

# Var Village Voice

The background of the cover is a photograph of an art installation in a museum. It features two large, stylized sculptures of human faces. The sculpture on the right is in the foreground, facing left, and is composed of a dense arrangement of various flowers, including roses and lilies, with green foliage at the base. The sculpture on the left is further back, facing forward, and is also made of flowers and leaves. The room has dark walls and a polished floor that reflects the sculptures. A few small figures of people can be seen in the distance, providing a sense of scale.

*THE Var's English Language Newsletter*

***LES CARRIERES***

***APRIL 2017***



## PC Keith Palmer Another Victim!

Yes there were three other victims of this murderous attack in Westminster, 3 other families devastated by their Loss, French children from Concarneau, with broken legs in hospital. But one's heart goes out to Palmer's widow and child, he died doing his duty, the best of the best.

Many MP's knew him, he was a regular on that duty, they all liked and respected him.

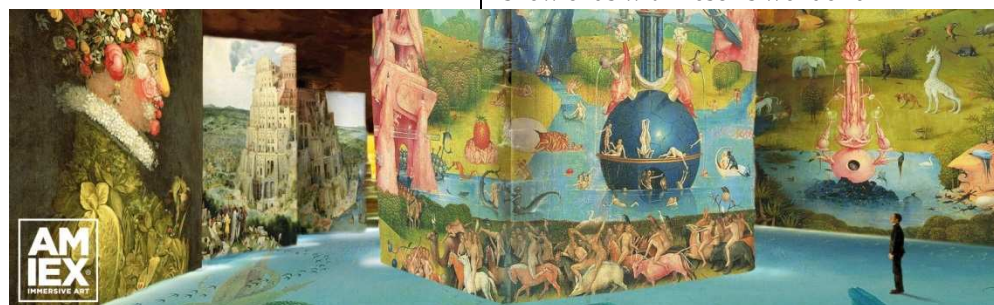


## ENGLAND WIN 6 NATIONS 2017 –

AGAIN! Not quite the Grand Slam, but very nearly. Plus a great Calcutta Cup match the week before. Great Rugby

**Quote of the Month:** “According to research, we waste £240 million of wine a year in the erroneous belief that leftover wine won’t keep in an opened bottle.

“Sorry, I don’t quite understand: ‘leftover’ wine?”



## ART EXPO - LES CARRIERES, LES BAUX Bosch Brueghel Arcimboldo

**From 4 March to 7 January 2018**

Produced by Culturespaces and created by Gianfranco Iannuzzi, Renato Gatto, and Massimiliano Siccardi, with the musical collaboration of Luca Longobardi, this new exhibition invites you to explore the unbridled imagination of the animated paintings of Bosch, Brueghel and Arcimboldo.

From Hieronymus Bosch’s most emblematic triptychs, such as The Garden of Earthly Delights, The Temptation of Saint Anthony, and The Hay Wagon, to Giuseppe Arcimboldo’s remarkable compositions of flowers and fruit, and the village festivities depicted by the Bruegel dynasty, the Carrières de Lumières embraces the fascinating worlds of the great masters who represented these animated scenes of life and the duality of a world shifting between good and evil. Their work shares the same excellent structure and incredible inventiveness. Bosch’s hallucinatory imagination and Arcimboldo’s highly creative and improbable faces are complemented by the joyous triviality of Bruegel’s works, whose many figures are inspired by reality.

In this new immersive exhibition, which lasts around thirty minutes and includes more than 2,000 digital images projected on a total surface area of 7,000 m<sup>2</sup>, the Carrières de Lumières will be filled with innumerable fantastical creatures and allegorical figures. These are depicted

spontaneously, and some are frightening and others amusing and caught up in comic situations—all these characters are reflections of the viewers. Man’s vanities, spirituality, pleasures, temptations, and vices are all evident in the landscapes painted with an acute sense of detail by Bosch, Bruegel, and Arcimboldo. The show ends with Bosch’s wonderful

Garden of Earthly Delights, inviting visitors to enter a phantasmagorical world.

The exhibition's soundtrack oscillates between classical and contemporary music, playing, for example, the famous pieces Carmina Burana, by Carl Orff, The Four Seasons by Antonio Vivaldi, reinterpreted by Max Richter, the works of the Russian composer Modeste Petrovitch Mussorgsky, and music by the British rock group Led Zeppelin. <http://carrieres-lumieres.com/en>

## COACH TRIP LES CARRIERES – ST REMY DE PROVENCE WEDNESDAY 14 JUNE Confirmation needed by 7 April – book Now!

CAROLYN of Riviera Tours has yet again come up with a lovely idea for a trip to Les Carrières for the latest expo devoted to Hieronymus Bosch, the Bruegels, and Arcimboldo, one of whose works features on the front cover. She has been scurrying around to work out the best options, and this year proposes the coach first of all takes one to the super Wednesday market at **St Remy DE PROVENCE**, as a total, and very interesting change from les Baux, where the village as we found previously can be difficult about parking.

As Carolyn says:

“After the success of our trip to Les Baux in June 2016 for the wonderful Chagall screening, I just thought I’d let you know that there is a possibility of another trip to Les Carrières de Lumières but with a twist!! As many of you have been on this



trip before and have already seen much of what the actual village of Les Baux de Provence has to offer, we thought it was time for a change so we're starting our day out in the heart of Provence and the village of **Saint-Rémy de Provence** which nestles at the foot of the Massif des Alpilles National Park with its magnificent landscapes.

Our day out is scheduled for **WEDNESDAY, 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2017** and going on a Wednesday means we get chance to experience Saint-Rémy's very popular **Grand Marché Provençal** as well as the many boulevards, under the shade of century-old plane trees, where you can discover squares, fountains, attractive boutiques and art galleries, cafes, bars and restaurants that make the town's historic centre so lively.

After our market morning and a good lunch in Saint-Rémy we make our way to Les Carrières des Lumières for their new show 'The Fantastic and Wonderful World of Bosch, Bruegel, and Arcimboldo'!

The quarry walls of the Carrières de Lumières new exhibition (which lasts around thirty minutes and includes more than 2,000 digital images projected onto a total surface area of 7,000 m<sup>2</sup>) will be filled with innumerable fantastical creatures and allegorical figures and the soundtrack varies between classical and contemporary music.

