption per passenger than the previous generation of planes, while adding 30% more range than the currently used A321neo.



Ending the presence of industry consultants who craft expert position papers, and replacing them with activists screaming “end ALL fossil fuels” at the top of their lungs, is neither democratic, nor politically reasonable. Policy makers cannot be expected to know the ins and outs of modern refineries by heart, and it is only by talking to industry representatives that they can get a clearer picture of the situation. We would be foolish to believe that terminating fossil fuel lobbying would be the end goal – soon car makers or even farmers associations could become the victims of “climate action” apostles.

Ending the presence of industry consultants who craft expert position papers, and replacing them with activists screaming “end ALL fossil fuels” at the top of their lungs, is

neither democratic, nor politically reasonable. Policy makers cannot be expected to know the ins and outs of modern refineries by heart, and it is only by talking to industry representatives that they can get a clearer picture of the situation. We would be foolish to believe that terminating fossil fuel lobbying would be the end goal – soon car makers or even farmers associations could become the victims of “climate action” apostles.

I have my own biases on the matter. My father worked for an oil company for a full 16 years, and I’ve had the opportunity to observe the reality of managing petrol stations, its customers, and its supply chain. As a result, I can only see headlines claiming that fossil fuel companies are “responsible” for most CO2 emissions with great scepticism. Consumers are purchasing petrol themselves – no company makes them do it. They drive their car to work, use a plane to visit their relatives, or drive

their motorcycles on their weekend off. They are grandmothers, cleaners, students, carpenters, or firefighters. Behind the façade of these big companies are real workers, scientists, drivers, and cashiers, serving consumers like you and me.

These consumers aren’t attempting to bring down our ecosystem, and are in fact open to more efficient fuel, and alternative modes of transport. However, what certain European countries have shown us, is that consumers are not willing to be made scapegoats for the self-aggrandising pleasure of those who’d rather have us return to the stone age than use a single additional litre of petrol. We have experienced that they will put on their yellow vests if they have to.

The challenges of a changing environment are real and serious, but they cannot be addressed by waving a flag, whistling at the gates of parliament, or taxing low-income consumers out of their existence. Quick fixes do not exist, and they do not provide energy stability and price security for those who need it the most.

All actors need their seat at the table, and that includes engineers and professionals who work with essential forms of energy. ■

Bill Wirtz is a senior policy analyst for the Consumer Choice Center.



Spanish election dominated by Catalan question gives boost to Vox

Left coalition of PSOE and Unidas Podemos may struggle to contain anti-separatist feeling

by *Gerald Warner*

The spectacle of Pedro Sánchez, Spain’s caretaker prime minister and leader of the socialist PSOE, embracing Pablo Iglesias, leader of the far-left Unidas Podemos, on concluding a preliminary coalition agreement just 48 hours after the recent Spanish general election, must have provoked a sceptical question in the minds of Spanish voters: how were the two leaders able to conclude so quickly an agreement that had eluded them during months of fruitless negotiations and subjected Spain to the disruptive experience of two general elections within seven months?

The answer is political desperation. Between them, the two parties emerged from the second election with 10 fewer seats, making the construction of a parliamentary majority even more difficult, so they embraced with the fervour of politicians who realise that they must hang together or they will hang separately. Prior to the election Sánchez had made generous offers to Iglesias, including the deputy prime ministership and control of three ministries, which had been rebuffed.

Now, with his parliamentary representation reduced from the 42

seats he won in April to 35, Iglesias can no longer indulge in playing hard to get. Between them the PSOE and Podemos command 155 seats and they can rely on a further three from Más País, a Podemos breakaway group, taking them to 158; but a minimum of 176 seats is needed for a parliamentary majority, so the horse trading will continue.

The mainstream conservative party, Pablo Casado’s Partido Popular (PP), which only months ago feared it might suffer the fate that in this election overtook its rival Ciudadanos, healthily improved its parliamentary representation from 66 seats to 88, not sufficient for a return to government but a clear indication it is back in business. It will be forced to continue its move rightwards now that Vox, the third largest party in Spain, is challenging so strongly.

But much more occurred at this significant election than the small slippage in the votes of the two main leftist parties and the adequate PP revival would suggest. There were developments that saw a considerable upheaval in the Spanish political landscape. These included the implosion of Ciudadanos (Cs), the centrist liberal party of Albert Rivera, which plummeted from 57 seats to 10, a near-extinction event. For Rivera personally it was an extinction event: he resigned as leader and has quit politics after presiding over his party’s loss of 2.5 million votes.

The collapse of Ciudadanos is the aspect of the election that will be viewed with the greatest concern in Brussels. Cs was the most Europhile party in Spain; it was fervently pro-Brussels, to the extent of

describing itself as “post-nationalist”. That may partly explain its downfall. “Post-nationalist” is not a concept congenial to patriotic Spaniards, particularly at a time when Catalan separatism is menacing the integrity of the nation.

When 2.5 million voters desert Ciudadanos it is a further blow, following upon the recent Polish election, to those who harbour ambitions for fast-track EU integration – meaning, principally, Emmanuel Macron. An identifiable pattern has emerged at every recent election in EU states: despite differing preoccupations, the one consistent verdict recorded in the ballot boxes is rejection of further EU integration. If Brussels cannot accept that message it will condemn itself to unnecessary confrontation with member states, provoking the opposite outcome to its declared objective of greater unity.

The other seismic event at this election was the spectacular rise of Vox, the right-wing party which increased its representation from 24 seats to 52, harvesting 3.6 million votes, after just eight months’ participation in national politics. Where did Vox’s extra million votes come from? On a cursory inspection of the arithmetic on the right of centre it would be tempting to conclude that one million of the 2.5 million who abandoned Ciudadanos simply crossed over to Vox.

Ideologically, however, that does not compute. Ciudadanos is a liberal party: disillusioned voters would surely transfer their support to the centre-right PP rather than to Vox. It may be that Cs deserters were entering the PP camp from the left even as some previous supporters, inflamed by the Catalan crisis, were exiting from the right to lend their support to Vox. Rioting in Catalonia following the jailing of separatist leaders undoubtedly helped Vox, which won votes from anti-separatist Catalans too.



The collapse of Ciudadanos is the aspect of the election that will be viewed with the greatest concern in Brussels. Cs was the most Europhile party in Spain; it was fervently pro-Brussels, to the extent of describing itself as “post-nationalist”. That may partly explain its downfall. “Post-nationalist” is not a concept congenial to patriotic Spaniards, particularly at a time when Catalan separatism is menacing the integrity of the nation.

It also profited from an unforced error by the government: exhuming the body of General Franco just 17 days before polling. That provocation not only angered pro-Franco sympathisers (who were probably already Vox voters) but also neutral citizens disapproving of the left’s self-indulgence in reviving the antagonisms of the 1930s at a time when Catalan separatism is creating violent constitutional

confrontation and Spanish unemployment stands at 13.9 per cent, compared with an EU average of 6.3 per cent.

The very evident elephant in the room at this election was the Catalan crisis. So far from going away, that can only escalate. Within minutes of the election result, Spanish television stations were producing theoretical coalitions that would give the PSOE and partners an overall majority. That computer number-crunching ignored the fact that the PSOE would have to ally with separatists – a move that would be seen as toxic by the mainstream electorate. Imagine a situation where some left-wing legislation such as Podemos will demand was imposed on Spain with the help of separatist deputies: Vox would have a field day.

The right cannot take power, since the combination of the PP, Vox, Cs and two Navarrese deputies would amount to just 152 seats, far short of the necessary 176. But with 10 small, broadly left groupings holding

a total of 40 seats – 21 of them occupied by Catalan nationalists and 12 by Basques – it seems inevitable that Sánchez, who has made clear his determination to remain in office for four years, will commit himself to pacts that could massively rebound on his party in the future. And, along with the power-hungry PP, waiting in the wings to profit from PSOE mistakes is the even hungrier Vox. ■

British general election turning into a two-horse race

A traditional battle between Labour and the Conservatives over spending and leadership has so far dominated the campaign

by *Jack Dickens*

As soon as it was announced in late October 2019, the forthcoming UK general election was billed as one for the ages. It has been framed as the most important election for a generation, a battlefield in Europe and America’s ongoing “culture wars”, and as a contest for the very soul of the British constitution.

This competition was also expected to cast a judgment upon Britain’s supposedly “outdated” two party system. Several parties, each with distinct and

divisive core messages on questions such as Brexit, democracy, and the status of the United Kingdom entered into the fray.

Yet, for all the vaunted principles being discussed in the build-up, this election has in practice – so far, and there is some distance to go – returned to quite traditional terrain. Both the polls and the opening salvos of the election have made this election look more and more like a two-horse race between the two major parties – Labour and the Conservatives.

On the Conservative side, there has been a potentially significant boost to Boris Johnson’s party over the insurgent challengers of Nigel Farage’s Brexit party, which campaigns for a no deal Brexit. Not only have the Conservatives been squeezing the Brexit party in the polls ever since the aftermath of the European elections in May, but Farage has also made overtures to Johnson’s party.

Earlier this month Farage announced that he was standing

down candidates in 317 seats won by the Tories in 2017 for fear of risking a hung parliament, but also because his party have been struggling to regain their giddy heights of May 2019 in the polls thus far in the campaign.

Meanwhile, the early signs were that the Liberal Democrats were also being squeezed. As the unambiguous party of Remain and Revoke Article 50 (cancelling Brexit) they had been hoping that to challenge Labour in national terms, but their figures slipped in the early part of the campaign in the face of the Labour leadership’s promise to hold a second referendum on Britain’s EU membership.

Brexit undoubtedly looms over the election, but it is also the case that this election is simultaneously being fought on very traditional issues. Economic management has already emerged as a crucial fault line between Labour and the Conservatives, much as this was one of the key battlegrounds in every

election before the 2016 referendum (and even in 2017).

For instance, the opening two weeks of November have centred not only upon Brexit but also upon issues of public spending. Where the Labour party have promised ambitious investment programmes into public infrastructure combined



Not only have the Conservatives been squeezing the Brexit party in the polls ever since the aftermath of the European elections in May, but Farage has also made overtures to Johnson’s party.

with punitive taxes for higher earners, the Conservative Chancellor of the Exchequer (Johnson’s man at the head of the treasury’s finances), has hit back with allegations that the Labour party’s reckless tax and spend policies cannot be trusted.

Of course, there are complications to any neat picture – the situation

in Scotland is very different, where the SNP have had a strong presence and hope to win even more seats and hold the balance of power if there is a hung parliament. They will push for a referendum on Scottish independence. In Scotland the Conservatives will seek to hold as many of their thirteen seats as possible against challenges from the SNP and the Liberal Democrats.

In general, however, in the early phases of this election it has begun to look like a traditional two and a bit party contest. That could change.

But Britain has a first past the post voting system, and elections often become a straight fight between the leaders of the two main parties. In this case that is Brexiteer Boris Johnson for the Tories and the far left Jeremy Corbyn for the Labour party. Only one of them can be Prime Minister on Friday December 13th, the day after the election. ■



LEADER COLUMN

REFORM AND REBUILD NATO

“What we are currently experiencing is the brain death of NATO.” That is the type of soundbite at which President Emmanuel Macron excels and which guarantees him media attention. Unfortunately, it also puts a spring in the step of aspiring hegemons in the Kremlin and other hubs of chauvinist ambition. President Macron himself is hardly innocent of chauvinist impulses: his provocative claim made earlier this month is being seen by many as an attempt to promote the conversion of the European Union into a military power, with France in the leading role.

An Emmanuel Macron interview is now as unpredictable and potentially combustible as a Donald Trump tweet. The two leaders even have a community of interest in their disparagement of NATO. President Trump, before he had been formally inaugurated, described NATO as “obsolete”. He makes no secret of his desire to rehabilitate Vladimir Putin, an aim in which he is now supported by Emmanuel Macron, whom Putin visited in September.

President Macron is keen to flex some military muscle since, as he is fond of pointing out, with Brexit the EU will lose its other nuclear power with a permanent seat on the UN Security Council, leaving France in pole position. However, since Britain's departure will also eventually mean the loss of 16 per cent of the EU's budget, the coming years might be an inauspicious time for the EU to embark on the large-scale expenditure that any kind of truly independent defence posture would demand. But while President Macron's language is to be deplored, he was right in asserting that all is not well with NATO.

The United States' recent withdrawal from Syria and replacement by Turkish forces, without consultation with other NATO members, conflicted with the whole spirit and purpose of the Alliance. Turkey, though a NATO member, is acting in complicity with Russia. That situation reflects the incoherence of NATO policy. The solution is to make concerted and vigorous efforts to consolidate, modernise and re-energise the Alliance. That is a perfectly achievable objective and it makes much more sense, strategically and financially, than trying to convert the EU, already fraught with the serious challenges, into a military super-power, which it was never designed to be.

EU member states should ask themselves which is more likely to be effective and affordable: beefing up their defence budgets to the 2 per cent of GDP required by NATO, but met by only six European members, including Poland, or shovelling unlimited amounts of cash into a Macron-inspired vanity project to turn the EU into a putative superpower capable of confronting China or eventually even the United States, as the more extravagant euro-militarists postulate? There is already military mission creep among EU institutions. Under the system of Permanent Structured Cooperation (PESCO) and financed by the European Defence Fund (EDF), 13 new defence projects have been approved this month, making a total of 47 joint initiatives since 2017.

