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Issue #15 | December 2019

THE CONSERVATIVE

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



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HAIL BORIS

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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).

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APOCALYPSE POSTPONED

NATO's 70th anniversary meeting showed that the organisation is capable of reinventing itself and continues to play a vital role in the West's critical defence infrastructure

by Robert Fox

At least the family stuck together. This seemed to be the general verdict on the NATO 70th anniversary meeting in London. The alliance stands to fight another day, but there are still disagreements about its purpose and direction.

Progress was made, though, on the terms of fighting together under the key Article 5 of the founding treaty which supports the need for allies to respond when one is attacked. This now embraces cyber attacks as well as by force of arms. The alliance is now grappling with space defence and security, and not before time.

Much of the media, especially among the British hosts, focused on the reality television show aspect of the gathering at a rather unspectacular hotel to the north of London. Premiers Trudeau, Johnson, President Macron and Britain's Princess Anne were caught on camera sniggering about President Trump's indulgence in impromptu media conferences – even in the hallowed halls of Buckingham Palace.

Later Trump cut short the visit entirely, not before calling Macron “two-faced”, his remarks on NATO “nasty” and then calling him his friend. For the reporters this was meat and drink, or, rather, delicious froth – a wonderful holiday from serious thought and forensic analysis.

The bad boys didn't turn out to be so bad after all. Trump praised NATO, so did Macron, and even Erdogan's warnings

and caveats became muted. The major unanswered questions will now be pondered by a panel of “wise counsellors”, though the terms under which they will operate weren't explained.

The brief concluding statement pointed to real achievements. More member nations are moving towards spending 2% of GDP on defence, as they pledged in 2014 at Cardiff. Trump praised them for this, and credited himself with winning them round. This has brought defence expenditure

from non-US allies to USD \$130 billion annually.

The alliance now acknowledges the 360 degree threat. It also includes space as an “operational domain.” It continues to warn about the continuing and changing threats of terrorism – though this takes very different guises in the views of different allies, Turkey especially.

This time it addressed the strategic aims and attitudes of both China and Russia in terms that were at once plain and subtle. Russia's destabilization in Ukraine and the Baltic region are acknowledged, as was the cancellation of vital treaties.

The scrapping of the INF 1987 – intermediate nuclear forces – treaty is particularly bothersome. This seems to be triggering a new arms race with Russia, and maybe America, about to deploy new generation intermediate missiles across the marchlands of continental Europe. This concern has to be taken further, not least because there have been few positive signs that the START 2 strategic weapons treaty will be renewed after it expires in two years' time.

For the first time China and Chinese influence were mentioned, albeit extremely cautiously, in that they represented “challenges” and “opportunities.” The role of Huawei in running Europe's 5G communications network is now doubtful, with many of the allies now following Trump's line. Less clearly stated was the



Photo: Dan Kinkead - Getty Images

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For the first time China and Chinese influence were mentioned, albeit extremely cautiously, in that they represented “challenges” and “opportunities.” The role of Huawei in running Europe's 5G communications network is now doubtful, with many of the allies now following Trump's line. Less clearly stated was the implications of China's neo-mercantilist bid to dominate the globalized economy, especially through the “belt and road” project. Officially, NATO, as much as the EU seems reluctant to acknowledge China as a major European player, in cyber, communications, and diverse projects like the acquisition of strategic ports such as Trieste.



Photo: NurPhoto - Getty Images

whole – or else he will veto NATO enhancement of Baltic security. The YPG is an alliance matter, but apparently Ankara's relations with Russia, particularly in the acquisition of the Russian S400 air defence missile system, are not. The purchase of the missiles is a matter of discreet Turkish territorial defence. It seems to matter not that the system is configured to down almost every attack aircraft in NATO's current order of battle.

Erna Solberg's sharp intervention captured the moment at the warm-up seminar “NATO Engagement” in London the day before the summit meeting in Watford. Asked by a rather insouciant interviewer what she saw as the biggest strategic threat to NATO, “Russia's disruption, or terrorism?” she snapped. “From a Norwegian perspective, the biggest strategic threat to NATO is the melting of the northern icecap, and all it implies.” It was a wake-up call. NATO has started issuing pious official words about climate and environmental change, but done little to elaborate ideas, strategy and policy to confront it – even as we are all beginning to feel its effect.

Another important intervention offstage was from the government of Giuseppe Conte, Italy's surprisingly

dialogue, a formation of NATO and seven Mediterranean countries.

The Rome gathering addressed some actual security worries that London airbrushed out, including Libya and the ramifications of the violent demonstrations from Lebanon to Iraq and Iran. It gave severe warning about the international sponsorship of the warlord of Benghazi, General Haftar Khalifa. “Khalifa was identified as a major problem, not the solution for Libya,” an Italian source reported.

Italy then led the condemnation of foreign interference in Libya from Russia, Egypt, UAE, Qatar and even France. There was a warning, too, against extending such foreign adventurism to Algeria in its increasingly fragile state. Sergei Lavrov, the Russian foreign minister, was present at the meeting, and contributed. He wasn't in London at all – perhaps a mistake. NATO's first secretary general, Britain's Lord Ismay explained its purpose as “keeping the Russians out, the Americans in, and the Germans down.” All this seemed at risk of being turned upside down on the eve of the London meeting – the Russians present, Germany dominant in any EU Defence arrangement, and Trump's isolationist America wanting out.

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None of this is happening – so far. The London meeting showed that NATO can reinvent itself, and is doing so. The basis is partnership, with awkward members inside and awkward neighbours outside, alike. The rapid change of the strategic context is the big challenge – illustrated by a new and ominous geopolitical vocabulary: cyber, space, climate, new militias, non-state actors, migration, militant religious fanatics, genetic warfare, nano, and quantum. ■



Photo: Anadolu Agency - Getty Images

The Conservative Party REDRAWS THE ELECTORAL MAP

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, fought the election on one succinct slogan: "Get Brexit done!" His gamble on attracting working class voters has paid off to stunning effect

The UK general election was an extraordinary event. It was, for the first and almost certainly the last time at a British election, chiefly about Europe. This was the Brexit election: it reiterated, for the benefit of tin-eared politicians, the result of the 2016 referendum on leaving the EU. In tandem with this theme, a Labour Party that had been taken over by an aggressively Marxist faction, tried to gain power by fudging the issue of Brexit and attempting to bribe the electorate with promises of public spending on a totally impracticable scale.

The distinctive feature of any general election in Britain is the first-past-the-post electoral system. In each constituency the voter simply puts a cross opposite the name of the preferred candidate and whoever receives the largest number of votes is elected as Member of Parliament. It is the simplest voting method ever devised and strikingly different from the various systems of proportional representation. It favours the two largest and long-established parties – Labour and Conservative – and it is very difficult for smaller political groupings to break through and become serious contenders.

The Prime Minister, Boris Johnson, fought the election on one succinct slogan: "Get Brexit done!" It tapped into the deep resentment of millions of voters who had watched, appalled, for three and a half years while a parliament dominated by pro-Remain MPs stubbornly blocked every effort to implement the decision of the 2016 referendum and take Britain out of the EU. Even many people who had voted Remain were repelled by the spectacle of a democratic vote being nullified.

This alienation was aggravated when the newly elected leader of the Europhile Liberal Democrat Party, Jo Swinson, decided to fight the election on a platform of "Stop Brexit!" She proposed to do so not by holding a second referendum – which would have been controversial enough – but by simply revoking Article 50, withdrawing Britain's application to leave the EU. That would have meant arbitrarily annulling the decision of 17.4 million voters, a clear repudiation of democracy. That feeling of democracy being at risk was reinforced by the behaviour of the leader of the opposition, Jeremy Corbyn, his shadow chancellor John McDonnell and the hard-left faction named Momentum that exercised an iron control over the Labour Party.

The Labour manifesto committed the party to an unbelievable deluge



Photo: Christopher Furlong - Getty Images

of public spending. It pledged to create a £150bn "social transformation fund" to support the biggest programme of state-owned house-building since the Second World War and the upgrading of schools and hospitals. Another "green transformation fund" was to create a green economy at a cost of £250bn. Proposed renationalisation of all the main public utilities was costed by the Confederation of British Industry at a preliminary output of £196bn. And so on... This was by far the most profligate programme ever put to the British electorate.

Its very extravagance was its undoing: voters refused to believe it was a credible proposition.

The Conservatives pledged to abandon austerity and spend more on public services such as recruiting more police and nurses. But the cost was only a small fraction of the gargantuan Labour programme. The two main parties also pursued contrasting Brexit policies. Boris Johnson made a straightforward appeal to voters: give me a working majority and I will deliver Brexit with no more delays and extensions. Labour, in contrast, was divided on the issue. Jeremy Corbyn was a lifelong Eurosceptic, but his party hated Brexit, so he had to trim his sails. Aware that Labour constituencies in the north of England had voted heavily to Leave, he tried to tread a path mid-way between the Remain left in London and the blue-collar pro-Brexit Labour vote in the north.

by **Gerald Warner**

The resulting fudge alienated both sides and deprived Labour of support all across the country. The elections were rancorous and yet, in a way, strangely subdued. Boris Johnson has always been known as a showman, unpredictable, but very characterful. With the media keeping all the party leaders under a microscope, however, Johnson confined himself to interviews with unchallenging interlocutors and doing tours of businesses

in the various parliamentary ploys to subvert Brexit and at the general election they fared badly at the hands of a vengeful electorate.

Throughout the campaign the various opinion polls predicted a safe majority for the Conservatives. In the event, their forecasts were fairly accurate, though slightly underestimating the strength of the Conservative support. The problem was that those polls recorded projected vote share, but each constituency had its own distinctive profile and some of them were tight marginals, so that a few votes

redirected one way or the other could have a disproportionate effect on the national picture. Pro-Remain London was seen as Labour's greatest strength, provided it could hold onto its seats in the north – the so-called "Red Wall" of safe constituencies – that had been held for decades. But those seats had largely voted Leave at the referendum and the Conservatives were arguably depriving themselves of the talents of a colourful public performer; but they calculated that was preferable to the risk of the Prime Minister committing some gaffe that would give the media a field day and derail their campaign.

By the time of the election the Remain wing of the Conservative Party had imploded: some MPs had been expelled from the party; some defected to other political parties, others stood as independents, many retired from politics. They had collaborated with the opposition parties

and factories. With this strategy the Conservatives were arguably depriving themselves of the talents of a colourful public performer; but they calculated that was preferable to the risk of the Prime Minister committing some gaffe that would give the media a field day and derail their campaign.

many abandoned Labour at the election, regarding it as now a Remain party that had disregarded the wishes of its working-class voters. The result was a catastrophe for Labour. There was a similar disaster, on a smaller scale, in Wales, also a Labour stronghold. In Scotland – the part of the UK that supplied the majorities for three Labour governments in the 20th century – the Scottish nationalists made large gains, reducing Labour to just one seat in Scotland.

The outcome was 365 seats for the Conservatives, 203 for Labour and just 11 for the Liberal Democrats.

The Liberal Democrat leader Jo Swinson, who had aspired to "cancel Brexit", lost her seat. While many layers of interpretation can be put on those results, one thing is certain: Britain wants to leave the EU – the myth of "Leaver remorse" put about by Remainers after the referendum is totally discredited. The strengthening of the nationalists in Scotland, who demand a second referendum on Scottish independence, guarantees friction between Westminster and Scotland over the next few years.

How will Boris Johnson, now armed with a large overall majority in a Remain-free party, use his victory? Firstly, he will rush through Parliament all necessary legislation for Britain's departure from the European Union on 31 January: this is one Brexit deadline that will not be extended. Faced with what is now the inevitability of Brexit, some EU leaders are rejoicing in the UK premier's large majority, in the belief that it frees him from the pressure of hard-line Tory Brexiters, encouraging him to craft a softer Brexit.

Since nobody knows Johnson's inner political thoughts, that might be the case. But, on the other hand, why would he want a softer Brexit? It would compromise the trade deals he wishes to negotiate outside the EU. It would hobble Britain with tendrils of EU regulations and laws, not to mention financial contributions, that would quickly become a focus of domestic resentment. Johnson has seen the fate of UK politicians who betray the promise of Brexit: why would he needlessly incur controversy and odium? It is equally likely that he would drive a harder bargain, as the first British prime minister Brussels has dealt with who had no parliamentary drag-chains restraining him. He could threaten an exit on WTO terms in December 2020 if he does not get a reasonable agreement. The EU may have painted itself into a very uncomfortable corner.

Domestically, Boris Johnson is employing the phrase "One Nation Conservative Party" as if it were one word. Austerity is history. While tough on crime and immigration (not his previous posture), he is willing to loosen the purse strings of public spending. That might remind EU citizens of a similar political phenomenon: the combination of generous public expenditure and social conservatism that has given Poland's Law and Justice Party a long lease on power. It will be interesting to see if post-Brexit Conservatism essays something similar under Prime Minister Johnson. ■



What next for BORIS?

Johnson has wrongfooted his political enemies at home but the next stage of the Brexit negotiations could be tricky to pull off in his favour

by **Maggie Pagano**

One of Boris Johnson's best lines of the election was his description of Brexit as "oven-ready." The question Britain's new Prime Minister has to decide now is how Brexit will be cooked.

Will it be a perfectly roasted golden brown bird, tender on the inside and crispy on the outside? Or barbecued out of existence by a vengeful European Union intent on keeping the UK as closely aligned as possible?

Other than the repetitive – but clearly effective – slogan of "Get Brexit Done", Johnson has not given any hints as to how he wants his Brexit cooked, or even flavoured.

Theoretically, the size of Johnson's parliamentary majority gives him the authority to be head chef in the kitchen, free to take the UK out of the EU after four years of tortuous gridlock and to define a new trade relationship with the EU by end of 2020.

We will only know what recipe Johnson wants to follow when we know the make-up of his cabinet, and who he anoints as Brexit Secretary. As with the three great offices of state, those of Foreign Secretary, Chancellor of the Exchequer and Home Office Secretary, the character of whom he appoints will give a clearer idea of how he wants to cook his bird. What his huge majority of new Conservative MPs does mean, however, is that he is not so beholden to the hardliners in the ERG group, some of whom are still clinging to a hard exit.

As Johnson said again today in his No 10 victory speech, he wants a

positive partnership with the EU, one that works closely with our continental neighbours on the big issues of the day but one that heals the country too. They were good, powerful warm words but they don't give any clues as to what happens next with getting Brexit done.

The only certainty is a future free trade deal with the EU will be precisely that, a trade. If Johnson wants the UK to have good access to the EU's single market, there is no question that he will be asked to accept certain obligations in return.

The EU will be bargaining hard to keep the UK aligned on key issues such as workers and environmental standards, financial services regulation and tax.

That's the contradiction that Johnson will have to work through in next year's negotiations. How to square leaving the EU but keeping as much access to the single market as possible without tying the country up in unnecessary rules and regulations.

To date, Brussels has indicated that Britain can adopt a zero-tariff, zero-quota deal – so long as the UK doesn't go down the light-touch Singapore route. And that's the rub. With such a huge trade surplus in goods with the UK, the EU negotiators will do their utmost to ensure we have as few competitive advantages over their members as possible.

