

# Var Village Voice

*THE Var's English Language Newsletter*



**SIX NATIONS RUGBY**

**MARCH 2017**



Dear Readers,

I was chided, quite fairly, by two readers recently for lack of coverage of Events. This is partly my fault, due to lack of perseverance in chasing recalcitrant and extremely user unfriendly websites, but also unfortunately to a lack of said Events. Plus, obviously the Var Tourist Department has retrenched costs as much as possible, and no longer makes available its Var en Fete, online.

If one thinks back five or six years to the summer season, there were a dozen or more interesting, entertaining events all around the region, of all sorts. This past summer season, barely one! And why, a lot is due to lack of budget, the economy is in a bad way, municipalities have had to cut back, plus costs are now even higher as they have to reckon in costs of security, and security has been on the frontline for some time now.

Events the past year have been cancelled due to security concerns. Our village fireworks for the Quatorze were cancelled, as were lots of others round about, due to security concerns. The Nice Jazz Festival was immediately cancelled after the Nice Truck killings, not surprisingly. It must have cost the promoters a lot of money, unless they had a clause built into the performers' contracts, and they had to repay all the tickets.

So times are hard. I seriously debated whether or not to go to Paris, in January, wondering what the situation would be like, and I must admit, I was relieved when arriving at Toulon Airport, to see at least 6 to 8 hunky army guys, shouldering large guns, on guard duty there - a rather depressing sign of the times. In Paris, we travelled by bus, so much easier to jump on and off, in safety.

So one should keep Security in mind in these very troubled times.

But keep Cheerful – Anita

Ensemble **CAD VOCAL**  
Choeur & orchestre  
Direction: Jean-Marie GARDON

"Navidad Nuestra"  
&  
"Misa Criolla"

Solistes: Anne d'AMBRA - Luc DOMALLAIN - François LATIL

**FLAYOSC**  
DIMANCHE 5 MARS 2017  
16 h 30 - Eglise Saint Laurent

Réervations conseillées (places numérotées) : Tél : 06 80 32 10 73  
Email : cadvocal@orange.fr - ou billetterie sur place à l'entrée le jour du concert

Tarifs : 15 € / gratuit - de 12 ans

**CHOIR CONCERT FLAYOSC  
CAD VOCAL Sunday 5 March  
16h30**

**TOULON FESTIVAL OF  
MUSIQUE – CONCERTS  
Tuesday, 7 March 20h30,  
Palais de Neptune  
Quatuor Talish &  
Quatuor Akilene**

Le Festival  
de Musique de Toulon et sa Région

Grands Concerts  
Les Classiques du Festival 2016/2017  
en partenariat avec l'Opéra de Toulon

MARDI 7 MARS PALAIS NEPTUNE 20h30  
Quatuor Talish & Quatuor Akilene

Mozart  
Chostakovitch  
Mendelssohn

www.festivalmusiquetoulon.com

**Mozart, Chostakovitch,  
Mendelssohn**



**OPERA DE TOULON -  
CONCERT  
Friday 17 March 20H**



**YOSSIF IVANOV (violon) ORCHESTRE  
SYMPHONIQUE DE L'OPÉRA DE  
TOULON,**

Philippe Hersant Cinq pièces pour  
orchestre, Sergueï Prokofiev Concerto  
n°2 en sol mineur, opus 16 Antonin  
Dvořák Symphonie n°9, en mi mineur,  
opus 95 « Du Nouveau Monde »

**CONCERT – LYCEE  
DUMONT d'URVILLE  
Thursday 23 March –  
20h30**

**FANNY AZZURO (piano)**

**KRISTI GJEZI (violon)**

Prokofiev, Schumann & Faure



**OPERA DE TOULON –  
NUIT DU PIANO  
Saturday 29 April from  
18h - 00H**

**CLAIRE DÉSERT / JONAS VITAUD  
LAURE FAVRE KAHN / GUILLAUME  
COPPOLA, ORCHESTRE SYMPHONIQUE  
DE L'OPÉRA DE TOULON**

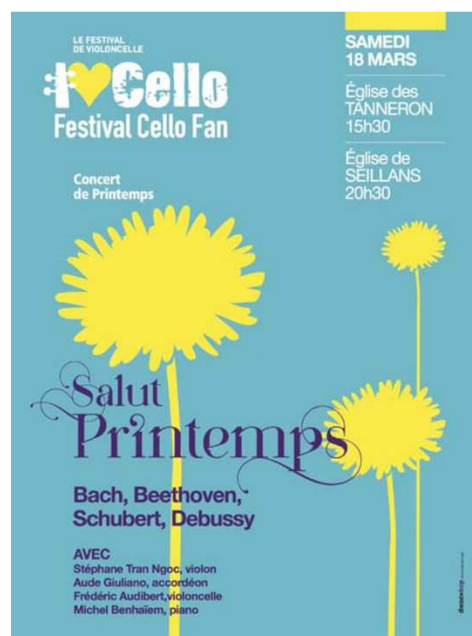


It's worth getting in ahead of time to book for this splendid night of wonderful piano music spanning from Granados, to Chopin, to Mantovani, to every favourite piano work one has ever heard. During the long piano fest Opera de Toulon propose handy snacks, under the title, la Fourchette qui Roule, with panier repas of €10 per person with wine. Reservations required.

**FREE PIANO CONCERTS**  
**Wednesday 26 April from**  
**10h – 19h Toulon.**

In addition there will be free Concerts in Toulon Wednesday 26 April, in Place Puget, Place Victor Hugo, Carre du Port and galerie du Centre Mayol. In case of bad weather everything transfer to Centre Mayol.

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



**CONCERTS CELLO FAN**  
**Saturday 18 March**  
**Eglise de Tanneron**  
**15h00**

**Eglise de Seillans 20h30**  
 Bach, Beethoven, Schubert, Debussy  
 Information : [www.cellofan.com](http://www.cellofan.com)

**FOR PROGRAMME OF**  
**FILMS IN VO – THIS MONTH**  
**GO TO END OF EDITION**



**LES HALLES DE BOCUSE, LYON – OYSTERS - & SHE WHO LOOKS AFTER THE CATS**

**A CONSOLATION PRIZE**  
**BY TRENCHERMAN**

I remember my first time; I suppose we all do to one extent or another. If it was a delight it will have a special place in our memories, and if not, oh-well!

My initiation was organised for me by a kindly uncle who had decided that I was the right age to move on in life, the right age to experience something new and different and sophisticated.

I am not sure I was really consulted until we were outside the premises and I was feeling a little nervous.

"Don't worry", I was told, "it will be alright, and once you have tasted the delight, you will want more".

The prophesy turned out to be true, and ever since I have been a devotee.

She, who must be consulted on such things, had a different view, it seems her first time was not all it might have been, but she persevered and now even looks forward to repeat performances.

So here we were on an away weekend in Lyon and intent on taking advantage of all the delights we could reasonably expect.

The first oyster of the morning brought back memories, a smile to my lips and a taste of the sea to my palate. The glass of Muscadet was the perfect choice to bring out the best of the Atlantic oysters from

Utah Beach, and Chez Antonin was the place to have them.

We were in our idea of heaven, Les Halles de Bocuse in the centre of Lyon and a place of pilgrimage for those who want to shop for and eat great food made from great produce.

I have mentioned this Valhalla before and will likely mention it again, it is a food market that not only prides itself on having great food stalls peopled by those who love what they do and take immense pride in it, but who will also serve up their produce in a home cooked way, at a few tables set beside their stalls.

We had begun the day at a stall just inside the entrance, with coffee that was reminiscent of Italy and accompanied by pains raisins from the Boulanger opposite.

We had then wandered slowly around the market deciding what and where we would have our next treat?

A young Catalan was carefully slicing slivers of Pata Negra, the amazing Spanish ham made from pigs that have spent their last months in an oak forest gorging themselves on acorns, before being hung for a few years to mature. Along with plates of this he was offering a selection of Spanish wines, my choice was a warm red from Valencia.

This pit stop allowed us to discuss where we might stop next, and so some twenty minutes later, we were enjoying oysters fresh from Normandy that morning with a crispy Muscadet washing them down.

By now the market was buzzing and people were assembling their lunch or dinner or even dinner parties, offering pre-prepared dishes, which would grace any Michelin starred restaurant, of which Lyon has many.

If I were to come back in another life, instead of coming back as a cat looked after by she who loves them, I would choose to be a Lyonnaise and to live next door to Les Halles.

The reason to be in Lyon, as if we needed one, was to attend an auction wherein were a couple of paintings which interested me, so after our shopping and eating, we headed off to the *salle des ventes* for a viewing, the auction being the following day.

When, on the morrow, we arrived for the sale, the room was packed and finding a suitable place to perch was not easy, nor was it easy to watch as the pieces I was interested in sailed off into twice the upper estimate regions, leaving me in their dust.

It was not the only disappointment to come my way this month although two trips to the UK brought some successes.

It was on one of these trips that found me on an Easy Jet flight bound for Gatwick and although I cannot bring myself to eat any of the un-tempting items from their menu, they do serve recognisable brands of alcohol and as I was not driving, I succumbed to a cocktail. They offer a Bloody Mary mix, which with ice cubes and Vodka makes a very acceptable mid morning pick me up. I sipped and nodded silent approval to myself reviewing what awaited me in London, when the woman sitting beside me asked if the BM mix was ok?

I assured her it was, and not only that but it counted as one of your five a day, oh no she said, it is not five any more it is ten.

Obviously the look of dread on my face prompted her to ask what was wrong.

"Well", I said, "I have been finding it hard enough to drink the other four, but ten"!!!!

Pip, pip



## OPERA NEWS By ROBERT TURNBULL

Summer is *Ecumen In* for music lovers, so it's time to get out the gladrags and credit card and start planning the season.

For die-hard opera fans the summer's most interesting event is unquestionably the **Bayreuth festival's *Die Meistersinger*** directed by Barry Kosky, which will replace the much reviled production of this masterpiece by Katharina Wagner, the composer's great granddaughter. Kosky has enjoyed huge success as director of the *Komische Opera* in Berlin. The zany, camp Australian always injects fun and passion into the operas and operettas he directs, and my god do they need it! The *Merry Widow* was never so gay! Let's hope he can put the comedy back in Wagner's comic opera which so often is treated by directors as a polemic on German pride and identity. Hans Sachs in twin set and pearls? Probably not, but at least the opera promises to be funny!