In the top echelons of EU governance Emmanuel Macron is knocking on an open door. Donald Tusk's successor, incoming Council President Charles Michel, said recently: “It's important for us to have our own capacities in order to have more weight.” As Belgian premier he presided over defence spending of less than 1 per cent of GDP. Josep Borrell, the new High Representative for External Affairs, supporting Macron, spoke of “the urgent need for Europe to move forward with determination in the development of its defence capabilities...” And President Ursula von der Leyen contributed to the sabre-rattling: “Soft power alone won't suffice today if we Europeans want to assert ourselves in the world.” The condition in which she left the German armed forces does not suggest she is well qualified for the role of Supreme Warlord.

Rather than the creation of an EU army, what is urgently needed is a focused reform of NATO, particularly clarification regarding the terms of Article 5, requiring all signatories to assist any member state that is attacked. The opportunity will present itself at NATO's seventieth anniversary meeting next month in London. There is no evidence that President Trump seriously desires the dissolution of NATO: he will cooperate in rebooting the Alliance, provided all members pull their weight. Therein lies the best guarantee of European security. ■



Photo: Charles McQuillan - Getty Images

For weeks, pundits and politicians in Britain have framed this as the most tumultuous and difficult to predict General Election for decades, involving a population as wearied by the third national poll in four years as they are by political clichés.

Voters should be under no illusion, though. When the United Kingdom goes to the polls next month it will be the most important democratic exercise in the country's modern political history.

Why? Next month's election will be a stark choice between capitalism - via Boris Johnson's brand of globalist conservatism - and the toxic mixture of socialism and anti-Western extremism peddled by the leader of the Labour party Jeremy Corbyn. On Brexit, the outcome could propel Britain into the next stage of trade talks with the EU or sentence the British to years of further political paralysis. But the choice for the British is not just between Brexit or no Brexit. The decision represents a more fundamental choice between having a functioning market-based democracy or opting for a grim Socialist future.

The backdrop to this contest is turmoil, class-driven dispute and party realignment, of course. Even though the Brexit vote in 2016 represented a break from mainland Europe, it has paradoxically made British politics more European and fragmented, exposing the limitations of the “First Past the Post” electoral system. This was once supposed to guarantee political stability but the voting system now looks alarmingly

ill-equipped for a multi-party age. And since this will be no straightforward two-horse race, it is far more difficult to predict the outcome. Joining the two main parties in the running are the resurgent Liberal Democrats, led by Jo Swinson with their signature policy of revoking Article 50 and returning Britain to the EU fold, in contrast to Nigel Farage's Brexit Party, which favours a clean break from Europe. Both threaten to squeeze the two main parties in marginal seats.

Many traditional party loyalties have been swept away. The EU referendum and its bitter fallout have has-

distinctive third way between the two main parties, have become a single-issue protest group committed only to blocking Brexit. As if to underline their new-found radicalism, earlier this month they selected Steve Bray, a well-known activist who spends his days outside Parliament yelling “Stop Brexit!” through a megaphone, to run as a candidate next month. It is a vivid indictment of the madness currently infecting British politics.

For the minority of UK citizens who are committed europhiles, Brexit has been an extraordinarily painful process, forcing them to confront their fellow citizens' stubborn commitment to borders and the nation state. Yet this act of defiance against the European project has also unlocked previously dormant feelings of European affinity.

Before 2016 it would have been considered eccentric to own an EU flag and now, in London at least, they adorn walls, windows, and proliferate on social media in emoji form. Many Remainers now describe themselves as “proud Europeans” and “citizens of the world” in ways that would have been dismissed as kitsch just a few years ago. But along with these commendable feelings of solidarity, ugly and unpleasant prejudices have stirred. Brexit has unleashed a virulent strain of class snobbery and ageism; attend a pro-EU “People's Vote” march in London and you will see the well-educated middle classes pouring scorn on the supposedly “uneducated” Brexiteers by bragging about how the slogans on their placards are

“
The mission of the Corbynites domestically is to make Britain a far-left economy, returning it to state ownership and going much further than any previous Labour government. Internationally, Corbyn and his aides are pro-Russia and anti-Western.

tened the party shake up underway in Britain as in much of Europe, creating previously unthinkable alliances. MPs have crossed the floor and defected to other parties; battling for the Liberal Democrats are former Conservative and Labour ministers. Once-loyal Labour stalwarts are publicly backing Boris Johnson, disgusted by Jeremy Corbyn's refusal to tackle the endemic anti-Semitism in party ranks. Margaret Thatcher's enemy Arthur Scargill, of the 1980s Miners' Strike and the leader of the Communist Party of Great Britain, recently wrote to the conservative newspaper the Daily Telegraph, praising Johnson. The Liberal Democrats, once a moderate,



Photo: Christopher Furlong - Getty Images

“
The Conservatives are in a precarious position. If they fail, Britain will be on the road to socialism, with all the horrors that entails.

by Madeline Grant

spelt correctly. Some have argued for the over-65s, who voted largely for Brexit, to be removed from the franchise. There is even a website tracking how many Leave-voters have died since the referendum.

Only by seeing Brexit through can Britain begin to extract some of the poison from this toxic national debate. A Conservative victory next month might not destroy the so-called “People's Vote” campaign altogether, but it would certainly take the wind out of its sails. It is far trickier to make the public case for rejoining the EU after the British have left. Britain would then be on a sensible path towards EU exit, led by a PM who, despite his well-documented faults, is no Little England tub-thumper but a cultivated cosmopolitan and classical scholar. Although he has been sceptical of the EU since working as Brussels correspondent in his twenties, the PM - the son of a Conservative MEP and an alumnus of European School in Brussels - is also a European and internationalist who speaks six languages. Unlike his predecessor Theresa May, Johnson is an instinctive economic and social liberal, keen to maintain close and friendly links with Europe, without compromising Britain's ability to think globally.

If the Tories - or at least Brexit-supporting parties - fail to win an outright majority, however, then a second referendum will become inevitable. Worse than that though is the prospect of the country falling into the hands of an unreformed Marxist who would not only be the most economically left-wing Prime Minister in British history, but far and away the least patriotic. Although he has recently performed a politically expedient volte face on Europe, Jeremy Corbyn has spent his political career

rejecting the EU as scathingly as Nigel Farage, though for different reasons, decrying the Common Market as a “neoliberal project”.

The mission of the Corbynites domestically is to make Britain a far-left economy, returning it to state ownership and going much further than any previous Labour government. Internationally, Corbyn and his aides are pro-Russia and anti-Western.

If elected Corbyn would take key industries into public ownership including water supplies, the national grid and even repeat Britain's disastrous experiment with nationalising British telecoms. Broadband would be “free”, meaning private investors would have their assets stolen (purchased at a knock-down price) and the state would run technology infrastructure, with predictable results.

Corbyn and his team have discussed the abolition of private schools and a state seizure of their property, and of reviving capital controls to prevent the wealthy from transferring their assets overseas. Corbyn's tenure would also destroy conventional forms of international cooperation. Whereas Johnson favours multilateral action on military matters, Corbyn's foreign policy seems largely determined by anti-American feeling, coupled with conspiracy theorist opinions and a deep distrust of international agreements like NATO. Key allies have already intimated that they would no longer share intelligence and work strategically with Britain with PM Corbyn at the helm.

It is deeply depressing that 30 years on from the fall of the Berlin Wall, socialist ideas continue to proliferate. It will sound extraordinary to a Polish or Hungarian audience, for example, that anyone would even try to implement these failed concepts again when history shows it leads to tyranny, oppression and stagnation.

But it is still conceivable that British voters, particularly younger ones who have suffered especially from the UK's housing crisis and lack first-hand experience of life under socialism, could choose a policy platform rooted

“
It is deeply depressing that 30 years on from the fall of the Berlin Wall, socialist ideas continue to proliferate. It will be extraordinary to a Polish audience, for example, that anyone would even try to implement these failed concepts again when history shows it leads to tyranny, oppression and stagnation.

in the ideas which drove Britain's terminal decline in the latter half of the 20th century.

The integrity of the United Kingdom also hangs in the balance. Many believe that Brexit has made Scottish independence more likely, since 60% of its electorate voted to Remain in the EU back in 2016. Brexit (and the premiership of Boris Johnson, who is deeply unpopular north of the border) have certainly boosted the Scottish Nationalist Party in the short term. However, given that much of the Scottish case for independence hinges on staying in the EU, there is no time for another

independence referendum before the election, and it could take an independent Scotland a decade or more to be invited to join the EU, the Scots will arguably be less likely to choose independence once Brexit has happened. Should the Tories fail to secure an outright majority, however, then all bets are off. Corbyn would certainly offer the SNP a referendum on Scottish independence in exchange for their support in a coalition. At a time of such bitter division, this would probably yield an Out vote.

One common misunderstanding about democracy is that it exists to discover the “right answer” to political issues. On the contrary, rarely, if ever, can we be sure what the “right” answer is. Democracy is a system for fostering consent and solidarity by affording everyone an equal vote and an equal right to participate in national decisions. But next month's General Election is slightly different because of the scale of what is at stake.

Given the risks, the Tories are taking an enormous risk holding this election. But they had little alternative given the state of total paralysis in Parliament. Having inherited May's minority government, Johnson soon found that optimism alone wasn't sufficient to see Brexit through.

But their plan is audacious. Inspired by Johnson's Machiavellian Special Adviser Dominic Cummings, the Conservatives hope to reunite the Leave vote, see off the Brexit Party and win an election against a divided Remain faction. But they are staking everything

on the personal draw of a politician - Boris Johnson - who tends to divide and their success hinges on winning a clutch of seats in the North of England and Midlands that have never turned blue before. In order to win these traditional Labour voters, the Tories appear to have abandoned the remaining vestiges of Thatcherism in their party (while paying lip service to the idea of free markets) in order to mount a series of ambitious electoral giveaways.

So far, their plan appears to be working, buoyed by a successful renegotiation of Theresa May's deal which few in Westminster anticipated, coupled with the welcome announcement for Conservative strategists earlier this month that Nigel Farage will not be fielding Brexit Party candidates in Tory-held seats. Early polling showed that the Conservative Party now enjoys more support among working-class voters than the upper classes. Even their disastrous campaign launch, accompanied by a slew of gaffes and resignations, seems not to have cut through to the general public.

Since the start of the campaign, most UK pollsters have predicted a Conservative majority of varying degrees - but the curse of 2017, when the Tories fell short, is never far from anyone's mind.

Psephologists and Tory strategists will recall in tortuous detail how former Prime Minister Theresa May's campaign unravelled within weeks of scoring some of the highest opinion poll ratings in electoral history. One persuasive offer from Labour, one rogue policy announcement from the Tories, could change everything.

The Conservatives are in a precarious position. If they fail, Britain will be on the road to socialism, with all the horrors that entails. ■



New generation of protestors discovers you can’t always get what you want

by *Jack Dickens*

Iraq, Lebanon and Haiti are not crippled by any one institution which can be eradicated overnight, but by corrupt behaviours which have become endemic



A wave of protests has spread across the world this year. For most, this has been epitomised by the traumatic scenes from Hong Kong, showing student demonstrators in gas masks as they take on the Beijing behemoth. Beyond this rather exceptional context, however, we are also witnessing a more general crisis of democratic politics. Protests are occurring in places where there is a fatal synergy of socio-economic inequalities, high levels of corruption, and the threat of religious sectarianism. Such forces have precluded the transparent operation of institutions to redress popular grievances.

Chile is an exception: not only is it a shining example of a successful transition to democracy and the rule of law, but the country has enjoyed strong economic growth since 1990. Yet it remains one of the most unequal countries in the world – the UN estimates that the wealthiest one per cent earn one-third of the national wealth. This state of affairs is exacerbated by a low minimum wage, slow wage growth, and a lack of affordable housing and healthcare. In these circumstances, the rise in subway fares announced by President Piñera was merely the straw which broke a beleaguered camel’s back.

Where Chile ranks highly in international reviews of freedom and transparency, however, the story in Haiti is different. The precise target for the Haitians is President Juvenel Moïse, who promised to invest in infrastructure and fight decay using the loans from a Petrocaribe deal struck with Venezuela in 2006, only to have been found with his own hands in the till by Haiti’s corruption watchdog. Adding fuel to the flame of revolt is the country’s broken education system – social barriers set up by an education system which is dominated by teaching in French, a language spoken fluently by only 5-10% of Haitians. Socio-economic disparities and cultural stratification work hand-in-hand in Haiti.

Elsewhere, in Lebanon and Iraq, democratic governments have tried to paper over the cracks of civil societies torn apart by the legacy of sectarian conflict and a kleptocratic political culture. Socio-economic degradation and a sense of relative economic deprivation are blamed upon governments who are

motivated by an entrenched religious identity politics.

The protests which have gripped Beirut are a part of a rage against the failings of a power-sharing government established after a bitter sectarian war tore the country apart from 1975-1990. Instead of passing much needed economic reforms, sectarian leaders within the government have abused their power, parcelling out funds and state contracts amongst their own supporters. Meanwhile, jobs for the general population are in short supply and state infrastructure falls into disrepair.

Yet, the protests risk being too vague to achieve anything. In Iraq, the protests have led to calls for a total overhaul of the established government. One woman at the mass protest in Tahrir Square which took place on 29th October, told *Le Monde* that “We don’t want this government any more. We want a transitional government and constitutional change”. Meanwhile, in Lebanon, there have been calls

straight away. The leader of the pro-government Lebanese Christian party, Michel Aoun, has acknowledged: “The people have revolted because their rights are missing” and because “people have lost confidence in the state”. Yet he also cautioned that “corruption will not end easily because it has been deeply rooted for decades.”