This is particularly true of Angela Merkel and her German lobby of industrialists who will be pushing to keep the UK supine, tied down to as many EU regulations as possible to stop the UK becoming more competitive and productive. Quite rightly, the Germans on industry – and the French on finance – are terrified that, once unleashed, the country's animal

spirits will roar again, particularly with the promise of new investment and more spending on infrastructure going into the economy.

Yet as far as one can tell, doing a Singapore is not the route favoured by those around Johnson, his chief advisers such as Dominic Cummings and industrialists like Sir Anthony Bamford of JCB. Their strategy for growth is far more ambitious than that. They want to build up the

country's industrial base, reversing the trade deficit in goods, investing heavily in innovation and new technologies and giving space for the UK's SME sector to grow.

If Cummings is as successful at persuading the PM to take this route as he has been in advising him on the election, then the country might be onto a winner. But there is much hard work to be done, particularly on redirecting investment into the real economy and, more pertinently, into the North and South West, to rebalance the regions.

What, then, are the most realistic options for PM and the new Brexit Secretary to pursue?

At present, there are still only four serious options for him to take. First, Johnson could go for a "managed no deal", falling back on WTO rules and mutually agreed mini-deals. This could be done within the deadline.

Second, the PM could go for what the EFTA4UK lobbying group call the "Tesco" style no-frills deal. This is what countries did in the 1970s before the European Economic Area was set up. This allowed EFTA countries to sign individual FTAs with the then European Economic Community. These took on average nine months to negotiate but were basic.

Third, the UK could stay in the EEA and join EFTA, the European Free

Trade Association, of which Norway, Switzerland, Liechtenstein and Iceland are members.

Fourth, he could go for a super EU-Canada type deal, CETA, which is likely to take longer than 11 months.

Each option has its benefits and risks. The danger with a managed deal is that going for WTO tariffs might tip the already fragile economy into recession, and annoy the business world which craves certainty.

The second option could be a good starting point but would not take into account the UK's huge financial services industry unless negotiators can get a side agreement on mutual recognition or equivalence.

The third EFTA option makes a lot of commercial sense because it gives the UK the most access to the single market and keeps the UK out of EU legislation on fisheries and the ECJ. But it also means the UK would have to accept free movement of workers. So unlikely.

The problem with a Canada style deal is the amount of time required to do such a deal. And time is of the essence. The UK and the EU have only until July 2020 to agree on whether they will extend the transitional period by up to another two years. So far Johnson has ruled out an extension but now that he has such a majority, he has the freedom to change the goal posts.

Maybe there is a fifth recipe that Johnson has ready for the oven that we haven't heard about? Who knows, the PM may surprise us once again. ■



New Direction's Western Balkans summit, 7th December, Sofia

Bulgaria charts a New Direction for the Western Balkans



The New Direction Western Balkans Summit took place in Sofia on the 7th of December. Bringing together politicians from a range of parties the conference was supported by prominent figures including leading members of the Bulgarian government – Minister of Justice Nikolay Prodanov and Foreign Minister Ekaterina Zaharieva – as well as the European Commissioner for Digital Economy and Society Mariya Gabriel.

The prominent International Republican Institute which seeks to promote democracy and freedom globally and has worked in the Balkans to aid the development of strong democratic institutions and vigorous civil society also participated in the summit, showing its support for the New Direction vision.

After these opening remarks, the summit kicked off a series of keynote speeches and panels, with political leaders from across the Balkans, Europe, and the political spectrum coming together to present their remarks. The first speech was delivered by European Commissioner Mariya Gabriel, who has previously served as an MEP for the conservative GERB party and head of the Bulgarian delegation of the EPP group. She made a passionate case for wielding the latest IT technology to connect the Western Balkans with the rest of Europe and ensure the future economic success of the region.

Extending from digital solutions into the political arena, Minister Prodanov urged that cooperation is the key to successful EU integration. He said that, in the pursuit of joining the EU, “a genuine attempt has to be made to take into account the interests of the citizens of the countries” involved. He thoughtfully argued that it would be necessary to refrain from imposing hardline legal norms for political success, and that the Western Balkans will need to be able to engage in dialogue in order to build bridges with the European project.

This provided a perfect point of departure for the speech delivered by Prodanov’s colleague, Minister Zaharieva. She stated unequivocally that “the current impasse” in EU integration in the Balkans “is not just the fault of the EU”. She said that

the “Western Balkan countries also have a great deal of responsibility,” and said that there were outstanding issues in the region which needed to be resolved before integration could continue. However, she also struck a positive note welcoming that “the topic of the Western Balkans” has been brought “back to the agenda” in Bulgaria. A vital first step for addressing these complex issues.

The panels moved beyond the diagnoses provided by the keynote speakers and sought to dig into the detail of how concrete policies might establish greater integration between the EU and the region. One particularly hot topic revolved around the future of NATO and the security of the Western Balkans. After French President Emmanuel Macron recently declared the Transatlantic alliance to be “brain dead”, the panellists and participants were all eager to weigh in upon this momentous debate about Europe’s defence needs - and present a more positive vision of the path ahead.

Robert Pszczel, the serving Senior Officer for Russia and the Western Balkans in the Public Diplomacy Division at NATO, was adamant that there is no alternative to NATO. The organisation is, he argued, “the main forum that gives the opportunity for Europeans and North Americans to gather and discuss the most important issue of security and defence.” Turning to the role that the Western Balkans can play in this forum in the

future he pointed out the success of Macedonia, which has already fulfilled many requirements for NATO membership.

As such while Nataliya Apostolova, the Ambassador for the EU in Kosovo, sounded a more cautious note stating that the Western Balkans “have specific challenges” it is clear these are by no means insurmountable. Still as she argued addressing issues of influence by non-EU countries, economic development, religious extremism, governance, rule of law, and migration will be vital to allow the Western Balkan nations to be effective partners and guarantors of European security as a part of the NATO alliance.

Indeed, discussing how engagement with the Transatlantic Alliance could be strengthened panellists pointed out that issues such as the migration crisis and a need to further strengthen the independent press to help Western Balkan states make their cases to the EU and NATO. Panellists also argued that there also needs to be more infrastructure and defence investment in the region. This would strengthen Western Balkans security, and build confidence in the benefits of the geopolitical framework of the EU and NATO.

Krasimir Bogdanov summarised the attitude in Bulgaria well, when he said that ensuring that such goals are met is a priority of the Bulgarian government. He explained that “The Bulgarian position is clear. The

integration of the Western Balkans is in the economic and political interest of Europe and should remain one of the Union’s main priorities.” The Bulgarian government, and those present at the conference, are passionate about the role that Sofia can play as a window to the West. Sofia may well prove key in overcoming the opposition to integration and providing a pathway for the spread of rules-based government, freedom, and security for the region.

Looking to the future the day’s final panel “Future of the Western Balkans: A Young Political Leader’s Roundtable” brought together bright young voices in politics from across the region. The panel moderated by the IRI’s programme director, Dr Igor Merheim-Eyre, showed that enthusiasm existed across Europe for further strengthening EU and Transatlantic ties with the Western Balkans – and optimism about the bright future this might bring.



ECR Party supports fair trial for former President of the Maldives

The European Conservatives and Reformists Party strongly condemns the continued imprisonment of former President of the Maldives Abdulla Yameen. He has been under scrutiny since he lost his bid for re-election in September 2018, after which he peacefully handed over power. After being arrested in February 2019 by an order of the courts, Yameen has now been brought to trial and convicted.

The former President was sentenced to five years in prison at the end of November, after he was convicted of money laundering. The government prosecution charged that he had transferred a payment worth \$1 million worth of state funds to a private company before passing them into his own bank account. Judge Ali Rasheed, the head of a panel of five judges who convicted Yameen, said that they had established beyond any reasonable doubt that Yameen had embezzled the funds.

However, President Yameen’s trial was held with a lack of transparency and in irregular circumstances – including the case taking place in front of only one judge as opposed to three as in most high profile cases. Currently, there is no Chief Justice or a Prosecutor General holding office in the Maldives and ahead of the trial, the government removed from office four justices of the Supreme Court. The trial itself was considered heavily politicised by the government in a way that demonstrates a lack of independence in the ruling.

The political controversies surrounding Yameen include allegations that his government has used excessive force to crush dissent in the Maldives. Several opposition politicians were jailed under Yameen, and the US and the European Union have previously threatened to impose sanctions upon his government in response.

The Maldives are also one theatre in which a geopolitical contest between China and India is played out. Yameen’s attempts to bring the archipelago closer to the political orbit of the government in Beijing has also caused controversy within the country. The Indian government believes that the Maldives should instead be seeking closer ties with Delhi, and has expressed support for Yameen’s opponents.

The situation on the ground is complex, but former President Yameen has since allowed for the peaceful transfer of power. Accordingly, the European Conservatives and Reformists Party expresses strong concerns about the process that led to the imprisonment of former President Yameen and calls on the European Union to investigate this erosion of the rule of law and the universal human rights within the country – as well as the wider independence of the criminal justice system in the Maldives. ■



ECR Party makes significant contribution to the International Democratic Union Forum



At the forum’s inaugural dinner on the 4th of December in Washington D.C. IDU Chairman former Canadian Prime Minister Stephen Harper made the opening remarks followed by other luminaries of the right in the USA and Canada including Governor Haley Barbour, Senator Patrick Toomey, Senator Todd Young and Ontario Premier Doug Ford.

Moving on to business Harper welcomed all attendees with a sentiment echoed in the opening speech by Senator John Barrasso. The panels were extensive ranging across free

trade and protectionism, migration, digital government, new electoral tactics, and the future of conservatism and some of the most pressing issues of the day were discussed. Speeches by Senator Mitt Romney and Secretary of Transportation provided further insight into these difficult issues.

Many of the ECR’s member parties have attended the forum, including the Conservative Party in the UK, Israel’s Likud, the Albanian Republicans and others, as part of the ECR Party delegation.

The European Conservatives and Reformist-presented lunch on the



ECR Party Training Academy in Granada

The European Conservatives and Reformists held their second Training Academy in the year in Southern Spain from the 13th to the 14th of December. This followed on from the success of the previous Training Academy that was held in Madeira earlier in the year, in which nearly 200 activists from 31 countries gathered to discuss the latest campaign techniques.

The focus on the Granada event was on more conventional campaigning – with sessions led by veteran Conservative Party activist Richard Murphy. Mr Murphy, who has long run election campaigns in the UK and further afield, gave the attending delegates detailed

guidelines on how to identify potential voters, how to win them over and then finally how to get them out to support the candidate. Many of the delegates came from the Spanish Vox party, who earlier this year managed to double their number of sitting MPs in Parliament, as well as electing their first three Members of the European Parliament.

All of this took place in the beautiful setting of Granada in Southern Spain. Delegates also had the chance to explore the ancient city ahead of a formal dinner.

The ECR Party is committed to training the next generation of political activists – it is important to get more ordinary people involved and engaged in European politics. ■



the IDU and the membership of Law and Justice Party from Poland, and with Dan Twining, President of the International Republican Institute in order to discuss the organization’s close engagement in Eastern Europe.

The final dinner was addressed by Lord Ashcroft, and the Chair of the House Republican Conference, Congresswoman Liz Cheney. A very enjoyable evening was had by all.

On the 6th December, the final day of the conference, the final panel “Advancing Female Leadership and Equity: Perspectives from Conservative Women Across the

Globe” served as a stimulating final event. Interesting perspectives were offered from across the globe with participants from Africa, to South America, to Europe.

The Republican Party of Albania has applied to join the IDU, if accepted it will make it the second Albanian member party alongside the Democratic Party of Albania. The Republican Party of Albania looks forward to the benefits that the prestigious international organisation that is the IDU offers – and to work with other members to promote its agenda globally. ■

Angel Dzhambazki MEP EU MOBILITY PACKAGE threatens to choke the transport industry

The Conservative sat down with Angel Dzhambazki MEP to talk over the issues raised by the EU's transport reforms

THE CONSERVATIVE

Apart from the sporadic statements made on the Mobility Package [an EU project aimed at the transportation industry], it seems that the issue has been left in the background and almost nothing has come out on its progress lately. Can you tell us a little more about the status of the dossiers?

ANGEL DZHAMBAZKI MEP

Perhaps the reason for the slow negotiations is that the Mobility Package is currently being discussed at triologue meetings between the European Commission, the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. On the other hand, until the 2nd of December we had no appointed European Commission. At the last triologue held on the 25th of November, nothing was agreed. It became evident that neither the former commissioner for transport Violeta Bulc, nor the European Road Alliance had any intention to soften their position.

This may be good for our transport industry and us because the new transport commissioner, Adina Valyan, is from Romania. He is one of our allies in the Council. The other positive factor is that from January 1st 2020 Croatia assumes the presidency of the Council. In my opinion, now is the right time to reach our goals of protecting our home transport industry, because after that it will be very complicated.

THE CONSERVATIVE

In the public discussion on the Mobility Package we often hear about the losses in the transport industry, however, we have not seen figures. Can you elaborate?

ANGEL DZHAMBAZKI MEP

In October, a KPMG survey was commissioned by the Bulgarian transport industry, which lists the exact figures for the loss that will be created after the introduction of the Mobility Package as it is proposed.

The study suggests a raise in the administrative costs by 40 million

euro. At the same time, it was proclaimed that one of the goals of the package is to cut red tape and the administrative burden. Of course, enhancing this very burden is not new to the EC. Its administration has become an army, which not only defends itself well, but also tries to create new soldiers through pointless new regulations.

Let me give you an example. The additional cost for hotels will be around 119 million euro, which unfortunately will not make the working conditions for the drivers of heavy goods vehicles better.

Why? Because even now, drivers are forced to pay for hotels in order to have an invoice (required by some authorities) while at the same time they sleep in their cabin to keep their cargo from raids by illegal migrants

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No one knows the exact figure of the hike of the prices! I will give you a simple example. A car, regardless of the manufacturer, is often produced in five different factories in different parts of Europe. If all five deliveries increase their price by 2-3%, this means that the price of this car will increase by at least 8-9% if of course it does not increase by more because of different speculators in the production and supply chain.

and organized criminals. I will now add that the requirement of such documents is not within the competence of local judicial authorities, according to a letter from the Commission to the International Transport Union. For that reason, as a proof is used Regulation 165/2014, Article 36, which explicitly states that such documents may be provided only to the bodies authorized for this type of inspection (In Bulgaria, such body is the EAAA). We should also add the cost of non-existing parking, which will amount to 24 million euro.

The third largest expense will be 155 million euro for bringing the vehicle back to its registration location in 4 weeks. This cost is unnecessary, and here we can include the negative effect that these empty courses will generate. Of these,

88,500 tonnes of carbon emissions will be produced, which is an increase of about 3% of total annual carbon emissions.

THE CONSERVATIVE

Will these additional costs make shipping and forwarding more expensive and won't they be passed on to the end user?