How to get hold of a ticket? Well, that's another matter, but I am told that if you turn up in a tuxedo with wads of cash you shouldn't have a problem. A decade ago, one had to wait 11 years to get a seat through official channels. Artistically at least, those were the good old days and everyone wanted to go. These days, when productions are being panned by critics and people are giving the festival a wide berth, it's not so hard to find tickets. In any case, this *Meistersinger* holds great promise. There are always ways and means, usually through on-line agents or by delivering quiet words to the hotel concierge.

Tickets are still available for the festival at Salzburg, the city which resounds to The Sound of Music and the munching of Mozart chocolates in the Tiergarten. However you might have to sell some of your jewels first. Top tickets for opera go for up to 900 euros. For this you get to hear the stars and even catch them between rehearsals around town with heavy scores under their arms.

Outside the *festpielhaus Daimlers* line up to escort the German and Austrian elite in their *dirndls* and *lederhosen* to and fro the *Schloss Fuschl*, Ribbentrop's former country estate and now a five star hotel. Salzburg has many different facets.

During the day, the vast concert hall smells more like a farm, as horses relieve themselves on the pavement outside as they wait patiently for tourists.

The programme this year is dominated by Riccardo Muti's conducting of *Aida* with the wonderful Anna Netrebko in the title role. Other highlights include Berg's moving, expressionist *Wozzeck*, title-role sung by the incomparable Mathias Goerne and Shostakovich's equally powerful *Lady Macbeth of Mtsensk*, conducted by Mariss Jansens starring Swedish soprano Nina Stemme. Baroque lovers will enjoy Handel's *Ariondante* with Cecilia Bartoli and Rolando Villazon and may also want to catch Mozart's *La Clemenza de Tito* directed by Peter Sellars, though the real deal will be the new production of Aribert Reimann's *Lear* starring the Canadian Gerald Finlay and conducted by Franz Welser-Most.

Closer to home, France has its own glamourfest at Aix-en-Provence every summer. The atmosphere might be a tad more relaxed and the tickets slightly cheaper but the productions – many of them Anglophone – can be nauseatingly pretentious. Last year's *Pelleas et Melisande*, directed by British director Katie Mitchell was a case in point. This year Simon McBurney and conductor Daniel Harding take on Stravinsky's *The Rakes Progress*, which boasts a clever libretto by WH Auden. Some see it as a paragon of wit, others as rather boring, but if anyone can liven up this somewhat dry and cerebral opera it is McBurney, whose *Magic Flute* for English National Opera is considered one of the best ever. He has a great cast in Kyle Ketelsen, Paul Appleby and Julia Bullock.

*Carmen* returns to Aix after many years with Stephanie d'Oustrac and Michael

Fabiano as the doomed lovers and the new opera this year is Pinocchio, composed by the Belgian Philippe Boesmans, who, intriguingly turns a puppet into an operatic character. The Glyndebourne Festival is showing six operas this year, perhaps the most interesting being the UK premiere of an opera written almost 400 years ago. Cavalli's *Hipermestra* has suffered the same kind of incomprehensible neglect as his other operas, so its resuscitation in the hands of maestro William Christie and director Graham Vick is bound to be worthwhile. Don't forget formal evening dress is customary for this summer festival/posh picnic in the grounds of a country estate. Given the perils of the British weather, it is also advisable to bring an additional warm layer: cardigans, wraps and jackets are a good idea!



## LUNCH IS FOR WIMPS!

**From Frankfurt to Paris, Milan, Dublin and even Warsaw, European cities are preparing the red carpet to welcome London bankers and financiers fleeing a post-Brexit Britain. However, all might not be going as well as expected.**

First off French Finance Minister Sapin tackled French efforts to lure financiers from London to Paris have been ridiculed by top City figures, who have rejected the country's attempts to paint itself as a pro-business, tax-light haven with flexible labour laws. Christian Noyer, the former governor of the Bank of France, has been

on a City charm offensive, trying to convince financial institutions to set up over the Channel, arguing that the French capital would be more attractive than post-Brexit Britain.

However, The Sunday Telegraph understands the pitch failed to impress London's elite, who associate France more with high taxes and tough employment laws.

"Not in a million years," said a senior London financier.

HSBC is publicly considering moving as many as 1,000 more staff to its French base. JP Morgan has said it will not move jobs to France unless labour market rules are relaxed.

### Lost in Translation French finance minister's lack of English baffles US bankers

**France has taken several steps to entice companies and banks to up sticks and move across the Channel. They've cut red tape and even – EVEN! – published documents in English.**

French Finance Minister Michel Sapin failed to impress US bankers in a pitch to move their London operations to Paris following Brexit – because he spoke to them in French through an interpreter. Sapin was visiting Washington DC during October's G20 meetings, the Financial Times reported, when he addressed senior bankers at Goldman Sachs and Bank of America as well as Swiss giant UBS over lunch. None of the banks present commented publicly on the meeting, or whether they are likely to move London operations to Paris. However, one unnamed source told the newspaper that the fact the French minister of finance needed an interpreter -- was "a negative."

Interpret that as OOPS – Bummer!

One can imagine the response of the Gordon Geckos gathered for this meeting : "What the heck is he saying?" "It's in French, wait for the translation"" "You mean we have to sit through this TWICE!" "Holy Cow!"

Subsequently another French delegation tackled a bunch of Bankers in London with a charm offensive -

recently stepping up its offensive by sending dignitaries to London to meet with bankers, insurance firms and asset managers to persuade them to move their activities to Paris.

"The battle is tightening between Paris and Frankfurt," said a spokesperson for

Valerie Pécresse, the head of the Ile-de-France region, who led Monday's raiding party to London.

It sounds as if Mme Pécresse, did a rather Mselle Kiki OOOh La La presentation finishing up with "When was the last time you took your partner off for a weekend in Frankfurt?"

A low blow aimed at their competition – apparently Frankfurt has a reputation for a rather dull and staid night life!

Yet again I can imagine the London Gordon Geckos' reactions:

""What the heck do I care about my employees sex life – I want them in the office in front of their terminals, bright eyed and bushy tailed and monitoring the Hang Seng Index at 6 am or earlier, and doing trades. The hell with their love life!!"

Meantime London bankers looked very unappreciative of French Labour laws, and high taxes.

In October the World Bank gave France a reality check in its bid to attract Brexit business. In its global ranking Doing Business 2017 France was placed down in 29<sup>th</sup> position for the "ease of doing business", one lower than the previous year's position. While 29 out of 190 doesn't sound bad, when you consider the likes of Georgia, Macedonia and Latvia are ahead of France, it doesn't look so rosy. Also France languishes near the bottom of the list of EU countries on the EF English Proficiency Index, behind Bulgaria, Spain and Italy, with a score of 54.33 percent. At the top of the Index are more attractive EU destinations for English speakers, including The Netherlands (in first place with a proficiency of 72.16 percent), Denmark and Sweden, countries where fluency in English is almost universal.

Mark Boleat, the policy chairman at the City of London Corporation, said he would expect cities such as Paris to compete for jobs, but added: "I am confident that the depth of talent here, our attractiveness as a place to work and live, and assets like English rule of law, language and our regulatory landscape will mean we remain the number one global financial centre."

Paris may be in for a long wait, for as Jean-Frederic de Leusse, head of UBS in France, told the French Senate last week, until France reforms its labour, tax and insolvency codes, there is virtually no chance of Paris becoming a serious rival to London as a financial centre.



Two of the biggest global banks have told French politicians in brutally clear language that Paris has almost no chance of capturing serious business from the City of London without radical reform of the country's labour code.

A special Brexit panel in the French Senate revealed just how difficult it will be for Paris to become Europe's pre-eminent financial centre once Britain leaves the EU. Any migration of business is more likely to go to Dublin, Frankfurt, or even to New York.

Jean-Frédéric de Leusse, head of UBS in France, said French law does not offer major banks the complete flexibility they need in the fast-moving world of high finance and complex trading.

**"As the saying goes, it takes three days to fire somebody in London, three months in Switzerland, and three years in Paris. It may be an exaggeration, but it is probably quite close to reality," he said.**

Mr de Leusse said UBS employs far more French citizens in London than it does in Paris, and that is unlikely to change quickly.

Rene Proglia from Morgan Stanley said those making the key decisions at corporate headquarters in New York could not care a hoot about the lifestyle or happiness of their staff. It is futile making a pitch that Paris is a nice place to live.

"That is not their concern, so don't get carried away with a humanist philosophy. Like it or not, their only objective is to defend the interests of the shareholders," he said.

Mr Proglia said the crucial issue for banks is the level of corporate taxation and the overall cost of labour. France is simply not competitive by this metric.

"Employers' social charges are colossal. It is a handicap, and the gap with Frankfurt is a very big problem," he said.

Two of the biggest global banks have told French politicians in brutally clear language that Paris has almost no chance of capturing serious business from the City of London without radical reform of the country's labour code.

Paris, Frankfurt et al will gain, certainly, but possibly not at the City's expense.

Both as a financial centre and a city, no other metropolis in Europe comes close to London (certainly not as head hunters in Dublin admitted, London dominates with its talent pool).. ""We may not like it very much, but it is in such vast, super-cities that economic activity is being

increasingly concentrated. Once they reach a certain critical mass, they become self-sustaining.

Talent is drawn to them regardless of the efforts of jealous pretenders to divert it, **for if you want to spend a romantic weekend in Paris, London is where you are most likely to earn the money to do it.**



## A CANDLE IN THE DARKNESS!

In case you missed this story. Just before Christmas Berlin suffered it's worst example of Islamic terrorism, when a so-called refugee from Tunisia drove a truck into a crowd of Christmas revellers at a market. The Polish driver, **Lukasz Urban** was killed by the Jihadist prior to the attack.

Horried by these events one Brit reacted positively. David Duncan from Otley, in the north, a truck driver himself, he realised how it would affect the Polish driver's family, and so he started a crowdfunding page to raise money for Urban's widow and children. Within a short space of time, the crowdfunding page had raised over £200,000. Duncan then travelled to Urban's home town in Poland for the funeral, together with several hundred other truck drivers, and met with the widow. Leaving the funeral several hundred truck/rig drivers honked their support.

Later back in London, the Polish Ambassador to the UK Arkay Rzegocki, thanked David Duncan for his humanitarian gesture saying "His compassion moved many both in the UK and back in Poland. It is an inspiring example of British-Polish solidarity which never fails in times of crisis."