In the end, this is the chief problem that the world’s protestors face – many of them are animated by a sense of urgency and imminence, a desire to do away with the system and rebuild from a tabula rasa. Yet it is one thing for a protest movement to call for the overthrow of a regime or political establishment, and it is another to have a coherent idea of what should be created in its stead. What do you replace a democracy with when a democracy does not function?

The protesters in the Middle East and Haiti are also hamstrung by the failure of democracy to function. This leaves their political movement in a kind of stasis, calling for meaningful change, but unable to identify the precise source of all political evils beyond a vague opposition to an elite. Iraq, Lebanon and Haiti are not crippled by any one institution

which can be eradicated overnight, but by corrupt behaviours which have become endemic. They are officially governed by the rule of law, but the law is systematically subverted. Their governments are nominally representative, but they are neither meritocratic nor transparent. They have free elections, but they are often not a fair contest.

Together, these states offer stark warnings of what happens when the conditions for a successfully functioning democratic system are placed under severe strain by unequal opportunities, a loss of faith in institutions, identity politics, and a lack of basic accountability. They reflect Alexis de Tocqueville’s shrewd observation about the 19th century United States: “The surface of... society is covered with a layer of democratic paint, but from time to time one can see the old aristocratic colours breaking through.”

Conciliatory overtures by the governments of Lebanon and Chile indicate that the protestors’ message will stimulate reforms. Yet successful measures to tackle socio-economic disparities and corrupt political practices will not be achieved

INSIDE LEBANON’S PROTEST MOVEMENT

by *Mattie Brignal*



I was in Tripoli, Lebanon’s second city, when the country decided it had had enough.

On the night the protests began, men in balaclavas set fire to tyres on the city’s main roads. In Abdul Hamid Karami Square, mopeds weaved through billowing smoke as crowds chanted “thawra!” – revolution. Flick knives poked out from the jeans of wiry 10-year-olds who prowled around looking menacing. Soldiers looked on with M16s clamped to their chests.

As the only obvious foreigner in attendance I attracted a lot of attention. Many gave me an ironically cheery “welcome to Lebanon!” as dustbins blazed and men scaled statues. One young boy just stared at me in disbelief. “Why are you here?” he asked.

I asked one man, Hassan Nassif, why he was protesting. “Our electricity is going off all the time” said Hassan, who had brought his young daughter to the demonstration. “We cannot drink the water. Food and housing are very expensive”.

On the edge of the crowd I spoke to Nazih Fino, a quiet, thoughtful teacher. “I don’t like chaos” he said. “If it’s not really organised it’s not worth it.” A street vendor sold me a spinach-filled flatbread. “I know there will be a change of government soon” he said.

I watched a group of teenagers feed a banner showing a minister’s grinning face to the flames.

“People don’t have jobs. I don’t have anything to do in the day” said Fareed, who had helped to carry the banner. He lit a cigarette and climbed onto his moped. “I’m going home now. My mother will be worried.”

Simmering resentment at the government’s corruption and ineptitude had finally erupted. But there was a sense of excitement and cathartic release as well as anger.

Fundamental change is being demanded - an overhaul of the entire ruling class. This is an intoxicating prospect for people whose grievances have been ignored for so long. But despite the Prime Minister’s resignation, the system that has bred the bloated and self-serving elite remains in place, at least for the time being.

When I got back to Beirut the mood had changed. The demonstration outside the majestic Al-Hussein Mosque on Martyr Square had calmed into a peaceful gathering that felt more like a party than the spark of a revolution.

No sectarian flags were flying, only Lebanese – a forest of green cedars.

Anas, a middle-aged volunteer at the Mosque, offered to take me for a spin on his motorbike around the square.

“The Syrian war is a big problem for us” he yelled over his shoulder. “So many have come. We want to help them but it is too much. It is hard with just Lebanese.”

He dropped me off and I sat on the outskirts of the festivities with a group of men and women in their early twenties, coiling shisha clouds into the air and talking politics.

“The country has come together, but I wish it was for happier reasons” said Reina Abboud, who was struggling to find work. What next? I asked her. She gave me a sardonic look, then grinned. “Make Lebanon great again!” ■



A new generation of refugee cities can help prevent another migrant crisis

Between 2015-2017, 2.5 million people entered Europe in an irregular manner. This chaotic situation led to the exploitation of refugees and vulnerable economic migrants, as well as terrorism.

EU politicians have argued that the situation was stabilised in March 2016 thanks to the EU-Turkey deal, but that is only half the truth. First and foremost, the Greek government decided to no longer allow those that had illegally travelled from Turkey to leave their islands. Under the EU-Turkey deal, fewer than 3,000 people were returned back to Turkey, in three years, so this could not have had much of an effect. The real reason why people no longer risked their lives trying to make the dangerous journey from Turkey was that they knew that they would end up stuck in Greece.

As a result, the numbers of undocumented migrants who drowned in the Aegean Sea plummeted by 85 percent in 2017 when compared to 2016. A similar policy implemented in 2013 in Australia resulted in close to zero drownings, after at least a thousand people had died at sea in the 13 years before.

Telling those arriving illegally to await the answer to their asylum request before continuing their journey has proven to be the key for developed economies seeking to prevent disorderly mass migration. However, it does not solve everything. For a start, there is the major question mark over what we should do about those that have been denied asylum.

This remains a major problem both on the Greek islands, where tens of thousands of migrants are stuck in terrible conditions and remain subject to lengthy asylum procedures and on the islands outside Australia where illegal immigrants are housed in depots that resemble prisons.

Despite a recent rise in arrivals from Turkey, the numbers are still

relatively modest in Europe, given that many without a chance to get asylum have simply stopped trying to make it into the EU.

Things look very different in Turkey, which currently hosts more than 3.6 million Syrian refugees. Partly due to the deteriorated Turkish economy, public opinion has become more hostile to their presence there.

In response, Turkish President Erdogan once again threatened in October 2019 to flood Europe with refugees if the EU dared to describe Turkey’s military offensive in northeastern Syria as an “occupation”. He stated: “If you try to label our current operation as an occupation, our job becomes easier, we will open the doors and send the 3.6 million refugees to you.”

Erdogan’s idea is to rehouse up to 1 million of these refugees in a 30 kilometre-wide buffer zone in Syria, where Turkey has tried to push out Kurdish-led forces. The Turkish government regards these Kurdish forces as terrorists.

The UN’s refugee agency, UNHCR, has stressed that any return of Syrian refugees to Syria should be done voluntarily, while the International Rescue Committee, an NGO, has warned against evicting civilians currently living in northeast Syria.



by *Pieter Cleppe*

“The cost of helping to integrate the one million refugees Germany welcomed is already 23 billion euro per year. That doesn’t reflect the divisions disorderly migration flows can create in the social fabric. It should, of course, be fully voluntary for any refugee or economic migrant to go to a “refugee city” and it does not mean that the West should close its doors to refugees or economic migrants.



Photo: Shutterstock.com

This comes amid reports that at least 100,000 of them fled their homes as a result of Turkey’s offensive. This has now halted, following a ceasefire. It should be noted that Kurdish forces do not seem completely innocent either. In 2015, Amnesty International accused them of having forcibly evicting Arabs and Turkmens from areas where they took control after driving out ISIS.

The Turkish proposal to resettle its own Syrian refugees in the strip looks like a complete mess. It would end up with people being resettled to areas they are not from, and it would make it nigh-on impossible for those that have fled to return to their homes.

At the heart of all this is the fact that there simply is not the sufficient democratic support in either Europe or Turkey to welcome all refugees, let alone all economic migrants. Most people would agree a solution should be found for them, but even the most welcoming would admit that allowing everyone in is not sustainable.

In history, there are precedents for more radical action. The United States is probably the most ambitious and most successful “refugee haven” ever created. On a smaller scale, the was British Hong Kong provided a safe haven for millions fleeing the murderous

Maoist regime in China. Israel, also, can be seen in this light.

In all three of these success stories, locals already lived in the area before, which gave rise to serious challenges. In general, however, the creation of “refugee cities” was a success. We must now find a suitable site for their modern equivalent, but somewhere where nobody lives. That shouldn’t be too difficult, given that only three percent of the world’s land surface is urbanised. The rise of cities such as Dubai and Shenzhen illustrates how it is practically possible for economic centres to emerge from virtually nothing.

In other words, it is possible to offer good economic prospects to those that can’t be welcomed elsewhere, provided the rule of law is safeguarded. If the British were able to provide the rule of law to millions of Chinese refugees back in the 1950s, surely the industrial nations of today can work together to replicate something similar.

The cost of helping to integrate the one million refugees Germany welcomed is already 23 billion euro per year. That doesn’t reflect the divisions disorderly migration flows can create in the social fabric. It should, of course, be fully voluntary for any refugee or economic migrant to go to a “refugee city” and it does not mean that the West should close its doors to refugees or economic migrants. New centres for resettlement only offer a solution to those denied residency elsewhere. Desperate military actions like the one undertaken by the Turkish government illustrate that, in the future, what appears to be unrealistic at first sight may actually be very practical in light of the dire alternatives. ■

Pieter Cleppe represents independent think tank Open Europe in Brussels

The EU must stop making up the rules as it goes along

Who said this? “Playing one’s proper part in solidarity with fellow Europeans cannot be based on a penny-pinching cost-benefit analysis along the lines (familiar, alas, from Brexiteer rhetoric) of ‘what precisely does the EU cost me per week and what exactly do I personally get out of it?’ Such self-centredness is a betrayal of the founding fathers’ vision for a peaceful and prosperous continent.” Go on, have a guess. Who would engage in such simplistic Europhile sloganizing? Anna Soubry? Roland Rudd? Guy Verhofstadt?

The answer, disgracefully, is Eleanor Sharpston, Britain’s Advocate-General at the European Court of Justice (ECJ). She was not speaking extra-judicially. Those words came in a formal ruling which found against Poland, Hungary and

the Czech Republic for, in essence, failing to accept as many immigrants as Brussels told them to.

The aspect of the EU I have always disliked the most – worse than its remoteness, its corruption, its contempt for public opinion – is its tendency to make up the rules as it goes along. Again and again, it has been prepared to set aside its own laws in pursuit of closer integration. It often does so quite flagrantly, cheerfully admitting that the goal of a federal Europe matters more than the dots and commas of the treaties.

To pluck an almost random example, the euro bailouts were plainly

against the law – not just in the sense that they lacked any basis in the treaties, but in the sense that they were expressly prohibited. “We violated all the rules because

Politicians are expected to be partial, but judges are not. That is why it is so alarming to watch the ECJ repeatedly setting aside what the laws says in favour of what it wants the law to say.

“Politicians are expected to be partial, but judges are not. That is why it is so alarming to watch the ECJ repeatedly setting aside what the law says in favour of what it wants the law to say.

we wanted to close ranks and really rescue the euro zone,” said Christine Lagarde at the time. “The Treaty of Lisbon was very straightforward: no bailout.”

and 1964. Lord Neill of Bladen, one of the most distinguished jurists of his age, put it well. “A court with a mission is a menace. A supreme court with a mission is a tyranny”.



by *Daniel Hannan MEP*

The EU’s judicial activism infects the courts in its constituent states – including, of course, our own bench. As we discovered six weeks ago, Britain’s supreme court, taking its cue from the ECJ, was quite prepared to invent new legal principles in order to advance the European cause.

The past few months have been so scrappy and ill-tempered that it is easy to lose sight of what Brexit was all about. We should, perhaps, thank Dr Sharpston for reminding us of precisely why the UK voted to leave the European Union. Her attitude is precisely what Brexit campaigners had in mind when they spoke of Britain “living under its own laws”. ■

Louis de Bonald

THE MUSKETEER WHO INVENTED SOCIOLOGY

In the third of a series of essays on conservative philosophers, Gerald Warner reflects on the legacy of Louis de Bonald, who had a lasting and profound impact on Europe’s sociological tradition

Today, mention of the science of sociology conjures an image of “progressive” academics whose intellectual assumptions are far removed from any sympathies with conservatism. It is startling, therefore, to realise that the father of that discipline – or at least the grandfather – was an 18th-century French nobleman whose first career was in the elite regiment of the King’s Musketeers and who subsequently became celebrated as the most reactionary native-born writer in France to denounce the Revolution and celebrate the virtues of the *Ancien Régime*.



Photo: Photo 12 - Getty Images

Louis Gabriel Ambroise, Vicomte de Bonald was born in 1754 near Millau in the south of France. He was educated by the Oratorians, after which he entered the army, serving from 1773 to 1776 in the Musketeers, that most romantic military corps celebrated, thanks to Dumas *père*, in hundreds of feature films, its members sporting the red heels on their boots that denoted nobility and the iconic white Cross of Armagnac on their breasts. After the regiment was disbanded in 1776 Bonald returned to his estate at Millau where he became the mayor and devoted himself to campaigning against the centralised

Bonald emigrated and joined the royalist army of the Prince de Condé. After the victory of the revolutionary forces he settled in Heidelberg where he wrote his first major work in 1796, *Theory of Political and Religious Power in Civil Society Demonstrated by Reason and History*. That title incorporates two of Bonald’s chief preoccupations: the importance of reason (an issue on which he took a radically different approach to Maistre) and his concept of history as a slow process of establishing the truth of principles that are of divine origin but empirically demonstrated by the experience of successive generations.

government that he believed was the curse of France.