ANGEL DZHAMBAZKI MEP

Of course, this is also what those who are trying to push this package are trying to hide from the people. The general public in Europe is not aware of the impact of the Mobility Package. This is done on purpose. Not only are our businesses in danger, but also businesses across Europe. I can assure you that preliminary analyses indicate that the regulation is going to have a negative impact throughout Europe. Companies such as Amazon and BMW are already aware of the negative effects and follow very carefully what is going on with this package so that they can absorb the new conditions in the transportation industry very quickly after the package is adopted, as this will affect their business as well.

With the price of transport and logistics rising, the economy will change. The

prices will go up because of that. The transport industry is one of the most important of our industries. Surely, it will produce a domino effect which will hit all other industries, thereby reducing purchasing power, and at the same time reducing the growth of all EU Member States and their citizens.

No one knows the exact figure of the hike of the prices! I will give you a simple example. A car, regardless of the manufacturer, is often produced in five different factories in different parts of Europe. If all five deliveries increase their price by 2-3%, this means that the price of this car will increase by at least 8-9% if of course it does not increase by more because of different speculators in the production and supply chain. However, this also fully applies to other necessities



such as bread, dairy products and even meat.

Another problem that most people do not think about is the fact that should the measure for returning of the trucks become operational, manufacturers will be forced to build new warehouses. For a while now, the method of “just in time delivery” has been adopted in the industry. This means that when the product descends from the production line it is immediately loaded onto the truck to be taken to the next plant or, if the product is finished, is delivered to the wholesaler and/or end user. Due to the return of the trucks, there will be a mass shortage of transport and manufacturers along the chain will be forced to build new warehouses. Part of their price will surely be passed on to the end user. The attempts of the unions, which are supposedly fighting for the well-being of the workers,

to achieve a victory in the reckless war they led with the Mobility Package will, in practice, slow down the workers. Eventually the adoption of this package will make the workers poorer.

THE CONSERVATIVE

How do you see the outcome of this situation and will Bulgaria and its allies be able to defend its interests?

ANGEL DZHAMBAZKI MEP

I am hopeful of the outcome and I think that we can achieve our common goals in defending the Bulgarian transport business. It will not be easy, but if we continue to fight this battle, as we have all done so far (the Ministry of Transport, represented by Rosen Zhelyazkov, and Bulgarian representatives in the EP and the transport industry), we will put an end to this mess that they tried to impose on us through the so-called Mobility Package. ■

Beijing's ruling class is HAUNTED BY THE FALL OF THE SOVIET UNION

Brutal treatment of Hong Kong protests shows the Communist Party is gripped by fear of a Soviet-style loss of ideological control

by Jack Dickens

History suggests that one of the most perilous moments for an authoritarian regime comes when it tries to reform itself. For many reasons, such regimes can struggle to accommodate the forces which they unleash, whether it is the aspirations of a new middle class, nationalist movements, or the heightened political expectations of highly literate intellectuals.

Now, in the vast Leviathan that is the modern Chinese state, the ruling Communist Party has found that the process of “opening and reform” begun under President Deng Xiaoping in 1978 has also begun to unleash unforeseen dynamics within the country. The Chinese transition from a poor, agrarian communist backwater to a “command and control” form of state-run capitalism has amazed the world. The process has forged one of the world's leading economies over a period of forty years of hyper-industrial growth.

However, it has also heightened anxieties in Beijing. China's rulers remain alert to potential movements for political reform which may accompany this economic miracle. Such anxieties which led to the fierce state response to the pro-democracy protests which took place in the capital city's Tiananmen Square in 1989, a time in which pro-democracy movements and demonstrators under Europe's Iron Curtain were gaining ground and momentum. The Tiananmen protestors were silenced just before the high tide of Europe's summer revolutions, which eventually led to the fall of the Berlin wall and the USSR along with it.

The leaders of the Chinese Communist Party in China remain haunted by the history of the late USSR. The Soviet Union dissolved in 1989-91, very shortly after Mikhail Gorbachev, a leading advocate of *perestroika* (“restructuring”) and *glasnost* (“opening”), came to power. It has invited parallels to be drawn with the process of opening and reforming unleashed by China's own Communist Party since 1978. In the demise of the Soviet Union, many in Beijing believe, resides a modern parable of tremendous political significance. It is the tale of how a once might Communist state lost control of the reins of political reform and, in so doing, brought about its own dissolution.

President Xi Jinping's own analysis of the fall of the Soviet Union is a profound expression of this anxiety

which has gripped the highest circles of Beijing's political elite. In a speech delivered in Guangdong in December 2012, which was leaked by a Chinese journalist, Gao Yu, President Xi asked “Why did the Soviet Union disintegrate? Why did the Soviet Communist Party collapse?” Xi answered that “An important reason was that their ideals and beliefs had been shaken... It's a profound lesson for us!” He also added that another “lesson from the collapse of the Soviet Union” was that “within days” the Communist Party lost “the instruments to exert power” because “nobody was man enough to stand up and resist”.

These remarks are echoed by several other key speeches delivered by President Xi. In April 2019, the contents of an address delivered by Xi to the Central Committee of the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) upon his appointment as General Secretary in January 2013. In extracts, which were published in the CCP's journal, *Qiushi* (“seeking truth”), President Xi said that the Soviet Union fell because it lost ideological control.

April 2019 was a fitting moment for this document to appear, because this month also saw the emergence of the current protests which have now engulfed the island city of Hong Kong. Understanding President Xi's reading of the history of the fall of the USSR helps to provide some perspective on the cold brutality with which Beijing has tried to break the pro-democracy demonstrators in this island city.

The crackdown on Hong Kong's demonstrators is also rooted in President Xi's deep mistrust of democracy. In May 1989, while the demonstrations were ongoing in Tiananmen square, Xi, who was then a relatively unknown party official in Fujian, drew comparisons between the protests taking place and the anarchy of China's Cultural Revolution. He is reported to have said that “This kind of ‘big democracy’ is not in accord with science, not in accord with the rule of law, but is instead in accord with superstition, in accord with stupidity, and the result is major chaos.”

Now, the determination of the protestors in Hong Kong has inspired the disaffected on the Chinese mainland. The blaze of revolt has spread

to Guangdong province. Here, as much as in Hong Kong in the east and Xinjiang in the remote northwest, people are coming into contact with the paranoid and punitive streaks of Beijing's police state.

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A truly terrifying police state has emerged from the pessimistic and paranoid reflections of President Xi and his acolytes in Beijing. Throughout China's regions, Xi has made the calculation that, if his regime cannot be loved, then it must be feared. But power based only upon fear is rather brittle – and, in the end, that may prove to be his undoing.

Yet while Hong Kong's protests are centred around preserving the city's democratic institutions as well as its historic common law freedoms, Guangdong is slightly different.

The province is part of the story of China's rapid industrial and economic expansion since 1978. Its capital city, Guangzhou, has been one of the leading cities spearheading China's rise to economic greatness. In the space of a generation, it emerged as a centre of new mechanised industry, a net consumer of people and capital, the home of the factories and workshops fueling China's industrial expansion.

Guangzhou and the surrounding towns of Guangdong have recently become a hotbed of unrest amongst workers who are now demanding better standards of living. China Labour Bulletin (CLB), a Hong Kong-based organisation who analyse workers' rights across China, have recorded 129 instances of industrial strikes and protests this year. These are being led by many workers of retiring age who feel that they have contributed to China's economic miracle over the last generation, but who now face an uncertain retirement.

The events taking place in Guangdong are a microcosm of wider changes which have been rumbling beneath the surface of the Chinese

economy since at least 2014. In that year, when GDP growth began to slow to more modest levels, China reached a “turning point” in which the pool of excess labourers from the countryside began to dry up. Demand for migrant labour in the industrial towns has continued to grow, but the supply of

labourers has not kept pace, a situation which has led to a rise in strikes for higher wages in manufacturing centres across the country. A shift in the balance of power has occurred,

providing workers with greater leverage over their employers in many regions.

Beijing's response to these protests reveals something important about the trajectory of the Chinese state since 2015. There is a sad symmetry of a kind between the persecution of Muslim minorities in north-eastern Xinjiang and the demonstrators in the East. Xinjiang's Muslims, Guangdong's workers, and Hong Kong's democrats are besieged by a regime seeking to root out what it sees as ideological nonconformists.

Across this decade, China's President Xi has wielded a series of anti-corruption trials against powerful rivals in order to slowly concentrate more political power in his own hands. He has also overseen the establishment of new forms of surveillance software and data collection technologies, which are now being used by Beijing's intelligence services to screen entire populations for signs of political dissidence. Such is Xi's determination not to follow the fate that befell Gorbachev and the Soviet Union.

At the same time, however, Xi's government has in another sense been continuing the work of Deng Xiaoping, further liberalising the management of the Chinese economy by devolving powers for economic decision-making to provinces and local governments. It has been trying to strike a balance between centralised political power and economic growth, while maintaining ideological control of China's expanding population across a vast landmass.

A truly terrifying police state has emerged from the pessimistic and paranoid reflections of President Xi and his acolytes in Beijing. Throughout China's regions, Xi has made the calculation that, if his regime cannot be loved, then it must be feared. But power based only upon fear is rather brittle – and, in the end, that may prove to be his undoing. ■





LEADER COLUMN

Cut the ECB down to size

“I’m going to be myself, and therefore different.” In those words Christine Lagarde, the new president of the European Central Bank, speaking at her first ECB press conference, asked journalists not to compare her with her predecessors. Immediately beforehand, the ECB governing council had held all three of its policy rates at record lows: its headline borrowing rate remains at zero, the negative interest rate of - 0.5 per cent for depositor banks is retained and the ECB’s marginal lending facility for banks seeking short-term loans will still be charged at a 0.25 per cent rate. That is hardly a differentiation from her predecessor Mario Draghi.

The ECB governing council stated that it expects the key ECB rates to remain at their present “or lower levels” until inflation reaches “a level sufficiently close to, but below, 2%”. President Lagarde claimed to detect “some initial signs of stabilization” and a “mild increase in underlying inflation”. Yet the inflation targets for the three years 2020-2022 are 1.1 per cent, 1.4 per cent (down from 1.5 per cent) and 1.6 per cent respectively. None of those figures can reasonably be regarded as close to, but below, 2 per cent. Growth forecasts for the same three years are 1.1 per cent (down from 1.2), and 1.4 per cent in both the later years, reflecting an expectation of no increase in growth between 2021 and 2022.

Christine Lagarde must be using an extremely powerful microscope to detect even a mild increase of any significance in underlying inflation. There is a discrepancy between her reassuring remarks and the fiscal realities. Of these, the most disturbing is the fact that the ECB is still making bond purchases totalling €20bn a month, in an open-ended commitment – the controversial Parthian shot by Mario Draghi, who resumed quantitative easing, against the advice of ECB officials, just nine months after he had supposedly ended it. There is a further echo of her predecessor in President Lagarde’s insistence that the ECB stands ready to adjust all its instruments, as appropriate, to ensure inflation returns towards its target: the resonance of Draghi’s “whatever it takes” is unavoidable.

But if Christine Lagarde’s leadership of the ECB resembles Mario Draghi’s policy in those obvious respects, much more concerning is the one aspect of her agenda that notably diverges from his. He was focussed – sometimes to the point of tunnel vision. Christine Lagarde, in contrast, is showing signs of a dangerously diffuse approach to her responsibilities. Her announcement of an ECB strategic review, starting in January, is not in itself undesirable. There has been no such reappraisal since 2003 and it makes sense, in the present impasse, to review inflation targets and how to achieve them.

But this review, as envisioned by Christine Lagarde, will be anything but focussed. It will include in its eclectic remit “the enormous challenge of climate change” and the question of economic inequality. This is a major mistake. The ECB needs to concentrate its mind on the challenge that has so far defeated it, of restoring price stability. That urgent priority can only be undermined by addressing distractions such as climate change and inequality. Climate change is a hugely controversial and amorphous issue; its universal characteristic is that it devours unlimited amounts of money like a black hole.

Christine Lagarde is indulging in displacement activity rather than tackling the ECB’s core problem; invoking climate change is a diversion, putting out virtue-signalling chaff to distract from more immediate concerns. This is a classic example of ECB overreach, on the worst model of EU institutions. It is provoking opposition both inside the ECB and externally. Bundesbank President Jens Weidmann has already said he would view “very critically” any attempt to use monetary policy to combat climate change, which he sees as the responsibility of individual states.

Despite her time at the IMF, Christine Lagarde is the first ECB president with no experience in central banking. She is a lawyer and politician, in a post that arguably requires a banking professional to engage with intractable monetary problems. It is doubtful that the ECB has enough firepower left to conquer inflation-related challenges or any future Eurozone crisis. The new regime in Frankfurt does not inspire confidence. ■

The art of the GREEN DEAL

by Pieter Cleppe

The EU’s shaky track record on environmental policy means Ursula von der Leyen’s flagship policy is unlikely to be a success

The new European Commission, led by Ursula von der Leyen, wants to come up with a “European Green Deal”, which is only part of a whole range of new EU measures intended to protect the environment. The Commission is attempting to present itself as a green champion. Past evidence, however, raises quite a few doubts about the EU’s performance when it comes to protecting the environment. Not to mention the considerable waste of financial resources the EU’s biggest spending area – agriculture – entails. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has led to years of overproduction, the antithesis of sustainability.

More than 2,500 scientists across the EU have urged the EU “to act on the science, and undertake a far-reaching reform of the EU’s CAP without delay.” They argue that EU subsidies financially support the so-called “intensive” agriculture model, which they think harms biodiversity. Whether one supports the current model of agriculture or not, it’s clearly a problem that those keen to test the benefits

of a more sustainable model will be facing competitors funded by the EU to the tune of billions and billions of euros.

Building a more sustainable environmental policy requires opening up the CAP to new ideas – a similar poverty in aspiration dogs the EU’s fisheries policies. This could lead to a major environmental disaster. For years,

Incoherence, stasis and poorly planned choices feed into the EU’s policies on CO2 emissions. Long before Barack Obama came up with U.S. “cap and trade”, the EU had its own version, which is called the “Emission Trading System” (ETS). The central idea of ETS was to force companies that emit CO2 to provide compensation and at the same time allow them to buy

the right to emit, so to make sure CO2 is emitted by those able to do it with the lowest economic cost.

In reality, however, major industrial firms often managed to convince politicians to provide them with free emission rights and threaten to scrap jobs otherwise. In this way, the ETS distorted fair competition as it ended up supporting big manufacturers that emit a lot of CO2. This

meant that a policy intended to limit CO2 emissions has ended up providing an unfair advantage to the biggest emitters of CO2. The problem has been known for years, but reforms have proven very difficult.

In parallel, protections for the climate have fallen by the wayside – a product of large-scale EU failure. The EU and European governments

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The Commission is attempting to present itself as a green champion. Past evidence, however, raises quite a few doubts about the EU’s performance when it comes to protecting the environment. Not to mention the considerable waste of financial resources the EU’s biggest spending area – agriculture – entails. The Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) has led to years of overproduction, the antithesis of sustainability.”

of the EU setting quotas centrally, instead of opting for the US or Nordic model whereby all fish which has been caught should be brought on land, and the loads can be inspected.



