

# Var Village Voice

*THE Var's English Language Newsletter*

*RENDEZ VOUS AUX JARDINS*

*JUNE 2017*





## JUNE EVENTS – FETE DE LA MUSIQUE!

It is very sad and upsetting to talk about and report such events as have just happened in Manchester, UK, the nail bombing of a musical event that attracted hundreds of kids and teenagers. At present the death toll has rise to 22, there will likely be more. How horrific can it get?

This month, June 21, is the FETE DE LA MUSIQUE. But people should be aware that large scale events, attracting lots of people could well be targeted.

Be safe, be sure and be aware.

## CHATEAU DE MENTONE – ST ANTONIN – UPCOMING SEASON JAZZ APERO – FERME AUBERGE Thursday 1 June

Chateau de Mentone, wine domaine, just above St. Antonin village, starts its summer season with a series of **JAZZ APERO** evening events, once a month, at their Ferme Auberge, from 18h30 to 20h30.

Buy a glass a wine, and get one free. The information does not state whether one has to eat at the Ferme Auberge, which is now open Tuesdays to Saturday night 11h – 15h, and 19h – 23h, Sundays from 8h30 to 14h30 where they offer a special assorted Brunch at €18TTC. Typical prices of meals are: Picnic Box €18TTC, Roast chicken (a la broche) €14TTC kilo, L'Aioli du Chef, for 2 people €22TTC, plat de jour €18TTC, tarte de jour, 6 parts, € 20TTC. Rservations recommended.

Dates for the Jazz Apero events are: Thursday 1 June, Les Dealers of Swing, clarinette trio, 6 July, Les Acroche Notes, jazz manouche, 3 August, Les Dealers of Swing, 7 September, le Duo MO, and 5 October, Lizzie Gayle, guitar trio. In addition Chateau Mentone will host one of the free Jazz events of Jazz Verdon series, 14 July

[www.chateamentone.com](http://www.chateamentone.com)

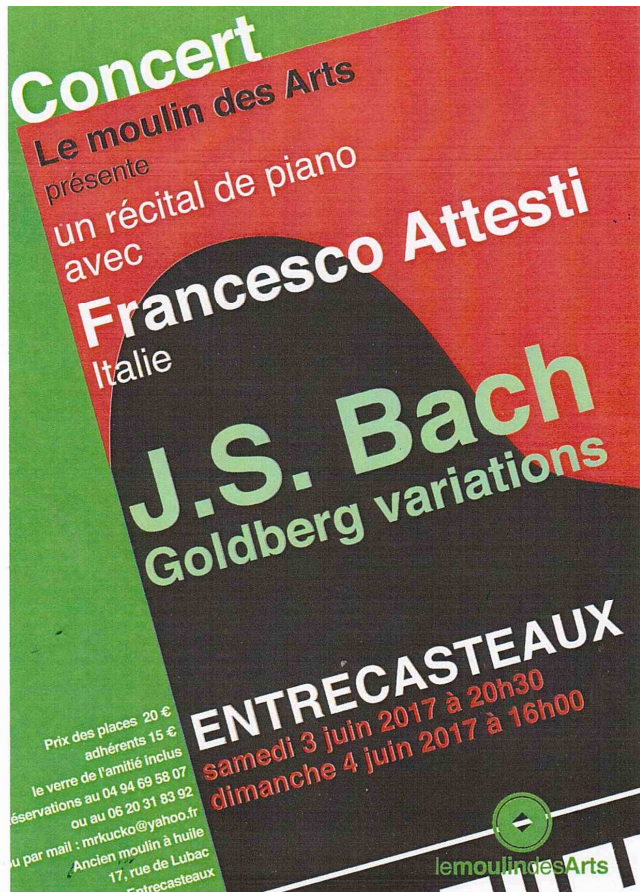


## RENDEZ VOUS AUX JARDINS – 2, 3 & 4 JUNE

The now annual Rendez Vous aux Jardins continues to delight garden lovers everywhere. This year the delights of numerous gardens are open 2, 3 nd 4 June. To find out what is available locally just go to

<http://rendezvousauxjardins.culturecommunication.gouv.fr/Dans-votre-region> - where you can find a full listing for everything

going on in the PACA region, and most specifically in the Var, with gardens from Bormes les Mimosas, Callian, Fayence, Flassans, Frejus of course, Gassin, Hyeres, La Celle, La Garde Freinet, la Londe les Maures, La Seyne, le Lavandou, le Luc, plus of course the wonderful gardens at Rayol Canadel. Gardens to delight everyone and provide special reasons for excursions all round the Var, and elsewhere!

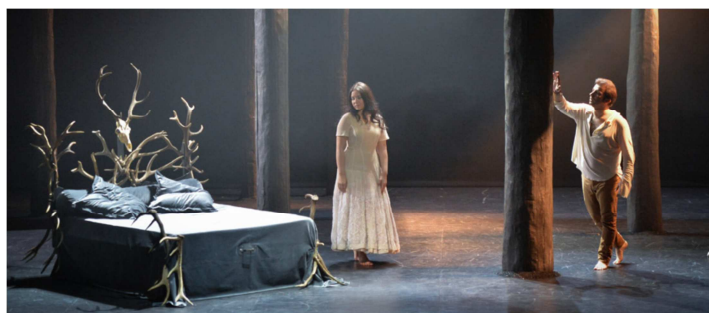


**CONCERT – MOULIN DES ARTS –  
ENTRECASTEAUX  
PIANO RECITAL – J. S. BACH  
GOLDBERG VARIATIONS  
3 & 4 JUNE**

a wonderful piano recital Saturday 3 June 20h30 and also Sunday 4 June at 16h, by the Italian pianist Francesco Attesti, at the Moulin des Arts, rue de l'Hubac, Entrecasteaux.

Tickets. 20 euros. Contact 04 94 69 58 07 / 06 20 31 83 92

(Sylvie Brignone) or mail à [mrkucko@yahoo.fr](mailto:mrkucko@yahoo.fr)



**TOULON OPERA – GOUNOD'S  
ROMEO & JULIETTE  
4, 6 & 9 June**

Toulon Opera presents Gounod's Romeo & Juliette, Sunday 4 June at 14h30, Tuesday 6 June, at 20h and Friday 9 June at 20h. the production is by the opera d'Avignon.

Le Madrigal de Provence a le plaisir de vous convier à s

**MADRIGAL DE PROVENCE**

**CONCERT**  
Chœur et violoncelle  
Direction : Sébastien Boin

**SACRAE CANTIONES**  
Monteverdi • Gesualdo • Vivier • Marti

Concert de Toulon - Réservation conseillée : 06 49 95 75 43  
Tarifs : 15 euros / 12 euros (tarif réduit)  
Concerts La Londe et Saint-Chamas : libre participation

**CONCERTS – MADRIGAL DE  
PROVENCE – 9 & 10 June**

Madrigal de Provence Choir, with cello, performances of Monteverdi, Vivier, Marti, Gesualdo – Friday 9 June 20h30 at Eglise de la Nativite, La Londe des Maures  
Saturday 10 June, 20h30, Temple Protestant, Toulon,  
[www.madrigaldeprouvence.fr](http://www.madrigaldeprouvence.fr)





## CONCERT VAR MUSICA – ABBAYE DE THORONET 18 JUNE 19H

The Var Musica Ensemble are giving a concert Sunday 18 June 19h, of Gregorian chants, Monteverdi, improvisations and baroque airs. Gabriel Jublin, counter tenor, Daniel Jublin, bass and organ, with the participation also of Paul Kieffer, lute and theorbe. Res & Info: 04 94 60 10 94 Tickets €20



## FETE DE LA MUSIQUE – 21 JUNE – CONCERTS, MUSICAL EVENTS ALL OVER

Watch out for local posters of events.



Bereavement Support Network

## VOLUNTEERS NEEDED – JOIN THE GROUP

The Bereavement Support Network (BSN) which operates throughout the Var, is looking for new volunteers. A dynamic group of people from all walks of life get together to offer support to English speaking people who need help dealing with bereavement, be it a death, or terminal illness, or loss of a loved pet. They meet monthly in the Var, and full training and support is provided. For more information visit their website:

[www.bsnvar.org](http://www.bsnvar.org). Contact Sandra on 04 94 84 64 89 or 06 32 35 31 24. And at : [info@bsnvar.org](mailto:info@bsnvar.org)



## FESTIVAL DE MUSIQUE A TOULON - SATURDAY 24 JUNE – THEATRE VERDURE DU FARON LES ANCHES DOUBLES DANS LA RUE – 11H30



## CHATEAU DE BERNE SUMMER PROGRAM – LORGUES

Château de Berne is shaking up its Jazz Program for the summer, there will no longer be Jazz picnics of a Sunday afternoon, but rather evening events,

from 21h – 23h. So far 6 events are scheduled, starting the 13 July, with a concert by UNDERSKORE ORKESTRA, with Balkan, Klezmer, Gipsy Jazz and Swing. Further concerts are 20 July, 27 July, 10 August, 17 August and 24 August.