Bonald’s first enemy was not Robespierre but Richelieu, whose legacy of central control by the monarchy had reduced the role of the nobility. Bonald was no friend of Bourbon absolutism despite his later encomium on the dynasty: “When God wished to punish France, He took away the Bourbons from her governance.” Bonald, like Burke and Maistre, was not only sympathetic to the early stages of the Revolution but remained so for much longer, only going into opposition in 1791 in reaction to the Civil Constitution of the Clergy.

by **Gerald Warner**

Bonald, like Burke, embraced empiricism. His method of thought was scientific, unlike Maistre who detested science. Auguste Comte and Emile Durkheim both acknowledged their discipline’s debt to Bonald’s early analysis of “social facts”, a system of pre-sociology. Commentators have suggested that the elements of positivism in Bonald’s philosophy effectively divorce him from true traditionalism, but that notion is contradicted by his constant invocation of the divine in his observations on society.

For society, to Bonald, was the essential environment of man. The first sentence of his seminal work *On Divorce*, written in 1801, declares: “It is a fertile source of error, when treating a question relative to society, to consider it by itself, with no *relationship* to other questions, because society itself is only a group of *relationships*.” He goes on to ask: “How, indeed, can one treat divorce, which disunites the father, mother, and child, without speaking of society, which unites them?” Such ideas interested Napoleon, recently come to power, who amnestied Bonald for his *émigré* past in 1802 (he had been in hiding in Paris since 1797) and tightened up the permissive divorce legislation passed in 1792.

Bonald lived quietly in Napoleonic France, avoiding trouble with the authorities, and by 1806 was collaborating with Chateaubriand in editing the *Mercur de France*, a collaboration that would be repeated a decade later on a rather different publication. In 1808 he accepted a professorship at the Imperial University, but he was never an enthusiastic “*rallié*” of the Bonapartist regime. After the publication of *Primitive Legislation* in 1802 Bonald produced no further important work until after the Bourbon Restoration when he finally came into his own.

In 1815 he became a deputy in the famously ultra-royalist “*chambre introuvable*” which came into conflict with Louis XVIII because its programme was more conservative than his. Part of that programme was to abolish divorce and Bonald made an impassioned speech in the chamber arguing in favour of this reform, drawing inspiration from his previous writings. He was commissioned to write a report on the subject for the government and, under his guidance, divorce was abolished in France in 1816. From 1818 to 1820 he renewed his collaboration with Chateaubriand on the journal *Le Conservateur* – the first formal use of the term “conservative” in politics.

Bonald is so traditionally linked with Maistre – in the style of Marx and Engels – it is necessary to emphasise

how greatly they differed. In religion Maistre was an Ultramontane, Bonald a Gallican; Maistre loathed science, Bonald regarded it as a crucial intellectual discipline; Maistre reacted violently against reason, associating it with the charlatan *philosophes* of the Pseudo-Enlightenment, Bonald (like Aquinas) employed reason in defending tradition; Maistre saw the French Revolution as a divine chastisement, Bonald regarded it in more scientific terms as an empirical experiment – an example of history-as-truth – a “crucible” in which the ideas of the Enlightenment “melted away like a light fog”.

Some claim that Bonald is largely ignored today while Maistre is still read, because his literary style was so inferior to that of the Savoyard. Yet it is unjust to dismiss Bonald’s style as plodding. Some of his aphorisms are

before Descartes, but before language there was absolutely nothing but bodies and their images, because language is the necessary instrument of every intellectual operation – nay, the means of every moral existence.” Thus Bonald proclaimed his belief that language was evidence of a divine creation, God’s gift to man and the origin of articulate intelligence. He reversed the Cartesian “*Cogito ergo sum*” in a new formulation: “Man thinks his word before he speaks his thought, or, in other words, man cannot speak his thought without thinking his word.”

This postulation reached back into the roots of knowledge and philosophy. Bonald did not confine himself to theorizing on basic speech; he took into consideration syntax and all forms of communication. He thus anticipated a problem with which

“
Bonald is so traditionally linked with Maistre – in the style of Marx and Engels – it is necessary to emphasise how greatly they differed. In religion Maistre was an Ultramontane, Bonald a Gallican; Maistre loathed science, Bonald regarded it as a crucial intellectual discipline; Maistre reacted violently against reason, associating it with the charlatan philosophes of the Pseudo-Enlightenment, Bonald (like Aquinas) employed reason in defending tradition; Maistre saw the French Revolution as a divine chastisement, Bonald regarded it in more scientific terms as an empirical experiment – an example of history-as-truth – a “crucible” in which the ideas of the Enlightenment “melted away like a light fog”.

truly memorable: “All that is to last is slow to grow”; “The deist is a man who in his short existence has not had time to become an atheist”; and, as an advocate of limited censorship, “Absolute liberty of the press is a tax upon those who read. It is demanded only by those who write.”

God, family (a microcosm of society), a scientific approach to all observable social phenomena (a principle he put into practice as a government minister from 1822, confirming his claim to have cultivated pre-sociology), and a view of all existence as based on a triad of cause, means and effect – these were significant elements of Bonald’s system of thought. There was, however, one towering preoccupation that dwarfed all others: the importance of language.

“There was geometry in the world before Newton, and philosophy

Darwin would wrestle, the relationship between language and power, the semantic obsessions of Marxists and modern issues of semiotics. Of all the Counter-Revolutionary writers, of whom it might be thought the last word has been written, Bonald deserves further academic research today because of the startling modernity of many of his preoccupations.

Bonald’s public life ended with the Revolution of 1830 when he left the Chamber of Peers rather than swear allegiance to the usurping Orleanist regime. He died in 1840, having composed a telling epitaph on the French Revolution: “The cry ‘Liberty, equality, fraternity or death!’ was much in vogue during the Revolution. Liberty ended by covering France with prisons, equality by multiplying titles and decorations, and fraternity by dividing us. Death alone prevailed.” ■

Old spymaster

Le Carré hasn’t lost his touch

John Le Carré’s latest novel is an angry, funny, and readable take on the politics of Trump and Brexit

by **David Waywell**

When an author has written twenty-four novels, one should expect (and perhaps even hope) that they tread familiar ground with their twenty-fifth. Authors of this kind are rare enough to be special; special enough to maintain a dialogue with their reader across multiple millions of words. As much as there’s something to say about authors exploring radically new ground, readers often don’t want that newness to be at the expense of their strengths.

And so it is with John Le Carré, whose latest novel, *Agent Running in the Field*, was published last week. To describe it briefly as “typical” le Carré fare is to mischaracterise it. It is certainly a spy story but, through the prism of Brexit, the author has found new ways of projecting old themes. Le Carré is angrier than he has perhaps ever been on the page. That lends the book a sense of urgency that may well lessen over time and diminish with political distance. In the right moment, how-

“
Le Carré brought a clerical solemnity to the business of spying. This was James Bond going to confessional, where the author could strip away the machismo. His spooks internalised the Cold War hostilities which were then manifested in personal drama.

ever, it slams its points home with a force one might not expect from a writer in his 88th year.

Le Carré’s great books, specifically the Karla trilogy, written in the 1970s, were set in the Cold War but the themes were never narrow. Le

Carré explored how his protagonists felt, thought, believed, lived, and often died according to their many illusions. Even his pen name (he is really called David Cornwell) suggested self-recognition wasn’t so easy in the covert world.

Le Carré brought a clerical solemnity to the business of spying. This was James Bond going to confessional, where the author could strip away the machismo. His spooks internalised the Cold War hostilities which were then manifested in personal drama. He created books infused with moral dread; where it was usually impossible to distinguish right from wrong. Good people did bad things for even worse reasons; bad people succeeded sometimes by playing the system well. George Smiley was somewhere between the two. Even when the Cold War ended (albeit briefly),

le Carré found his universal truths elsewhere. Good, bad, and the realms in between, were there in the emergence of mega-corporations, the destruction of the environment, and even the international movement of money.

Much of that is still true of his latest novel, MI6’s “The Circus”

is now “The Office” but archetypes are the same: the jaded handlers, the betrayed friendships, the mendacious grifters climbing the service ranks. Like most of le Carré’s protagonists, Nat – the middle-aged MI6 handler given one last job – is anchored to

beliefs that are constantly challenged. “Nobody knows who they are just now, do they? Whole fucking country in disarray,” says one of the more firmly anchored figures towards the end.

That dislocation is felt wherever le Carré fixates his anxieties. Old Cold War insecurities did, usually, end with a resolution that implied there was a nominally better side. Our Brexit crisis leaves us with no such assurances. Britain in the book is caught between America and her old European allies. The result is schizophrenic. Le Carré, populates the pages with real figures and, one suspects, real feelings. Buried in the text are acid passages that crackle with splenetic fizz. They usually centre around the figure of Donald Trump. “[T]he man is a total nothing,” writes le Carré in the voice of his protagonist. “A mob orator. But as a symptom of what’s out there in the world’s undergrowth, waiting to be stirred up, he’s the devil incarnate.”

Yet in the next breath, he recognises his own prejudices. “A simplistic view, you might say, not everyone’s by any means. But deeply felt all the same. Particularly if you’re by way of being an obsessive pro-European.”

And that is the point. Le Carré is something of an obsessive pro-European himself. And that bias is perhaps



the way to read the novel. It is provocative in ways that are at times glaringly comic. If his last novel, *A Legacy of Spies*, ended with Smiley offering a hymn to the European project, this book is a riot of liberal sentiment set free.

Agent Running in the Field is as angry, funny, and readable as le Carré has been in a very long time but whether you rate it as one of his best might depend on how sympathetic you are to his conclusions. As serious as it is at times playful, it is, throughout, delightfully pointed. ■

The Order of the Day

by Eric Vuillard

An unsettling new fiction illustrates the extent to which the appeasement of Hitler was a Europe-wide phenomenon

by **John Freeman**

Can any more be said about “appeasement”, a word so scarred by association with the 1930s that it has lost any general utility? In truth appeasing an enemy may at any time be a perfectly sensible option when faced by the prospective

with its consequences. But our palettes are perhaps jaded by a continuing pre-occupation with the Nazi period and, to use the modish cliché, many of us want “to move on”. That too would be a mistake. As so often, fiction has come to the rescue and resuscitated the trau-

“
“We know them very well. They are here beside us, among us. They are our cars, our washing machines, our household appliances, our clock radios, our homeowner’s insurance... Our daily life is theirs. They care for us, clothe us, light our way, carry us over the world’s highways...”

mas of the 1930s and coloured and framed them in new ways.

There have of course been a number of relatively recent thrillers which have used the events of 1938 as their focus, notably Robert Harris’s *Munich* and George-Marc Benamou’s *The Ghost of Munich*. But Eric Vuillard’s

The Order of the Day is quite different and, in its own way, quite devastating. Newly translated from the original French (by Mark Polizzotti) its only characters are the actors of the time and the fictional element is merely interpretative commentary. Of course the usual suspects are on parade in London (and Lord Halifax among others is treated with utter disdain) but the cast in the drama of appeasement is enlarged and includes Germany too.

For Vuillard begins and ends his account with the industrial magnets who accepted the mix of blandishment and threat which Hitler and Co extended to the men who owned and ran the companies (Bayer, Siemens, Farben, Allianz and the others) that in turn formed the industrial-military complex that nearly conquered all of Europe. In a mere seventeen initial pages the secret meeting attended by the kingpins of German industry at the Villa Godi Malinverni in February 1933 is coldly described in all its banality. Here was perhaps the original appeasement, the original failure to call Hitler’s bluff. As the names of the German companies who sat

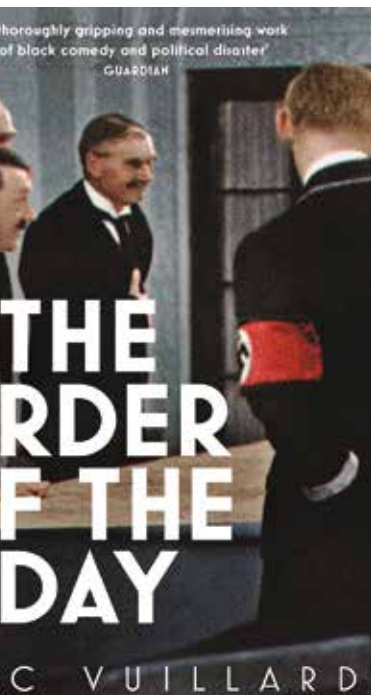
around the Villa table are recalled, Vuillard comments: “We know them very well. They are here beside us, among us. They are our cars, our washing machines, our household appliances, our clock radios, our homeowner’s insurance... Our daily life is theirs. They care for us, clothe us, light

our way, carry us over the world’s highways...”

And they and their antecedents’ decisions in 1933 are core to Vuillard’s theme: Hitler was a bluffer and one by one his antagonists and his interlocutors at home and abroad fell for it. Vuillard is a filmmaker as well as a writer (he won the Prix Goncourt for *The Order of the Day*) and his cinematic skills help the reader to see the familiar afresh, partly by recalling newsreel images we know all too well and then forcing us to look more closely.

The Anschluss is a case in point. Vuillard shows us not only the crowds who welcomed Hitler into Austria but dwells on the excruciating encounter at Berchtesgaden between the Führer and Austrian Chancellor Schuschnigg. Schuschnigg never managed to say “no”, to his great discredit. The author’s pen is equally withering as he recalls the farewell lunch at 10 Downing Street given by Neville Chamberlain in 1938 for the departing Nazi Ambassador von Ribbentrop. All the courtesies were extended by the Prime Minister to a man who knew that the invasion of Austria was imminent and who deliberately kept him at the table like a cat dallying with a compliant mouse.