Photo: NurPhoto - Getty Images

encouraged diesel cars over the years, through regulations and tax treatment. The EU promoted diesel by agreeing to a voluntary CO2 target for vehicles that was largely in line with what diesel technology could meet. Partly as a result of this, diesel sales soared. In 1990, only 10% of new car registrations were for diesel cars. This increased to almost 60% in 2011.

Diesel has fallen out of favour, even if some argue that it actually may be a superior choice when it comes to CO2 emissions than petrol cars and perhaps even a better choice than electric cars. In any case, even if diesel engines were more fuel-efficient and emitted less CO2 than other engines, emission of soot, particulates, and nitrogen oxides (NOx) is also an environmental concern.

The point here is not so much who’s right and who’s wrong in this very technical debate, with serious arguments being made by each side. It’s mostly that top-down control of environmental policy has been leading to epic u-turns and great uncertainty, also imposing great costs on industry.

Today, the policy consensus at the EU level is to promote electric cars. Few listen to dissident voices, like the International Energy Agency, which has warned that driving electric cars – which enjoy tax breaks – won’t make a dent in global carbon emissions, and may even increase pollution levels. The environmental impact is also a worry, as senior researcher Elsa Dominish explains that “the mining of many metals used for renewable energy technologies and electric vehicles already impacts wildlife biodiversity”. It looks like once again, EU policy makers will need to make

an embarrassing u-turn after having declared a certain technology to be environmentally friendly.

The EU once designated biofuels as “climate friendly”. Apart from the fact these were also blamed for higher food prices in developing countries, they have been accused of destroying habitats such as tropical rainforests. NGO Transport and Environment (T&E) has claimed that using biofuels is actually worse for the environment than traditional fossil fuels.

After the EU Commission had put its weight behind biofuels in 2003 an external report it commissioned to scrutinize its own policies concluded in 2011 that the policy actually caused higher emissions. This was due to indirect land use changes tied to biofuels, with activities like clearing grassland and forests negating any cuts in greenhouse gasses. Meanwhile, tax incentives and subsidies had been introduced.

According to the damning report, the EU Commission cannot hide behind claims it wasn’t aware of the impact: “There was little scientific evidence available in 2003 that supported the claim that a European biofuels target would be guaranteed to bring down greenhouse gas emissions.”

An EU target requires 20% of the energy used in Europe to come from “renewable” sources by 2020 and biomass currently represents almost 60% of renewable energy consumption in

the EU. It’s estimated that burning wood for energy, which is what biomass ultimately comes down to, typically emits 1.5 times more CO2 than coal and 3 times more than natural gas. Opponents argue that to qualify biomass as “renewable” energy fails to take into account the scientific evidence showing that forest biomass harvesting and combustion for energy purposes exacerbates climate change by causing deforestation outside of Europe. A court case at the highest EU court challenging the EU’s definition of biomass as “renewable” is currently pending.

78 million metric tonnes by 2050. Solar panels have been estimated to create 300 times more toxic waste per unit of energy than nuclear energy. In countries like China, India and Ghana, this toxic waste is often burned, in order to salvage the valuable copper wires for resale. The resulting toxic fumes are known to cause cancer and birth defects.

In its climate policies, the EU has been consistently promoting the described technologies, while nuclear energy, despite its very low level of CO2 emissions, has been on the defensive at the EU level.

The EU’s support for diesel and biofuels has already been revised. Given the abundant evidence, the policy choices to support biomass, wind and solar energy, as well as electric cars may be seen as grave errors, from the perspective of protecting the environment.

At the heart of the problem is that the EU has opted for imposing a fixed EU target for a certain technology to reduce CO2 emissions, in this case “renewable” energy, whereby defining what this amounts to isn’t very obvious. This has forced EU member states into expensive and unworkable policies and it has caused cheaper methods of reducing CO2 emission to be ignored.

Furthermore, the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement, to which the EU signed up, foresees that the world’s developed countries provide developing countries with at least

\$100 billion a year until 2025, so to “ease the transition”. Also within the EU, a similar arrangement is being planned, in the form of a so-called “Just Transition Fund”, which would contain up to €35 billion euro, to support poorer member states like Poland, which is still heavily reliant on fossil fuels.

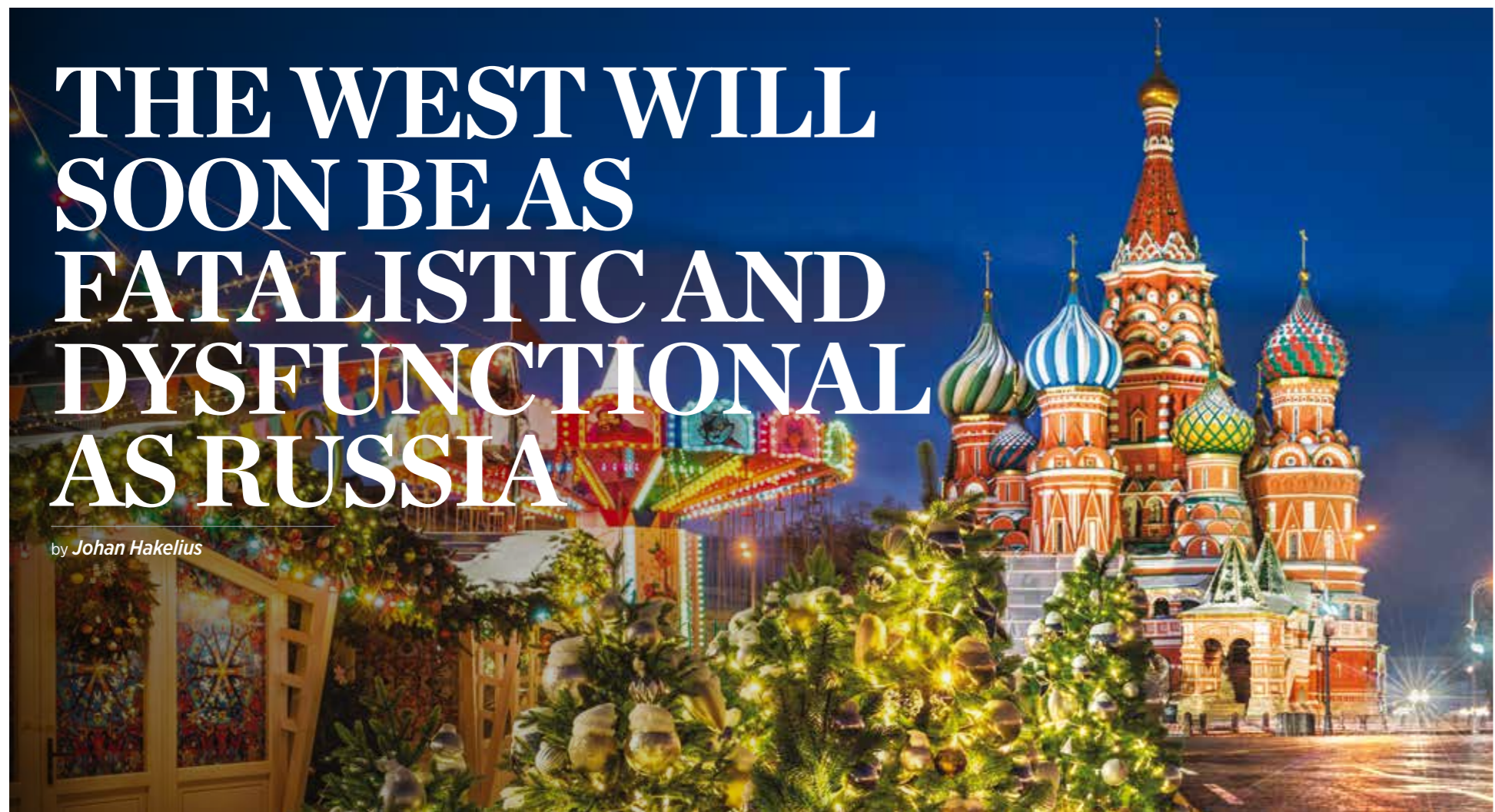
The track record of these kinds of support schemes does not inspire confidence. A study published in Nature in 2015, concluded that due to weak environmental oversight of the UN’s 1997 carbon credit scheme, there were “perverse incentives”. For some industrial plants in Russia to increase emissions, so they could then be paid to reduce them. In other words: financially rewarding those that are lagging behind has proven to be a tricky strategy. Yet, the EU is enthusiastically doubling down on this, ignoring the lessons of the past.

Last but not least, in its climate policies, the EU is not above handing out EU subsidies to fossil fuels or withholding embarrassing reports on its own policies from publication until after the European Parliament elections. In its brand-new plans for a “European Green Deal”, the EU Commission is pushing for more regulation, more spending, more taxes, more protectionism, more top-down control and picking winners in a complex technological environment. The question is whether an organization with such a questionable track record when it comes to protecting the environment should be trusted when it comes up with new grand policy schemes which basically amount to “more of the same”. ■

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The question is whether an organization with such a questionable track record when it comes to protecting the environment should be trusted when it comes up with new grand policy schemes which basically amount to “more of the same”.

THE WEST WILL SOON BE AS FATALISTIC AND DYSFUNCTIONAL AS RUSSIA

by *Johan Hakelius*



It's an unsettling experience to be driven through Moscow at hell-for-leather speed by a Georgian cabbie with suspiciously dilated pupils, especially while he indignantly explains the Russian-Georgian conflict to you with his head turned over his shoulder.

I can't say that much of his explanation stuck.

This was a few years back and I had been asked to lecture at Moscow State University. At first there seemed to be no intelligible reason. Granted, I do speak Swedish and it was the Swedish subsection of the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Area Studies that invited me. But still, why invite a cynical, constantly quipping columnist to lead the students astray?

It didn't make any sense.

The actual explanation made even less sense. This particular group of students were learning Swedish largely by reading and painstakingly translating my columns. They solemnly sat by their desks and, with much deference, turned jokes they didn't understand about people they've never heard of into what I only can assume was something even more pointless in Russian.

Of course, it was too bizarre to pass up. My wife and I flew to Moscow.

I delivered a lecture stuffed with sardonic irony. The students all took comprehensive notes. No one smiled.

Afterwards there was a kind of reception. Partially inspired by my Georgian cabbie I tried to talk a little bit about politics with the female professor. It was a no go. Next to "business", she explained, there was

nothing that interested her less than politics.

Having established that I tried a more general angle: what did the Moscow papers write about these days?

She looked more than a bit affronted.

"Really", she said with perfect Swedish diction, "I wouldn't dream of reading the papers".

So what did she read? Tolstoy, of course. Pushkin. Maybe the odd Dostoevsky, to curb any frivolity.

We didn't keep in touch.

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I think we're going Russian. The West is having a Candide-moment and millions of people will finally become so exhausted that anyone who tries to get them to do anything more than cultivating their own gardens will be met by derision and contempt. The world will have to take care of itself. Or, as the Russians say, "Let it pour".

Our hotel wasn't, strictly speaking, a hotel. It was a room off a corridor in one of Stalin's Seven Sisters, the giant skyscrapers that tell you what Manhattan would have looked like, if Joe Kennedy and Charles Lindbergh had gotten their fascist-state. There was nothing wrong with the room. At least as long as you didn't turn the tap on in the bathroom. If you did the floor was immediately covered in a couple of inches of water.

When we were checking out I asked our guide to tell the three sturdy babushkas, who with fuming resentment managed the corridor, about the leak. He was reluctant, but eventually sighed deeply and went

over to talk to them with the bearing of a man who knows he's about to lose yet another fraction of his dignity.

His face was absolutely blank when he stepped into the elevator. I asked him what they said. He stared into the air and quietly repeated the message: "Let it pour."

In the tax-free shop at the airport I bought a chocolate-box picturing Stalin at the helm of the Ship of State. The chocolate was inedible.

On the whole, it was a very fruitful stay. I remember getting at least half

a dozen columns out of my visit to Moscow. They all had the same basic and somewhat trite point: it will be a very long time before Russia becomes anything like a working democracy, or even a working society. There is simply no sense of civic pride, still less of civic duty.

So, no surprises there. But what I have come to question lately is if Russia is really way behind us in the glorious West. Maybe Russia is the future.

Just a few years ago it would have been unthinkable that anyone among my acquaintances wouldn't follow the news. They are, mostly, middle class, middle aged college graduates with incomes modestly above average. The salt of the earth and the backbone of society, as it were.

Today it's more common than not that they skip the news. They may not even read a paper every day. It's partly because news is always there, if you want it. You don't need to get it at specific times of day anymore. But there's something else too.

A kind of fatigue. A sense of alienation. A growing feeling of politics and

society in general being besieged by lunatics, boobies and fanatics.

People around me are retreating into novels, bee-keeping, cross-stitching, cooking; whatever it takes to keep the idiocy of modern times out. Those that were thoughtless enough to set up a life on Twitter and Facebook are closing it down. They just don't want to hear it all.

When Sky News decides to start a channel without news about Brexit – the most important issue in Britain for decades – they have good reason to do so. Six out of ten viewers say that news about Brexit makes them depressed. Four out of ten feel powerless at the mere mention of Brexit.

Who can blame them? And why should it get any better? Politics today is all hysteria.

The world is coming to an end. We've robbed the young of their

future. The fascists are taking over. A billion refugees are knocking on our door. The financial system is going to collapse. The Channel will become an abyss and Britain won't have any food. There will be civil war in Northern Ireland. The union will dissolve. Trump. I said TRUMP. And so on.

Who could possibly stand a barrage like this for very long? Is there any way out, except pulling out of the game?

I think we're going Russian. The West is having a Candide-moment and millions of people will finally become so exhausted that anyone who tries to get them to do anything more than cultivating their own gardens will be met by derision and contempt. The world will have to take care of itself.

Or, as the Russians say, "Let it pour". ■



HOW MACRON BUNGLED HIS PENSIONS REFORM



by *Anne-Elisabeth Moutet*

There are many ways in which you can sabotage collective bargaining over France's Byzantine pensions system. Having an appointed negotiator exposed for having "forgotten" to mention links to the insurance industry, a key player on pensions, on his official statement of interests is the kind of own goal only President Emmanuel Macron makes a habit of scoring.

Jean-Paul Delevoye, 72, an old-style former Senator from the northern Rust Belt, once a Chirac Cabinet Minister and a long-time president of the worthy Economic and Social Council, was named High Commissioner for Pensions Reform two years ago. He was tasked by Macron, cagey after one year of Yellow Vests angry demonstrations, to "consult" and produce a reform project.

That might have been a cunning plan, if Delevoye had been left to it. Unfortunately, as contradictory rumours on the reform's precise contents started circulating, Macron started answering some of them off the cuff, without consulting with his High Commissioner. He also sent out a squad of Cabinet Ministers who each, unsynchronised, began denying various hypothetical changes to pensions.

Prime Minister Édouard Philippe, Budget Minister Gérard Darmanin and several others all put their respective oars in. No, the retirement age (62) would not be upped to 64. No, reforming "special regimes" would not apply immediately. These regimes cover some 15% of the workforce. They

provide far better pension conditions for 42 different categories of employees, mostly from the public sector, ranging from train drivers to opera stage hands, sailors, teachers, air traffic controllers, firemen, EDF staff, and more.