Between two screenings of the show, there will be a shorter six-minute interlude with a film that pays tribute to Georges Méliès, an ingenious filmmaker and inventor at the beginning of the twentieth century, where you will embark on an ingenious, magical, and fantastic journey: the Méliès workshop is the departure point, but you will soon encounter astonishing creatures created by the inventor that live in the abysses and hells, as well as his famous moon. Blending emotion, rolls of old films, and wonderful visions, the show pays tribute to the child inside the man known as the 'Cinemagician'.

For more information you can visit the sites [www.saintremy-de-provence.com](http://www.saintremy-de-provence.com) and [www.carrieres-lumieres.com](http://www.carrieres-lumieres.com).

In the first instance if you are interested in this day out then I would appreciate hearing from you as soon as possible so that a passenger list can be started **and a decision will have to be made by FRIDAY, 7th APRIL** as to whether there are enough people to make the trip go –

**in which case it will be confirmed and payment will be required.**

**In order to avoid disappointment and as our booking for the Carrières and the Coach need to be confirmed well in advance please make sure that you are able to join us before putting your names down for this trip.**

The price of the day out is 38€ which includes your transport by coach and your ticket for entrance to the Carrières de Lumières. The provisional departure times – which have to be early due to travelling further afield and the morning only market in Saint-Rémy are:

07h30 - Taradeau Village

07h45 - Lorgues Lycee Parking

08h15 - Le Cannet Peage entrance – there will be a **BRIEF** comfort stop at the Lançon service station en route.

Return times will be between 19h/20h.

Hoping to hear from you soon and to have the pleasure of your company for this exciting new day out!

Carolyn

CAROLYN MOULET

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**FESTIVAL DES JARDINS – COTE D'AZUR 1 April – 1 May**

**See**

<https://festivaldesjardins.departement06.fr>

**Other Events Around & About**

1 – 9 Foire Agricole, Brignoles, all the fun of the Agricultural fair from animals, to products, tractors, you name it.

1 -2 Frejus, parc Aurelian, Fete des Plantes

2 – Cotignac, cinema, Opera Film The Marriage of Figaro 18h

5 – Lorgues cinema Ballet fil The Sleeping Beauty 19h

8 Montauroux, concert St. Barthelmy piano duets, 17h

9 Entrecasteaux Cricket Club AGM

15-16 Plan de la Tour, Foire aux Plantes

19 Book Swap, Les Arcs chez Pat Toohey

21 Grimaud, Eglise St. Michel Soirees Musicales 21h

22 Montauroux, cinema Oper film Eugene Onegin 18h55

22 St. Tropez cinema Opera Film Cosi van Tutti 16h

23 St. Tropez concert, cinema, string quarter and piano 17h



**OPERA DE TOULON – MOZART'S L'ENLEVEMENT AU SERAIL**

**Friday 7, Sunday 9 & Tuesday 11 April**

The exciting tale concerning high jinks in a Turkish harem, are enough to lighten anyone's heart.

Starring Aleksandra Kubas-Kruk, Jeannette Vecchione, Oleksiy Palchkov and Elmar Gilbertsson. It is a co-production with the Opera de Fribourg, Opera de Lausanne, Opera de Tours, Theatre du Capitole de Toulouse, with the Orchestra and Opera of Toulon.

Well worth the effort to go to Toulon, Friday 7, at 20h, Sunday 9 at 14h30 and Tuesday 11 at 20h.

Tickets: 04 94 92 70 78

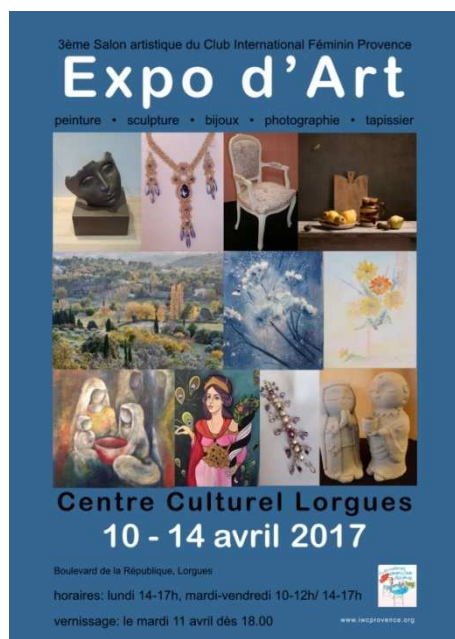
**VIAC have the following monthly events planned:-**

27 April Tour of Les Parages, Les Arcs, followed by lunch. Venue to be advised

24 May - joint Gourmet lunch with AMIAC, Le Clos des Roses, Fréjus

More details on our website at

[www.VIAC83.fr](http://www.VIAC83.fr)



## IWCP ART EXPO – CENTRE CULTURAL, LORGUES

10 – 14 April

Vernissage 11 April 18h.

Sculptures, art works, photos,  
jewellery, needlework.



## GALERIE AALDERS, LA GARDE FREINET - SPRING EXPO

15 April – 23 May

Vernissage Saturday 15 April

19 h – 21h.

15 Rte Nationale, La Garde  
Freinet. 04 94 55 23 47



## CONCERT OPERA DE TOULON WEDNESDAY 21 APRIL 20H

### Concerts Symphoniques, «

Terre de feu » PABLO MAINETTI  
(bandonéon), ORCHESTRE  
SYMPHONIQUE DE L'OPÉRA DE  
TOULON, with ERNEST MARTINEZ  
IZQUIERDO Musical director, works  
Astor Piazzolla Tangazo / Adios nonino /  
Libertango / Milonga del angel /  
Muerte del angel / Verano porteno /  
Invierno porteno / Oblivion  
Manuel de Falla L'Amour Sorcier, suite  
d'orchestre  
Alberto Ginastera Estancia, opus 8



## 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)



## FESTIVAL GLORIANA – MUSIQUE DES CHAPELLES 21 April – 14 May

Du Classique au Tango Philippe  
Bonfond, Eric Courrèges, Cécile Houi  
**Friday 21 April 20h30** - : Chapelle Saint  
Pierre, Les Arcs,  
Du Classique au Tango Philippe  
Bonfond, Eric Courrèges, Cécile Houi  
**Saturday, 22 April 19h** : Chapelle Notre  
Dame des Oliviers, Figanières,  
Duo Contrebasse & Violoncelle Philippe  
Bonfond, Eric Courrèges  
**Sunday 23 April, 15h30** - Chapelle Sainte  
Brigitte, Vidauban  
La jeunesse de L.V Beethoven Emma Lee,  
Camille Chardon, Eric Courrèges  
**Thursday 27 April, 20h30** - Chapelle  
Saint François de Paule, Bormes-les-  
Mimosas,  
Le classicisme Viennois, Trio Hermarque,  
**Saturday 29 April 19h** - Eglise Saint  
Martin de Nèbre, Rue de l'Église, Évenos,  
Romantique Florent Bontron, flûte –  
Cécile Maudire, harpe –  
**Monday 1 May 16h** : Chapelle Saint-  
Anne, Lorgues,  
Zarzuela ou l'opéra comique espagnol ,  
Delphine Haidan, Pascal Polidori, Eric  
Courrèges  
**Thursday 4 May 19h** - : Eglise Saint  
Sylvestre, Place du 8 mai 1945, Claviers,