And as Vuillard draws his “fiction” to a close he returns to the original participants in the drama, the industrialists. In a few heavily



sarcastic sentences he touches on Alfred Krupp: “[who] would...become one of the powerful figures in the Common Market, the king of coal and steel, a pillar of the Pax Europaea”. He also glosses the reluctantly conceded and minimally funded reparations paid to those who had worked as slave labourers for his family’s company. In a final Delphic phrase Vuillard remarks: “we never fall twice into the same abyss” but states that the abyss when it comes “is bordered by high mansions”.

Do read the book, which is more unsettling in 129 pages than many much longer fictions and treatises. ■



Gluck's Orfeo at the Teatro Nacional de São Carlos, Lisbon

Don't look back in anger

Lisbon's Teatro Nacional de São Carlos, the country's foremost opera house, is an understated gem – on my bucket list for years. It was built in 1792, after the Tejo Opera House was destroyed in the earthquake of 1755. It boasts an elegantly understated classical façade, featuring a portico of three elegant arches, and a third-floor loggia with a garlanded clock. The 1,150 seat auditorium has the familiar, intimate feel of houses of that era scattered across Europe.

The Portuguese Royal Family liked it so much that, when Napoleon forced them to flee to Brazil in the early 19th century, they had a replica built in Rio de Janeiro – as one does when *en congés forcés*.

But let me get my hands on the renovator with the fixation for chocolate coloured paint. The interior – where it isn't originally gilded – has been confectioned into a drab version of a Cadbury's Milk Tray selection. Dark chocolate pillars; milk chocolate balustrades; cocoa butter curtains; a swirling, mixed praline ceiling; and ruby chocolate velvet seats. The celebrated chef, Barry Callebaut, might think he was smart, inventing his Ruby Chocolate confection in 2017, but São Carlos got there first.

And the lighting is horrible. Who bought that job lot of energy efficient bulbs that glare intrusively? The effect, combined with the chocolate, was nauseous. A revamp is long overdue, but cash is short.

In the last two years the house has trodden a rocky road of turbulent industrial relations. On 1st October soprano Elisabete Matos took over as Artistic Director from the battered Brit, Patrick Dickie, a quixotic choice. He resigned in despair, after only three years in post, in late spring, having failed in his ambition to schedule ten main stage performances per season. This year the company is managing only seven, and one of those is the concert version of Gluck's *Orfeo*. The local gossip has it that the strikes and increasingly desperate budgeting crisis afflicting the house were the last straw

for Mr. Dickie.

Doubts about plunging an internationally renowned soprano with no experience of management and direction into this demanding Götterdämmerung of Portuguese opera are rife in Lisbon. Watch this space.

On to Grecian legend - and the concert performance of Gluck's *Orfeo*. Some back history. The Orfeo and Euridice legend has been latched onto by composers for centuries. First out of the traps was Germi. Who? Sorry, no first name or biography extant. Difficult to corroborate his contribution, or even speculate – as not a note of his music survives. But there are records of a play by Politani, with Germi's music, performed at the court of Duke Ludovico Gonzaga, Mantua on 18th July 1472. This version is not on Spotify.

Three times since has the Orfeo story stood at the crossroads of musical history. First, at the beginning of the 17th century, when the miserable lover wept tears over his dead Euridice in many musical dramas scored by many composers - most famously, Monteverdi in 1609.

These were productions for select, courtly, audiences, mostly passing into oblivion after one outing. Then, in the mid 18th century Christoff Willibald Gluck, a German composer, and Ranieri de' Calzabigi, his Italian librettist, revived the Greek troubadour and soon had Orfeo strumming his lute afresh for a wider opera going public. Gluck's version is the most revived of the present day.

Spool on to the late 19th century. Offenbach incongruously turned the lute playing swain firmly towards the burlesque, locating Orfeo in a high-kicking underworld. The conventional, placid, Blessed Spirits, who

by **Gerald Malone**

console Orfeo, morphed into raunchy Can-Can dancers.

Now, perhaps, we are at a fourth crossroads. Cue Harrison Birtwhistle's *The Mask of Orpheus*, currently presented by English National Opera (ENO) at London's Coliseum. That is a four-hour delight in store. Should I survive, I shall review it next week.

I can't quite decide whether Mr. Birtwhistle is the true prophet of a new iteration of transformative mood music – or a vacuous charlatan. Having

dies again – but, just as all seems lost, their intense love for each other is acknowledged by Amore, who unites them for ever. Cue cute heart emoji.

The work's role in the development of opera is more complicated than the simple plot implies. Monteverdi tipped the balance from dance to music in his score of 1609. The Gluck version incorporated dance, recitative and aria for the first time, laying the groundwork for opera as the artform we recognise today. Concert versions focus on the music, the theatrical plot and curtail the dance passages.

Proceedings in Lisbon got underway under the baton of a Maestrina (I am hooked after discovering that elegant Portuguese descriptor of a female conductor), Jane Glover, the British doyenne of Baroque music. She debuted in Wexford in 1975 in Cavalli's *L'Eritrea* and has been Music of the Baroque's director since 2002.

Her career contribution to the Baroque movement has been to breathe life into scores, which, in the hands of less insightful conductors, can be dull, dusty, pedestrian, a bit plinkity-plonk. Under her direction, if Baroque "ain't got that swing" she feels she is missing her point. This is music that lived in its time and it is her mission to make it live afresh.

An advantage of a concert version is that Maestrina Glover can be observed, in full control, centre stage, not plying her arts in pit obscurity. It was quite a sight. How she sculpted this performance, turning a beady eye on the soloists at every entry. She looked a bit like Margaret Thatcher overseeing an impertinent bunch of journalists. Often ensembles "know it all" and barely lift their heads from their scores. Conductors seem redundant. All eyes were fixed on this Maestrina.

Orfeo was sung by Croatian mezzo

soprano, Renata Pokupić, much in international demand on the concert platform. Her broad mezzo range had her growling through Orfeo's depths and soaring when ecstasy was required. She sang with visible conviction, pulling off difficult passages and high notes with sharp clarity. Her voice had just enough vibrato to add colour, and a few well-chosen grace notes – not too showy – added to a sparkling performance.

Now, the litmus test of *Orfeo* for all mezzos, the *Che Faro Senza Euridice?* aria in Act 3. This is one of the great moments in opera. I was introduced to Gluck and *Che Faro* by Janet Baker, who sang Orfeo in a Scottish Opera production in the 1970s. It was a light-bulb moment. This is what opera was for – the stripping of character and emotion into their essential components, using sheer beauty of phrase, and simple melodic line.

Ms. Pokupić is not Janet Baker. No-one is. But she held the audience in the palm of her hand with a piano, heartfelt, rendering, rising to a full-blown climax at the tragic conclusion.

Euridice was Eduarda Melo, a Portuguese soprano and recent graduate from Porto's Superior School of Music. She sang beautifully and acted pertly. There are several ways of playing Euridice. One is to present her as Mrs. Resentful, who from the moment of being restored to human form, nags Orfeo mercilessly for his reticence. That's how this version was interpreted.

Amore was played by Sandra Medeiros, also a Portuguese soprano, who studied at the Ponta Delgada Regional Conservatory. The role is comedic. Her *dux ex machina* interventions are required twice, to sort those pesky mortals out. She was dressed in an extravagantly cerise evening gown, topped with an incongruous, homely Portuguese white lace shawl - and sporting sparkling earrings. The lady who serves behind the counter of the National Confeitaria (national sweetie and cake shop) in Dom Pedro IV Square is her spitting image. As are some of the cakes. ■



Music journalism hasn't died – it's just changed channel

Biography has replaced the interview as the best way to understand great musicians

by **John McKie**

Frank Zappa's comment on the music press is evergreen: "Most rock journalism is people who can't write interviewing people who can't talk for people who can't read."

What's remarkable about the comment is not whether it's true or not (your opinion is as valid as mine) but that when Zappa spoke to the Toronto Star reporter in 1977, he had no idea how much worse things were going to get.

This was ten years after the establishment of Jann Wenner's Rolling Stone, nine ahead of the founding of David Hepworth and Mark Ellen's Q magazine and it was around thirty years before record companies started offering media training for fledgling pop stars. Now we have Rolling Stone's 2017 cover

story on Kendrick Lamar where the rapper mentions a videographer present, putting paid to any pretence of intimacy. The September 2018 edition of Vogue was graced by Beyoncé on the cover (good) but the feature

“ You could conclude that music journalism is in the same shape as Elvis's television set after it became acquainted with Elvis's .357 magnum, or even Elvis himself. But what's actually happened is that music journalism didn't die, it just changed channel.

inside was a first-person piece, clearly dictated and edited to within an inch of its life by Team Beyoncé (less good).

Where once the minibar and life secrets were shared, when a journalist now braves some alone time with a living legend, the results can be

glacial. See Van Morrison's 18 minute encounter with The Guardian's Laura Barton as the latest example.

You could conclude that music journalism is in the same shape as Elvis's television set after it became acquainted with Elvis's .357 magnum, or even Elvis himself. But what's actually happened is that music journalism didn't die, it just changed channel.

The interesting books of recent years, from Hepworth's riffs on the limited shelf-life of the Rock Star (*Uncommon People*) and the year 1971 (*Never A Dull Moment*), Brooklyn writer Rob Sheffield's idiosyncratic takes *On Bowie* and *Dreaming The Beatles*, Sylvia Patterson's on-off relationship with the celebrity interview, 2016's *I'm Not With The Band*, or *Saint Etienne* member Bob Stanley's sprawling tome on British pop music *Yeah Yeah Yeah* are all wildly different.

What each has in common is the author's strong personality writ large over every page.

One of my favourite music books of this decade was Alan Light's 2012 *The Holy or the Broken*. Light took more than 250 pages on one album track from a 1984 Leonard Cohen

record which his US record company wouldn't even release. This sounds unpromising, but the song *Hallelujah* would become a staple of reality shows and glossy dramas, beloved by everyone from Simon Cowell to Bob Dylan.

usual self-conscious references to his reputation and creative process before becoming more like a preacher firing off Biblical references. Notably it's here that the song's urgency grows. War drums set in and continue through a chorus of rapidly spiralling Hallelujahs. Kanye's usual self-conscious self-obsession is present, but for the first time he doesn't necessarily seem to be playing the (anti-)hero.

The problem is that this new approach doesn't seem to work. When Kanye turns to religion in his raps, too often he seems content with the occasional Biblical quotation. This is even more disappointing considering the truly affecting emotional rawness Kanye displayed in his previous album *ye*. Take the third track *Follow God* which trots along to a crisp constant drum beat and flowing lyrics. The bars themselves are messily opaque with little of the clever wordplay or starming self-revelation that used to define Kanye at his best. Only the backing repeating "Father, I stretch/ Stretch my hands to You" gives a sense of emotional depth. It seems Kanye can no longer confidently rely on his own resources, in more ways than one.

Kanye has not so much moved away from himself as a subject as expanded it to breaking point. In this album Kanye's sense of personal salvation is paired with a belief that Jesus can redeem others, and even save African-Americans from racism and the legacies of slavery.

This is not to say Kanye absents himself from the album. The second track *Selah* starts by abruptly transitioning to slow organ tones and we hear Kanye's voice for the first time. Taking centre stage Kanye makes the



We can end up learning more about current and past artists not by the confessional interview, shunned by almost all the big stars but longer form music books.

Two examples from 2019 would grace the stocking of anyone still brave enough to profess an interest in rock journalism.

In *Why Karen Carpenter Matters*, cultural critic Karen Tongson references the band's huge popularity in the place of her birth, the Philippines. Tongson was named after Karen by her mother, a singer who was said to sound like her. A return to Manila provides a revelation into just how omnipresent the Carpenters' music remains in her mother country. Throughout, Tongson sketches out her personal perspective on why the Southern Californian siblings' music retains its universal appeal, as well as its influence on her own life.

British writer Ian Penman's *It Gets Me Home This Curving Track* is, at first glance, less personal – a collection of book reviews about artists including Charlie Parker, James Brown, John Fahey, Frank Sinatra, Prince and Steely Dan's Donald Fagen. On closer inspection, the conceit is an excuse for the writer to dig into the id of various icons. Penman offers his theory that Prince's *Lovesexy* was "a gospel album" as well as his last great one, he breaks down the concept of "straight hip" in Steely Dan records, why Lalo Schiffrin worked with Clint Eastwood more than any other actor and pays tribute to the "subtly evolutionary" recording techniques employed by Bing Crosby.

In short, by getting inside Penman's and Tongson's heads, you are forced to think anew about great artist. This is rock journalism for people who can read – even if the artists are often decidedly unavailable for interview. ■

from racism and the legacies of slavery. In *God Is Kanye* proclaims: "Jesus brought a revolution/All captives are forgiven". This ties to references to the 13th Amendment, which famously abolished slavery but is also seen as paving the way for a new form of slavery via mass incarceration of black Americans. Kanye has publicly attacked the 13th Amendment on these grounds in the past. Just as Kanye feels Jesus has washed away his sins, he hopes Jesus can wash away the legacies of slavery.

The album was originally called *Yandhi* before it was reconceptualised and retitled. Kanye had originally planned to cast himself as Gandhi who led India on the road to freedom, and inspired Martin Luther King. Gandhi

also famously accused Indians of being complicit in their own colonisation by the British in their failure to resist, and proclaimed that Indians must first become mentally independent before they became politically independent. This echoes Kanye's own wildly controversial comments that four hundred years of slavery "sounded like a choice" by black Americans.