## ONE CORNER OF THE BALKANS IS FOREVER PECKHAM!

It's a place where Del Boy is always on the make, Rodney is always a plonker and there's always some knock off clobber to be bought at the Nag's Head. But it's not Peckham - the setting for the classic British sitcom Only Fools and Horses- but the tiny Balkan country of **Montenegro**.

Here the citizens know by heart the jokes and catchphrases written by John Sullivan about the life of market traders and wheeler dealers in the south east London suburb, and hail the actor who plays Derek Trotter's hapless brother Rodney as a national hero.

The popularity of the show was at fever pitch following Nicholas Lyndhurst's appointment as Unicef ambassador to promote the charity's work with orphans in the country.

Only Fools and Horses has had a widespread following in Montenegro since the 1990s, when its humorous accounts of trying to get by on a working class estate in Peckham chimed with the country's struggling population. Now whenever Lyndhurst visits the country to promote the UN's work on fostering he finds himself mobbed by fans.

**"When I first came in 2013 I got out of the car to go to a press conference... and as I walked down the road, I still cannot believe it, people outside the restaurants and bars stood up and they all started to applaud. I felt like the Queen,"**

**Lyndhurst told local journalists. "I then realised how popular Rodney was."**

The popularity of the 55-year-old actor can be explained by the country's surprising love affair with the long-running BBC sitcom.

The saga of a dodgy independent businessman trying to make a living in South London has over the past 25 years become a television institution in Montenegro.

Repeats of the series, called Mucke locally and roughly translated as funny or shady business, are rarely off the television. Phrases such as 'lovely jubbly' and 'Rodney, you plonker' are familiar to those who can speak no other English and the country has a well-subscribed Only Fools and Horses fan club.

The Montenegrin capital, Podgorica, has a popular theme bar named after the series' local pub, The Nag's Head, while the city of Niksic has another restaurant called Del Boy.

The comedy exploits of the Trotter brothers from Peckham, which originally began in 1981 on the BBC, first struck a chord with Montenegro in the 1990s. International sanctions imposed on Serbia and Montenegro during the Bosnian War saw their economies collapse and smuggling and shady business become a way of life.

Jelena Gardovic, a 32-year-old television journalist, said: "The 1990s was a very hard time on the Balkan countries. My father used to come home with a salary that would only buy chewing gum.

"We could see that Del Boy was someone like us, he was trying like us all the time to get money, buying and selling, and people related to him.

"And even in the hard times he was positive. When he came here, the streets were full of people. Everyone here knows who David Beckham is, but Rodney is a star too."

Rade Obradovic, a 34-year-old salesman, and a regular at The Nag's Head, said he made a point of watching the entire series at least once a year.

So a large part of Montenegro resounds to the echos of Del boy & Rodney & Trigger. You couldn't make it up, could you?

## INTERESTING BOOK READ

For long time residents, or newly arrived ones, the latest book by Michael Nelson might prove a useful informative addition to one's library.

Titled "THE FRENCH RIVIERA – A HISTORY" it gallops one at speed from the beginnings of pre-history, thence via the arrival of the Greeks, the Romans, and loads of fascinating history after that. My favourite period is that of the Romans, who founded so much in this region. Publisher Michael Nelson.



## THE MIGRANT DISASTER! FINALLY, FINALLY, MERKEL ADMITS GERMANY HAS A PROBLEM WITH ISLAMIC TERRORISM!

• **The German chancellor agreed measures to speed up deportation**

• **An estimated 450,000 rejected migrants are set to be sent home**

• **Scheme includes £76million of cash incentives to leave voluntarily**

Mid February, Chancellor Merkel announced in a highly-embarrassing U-turn over the ill-fated plan, which saw at least 1.2million migrants flock to the country, Merkel has now vowed to send many of them home. The German chancellor agreed a package of measures to speed up the deportation process for an estimated 450,000 migrants who have been rejected asylum.

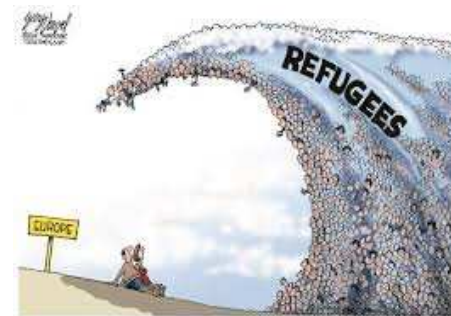
In a podcast to the German public she announced they now face a threat from Islamic Terrorism, as illustrated by the truck killing in Berlin, and incidents in Wurzburg and Ansbach. Her U turn is also seen as being a desperate attempt to claw back voter support as she recently announced that she would be standing for a fourth term in the upcoming September elections - and is increasingly facing huge opposition from Martin Schultz, who recently stood down as President of the European Parliament - which she is losing week by week.

## SHE LET THE GENIE OUT OF THE BOTTLE

It seems it took a disaster like the truck killing Christmas revellers in Berlin, to finally bring it home to Merkel and her Ministers. They all up to now, had been playing blind man's buff, hear no evil, see no evil, and to this end, were putting pressure on the German press from reporting incidents, stopping police from noting immigrants, North Africans, or others as being responsible for sex crimes, rapes, assaults, sexual molestation, etc. yet it had all been going on ever since and well before Chancellor Merkel struck her wonderfully humanitarian gesture, let them all in, she said, We can do it.

## IN DENIAL

From the time that good Germans welcomed Syrian refugees - and they did - the Germans stood up and cheered and welcomed Syrian refugees from the war, they were good people, they did their best, they volunteered and welcomed asylum seekers - but they had not expected to be so utterly overwhelmed, and engulfed, as they then found themselves.



However Merkel and her ministers put a cap on reporting crimes that might involve migrants. The cat leapt out of the bag following the very nasty events on New Year's Eve 2015 in Cologne, when gangs of migrants targeted women and girls, sexually molesting them. The



news only filtering out several weeks after the actual event. To this date the German police have virtually not succeeded in convicting anyone involved. Events like this have trebled, quadrupled, sexual assaults, molestations, rape etc. But Merkel and her ministers, exerted pressure on the newspapers not to report the incidents, not to link migrants, exerted pressure on the police authorities to tailor their reports, leaving out mentions connecting immigrants in any way. For example, the 'political correctness being enforced on the police is as follows:

*“German police also deliberately downplay the true scale of the migrant crime problem by referring to migrant criminals with politically correct euphemisms such as “southerners” (Südländer), men with “dark skin” (dunkelhäutig, dunklere Gesichtsfarbe, dunklem Hauttyp) or a combination of the two: “southern skin color” (südländische Hautfarbe).*

*An even more toxic practice is for police deliberately to omit any references to migrants in crime reports. This lapse makes it impossible for German citizens to understand the true scale of the migrant crime problem.”*

*“The actual number of migrant-related sex crimes in Germany is at least two or three times higher than the official number. Only 10% of the sex crimes committed in Germany appear in the official statistics. — André Schulz, head of the Criminal Police Association”*

If you want to see the scale of events, and of censorship, just go to [www.gatestoneinstitute.org](http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org), and read the reports, under the heading **Europe's Migrant Crisis**”.

Now there are numerous NO-GO zones in suburbs of large towns in Germany, where the police fear to go in normal police cars, as they are attacked by gangs of migrants, throwing stones, bottles, and now molotov cocktails! Gangs that organize themselves via their smart phones. In addition the authority of the police are now being threatened by Islamic vigilantes, organising SHARIA PATROLS.



“The vigilantes are followers of Salafism, a virulently anti-Western ideology that openly seeks to replace democracy in Germany (and elsewhere) with an Islamic government based on Sharia law.”

## IN DENIAL –

All this time, Merkel and her ministers could see what had been happening elsewhere in Europe, particularly in France, worst hit with twenty one incidents of terrorist violence. Charlie Hebdo, the Kacher supermarket, several incidents on trains, the Bataclan massacre, the truck murders in Nice, all happened after Merkel let in thousands of refugees, but only now is she and her government admitting some sort of responsibility. All the terrorists responsible for these outrages, travelled along refugee routes, with phoney papers, into France, Germany and elsewhere.

Now, in the light of the Berlin truck incident the Bundestag voted to speed up deportation and mandatory finger printing, well over a year and a half since letting in the 1.2 million refugees. Prior to that they had no real system whatsoever for checking papers, fingerprinting, etc. Thousands were let in with very little checks, no preparation, no computer systems. Up to around two month ago, they had only signed up 50,000 on temporary work permits, tens of thousands of others were denied right to stay, and served deportation orders. With the result that although they have subsequently denied residence permits to thousands, have served expulsion /deportation orders on tens of thousands, they have no real idea where these tens of thousands of refugees, asylum seekers, and perhaps Jihadists have gone, they have melted into the woodwork.



## CASE IN POINT

The main suspect in the Berlin Truck massacre, Anis Amri, had been investigated by intelligence services in the state of North Rhine-Westphalia (NRW)

on suspicion of planning a terror plot and had been categorized as a security threat. Prior to that his history had been that he had stolen a truck in Tunisia, where he lived, been sentenced, he was about 16 years old, managed to escape, got boat to Sicily, where put in a accommodation he was found guilty of setting fire to the hostel and sentenced to four years in prison. On release he moved up through Italy, presumably accumulating false papers.

But when he moved to Berlin in February 2016, a lack of communication between security services in the two states appears to have contributed to him being able to escape the attentions of police. In the meantime via numerous false identities, at least 14! he was collecting money from at least 14 welfare agencies all around Berlin.

He had also been told to leave the country in June 2016, but remained free in the months that Germany tried to get official documents about him from his home country of Tunisia.

Tunisia refused to accept him as one of their nationals, but finally acceded, reluctantly sending papers, too late, two days after the Christmas Market slayings. Meantime escaping the truck killings, he had managed to flee across Germany, and travel through Holland, by bus into France and thence Italy, crossing several borders on the way. So much for Schengen!

## WHAT GERMANY NEEDS – GERMANY GETS

Was Merkel's gesture all that humanitarian, partly yes, partly political grandstanding, and mainly, and

predominately economic necessity, as Germany has a fast falling birth-rate, and needs thousands of workers, so it was a calculated effort to stave off Germany's demographic decline and to preserve the future viability of the German welfare state. Now it emerges Germany needs 300,000 people a year for the next 40 years to stop population decline.

So the refugee flood – and terrorist threat that it brought with it – which has subsequently engulfed several EU countries is all down to Germany's



economic needs, the hell with anyone else.