Tickets were on offer in April at €22 e. now they are priced at €30 per person, offers for passes for two events, at €48, and for 3 events, at €63. info and reservations: [www.chateauberne.com](http://www.chateauberne.com)

## OTHER EVENTS

2 Grimaud, Eglise st. Michel. Mozart Requiem 18h Free  
15 Seillons, Concert chor Carmina Burana, Ensemble Chorl de Lorgues 21h Free

23 St. Tropez, Cinema Concert 18h30, Russian music € 30

27 Draguignan, parc haussman Gitano concert music 20h Free



## POLISH PRESIDENT BERATES EU FOR ITS SUPINE ATTITUDE TO TERRORISM!

Speaking in the Polish parliament, Beata Szydło raged at the terror threat posed to European nations following the Manchester terror attack, in which 22 people were killed at a pop concert. She called on European leaders to “rise from your knees and from your lethargy or you will be crying over your children every day”.

She said: “We are not going to take part in the madness of the Brussels elite, we want to help the people, not the political elites.

**“I have the courage to say and I have the courage to ask all European political elites a question: Where are you headed? Where are you headed, Europe? “Rise from your knees and from your lethargy or you will be crying over your children every day.”**

She said: “If you cannot see that today terrorist danger is a fact that can hurt every country in Europe and you think that Poland should not defend itself, you are going hand in hand with those who point this weapon against Europe, against all of us.

**“This is an attack on Europe, on our culture, our tradition. Why am I talking about that? That is a good question because all of us in this room have to answer the question... Do we want politicians that claim that we have to get used to attacks and who describe terrorist attacks as ‘incidents’? “Or do we want strong politicians that can see a danger and fight against it effectively?”** As Beata Szydło made this impassioned speech in the Polish Parliament, representatives rose to their feet to applaud, several times.

Of course one can say that this passionate speech comes as tensions grow between Poland – plus the three other Visegrad countries (Hungary, Slovakia, Czech Rep) who refuse to accept (Muslim) refugees - and the EU bloc after they refused to take any refugees, and the EU is threatening legal action against members failing to comply with quotas. However one begins to agree with their attitude more and more. Not all Muslims are terrorists, but decisive, effective action needs to be taken EU wide to monitor and deport real suspects. Tens of thousands of so called refugees, denied asylum in Germany and served deportation orders have just disappeared into the woodwork! All the terrorists of the past few years entered the EU along refugee networks. This latest home grown terrorist took a Cooks tour to return to the UK, long and expensive, Tripoli to Istanbul,

to Dusseldorf, thence to Manchester, Why? Very possibly as he would be subjected to less stringent security checks than if he had flown direct from Tripoli to the UK. So much for Schengen! PM May at the G7 meeting made an appeal for them all to share terrorist information, to declare war on the Jihadists, to update EU systems, but apart from the usual platitudes that have flowed like water, what will they really do? As the Polish Prime Minister pointed out, the madness of the Brussels Elite keep on insisting on open borders, and freedom of movement. Oh Yea!



## Style Over Sustenance

**BY TRENCHERMAN**

In the days before the joys of parenthood added another dimension to married life, I was a bit of a petrol head, ambitiously driving cars which I could not really afford.

One of my favourites was a 1953 Jaguar XK 120, reg no OLY 124, which had been previously owned by the great Duncan Hamilton, who drove Jaguars at Le Mans, and in fact won the race in 1953 in a 120, but not mine. I suspect that a grateful Jaguar might well have presented him with OLY 124 as a thank you.

So many years later we have OLY and after a major restoration, she was the best looking girl on the block. Although she was a weekend treat, we would occasionally turn up to classic car events and stand proudly beside her, answering questions from an admiring audience, even in the late 60s these events were well organised and attracted an interested audience. On one occasion we won the Concours d'Elegance at Beaulieu, grandly presented by the old Lord himself.

Children and other pressures removed the 120 and life went on intertwined with other distractions.

I had not attended a ‘Classic’ car event for very many years until we found ourselves caught up in one a few Sundays ago near Lorgues. We were on our way to lunch accompanied by some good friends and found ourselves caught up in a quite well attended event.

As I said, a well organised show can be great fun, but this was not a well organised show, in fact it appeared as if all the attendees had arrived in their cherished classics and just parked them at the side of a road almost blocking it and making it very difficult for passing motorists, in fact, as we crawled past at two kph, one oversized lady smacked our wing mirror in anger at, one supposes, being too large for the road, her that is not us.

Eventually we managed to park and find our way to the restaurant for a much needed aperitif.



We were greeted and seated and rapidly supplied with our pre-lunch drinks on a large airy terrace, populated with parents and small energetic children. Very nice but a difficult place to create an ambiance, unless of course you are on the beach.

The wine list and menus arrived and a curious, but delightful, house cocktail made from the local vegetation was served to us in conical glasses that slotted into metal holders. Style was beginning to raise its profile.

We applied ourselves to the menus while my dear friend, who had just returned from a wine and gastronomic tour of Burgundy, including a stay and dinner at Mère Blanc, attended to the wine list, quite a chunky volume in itself.

There were a number of menus varying from 120€ to 160€ which offered degustations of many interesting dishes however, she who does not eat very much only wanted a main course, led us to the à la carte menu from which all could be chosen on a single basis.

The sommelier arrived to offer her assistance and my dear friend, who is not unused to paying well for fine wine, noted that the wines were very expensive, an example being a local wine which had had its price lifted by 500%, an ambitious idea even in an expensive restaurant.

It is the norm to multiply wholesale prices by three, except in the case of multiple starred restaurants with very high rent and staff overheads, where a carefully chosen list might seek to charge a little more, four times perhaps.

The sommelier claimed that their prices were normal for a one star restaurant, but perhaps she does not get out a lot.

Amuses bouches arrived and beautiful they were and delicious, the staff were attentive and charming, ready to knowledgeably describe any dish and to offer their recommendations.

She who does not do starters left the running to my chum's wife who ordered the '*Asperges vertes du Var, with a beurre de Sardine/Purée Citron Marjolaine*' from the entrées and I and my chum ordered the '*Petits Pois et Groseilles, en Tarte au Basilic*'.

We eventually ordered the house wine, a bottle of white and a bottle of red, they were the least expensive option and made by the owners of the restaurant.

The white was very good and went well with the asparagus and the pea tarts although the portions were not what a growing boy would need; they were delicious: the three asparagus spears and three delightfully small sardines, were beautifully presented. The pea tart was a work of art, the short base was long on texture and the peas and red currants had been immaculately positioned. We agreed that they were very tasty and tasteful, and clearly kept small to allow for the main course.

She who had watched in amazement at our entrées had ordered the '*Truite du Haute Var, Juste nacrée/Laquée Miel-Gingembre/Légumes du Potager au Poivre Sichuan/Sauce Chantilly-Raifort*' whereas chummy and I had plumped for '*Le Ris de Veau, Flambé au Whisky/Variation d'Echallotes/Jus à l'Estragon*'.

Well thankfully, we were not hungry, for the trout was the size of a starter and our two (each) sweetbreads were not going to keep an army on the march. All dishes were delicious and beautifully presented, the style surrounding the delivery was theatrically managed and very well done. The three pieces of asparagus were only 38€ as was the trout, the sweetbreads were a mere 48€ per portion, these dishes were on the menu dégustation and would have been served with six or more further dishes and would have fitted in perfectly, but to offer

them as entrées and main courses without altering the portion size smacks of profiteering rather than restauration, the wines were 48€ per bottle.

We had lost the heart to order dessert, feeling that to pop home for a sandwich was higher on our list of wants, we even left a half bottle of the red wine, something I have never ever done before.

I blame myself entirely, I am well used to eating at high end establishments, but as I always tell people, go for lunch during the week and have the set menu and you will eat like royalty for a bargain price. I went at a weekend when these rules do not apply and I paid the price. Le Jardin de Benjamin does offer a menu at 55€ for lunch on a Monday to Friday and this may be the bargain that I missed, I shall never know.

I looked wistfully at the impressive cheese trolley as we left and wondered if that large round was a Blue Leicester?  
Pip, pip



## OPERA IN THE MIDDLE EAST

### By ROBERT TURNBULL

Last month I was invited to Abu Dhabi to check out the musical scene there. The country's history is fascinating. A hundred years ago, the place was famous for one thing only: pearls. The fishermen of the Persian Gulf would dive for up to 16 hours a day with no oxygen tanks while traders with fistfuls of Indian Rupees waited on the pier under the burning sun. That was until the Japanese invented cultured pearls and the industry collapsed, along with centuries old traditions.

Then they discovered oil. From the 1960s onwards the labourers came from India and Bangladesh, imported in their thousands to build what was to be the jewel in the crown of the Gulf States, United Arab Emirates. Sports stadiums and eight star hotels sprouted cheek by jowl with five-lane highways and shopping malls. The Emirati tourist industry boomed and CNN exalted in the nation's newfound innovation and prosperity.