Zarzuela ou l'opéra comique espagnol  
Delphine Haidan, Pascal Polidori, Eric Courrèges –

Friday 5 May 20h30 : Chapelle Saint Ferréol, Lorgues,

Zarzuela ou l'opéra comique espagnol  
Delphine Haidan, Pascal Polidori, Eric Courrèges

Saturday 6 May 20h30 : Chapelle Saint François de Paule, Bormes-les-Mimosas, Romantique Florent Bontron, flûte – Cécile Maudire, harpe

**Sunday 7 May 16h** : Chapelle Notre Dame de la Consolation, Gassin, Les Folies d'Espagne Stravaganza

**Monday 8 May 15h** Chapelle Sainte Christine, Solliès-Pont,

Le Bel Canto dans la musique de chambre  
Philippe Depetris, Eric Courrèges, Pascal Polidori

**Friday 12 May, 18h** : Chapelle Saint Martin, Taradeau, Maîtrise des Bouches du Rhône

**Saturday 13 May 18h** Chapelle Sainte Roseline, Les Arcs,

Intégrale des 6 suites pour violoncelle de Jean Sébastien Bach Florent Audibert, Frédéric Audibert, Eric Courrèges

**Sunday 14 May 11h – 18h** (possible Chapelle Ste Roseline – not listed)

<http://festivalgloriana.fr/les-festivals/musique-des-chapelles.html>



## SANGLIERS IN THE VAR ON THE INCREASE

This past year 25,000 sangliers were killed in the Var. A figure which has increased significantly on that of the previous years, 18,000 was the total around 2010. And of course the total sum now being paid out to farmers, vigneron throughout the region, for the devastation caused by these animals now amounts to €573,000, submitted by over 344 claimants to the Federation de Chasse. Not nice news.

## THE TRUTH CAN NOW BE TOLD



### By TRENCHERMAN

In the seventies, the days when I worked in London, in the 'Ad Biz', the days when lunch was part of my job description, the area around Charlotte Street tended to be my hunting ground.

It was well dressed in good restaurants, L'Etoile, the White Tower and many others, it was not far from my office and I soon became a recognisable member of the milieu.

So to arrange a lunch with someone and suggest that we met at the Tate gallery tended to be a little off centre, even a touch pretentious?

Were they expected to admire an exhibition or just admire my intellectual pretensions? I will admit that I gave considerable thought to whom I would invite and surprise, surprise – their deep interest in art was not amongst the qualities they needed to have.

At the Tate (now called Tate Britain) is a restaurant called the Rex Whistler, a tribute to the man who had painted the amazing, fantasmagorical mural that lines every wall in this, far from small, dining room.

Whistler was the darling of the grand country house owning set, of those who not only had a national treasure house but also the vision to add more artistic touches to it. Trompe l'Oeil was always a good way to amuse ones guests and Whistler was your man. He would install himself in your 'house' and commence his opus, returning from time to time to continue with the good work.

His work has a timeless quality, a great sense of romance and is still to be seen today in the, now restored, Rex Whistler restaurant.

But this is not what took me there all those years ago, nor was it the food, good as it was, no; it was the wine list.

The then manager was an elegant man who had sensibly spent his time, his expertise and the Tate's money, on building a remarkable cellar at a time when it was still possible. His idea was that in those days while the level of cooking in most British restaurants was slightly below par, he would attract a discerning clientele by offering them the chance to drink almost mythical wines at a mark up that would make a cheap off licence seem expensive.

And so, once a week, I would find my way to the best kept secret in town taking great care, as did all regulars, as to whom I might induct into this secret society.

Well the good news is that the restaurant is still there and as magnificent as ever, the food these days is even better and the wine list is still excellent, if a shadow of its former self.

We, myself, son and daughter and she, 'just half a glass please' took Sunday lunch there after visiting the, much heralded, Hockney exhibition.

The traditional roast Sunday lunch is still alive and well. On offer was a choice of Venison, Lamb, Saddleback pork or 32 day aged Beef. The slightly curious thing was that whichever you ordered, it arrived accompanied by Yorkshire pudding. Clean plates were a testament to the excellence. The wine list produced a very good chilled Albarino getting us off to a good start, followed by a luxurious 2007 Cornas at a sensible price. The starters were imaginative and well received as were the desserts, although my Eton miss slightly messed the point.

And suddenly as if in a twinkling, I was in Lorgues, visiting a restaurant recently recommended by someone whose judgement I trust.

It is called L'Estellan (06 38 10 04 09) and is out of town on the route de Saint-Antonin. It has been there for some years but has been taken on by Caroline and Eric, a young and enthusiastic couple who appear to be making a name for themselves.

The set menu is 28 Euros at lunchtime and very good it was on the day we were there. We were accompanied by friends who tend not to take prisoners where food is concerned and they were equally impressed as was she who has to be seated to see the view.

The menu that day started with 'Crème de Chouxfleur avec oeuf mollet, saumon fumé et pistache', an unlikely assembly of ingredients which worked beautifully

together. The main course was *'Pavé de Quasi de veau, roti au sauge, artichauts sauté, pommes de terre et chorizo'*. It was consumed with gusto. I went off piste and chose a *'risotto poire, miel, noix et gorgonzola'* followed by a perfectly cooked pigeon.

My notes say the desserts were utterly..... and the cheese plate too. We drank well, but modestly, the white was Val de Gilly, always reliable and fresh and a very good Cotes du Rhone. In the words of Arnold Schwarzenegger, 'I'll be back'.

It is the young and enthusiastic who bring the future, those with drive and imagination and a nose for something special.

Just as we were, in the 70's.