Which is pretty much how the EU has been run, for Germany's benefit for some time. For example the floating of the euro which greatly advantaged Germany with low valuation for the Deutsche Mark, and higher valuation for the Italian Lira and French Frank. An accusation levied by several fiscal authorities over the past year or so, and now more recently by President Trump's advisor.

## **TRUMP IS NOT ALL WRONG**

As Economics journalist Ambrose Evans-Pritchard explained:

""As a matter of strict objective fact, Donald Trump's trade guru is correct. Germany is the planet's ultimate currency manipulator.

**The implicit Deutsche Mark is indeed "grossly undervalued" The warped mechanism of monetary union allows Germany to lock in a permanent 'beggar-thy-neighbour' trade advantage over Southern Europe, inflicting mass unemployment on the victim countries and blighting their futures.**

Whatever you think of Peter Navarro's trade philosophy, he is right that Germany's chronic, huge, and illegal current account surplus - 8.8pc of GDP - saps global demand and seriously distorts the world economy.

Let us concede that this super-surplus is an accident of history, rather than the result of a strategic conspiracy by Chancellor Helmut Kohl in the early 1990s. The German people never wanted the euro in any active sense.

The Bundesbank went to some lengths to head off the creation a 'greater euro' with too many ill-suited countries, constructed on the unworkable foundations that we can all see so clearly today.

That said, monetary union was never entirely innocent. The German Chambers of Commerce and Industry (DIHK) railed against the periodic devaluations by Italy and France in the various fixed exchange experiments of the pre-euro era. They were fully aware of the mercantilist advantage of fixing the D-Mark rate in perpetuity, and their influence played its part in the German acceptance of the Maastricht Treaty.

Once the euro was underway, Germany then pushed through policies in labour law and tax policies that amounted to an 'internal devaluation' - cutting unit labour costs in manufacturing in the single year of 2005 by 4.4pc, for example -

and continued to screw down its intra-EMU exchange rate long after there was any justification for doing so. The effect was to further entrench commercial supremacy.

Large current account surpluses are invariably the result of tax policies, regulations, hidden barriers, and an overall governing structure that punishes consumption and fosters exports.

Germany - for example - forces households to cross-subsidize the power costs of export industries.

## **GERMANY'S TRADE SURPLUS**

""Germany's current account surplus has exploded to almost 9pc of GDP. This violates EU rules but nothing is done about it.

This would not matter much if Germany had a floating exchange rate: the currency would correct for the distortions over time. But such practices within the euro system are an entirely different matter. Nothing self-corrects.

We all know why Brussels tolerates Germany's open breaches of single market rules and competition policy, just as we know why it winked at equally clear violations of EU treaty law on the Gazprom pipeline, and why it fails to do anything about Germany's violation of the macro-imbalances procedure on current account surpluses.

EU law is clear, or should be. Persistent surpluses (three years in a row) above 6pc of GDP are illegal. Germany is not even close to compliance, and the picture has been getting worse, not better. This violation is a much bigger threat to the long-term viability of monetary union than the trivial budget infringements by minnow states - so fiercely condemned by the European Commission.

Yet nothing is ever done about it.

Germany flouts the law with impunity, even as it lectures others on the rule of law. **It is this double standard that feeds a pervasive sense of cynicism about the European Project.**""

Merkel responded with a tetchy remark that she - Germany - did not manipulate the euro. However in the last few days she has been reported as missing the old Deutsche Mark, agreeing implicitly "If we still had the D-Mark it would surely have a different value than the euro does at the moment."""

Newspaper reported later that in a telling statement issued during the visit of US vice-president Mike Pence to Munich,

Frau Merkel revealed even she is becoming concerned with the European wide currency. And amid calls for the Deutsche Mark to be returned in her native Germany she said the ECB's policy is not geared towards her country and benefits other member states. And she implied her country's involvement in the single currency, which is used by 19 of the 28 member states of the European Union, is propping up less productive economies.

Very possibly, but one perhaps should ask the question, why are these countries so much less productive?

See preceding column about Germany's Trade Surplus.

So on the whole the EU has been the boat that floated Germany for all these years.

**A leaked report from Mrs Merkel's government said Germany would need to take in 12m migrants over the next four decades to keep Germany's population size stable.**

But the staggering figures unearthed by the *Rheinische Post* are only set to infuriate far-right voters who are already reeling after almost 2.2 million migrants flooded into the country in 2015 alone. Not only are they now paying migrants to go home, with generous inducements, but they have placed a ban on the families of as many as three million people who arrived in Germany during the migrant crisis joining their relatives. The ban, which also applies to women and children and elderly relatives from war torn countries, has been put in place for two years after the country revealed the crisis will cost £37bn this year.

Plus they are also trying to limit child benefits to children actually living in the country. Something that David Cameron tried very hard to achieve for the UK, but got slapped down by the EC.

**""Germany has been almost immune to the downsides of EU membership. It has had to put up some cash to keep the euro ticking over, but a sizeable chunk of it effectively bailed out its own banks. In return, Germany's size and wealth have allowed Berlin almost to dictate terms in the EU. And the euro has suppressed the cost of German exports, to its advantage.""**

## **EU UNEMPLOYMENT TOTALLY IGNORED**

No consultation was given to other EU states, in opening the floodgates to thousands of immigrants, to France, Italy,

Greece, Spain, all shouldering stagnating economies, and large unemployment figures, over 10% in France, nearer 28% for the young, in Italy worse, and even worse in Greece. Meantime Greece and Italy shouldered most of the cost and shattering problems of dealing with the thousands of immigrants that continued to arrive on their shores, increasing month by month.

Merkel and the EC kept on making announcements of money to be allocated to Greece and Italy, together with provision of active counsellors to process refugees, but how much of that promised assistance arrived?

Recently Merkel travelled to Stuttgart to pick up an award for her humanitarian response to the migrant crises, but which has mostly been condemned not only in her own country but in Italy, Greece and Malta.

She said she intends to continue on her path appearing to ignore the fact that Germany has been plagued with migrant problems since 2015. But her acceptance of the award was not welcomed by everyone. Far, far from it, although she was greeted by her party faithful when she decided to run again for the Chancellorship, her party have had to pick and choose at political gatherings ever since to avoid scenes of her being booed and hissed, as a result of the Migrant Disaster.

## HINDSIGHT

A critic reading this might well say, Ah, it's all too easy to see this in hindsight. BUT NO! Had Chancellor Merkel- and others Eurocrat politicians - looked out of their ivory tower isolation - she and they could have seen very obviously the results of uncontrolled immigration. It was all there to be noted, observed, had they wanted to look, for the UK had been struggling with precisely this sort of immigration problem for years. First of all Sangatte, then the Calais Migrant camp, where it was obvious that although some gathered there were genuine refugees, asylum seekers, the vast majority were young single male Economic migrants with low to no skills. As a journalist just recently commented, following Tony Blair's impassioned call for UK voters to ""Rise Up!"" against Brexit! Cast your minds back to 2004. It was then that New Labour decided to open UK borders to East European migrants. Almost every other EU state wisely chose to exercise their right to

prevent migrants from the "new countries" working for seven years. Not Tony "I'd Like To Teach The World To Sing (in Perfect Harmony)" Blair. He was hellbent on changing the composition of this country, creating a multicultural paradise that would always vote Labour while promoting a European superstate of which the UK would be a small, westerly corner.

The Blair government was "very relaxed" about the population rocketing towards 70 million, never mind the intolerable pressure that would put on our schools, housing and hospitals. The British people - that's all of us appalling, racist Little Englanders - would just have to suck it up.

"Thorough research" by the Home Office concluded that a "relatively small" number of East European migrants would come - up to 13,000 per year. (Almost as good as that excellent guess about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction.

Ed: \* I remember the report well, It stated that just a few dentists might arrive, plus some circus performers! Circus performers!!)

By 2010, a quarter of a million were arriving annually. And Tony Blair has the cheek to call Brexit voters uninformed! Tony Blair and his Ministers preached the gospel of Multiculturalism, letting in thousands of immigrants, and then East Europeans, in totally uncontrolled waves, padding their inner city Labour strongholds with immigrants from Pakistan, Bangladesh, Bengal, etc. Until finally the myth of Multiculturalism was laid to rest in ignominy, as immigrant communities refused to integrate, and as the UK found itself struggling with huge welfare debts, with ghettos, where women speak no English, and where such communities gave rise to the appalling Rotherham Sex Grooming Scandal\*\* (it happened also in at least two other UK communities). It is interesting to note that in the recent final sentencing of these Asian monsters, who formed the sex grooming gang - what happened between 1997 and 2013 to so many young girls of 12 and 13 is too awful to imagine - that Theresa May when Home Secretary, insisted that the culprits of these crimes should be stripped of their British citizenship and deported to Pakistan. They appealed, using UK Taxpayer Legal Aid, but their appeal has been turned down. One wonders whether they will

serve the full time sentences imposed on them by a British Court, in Pakistan.

## REVERSE RACISM & RACISM

As journalist Sarah Vines pointed out: ""The Rotherham child abuse scandal, in which the systematic grooming and abuse of young white girls by Asian men between 1997 and 2013 - was routinely covered up because of what **Professor Alexis Jay, author of the subsequent inquiry, described as 'institutionalised political correctness'.**

And what about inhuman practices such as female genital mutilation, imported to Britain from East Africa and for years left unchallenged for fear of causing offence?

""The same is true of forced marriage, honour killings and the indoctrination of young Muslim boys and girls into a warped and dangerous interpretation of religion.

""**The fact is, the path of least resistance never leads anywhere good, which is why, after years of middle-class liberal dithering, race relations in many parts of Britain are the same as they have ever been, and in some cases worse.**

""**The truth may be uncomfortable, but that doesn't make it any less true. And turning a blind eye for fear of ruffling a few feathers won't make it go away.**

Turning a blind eye, as the German Ministers and others in Europe have been doing does not work. It only exacerbates the problem

**What happened in Rotherham and at least two other towns, was down to the fact that the authorities, the local Municipal Council, the Social workers, and the Police authorities all declined to take action, because they were terrified of being called ""Racist.""**

**In a TV programme this past week**

**""Has Political Correctness Gone Mad?, the veteran equality campaigner Trevor Phillips makes a strong case for saying that stifling debate on immigration, and a fear of offending minorities, provided the ideal breeding ground for the populism which is sweeping Europe and the US. People were afraid to voice legitimate concerns because the politicians who had drastically changed their countries, without asking, called them bigots, ie Racists.**

**And now in many parts of Europe, 'institutionalised political correctness' is going on day by day, as the authorities are yet again terrified of being labelled**



**“Racist” This is precisely what is going on now in Germany, and to some extent also in Sweden, the authorities are digging their heads in the sand, hoping that by some magic the problem will go away. It won’t.**

As Julie Lenarz, a German journalist commuting between London and Berlin commented following the distressing Berlin massacre before Christmas: “on more than one occasion a connection has been made between a terrorist attack and a perpetrator who entered the country as a refugee. In July, an Afghan teenager injured four people with an axe on a train in Würzburg. Days later, fifteen people were wounded in a suicide attack in Ansbach carried out by a man from Syria. Police also prevented a major attack by Islamic State planned on the city of Düsseldorf and arrested another Syrian refugee in Chemnitz for the possession of extremely dangerous chemical explosives....