Culture and education took longer to emerge, at least officially. In 2008 New York University opened a 40 acre large campus on Saadiyat Island, within a part of the city that spawned new branches of established international museums, including one of the Louvre designed by celebrity architect Jean Nouvel. For NYU

Abu Dhabi, the designer was Rafael Viñoly, who aimed to match something of the environment of NYU's Greenwich Village with that of traditional Islamic villages.

My destination was NYU Abu Dhabi's theatre complex, which has become the principle venue for another of Abu Dhabi's major cultural assets, its International Arts Festival, created by the Abu Dhabi Music and Art Foundation. The festival is currently the largest celebration of arts and culture in the Arabian Gulf, boasting over 100 events annually. Today proud players from Lebanon accompany tarab dancers and get to meet visiting Chinese acrobats en route to Europe.

The person to meet there is H.E. Hoda Ibrahim Al Khamis Kanoo, the founder and Artistic Director of the Foundation who is passionate about nurturing Emirati talent and supporting the cultural renaissance. Her main focus is on opera, she told me. Having heard Domingo at the Baalbek Festival while growing up in Beirut and 'spending many hours at the Salle Garnier while studying at the American University in Paris', she feels that for too long the Middle-eastern and North African contribution to opera if not all of Western classical music has been ignored. It's true. As a concept, Arabic opera has barely entered the mindset of most Westerners. Some of us know that Verdi's Aida was premiered in Cairo, but very little about operas originating in that part of the world. Islam's skeptical attitude towards secular music in general and especially an art form that presents women as protagonists would, for many, preclude such a possibility.

They would be wrong. According to Kanoo, a wave of Wahabi puritanism might have cast a shadow over the region in recent years, but for the last 50 years or so an appreciation of the Western arts has been a mainstay of middle-class Middle-Eastern and North African life. Singers and composers from the Arabian diaspora have taken up places in European and American music colleges for decades, many returning home to present their work in a growing number of concert halls and opera houses from Damascus to Muscat. The operas written by Mohammed Fairouz, Zaid Jabri, Hiba Al Kawas, Patrick Lama and Ahmed Essyad she described as 'exciting new hybrids of Western and Middle Eastern idioms'.

It is also happening outside the Middle East, it seems. The Palestinian Moneim Adwan's opera Kalila Wa Dimna was commissioned by the Aix-en-Provence festival last year. It's mélange of instruments - the qanun with the clarinet for example - lent a bed of support to a warm and melismatic "Arab" vocalism, while the libretto by Fady Jomar and Catherine Verlaquet followed familiar contours of a traditional Western opera. Contemporary Arab composers share not only a common language, but, like its Western equivalents, a rich history of mythology and tales to draw from.

It transpires that the Royal Opera House have since signed up to the cause. Between 10 and 14 July this year, four emerging composers - Nabil Benabdeljalil from Casablanca, Bahaa El-Ansary, the Iraqi Amir Elsaffar and Cracow-based Syrian Nadim Husni - will take up a residency with both the Royal Opera and London's esteemed Shubbak Festival. A concert at St Luke's on the 13<sup>th</sup> July will feature existing works of these composers as well as the premiere of scenes from *Woman at Point Zero* by the 5<sup>th</sup> composer in the project, Lebanese composer Bushra El-Turk. ROH and Shubbak's previous collaborated on *Cities of Salt*, a co-

production of an opera by Syrian composer Zaid Jabri, extracts of which were performed in the Linbury Studio Theatre in July 2015.

'*Women at Point Zero*' is certain to make an impact. A chamber music opera composed by the Bushra Al Turk with libretto by Sabrina Mahfouz adapted from the novel by Nawal El Saadawi, the work is based on Saadawi's real life interview with a convicted murderess in Qanatir Prison just days before her execution. The novel explores the issues of the subjugation of women, female circumcision, and women's freedom in a patriarchal society. Whether or not the opera will get an airing in the more conservative Middle East is yet to be determined, but anyone doubting the use of radical subject matter in Middle-Eastern opera can only be surprised.

'When it comes to Arab opera it's very fragmented picture. Because of the very different political and cultural milieu, it's difficult to compare the work emerging from Arab composers working in Poland with those in Morocco', says Kanoo. 'Some have institutional support, others work in isolation and often with low budgets. But in general opera still requires the passion and focus of individual philanthropists.'

The Royal Opera House residency represents one way to connect Middle-eastern opera composers to an international network, but in the most nurturing way possible, Kanoo believes. 'If opera is to develop we need to provide the incubator and allow them to experiment in an unpressured environment', she says. 'It's a very good moment not just to engender a more liberal environment at home but to do so at a time when Gulf States are examining their musical roots'.

After a few days in Abu Dhabi I came away feeling amazed at just how much Arab opera there is out there and humbled by the fact that I knew so little about it. I suppose that like many operas in the West - think of Verdi for instance - opera from the Middle East has a political dimension and is far from being what one imagines, namely updatings of *A Thousand and One Nights* or some other Arabian style Hollywood Fantasy. It could indeed be used to build bridges from West to East and even serve as a tool for democracy.



Heaters in vineyard April 2017

## THE WINE HARVEST

VVV readers who are enthusiastic wine bibbers, collectors, who read DECANTER religiously, looking for news about their favourite vintages, cepages, quality and all, fans of Burgundy

and Bordeaux, had better start looking around to build up their stocks of the latter, as a bitter frost has not only threatened this year's vine - the most important premier bougeon on the vine - but has apparently totally wiped out some vineyards. Really painful.

In the predawn hours of April 27, as temperatures across Bordeaux plunged below freezing, the normally dark and deserted vineyards suddenly sprang to life. Armies of workers decamped into the fields, fires raged and giant fans and helicopter blades whipped up the icy air.

The invading enemy: A frost that threatened one of the world's most valuable crops, the grapes that produce \$4,000 bottles of Chateau Petrus and other prized wines.

The cold, which caused at least 1 billion euros (\$1.1 billion) of damage in what France's winemakers call the biggest disaster in a quarter century, is the latest blow to a French industry that exported 8.25 billion euros worth of wine in 2016 but has lost share globally in recent years. As frost ravaged vineyards from Bordeaux to Burgundy to Champagne, a grower's fate depended on resources, planning, location and not least, luck.

Among the shivering workers in Bordeaux that night was Ines de Baillencourt of Pomerol estate Chateau Gazin, who quickly realized she was facing the biggest frost menace to her vines since the great freeze of 1991 that wiped out 90 percent of the vineyard. This time she says the estate was better prepared to ward off the cold, lighting hundreds of giant, heat-producing candles to warm the vines.

"We were lucky," said De Baillencourt, whose family has owned Gazin for the past century and sells its wine for \$50 to \$100 a bottle. "We lit fires everywhere. It was a first for us."

#### **Saint-Emilion**

Less than 10 kilometers (6 miles) to the south, just below the historic town of Saint-Emilion, others were facing greater losses. Unlike Gazin, on the region's plateau, Chateau Canon La Gaffeliere sits on low-lying ground near a railway line and was more vulnerable to pockets of freezing air forming below the slopes. More than 70 percent of the vines in the estate were damaged, according to Magali Malet-Serres, who works at the winery.

Some other Bordeaux chateaus say they lost almost everything. Other regions suffered less but this is the second straight year of deep freezes for Burgundy, where the regional wine board said in a statement that 3,000 hectares (7,400 acres) of vineyard out of a total of 28,500 hectares was affected.

While global warming has generally led to earlier harvests and riper grapes, cold weather remains an annual threat in France. This year the risk was acute because of an early spring that caused vines to bud just as wintry weather returned. Vintners can buy frost insurance, but few do because it's expensive and of little value for prestigious producers as it covers only the value of the grapes lost, not the full amount of the bottled wine. Growers are generally not eligible for disaster relief, the Agriculture Ministry said, but regional authorities in Bordeaux proposed aid for the hardest-hit estates after a crisis meeting Friday.

Frost affected as much as 60 percent of the Bordeaux wine-growing areas and will cut volume of the 2017 vintage by as much as 40 percent, according to the Bordeaux wine federation FGVB. That means at least 1 billion euros in lost production from that region alone, out of normal annual revenue of 3.5 billion to 4 billion euros, the organization said.



#### **1945, 1961**

Bordeaux vintners were quick to note that great years like 1945 and 1961 were also hit by frost, with the surviving grapes ripening to perfection. The prospect of tighter supply could fuel demand for the region's lauded 2016 vintage, just as the annual "en primeur" sale of futures gets under way.

In Champagne, as much as one-quarter of vines owned by the region's 15,000 growers might be damaged, according to the industry's trade body in the U.K. Because most Champagne is a blend of vintages, houses such as Laurent Perrier and LVMH-owned Moët & Chandon can tap into the equivalent of 200 million bottles kept in reserve tanks, along with a further 1.3 billion bottles aging in cellars. Producers say that will tide them over for now, but if the run of bad luck continues next year, shortages will appear.

"It's a frost like we haven't seen since 1991," said Paul-Francois Vranken, chief executive officer of Vranken-Pommery Monopole SA. "We're worried."