Pip, pip



## IN PRAISE OF THERESA MAY

Recent articles have focused on Prime Minister May, in more often than not, pretty flattering terms. As an article in Politico.eu said:

""In an age of ever-quicken news cycles, Britain finds itself with a prime minister who rejects the need to "feed the beast." In her set-piece speech setting out the government's position on Brexit in January, May laid out her philosophy. "It is not my job to fill column inches with daily updates," she said.

"To many her reticence is a source of strength. "I like the fact that she doesn't succumb to the knee-jerk reaction," said one Conservative minister, who did not want to be named. "The PM is a leader, not a commenter."

Britain's prime minister does not really do Twitter. She does not do emotional public statements, snap decisions or rushed announcements. She likes governing, formally and in her own time.

Her handling of her first crisis was characteristically deliberate. She will face many more over the coming months. Don't expect her to change tack."" And she doesn't waste time in empty political gestures, just for publicity's sake. Immediately after having been bundled out of the Houses of Parliament for her own safety, back to No. 10, she gathered all the information together that was available, presided over a COBRA security meeting, then went off for her regular weekly meeting with the Queen. Then only then did she make a short announcement. Following which she detoured to visit a London hospital to visit victims of the Westminster atrocity, and the medical emergency staff treating them, but with no publicity, no photo poses.

How many others would have posed for just such photos, Blair for example. Juncker, you name them, all publicity junkies, posting themselves into the public memory.

My personal view is that Theresa May is the best thing that has happened in UK politics for yonks. She is sincere, obviously has very serious values, which she is determined not to betray. She has been handed an extremely poisoned chalice in dealing with Brexit, which must be rather like kayaking white water rapids, beset by rocks on all sides. How many times have the EU elite ignored her, exhibiting incredibly childish behaviour at meetings, only to be met with unfailing courtesy from her side. The SNP First Minister chided her for not having been elected, a totally idle boast, as she well knew. Were May to call a snap election – which she will not do, knowing it is a waste of time, and time is of the essence, plus total waste of money – she would win in a landslide. She has the total confidence of the country behind her, and is obviously prepared and determined to do battle for it.

I have the strong feeling that J.C. Juncker et al, do not yet know what they are up against – one strong, very determined lady – a lady who is not for Turning. I had admired David Cameron, he restructured the economy, created jobs, reduced unemployment. But like many before him, he lost touch with the electorate, preferring the Westminster glass bubble, the chattering classes. Now he looks very much like a dilettante, seeking another, hopefully, "Interesting" job. Sad! What an epitaph.



## MUSIC REVIEW By ROBERT TURNBULL

Finally invited into the new Philharmonie in Paris last month I can confirm that it's an absolute horror, even by French architectural standards. Its famous architect Jean Nouvel, who came to prominence with the popular Institut du Monde Arabe in 1987, disowned the building claiming it to be 'unfinished' and refused to attend its inauguration. But even finished it wouldn't have passed muster. The much reviled exterior has been compared to Darth Vader's helmet after a bruising scrap with the padawans. To me it looks like a collapsed multi-story car park after a coalition attack somewhere in Afghanistan.

Among the 387 million euro concert hall's ugliest external features are black and white cladding resembling fish scales, numerous grey walls in dark corners, a perfect invitation to graffiti artists (who will surely improve it) and an ugly concrete staircase leading up from gloomy recesses of the car park to the equally depressing foyer area. This is a public space of staggering vacuity, the most imposing feature being large iron nails threateningly suspended from the ceiling. They told me there was a bar but I couldn't find it. One mitigating factor: once inside, the auditorium, though curiously dated seems to have a decent acoustic, more than can be said for many of these new theatres. Why are these French buildings so controversial? The reason of course is they gobble up vast amounts of taxpayers money, being designed or commissioned by men with monstrous egos determined to cast their legacy in stone or some other fashionably expensive material. It all began with Louis XIV and Versailles, a Follie de grandeur and unparalleled monument to megalomania. Since then we've had



Napoleon's Les Invalides, followed by a slew of monuments pronouncing the Second Empire. Giscard d'Estaing and his successor Francois Mitterrand initiated Les Grands Projets, a 20 year building spree which resulted in La Defense, the Pyramide, the Parc de la Villette and Bibliotheque Nationale, among many others.

We are now inured to these buildings and are even nostalgic over scandals which captivated the entire nation in spirited though largely pointless debate. Many seem to have stood the test of time, but does anyone really like them? 40 years on, it's still hard for me to glance at the massive Opera Bastille without wondering if they should have kept the old prison. It was and will remain an expensive excuse for warehousing audiences, a Socialist project to make us all become appropriately cultured, in the true spirit of French dirigisme. It seems that every moment of every day in France someone somewhere is dreaming up another concert hall or opera house. Paris has five functioning opera theatres if you include the Theatre des Champs Elysees and the Theatre du Chatelet and more concert halls than you can count.

And there's even another one of the cards. The Cite Musicale situated on the banks of the Seine is due to open later in the year in an area more famous for its Renault's factories than artistic pursuits. It marks the beginning of yet another cultural zone for those who don't yet know they need it, even if they (probably) have already paid for it.

Concert halls are, in any case, risky acoustically. The Elbe Philharmonie in Hamburg, a commercial venture comprising a five star hotel, opened last year to many accolades, but many have to be tweaked considerably, and in some cases a redesign is needed.

But what of Britain, where the chances of extracting money for the culture from any shade of government are practically zero?

It was the conductor Simon Rattle who famously said of London's festival Hall that when you rehearse there you 'lose the will to live', while making his bid for a new concert hall for when he takes over the LSO in 2018. The scheme to build the new hall on the current site of the Museum of London had been approved after a feasibility study undertaken by Rattle and Nicholas Hytner, the former

artistic director of the National Theatre, but then it seems the project ran out of steam. Many considered it an unnecessary extravagance, a vanity project, at a time when arts organizations across the country were struggling to find the money for spaces that already existed. In the end the dissenters were drowned out by those determined to give the hero of the British musical establishment what he wanted and a deal was concocted. In the end the celebrity had to be appeased. Will the costs overrun and will the entire operation be mired in controversy and scandal? You don't need to be a genius to answer these.



## STURM UND DRANG When are they going to believe we mean it?

It is quite amazing to read all the drama, invective, and threats of backlash, from every sort of EU politician as the date approached for Prime Minister May to



trigger Article 50.

As I write it is **LIBERATION DAY Wednesday 29 March 2017**. It is as if they really did not believe she/we would do it, that at the last minute faced with all their threats, and blackmail, invective, hot

air, insults, she would on the 28 March, back down, and say: "Sorry Chaps, we've reconsidered."