**““To respond to such attacks with empty mantras such as “Islam is a religion of peace”, “terror has no religion”, or “this has nothing to do with Islam” will not help to solve one of the most pressing, if not the most pressing, security issues of our time. The majority of terrorist organisations that we fight in the world today – Islamic State, Al Qaeda, Boko Haram and Al Shabbab – are all Salafi-jihadist entities.**

Meanwhile, German intelligence services have stated in a fresh report that in North Rhine-Westphalia alone, the most populous state of Germany, no less than 55 active mosques and Islamic places of worship preach hardcore Salafism.”

And responding with Mantras is exactly what Chancellor Merkel did, saying: “maybe please go to church once in a while or become a tad more versed in the Bible.”

## SWEDEN ALSO IN DENIAL

The Swedish authorities, as has only become too clear in the past week, are also in total denial. Following Trump’s much mocked recent statement, more and more about the situation in Sweden has come to light.

This is nothing new, I have been reading about it for months, again see [www.gatestoneinstitute.org](http://www.gatestoneinstitute.org) reports.

For months now it was known that at least 52 or so No Go areas, suburbs of major towns, had been identified, places where the police could not patrol, or tackle incidents without massive back up. Now the authorities are saying No, we don’t have No Go areas, yes we have “vulnerable areas”. For months now Malmö, where immigrants arrive from Denmark, has been the scene where numerous cars, several dozen, are set on fire, by gangs, there are mini riots, disturbances, etc.

**For months now reports have come in of Swedish Police officers resigning “in droves” in despair, just not wanting to continue the unequal struggle of policing. The police force is constantly trying to recruit. The Swedish Police Commissioner has been criticised in Parliament, he rightly points out he needs much more in the way of funding the plug the gaps in policing.**

Just a few weeks ago, a local long serving Swedish Police Officer let his feelings be known by putting up a statement on Facebook.

This is Peter Springare, who works as an investigator for the police in Örebro, a small city in southern Sweden,



“I’m so f... tired. What I will write here below is not politically correct. But I do not care. What I will tell to you is forbidden to talk about for all state employees. It renders the loss of career and loss of individual salaries. Although it is true. I do not care about this; I will soon retire anyway after 47 years in this business. I am now and every week will go forward to account in detail for what these cases that occupies me as a researcher / investigator in the serious-crime squad at the Örebro police force. It will not harmonize with BRÅ (Swedish state statistics bureau) perception or other leftist-leaning criminologists perception in the public debate.

**Our senior citizens are poorer than ever (on their knees), the school system is in chaos, the health care is an inferno, the police force have been completely destroyed, etc etc.**

Everyone knows why all this is taken place, but no one dares or wants to speak up, because Sweden has always lived on the myth of magnificent ultimate society. Society, that has unlimited resources to be in forefront when it comes of being the only politically correct option in a dysfunctional world. To be in forefront in the world of turmoil, concerning the destructive behavior in the name of various religions.

Here we go; these cases I have handled from Monday to Friday this week:

Rape, rape, aggravated rape, assault, rape, extortion, blackmail, abuse of judicial procedure, unlawful threats, violence against the police, threats to the police, drug trafficking, aggravated drug offenses, attempted murder, rape again, extortion again and assault.

Names of suspected perpetrators for the crimes listed below:

Ali Mohamad, Mahmod, Mohammed, Mohammed Ali, again and again, Christopher ... huh, is it true? Yes a Swedish name crept into the outskirts of a drug offense, Mohammed, Mahmod Ali, yet again.

The countries representing the weeks of all crimes I investigated in total: Iraq, Iraq, Turkey, Syria, Afghanistan, Somalia, Somalia, Syria again, Somalia, unknown country, unknown country, Sweden. Half of the suspects, we cannot know for sure because they have no valid papers. This in itself often means that they lied about nationality and identity. Now we talk only of the area of Örebro. And these crimes are occupying our investigative capacity for 100%.

This is how it looks and has looked like the last 10-15 year.”

**Springare summarized: “If you cannot discuss the problem of crime among immigrants without somebody attributing it to racist propaganda, we are in deep trouble,” “The problem is that nobody wants to talk about this.”**

**BRA the Swedish statistics bureau stopped noting ethnicity of criminals since 2004, and apparently it is a fact reluctantly reported in the Swedish media, that the police are ordered to use a 291 code to cover up crimes perpetrated by immigrants. Gothenburg police officer who revealed that the police were told to implement Code 291 rules to hide "all information about the immigration-related crimes."**

A number of leading officials have tried to discredit Mr Springare's claims however Frederik Sword, chief investigator of the Ljungby police, said the officer had portrayed the situation accurately.

Mr Sword told SML: "This is a hot potato, but this is what it looks like in reality. Foreign-born and second **generation immigrants are overrepresented in certain crimes.**"

"I would never have written such a thing on Facebook. He had every right to do it, but as a police officer, one has to be extremely neutral and impartial when it comes to issues related to politics, religion and sexual orientation."

He added: "As the chief investigator in Ljungby, I've had much the same experience. The picture he gives is realistic." thousands have rushed to support Mr Springare and thanked him for having the courage to tell the truth about the existential crisis facing Sweden.

## **FACEBOOK SUPPORT FOR PETER**

**A Facebook group, called 'Stand up for Peter Springare' has gained more than 162,000 members since it was created over that weekend, and many frustrated Swedes have used it as a platform to show their appreciation, as well as share their own experiences.**

One user, who claimed to work for the police in Stockholm, the Swedish capital, also said Mr Springare had told the truth. Oskar Tallryd wrote: "What he says is no exaggeration or lie, this is my everyday. This is many police officers everyday life."

Swedish online journal

[www.thenewnationalsm.com](http://www.thenewnationalsm.com) commented as follows: ""The winds are changing in Scandinavia, and the currently ruling left-wing system is afraid. The elite know that their days are counted, so they go on an offensive to silence the masses and harass the people who work for them and dare to reveal the truth like Springare did. One should note that none of those who condemned the Springare's action doubt the truthfulness of his claims, **but only his rights to express these claims.** The very same attitude led to infamous Rotherham Scandal with more than 1400 innocent victims. In the light of this experience we should spread a word around the world and defend Peter Springare as a whistle-blower, even if the disturbing situation about which he

warns us, is so obvious, that only left-wing media can refuse to admit that.

**Since this started, Sweden has faced an uphill battle to maintain law and order across the nation** as public services have been overwhelmed by the increased pressure.

In 2015 alone the country received more than 160,000 asylum applications to join a population of just 9.5million.

Swedish taxpayers could be forced to foot a million pound bill to house migrants as the country faces a property crisis and new arrivals stretch resources to breaking point.

While **President Donald Trump** was ridiculed last week for suggesting there was a terrorist attack in Sweden, two Swedish politicians rose to his defense.

**Per Jimmie Akesson and Mattias Karlsson, two members of parliament from the right-wing Sweden Democrats, backed Trump's characterization of Sweden as a country that is plagued by migrant-fueled crime. Akesson and Karlsson co-wrote an op-ed in The Wall Street Journal on Wednesday.**

'Mr Trump did not exaggerate Sweden's current problems,' Akesson and Karlsson wrote. 'If anything, he understated them.'



## **FRASER NELSON COMMENTS**

**""They won't admit it in Stockholm, but Donald Trump is right about immigration in Sweden""**

**Following Trump's declaration and the mockery that followed it, Fraser Nelson, journalist, Editor of the Spectator, his wife is Swedish, has now updated an article he wrote last year, and comments as follows:**

"The inside pages of most Swedish newspapers would carry the answer. Earlier this week, for example, a riot broke out in one of Stockholm's suburbs, ending in a photographer being injured

and a policeman opening fire. There were also stories about how six Afghan child refugees have committed suicide in Sweden in the last six months, failed by a government system that cannot cope with the 25,000 unaccompanied migrant children in its care. All this is shocking – but in Sweden nowadays, not so surprising.

""Sweden is not a country that is falling apart. You can still land in Stockholm's gorgeous Arlanda airport, skate on the frozen lakes in special lanes polished by the local authorities, cook sausages on the communal barbecues. **The Scandinavian paradise is still there, welcoming and inspiring. The government has, after great upheaval, managed to cut the refugee influx by four fifths. But its failure to integrate those already there has led to another Sweden, a country within a country characterised by gang violence and joblessness.**

""As the violence affects just a sliver of society, the overall Swedish crime figures are quite small. Trouble can be buried in the data. Wider discussion about all of this is also discouraged by what's known as Sweden's "opinion corridor", the narrow parameters into which public debate is confined. Those who step outside, and talk about the immigration problems, risk being accused of bigotry. Or, perhaps worse, giving succour to the populist Sweden Democrats, now supported by one in six Swedes.

**The immigrants do want to work, but find themselves stuck outside a heavily-regulated jobs market that could have been designed by a populist demagogue to keep them out. For unskilled work in restaurants, for example, the trade unions' unofficial (but strictly enforced) minimum wage is about £10 an hour. For unskilled immigrants, especially from countries like Afghanistan and Somalia with no properly functioning education system, this means the Swedish dream ends before it begins. A policy intended to lift everyone's wages has ended up destroying entry-level jobs, and ensuring thousands of immigrants are shut out of the economy, denied the first rung on the ladder to work.**

""Among Swedes, unemployment is about 4 per cent and falling. **Among immigrants, it's 22 per cent. No developed country has a higher differential:** in Britain, there's barely any difference at all. The Swedish government describes itself as a "humanitarian



superpower” and accepted refugees on that basis, but its fatal mistake was failure to welcome so many without being able to integrate them. Hence the zones of joblessness and the criminality, and the inability to know what to do about it. The resulting shadow society is now quite advanced, with its own moral codes and even its own legal system. Tribal courts are now in operation, dealing with crimes – or, at least, what count as crimes in the underworld. The fine for a failed attempted murder is about £50,000, according to Malmö’s chief prosecutor. Of the 37 murders and attempted murders in the first half of last year, just seven have been solved. But what are police to do, when witnesses drop out and victims drop the charges? Officers admit that, when child refugees go missing from care homes – feared to have been passed into prostitution or criminal gangs – there is not much they can do.