Champagne has already been hit by a 14 percent drop in exports to the U.K. last year. Sales in Britain, the region's largest overseas market by volume, have suffered from the plunge in the pound since the vote to leave the European Union last June.

While France was most affected, April's frost damage spread across much of wine-producing Europe, damaging the vineyards that produce riesling in Germany, sparkling wine in southern England and Prosecco in northern Italy. Some Mediterranean regions were spared, though the cold also killed off apples, cherries and other crops.

In France's Burgundy, growers were well-organized after a deep frost last year. This time around, when the forecasts predicted another freeze, they arranged a text-message chain and delivered hay bales to strategic spots. Beaune-based grower and merchant Alex Gambal woke at 5 a.m. on April 29 to clear skies and plunging temperatures. By 6:45 a.m., he said, bonfires created a purple haze across the vineyards.

"It was all hands on deck," Gambal said. "Some of the old-timers compared it to 1957 and 1981. But a lot of them said they had never seen anything like it."

Well, actually one has. I remember, not so long ago, hopefully organising a Midsummer's Night party, a la Woody Allen, with ridiculous visages of females drifting around in chiffon, and boozing the night away, with toasts to the summer, only to be hit that morning with the most incredible hail storm. Like Victor Meldrew, I just could not believe it, I rushed out and photographed the huge mountain of hailstones that had accumulated in my geranium pots. How was this possible in mid June? We finished up, huddled round my roaring wood burning fire in the living room, perfectly cosy and warm, having



dinner inside, but not what we had expected, and certainly not a la Woody Allen!

## Angry protests against sale of cheap Spanish wine



### Winemakers in Occitanie want supermarkets to buy local and say cheap Spanish costs make for unfair competition

Furious French winemakers have taken direct action against supermarkets selling cheap imported wine, branding them 'disloyal'.

Angry vigneronns from Gard, Occitanie, invaded the wine aisles at Metro in Quessargues and Géant Casino in Nîmes, where they collecting imported wine from Spain in trolleys before dumping them and smashing bottles outside in the car park.

The action is aimed at stemming the growing trend for 'grandes surfaces' (large supermarkets) to negotiate high-volume deals with Spanish winemakers instead of buying locally produced wine from Languedoc-Roussillon. French winemakers say competition is unfair because wine is much cheaper to produce in Spain, where land and labour costs are lower.

In one shop, Promocash, however, the winemakers welcomed the approach of the store manager who is making special efforts to highlight local production.

A recent France 2 TV report highlighted one winemaker, Mathieu Calégari, whose entire 2016 crop remains unsold. "We have almost 1,000 hectolitres, it is beautiful this wine, but I cannot sell it, there is no explanation," he said.

Just a few hundred kilometres away, near Valencia, is the largest vineyard in the world. Here, wine production costs are said to be just 30 centimes per litre, half that of French costs.

In the last 30 years, more than 150 wine cooperatives have closed in Languedoc-Roussillon, while the cost of frosts in late-April is still being counted.

In the run-up to the recent election, winemakers marched en masse in Narbonne to bring their plight to the attention of politicians. Many communes held by the Parti Socialiste in these wine-making territories (previously known as the "Red Midi"), swung to the Front National.

In Aude, the local wine syndicate were meeting later where leaders were expected to call upon France's new political regime to help wine workers, just as legislative election campaigning gets under way.



Apparently Macron is modelling himself on Joan of Arc – not a good precedent!

## THE FRENCH ELECTION – MACRON – PROMISES, PROMISES!

Without wanting to seem unduly pessimistic, new President Emmanuel Macron has certainly got his work cut out, if he is to succeed and carry out his election manifesto.

Yes, he did achieve an incredible climb, from absolute nothing just a year ago, to being elected President, pretty impressive, now the hard work begins, as all the commentariat pointed out, he has no political machine behind him – but a lot of enmity from the right and left of the French political scene who got wiped out in the election – and has now to find enough candidates to muster for the legislation elections in June. Wow.

And, of course when one examines in detail the results of the first and second tour of the election, Macron certainly did not win a landslide, and faces opposition from a number of quarters.

The following results are based on 99.99 percent of the votes being counted, and come from the interior ministry.

### Macron gets 66 percent of the vote

Emmanuel Macron won 66.1 percent of the votes, leaving Marine Le Pen with 33.9 percent. That was a much bigger gap than the last polls suggested which had Macron at 62 percent.

### Over 20 million vote Macron

The interior ministry reports that 20.7 million voters chose Macron, while Le Pen got 10.6 million in total. That's a record score for the National Front, beating their previous record of 7.6 million, that was achieved in the first round vote.

And to put it in more perspective, Marine Le Pen achieved almost double the number of votes her father did in 2002 (5.5 million) when he reached the second round.

But, Macron's 66% was of the votes cast. Thousands did not vote, in fact the vote was the lowest for some years, reflecting immense dissatisfaction, as many put it, it was a choice "between Plague or Cholera!"

**In fact, polls also showed that Macron has hardly been swept to power on a wave of popularity. According to an Ipsos survey as many as 43 percent, so around 9 million voted for him just to block Le Pen. Not exactly a confidence Vote.**

Macron's 20.7 million votes puts him well ahead of the 18 million who voted for François Hollande in 2012 and the 18.9 million who voted for Nicolas Sarkozy in 2007. However neither of those candidates were up against a far right candidate who went by the name of Le Pen.

In 2002 Jacques Chirac gained 25.5 million votes when he was up against Jean-Marie Le Pen, so far more than Emmanuel Macron did against Le Pen's daughter.

### **Abstention at 25.38 percent**

According to official results, the abstention rate stood at 25.38 percent - the highest since the presidential election in 1969.

That means some 12 million voters did not vote in the election, three million more abstainers than in 2012, when the turnout was 80 percent.

Among the abstainers it was the young (34%) and the unemployed (35%) who had the highest abstention figures.

### **Four million cast blank votes**

The interior ministry reported a record number of blank and invalid ballots, accounting for 8.49 percent of all registered voters, compared to two percent in the first round.

So that means four million French voters went to the polls to cast a blank vote. That's two million more than in 2012.

So adding the blanks to the abstentions, a third of French voters declined to choose between Macron and Le Pen -- a record rate in nearly half a century. In other words out of 47 million voters, some 16 million declined to cast a vote for either candidate.

That's compared to 11 million in 2012.

"That would make a total of one French person out of three who decided not to choose between the two candidates. It's really a lot for a presidential election," Anne Jadot, political science professor at the University of Lorraine, told AFP.

### **Le Pen in third place overall**

So if we look at the votes overall Marine Le Pen actually finished in third place, behind Macron and abstentions/blank votes. Macron picked up 43.6 percent of the vote (20.7 million votes), ahead of the 34 percent (16 million votes) who did not vote for either candidate and Marine Le Pen who won 22 percent (10.6 million votes) of the vote.

Le Pen's strongholds in the north east held firm, gaining 57.42 percent of the vote in Calais and 61 percent in Hénin-Beaumont. In the Aisne department, Le Pen came out on top in 619 out of 804 communes.

Le Pen scored well on France's Mediterranean coast in the south east, getting close to 50 percent in many departments, like the Var, where she gained 49 percent.



Has an incoming president ever had so much on his to-do list from day one?\*\*\* Macron must try to reconcile the country, cut unemployment, restore faith in Europe, even reform the EU, boost the economy, deal with the terror threat and dangerous jihadists returning from the Middle East, find a way for France to be ease with Islam and immigration, help forge a new identity for the country so it feels at ease with its place in the world. In other words make France *feel* great again.

A few days ago, Juncker was in Berlin, where he sang a different tune. "We have a real problem with France," he declared. "The French spend too much money and spend it on the wrong things."

More profoundly, Mr Macron, a former economy minister in Francois Hollande's government, also wants much deeper eurozone integration including – ultimately – a Eurozone budget, finance minister and instruments to mutualise debt and obligations of the single currency, like a common deposit insurance and a "backstop" for Eurozone debt.

It implies a unitary eurozone superstate.

This calls Berlin's bluff. The German elites often argue that they cannot accept such radical proposals as long as other eurozone states scoff at budget rules and fail to put their house in order. Whether Germany's real motive is to protect its mercantilist interests as a creditor power and run monetary union to suit itself is conveniently never put to the test.

France is split on deep lines cleavage, Balkanized five ways. The scale of Mr Macron's 66:34 victory is misleading. Blank protest votes - "Neither Plague nor Cholera" - jumped threefold to 11.5pc. The abstention rate jumped six points to 25.4pc.

As the diplomatic theatre unfolded in Berlin, the grand visions of the campaign were quietly squashed by Germany's finance minister, Wolfgang Schaeuble, who told Le Figaro newspaper they were simply "not realistic".

As Mr Schaeuble acknowledged, in practice there is no political appetite for a re-opening the EU treaties and holding referenda to ratify such changes, because too many of the citizens of Europe will say 'no'

To restore it to full health, Mr Macron will have to deliver on his promise to reform - to cut France's deficit, to trim the bloated state which spends 57% of GDP and wrestle down France's mammoth debt from its current 96% of GDP closer to Germany's 71%.