The UK electorate overwhelmingly voted to leave the EU. Let's remind ourselves that 77.2% of the UK electorate voted in the Referendum, an astronomical voter turnout not seen in decades - and we voted to leave.

It is as if the EU, the EC was controlled, steered, directed by incompetent children, incapable of seeing, understanding, the evidence before them.

But of course as events have unrolled, they, plus member nations, have finally realised the enormous financial hole they face. The UK was the second highest

contributor to the EU budget, it also is the major market of many of the EU members, see further details .

And Now, OMG, they realise that the UK is going through with it.

Germany, of course, has been saying quietly all along, "Well we are not going to pick up the Tab", now Sweden, that is only the sixth net contributor to the EU

Budget, is also saying "Hallo, we are not going to fill that hole!". And so it goes. They all want the advantages, but none of them want to pay for it, they still expect the UK to underwrite the EU.

The EU and the Euro has caused massive economic stagnation, but they still will not recognise those facts, or deal with them, massive youth unemployment, absolutely no

job creation, and now in the past two years, huge problems with immigration, jihadists, and terror attacks.

And now at the last minute, before Prime Minister May triggers Article 50, they accuse the UK of everything they can

think of. They have tried every delaying tactic they can think of, every blackmail trick in the book. Accusing the UK of everything, basically that they, themselves, have been guilty of for the past months since the UK Referendum. One really wonders how such people came to power, and it is a total inditement of the EU that it now basically consists of unelected, mini dictators, who are never held responsible for their actions. Yes, they are totally frightened, panicked beyond belief that their edifice, and so called sacred freedoms, will collapse. They have only themselves and their incredible egos, their incompetence, their profligacy, and mismanagement, to blame for it.

They can write Treaties, like the new Treaty of Rome, etc, until the cows come home – unfortunately at some point they are going to have to wake up, smell the coffee, and Get with real life. Rather than the Utopia cum La la Land they are living in.

**Quote:** “The European Union has been the all-time champion at devising barriers to economic flexibility and vitality, with the predictable consequence that youth unemployment in many member countries is now at its highest levels in living memory.”

Janet Daley.

to see signs of an unpleasant, controlling personality. You churned out miles – sorry, kilometres – of intrusive, often barmy regulations. And, because we are British, we actually obeyed them!

**To take just one small example, we were told that universities within the EU must open jobs to academics from other member states. Only two nations succeeded to any serious extent: the Netherlands and the UK. Germany scarcely did. France reserved all her university positions for the French. Quelle surprise!**

**(Ed: France has also now imposed the “Clause Moliere” on all its public works construction sites, ie all workers should be able to speak FRENCH, ostensibly for safety reasons, but actually of course to keep out East European, and particularly Polish workers from such employment! So much for the EU’s sacred freedom of movement! Typical EU hypocrisy!)**

Italy, meanwhile, kept it in the family – a startling number of professors shared the same surname. Those are basically the conclusions of a recent EU study, so we’re not being paranoid. **You made the rules, we played by them; others did not.**

Your crazy over-regulation was symptomatic of a desire to create a European superstate while imposing your will on your subject peoples. How right

Mikhail Gorbachev was when he said: “The most puzzling development in politics during the last decade is the apparent determination of Western European leaders to re-create the Soviet Union in Western Europe.”

To advance your project, you introduced the euro, even though many economists predicted it would be a disaster.

Imagine tying an Andalucian donkey cart to the bumper of a German Merc. Well, that’s what you did. **Over a quarter of young people in southern Europe are unemployed today because of your arrogance and stupidity.**

Unlike any other trading bloc in the world, the EU made free movement of people a condition of membership. This caused huge pressure in the UK, which was a honeypot for migrants from Eastern Europe. Millions came and, astonishingly, you insisted that we had to send child benefit to their offspring in other countries, while we were cutting benefits for our own people.

But we are where we are. Today, the UK gives you notice that we are leaving the EU. We are the first, but almost certainly not the last. We hold no brief for Marine Le Pen, but she is riding high in the polls, and what she told the French electorate on Sunday may not be a hollow threat: “The European Union will die because the people do not want it any more... arrogant and hegemonic empires are destined to perish.”

We very much hope that negotiations over the next two years will be cordial and productive. The UK bears no ill will towards our European neighbours. On the contrary, we hope that both our trade and our friendships will go from strength to strength. We want your cheese, your cars and your Prosecco as much as you need our world-class intelligence services and popular music.

Finally, about this exit bill. You want us to pay you €60billion? Well, we did have a Diet Coke and Twix from the minibar, but the kitchen was closed. Let’s say 60 quid and no hard feelings?

*Yours sincerely,*

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

**PS: Any use for a small, angry**

**Scotswoman? We’ve got one going spare.**

## EU BUDGET: WHERE'S THE MONEY GONE?

Leaving the European Union, now triggered by Prime Minister Theresa May Wednesday March 29, may transform Britain but it will also change the EU. Here's how!

The following article by Alastair Macdonald for Reuters, makes interesting reading

The Union's budget accounts for only 2 percent of public spending in the bloc. But in the east, transfers from Brussels contribute a much bigger share - some 8 percent of Poland's budget and nearly a fifth of Bulgaria's.

Without Britain, Brussels will have about a sixth less to give to countries that are net recipients, setting up a fight between east and west over a 7-year spending plan from 2021.

In the short term, there will also be a battle with Britain over what it owes on leaving. London may choose to keep paying for access to some key EU budgets, such as for research. But big accounts, like farm subsidies, could be in for radical review.



## AND Columnist Allison Pearson sums up a Farewell letter to the EU

“The UK will never fall out of love with Europe, but, sadly, our marriage with the EU became an abusive one.

Europe taught us how to eat; a generation that was raised on the Findus Crispy Pancake now feeds its own children pasta, garlic bread and fromage frais. Without the Mediterranean diet, we would definitely be a sadder place with a Vitamin D deficiency and, quite possibly, rickets

You changed. When we first got together in 1973, you were strong and capable of growth. Before long, though, we started



## BALANCE OF POWER: FRIENDS LEFT IN LURCH

Britain has used its 12-percent share of EU votes to curb Brussels spending and push hard for free trade. Its departure worries smaller northern allies like the Nordics and Dutch.

Poorer easterners, whose membership Britain championed, fret that Germany and France may stiffen barriers to their low-wage workforce (which is already happening see previous!) or beef up EU federal powers the ex-communist states dislike. Aspiring new members, notably in the Balkans, also lose an ally against rich westerners wary of further EU enlargement.