In creating *Jesus is King* Kanye seems to accept that he cannot be the saviour he hoped to be and has turned instead to what he sees as a higher power to save himself and others. Kanye misses the opportunity to develop this more fully. He shows flashes of genius but the album seems defined by a sense of wasted potential. ■





SPIRAL

FRENCH COP DRAMA WITH UNIVERSAL APPEAL



Now in its eighth season on Canal + in France Spiral merits the acclaim it has won in 70 countries across the globe, including the United States

The French word *engrenages* meaning gears, or gearing, hints at the possibility of sudden changes of speed or direction. But as the title of a cop show, it was never going to work outside of France, which is why someone came up with the more workaday alternative, *Spiral*.

But what's in a name? The series, now in its eighth season on Canal + in France and half-way through season 7 on BBC 4, is one of the finest, and grittiest, detective shows on television, fully meriting the acclaim it has won in 70 countries across the globe, including the United States.

Its leading characters, making up a plainclothes detective squad in one of the less salubrious *quartiers* of Paris, are entirely believable, wholly gallic (with a garlic aftertaste) and 100 per cent universal.

First up we have Laure (Caroline Proust), the *capitaine*, or chief inspector, in her forties, sexually wayward, and vulnerable, who never leaves the office without her trusty SP 2022 pistol and sky-blue evidence gloves. Laure dresses like the 1960s rock-star Julie Driscoll – leather jerkin over jeans and a revealing t-shirt. She likes nothing more than a good car chase or the opportunity to scramble over a backyard wall. But she is also a thinker, usually one step ahead of her team, whom she defends to the higher-ups in the manner of a she-bear protecting her cubs.

By her side is the trusty Gilou (Thierry Godard), a long-time lieutenant, who provides both the empathetic insight that Laure lacks and the muscle required to beat the crap out of a villain or, back at the station, to encourage a reluctant confession. Gilou has been known to help himself from time to time when recovering stolen goods. Well, he's got bills to pay, and on the money he makes, who could blame him? But he is otherwise generous and good-hearted – the sort of man you would depend on to beat

up a rapist but might not choose to leave alone with your wife. He never seems to change his clothes. Either that or he keeps a number of identical ensembles. Nor does he spend much time with his razor, yet never quite grows a beard. If this was 1972, he would be played, with a cigarette, by Jean-Paul Belmondo.

In season six, Laure and Gilou finally get it together, which we have been expecting since at least season three. They can't keep their hands off each other. But it is not to be, or at any rate wasn't as far as episode two of season seven, which is as far as I've got. Laure went through a breakdown, you see, after she realised (correctly – she only had to ask me) that she was not cut out to be the mother of the child she bore following a disastrous affair with a married man. Poor Gilou, who was left holding a stuffed panda rather than the baby (which he had rather optimistically undertaken to raise with her), despairs and throws himself back into the job with a vengeance, at which point watch out, low-lifes.

The third wheel in this damaged police vehicle is "Tintin" (Fred Bianconi), another long-serving lieutenant, whose marriage is falling apart, leading to mood-swings that his *colleagues*, while sympathetic, find more than a little irritating. Tintin is the procedures and paperwork man, without whom, as we discover, the work of the team is fatally undermined. But he is also impulsive and brave, intervening more than once to keep his more reckless colleagues from being beaten to a pulp. At

the end of season six, he flounces off, affronted by the discovery that Gilou has briefly pocketed some stolen gold and that Laure, as his lover, has helped him cover it up. But he comes back in season seven in order, I suspect, to tie up loose ends.

You might think that all this would be quite enough to keep the show moving along at a brisk pace. Crucially, however, *Spiral* is not all about the

by **Walter Ellis**

work done, but – *merde!* – they don't have to like each other.

Josephine – who despises Roban – serves both as a superbly equipped (in every sense) defence lawyer and as an old-fashioned object of desire, moving from one set of chambers to the next, cutting a swathe through a legal Establishment that thinks it knows what she's up to and plans to bring her down, but still ends up, to a man, staring down her décolletage. She gets her come-uppance in season seven when she is had up for trying to murder her boss after she discovers that he was the one who drugged and raped her. But I'm guessing that after four purgatorial months spent in one of France's notorious prisons, she gets off, chalk-ing the whole thing down to experience. If she doesn't, I, for one, shall be extremely disappointed.

Roban, meanwhile, like a Catholic bishop tortured by doubt, does his utmost to assist Laure, with whom he maintains a respectful relationship, but can't stop himself from obstructing her every time she and her team fail to share his pious interpretation of the evidence as it unfolds. He has learned from long experience that corruption runs from top to bottom in the system and that most of his judicial colleagues are self-serving mountebanks. He likes to think of himself as the only honest man in Paris. Deep-down, though, he knows that he, too, is capable of bending the truth. If Molière had written the part of Roban – and I doubt he would have done it any better than the actual scriptwriters – the result would have

been a piece called something like The Honest Hypocrite.

All fictional detectives cut corners. Tension between the pencil-pushers of the executive corridor and the hard nuts who do the actual work is one of the best-worked clichés of the genre. The difference in *Spiral* is that the corners come pre-cut. Going by the book and due process is just the unavoidable precursor to getting on with the serious business. What really matters is putting the frighteners on the bad guys until they finally crack and spill their guts – a case not so much of Good Cop/Bad Cop as Bad and Badder.

cops. Adding another rich dollop of spice to the proceedings are the ornately-gowned lawyers – especially the flame-haired temptress, "Maitre" Josephine (Audrey Fleurot) – and the extravagantly ascetic *juge d'instruction*, or examining magistrate, Roban (Philippe Duclos).

In the long-running US series *Law and Order*, the division between the police investigation and the inevitable court case that follows is clear-cut. One starts when the other stops. In *Spiral*, the two interweave throughout. Each needs the other to get the

work done, but – *merde!* – they don't have to like each other.

All fictional detectives cut corners. Tension between the pencil-pushers of the executive corridor and the hard nuts who do the actual work is one of the best-worked clichés of the genre. The difference in *Spiral* is that the corners come pre-cut. Going by the book and due process is just the unavoidable precursor to getting on with the serious business. What really matters is putting the frighteners on the bad guys until they finally crack and spill their guts – a case not so much of Good Cop/Bad Cop as Bad and Badder.

I read somewhere that the producers and writers of *Spiral*, particularly in its later guise, are proud of the fact that their characters – whatever their personal inclinations – are obliged to stick to the rules. If so, it is hard to imagine what they would be like if let off the leash. But then, in real life, French Police are not best known for wearing kid gloves. They go in hard, especially in the *banlieues* of Paris and other big cities, where there are large immigrant communities and a backdrop of lawlessness. I suspect the show is watched avidly by actual police officers and lawyers, who see in it a true reflection of the challenges they face.

Spiral is grimy and morally ambiguous, set in a Paris in which the Eiffel Tower and the Seine are never seen and lunch is a sandwich eaten while scrolling through the latest CCTV footage. Justice is usually done in the end, but the suspicion is that for every bad guy taken off the streets there will be another, even more violent and more rapacious, ready to take his place. It is not so much that there are eight million stories in the naked city as the same story repeated, with twists, time and time again.

Enjoy! ■

Spiral, season 7, is available on BBC iPlayer for the next month



DOCTOR SLEEP

Worthy sequel to *The Shining* lacks the genius of Kubrick's masterpiece



Simultaneously an adaptation of Stephen King's 2013 novel, a sequel to the original 1977 book, and a follow-up to Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film, *Doctor Sleep* fails to convince

by **Alexander Larman**

In keeping with the current vogue for massively delayed sequels (see also: *Blade Runner 2049* and *Mary Poppins Returns*), *Doctor Sleep* has arrived. It is a follow-up to *The Shining* and concentrates on the now grown-up Danny Torrance, as played by Ewan McGregor, now an alcoholic due to the pain he suffered at his father's hands. However, he must gird his loins to fight the powers of darkness, as played, deliciously, by Rebecca Ferguson as the ageless, telekinetic nemesis Rose the Hat, who sustains her beauty by draining her psychic victims' "steam".

The film is both enjoyable and frustrating. On its own terms, it works well as a nerve-jangling psychic thriller, with a good mixture of scares and tension. Ferguson is an unusual, chilling villain. But its larger problem is that it is simultaneously an adaptation of Stephen King's 2013 novel, a sequel to the original 1977 book, and a follow-up to Stanley Kubrick's 1980 film. This leads to a tonal uncertainty that is only partially ameliorated by its extended climax: a return to the Overlook Hotel.

King's original novel, as published in 1977, is justifiably regarded as one of his greatest books, a terrifying and white-knuckle journey into a supernatural hell set in a malevolent and sentient hotel. It was inevitably ripe for adaptation, but nobody quite expected the attention of the already legendary auteur Kubrick. He had not directed a film since the brilliant *Barry Lyndon* (1975), which had underperformed at the box office compared to *A Clockwork Orange* (1971) and *2001: A Space Odyssey* (1968). He wanted a hit. It was an unlikely match, but the deal was made.

The filming of *The Shining* is the stuff of legends. Kubrick spent over a year making it, and filmed takes over and over again, sometimes more than a hundred times. Jack Nicholson,

who played the difficult role of Jack Torrance, took it in his stride, although he wryly commented: "Stanley's demanding. He'll do a scene fifty times, and you have to be good to do that."

Kubrick's perfectionism only greiv. At one point, Wendy Torrance, wife of Jack, played by Shelley Duvall, to her horror, finds that her husband's much-worried-over novel simply consists of the phrase "All work and no play makes Jack a dull boy" written over and over again. Kubrick had a set assistant write the phrase thousands of times, even though it could only be

too little; and that's why, for all its virtuosic effects, it never gets you by the throat and hangs on the way real horror should." King even wrote and produced his own made for TV adaptation of his book, which was not a success and failed to supplant Kubrick's film in the popular imagination.

Today, *The Shining* is widely regarded as the greatest horror film ever made despite originally being critically panned with Kubrick nominated for a Golden Razzie for Worst Director. The reasons for its success are simple; unlike most ghost stories, which explain why the spirits exist and what they want, Kubrick leaves much of this to the audience's imagination.

It is never entirely clear what is going on, why the apparitions are appearing or what Danny Torrance's psychic gift – "the shining" – actually is. This sense of unease and uncertainty permeates the film's every frame. It is aided immeasurably by its soundtrack, a mixture of Wendy Carlos and Rachel Elkind's original electronic music and modernist classical composers, including Penderecki, Ligeti and Bartók. It is impossible to watch the film and not feel unsettled, even as nothing more sinister happens than a small boy driving his tricycle through the corridors. What lies around the corner is at the heart of all primal fear – the sense of a malevolent, unstoppable unknown.

Doctor Sleep does not have the sheer giddy fear of its predecessor. Barring a truly horrific torture scene midway through, it is short on really nightmarish stuff. Even its predecessor's famous "elevators of blood" scene is reprised almost for a throwaway joke. While well above the usual norm for contemporary horror it seems unlikely to displace *The Shining* from audience's affections as a legendary example of what happens when one of cinema's greatest directors turned his interest to the horror genre, to indelibly frightening effect. ■

SCORSESE AND FORD COPPOLA ARE RIGHT

Marvel films aren't real cinema

by **Alastair Benn**

Venerable Hollywood filmmakers Martin Scorsese and Francis Ford Coppola both used interviews recently to criticise the Marvel franchise. They were "theme park, amusement park, comic book films," Scorsese said, and "not cinema". Ford Coppola followed suit: "I don't know that anyone gets anything out of seeing the same movie over and over again. Martin was kind when he said it's not cinema. He didn't say it's despicable, which I just say it is".

On a transatlantic flight earlier this month, I sat next to a fellow passenger who was, like me, looking through the United Airlines film selection – I opted for *They shall not grow old* directed by Peter Jackson. Admittedly, at first, I wondered whether I had made the right choice. The carnage of the First World War daubed in the essential colours of conflict – ghastly browns and reds. Perhaps, my neighbour was queasy, or might find it an odd choice to "chill out to" as we sailed over the Atlantic, I reflected.

But no, about half an hour into the film, I noted that my neighbour was absolutely engrossed with his screen – he was watching the final battle scene of *Avengers: Endgame* (the highest grossing film of all-time).

After about fifteen minutes, my neighbour rewound the film a bit so he could watch it through again. Nothing wrong with that I suppose. Then he did it again. And again. And again. A couple of hours in, I realised that he must have watched it about a dozen times. It was then that I counted five other passengers all watching the same *Avengers: Endgame* battle sequence.

Why are superhero films so popular? There is an element of spectacle – it's good sport after all. At the cinema where I saw *Avengers: Endgame*, the whole audience clapped and cheered at the end of the film's climactic scene, a truly "epic" piling up of flesh and exploded matter until (spoiler alert) as usual the good guy manages to whack the bad guy and it's all over.

Pier Paolo Pasolini once called cinema "the sacred language of reality". Well, Marvel surely ain't that.

Marvel films, in their repetitive story lines and formulaic visual language, tap into a rich vein of so-called "commercial" cinema. The industrialist Henry Ford founded a Motion Picture Department in 1913, which had a then considerable \$600,000 annual budget, and churned out films at roughly a rate of once a week. The films were widely distributed across the Americas and they were among the most watched silent films of the day. They championed "Fordist" working practices – the rhythms of the assembly line, forging an ever more seamless relationship between man and machine. Classics include the 1914 film *How Henry Ford Makes 1,000 Cars a Day*.

Scorsese and Coppola are of course engaging in their own commercially savvy gambit. By selling their own vision of cinema as *cinema* as opposed to "the other lot" they are making quite a crass claim about the intrinsic truth value of their own art – the other guy might be interested in the big bucks; I, however, seek out truth, enlightenment etc – but that doesn't mean they aren't right about Marvel.