\*\* The CGT Union has just called it first strike, that of fuel truck drivers. Welcome back to Strike season.



### **EX-VIP'S – WHY WON'T THEY JUST LIE DOWN?**

Have you noticed we seem to be swimming in loads of Ex Very Important People, who keep on popping up, getting photographed, to remind us of How Important they Used to be! Part of the problem of course now is that people live longer, before you could rely on retiring politicians, to quietly pop their clogs, and fall off the perch. But now they seem to hang around forever.



One of the results which I heartily hoped for, from the election of Emmanuel Macron, is that we will no longer have to gaze at ex President Ms Pudding, and his unending grandstanding in photo ops. Gosh was he boring. "This is me entertaining Chancellor Merkel and Spanish Prime Minister, whatever his name is, at Versailles Chateau to a totally scrumptious and totally French meal, whilst we discuss, Very Important Things!" or posing in Italy with Prime Minister Renzi, Merkel etc, about absolutely nothing, just as they all posed in Bratislava, up the Danube, achieving totally nothing, except of course for yet more photo ops, all at vast expense to the EU taxpayer!

Perhaps the film Carry On team could put together a political Carry ON - Carry On up the Danube. Think of it, saucy laughs, especially from lady politicians as they experience J. C. Juncker's hands on approach! Kisse Kisse, smack on head, and as one columnist put it, Ms. Pat on Bottom. Wow it would rock them in the cinemas.

But Ms. Pudding (Hollande! I know he is really Ms Custard, but he has put on lots of weight and now looks more like a gigantic Pudding!) was still trying desperately to wring every last bite out of his presidency, gladhanding New Boy Macron at a ceremony at the Arc de Triomphe, his ego bursting all over the place, as he struggled to show he was still in charge, an avuncular hand on the back of the neck of Macron, a hand in the middle of his back "Just follow me, this is how you do it" with Macron visibly gritting his teeth. Then he rushed off, no doubt by private jet to have yet a last tete a tete with Chancellor Merkel in Berlin, how cosy. Yet more photo ops and glad handing.



Of course the question now is, what becomes of ex President Pudding? Unfortunately he is unlikely to fade gracefully from the scene. No doubt the Paris Municipality, in its usual fashion will find him a suitably luxurious apartment in Paris, either in the 16 or 8 arrondissement, to which he can retire, for a peppercorn rent, as is the custom here. But hopes of him bobbing down out of view are pretty unlikely, judging by other ex VIP politicians.

A classic example is our own ghastly very ex UK Prime Minister Bliar, he just won't lie down. From hanging around the corridors of power, the UN, NATO etc. "Hi guys, what about a nice job for me?" he just keeps on popping up, "Listen to me, photograph Me! I am making an Very Important Statement here, Listen to me!~!"

It wasn't enough that he just kept on hoovering up loads of commission as a supposed Peace Envoy to the Middle East, in reality just signing up more and more deals for his banker sponsors, achieving precisely nothing in the so called peace process. His ego is so great (don't they all have just gigantic egos, it's a wonder they can get through normal doorways!) that

he seems totally incapable of acknowledging how toxic his so called legacy is. The latest laugh is that Corbinista rebels, planning a coup for after the General Election, might be calling on a Bliar sponsored Think Tank for support, however donor sponsors of this rebel movement and those connected with the Think Tank apparently will not want Bliar fronting any movement, as they consider him totally toxic with the public. Dear oh Dear, how the truth hurts.

Then again up he pops, with advice for Macron, mainly an editorial on the theme of "I was just as promising as you, the new, great White Hope, and look at me now! All I've got is money. It will happen to you too!"

David Cameron, and George Osborne, both beavered away at hoovering up speaking engagements at the Davos meeting, shortly after their collective Referendum downfall. Now David Cameron, who has not really had a Real job since Oxford, apart from PR and Politics, but of course is comfortably off - is still sniffing around the corridors of power, the UN, the IMF, who knows, meantime he has bought a suitably luxurious Gypsy caravan to park in his no doubt large back garden in the Cotswolds, so that he can concentrate on writing his Memoirs. We just can't wait.

Mrs. Clegg - I just can't be bothered to remember the name she prefers to be known by - in the wake of her husband's fall from power, he still retains his seat, just - wrote a cookery book, which wound up in the Remainders pile. And of course He wrote several. Well you have to pass the time somehow. But getting back to Ms. Pudding, somehow I think he is going to have a hard time finding the next Mistress, now he can no longer invite them back to the Elysees Palace - "Do come back for a nightcap, I have the most wonderful collection of Napoleonic memorabilia!"

Now, what can he tempt them home with, "Oh do come and see my luxury, bijou apartment, and I have the most wonderful collection of photographs of Me, Me with Chancellor Merkel, Me with Renzi, Me with just lots of Very Important People!" Possibly the most cringe worthy photo op of the past few weeks, was that of Prime Minister May having to submit to being Kissed, slobbered over, by J. C. Juncker, before their ruinous and fated dinner. May must have thought "Good God, what I put up with on behalf of my Country."

But, she managed to smile through it, that takes guts, and total face control. I would have vomited on the spot practically. And now St. Obama is parading his Leader, oops, sorry, correction, Ex-Leader of the Free World credentials, at a recent Climate Change Conference.

B. Obama was reportedly accompanied by hundreds of police and a massive motorcade featuring gas hungry SUVs - the motorcade was 14 cars long! - as he arrived to discuss climate change at a conference in Milan. The former President - who reportedly pocketed £2.5million (\$3.2 million) for the one and a half hour speech - the 3,000 delegates paid between 650 - 850 euros for this key speech - appeared at the Global Food Innovation Summit on Tuesday to urge conference-goers to reduce their carbon footprints.

Footage from the event shows an ostentatious arrival, with police cars, motorbikes, and gas-guzzling armoured SUVs ferrying the ex-Commander in Chief to the event. Mr Obama was allegedly chauffeured straight from the airport to the £7,100 (£8,400)-a-night Park Hyatt hotel in the city, reportedly with an escort of up to 300 police officers.

The former President's armoured Chevrolet Suburban has an approximate mileage of just 16 miles per gallon (MPG) - compared to a Vauxhall Astra, which has a fuel economy of at least 46 MPG.

The motorcade was also reportedly accompanied by numerous attendant helicopters, plus of course the private jet - all of which brought the Italian city to a standstill. Oh, what a carbon print that lot made, just to bring one man to a conference on Climate Change - you couldn't make it up.

One wonders what he could have possibly said in his speech of hour and a half, that was worth €2.5 million! A sum which could have better been spent in the 3<sup>rd</sup> world, but of course that is rubbish. All the delegates there were no doubt claiming expenses for their hotels, their flights, their attendance fees, all founded by taxpayers all over.

Oh Please, get back in the box.

When is enough, enough? But for all these types, Enough is never Enough, they always want more!



## THE UK – THE EU AND TACTICS! Lies, Lies & Propaganda !! Yanis Varoufakis says Don't Negotiate !

The UK, in a Referendum, which mustered an incredible voter turn-out of 76.2% of eligible voters, voted to leave the EU. The Unelected, Unaccountable masters of the EU Commission, ever since the June 2016 Referendum have refused to believe, acknowledge in any way that the UK has the right to do this, and have prosecuted an unending blitz of threats, extortionate demands, amounting to fraud, lies, innuendoes from that time on.

The latest event in this literal war of attrition took place after what was supposed to be a friendly dinner at No 10 Downing Street, where Prime Minister May, and several of her Cabinet, entertained J. C., Juncker, his Chef de Cabinet, Selmayr, Ms. Barnier, to dinner.

What emerged later from that evening event, which had been intended from the UK side certainly, from the purest motives of establishing some common ground, subsequent specifically German press briefings, were pure spite and totally malicious, in an attempt to discredit PM May and her team, at the same time totally playing to the German electorate, and the upcoming September election - ie "we are going to be hard, Punative, just watch us"!

What was supposed to be a private engagement to smooth the path to proper negotiations was quite deliberately turned on its head by malicious briefing from the J. C. Juncker party. Media fingers later pointed directly\*\*\* at Juncker's chef de Cabinet, the very, very German Selmayr, noted ferocious gate keeper to Juncker, in the way details of the dinner were leaked to a major German Newspaper **Frankfurter Allgemeine Sonntagszeitung** newspaper.

\*\*\* Media Hacks also pointed the finger directly at Juncker's Chef de Cabinet Selmayr, for the previously reported instance of double talk - see further on the article I printed a couple of months back, re FAKE NEWS - as he then quite candidly admitted to deliberately misleading journalists with the memorable quote:

**"That was a tactic. I have tactics, when I speak to journalists, I don't speak because I'm a nice guy. I want to achieve something. "You write it, somebody reads it. I instrumentalise you."**

Given that, and the statement that Juncker made relative to the 2015 Greek Bailout, "When it is Serious, I lie!!!" no one should be in any doubt that the Juncker party will do anything to achieve their ends, and lie through their teeth to do it.