There was more: physically-hard jobs would be exempt, it was said. There would be a grandfather clause: the new system would only apply to new entrants to these professions. Emmanuel Macron himself mentioned the "clause du grand-père", which in effect would delay his reform by a generation. Then he stopped saying it, after Delevoye complained. No, pensions would not be lowered – or they would be only for a very few people.

No wonder that instead of reassuring public opinion, the fog of contradictory promises ended up fostering a rising panic. The still-unknown reform took on a hydra-like quality: all groups of French workers found something in it to fear and oppose. France's former Ambassador to Washington, the witty Gérard Araud, called it the "Thermidor Syndrome": it echoes that moment in July 1794 when Robespierre threatened his enemies in the revolutionary assembly, the

National Convention, without naming them, causing a fatal coalition to rise against him since all began to fear they would get the guillotine.

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Pensions reform is a touchy issue in France. The country's pay-as-you-go system, which worked very well for several decades in the high-inflation post-war era, started flagging around the 1980s. Demographics inexorably eroded contributions paid into the collective pot to be immediately redistributed to an increasing number of retirees. In 1980, there were ten active workers paying in for two pensioners. Today, they pay for three. In 2050, they will have to pay for six pensioners – an unsustainable burden without changing the national system's parameters.

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workers paying in for two pensioners. Today, they pay for three. In 2050, they will have to pay for six pensioners – an unsustainable burden without changing the national system's parameters.

This is where we hit the "touchy" part. In 1995, a newly-elected President Chirac asked his PM, the stiff-necked Alain Juppé, a pure technocratic alumnus of the exact same top civil service that would later produce Emmanuel Macron, for structural cuts in France's expensive social welfare system. France spent 28.3% of GDP on it then, but this has risen to 31.2% now. This was and remains the highest level out of all OECD countries. This naturally included pensions, especially since François Mitterrand, upon winning with a Socialist-Communist coalition in 1981, had lowered retirement age from 65 to 60. This was both a demagogic and a damaging decision: baby-boomers were beginning to retire en masse; the birth rate was falling, while pensioners lived longer – 74 years in 1980, up from 69.8 in 1960. Medical progress has now pushed French average life expectancy even further, to 82.6 in 2019.

Juppé tried to ram through his reform. The French unions responded with a month-long general strike in which most public services ground to a halt. Having sworn he would never give in, Juppé was ordered by Chirac, a better if less courageous politician, to capitulate. Afterwards, Chirac, traumatised by the experience, never lifted a finger to reform anything in the ensuing 12 years of his presidency.

Nicolas Sarkozy followed: cannily, the hyperactive "Sarko" first had Parliament vote into law the principle of "minimum service" in the public sector during strikes. He then withstood a couple of weeks of demonstrations, and managed to raise the retirement age to 62. He was then

hit by the 2008 financial crisis, and the rest of his reforms were forgotten. Come Emmanuel Macron and his cohort of thirty-something clone-like technocrats: his platform included pension reform, and the Holy Grail of a uniform national pension system. Even though minutes after being elected, the 39-year-old President started affecting the enigmatic, conservative mien and clothing of the late François Mitterrand, he remained aware that he needed a rounder, more seasoned figure to reassure future pensioners. His eye alighted on Delevoye, who was exactly the kind of second-tier centre-right politician he had been collecting in his big-tent government. Macron may even have remembered that Delevoye attended, decades before him, the same private Jesuit school in Amiens.

Delevoye was meant to soften up public opinion. Instead, while he pursued the protracted ritual confabs with France's main unions that have long been part of the consensual national Kabuki, he found himself in a roiling sea of fears and bitter hostility. Every new envoy to the front lines troubled the waters further, even the popular Education Minister Jean-Michel Blanquer, Macron's last trump card, a man intent on restoring the basics in French schools. Blanquer promised a hefty bonus to France's admittedly badly-paid teachers to "make up" for their pensions' reform, which only served to convince them that it would significantly cut into their retirement annuities.

The actual bones of the reform are due to be announced this Wednesday, after another day of protest and strikes. On Monday, *Le Parisien* newspaper revealed that Delevoye sits on the board of an insurance graduate school financed by the industry, who stand to gain from the Macron reform as more and more workers are encouraged to invest in private pension schemes. While his board position is pro bono, the school is largely financed by an adult education quango which Delevoye has billed for almost €200,000 over the last 4 years. At the time of writing, Delevoye has merely announced he will resign from his board seat. The consensus in Paris is that he is toast, but will thaw also apply to Macron's pension reforms? ■

peaceful means." Not so very long ago, in 2011, an inspiring biopic film called *The Lady* was made about Suu Kyi's experience in Burma during her fight for free and fair elections between 1989-2010. She spent fifteen of these twenty-one years under house arrest.

Now, Suu Kyi is apologising for the very military who enforced her long periods of arrest. It is tragic to see that Suu Kyi has now decided that the human rights that she struggled for over such a long and painful period of time, that she sacrificed so much to defend, do not also apply to Burma's Muslims. It is nothing less than a betrayal of the principles of moral courage which won her the Nobel Prize nearly three decades ago. ■

AUNG SAN SUU KYI'S REFUSAL to acknowledge genocide is a disgrace

by *Jack Dickens*

Nobel Peace Laureate and de facto Prime Minister of Myanmar, Aung San Suu Kyi has denied that country's military acted with "genocidal intent" against the country's Muslim minority – the Rohingya. Suu Kyi was speaking in the Hague on 11 December 2019, where she has been called to answer questions by the UN's International Court of Justice after a genocide hearing was initiated by the West African state of The Gambia.

In August 2017, Myanmar's generals launched a "security clearance operation" in Rakhine, in the north of Burma, an operation which left thousands dead and forced 740,000 Rohingya to flee to neighbouring Bangladesh. The Rohingya men, women, and children who have survived and fled have given harrowing testimonies of their experiences.

The government of Myanmar has long refused to recognise that the Rohingya, who are Bengali in their origins, have a right to citizenship in Buddhist-majority Burma. The military campaign in 2017 was only the latest of a series of crimes committed against Rohingya people in the country going back to 1978.

In the Hague, Suu Kyi accused the prosecution of painting a "misleading and incomplete picture of the situation" in Rakhine state, the home of Myanmar's Muslims where the atrocities have taken place. She instead portrayed the events in Rakhine as an "internal armed conflict" between the army and insurgents led by the Arakan Rohingya Salvation Army (ARSA). She admitted that government troops may not have distinguished "clearly enough between fighters and civilians", but argued that the military was trying to restore order and conduct "counter-insurgency operations".

Suu Kyi's testimony flies in the face of the evidence gathered by UN investigators who have visited Rakhine

Chateaubriand

THE ROMANTIC WHO COINED THE NAME “CONSERVATIVE”

In the last of his essays this year on conservative thinkers, Gerald Warner reflects on the complex and enduring legacy of Chateaubriand, novelist, philosopher, politician

by Gerald Warner

His talent was matched only by his ego and the volatility of his temperament reflected his identity as a Romantic writer rather than a philosopher, yet François-René, Vicomte de Chateaubriand made not only a military, political and diplomatic contribution to the Counter-Revolution but, above all, an intellectual one. He dominated French writing for the first half of the 19th century, converted many of the French back to Catholicism and delivered the coup-de-grâce to Napoleon Bonaparte with a single pamphlet. He was the first to coin the term “Conservative”.

Chateaubriand was born into an old Breton noble family in 1768 and at age 17 entered the army. At the outbreak of the French Revolution he at first felt sympathetic. In 1791 he left the turbulence of France to visit America where he claimed to have met George Washington and to have lived with a Native American tribe; both those claims are doubted by historians, though his American visit furnished him with material for three novels.

On his return to France he resolved to emigrate and join the Army of the Princes being formed by Louis XVI's brothers to fight the revolution. Wounded at the siege of Thionville he contracted smallpox and after many misadventures arrived at his uncle's household on Jersey in a state of delirium. On recovery, he went to London where he lived in poverty, surviving by doing translation work. In 1797 he published his first book, *Essai sur les Révolutions*, which attracted little attention. Chateaubriand was now reading English literature and fell under the spell of Milton's *Paradise Lost* which he later translated into French.

In exile, Chateaubriand learned of his mother's death and how grieved she had been in her last days by the religiously sceptical tone of his essay on revolutions; shortly after, his sister also died. He was stricken with remorse, reconverted to Catholicism and resolved to make expiation. “Those two voices from the tomb,” he wrote, “that death which acted as death's interpreter impressed me. I became a Christian. I did not yield, I admit, to great supernatural enlightenment: my conviction came from the heart; I wept and I believed.”

The consequences of that change of heart were immense.

Chateaubriand began composing his greatest work, *Le génie du Christianisme*, which occupied him for four years, during which he returned to France in 1800 and took advantage of the amnesty for émigrés promulgated by the Consulate under Bonaparte. That same year his novel *Atala*, set in the wilds of North America, became a popular success, its romantic style signalling the dawn of a new literary era.

In 1802 *The Genius of Christianity* was published and took France by storm. The timing was perfect. The Pseudo-Enlightenment had been discredited by the excesses of the Revolution and a new leisured society was emerging that deplored the destruction and vulgarity that had characterised the Republic. Most importantly, Bonaparte had concluded a Concordat with the Pope in 1801, since he valued the Church as a stabilising influence on society. He therefore approved of Chateaubriand's attempt to re-popularise Catholicism.

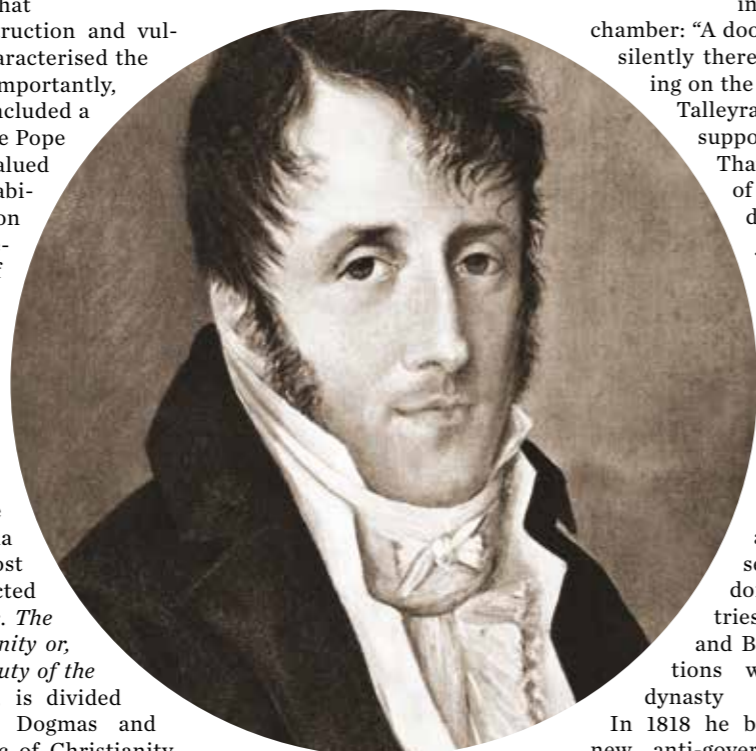
Chateaubriand went further than that: he redefined the whole of existence by the very criteria that had been most emphatically rejected by the philosophes. *The Genius of Christianity* or, *The spirit and beauty of the Christian religion*, is divided into four parts: Dogmas and Tenets, The Poetic of Christianity, The Fine Arts and Literature, and Worship. As those largely secular headings indicate, Chateaubriand had progressed beyond traditional Catholic apologetics (though that discipline was also prominent in the work) to do something far more audacious: he used aesthetics as an instrument of evangelisation and, even more startlingly, he succeeded.

A book with section headings such as *The harmonies of the Christian*

religion with the scenes of nature and the passions of the human heart could penetrate even minds that might have remained impervious to Bossuet. The glorification of the Middle Ages, of Gothic architecture, of human feeling brought into harmony with the divine, all proclaimed

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Chateaubriand's great preoccupation was freedom of the press, which he described as necessary to prevent the “triple despotism of democracy, aristocracy, and crown”. He believed in the authority of public opinion, to a degree that nowadays might almost be called populist. Legitimacy was the primary principle of his political creed, but his legitimism was liberal in tone.



the new Romanticism that Walter Scott would develop. Chateaubriand effected wide-scale, if patchy, religious conversions.

Although Chateaubriand accepted diplomatic posts under Bonaparte, he resigned in 1804 after Napoleon engineered the kidnapping and judicial murder of a Bourbon prince, the Duc d'Enghien. Chateaubriand spent the remainder of the Napoleonic era

in retirement at his country estate. Then, with the defeat of Napoleon in 1814, came another opportunity to astonish France. While the Austrian and Russian victors prevaricated over the restoration of Louis XVIII, on 30 March, 1814 Chateaubriand published a pamphlet entitled *De Buonaparte et des Bourbons*.

Overnight it killed off any hope of the Bonaparte dynasty's survival. Louis XVIII said its fifty pages had been worth 100,000 troops to him. During the Hundred Days, when Bonaparte briefly recovered power, Chateaubriand followed Louis XVIII into temporary exile at Ghent. There, while he was waiting in the King's antechamber: “A door suddenly opened: silently there entered vice leaning on the arm of crime, M de Talleyrand walking with the support of M. Fouché.” That vignette of two of the worst scoundrels of the age was just one of innumerable recollections published posthumously in Chateaubriand's *Mémoires d'Outre-tombe*.

Before he reached that tomb he had a crowded life. Made a peer of France, he served as ambassador to several countries, including Prussia and Britain. Yet his relations with the restored dynasty were turbulent. In 1818 he became editor of a new anti-government newspaper he named *Le Conservateur*; thus inventing the term “conservative”. Reconciled to the government, he was French foreign minister from 1822 to 1824.

Chateaubriand, unlike Maistre and Bonald, spent more time practising politics than writing about it. His political philosophy gave primacy to religion and the rights of the Church. His pamphlet *De Buonaparte et des Bourbons* was

mainly devoted to a devastating critique of the Napoleonic despotism, but a contrasting theme he emphasised was “liberty”. He meant, of course, something very different from the revolutionary “liberty, equality, fraternity”: the protection of basic human dignity that Frenchmen had traditionally enjoyed under their kings.

Chateaubriand expounded his political philosophy mainly in one work: *On the Monarchy according to the Charter*, in 1816. The Charter granted by Louis XVIII on his return to France in 1814 was the bedrock of Chateaubriand's concept of France's constitutional future. Bonald had denounced the Charter as a work of “folly and darkness”, but Chateaubriand supported it. Since it had been granted by the King it preserved the royal prerogative. The Charter based representative government on four pillars: the prerogative, the Chamber of Peers, the Chamber of Deputies and the executive.