The 19 euro countries will lose a key block on their caucus power. They can now outvote non-euro states, but only just. A non-euro bloc led by Poland and Sweden would need major dissent among euro countries to prevent the euro zone setting EU policy.

France becomes the EU's only nuclear-armed, veto-wielding U.N. Security Council member and loses a dogged opponent of its ambitions for more EU defense cooperation outside the U.S.-led NATO alliance; defense is already back on Brussels' agenda.

Germany, ambivalent about being seen as dominating Europe by dint of its economic muscle and being home to nearly one post-Brexit EU citizen in five, is uneasy about how to maintain balance, notably with economically struggling co-founder France.

## EU IN THE WORLD: A DIMINISHED FORCE

The EU loses a hefty interlocutor with the United States and the wider English-speaking world. A historic diplomatic and military force, Britain's insight and influence with powers like China and Russia or in the Middle East have been useful to the EU. In Africa, a source of growing concern over migration, British aid budgets and other clout have played a key role.

London's tough line with Moscow has won it friends among the likes of the Baltic states and the Netherlands, which fear that a softer approach from France, Italy and, possibly, Germany will undermine a consensus for pressuring Russia with sanctions over its actions in Ukraine or for cutting dependence on Russian gas.

## POLITICAL CULTURE: VIVE LE BREXIT?

Though under-represented in the staff of EU institutions, British officials over 44 years of membership have established a key role in senior positions as well as in the EU parliament. That will disappear as British citizens are shut out of EU jobs. Many governments, notably from smaller states, value what they see as a British approach to administration that is more pragmatic and laissez-faire than the more centralized, dirigiste tradition embedded in the French foundations of the Union. Britain will leave one legacy likely to survive in the form of English as Brussels' working language, despite some hopes in Paris of restoring the prominence of French.

SMALL PRINT



## EU BUDGET

**BRUSSELS is facing a major funding crisis when its cash cow Britain leaves with Brexit set to slash the EU's budget receipts by up to a fifth, a leading think-tank has warned.**

Eurocrats are staring at a colossal spending black hole caused largely by the astonishing rate at which they have

milks the UK economy for cash, according to bombshell conclusions published by the **European Policy Centre (EPC)**.

Experts revealed how Britain's budget contributions have ballooned at an unprecedented speed and are now a scarcely believable more than 50 times greater than they were when the country joined the bloc in 1973.

For just one year in its five-decade EU history has the UK ever been a net beneficiary of the project, and that came in 1975 when the then Government was putting full membership to a referendum.

And now Brussels has become hooked on British taxpayers' cash, with experts

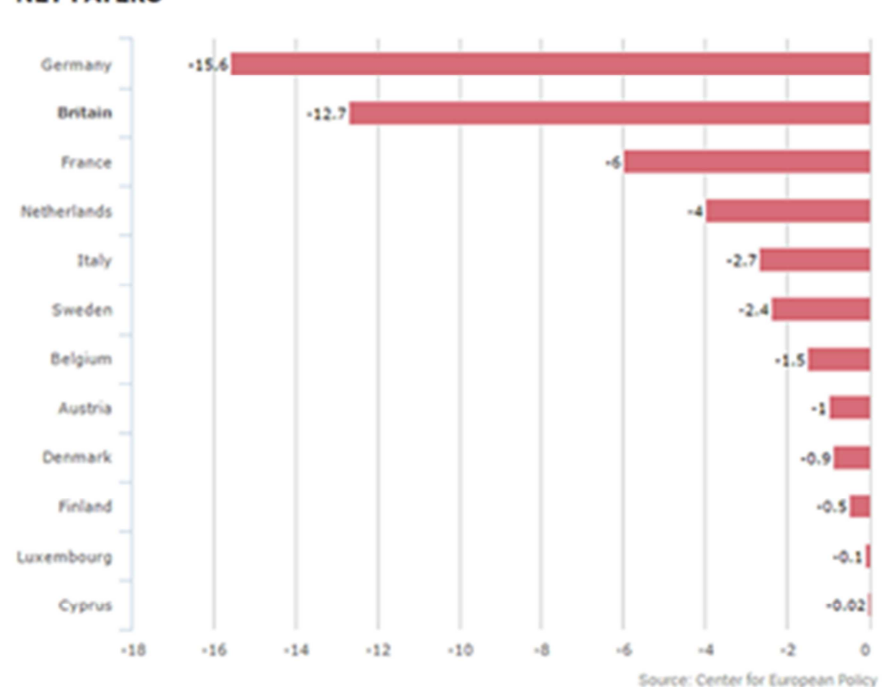
warning both eurocrats and the other 27 countries face seriously painful decision about how to make up for the shortfall from 2019 onwards.

Some time earlier in **Der Spiegel**, German magazine reiterating that very point, that once the UK had quit the EU, who was going to fill the financial gap.

## QUOTE "10 Billion Euros or Worse

*Commissioned by the European Commission and the General Secretariat of the European Council, the first calculations on how expensive Brexit might be for the 27 remaining member states have now been completed. According to one paper, net revenues that flow into the EU from Britain each year range from 14 to 21 billion euros. If*

## NET PAYERS



*you subtract the money Britain gets back from Brussels, the EU budget would shrink by up to 10 billion euros per year.*

*But it could be even worse. The rebate to Britain's EU contributions negotiated by Margaret Thatcher has led to more than 110 billion euros in savings for the British over the years. Given that other net payers, including Germany, did not want to be made responsible for the additional costs this created, they were also given a rebate. In addition to Germany, the Netherlands, Sweden, Austria and Denmark also currently enjoy a reduction in what they must pay into the budget. After Brexit, this spat could intensify, especially given that France, which is also a net payer, doesn't get any rebate at all.*

*A paper by the Center for European Policy (CEP), set to be presented in Berlin this week, delivers numbers of a similar magnitude. The comprehensive study on redistribution in the EU shows that the remaining EU member states, above all Germany, are facing significant additional burdens.*

*From 2008 to 2015, the United Kingdom's contribution to the EU rose each year, to the point that it ultimately became the third biggest net payer into the EU's budget, the paper notes, with the average yearly amount paid by Britain pegged at 6.5 billion euros during this period. The only countries that pay more for European unity are Germany and France.*

*In 2015, the study found, Britain was in second place: The British paid 12.7 billion euros more than they got back from the EU. By comparison, Germany paid 15.6 billion. The paper also determined that the British paid more into the EU per capita than Germany did that year. "After this country's withdrawal from the EU, this net amount will have to be redistributed among the other member states," writes CEP report author Matthias Kullas. "The other major net payers -- especially Germany, France and Italy -- will be facing significant additional costs."*

## **FOLLOW THE MONEY**

**The EU for all their blustering, are facing a huge black hole. And it is not just the huge hole in EU finances, it is also the Damocles sword of European banks' imminent collapse.**

**For example:**

*If the ECB scales back stimulus, banks face even greater risk of collapse. But now there's a new solution.*

**Events are moving so fast in Europe these days, it's almost impossible to keep up.** While much of the attention is being hogged by political developments, including the past election in the

Netherlands, Reuters published a report warning that the European banking sector may face even higher bad loan risks if the ECB begins to scale back its monetary stimulus programs, something it has already begun, albeit extremely tentatively.