But Marvel is not alone in adopting Fordist aesthetics. The television series *Game of Thrones*, the most watched HBO show ever, does away with the traditional vectors for storytelling (dialogue, acting, and directorial craft) in favour of mashed-up visual cues – big battle scenes, wooden performances from an ensemble cast, and writing of little to no craft.

Game of Thrones affects to be *more* epic than cinema itself – a battle scene in its last season took up a whole episode of an hour and twenty minutes and was popularly billed as the longest ever shot in screen history. It was shown in pubs – and footage emerged afterwards of crowds celebrating its climax, cheering, screaming, even hugging each other in relief.

The joy of real story-telling, married to wit and a delight in moving pictures is submerged into a vision of pure spectacle, so perfect is its adherence to repetitive formulae. Like the Marvel franchise, it is the ultimate Fordist fantasy. ■





The Charterhouse of Parma

by Stendhal

Lost Classic is the series in which we highlight great works that are under-appreciated or forgotten

Marie-Henri Beyle, the French author who lived from 1783 to 1842, was a “romantic realist”. So, clearly of an oxymoronic bent and with an overactive sense of humour. He adopted the nom de plume *M. de Stendhal, officier de cavaliere* from 1817 onwards, having fallen in love with a blonde, Wilhelmine, in Stendal – a town in the heart of Germany, Saxony-Anhalt, 125 km to the west of Berlin. He added the “h” to make correct German pronunciation more likely.

Prior to that he had assumed – dizzily – up to 200 nom de plumes, publishing only one work under his own name, *The History of Painting* in 1817. Wilhelmine, or Minette, his term of endearment for Miss W., was clearly something special. She was his “star of the north”. From then on Stendhal never adopted another nom de plume.

However, he did, notoriously, adopt other stars of the opposite sex, reaching out to whole constellations – in the south, west and east and most other points of the compass in between. Stendhal was a notorious womaniser.

He eventually contracted syphilis and died, not of the disease, but more likely overapplication of the toxic cure.

The Charterhouse of Parma, published in 1839, three years before his death, holds me in the grip of nostalgia. I first acquired a copy in 1968 – an edition in the original French (pretentious from the start) – bought to impress a potential girlfriend. Result? The book impressed, but I did not. When she moved on, I consoled myself by actually reading the thing.

Instantly, I was distracted from my temporary grief by Stendhal’s world of military campaigns, chivalric deeds and political intrigue. Latterly I also read *The Red and the Black*, published in 1830, chronicling the attempts of a provincial youth to overcome his humble background and rise above his roots through a combination of talent, hard work, deception and hypocrisy. Do I feel a blubbing political autobiography coming on?

I did not return to my favourite, *Charterhouse*, until last summer, when I happened across a 1999 translation by Richard Howard, an American poet, academic and

by Gerald Warner

translator. It was like the return of an old, familiar friend – as if I had never left Stendhal’s romantic *Parma*. This classic, revisited after 50 years, did not disappoint.

The book has epic sweep, yet is founded on intimate, absorbing detail. At one level it reads like a soap opera – the hero escapes a tall tower, using a long rope; a lover is wooed from his cell window, using a complex system of semaphore on sheets of paper. At another, political intrigue, every bit as complex as current European she-nanigans, is played out in the fictitious court of Parma. Villains are ruthless, heroes are undaunted, maidens – not many of those, mind you – are in distress.

Stendhal’s hero, Fabrice del Dongo, a headstrong, young, Italian aristocrat, has – to put it mildly – a comprehensive CV. Here is a barebones version of the plot. Fabrice is an admirer of Napoleon, unusual for an Italian of the era, when France and Italy were at war. He joins Napoleon’s army and sees action ranging across Europe.

The wayward Fabrice leaves Napoleon’s service, then, incoherently, becomes a prelate in the Catholic Church. A prelate with no interest in religion, but plenty in women. His beautiful Aunt Gina, Duchess of Sanseverina, and her lover, the devious, married, Prime Minister of Parma, Count Mosca, then try to establish the former soldier/prelate/philanderer at court, but a repellent Prince Ranuce-Ernesto IV, who lusts after Gina, has Fabrice imprisoned in the notorious Farnese Tower.

Being locked up in the tower does not deter Fabrice, who embarks on his star-crossed love affair with the gaoler’s daughter, Clelia, who boasts the twin virtues of being beautiful – and dull.

Charterhouse was hailed as a classic on publication. Honoré de Balzac – Stendhal’s constant competitor for recognition by the French literary establishment – in a lengthy review which must stand as one of the bitchy literary world’s greatest acts of disinterested generosity, lavished

praise, saying: “One sees perfection in everything”.

Sixty years later Andre Gide ranked *Charterhouse* as “the greatest of all French novels”. In 1874 Henry James found it to be “among the dozen finest novels we possess”. This was recognition on an unusual global scale.

Why? The novel combines a sweeping narrative pace, fascinating characterisation and a sense of “what the hell?” freshness. The words poured out of Stendhal in a torrent. He closeted himself away for 50 days in the autumn of 1838 to emerge triumphantly on Boxing Day with a volume of 500 pages. His characters are vivid, sardonically human and politically manipulative, a none too subtle combination of Italian passion and French worldliness. The freewheeling, driving plot makes for breathless reading. It is a book almost impossible to put down.

Contemporary readers will be familiar with this restless, impetuous style and the unruly emotions that drive the characters. Stendhal is a 19th century precursor of the WhatsApp and Twitter generation. It may seem an outdated classic, but *Charterhouse* is written in a style today’s generation of reader – demanding instant gratification and pace of plot – will immediately warm to.



“

Charterhouse’s reputation endured well into the 20th century. Improbably, in a 1926 novel, *Bella* by Jean Giraudoux, at a memorial service for schoolmates who fell in the Second World War, the narrator hears the voice of a young man tormented by the thought he had never read *Charterhouse* and pleading for a precis of the book, “in a word,” because “with the dead there are no sentences”.

From the start, Fabrice is an impassioned rebel. As a teenager he defies his father and sneaks off to fight for his hero, Napoleon. The episodes of this soldier’s life are detailed and reflect the sheer day to day drudgery of military campaigns, artillery bogged down in mud, the struggle for food, bitter weather, contradictory orders and the necessary force of a will to live. War is detail, not glory.

Stendhal based this phase of Fabrice’s life on his own military

experience, in Napoleon’s army. He took part in the fateful 1812 Moscow campaign and was lucky to survive, shunning a conventional river crossing outside Moscow during the retreat and fording the Berezina River instead. Those on the bridge were shot to pieces. Stendhal was an author forged in the frontline of battle.

Fabrice is a compelling character study because his idealism is silhouetted against the often-farcical realities of life. Arriving on the battlefield of Waterloo with a bad hangover, he falls asleep, misses most of the battle and wakes up unsure of who has won or lost. “Had I ever seen a battle? ... Had this battle been Waterloo?”

The evil protector of a girlfriend is murdered, so Fabrice finds himself locked up in the Farnese Tower. The obvious thing to do is fall in love with the gaoler’s daughter, Clelia. Never able to master the art of living as a free man, Fabrice paradoxically finds true happiness in the tower, from which he can never quite stir himself to escape.

Stendhal is astonishingly easy to read in the original French. His language flows naturally and his grammatic constructions are concise. If the original French does not float your boat, I recommend Mr. Howard’s translation from the many available, including the definitive C.K. Scott Moncrieff’s 1925 version. The Moncrieff is still perfectly readable, but not so idiomatically up to date.

Charterhouse’s reputation endured well into the 20th century. Improbably, in a 1926 novel, *Bella* by Jean Giraudoux, at a memorial service for schoolmates who fell in the Second World War, the narrator hears the voice of a young man tormented by the thought he had never read *Charterhouse* and pleading for a precis of the book, “in a word,” because “with the dead there are no sentences”.

In mid war period literary circles Stendhal’s masterpiece was regularly evoked, even by dying First World War soldiers. It was simply assumed that an obscure illusion to *Charterhouse* would be instantly recognised by readers.

At the end of the book Stendhal dedicates *Charterhouse* to “The Happy Few”. He knew his Shakespeare and it would seem discourteous to resist the author’s overt invitation that readers join his “band of brothers”. This is teamwork. You, dear reader, are in the book. So, dust down that edition languishing on the shelf and settle down for a journey into your present day, courtesy of an author who was a master of the intrigues of his own. ■



BEIRUT

The Paris of the Middle East has reinvented itself

by Mattie Brignall



Despite its troubled past Beirut remains a romantic city full of cultural jewels

After the Second World War, Beirut was described as “the Paris of the Middle East”. This golden age ended with the outbreak of Lebanon’s devastating civil conflict in 1975. But Beirut is a city that has reinvented itself while staying true to its historic roots. With a wealth of cultural treasures, culinary delights and a thriving nightlife Beirut is a supremely underrated travel destination. Its faded colonial grandeur is more reminiscent of Havana than of Paris. And, like Havana, it is also a chaotic and beguiling city of contrasts.

Beirut more than deserves its reputation as the food capital of the Levant. The perfect starting point is Armenia Street, the centre of Beirut’s vibrant bar scene. The area has a southern European feel and an abundance of quirky eateries and drinking holes. But if you want to escape the maddening crowds, tuck yourself away in Vyvyan’s, a smart cocktail bar perfect for a few tumblers of arak.

One of the street’s lesser known gems is a restaurant called Enab. Its pastel-coloured walls and glittering chandeliers make it feel like you’re dining in an ornate doll’s house. Mountainous plates of kibbeh, fattoush and tablouleh flow out from the kitchen in an unending stream. Le Chef, an unpretentious establishment serving traditional Lebanese and French cuisine, is a locals’ spot of choice and also well worth a visit.

South of Armenia Street is Al-Falamanki. Hidden behind an understated, shuttered façade, the restaurant spills out into an atmospherically lit terrace overflowing with vegetation. It is an oasis of calm in a frantic city. The menu is a four-page cornucopia of mezze dishes and the food is served against a backdrop of clacking backgammon dice and coils of shisha smoke.

Tasty street food is ubiquitous in Beirut, but Barbar in the city’s Hamra district is a cut above the rest. It’s a quality restaurant pretending to be a fast-food outlet and worth frequenting

en route to the seafront. But for high-end dining, Liza is the best bet. It has a quietly sophisticated Parisienne feel but despite its glamour it doesn’t try too hard. The atmosphere is relaxed and the food is excellent.

Beirut is a city to explore and get lost in. Dotted in between modern apartment blocks are reminders of the city’s violent past. Crumbling ochre Rococo and Art Deco residences lie abandoned with trees twisting through their windows. Bombed beyond repair during the civil war, restoration isn’t financially viable. But the historical value of the

role as a father, son and husband, runs until January.

The National Museum of Beirut epitomises Lebanon’s identity as a cultural crossroads. Byzantine mosaics sit next to human-faced Phoenician sarcophagi and a Roman-era marble head of Bacchus. The story of the collection itself, rescued during the civil war and then painstakingly restored, makes viewing the treasures all the more enjoyable. All these institutions are cheap to enter, well-curated and refreshingly free of phone-wielding crowds.

“

Tourists are still considered somewhat of a novelty in the city. The Lebanese are inquisitive about where you’ve come from and why you’re in Beirut. Hit the locals with a smattering of Arabic and you’ll be friends for life. I tried to buy an apple and two bananas from a tiny fruit shop. I was waved away – I could just have them. This sums up Beirut: kind and casual. You won’t regret going.

houses has awarded them protected status and the land cannot be used to build lucrative high rises. So the buildings sit there in sad decadence, too beautiful to destroy and too impractical to revive. It is these gems that make walking Beirut’s streets constantly exciting.

Nowhere is the echo of conflict more starkly apparent than in Beit Beirut, a formerly grand residence turned snipers’ lair straddling what was once the dividing line between East and West Beirut during the civil war. The bullet-riddled building is well worth a visit for its own sake but also houses a renovated gallery exhibiting art installations which focus on the city’s relationship with its turbulent past. If you’re after more culture, the Sursock Museum houses an impressive collection of modern and contemporary art. *Picasso et la famille*, an exhibition of his work which explores the artist’s

Despite an abundance of tranquil cultural attractions, Beirut is neither relaxing nor a city for the faint-hearted. The Lebanese have a unique, muscular driving style which adds spice to taxi rides and demands an equally confident road-crossing technique. Traffic lights are thought of as suggestions and road markings as an inconvenience but the city’s taxi drivers are veterans of this chaotic game. The horn is used with incredible versatility and honking provides the sonic backdrop to Beirut’s loud and lively streets. The bustle of the Hamra and Al Kantari districts in the north of the city is exhilarating and exhausting in equal measure.

But the parts of Beirut to avoid are those that betray the city’s sense of commotion. The city’s souks are aspirational, modern shopping centres without much charm and probably

worth skipping on any walking tour. Downtown Beirut is comprised of cobbled boulevards flanked by porticoed, high-end boutiques and restaurants. But the district is strangely empty and devoid of the élan of Beirut’s southern districts.

Instead, visit Beirut’s religious landmarks. Lebanon has 18 recognised religious groups and a corresponding abundance of distinctive mosques and churches. The Al-Hussain mosque on Martyr Square is the pick of the bunch. Its domed interior has the feel of an 18th century ballroom, with a six-ton crystal chandelier taking centre stage. The St. George Greek Orthodox Cathedral boasts stunning frescoes and is the oldest in the city. You’ll often stumble across churches by accident, nestled in shabby side-streets.