The King was inviolable, any faults in government were attributable to ministers; but the King was not absolute. In fact, the only ruler of France to have been truly absolute was Bonaparte. Chateaubriand's stay in England had inclined him to that country's constitutional model, but with a more Catholic apotheosis of the King as Son of St Louis and father of his subjects. Chateaubriand had an ineradicable distrust of ministries: when he joined with the Ultras in attacking the government after it had dissolved the Ultra-royalist “*Chambre Introuvable*” he did so because the executive had emasculated an institution of representative government.

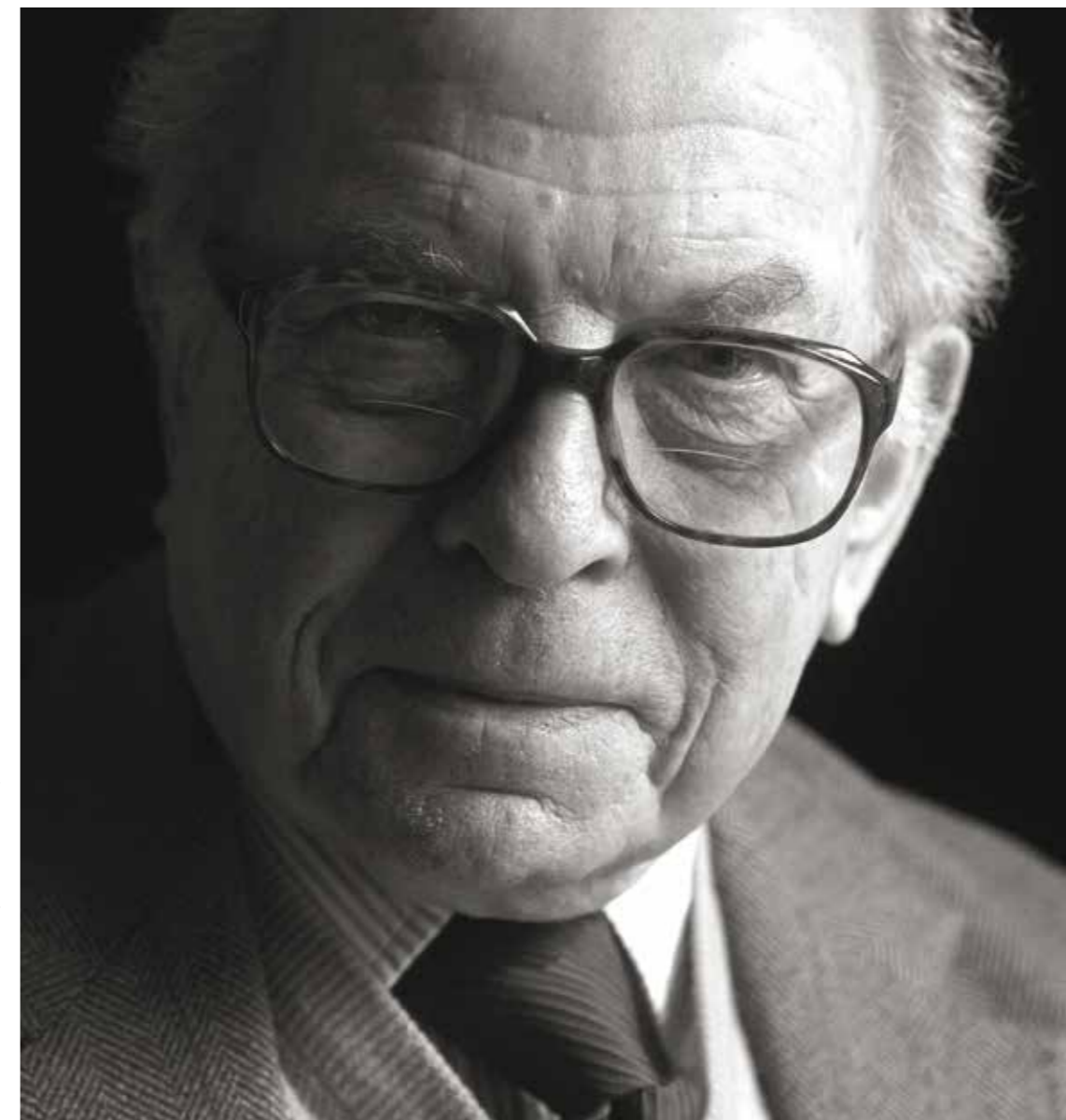
His other great preoccupation was freedom of the press, which he described as necessary to prevent the “triple despotism of democracy, aristocracy, and crown”. He believed in the authority of public opinion, to a degree that nowadays might almost be called populist. Legitimacy was the primary principle of his political creed, but his legitimism was liberal in tone. When the monarchy fell in 1830 – after a crisis involving censorship of the press – Chateaubriand resigned his membership of the Chamber of Peers and all pensions, reducing himself to poverty and a reclusive existence until his death in 1848. Despite all his apparent contradictions, his *ancien régime* sense of honour remained consistent. ■

Sir Michael Howard

THE GREATEST PRACTITIONER OF MILITARY HISTORY

Academic who advised the great and the good will be remembered for his outstanding contribution to the world of letters

by Robert Fox



“ He educated the great, not least Margaret Thatcher, about soldiers and the military. He also taught the military about education for the contemporary world. He could change his views, on nuclear disarmament for instance, and embrace the new – foreseeing years ago the influence of climate change, migration, cyber and genetics on present and future conflict.

This is recorded with astonishing frankness in his slim autobiography, *Captain Professor*. The Italian campaign had its touches of camp, too. A fellow officer was “Dickie” Buckle, later the famed balletomane and critic for the New York Times. Returning from a failed fighting reconnaissance patrol, Buckle was asked what was achieved. Buckle reported very little positive – two Guardsmen hit, and terrible weather – “but the violets were divine.” In Florence, Michael recorded driving round in taxis, holding hands with the precocious teenage Franco Zeffirelli, a self-appointed liaison officer.

The war left an enduring reflection: “We could never work out why the Germans were so bloody good.” The experience also left him with an enduring regard for the Guards,

which was reciprocated. Asked one day for his favourite general of the war, he replied “Bill Slim – outstanding because his men simply loved him.”

After the war came a return to Oxford, and a “lousy degree – I was enjoying myself too much,” and the pursuit of academe – but with a difference.

His first jobs were at King's College London, where he came to found the

Department of War Studies. He would return to Oxford, first in War Studies, and then the Regius Professor of History. One of the main endeavours was to help politicians and public understand the disciplines of thinking strategy, policy and diplomacy. To this end, with Alastair Buchan, he founded the International Institute for Strategic Studies.

In parallel was the astonishing production of books, which have his unique brand of clarity and succinctness. He translated Clausewitz's *On War* with his American colleague Peter Paret, and it is still the standard English version today. His study of the Franco-Prussian War was based on original research and focused on the social impact of the war in both Germany and France.

He also contributed to official histories on strategy and the Mediterranean theatre in the Second World War. A commission to write the official history of Intelligence in the war led to a close encounter with the vetting authorities, when he revealed that he was gay – which he had done little to conceal from friends. Nonetheless, the men in suits got their oar in by forbidding publication on security grounds – it didn't appear till the end of the nineties.

Among the best, most original and accessible of his works, are the essays – which are the length of a Maupassant novella. Try his *Clausewitz, A Very Short Introduction* or his *War and the Liberal Conscience*. His *Continental Commitment* based on the Ford lectures raises Britain's dilemma as a European or global actor, a problem which haunts the Brexit debate. One of his last books, *The Invention of Peace*, based on lectures in his last post as professor at Yale, explains that peace only became a concept in modern diplomacy with Kant's influence in the Enlightenment.

His essay, *The First World War*, is a bravura tour d'horizon without a footnote, adjective or comma out of place. I give it, along with Orwell's *Why I Write*, to anyone aspiring to write history or current affairs journalism.

This is only part of the story. Michael was one of the most intriguing and subversively witty of companions and conversationalists. I only got to know him later in his life. He treated me like an errant research student – generally hailing me with “been anywhere really dangerous lately?”

We used to have extended lunches in which we swapped thoughts about recent books and articles. His whole approach was that history and journalism were complementary and must always be awake to new developments and nuances. He was devastating about the activities of George W Bush and the hubris of Tony Blair – and hated the whole notion of the “War on Terror”. Going to war in Afghanistan and Iraq, he described as “like fighting cancer with a blow torch.”

In the middle of it all was mischief and music. He had played oboe at school and loved classical opera. One lunchtime we agreed not to talk military, or history – but music. He then explained why he felt that the spiralling septet in the middle of *The Marriage of Figaro* was for him one of the most thrilling moments of musical invention and entertainment.

He looked on his pupils and friends for enlightenment. Last year he said, “when you visit next, tell me your latest thoughts on migration and what it means for us all. After all, you have been looking at this for a very long time.”

He also had a tremendous touch with bores. The standard approach when the bores were in incontinent flow was, “jolly good company. Must go. I have a train to catch.”

The last time he had to catch a train was last Saturday 30th November – with impeccable timing, the day after his 97th birthday. ■

The Summer Isles

A Voyage of the Imagination

Travel writer Philip Marsden gives a thrilling account of our fascination with the islands that lie to the west of Britain and Ireland

by Alastair Benn

“The boat,” wrote the philosopher Michel Foucault, “is the greatest reserve of the imagination... In civilisations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.” The whole sweep of Western culture, from its genesis in the oral cultures of the Aegean and Near East, to its modern manifestations – including rock music – is populated by boats, both real and imaginary, and voyages.

To Odysseus’s long journeying to Ithaca, or Aeneas’s flight from Troy, or Noah’s Ark, Rimbaud’s *bateau ivre* (“bathing in the poem of the sea”), or Baudelaire’s *vrais voyageurs* (“drunk on space, light and fiery skies”), Bob Dylan’s vision of the *Titanic*, with “Ezra Pound and T.S. Eliot fighting in the captain’s

tower”, Lou Reed’s “great big clipper ship” sailing “the darkened seas”, we must now add the *Tzambika*, the travel writer Philip Marsden’s real-

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“The boat,” wrote the philosopher Michel Foucault, “is the greatest reserve of the imagination... In civilisations without boats, dreams dry up, espionage takes the place of adventure, and the police take the place of pirates.” The whole sweep of Western culture, from its genesis in the oral cultures of the Aegean and Near East, to its modern manifestations – including rock music – is populated by boats, both real and imaginary, and voyages.

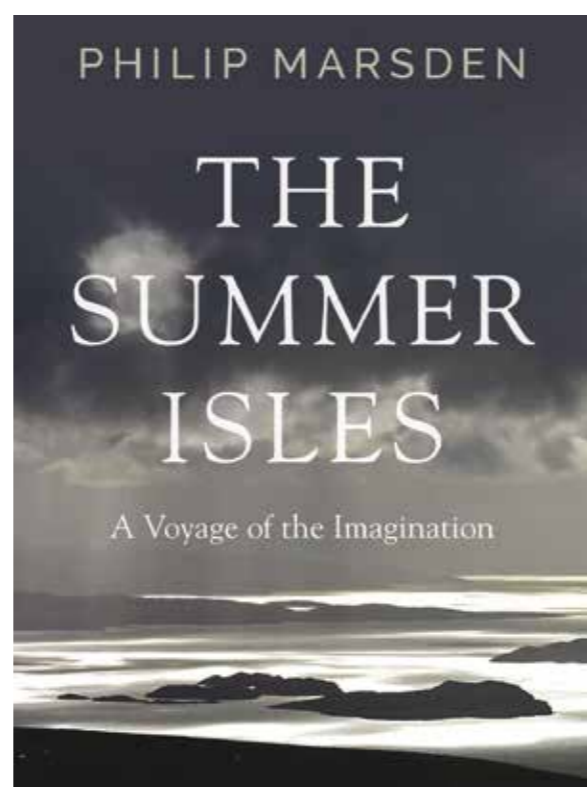
The Summer Isles are a small group of islands just off the coast of the far North-West of Scotland, to the West of Ullapool and just off the southern edge of the Assynt Peninsula. Marsden recalls summers spent long ago at his Aunt Bridget’s house, set below the famous peaks of that area – Suilven, Stac Pollaidh, Quinag and Ben More: “the oldest rocks in all Europe”. Looking out from their summits, he and Bridget became fascinated with the Summer Isles – far enough away to leave a wide expanse of sea between them and the mainland, but close enough – just a short ferry ride away: “A boat went from Ullapool, when the weather was right.”

Marsden leaves as autumn comes in and sets out for wilder places, including the Caucasus (he was working as a journalist at the time), but promises to return in the spring. “This time, we might make it out to the Summer Isles,” Bridget tells him over the phone. The next day, Bridget goes out walking, this time to Ben More. She never returned, and was found at the bottom of a gully a few days later. “She’d fallen. That was all,” writes Marsden.

Some years later, Marsden decides to take his little wooden boat, *Tzambika*, on a voyage up the west coast of Ireland and Scotland, his ultimate destination the Summer Isles. It is here that his account begins.

Hopping between islands, he explores their local histories and ponders the status of “the West” in Britain’s mythical imagination, and in tracing the stories of the islands and sailing between them, Marsden leaves us with a thrilling picture of our enduring fascination with the “places of the sunset”: the Celtic “Otherworld”, where islands disappear and re-appear as if by magic and which mariners imagined to be places of absolute bliss, fertility and magical happenings; the modern romance of the West Coast as a place of retreat for the painters and poets of the 20th century (like Sylvia Plath, who spent some of her last months on Inishbofin and recalled “inhaling the sea air ecstatically”); and the stories of the selkies in Scotland, seals which could take on the form of women, and which existed on the same plane as “fairies and angels”.

I must admit, too, that the Summer Isles have always exerted a powerful pull on my own imagination. I saw them from far off as a boy, and I have



never really forgotten the sight. Then, a couple of years ago, I was standing on a beach to the south called Mellon Udridge. It’s a ring of white sand on the north side of a spit of land that arches out into the Atlantic. It was a day typical of the West – a sharp wind, dark cloud, giving way to flashes of bright sunlight, the great brown mountains shrouded, then lit up as if grazed with gold. I saw a seal (or was it a selkie?) pop its head above the water – it remained there for a while, and then swam away. Now I think about it, it had turned towards the Summer Isles. ■

Bowie’s Books by John O’Connell

Bowie brought to book

This flawed attempt to bring Bowie’s literary tastes to life proves that no amount of analysis can really replace the sheer joy of listening to his music

by Alexander Larman

The idea behind John O’Connell’s *Bowie’s Books* is a truly terrific one; its execution, less so. While Bowie was still alive, but withdrawn entirely from public life, he was asked for an interview to support the touring exhibition *David Bowie Is*. He refused, but offered something that was in its own way more useful: a list of 100 books that he loved and that had inspired him, albeit without any further context or explanation. Some of the references were obvious; Orwell’s *Nineteen Eighty-Four* was the inspiration behind his 1974 album *Diamond Dogs*, which in turn arose from his pique at being refused permission by Orwell’s widow Sonia to adapt the novel into a musical, and *A Clockwork Orange* was one of the

major cultural influences on his Ziggy Stardust character. Others were more obscure. Why, for instance, did Bowie cite Rupert Thomson’s 1996 fourth novel *The Insult*, Tom Stoppard’s 2002 Russian drama trilogy *The Coast*

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Without the music, and the indelible efforts of those who were responsible for creating some of the twentieth century’s most indelible songs, one is left with poetic musings of varying levels of profundity, often beautiful and brilliant themselves.

of *Utopia* and *The Beano* as being his favourite books? What did he mean?