The total stock of non-performing loans (NPL) in the EU is estimated at over €1 trillion, or **5.4% of total loans, a ratio three times higher than in other major regions of the world.**

**On a country-by-country basis, things look even scarier.** Currently 10 (out of 28) EU countries have an NPL ratio above 10% (orders of magnitude higher than what is generally considered safe). And among Eurozone countries, where the ECB's monetary policies have direct impact, there are these NPL stalwarts: Ireland: 15.8% - Italy: 16.6% - Portugal: 19.2% - Slovenia: 19.7% - Greece: 46.6% Cyprus: 49% That bears repeating: *in Greece and Cyprus, two of the Eurozone's most bailed out economies, virtually half of all the bank loans are toxic.*

Then there's Italy, whose €350 billion of NPLs account for roughly a third of Europe's entire bad debt stock. Italy's government and financial sector have spent the last year and a half failing spectacularly to come up with a solution to the problem.

## **EUROZONE TURMOIL: Spain, Italy and Greece owe massive debt of €1 TRILLION to ECB!**

Analysts condemned the "flawed economics of this reckless [EU] experiment" and said the ECB faces a rude awakening as states crumble under the burden of debt.

Market conditions in Eurozone are showing signs of a return to the conditions that sparked the 2011 European debt crisis which first reared its head in 2009.

The ECB uses a system called Target2 to assess levels of debt and the bank's data appears to show it is only a matter of time before the current system breaks.

**They bought into the concept of an EU gravy train, without questioning the flawed economics of this reckless experiment.** Fuller Treacy Money analyst David Fuller

At the time several eurozone member states including Greece, Portugal, Ireland, Spain and Cyprus were unable to repay or refinance their government debt.

They were bailed out through assistance of third parties including Eurozone countries, the ECB, and the International Monetary Fund. But Spain, Italy, Greece and Portugal are racking up debts they will never be able to pay off. Spain's Target2 liabilities are €328 billion, almost 30 per cent of GDP. And Portugal's and Greece's liabilities are both at €72 billion. The Banca d'Italia alone now owes a record €364 billion to the ECB - 22 per cent of GDP.

## **NEWS FROM BRUSSELS Fake news is old news in Brussels**

Fake news is big news but in Brussels it is also old news. Tactical leaks ahead of legislative proposals are a well-worn tool to heap political pressure on internal opponents in the Commission.

But it is at the European Council summits when the EU fake news machine really cranks into gear.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

There are rumours of national officials, after a couple of beers, confessing to



feeding journalists lies to lift the boredom of the hours of tough negotiations. Such things are hard to prove and accusations of fake news cut both ways. But **The Brief** ([www.euractiv.com](http://www.euractiv.com)) recalls one instance in particular that shows how some in the EU view the press. One journalist took a high-ranking official to task over an inaccurate briefing given during David Cameron's ill-fated EU reform negotiations. He confessed to having twisted the truth. **He told the astonished pressman, "That was a tactic. I have tactics, when I speak to journalists, I don't speak because I'm a nice guy. I want to achieve something. "You write it, somebody reads it. I instrumentalise you."** Well now we Know!



## SO YES – MERKEL WAS JUST POLITICALLY POSTURING AS SHE LET IN 1.2 MILLION IMMIGRANTS

It turns out she and her Ministers were totally prepared to close the German borders, way back in September 2015. Extra police had been assigned, rushed into action, at the sight of the thousands of refugees, heading for Germany, and at the last moment they were pulled back, as Minister of the Interior, Maiziers, pointed out to Merkel, **"What is it going to look like? Hundreds of women with small children, rushing the border posts, and our police turning them back?"** **"What will it look like in photos? On TV?"**

It was at this point that Merkel, unwilling up to that time to make a decision, realised how dramatically it would affect her political career, and she finally took the decision to keep the border open. Not exactly the wonderful Humanitarian act that it has been portrayed as ever since. Just Political Expediency, with little thought for the repercussions, and the Repercussions have been hitting Europe ever since, and are about to bite her in the bum, politically, very soon, in the September German elections. Reports have just recently emerged from German newspapers, and specifically by a book being written by Robin Alexander, political observer, as follows: The Chancellor had actually finalised plans to shut the border with Austria in September 2015 and was mobilising hundreds of guards when she got cold

feet, according to Robin Alexander in his new book *'Driven By Events: Merkel's Refugee Policy'*. The high-profile political reporter claimed Mrs Merkel was concerned "for historical reasons, the Chancellor feared images of armed German police confronting civilians on our borders. "In the end, Angela Merkel refused to assume responsibility even as everything was in place to close the borders so they remained open - without an explicit decision." The book alleges Mrs Merkel had moved to close the border when she was told of a huge group of migrants moving through the Balkans towards Germany. However, just before finalising the decision, Mr Alexander said she spoke to German interior minister Thomas de Maiziere, who asked her: "Can we live with the images that will come out of this?"

"What happens if 500 refugees with children in their arms run towards the border guards?" Mrs Merkel made a rapid U-turn and left the borders open, allowing hundreds of thousands of migrants to enter Germany. Merkel then posed for selfies with immigrants, all good copy:



**The plan had been to turn back any and all migrants that didn't have papers allowing them entry, "including in case of asylum request,"** the *Welt am Sonntag* newspaper reported. The original plan, due to have taken place on Sunday, September 13, was scrapped after German officials voiced **legal concerns over the border closure** during a meeting at the country's Interior Ministry.

The stumbling block appeared to be that in the decisive hour, **none of the leading politicians was willing to take responsibility**, *Welt am Sonntag* reported, adding that, **ultimately, the decision to close the border might have been illegal**.