Yes, the dinner at No. 10 was not all that important, but Juncker and party totally betrayed diplomacy rules, they were incredibly impolite, discourteous, and downright childish in their subsequent insults - PM May was accused of "living in another galaxy" "delusional" etc.. One knows who is running the show from the fact that Juncker immediately phoned Merkel in Berlin from the car that night, and first thing 7h30 next morning to report in.

It is very possible that at last Juncker et al, have finally realised they have met their match in PM. May - and no matter how much they threaten - very much like loan shark enforcers, and boy that strikes a bell - "You do as we say, or your kneecaps are for it!" she will be obdurate. Later reactions showed that Merkel had totally disapproved of their actions, or possibly realised how badly this gossip had boomeranged to their joint discredit.

Also what would have rattled their collective cage considerably was the fact that P.M. May had all of a sudden, out of the blue, announced a snap General Election, and all the signs then were and still are, increasingly, that she will win in a landslide - as opposed to the French election, which was anything but a landslide - thus incredibly strengthening her hand in subsequent negotiations.

As Greek ex Finance Minister Varoufakis commented,:

## YANIS VAROUFAKIS GREEK - FINANCE GURU - SAYS DON'T NEGOTIATE!!

Perhaps you might think I am wasting too much time discussing this, now long ago event - a month ago - however the timing of it turned out to be totally strategic, as in the following two days, the 27 & 28 April, the **TELEGRAPH** newspaper published two totally revelatory articles - together with helpful commentary by their Financial expert, Ambrose Evans-Pritchard \*\*\* - extracts from the just published book written by the ex Finance Minister of Greece, Yanis Varoufakis, in which he detailed the negotiations leading up and after the 2015 Greek bail out, and the dirty tricks the EU negotiators employed.



These articles make utterly fascinating reading. Mesmerising and horrific at the same time.!

And subsequently, as the Juncker Nasty Party press briefings continued, Varoufakis was interviewed by UK TV and radio amongst others, helpfully giving his side of what he knew to have been the utterly jaundiced negotiations by the EU in the 2015 Greek financial bailout.

As he said at one point ""...the EU will exploit any internal political friction in the UK"" ,which is of course what they have been trying to do for the past few months, but have been totally gazumped by PM May's decision to go for an early snap General Election, and looks extremely likely to win in a huge landslide. As if on cue, Donald Tusk has implied that the future of Ireland, too, must be on the table in the coming Brexit talks. Pure blackmail, as this interferes with National Sovereignty.

Mr Varoufakis also warns that the EU will drown negotiations in the minutiae of the so-called divorce – the price of which keeps going up. The EU is now expanding its financial settlement to include "political" commitments, such as assistance to refugees. The goal is to waste Britain's energy fighting one battle in the hope that it will surrender the wider war. The only way to avoid this is to assert the strength of Britain's position and the possibility of walking away without a deal.

Ultimately, the UK can afford to do that because it is not Greece. Greece was debt-ridden and desperate to stay in the EU; Britain is wealthy and heading towards the exit, regardless of the outcome of these talks. The Government must make it clear that it will not cave in to threats. **And those Britons who still support EU membership must ask themselves this: why remain in an organisation that treats its poorest and richest members so badly?**



**The press conference with Michel Sapin (right) where Varoufakis realised that France had a different agenda**

As an example of the utter intransigence and duplicity of how the 2015 Greek bail out negotiations proceeded, Varoufakis quoted the following:

*""Five months earlier, when the anti-austerity Syriza government had just been elected, Varoufakis, newly installed as minister of finance, goes on a tour to meet his new colleagues. He quickly discovers the weakness of even major players like France.*

*""The Greek embassy's German car arrived outside the hotel to take us to meetings with France's finance ministers. I was met by an effusive Michel Sapin, a jovial man in his early sixties. Once we were sat down, I outlined the main items on our economic agenda, my debt-restructuring ideas, prefaced with an expression of allegiance to Europeanism and my contention that*

the Greek crisis, and its perpetuation, was wounding Europe unnecessarily.

I explained that I was proposing a new relationship between Greece and the EU based on Jean-Jacques Rousseau's concept of a contract between equals. Michel's response was that of a brother-in-arms: "Your government's success will be our success. It is important that we change Europe together; that we replace this fixation with austerity with a pro-growth agenda. Greece needs it. France needs it. Europe needs it."

It was the cue I needed. I explained how the ECB could partially restructure the whole of the eurozone's public debt without haircuts and without asking Germany to pay for everyone else or guarantee the periphery's public debt. I outlined how investment-led recovery could produce a new deal for Europe. The only thing that Michel did not do was suggest we join hands and rush out to storm the Bastille.

As Michel and I were making our way from his office to the obligatory press conference, **he informed me that Berlin had been in contact (ie Merkel!)** They were very upset that I had come to Paris without also offering to go to Berlin. I was more than happy to go to Berlin too, I told him. In the press room Michel welcomed me and said a few words about the great sacrifices the Greek people had made. Then suddenly, his tone changed.

The joviality and comradeship disappeared and were replaced with a harshness more familiar from the other side of the River Rhine: Greece had obligations to its creditors, and the new government would have to honour them; discipline must be maintained and any flexibility contained within the current arrangements.

Nothing about the new Rousseau-inspired social contract that we had agreed upon. Not a word about ending austerity or adopting public-investment-led pro-growth policies for the good of all of Europe. I felt as if I had been punched in the stomach. As soon as we left the press room, Michel instantly switched back to his amicable joviality. Determined to maintain my exterior poise, I turned to him and asked, "Who are you and what have you done to my Michel?"

To my astonishment he stopped, and, switching to English almost as if he had practised the line, shared an opinion of historic importance and sadness: "Yanis, you must understand this. France is not what it used to be."

In the months that followed, the French government and the country's entire elite proved their inability, as well as reluctance, to deter attacks on our government that were aimed at Paris.

Michel Sapin's performance is an excellent allegory for what is wrong in the French Republic.""



## **Yanis Varoufakis, who dared to oppose the might of the EU, tells Ambrose Evans-Pritchard Britain must learn from Greece's plight!**

**Theresa May might balk at taking advice from a radical Greek Leftist and motorcycling heart-throb of the European protest movement, but nobody knows better than Yanis Varoufakis what it means to take on the EU power structure.**

In the second article in and about Yanis Varoufakis's dealing with the EU he said as follows:

The former finance minister of Greece bears the scars of battle. For five hair-raising months he waged guerrilla warfare against the debt-collection policies of the EU-IMF Troika, learning to judge the reflexes of an imperial apparatus where the locus of real influence is disguised and where there are, in the words of the European Commission chief, instruments of torture in the basement.

The Greek Spring was short, snuffed out in July 2015 when the European Central Bank cut off liquidity and forced the closure of the banks....

There are lessons for Brexit in this sad saga. Prof Varoufakis, a specialist on economic "Game Theory", says Britain must not let itself be captured by the EU's negotiating net.

### **My advice to Theresa May is to avoid negotiation at all costs**

If the UK succumbs to that fate, it will be beaten down by one humiliating defeat after another in a slow campaign of attrition.

**The EU will exploit Britain's political divisions, playing off regions and parties against each other.**

"My advice to Theresa May is to avoid negotiation at all costs. If she doesn't do that she will fall into the trap of Alexis Tsipras, and it will end in capitulation," he told The Telegraph.

It is a regime that knowingly persisted in imposing ruinous policies on his country against economic science and logic.

### **A benign union it is not.**

"The parallel with Brexit is the tactic of stalling negotiations. They will get you on the sequencing. First there is the price of divorce to sort out before they will talk about free trade in the future," he said.

**They will give you the EU run-around. You won't always know exactly who to talk to and that is deliberate! \*\***

**(Re who is in charge, a very interesting article in Politico.eu, cited just how many people seem to be able to pull Barnier's strings, see [www.politico.eu/article/michael-barnier-europe-brexit-not-so-supremo-uk-negotiation-deal/Europe's Brexit not-so-supremo](http://www.politico.eu/article/michael-barnier-europe-brexit-not-so-supremo-uk-negotiation-deal/Europe's Brexit not-so-supremo).)**

EU chief negotiator Michel Barnier has at least 30 masters — and a monumental task ahead.

Former Belgian PM BREXIT negotiator Guy Verhofstadt has been consistently insisting that Britain must end up worse off after leaving the club otherwise there is "no point" in having a European Union anymore, ie that Brexit must be punitive to the UK.

On cue, Chancellor Angela Merkel said just recently that alimony must be settled before any start, and called on the UK to be more "constructive". She warned that the British are deluding themselves if they think they can have their EU cake and eat it.

Those who lived through the Greek drama find the words eerily familiar

**"When you make a moderate proposal they will react with blank stares and look at you as if you were reciting the Swedish National Anthem. It is their way of stonewalling," he said.**

Prof Varoufakis, steeped in Hellenic mythology, says they will resort to the "Penelope Ruse", the delaying tactic of weaving each day before unravelling it again secretly at night.