It is easy to see why O’Connell, a music critic who interviewed Bowie in 2002, was drawn to this particular subject. Although he does not refer

to it explicitly, he is following in the footsteps of Thomas Wright’s *Oscar’s Books*, in which the author attempted to piece together an alternative biography of Wilde’s life through his library, both catalogued and speculative. The subject offers O’Connell the chance to approach Bowie’s extraordinary intellectual breadth and interest from an unusual, even oblique perspective. Had this been done as well as it could have been, it would have been the literary equivalent of Chris O’Leary’s magisterial, definitive song-by-song Bowie blog, *Pushing Ahead of the Dame*.

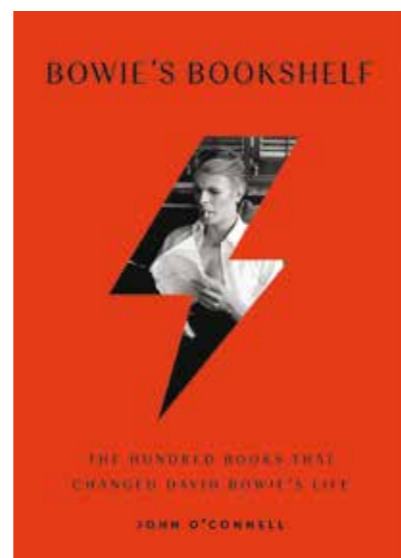
It has not been, but this is for two distinct reasons, one of which is O’Connell’s fault and one of which is not. The failing on his part comes from an inability to probe as deeply into some (admittedly obscure and difficult) texts as the reader would like, and the necessity of relating the books to specific songs in Bowie’s oeuvre. When he succeeds – as in the comparison between James Baldwin’s 1963 essay collection *The Fire Next Time* and the title track of Bowie’s 1993 album *Black Tie, White Noise* – the results are thrilling and convincing, as O’Connell marshals close reading of a book with a new appraisal of Bowie’s lyrical richness. Several of these essays are good enough to justify the book’s purchase alone.

When he fails, the results are either perfunctory – a friend believes it was

“highly likely” that Bowie continued to read *Private Eye* when he was exiled to New York – or frustratingly superficial. Nabokov’s *Lolita*, for instance, is rich in black humour, sexual transgression and graced with an unreliable narrator whose charm and erudition seduce the reader, until they realise that they are dealing with a psychopath. This gulf between image and often sordid reality was a key one throughout Bowie’s work – one thinks, for instance, of *Life on Mars?* – but O’Connell describes the major similarity between Bowie and Nabokov being that they both lived in Switzerland at one point, and his suggestion for further listening is Bowie’s 1967 song *Little Bombardier*, a sad tale of a lonely war veteran being chased out of town when he forms a friendship with two children.

Bowie’s Books often gives a potted summary of a plot or argument, makes a tendentious comparison to some aspect of Bowie’s life or work, and then moves swiftly onto its next subject. One imagines O’Connell cursing with frustration at having to make an argument for why Bowie enjoyed,

were responsible for creating some of the twentieth century’s most indelible songs, one is left with poetic musings of varying levels of profundity, often beautiful and brilliant themselves. But as a great man once said, “writing about music is like dancing about architecture”, and *Bowie’s Books* proves that no amount of analysis can really replace the sheer joy of listening to the music once again. ■



say, Jessica Mitford’s 1963 exposé on the US funeral industry *The American Way of Death*, and simply giving up by writing “life excited David Bowie, so it follows that he would have loved Jessica Mitford’s blackly comic, fastidiously researched exposé of corrupt practices in the American funeral industry”, before suggesting that his readers listen to Jacques Brel’s *La Mort*. It all but screams “Will this do?”

The other problem with the book is nothing to do with O’Connell’s efforts, but an inevitable flaw of attempting to treat song lyrics as literature, rather than an indivisible part of the creation. Without the music, and the indelible efforts

The Great Reversal: How America gave up on free markets by Thomas Philippon

How to save CAPITALISM from itself

US capitalism is out of control, the economist Thomas Philippon argues, it’s time for a radical rethink

Author Thomas Philippon is an economist and Professor of Finance at NYU’s Stern Business School.

by Declan Ganley

Professor exposes the depth and rot of regulatory capture. “Capture,” he explains, “can be direct (quid pro quo) or intellectual (ideological).” He details how revolving doors and a particular sort of lobbying have been exploited and abused by powerful vested interests to raise the bar against competition, protect prices, undermine labour and smaller suppliers and generally rig the system to a point where it is becoming almost anti-free market. Some of those that employ the language of the free market are the worst offenders.

Philippon also delves into the health care sector and shows a strong link between regulatory capture and the opioid epidemic, where regulatory capture has fostered over-prescription.

Monopoly power and monopsony power (monopsony power is when a firm can exert power on its suppliers and employees because they have limited options to go elsewhere) are also well explained. Monopsony, which in my own industry I have personally experienced but never before had a name for (at least not a name I could politely write down here) is shown to have become even more pronounced within the US.

On regulations, he says that he agrees when conservatives argue that the US needs fewer regulations but qualifies this position that the target should be “regulations that hinder the entry or growth of small firms.” He argues there is need to be much tougher on incumbents. “Competition and anti-trust remedies are not punishments for moral wrongdoing, at least most of

Free-market capitalism is often contrasted with “crony capitalism” – the latter dominated by big businesses that control the levers of power, squash new entrants with the help of compliant regulator cronies and claim to support economic liberty while relentlessly pursuing self-enrichment. But “crony corporatism” has long seemed a better term for this, as it bears so little resemblance to actual capitalism – the sort based on open competition, level playing fields and secure property rights.

Far from being a close relation, crony corporatism is the arch enemy and polar opposite of free market capitalism. Thomas Philippon’s *The Great Reversal* describes in forensic detail the efforts of the cronyists to limit economic freedom. Philippon, a professor of finance at NYU’s Stern Business School, also details the costs to us all of the rise of crony corporatism – his calculations suggest that the decline in competition has deprived American workers of \$1.5 trillion in income. He points out “This is more than the entire cumulative growth of real compensation between 2012 and 2018. The lack of competition has cost American workers a full six years of growth.”

As an entrepreneur, I found *The Great Reversal* hard to put down. The book’s lessons and recommendations are drawn from a broad range of industries, but it perfectly captured what I have encountered up close over the past 20 years in my own industry, the wireless sector.

The Great Reversal isn’t a political book. It is a thorough yet readable presentation of well-researched and presented evidence, data, methodology, analysis and a conclusion based on the past several decades of economic activity in both the US and Europe. *The Great Reversal* is in a sense the economic and political counterpart of Timothy P. Carney’s *Alienated America* and J.D. Vance’s *Hillbilly Elegy*. While Carney and Vance

focus on questions of culture and its role in the current state of America, Philippon follows the money, seeking the economic and financial roots of America’s current condition.

Philippon’s findings make for some uncomfortable reading but are much needed. The book presents broad-based evidence that competition has declined in most US industries over the past 20 years. Right in the Preface, Philippon poses the question: “Why on earth are US cell phone plans so expensive? Or, to broaden it a little further, why do consumers in Europe or in Asia pay less for cellular service and, on average, get much more?” He notes the transformation he has personally experienced since coming to live and work in the US in 1999. “Access to the internet, monthly cell phone plans and plane tickets have become much cheaper in Europe and Asia than in the US.”

Philippon makes the case that US prices are too high, showing that since 2000 prices in the US increased 15% more than prices in Europe, but wages only increased by about 7% more than in Europe. The evidence is that increasing concentration in the US has led to excessive price increases. Consumption and growth would be markedly higher if competition had remained at the levels that existed in 2000. Philippon shows that in contrast – and perhaps by accident rather than design – Europe copied what were some of the best elements of the older U.S. model and put a strong emphasis on ensuring competition and preventing over-concentration. He is not an apologist for Europe’s other problems but does show that they’ve had more success tackling the economic threats to competition and have done

better at thwarting the problem of over-concentration.

The book exposes how consolidation (primarily due to mergers and acquisitions) and productivity growth from 1989 to 1999 were good for the overall economy. Industries with larger increases in concentration had larger productivity gains. Between 2000 and 2015, that turned negative. The number of listed firms began shrinking – listings peaked in

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The crux of Philippon’s argument is that for markets to remain free we must constantly adapt, that great powers become complacent and greed. The Roman and Chinese empires, Florence, the Spanish empire and the Dutch are all examples of such decline. America should not fall into the same trap.

1997. Since then the number of listed firms has fallen by half. Some of this is because of mergers between listed companies, some because of a decline in new listings.

Philippon also turns his gaze toward the financial sector to underline that while it has been good for itself, it has not reduced the price gap between savers and borrowers by much since the early stages of the 20th century. Concentration in finance not only led to a “too big to fail” culture but has also made the industry less efficient at getting capital to stimulate the bottom up growth that feeds the cycle from start up to small, to medium, to large and so on. The evidence in the book is that this churn rate has very significantly declined and the finance sector has some share in that failure.

Perhaps the most revealing part of *The Great Reversal* comes when the

the time. They represent economic solutions that make the broader economic system more efficient. Firms have a right to beat their competitors and even drive them out of business. Regulators have a duty to make sure they do not impede free markets.”

In his own conclusion he says he was surprised to find how fragile free markets really are. “We take them for granted, but history demonstrates that they are more the exception than the rule. Free markets are supposed to discipline private companies but today, many private companies have grown so dominant that they can get away with bad service, high prices, and deficient privacy safeguards.”

The crux of Philippon’s argument is that for markets to remain free we must constantly adapt, that great powers become complacent and greedy. The Roman and Chinese empires, Florence, the Spanish empire and the Dutch are all examples of such decline. America should not fall into the same trap.

He cautions: “Returning to a high-competition economy will not be easy. Those who benefit from the lack of competition will fight to protect their vested interests.” He encourages more boldness and risk taking in challenging entrenched monopolies and oligopolies, most especially those that are the most costly, obvious and egregious abusers.

There is a happy ending though. Philippon makes it very clear that US markets can and should regain their freedom. I humbly suggest that reading his book might be a good way to start. ■

Declan Ganley is Chairman and CEO of Rivada Networks, a telecommunications company.

LOST CLASSIC

The Last Waltz

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

by **Mattie Brignal**

In San Francisco, on Thanksgiving Day 1976, the original members of The Band performed together for the last time. They were an effortlessly louche cast of musicians with implausibly good names; Rick Danko, the clean-cut, heart-throb bassist; Garth Hudson, the scholarly, dishevelled organist; Robbie Robertson, the slight, dapper guitar prodigy; Richard Manuel, the gentle, troubled pianist; and Levon Helm, the brooding drummer with an Arkansas drawl. All were dressed in finest gigolo chic and playing like their lives depended on it.

They played for five hours and were joined on stage by a who's who of rock royalty. Joni Mitchell, Bob Dylan, Neil Young, Eric Clapton, Muddie Waters and Dr. John were among those who paid tribute to the quintet and came together to celebrate a golden age in rock history that was coming to an end. Martin Scorsese filmed it all. The result, which has somehow slipped through the cracks of popular memory, is *The Last Waltz*, one of the greatest concert films of all time.

The American and four Canadians had started out as The Hawks, scraping a living by supporting rockabilly singer Ronnie Hawkins. But they grew tired of playing the same old songs with Hawkins, who banned them from

taking drugs and enforced a gruelling rehearsal schedule. Well-respected and supremely talented, they caught the eye of Bob Dylan who recruited them for his first "electric" US tour in 1965. There followed two delirious years of sordid glamour and excess as they accompanied Dylan around the world.

In 1968, The Band moved to Woodstock, New York, taking up residence in a pink house in a 100-acre plot where Dylan and The Band would record *The Basement Tapes*. It was here that they produced their ground-breaking debut album, *Music from Big Pink*, on which Dylan also collaborated.

The Band's music, image and ethos were counter-revolutionary. The record's black-and-white inner panel shows them as rugged, 19th century outlaws. They rejected the contentious idealism of hippie culture and its mistrust of anyone over 30. The album's sound stood in stark contrast to the psychedelia fashionable at the time and instead invoked old-time, rural America, traditional values and a sense of small-town community. It was a warped hybrid of blues, country, soul, rockabilly and gospel. The sound was authentic, imaginative and understated.

Their follow up album, *The Band*, was also a critical and commercial

success. Over the next few years they would hone their sound on hero-in-soaked tours. George Harrison, Eric Clapton and Roger Waters spoke of the influence The Band's music was having on them. But by the mid-70s, Robertson, the group's chief songwriter, had had enough after 16 years on the road and wanted The Band to call it a day.

The Last Waltz was his brainchild. When Robertson and promoter Bill Graham pitched the idea to a 35-year-old Scorsese, the director felt he didn't have a choice. Scorsese was a rock & roll devotee. He had helped to edit *Woodstock*, the 1970 documentary chronicling the phenomenon. This new project was a chance to capture the sun setting on rock's adolescence. Scorsese gets the rhythm of the film spot on. The numbers are interspersed with quirky vignettes of the bandmates telling stories, jamming, and hanging out. The men open up about their worldview and backstory with a laid-back charm and the easy intimacy of close friends.

Visually, the film is glitzy and elegant. Scorsese borrowed the set from San Francisco Opera's production of *La Traviata* for the show. The lavishly lit stage in the Winterland dance hall is decked out with three huge chandeliers and ornate maroon drapes. Instead of the 16mm handheld cameras that were normally used for music docs, Scorsese chose to film *The Last Waltz* in full 35mm splendour.

There's isn't a single cutaway to the audience throughout the entire film. Instead, the focus is purely on the alchemy between the five musicians and their illustrious guests. The bandmates feed off each another and operate as one slick unit, exchanging looks of quiet satisfaction or naked adulation.

It's an incredibly tight gig. Eric Clapton, who had wanted to join The Band, trades bluesy solos with Robertson in *Further On Up The Road*. Muddie Waters quivers and jiggles in a feisty performance of *Mannish Boy*. Rick Danko breaks hearts with the reflective, mournful, *It Makes No Difference*. Joni Mitchell's tender, witty rendition of *Coyote* is a treat. Another highlight is *Stage Fright*, a blistering, punchy number about Robertson's crippling fear of performing in his early touring days.

The Staple Singers accompany The Band in a soulful, gospel version of *The Weight*, recorded later on an MGM soundstage and substituted for



the concert performance. When Neil Young's harmonica sweeps in at the start of *Helpless*, a sense of nostalgic melancholy and things coming to an end fills the room. The song ends with Danko, Robertson and Young belting out the refrain into a single microphone. Joni Mitchell sings offstage and her anonymous vocal soars above it all.