But the problems it now faces are hideous: shadow societies, mafia courts, gangland killings and conundrums like how to handle adult refugees who turn up with a child bride in tow. And how to pacify suburbs that are slipping out of police control. These issues all fit a certain description. They stem from Sweden’s decision to take larger numbers than it could cope with, leading to problems that were once never thought possible. **It will pain the Swedish government to admit it. But on this point, at least, Donald Trump was right.”**

**But yet again, it is a government In Denial.**

**The mini riot that followed Trump’s flaky pronouncement happened in a northern suburb of Stockholm, called Rinkby, a known NO Go area, or “vulnerable district”, known locally as Little Mogadishu, because of the number of Somalians and others living there. A photographer and policeman were injured. Just three weeks previously three police officers were injured in similar circumstances and had to be carted off to hospital. These incidents are not isolated.**

### **VALLETTA CONFERENCE THE EU OVER A BARREL! STICKING A BANDAID OVER A BROKEN LEG!**

At the beginning of February at the EU summit in Malta, held in Valletta, the EU announced a 200m euro package of new

measures to combat migration, including boosting protection of the EU external border and deepening ties with African countries, including Libya, to stem the flow of migrants crossing into Europe. The EU politicians all made good noises about measures to stem the flood of immigrants into Europe, from crossing the Mediterranean, announcing these incredible, and expensive measures, building detention centres, in Libya, and Tunisia, providing aid packages to these North African countries to help them prevent migrants from crossing to Europe. However no mention was made of where these vast sums of money were coming from, and North African states are extremely reluctant to accept back their nationals. Basically they have the EU over a barrel – pay up vast sums in aid, or we don’t take back our nationals, is the underlying current of their stance. Hungary and the three other Visegrad states, Poland, Czech Republic, Slovenia, have all adamantly refused to accept refugees, and most particularly Muslims, believe the new EU stance offers belated “vindication” of its own tough stance on migration.

One wonders whether they will be willing to put their hands in their pockets to return immigrants to North African and elsewhere, one suspects not.

Theresa May welcomed the EU measures, announcing that Britain would contribute 600,000 euros to help train the coastguard as part of the package. Magazine Euractiv.eu commented:

... but the EU might wish to ponder the US retail maxim – “You Break it, You Buy it.”

The EU – and most specifically, Nicolas Sarkozy – left Libya in the “shit show” (copyright Barack Obama) that it now manifestly is, deposing a ‘strongman’ leader in Muammar Gaddafi, despite the examples of the vacuums left in Iraq and Afghanistan in similar situations.

The subsequent nine-point Malta Declaration promised more help for the Libyan coastguard in returning boats, and better camps and facilities on-land in Libya, all backed up (when you cut through the talk of billions of euros for African aid as a whole) with an additional €200m.

It’s akin to a sticking plaster during triage ahead of major open-heart surgery, but the underlying principle seems to be ‘out of sight, out of mind’. It’s perhaps harsh to criticise Brussels for at least making

some humanitarian effort, not least when a holistic solution is so hard to see, but they could at least try to work harder on the symbolism.

As AFP reported from sun-drenched Malta, “As the EU leaders boarded a luxury yacht to cross Malta’s historic harbour to their lunch venue, rescue ships off Libya saved hundreds more people including babies from rickety boats.”

Euractiv commented: “Makes you sick”!

### **CHATHAM HOUSE POLL ON MIGRATION FROM ISLAMIC COUNTRIES**

Just before President Trump’s order banning citizens from 7 Muslim countries from entering the USA, the well respected think tank Chatham House conducted a unique, new survey of more than 10,000 people from 10 European states over the months of December and January. The results throw new light on what people think about migration from mainly Muslim countries, and results are striking and sobering. They suggest that public opposition to any further migration from predominantly Muslim states is by no means confined to Trump’s electorate in the US but is fairly widespread.

In the survey, carried out before President Trump’s executive order was announced, respondents were given the following statement:

**‘All further migration from mainly Muslim countries should be stopped’. They were then asked to what extent did they agree or disagree with this statement.**

**Overall, across all 10 of the European countries an average of 55% agreed that all further migration from mainly Muslim countries should be stopped, 25% neither agreed nor disagreed and 20% disagreed.**

Majorities in all but two of the ten states agreed, ranging from 71% in Poland, 65% in Austria, 53% in Germany and 51% in Italy to 47% in the United Kingdom and 41% in Spain. In no country did the percentage that disagreed surpass 32%.

Public opposition to further migration from Muslim states is especially intense in Austria, Poland, Hungary, France and Belgium, despite these countries having very different sized resident Muslim populations. In each of these countries, at least 38% of the sample ‘strongly agreed’ with the statement. With the exception of Poland, these countries have either been

at the centre of the refugee crisis or experienced terrorist attacks in recent years..

Nigel Farage addressed the EU Parliament concerning the Chatham House poll and it was really interesting to note in the video the reaction of EU parliamentarians, they were bored, contemptuous, metaphorically indicating their disinterest, as if stuffing their fingers in their ears, "La la la, can't hear you, can't hear you""", as obviously they regard Farage as the much hated architect of Brexit.

He said:

""I feel like I am attending a meeting of a religious sect here this morning. It's as if the global revolution of 2016, Brexit, Trump, the Italian rejection of the referendum, has completely bypassed you.

""You can't face up to the fact that this bandwagon is going to roll across Europe in these elections in 2017. A lot of citizens now recognize this form of centralized government simply doesn't work. ... At the heart of it is a fundamental point: Mr. [name not recognized] this morning said, the people want more Europe.

They don't. The people want less Europe. We see this again and again when people have referendums and they reject aspects of EU membership. But something more fundamental is going on out there. .... No doubt, many of you here will probably despise your own voters for what I am about to say because just last week, Chatham House, the reputable group, published a massive survey from 10 European states, and only 20% of people want immigration from Muslim countries to continue. Just 20%. ... Which means your voters have a harder line position on this than Donald Trump, or myself, or frankly any party sitting in this Parliament. I simply cannot believe you are blind to the fact that even Mrs. Merkel has now made a u-turn and wants to send people back. Even Mr. Schulz thinks it is a good idea. And the fact is, the European Union has no future at all in its current form. And I suspect you are in for as big a shock in 2017 as you were in 2016.""

Yes indeed, Mr. Farage could be incredibly correct, they are all in for enormous shocks in the next few months, it will be an extremely Rock N Roll few months, starting with March, triggering Article 50, the election in Holland, then elections in France. Etc. Hold on to your hats.

## THE EU'S VIEW ON DEMOCRACY!

Just recently in an exchange, Frans Timmerman, EU Vice Commission, was questioned by a Finnish student about the legitimacy of the EC, seeing as these officials were not really elected democratically.

The Dutch politician brushed the question off as something "only Eurosceptics" would ask, as he poked fun at claims the Commission was made up of unelected representatives.

He continued: "What I find interesting is that it's always the people, I don't know if you're in that camp, but usually when I get this question about this 'unelected' bureaucrat institution it's **mostly the people who don't want the European Union, who complain about the commission not being elected because the last thing they want is a really European government.**""

**"Now we are unelected but we have a direct democratic mandate because we cannot operate without a majority support in the European Parliament."** Wonderful reply isn't it, just brush aside the views of the voters.

**HUBRIS, HUBRIS, HUBRIS, greek word, meaning : Wanton insolence, or arrogance resulting from excessive pride or passion – especially in Politics.**



**Norma Desmond - "Alright Mr. DeMille, I'm ready for my close-up" - Sunset Boulevard**

## CONCLUSIONS THE EU FIDDLES WHILST ROME BURNS

It is not just that the Juncker and Merkel are heading down the road to hell in a handbasket, it is that they are taking

everyone else, the EU, with them. To put it in a nutshell immigration into the EU is having a totally disastrous effect on all the EU economies. The issue is fraught with social and political complexities. But at its heart is the question increasingly convulsing nations across Europe: just how can they assimilate ever-growing number of migrants without creating dangerous social divisions that only serve to inflame extremism?

And whilst they continue to try to beat the UK about the head with the possibly awful consequences – according to them, as they frantically try to figure out how to plug the gigantic hole in the EU budget - of leaving the EU, threatening, exhibiting really awful discourtesy to Prime Minister May at every opportunity, they Fiddle whilst Rome Burns. Thank god the UK is getting out.

J.C. Juncker is right now preparing his Grand Plan White Paper for the EU, which he plans to present to the 27 countries of the EU at the Anniversary of the Rome Treaty next month. However Chancellor Merkel has told him, very possibly nicely but firmly, to put aside his Grand Plan, as it might well derail her prospects of getting re-elected in September, ie do as I say, or else, the hell with the EU, MY re-election is much more important.

As of now the EU is facing a possibly huge shake up in the Netherlands, where Geert Wilders anti immigration stance and his party might gain lots of seats in the Dutch parliament. **Also the Dutch Parliament have just announced that following the election 15 March, they will very seriously debate the potential of leaving the Euro.**

Juncker's Grand Plan, might also have something to do with, and a desire to outflank, and forestall the Visegrad states of Poland, Hungary, Czech Republic, and Slovenia, who are also planning to present their own statement at the Anniversary events in Rome in March, which one suspects may well enshrine their entitlement to individual sovereignty, which Poland has been fighting for quite determinedly for the past few months, despite Chancellor Merkel sweet talking important Polish politicians some weeks ago.

The euro is not stable, anything but, European banks are hanging on by their teeth, particularly Spanish and Italian Banks, with huge debts, and as to the Greek situation that is anyone's guess.



Austria is complaining loudly that neighbouring Hungary is sending over their nationals to take jobs from locals at lower wages – Ah, that strikes a bell right. Eurocrats refused to be drawn on dynamite plans by Austria that would put an end to the issue of wage undercutting by workers from other member states which has proved so unpopular with ordinary voters. Vienna said it was fundamentally “unfair” that workers predominantly from neighbouring Eastern Europe were willing to take jobs for lower pay at a time when unemployment amongst its own population is rocketing. Any move to restrict the movement of low-skilled labour would be one of the biggest shake-ups of free And it is not totally off the cards that Marine le Pen could effect a total shake up in France. Just supposing she won over 50% in the first poll. Who knows, it might be possible.