Beirut’s hotels cater to all tastes. The glamorous Le Bristol Hotel is centrally located and costs £104 a night for a double room. The Villa Clara Boutique Hotel, an authentic Lebanese villa with beautiful 20s décor comes in at £159 a night, expensive by Beirut’s standards but worth it if you’re looking for somewhere off the beaten track to retire to after a hard day of exploring. But there are plenty of cheaper, homely hotels and guest houses to pick from.

Despite its culinary delights and cultural wealth, it’s the people that will keep you coming back to Beirut. In a country that has taken to the streets in protest about a lack of jobs, high poverty rates and mismanaged public services, the generosity and warmth of the city’s inhabitants is all the more touching and genuine.

Refreshingly, tourists are still considered somewhat of a novelty in the city. The Lebanese are inquisitive about where you’ve come from and why you’re in Beirut. Hit the locals with a smattering of Arabic and you’ll be friends for life. I tried to buy an apple and two bananas from a tiny fruit shop. I was waved away – I could just have them.

This sums up Beirut: kind and casual. You won’t regret going. ■

WHAT TO DO



TAWLET
An all-you can eat buffet cooked by a rotating cast of Syrian and Palestinian chefs.



COOP D’ÉTAT
A rooftop terrace with a pub-garden feel. The stairs are worth it for the view of the Beirut skyline.



THE AMERICAN UNIVERSITY OF BEIRUT
Wander through the scenic grounds of Berkeley Campus with an Arab twist.



RAOUCHE ROCKS
Have a drink nearby Beirut’s iconic rock formation which is worth a good stare.



CORNICHE BEIRUT
Stroll along the promenade and watch the sun set over the Mediterranean. Watch out for the *jagal* (wealthy posers).



BEIRUT OLD CITY WALK
Great for history gluttons who want to cram in all of the city’s key sites in a day.



ST ELIAS AND ST GREGORY THE ILLUMINATOR ARMENIAN CATHOLIC CATHEDRAL
A jewel of a church with a stunning interior that’s usually deserted.



DAY TRIPS OUTSIDE BEIRUT
Lebanon is tiny. Take advantage and venture inland. Bcharre, Baalbek and Byblos are the star attractions.



VERCELLI

The rice capital of Europe



Our food critic visits the only Michelin-starred restaurant that specialises in risotto

Piedmont's fame in the culinary world is effortlessly established by its white truffles from Alba and red wines of Barolo and Barbaresco. What tends to be overlooked though is that it is also home to the finest rice in all of Europe. Over half of all rice produced in Europe originates in Piedmont and it comes almost entirely from the monotonously flat fields surrounding Vercelli, just an hour northeast of Turin.

Appropriately, Vercelli is also home to the only Michelin-starred restaurant that specialises in risotto – Cinzia da Christian e Manuel – better known as the Costardi Brothers. With beards that birds could happily nest in and an encyclopaedic display of tattoos, they look like they would be more at home in Shoreditch than a non-descript hotel near a traffic junction in northern Italy. However, they are deadly serious in their approach to risotto, offering tasting menus plus nearly 20 different risotto dishes all for £20 each.

Christian explains that it didn't take much reflection to choose this path: "It's very simple - we were born and brought up in the land of rice, so we have a responsibility to focus on it in our restaurant. Unlike in most restaurants, we also make a point of not demanding that it is not served in portions for two people."

Their approach is different to conventional methods – they don't cook it on a base of fried onions or other products such as carrots, celery or even wine before the rice is actually cooked. Christian believes that "it is difficult when you add cold white wine to the dish as it creates a temperature drop, which stops the rice from cooking, so the grains crystallise and the inside is not properly cooked."

They also only use vegetable stock in the cooking process and add further ingredients at the end to ensure that the risotto's

by **Bruce Palling**

natural flavours remain the dish's foundation. Their most unconventional dish is served in what looks like an Andy Warhol Campbell's soup tin but is labelled Costardi's condensed tomato rice. The base is of basil pesto and tomato infused risotto with an extra dollop of pesto on the top. Thanks to their first-rate ingredients and their careful cooking process, there is a welcome intensity of flavours.

Although it is possible to only eat the risotto dishes, it is so filling that

di grana padano, grasso di grana padano e ghee – a sublimely simple dish of plain risotto with a jus of grana padano cheese and clarified butter.

The peperoni and anchovy were beautifully integrated into the dish, giving the risotto a touch of crunchiness. The rabbit and foie gras combination slightly overwhelmed the risotto element but overall was irresistible. Strangely, the most accomplished dish of the evening was the simplest – the plate of perfectly cooked cream coloured risotto with a spoonful of semi-transparent jus in the centre, a combination of clarified butter

mixed with liquid extracted from boiled Grana Padano cheese. Its impact came from the simplicity of its creaminess with the mildest taste of the cheese along with a sensation of hazelnuts from the clarified butter.

It is possible to eat risotto with any number of wines but we were fortunate enough to have some of a stunning Gaja Barbaresco 2009 and an even more serious vintage Barolo Triumviratum 2001 from Michele Chiarlo. Both of them are from the

Nebbiolo grape, which has the necessary tannic backbone to cleanse the palate after each mouthful. Nervi, a local Gattinara vineyard, recently acquired by renowned Barolo producer Giacomo Conterno provided a relatively cheaper option that was almost as good.

Visually, the region is not exactly exciting, consisting of endless saucer-like fields. There is however, a superb rice museum located within Riso Buono, the Guidobono Cavalchini family estate. Directly opposite, there is a world-class sculpture museum called Materima, founded by Turin-based gallery owner, Nicola Loi. When you have had your risotto experience,

you can always drive a bit further and visit the vineyards or experience Alba truffles if they are in season. ■

Christian and Manuel Ristorante plus Hotel Cinzia
christianmanuel.it Menus from:
€70 - €130. Rooms (quite basic) €85 - €140

SPEAKING LANGUAGE OF WINE

by **Guy Chatfield**

One of the most attractive aspects of wine is that it has developed into a drink that can be enjoyed on a multitude of occasions. For many wine-lovers it means a shared bottle of Sauvignon Blanc with their Friday night family supper. Or a casual glass of Chilean Merlot in the pub or bar with friends. For others it is a cerebral exercise, the fun being in the analysis of how this particular wine stands up to their own exacting criteria.

Throughout the couple of decades that I have been involved in this wonderful part of the drinks trade my enduring message has been that wine should be convivial. It is there to be enjoyed with friends, ideally with food, but always with people you want to share your precious down-time with. If it takes your fancy to discuss it, then bash on and do it. If it floats your boat to analyse the flavours that are making you salivate, go nuts. My reservation is that I'm not a huge fan of the navel gazing and the verbosity that sometimes slips into the conversation about wine. In short, I have a real issue with much of the language that is used, particularly in the trade, for describing the flavour properties of this wonderful drink.

Now, I am under no illusions: the creation of wine is just that, a creative process; wine is a wonderful union of the environment the grapes are grown in and the palatable skills of the winemaker. I suppose that in every facet of the creative world there will be colourful ways of describing the end product, it is just that in my time I have definitely heard some pretentious horrors.

It is obviously essential to differentiate the wine in the bottle from those in its peer group and although we are blessed with an incredibly rich lexicon of language, the general state of affairs when it comes to wine descriptions is pretty poor. On ninety percent of the high street wine lists across Europe you will encounter the most prosaic repetition while in many white-tablecloth restaurants, you can find descriptions that are flowery nonsense.

For many years I have trained front of house staff to provide descriptions of wine under pressure. One of my key messages is that an over the top style of presentation will get you nowhere. The customer will think those who attempt this are from a different planet and switch off immediately.

My advice to staff in these situations is – when you want to describe wine – do your homework, i.e. taste the wine whenever possible before service, then express its deliciousness in three or four words only. This is not about pandering to the small attention spans of millennials, or to the immediacy that we're told so often people now want. An honest and direct description of the fruit notes and additional flavours is all the modern consumer wants.

Most wine-lovers don't want ordering wine to become a trial or a competition. Keep it simple and enjoy it. ■



CULTURE DIGEST

The best of Europe's art and culture



Black Nights Film Festival
Until 1st December, various locations, Tallinn

Returning for its 23rd edition, and boasting over 400 film and animation screenings, and 50 premieres, Tallinn's annual film festival is arguably the greatest in Northern Europe, and never fails to uncover the brightest in the region.



Dvořák 7
21st November & 22nd November, Brussels Philharmonic, Belgium

Brussels Philharmonic hosts two pieces from the oeuvre of Antonín Dvořák performed by cellist, and first Queen Elizabeth Competition winner, Victor Julien-Laferrière and Czech conductor Jiří Rožeh.



One of the Last Nights of Carnival

Until 29th November, Théâtre des Bouffes du Nord, Paris

A rare opportunity to witness one of Carlo Goldoni's most adventurous, but infrequently performed plays. Presented in period dress with popular music of the time, expect a mischievous and scurrilous night in Venice, brought to you courtesy of director Clément Hervieu-Léger.



Richard Gerstl: Inspiration – Legacy
Until 20th January 2020, Leopold Museum, Austria

Considered the first Austrian Expressionist painter, Gerstl receives the first monographic exhibition in Austria for 25 years. His gestural brush strokes and stylistic heterogeneity set a precedent for artists to follow in the 19th century.



Chineke! Orchestra
Until 18th November, Eurogress, Aachen

Britain's orchestra dedicated to "championing change and celebrating diversity in classical music" closes out a successful European tour in Aachen, with music by Weber, Brahms, and a violin concerto by Samuel Coleridge-Taylor, an English composer who achieved such success during his life he became known to New York musicians as the "African Mahler".



Pierre Henry
From 20th to 24th November, Philharmonie de Paris

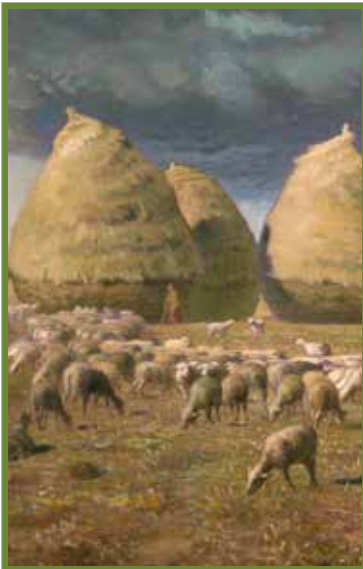
A long-overdue tribute to a pioneer of musique concrète, which will include a rare performance of La Dixième Symphonie; not his tenth symphony, rather a tribute to Beethoven nine. There will also be an array of objects on display, including instruments and devices he used in his Paris studio until his death two years ago.



Art on Display. Formas de expor 1949-69

Until 2nd March 2020, Calouste Gulbenkian Museum, Portugal

A half-centenary special: this exhibition takes the display of the museum's opening in 1969 as its inspiration.



Jean-François Millet: Sowing the Seeds of Modern Art

Until 12th January 2020, Van Gogh Museum, Netherlands

This is the first exhibition that explores how the French painter influenced major artists such as Vincent van Gogh, Claude Monet and Edvard Munch. Millet's radical painting technique and depictions of peasant life undoubtedly influenced modern art as we know it.



Belzhazzar

Until 6th December, Opera Zurich

Written during George Frederick Handel's most productive years in London, it draws on Charles Jennens's libretto telling of the fall of Babylon. Laurence Cummings conducts crack period band Orchestra La Scintilla, and keep an eye out for the vocal (and possibly physical) acrobatics of countertenor and occasional breakdancer Jakub Józef Orliński.



Greco

Until 10th February 2020, Grand Palais, France

This is the first of its kind in France: a retrospective dedicated entirely to the work of the iconographer, El Greco. Largely forgotten after his death, El Greco is now being remembered at one of the last great Renaissance artists, and one of the first of the Golden Age; the exhibition will feature many of his masterpieces.

crossword & sudoku

1	2	3	4	5		6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	
14						15								16
17						18								
19					20						21			
22									23	24				
25					26			27		28				
29						30			31			32		
				33										
34	35	36		37							38	39	40	
41				42				43		44		45		
46								47			48			
49														
52						53	54				55			
56											57			
											59			
58														

ACROSS

- Hussy
- Banana split ingredient
- Gay, WWII plane
- Department store giant
- "...be done" (optimist's opinion)
- Polish application
- Some offsprings' offspring
- Do magazine work
- Feminine pronoun
- "A pretty girl ____ a melody..."
- Typewriter key
- Chinese lake
- Summon up, as courage
- Rds.
- Traveling group of actors
- 52-wk. units
- Stuff like that
- .ZIP alternative
- Fight back
- Goose, in Spain
- More diabolical
- "Take ____ Train"

DOWN

- Gym items
- Implore
- Food package claim
- Common interest groups
- Single or red follower
- To the extent that
- Natalie portrayer Mindy
- Love deity
- B-F connection
- Feed format for blogs
- Merman and Mertz

- Extreme dryness
- Nickname
- Yards' kin
- Viperlike
- Not effective
- Bird-feeder block
- Causing harm
- Authors Ferber and O'Brien
- Royal Scottish Museum location
- Emblem
- Living it up
- Letters before tees

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

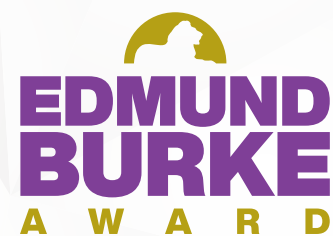
		5		8				6
								1
	9		4	6		3		
2				3				
					7	8		
	3			8				
	4	5	2				8	
9	1							
		8				4		7



LEADING EUROPE'S CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT



THE CONSERVATIVE



ecrparty.eu | [@ECRparty](https://twitter.com/ECRparty)