But the pick of the bunch is *The Night They Drove Old Dixie Down* – a first-person lament of a Confederate soldier written by Robertson and sung exquisitely by Helm who pours everything he has into the song. His drumming is clinical and his Southern twang makes it feel like he had personally witnessed the Union forces triumph. The horns lift the song to an almighty crescendo as Helm thunders out the final chorus. "His truth in that vocal could tear your heart out" said Robertson of Helm's performance.

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Even after 43 years, *The Last Waltz* hasn't lost its impact. But it's sad to watch the film knowing how The Band's story would end. They resumed touring, minus Robertson, in 1983. But the circuit of small bars and seedy lounges they were playing in was a brutal comedown from the dizzying heights they had reached in

their heyday. Richard Manuel took the fall especially hard. In the film's interludes, Manuel is cheerful, gentle and laconic. The deep affection his old friends have for him is clear. But he's so drunk that he misses his cue for the verse in *I Shall Be Released* and is shot a questioning look by Robertson.

It's a sad hint at the alcoholism and drug abuse that would grip his life until his suicide 10 years later. Danko and Helm would be the ones to cut Manuel down from the shower rail he had hanged himself from in a Florida motel room. The tragedy of Manuel's suicide and the impact it had on the music world is captured in Counting Crows' beautiful song, *If I Could Give All My Love*.

Despite his magnificent performance, Helm hated *The Last Waltz*. He blamed Robertson for destroying the Band and saw the film as his personal vanity project, confirmed by, as

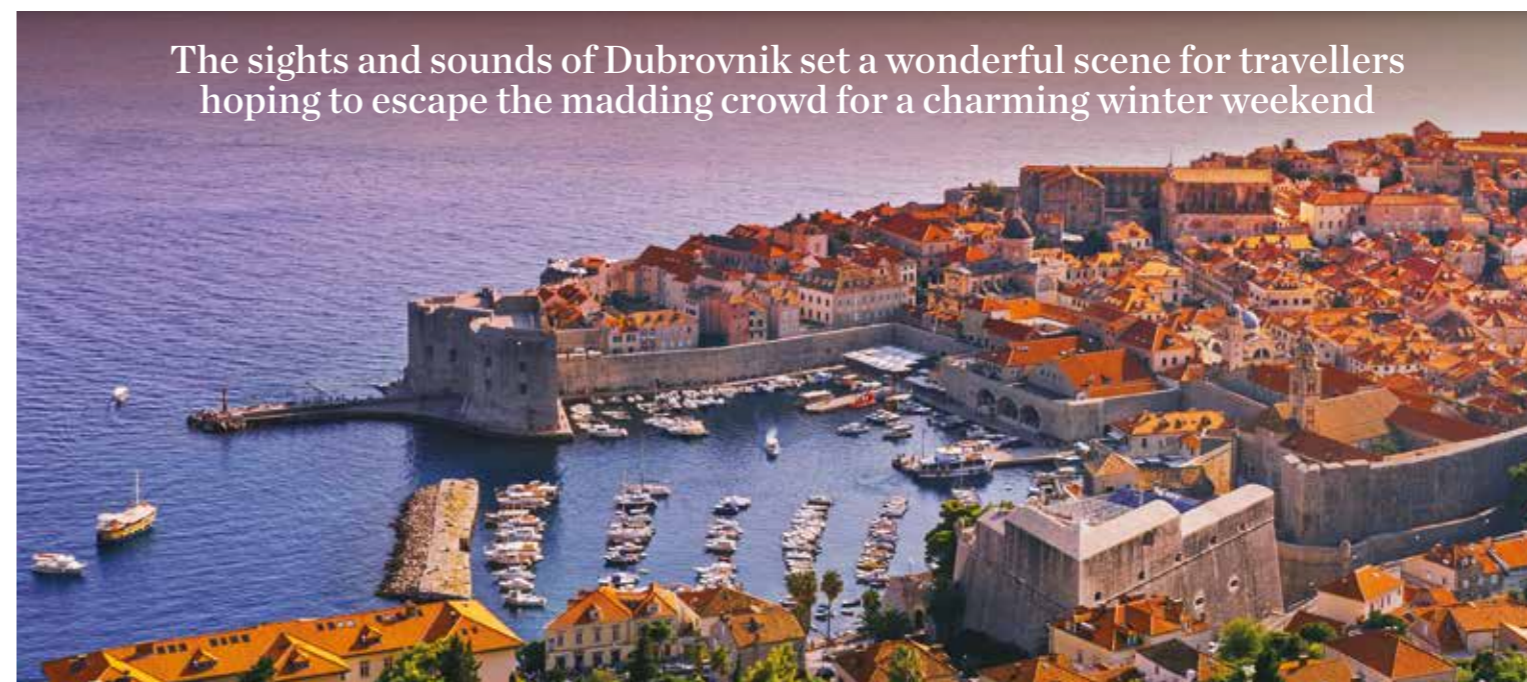
Helm put it, the "long, loving close-ups of his heavily made-up face and expensive haircut".

And he's got a point. It's not hard to tell that Robertson also produced the film and stayed up with Scorsese for months on end for coke-fuelled editing sessions. Robertson and the band's manager, Albert Grossman, also enjoyed the lion's share of the royalties. "It was a real scandal" wrote Helm in his memoirs.

But for all the bitterness and tragedy that followed, *The Last Waltz* is a glorious, uplifting and celebratory concert film. Scorsese captures an intriguing moment in rock history. He pays homage to a musical era that had reached its high-water mark. But he also manages to tell a poignant story about old friends taking a final bow together and saying goodbye. ■

A winter weekend in DUBROVNIK is the perfect escape

The sights and sounds of Dubrovnik set a wonderful scene for travellers hoping to escape the madding crowd for a charming winter weekend



Dubrovnik is usually associated with the sights and sounds of summer. It is known as an Adriatic hot spot where swarms of tourists flock to see historic walls and streets that make up the Old Town. In these months, the gorgeous Mediterranean heat and the promise of stunning scenes causes the place to quite literally erupt with people. This certainly makes for an atmospheric experience, but it can become wearing for those who are looking for a more peaceful or relaxing holiday.

I would instead recommend making a trip to Dubrovnik in the winter, as I did in November. It is a perfect location for a short, but memorable getaway for anyone looking to combine culture with good cuisine. I would recommend starting any winter tour of Dubrovnik with a walk around the historic town walls which encircle the Old Town. Fans of HBO's television series *Game of Thrones* will, of course, love it – many of the show's iconic moments were filmed in and around these walls.

If you pick the right day, then you will have a clear vantage point of the picturesque alleys, churches, and rooftops. The sandstone buildings and spectacular towers built across several generations of Dubrovnik's past give a charming illusion of time travel.

While wandering around the Old Town, I would also advise taking a trip to one of the many spectacular monasteries and museums. If you are serious about trekking round several museums to absorb information and culture, it is possible to invest in a single ticket that will give you access to several of the Town's museums, from the institutions devoted to Dubrovnik's archaeology and natural history to the Museum of Modern Art.

One place which particularly impressed me was the Dominican Monastery and Museum, towards the Old Town's south-eastern gate. Not

only are its cloisters very beautiful, they are also a wonderfully wistful place at this time of year. The museum attached to the monastery does not disappoint – it houses truly stunning canvases and devotional artworks. One impressive piece was a polyptych created by the itinerant Montenegrin painter, Lovro Marinov Dobričević in 1448 in which resplendent golden arches and vivid colours surround a scene depicting the baptism of Christ by John the Baptist.

There is also a more subdued, but nonetheless grand, canvass by the Neapolitan painter, Antonio de Bellis, who was powerfully influenced by Caravaggio. It ties Dubrovnik's rich history to the cultural currents of emerging baroque styles of painting.

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This piece, dating to c. 1657/8, shows the Virgin with St. Blaise and St. Francis before the port of Dubrovnik in the decade preceding the disastrous earthquake of 1667 in a sublime and brooding tableau.

For the true geek, the Dominican Museum also has a collection of rare but important manuscripts which can be viewed up close in the displays. One fascinating item was a translation of Aristotle's *Metaphysics* into Latin from the 13th century, presumably from Arabic, a document testifying to the rediscovery of this work by scholars in Europe during the centuries after what has been called "the twelfth century Renaissance". It is a testament to

Dubrovnik's place in the lucrative trade routes between Venice and the East in this period. In short, the Dominican museum is a hidden treat filled with esoteric riches from Croatia's history.

If you're seeking something with a little more modern spark, however, then there is also an unexpected surprise under ten minutes' walk away on the other side of the Old Town. This is an exhibition devoted to the Spanish surrealist maverick, Salvador Dali, currently being shown in the Convent of St. Claire. It is a well presented space, with light classical music in the background and quotes from Dali himself bedecking the walls, both of which add to the experience.

The works which are on display here are also typically fascinating

jazz and blues and has a delicious lunch menu. It combines great coffee with delicate cuisine. Another good sign is that, even in the winter, it is frequented by the locals. The service was swift and courteous.

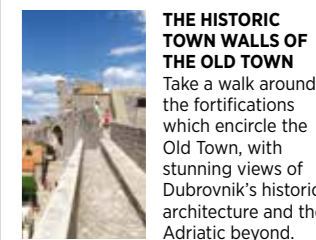
Dubrovnik's bars are an essential experience. I would recommend Fontana, a cheap and charming establishment tucked away in one of the town's small side streets. It is one of the few bars in the area that locals still frequent. It is an authentic taste of Croatian café culture in the day and a taste of its vibrant night life in the evening.

I stayed at the Rixos Libertas Hotel, which is a short and sharp fifteen minute walk away from the Old Town. It can be reached easily by taxi also, with fares costing between 60-80 Kuna (about £7-£10). The hotel has a good range of rooms from £100 upwards, and commands a view of the Adriatic coastline which weaves and winds around Dubrovnik and its environs. It has a comfortable bar with good food and a restaurant which provides both a set menu and buffets for breakfast, lunch, and dinner. It is modern, spacious, and deluxe.

Those seeking a smaller, and perhaps more authentic, atmosphere could go for the Villa Orsula, which is only a five minute walk from the Old Town. It is set in a boutique 1930s villa overlooking Lokrum Island and the edge of the Old Town, and boasts its own Peruvian fine dining restaurant. It is a member of the prestigious Small Luxury Hotels (SLH) Group, and guarantees to provide a personalised and luxurious experience.

All in all, the sights and sounds of Dubrovnik set a wonderful scene for travellers hoping to escape the madding crowd for a charming winter weekend. ■

THINGS TO DO



THE HISTORIC TOWN WALLS OF THE OLD TOWN
Take a walk around the fortifications which encircle the Old Town, with stunning views of Dubrovnik's historic architecture and the Adriatic beyond.



THE DOMINICAN MONASTERY AND MUSEUM
The quiet cloisters of the monastery are matched by an exciting museum which boasts esoteric treasures for art and history geeks.



THE SALVADOR DALÍ EXHIBITION IN THE MONASTERY OF SAINT CLAIRE
This display of Dalí prints presents some of the fascinating dimensions of the Spanish surrealist's lesser known works.



GUSTA ME, A CAFÉ AND RESTAURANT BY THE OLD TOWN
A smooth and trendy café and restaurant just outside of the Old Town. Expect good coffee and Croatian cuisine at its best.



FONTANA CAFÉ AND BAR
A charming little café which transforms into a bar in the evening. It is always filled with locals and is tucked away in one of the Old Town's side streets.



D'VINO WINE BAR
The friendly staff and cosy atmosphere contribute to the perfect location in which to try out Croatia's wines, and a few tasty light bites too.



GRAVSKA KAVANA ARSENAL RESTAURANT AND BAR
Provides refined, upmarket dining in an atmospheric location in the very heart of the Old Town. Mediterranean delicacies and local produce with a gourmet twist.



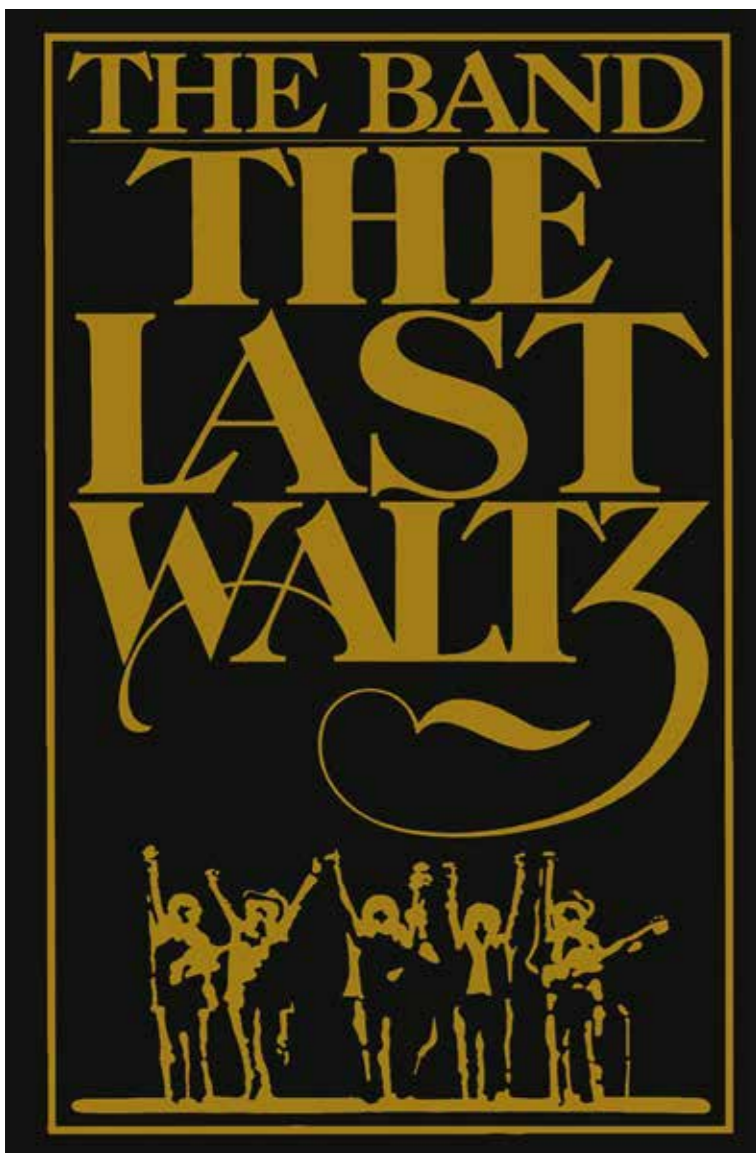
SLADOLEĐARNA GELATERIA
This gelateria sells freshly-made sorbets and gelatos. Its friendly staff and range of delicious flavours do not disappoint.



RIXOS LIBERTAS HOTEL
A spacious, bright, and modern hotel with good service and a panoramic view of the Adriatic sea. An ideal retreat away from the centre of town.



VILLA ORSULA
A small boutique hotel close to the Old Town. It promises to provide an intimate and luxurious experience, complete with its own Peruvian restaurant.





LEADING EUROPE'S CONSERVATIVE MOVEMENT



THE CONSERVATIVE