## FRENCH ELECTION

### Quote from The Spectator.

““The French voting system gives voters and politicians a second chance, not so much to reconsider their own choices as to react against the choices of others. In the first round you vote for the person you want; in the second you vote against the person you fear....”

When Le Pen shocked France by getting through to the second round of the 2002 presidential election, he was crushed by Jacques Chirac, who got 82 per cent of the vote. Good republicans rallied, including those on the far left: ‘Better a crook than a fascist’ said one slogan. The crucial question in this election is whether the republican reflex still operates. If not, Marine Le Pen could win....”

““A French friend recently said to me, ‘I am not voting for anyone. I’m only voting against.’ This is the depressing mantra of French politics today.””

The latest budget figures from the EU shows that it spends around £6.7bn a year on administration, most of which is made up of staffing costs. The biggest institution is the EU commission which alone has an army of 25,000 bureaucrats - around half the total number of EU employees.

On top of that are other stunning examples of largesse which may need to be cut.

Without Britain's cash, for example, even stubborn French officials may no longer feel they can insist on the exorbitant vanity show of moving the entire EU parliament to Strasbourg every month, at a cost of £130 million a year.””

## TRAVEL NEWS



### CITYJET RESTART TOULON – LONDON CITY FROM APRIL

Cityjet are resuming their service from Toulon Hyeres Airport to central London City as from 8 April and are increasing the frequency of flights to three a week, Tuesdays, Thursdays and Sundays. The service will operate frp, April to 26 october, all of which for expats and villa rental owners, fantastic news. Fares start at €53 one way, but you will have to be smart to grab them.

One can also fly to London City and swop over for flights to Dublin and Cork. CityJet offer free luggage, plus a snack and drink on board.

www.



## BA announces flights from Nice to Manchester & Stansted, starting May 2017

Expats and Holidaymakers rejoice!

British Airways has revealed it will be starting two new flight routes between the south of France and the UK in May 2017.

The seasonal routes from Nice to Manchester begin on 6th May while flights to London Stansted start on 20th May. The Saturday connections both depart the UK at 1.05pm and return at 5.10pm (Manchester) and 5pm (Stansted). BA currently serves Nice from Gatwick, Heathrow and London-City.

## EASYJET NEW CONNECTION MARSEILLE – VENISE

Easyjet Hub at Marseille Airport now will offer four flights a week as from 12 May 2017, Mondays, Wednesdays, Fridays and Sundays, until 27 October.



## DER SPIEGEL - WHY DOES THE EU GET SUCH A BAD RAP?

““Has the EU really lost touch with its citizens? Is it unable to improve people's lives? Yes and no. Across Europe, EU money flows from Brussels into thousands of projects and ideas. Why does nobody notice?””

This was the headline for a recent article in DER SPEIEGEL 23 January, by Ullrich Fishtner.

I read this article with increasing annoyance as it extolled the wonder and beneficence the EU. At the end I concluded that the article had not been so much commissioned by DER SPIEGEL but was a totally puff piece concocted by the PR Department of the EU. I really wanted to rebut so many statements made in this article but realised it would require work, putting together lots of facts, getting the facts really right, so thought oh what the hell.

I was delighted therefore a few days later to find that this article had aroused a total avalanche of adverse, and wholly hostile comments from lots of readers, to the tune of over 7 pages of comments, all, bar one, totally critical.

I do recommend you view the article and the comments, if they are still on the website. However here are some of the outstanding arguments in the article, followed by the comments they generated, all far better, more cogent, and infinitely more critical than I could have managed.

*“But the examples mentioned at the beginning, the hospital in Birmingham, the sausage factory in Crete, the wind farm in Suffolk, the pharmaceutical research facility in Barcelona, the environmentally friendly houses in France - all that and more would not exist without Europe, without the European Commission, with the European Investment Bank (EIB), and without the "Juncker Plan," the unofficial title of the "Investment Offensive for Europe" launched two years ago by European Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker. The Juncker Plan is an attempt to use smart lending to trigger additional investments worth many times the original sum, with an ultimate goal of 315 billion euros, distributed among thousands of projects throughout the EU. This article's aim was to take a closer look at the Juncker Plan.”*

*1st example quoted.....”* Brexit supplied spectacular evidence to support this notion. Wales, for example, is one of the biggest beneficiaries of European support. A great deal of money has been sent to the British region so that museums could be operated and festival halls built. The EU helped rebuild roads and pedestrian zones, create educational and sports facilities, and build bicycle and hiking paths. But the majority of Welsh voter supported Brexit, more even than the nationwide average. Some 52.5 percent of the Welsh, 854,572 people, voted to withdraw from the ridiculed, despised and hated European Union.

#### **Response:**

*“Thank you for this article, not just for the factual content but also for the more speculative part about the future. I hope that Herr Fichtner's vision becomes reality. Herr Fichtner is exasperated by those Welsh ingrates. Despite being given a "festival hall" and hiking trails, 52.5% voted for Brexit. The problem is that more than 52.5% of the population do not go to festival halls or walk along hiking trails. They worry about the fact that their earnings are nearly down at the minimum wage and because the ungrateful Welsh*

*(if not Herr Fichtner) have a basic understanding of the laws of supply and demand, they know that their wage levels are driven down by an uncontrolled increase in the supply of labour.”*

**(Possibly shades of unemployment due to Port Talbot Steel Works closing down, echo here!)**

Another Response: *“If Ullrich Fichtner has difficulty understanding how this works I suggest he sends me his salary every month and I will give him some money back for those things I feel he is in need of. I will of course have to take a cut to administer this valuable service to him as there will be sizable administrative costs in eventually giving him back his own money.”*

#### **Birmingham Trauma Hospital**

*....”Explaining this phenomenon is relatively simple in Birmingham. At the end of last year, Roger Stedman, medical director of the Midland Metropolitan Hospital, and Toby Lewis, the hospital's CEO, were sitting together in a mobile office unit with a view of the imposing construction site. Over instant coffee, the two Englishmen wondered why anyone would come to see them to talk about Europe.*

*The new facility will be one of Europe's biggest trauma centers, with 670 beds and 15 operating rooms -- at a total cost of £340 million (€392 million). Of that total, £107 million is a loan from the European Investment Bank (EIB), the EU's bank. In Brussels, the hospital deal is seen as part of the Juncker Plan and the "Investment Offensive." But that's not how they see it in Birmingham. "It's a loan at market prices," says hospital director Stedman. "We could have financed it differently. It's a business deal, not a gift from the EU."*

*That's quite a harsh response. One might expect that the hospital officials in Birmingham would at least find a few friendly words for their biggest creditor, that they might show some gratitude to the EU for assuming such a large risk. It would be logical, and certainly polite, for them to praise the cooperation with Europe, and it would hardly be surprising if they were to repeat their praise at every press conference and in every local newspaper. They could say that Europe is making a large contribution to this hospital and that, in fact, German, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Czech and Belgian taxpayers are vouching for a loan so that a nice hospital can be built in England. But these English builders aren't doing that. In fact, Europe's presence is virtually ignored in Birmingham when it comes to the construction of the Midland Metropolitan Hospital. The EU's role as a loan provider is kept silent, even by those who have good reason to say something nice. Even more*

*surprising is the fact that, in the course of our conversation, Dr. Stedman and CEO Lewis reveal themselves to be pro-EU and anti-Brexit.”*

#### **Responses**

*“The EIB does a good job but to promote it as the saviour of Europe is a bit of a stretch As for the Birmingham hospital only 107m of 340 million is coming from the EIB, the facility was needed and would have been built anyway.”*

*“This hospital was not funded by the EU, the £20 million trauma care collaboration was paid and funded for between the University of Birmingham, University Hospitals Birmingham Foundation Trust, the Department of Health and the Ministry of Defence of the United Kingdom.”*

*“I am quite sure the European Union is doing a number of worthy things. I am also quite sure that many of them are the wrong things. I certainly don't know what the market rate for loans to hospitals in Birmingham is, but if the EU loan is truly market rate as claimed, then expecting them to show gratitude for a market rate business deal is very unrealistic, and just makes the authors look kind of silly. If it was market rate (which the authors don't deny) what was the point from an EU perspective? It doesn't sound like something the EU needed to be doing at all. No reason for them to expect credit for doing something they shouldn't have. And the Greek sausage factory? Why on earth did the authors bring that up? The issue for the sausage factory is the complete failure of the EU in introducing the euro which has destroyed the Greek economy.”*

#### **Cretan Sausage Factory**

*“The EU story in Crete is different, even if the result is largely the same. High above the beautiful expansive beaches of Rethymno is the Creta Farms sausage factory, and the people who run it can hardly be beat when it comes to enthusiasm for Europe. The company has developed chemical and technical processes to extract fat from pork and replace it with olive oil. After the procedure, the sausage is easier to digest, and yet it still tastes good, at least better and stronger than many a competing product.*

#### **Last Chance Loan**

*For about a year, the Greeks have been supplying the Australian market with products under the brand name "Oliving," a play on the words olive and living, and they have already captured a 3 percent market share in the low-fat segment. They have to expand quickly to satisfy demand, which is*



where the EU came into play, in the form of the Juncker Plan.

Creta Farms became part of the European Investment Offensive when it was granted a 15 million euro loan. Without the money, says company president Manos Domazakis, a slim, melancholy man, the company would have run into difficulties and would not have been able to fill its orders -- and roughly 700 jobs would have been in jeopardy. And in Rethymno, Crete, 700 jobs is a huge number. Experts from Brussels and Luxembourg flew to Crete, inspected all the books and had company officials explain the business down to the last detail, including the process of putting olive oil in the sausage, the marketing and the sales potential. They visited the pig production facility, the largest in Greece, with 45,000 animals processed annually, and they toured the sausage factory, passing commercial kitchens, fermenters and packing stations. They also looked to see whether the company had any other potential sources of financing. But there were none.

That's because Crete is still part of Greece, where banks are tip-toeing along the precipice of a financial and government crisis and have no interest whatsoever in granting new loans. The Greek stock market is also as good as dead and private investors prefer to look for projects in calmer waters outside of Greece. For Creta Farms, says President Domazakis, Europe was the one last chance to secure fresh funding.