"They will suddenly suspend talks claiming the need for more fact-checking," he said.

The EU counter-attack has already begun, prompted by Mrs May's decision to call a snap election. Brussels had assumed that the Tories would be vulnerable **when Brexit talks come to a head in 2018, struggling to deal with internal brush fires on all sides.**

EU officials now realise it will not be so simple. The vote has thrown Brussels off its stride, and raised hackles.

"What they are trying to do is to reduce any benefit that Theresa May will get out of the election and downplay her democratic mandate," said Prof Varoufakis.

The only way to avoid being caught in the spider's web is to seize the initiative and take away their ability to create mischief, he said. He advises filing an immediate request to join the European Economic Area for a seven-year transition.

"They could not refuse this. They wouldn't have a leg to stand on," he said. The EEA is the "Norwegian option" backed by Labour.

It safeguards trade and the City, and allows withdrawal from areas of EU activity. But it also breaches Mrs May's red lines on free movement and the the European Court.

There lies the rub. What emerges from *Adults in the Room* is a eurozone regime where democratic accountability has broken down.

Real clout lies with a secretive "Eurogroup Working Group", operating on the margins. It is under the iron control of Thomas Wieser, the most powerful man in Brussels. While this body ostensibly serves elected finance ministers, they might as well be wallpaper.

"For almost all the meetings at which I was present the ministers received no substantial briefing on any of the topics," he said. Their role was to "approve and legitimise" pre-cooked decisions. "When the crisis came in 2008 they transferred the losses from the bankers to the most vulnerable people."

Prof Varoufakis is Europe's enfant terrible. He infuriated the EU and his own Syriza comrades. He broke diplomatic etiquette. He played the press. The establishment called him a dangerous gambler. Yet on the economics of the Greek crisis and the eurozone slump, he was right.

A chorus of Nobel Prize winners agree with him. The "fiscal water-boarding" of Greece, with its medieval policies of blood-letting, was counter-productive even on its own cruel terms. The 26pc contraction of the economy was so violent that it set off a downward spiral, causing the debt ratio to rocket. The Troika bail-outs forced a bankrupt Greek state to take on more loans in a squalid policy of "extend and pretend".

Greece needed 50pc debt relief at the onset of the crisis but this was deemed too dangerous because the eurozone — due to its own negligence — had no defences against contagion.

**The IMF confessed the errors in a devastating mea culpa. (See previous article in VVV some months ago where the**



Supervisory board of the IMF admitted the IMF under Christian LaGarde had been misguided in the 2015 bailout. ""Not a Whitewash, but a Greywash!"" The IMF admits its own "superficial and mechanistic" analysis.

It was bewitched by the ideological allure of the euro, disregarding the technical warnings of its own staffers. In the end it immolated Greece in a "holding action" to save a dysfunctional monetary union.

**Any Briton reading this damning account with an open mind might conclude that British democracy is best kept at a very safe distance from an EU that has so badly lost its way.**



## **Britain needs fighting 'Plan B' for trade as EU turns screws on Brexit**

**As Ambrose Evans-Pritchard commented:**

The European Union is hardening its terms on Brexit. There is a new hint of hostility in the language. The tone is peremptory. Those of us who hoped that Germany would push quietly for an amicable settlement can no longer be so confident. We now learn from Handelsblatt that the German finance ministry insisted on some of the most unfriendly changes to the EU's latest working documents. Berlin stipulated that Britain must honour "all obligations" (**Verpflichtungen**) for divorce payments, a tougher wording than the earlier, gentler talk of legal and budgetary "duties" (**Pflichten**).

It demanded that Britain desist from tax dumping and financial deregulation that would "jeopardize the stability of the union". This demand is almost insulting. British regulators have led efforts to recapitalize banks. It is the eurozone and Germany that have dragged their feet on tougher capital rules. There is no longer any attempt at diplomatic tact. The document states that the European Commission will "determine" when the UK has made "sufficient progress" as it jumps through the hoops, the way it handles accession talks for supplicants hoping to join. It reads like an imperial curia discussing a colony.

The French too have stepped up their demands, insisting that financial services be excluded from the trade deal. The City of London must respect the "regulatory and supervisory standards regime" of the EU in any future arrangement, suggesting that Britain will have to accept the sway of the European Court. Some argue that France will soften its line under a President Emmanuel Macron. His economic strategist is the anglophile Jean Pisani-Ferry, co-author of a Breugel paper proposing a 'continental partnership' between Britain and the EU that preserves very close ties. Sadly, Mr Pisani-Ferry has made no headway with this idea. I have met Mr Macron enough times - or have seen him at EU venues behind closed doors - to detect a

messianic fervour for the European project. He is a crusader by political religion, the EU's latterday Bernard de Clairvaux. But it is the hardening mood in Germany that is most ominous. The reason for the sudden change is unquestionably Theresa May's snap election. While we think that the Prime Minister's motive is - in part - to build a buffer against Brexit ultras in her own party, that is not the view in Berlin. Germans see her gambit as anti-EU sabre-rattling and a breach of good faith. (Ed: And also a direct, and very potent, challenge!)

"The EU wants to counter Theresa May's rhetoric and kill the idea that a bigger conservative majority will make any difference to their negotiating position," said John Springfield from the Centre for European Reform.

The German press has likened Mrs May's demarche to the defiant posturing of Alexis Tsipras in Greece. They almost take it as a given that her Brexit plan will fail and that she too will be forced to capitulate, grovelling for mercy. One wonders where the briefings are coming from in Berlin.

The parallel with Greece is on one level absurd. Syriza caved after the European Central Bank cut off liquidity and shut down the banking system. Britain is not in the euro or vulnerable to such coercion, and the strategic contours are entirely different. Yet the Greek saga is instructive. The lesson is that you do not bluff with the EU power structure. If Theresa May still thinks that "no deal is better than a bad deal", she had better have a credible Plan B, and she must be willing to activate it.

Falling back to the minimalist option of the World Trade Organisation and hoping to craft global trade deals smacks of defeat. It would leave Britain in limbo, pleading with the US, Japan, China, India, and other countries to embark on talks when they have larger matters at hand.

So it is time to think in revolutionary terms. Parliament's Exiting the EU Committee called earlier this month for a detailed study of what it would mean if the UK left the EU without a deal.

Downing Street should answer this legitimate request, and the menu should include the nuclear option of unilateral free trade. Adam Posen, head of the Peterson Institute in Washington, said Britain would face a rough time with no EU trade deal but at least such a plan has creative allure. "It is far more credible than other options," he said.

The current dismal narrative on Brexit would be transformed overnight. Britain would suddenly be seen by the rest of the world as pioneering nation at the forefront of globalism, reasserting Thatcherite audacity, rather than a crabby islanders in decline. "People's jaws would drop," says Professor Patrick Minford from Cardiff University.

Pure free trade cuts through the Gordian Knot, eliminating the need for an army of technocrat negotiators and for yet more of those supra-national tribunals that so proliferate, eviscerating democracies and sapping consent for globalism.

Prof Minford says the hide-bound political class has yet to give such clear blue sky proposals a serious airing. "It is so unfamiliar. It takes a mental somersault to break free of mercantilist thinking," he said.

Brussels might try to portray the move inaccurately as 'dumping' but the EU would be in the odd position of erecting barriers where none existed before, in effect retreating into unilateral protection vis-a-vis an open Britain.

The claim that the EU had to do this to defend the sacred acquis and the integrity of the Union would in such circumstances be humbug, inviting a good intellectual trashing.

Such a trade plan is certainly a high-risk venture. It might lead to a sterling crisis and a deeper break-down in confidence. But it might equally be a powerful catalyst for renewal. It deserves proper study.

**What is clear is that if the final document presented to Britain looks anything like the EU papers circulating just recently, no sovereign state can accept it. We will need a Plan B. It should be crystal clear, on the table, fully-loaded, with the trigger cocked.**

However, PM May has just recently stated: **Brussels must pay its own Brexit bill of billions of pounds for Britain's share of the European Investment Bank and other joint projects, Theresa May has indicated. The Prime Minister says in an interview with The Sunday Telegraph that "money paid in the past" by the UK must be taken into account in the final divorce bill. She insisted that the UK has financial "rights" that must be respected during discussions about payments as well as "obligations" to the body it is leaving.**

And it does not look as if she has any intention of capitulating. Yes, it will be punishing if the UK walks away, but not as punishing as staying in the EU as a totally captive, vassal state!

## GREECE

Two years later, little has changed. Greece is emerging from almost a decade of depression but the economic base is shattered. Youth unemployment is still 45pc. The debt ratio has risen further to 177pc of GDP. No debt relief is yet on the table. The country is still embroiled in interminable talks with the EU-IMF Troika. Its sovereignty remains utterly compromised. The former student radicals of Syriza are in the odd position of celebrating a primary budget surplus of 3.8pc of GDP to pay off foreign creditors in perpetuity. "It is a catastrophe. All this is doing is eating into the flesh and blood of the private sector. There is no investment," says Mr Varoufakis. What happened in Greece over those strange days in July 2015 raises disturbing questions about the character of Europe's monetary union.