The visitors from the north were sober, competent and professional, says Domazakis, who runs the family business together with his brother. They are truly grateful to the EU and its investment bank. In fact, the Domazakis brothers would be the perfect examples of the benefits offered by European Union membership, and not just in Crete. But during a drive along the coast, Domazakis lowers his voice and says that not everyone is pleased about the Juncker loan.

Envious competitors have badmouthed Creta Farms as "traitors" for allegedly receiving special treatment. Domestic banks were also upset over the foreign money from Brussels and Luxembourg, and about the symbolic message it sends when a Greek company is unable to secure financing in Greece. In other words, the fans of Europe from Rethymno, the employees of Creta Farms, all of them grateful beneficiaries who would certainly like to tell their story, now prefer to remain silent. Saying good things about the EU only creates bad blood. It's almost as if the EU were cursed.""

#### Response:

""The answer to your question is contained clearly in your article. Each of the examples you quote as beneficiaries of EU generosity occur in countries in the top 18 richest countries of the world. Each could choose to fund these

ventures out of their own resources if they chose to do so and with world interest rates so low funding through commercial loans would not pose a problem either. Further those major countries mostly provide the cash to the EIB that it so generously lends back to them. In the case of grants it is the net contributions of the same nations that are handed back. Two arguments found much favour in the UK leading to Brexit. The first is the question "Why do we send money to Europe to subsidise the very people who create (or grow) products that they then sell back to us at lower prices than our own producers can and thus put them out of business?". The second question is "Why do we send money to Europe so they can send it back as subsidies to support projects they like rather than spend it directly on subsidies to projects we like?" There is no europhile who can give a direct straight and honest answer to those questions. We just get waffle around it being to the greater benefit of all of Europe and the implication that Brussels bureaucratic elite are a better judge of what is good for us than we are.

**And Europe, far from being a global player, has erected huge barriers to trade to ensure that its consumers pay prices well above the world rates.**

Seven years to negotiate a trade deal with Canada which nearly gets blown out of the water by a few thousand people in one small region in Belgium - what sort of global player is that? You write about the Midland Metropolitan Hospital, well, a loan of £107million is trivial in the wider context of NHS spend and City of London finance (they talk in billions and trillions daily) - it's not a large risk, in fact it's not a risk at all - no one is going to abscond with either the cash or the building and its naive to suggest the tax payers in German, Italy, Poland, Portugal, et al are vouching for a loan. They haven't been asked and certainly will not know where their money is going. You also write about Creta Farms and their difficulty in raising cash for expansion. You don't mention that it is the Euro and the EU's management of the Greek debt crisis that has so impoverished Greece. It's hardly surprising that they are reluctant to talk about their loan. "Europe is when Germans and British install wind turbines

together, when Italians, Dutch and Poles get together and think about dairy cows, when people from Lyon argue with people from Munich-Westkreuz over clever ways to use bikes. That's Europe. And when that happens, the European narrative is a positive one." And not one of those examples needs the EU to hold their hands; Germans, British, Italians, Dutch and Poles are all grown up and can choose to work together without Brussels.""

Ed: Now I found this article and the subsequent comments immensely interesting. If you wish to read it in full, and can no longer find it, just let me know and I can send you a copy. I cut and pasted it.

[anita@varvillagevoice.com](mailto:anita@varvillagevoice.com)

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## PASSION, FUN AND SURPRISE TACTICS By SIMON EVELEIGH

Before a ball was kicked, most people were predicting this year's 6 Nations to be one of the closest for years. After three rounds, that is certainly proving to be the case and things are building nicely towards the final day on 18<sup>th</sup> March.

Three teams still have a realistic chance of claiming the spoils. That Ireland and England are two of those is something that most people would have predicted, but that Scotland make up the group is probably more of a surprise.

Scotland's success is not an overnight thing. They were desperately unlucky to lose to Australia in the quarter-final of the 2015 World Cup and they have steadily improved since then. The first 40 minutes of the opening match set the tone, not just for Scotland, but for the tournament as a whole. They were excellent during that first half and ripped Ireland to shreds, scoring three tries, including a cheeky one from a line out by centre Alex Dunbar.

What was most impressive about the game, however, was the way Scotland wrested the initiative back in the second half when it looked as if they had blown their chance. Leading 21-8 at half-time Scottish supporters must have had a serious feeling of déjà vu when Ireland fought back to 22-21. Unlike previous

near misses, Scotland's nerve held and they ran out 27-22 victors. Scotland followed that up with a narrow loss in Paris and a home win over Wales. England are still unbeaten under Eddie Jones and are still on course for a second successive Grand Slam. The bare statistics only tell half the story and they are certainly not running away with the 6 Nations crown. Indeed, as their next two opponents are the teams that have probably played the best rugby so far, nothing can be taken for granted. There is a scenario where if Wales beat Ireland and England beat Scotland in round four, England would probably retain their title, irrespective of what happens on the final weekend. England's form has been patchy and Scotland have a real cutting edge, with full-back, Stuart Hogg, being the standout performer. It is a long time since Scotland won at Twickenham (1983) and they have not won a Triple Crown since that famous Grand Slam of 1990, but few Scottish sides in recent memory can have travelled south with real belief.



This year's competition carries an extra edge for British and Irish players, with the Lions touring New Zealand in the summer. With Wales coach Warren Gatland once again being the man in charge, many felt that he would fall back on men who have served him well in the past (ie Welshmen) plus a few Irish and English players and a token Scot or two. From what we have seen so far, there will be plenty of Scottish names on Gatland's list of contenders and probably fewer Welsh ones than there were a month or so ago.

Under Gatland, Wales have had plenty of success, but they have been criticised for being one dimensional in their approach and recently they have been trying to develop a more expansive style of play. It is accepted that this is the only way to contend with the very best, but supporters will only put up with losing matches in the name of development for so long.

It has often been said that if Wales could play everyone with the same intensity that they reserve for England, they would be very a formidable team. In a tight competition, home victories are essential and so far, apart from Wales and Ireland in Rome, only England have managed to win away from home. On the second weekend in Cardiff Wales ran England very close in a match that lived up to all the hype (and there was plenty of that!) Having lost at home, Wales could not afford to slip up at Murrayfield and when they went in 13-9 up at halftime, they looked very much in with a shout. They proceeded to lose the second half 20-0 and were a distant second to Scotland come the end. The marked difference between the sides was how Scotland scored points when they had the opportunity, whereas Wales failed to convert pressure into points. Welsh captain Alun Wyn Jones has been talked about as the leading contender for the Lions' captaincy, but he has blotted his copybook a little in the last couple of weeks. Nothing to do with his ability as a player, but about his decision-making. Against both England and Scotland when the scores were very close, he chose to turn down the opportunity to kick for goal, opting for a line out instead and missing out on both occasions. Apparently, Jones wanted to take the three points in the Scottish match but was overruled by Dan Biggar. Not a great endorsement of his authority! Another contender as Lions captain is England's Dylan Hartley, but he too has had his credentials severely tested. Firstly, his form is not great and his place in the team is under pressure from Jamie George, although Eddie Jones talks in glowing terms about Hartley's influence around the team in the week before matches. What could be of more concern to Gatland is how Hartley's England were completely blown off course by Italy's strange tactics at Twickenham. Italy started the 6 Nations quite well (leading Wales 7-3 at half-time), but things went downhill in the second half and the wheels came off completely in their 63-10 loss to Ireland. With the world predicting a horrible drubbing against England, Italy's coaches came up with a master stroke. All rugby players know the offside law, but what nobody in the England team seemed to understand was what has to

happen for the offside line to be drawn in the first place. I suspect that even casual rugby followers now know that! The upshot of Italy not competing at the tackle area was that they were free to stand on England's side of the ball and disrupt their game plan completely. It made for a frustrating afternoon for England and most spectators and World Rugby is now looking at whether changes need to be made to the laws. To be fair to Italy, they played to the laws and got maximum benefit out of their surprise tactics. Some have argued that what they did was against the spirit of the game, but they were perfectly within their rights to do what they did. That it took England so long to work out what to do was a concern, but eventually they started to put passages of play together and scored 6 tries and won 36-15. Others will have noted how England were thrown off their stride by something out of the ordinary and will surely be plotting their own little tricks. So, what of France? Having run both Australia and New Zealand close in the autumn, hopes were high that Guy Novès' side would be competing for honours for the first time in many years. France dominated England in the first half of their opening fixture but could not take advantage and went into the break at 9-9. England were dreadful in that opening half and were slightly better in the second, with their replacements ("finishers" in Eddie Jones' language) swinging the momentum England's way. France followed that up with an unconvincing win over Scotland, before going to Dublin, where Ireland outplayed and, more surprisingly, outmuscled them for large parts of the game. Barring a mix of unlikely results which includes Italy winning in Edinburgh, France cannot now win the title, but they could still come second, but there is also a chance that they finish as low as fifth. There are some signs that France are getting better, but since Novès took over, they have only won 5 of their 13 matches. For this year's tournament to be deemed anything other than a failure, they must beat Italy in Rome and Wales in Paris. In domestic competition, Toulon have only played once in February, a home victory over Lyon. They remain in fifth place and still look on course for the end of season play-offs. March gives Toulon an opportunity to cement their place in



the top six, as their four opponents (Brive, Bayonne, Grenoble and Stade Français) are all currently in the bottom five. However, only the Bayonne match is at home, so nothing can be taken for granted. Next month we will report on these matches and the dénouement of the 6 Nations.

## 6 NATIONS SCHEDULE WEEK FOUR

Friday 10th March 2017

Wales v Ireland at Principality Stadium, Cardiff 9:05pm - BBC

Saturday 11th March 2017

Italy v France at Stadio Olimpico, Rome 2:30pm (GMT) - ITV  
England v Scotland at Twickenham Stadium, London 3pm - ITV

## WEEK FIVE

Saturday 18th March 2017

Scotland v Italy at BT Murrayfield Stadium, Edinburgh 1:30pm - BBC  
France v Wales at Stade de France, Paris 3:45pm (GMT) - ITV  
Ireland v England at Aviva Stadium, Dublin 6pm - ITV



## FILMS IN VO – LORGUES

Sunday 5 March – 18h –  
**MOONLIGHT, OSCAR  
WINNING FILM**

Sunday 12 March – 18h – **THE  
BIRTH OF A NATION**, story of  
antebellum uprising in the deep  
South

Sunday 19 March – 18h – **JACKIE  
– Jackie Onassis, after JFK's  
assassination.**

Sunday 26 March – 18h – **SING  
STREET** - Tom Ford's entry to  
filmmaking.

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