**One might conclude that when push comes to shove, the euro system is held together by fear rather than democratic consent.**

*(Adults in the Room : My Battle with Europe's Deep Establishment published by Bodley Head (£20). To order a copy from the Telegraph for £15.99, call 0844 871 1514 or visit [books.telegraph.co.uk](http://books.telegraph.co.uk))*

\*\*\*If you are interested in reading these two articles in full, I cut and pasted them, and can send them to you in a pdf. Just emails me at : [anita@varvillagevoice.com](mailto:anita@varvillagevoice.com)

## AND THE EU?

### "It's disgusting" Sweden Democrats blast EU over Brexit bill

There are more and more rumbles of discontent throughout the EU, and quite a few of the 27 are voicing deep concern about the behaviour of the EU elite, in the Brexit negotiation. Swedish, Danish, Dutch MPs have all voiced huge disquiet. Peter Lindgren, of the Sweden Democrats, said Eurocrats were picking the sums "of the blue" and their demand for the UK to pay £85billion (€100bn) before the bloc agrees to a trade deal was ridiculous.

"The size of the money they are talking about, it's incredible, in this house there is no reality check what so ever."

Meanwhile, Mattias Karlsson, the group leader of the Sweden Democrats in the Swedish Parliament, reeled against Brussels' decision to punish the UK with the massive sum.

Karlsson said: "Yes, unfortunately, it looks like that. It just stresses the fact that we have to get rid of the current leadership of the European Union.

"They are unworthy, they are not acting in the interest of European citizens and the respective nations.

"We should not have these kinds of negotiations, it would be much better if every country had negotiations with Britain rather than now being forced to obey the rules and the terms of the European Union."

He added: "That's just undemocratic and it's a situation that cannot be tolerated anymore."

THE rules of the EU have been manipulated to give Theresa May an unfair and uphill battle to strike a fair Brexit rule, according to the former Finnish Prime Minister

A reminder of the previous article re FAKE NEWS out of the EU!!

## NEWS FROM BRUSSELS

### Fake news is old news in Brussels

**Fake news is big news but in Brussels it is also old news. Tactical leaks ahead of legislative proposals are a well-worn tool to heap political pressure on internal opponents in the Commission. But it is at the European Council summits when the EU fake news machine really cranks into gear.**

EU leaders disappear for hours at a time behind closed doors, leaving journalists entirely dependent on national and Council and Commission officials for a running commentary on the talks.

This system is open to abuse because it is largely dependent on trust, and on second or third-hand information from those in the room with the big beasts of Europe.

The hacks and hackettes of the press corps need to write or broadcast something while waiting for the deal.

And EU spin doctors have form when it comes to putting out misinformation.

Often, the information spoon-fed to the media is trustworthy. But not always, and the only way to cross-check is to speak to a number of different officials from different member states.

Even then, the press is vulnerable to a concerted effort to pull the wool over its eyes.

**Many journos bitterly remember a Friday evening summit during the Greek bailout crisis. Shortly before the markets closed, a unit of officials fanned out across the Justus Lipsius. They briefed that a deal was close. In fact, it wasn't agreed until the following Monday morning. Positive stories were filed, but afterwards, suspicions grew the briefings were a ploy to bolster the euro before the markets closed for the weekend.**

There are rumours of national officials, after a couple of beers, confessing to feeding journalists lies to lift the boredom of the hours of tough negotiations.

Such things are hard to prove and accusations of fake news cut both ways. But The Brief ([www.euractiv.com](http://www.euractiv.com)) recalls one instance in particular that shows how some in the EU view the press.

One journalist took a high-ranking official to task over an inaccurate briefing given during David Cameron's ill-fated EU reform negotiations. He confessed to having twisted the truth.

**He told the astonished pressman, "That was a tactic. I have tactics, when I speak to journalists, I don't speak because I'm a nice guy. I want to achieve something. "You write it, somebody reads it. I instrumentalise you." Well now we Know!**



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## TOULON IN TOP 14 FINAL

By **SIMON EVELEIGH**

As recently as a month ago, this season had the makings of being a complete disaster for Toulon supporters. However, finishing the regular season with victories away to Bordeaux and home to Pau meant that Toulon finished in fourth place and secured a home play-off against Castres.

That win in Bordeaux was Toulon's first on the road since October, but good home form has enabled Toulon to stay in contention all season. The play-off against Castres was a tough, attritional battle, with Toulon running out 26-22 winners.

For the last few years, the semi-finals have been played in the same place over the same weekend and with this year's venue being Toulon's home from home, Marseille, there was genuine belief that they could put the insipid season behind them and win a place in the final.

The problem for Toulon was that their semi-final opponents were La Rochelle, who had finished first during the regular season and had continued to astound the pundits with their attractive rugby and resolve.

The match was tight throughout, but shortly after half-time, La Rochelle took a 9 point lead and were slowly gaining control. Then, the turning point of the match occurred. In the 50<sup>th</sup> minute, Toulon's James O'Connor was lifted in the tackle and landed on his head. The guidelines for referee's are clear – player safety is paramount. The culprit, Pierre Aguillon, was given his marching orders and La Rochelle had to play the final half hour a man down. Whilst there are examples of teams that have won matches after losing a player to a red card, the fact remains that in a sport like rugby numerical advantage does count.

Slowly Toulon got back into the game through the boot of Leigh Halfpenny and we went into the last few minutes with the teams locked together on 15 all. La Rochelle had two opportunities to win the game, with one penalty from the halfway line falling inches short.

The last two minutes saw Toulon with possession of the ball deep in the La Rochelle 22 and on more than one occasion, it looked as if the defence would be breached. However, the La Rochelle line held firm, but Toulon's forwards managed to manoeuvre themselves under the posts and as the siren sounded fly-half Antony Belleau dropped the goal that took Toulon to the Stade de France.

There were no tries in the match and much of the fare on offer was uninspiring, but not one of the red and black supporters cared a jot. Winning ugly is far sweeter than losing pretty! The following day, the second semi-final was a huge contrast to the first, with seven tries being scored.

Clermont's supporters were out en masse and they sang their way through the whole 80 minutes, only pausing to be silent when the opposition kicker was lining up a kick at goal, a lesson for some of Toulon's more boorish followers.

In a fast, open game, Clermont were far the better team and at half-time it looked as if they might run away with it. Like La Rochelle the night before, Clermont also had a man dismissed early in the second-half, but they were able to shrug that off and keep playing rugby and scoring tries. A late flourish from Racing gave us a final scoreline of 37-31, but the gap between the sides was greater than that may suggest.

Clermont have been the best team in France for quite some time, but, as mentioned last time, they have an unenviable record in finals, champions of France once, runners up 11 times!

Looking at the season as a whole and the two semi-finals in particular, Clermont go into the final as hot favourites, but Toulon have hit form at just the right time and their defence against La Rochelle was excellent. Also, whether they admit it or not, the woeful record in finals must play on the minds of the players and in top level sport the psychological battle is as important as the physical one.

Mind you, Toulon's recent record in Top 14 finals is nothing to write home about. This is their fifth final in 6 years, although they have only won one of these (2014).

The match takes place at the Stade de France on Sunday 4<sup>th</sup> June, kick off 8.45pm.

One player not taking part in the final will be Wales' Leigh Halfpenny, as he joined up with the British & Irish Lions' squad immediately after the semi-final. The All Blacks have dominated world rugby for the last 10 years, winning the last two World Cups and there is probably no task more daunting in any sport than taking them on in their own backyard.

The Lions have a strong squad and the series is far from a foregone conclusion, but the chances of them emulating the 1971 vintage were dealt a serious blow when England's Billy Vunipola withdrew through injury. Coach Warren Gatland will talk about the great strength in depth of his squad, but he will probably have had a list of a few players who were crucial to his plans and Vunipola would certainly have been one of them.

Canal+ will be showing all of the matches, kick off 9.35am French time. The full programme is;

Saturday 3<sup>rd</sup> June Provincial Union XV

Wednesday 7<sup>th</sup> June Blues

Saturday 10<sup>th</sup> June Crusaders

Tuesday 13<sup>th</sup> June Highlanders

Saturday 17<sup>th</sup> June Maori All Blacks

Tuesday 20<sup>th</sup> June Chiefs

**Saturday 24<sup>th</sup> June 1ST TEST**

Tuesday 27<sup>th</sup> June Hurricanes

**Saturday 1<sup>st</sup> July 2<sup>ND</sup> TEST**

**Saturday 8<sup>th</sup> July 3<sup>RD</sup> TEST**

One final point. Sport is important to so many of us, but is of no consequence at all when compared to real life drama. The same week that saw 22 people lose their lives in Manchester, on the Friday night and again on the Saturday evening, I was one of 60,000+ people who went to the Stade Velodrome in Marseille to watch the semi-finals of the Top 14.

We went because we love rugby, we went to support our team, but we also went because nobody is going to scare us into not doing what normal people do week in week out.



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