The German chancellor reportedly didn't make a decision and demanded that the border closure be handled by the courts. The interior minister was unable to obtain guarantees from the leading officials and police officers that the plan would be legal.

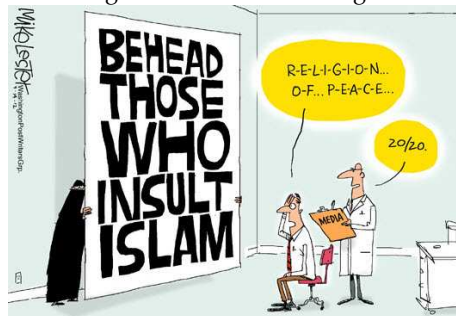
As a result, the already completed order to federal police was rewritten to state that "third-country nationals are to be permitted to enter Germany to apply for asylum without binding identity documents," *Welt am Sonntag* reports.

According to Interior Minister de Maiziere, **a total of 1.1 million refugees were registered in Germany in 2015 - 428,500 of them from Syria**.

Merkel has been under fire over her 'open-door' migration policy, with anti-migrant sentiment and anti-refugee rallies gaining momentum.

Some 200 people came to the Berlin office of the chancellor's Christian Democratic Union (CDU) party in December to protest against the policy. The action was organized by the Identitarian Movement,

a pan-European right-wing populist group often described as racist and Islamophobic. It all makes for an interesting backdrop to the Immigration crisis now facing the EU!



## GREECE CANNOT ACCEPT MORE MIGRANTS

Greece will cease taking back refugees under the controversial Dublin Regulation, as the country's limited capacities to host people are already on the brink of collapse, the Greek migration minister announced in an interview.

"Greece is already shouldering a heavy burden," Ioannis Mouzalas, the migration minister, said.

"We accommodate 60,000 refugees... and it would be a mistake to make Greece's burden heavier by the revival of the Dublin agreement," he said, also adding that Germany, the primary destination for most refugees, "wants countries where refugees arrive first to bear a large portion of the burden."

Asked if Athens is ruling out implementation of the Dublin Regulation, Mouzalas answered in the affirmative, adding, "I want the Germans to understand that this is not because of political or ideological reasons, or failure to appreciate Germany's assistance."

"Greece simply has no capacities to cope with additional arrival of refugees," he said. "We've just pulled ourselves together, so please, don't make us falter again."

At this stage, Mouzalas said, Greece is ready to accommodate only a small number of refugees as a symbolic gesture, showing "that we're not opposed to the Dublin agreement." Greece "reached its limits" and "we can't bring in a single refugee," he reaffirmed, appealing "to the common sense of Europe."

Of course, should Greece really go against Merkel's dream of assimilation, (oh Yes!) she will simply unleash further *austere despair* on the nation in return for their next bailout. **How much longer will the Greeks take it?**

**One fears, not much longer.**

## MERKEL'S AGREEMENT WITH TURKEY – ANOTHER CRISIS IN THE MAKING

"Never believe anything until it has been officially denied," people use to say in the old days of the Soviet Union.

Today, the same seems to be true for the European Union's migrant policy. When German Chancellor Angela Merkel engineered the EU-Turkey deal on migrants, it was widely described by the European politicians and the media as a "breakthrough". Merkel and other EU leaders agreed on offering a down payment of €3 billion to the regime of Turkey's President, Recep Tayyip Erdogan, in return for its promises to "stem migrant flows".

In December 2015, nearly four months before the EU-Turkey agreement was even formalized, Hungary's Prime Minister Viktor Orbán accused Chancellor Merkel of working on a "secret deal" with her Turkish counterparts. Orbán was quite specific in his claims, apparently certain that Berlin would soon reveal the details to the public.

"Beyond what we agreed with Turkey in Brussels there's something that doesn't figure in the agreement," Orbán said in December 2015. "We'll wake up one day -- and I think this will be announced in Berlin as soon as this week -- that we have to take in 400,000 to 500,000 refugees directly from Turkey."

Prime Minister Orbán was ridiculed for his claims. European Commission Vice President Frans Timmermans dismissed Orbán's allegations of a secret deal with Turkey as "nonsense".

Bloomberg News reported the German and French outrage at Orbán's allegations at that time:

"France and Germany are working together to manage the flow of migrants, which is a challenge to everyone," French government spokesman Stephane Le Foll told reporters in Paris on Wednesday.

"Last weekend the union reached an agreement with Turkey," and Orbán should be aware of the details since he was there, Le Foll said.

A German government official, requesting anonymity because EU-Turkey talks are ongoing, said Orbán's claim that Germany made a secret deal is false.

**As it now turns out, PM Orbán was right about a "secret deal" all along. According to the latest revelations made by the**

German newspaper *Die Welt*, Chancellor Merkel, along with Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte, had agreed to accept 150,000 to 200,000 Syrian migrants from Turkey into the EU without consulting other European member states.

**Report from Die Welt, 13 March** *Vijeta Uniyal, a journalist and news analyst, is based in Germany.*

Contrary to previous information, German Chancellor Angela Merkel (CDU) and Dutch Prime Minister Mark Rutte made concrete commitments on a legal refugee quota during the negotiations on the refugee deal between the EU and Turkey. Merkel and Rutte promised directly to bring in 150,000 to 200,000 Syrian refugees to Europe from Turkey each year...

The plan agreed upon by Merkel, [Turkey's Prime Minister] Davutoglu and Rutte was presented the following day as an unexpected suggestion by Turkey. The heads of the state and governments agreed on a "voluntary intake due to humanitarian reason" in the final document of the summit.

The exact number was not revealed to the European [leaders] by Merkel, Davutoglu or Rutte. The three heads of government reached an understanding on the number 150,000 to 250,000 through a gentleman's agreement. This has been confirmed by several individuals involved in the negotiations.

There is a plausible reason why Merkel and Rutte are still hiding these migrant figures from the public. Both Rutte and Merkel had to (Rutte's election passed ok, did his electorate know of this agreement?) face their voters this year and are looking at a real prospect of anti-mass immigration parties making strong gains in the March and September general elections respectively.

Regardless of any secret dealings, however, the idea of importing hundreds of thousands of migrants into Europe fits seamlessly into what seems to be Merkel's agenda of transforming the German and European demography.

In September 2015, before the migrant crisis could even fully unfold, Germany's Vice-Chancellor Sigmar

Gabriel declared that country could absorb up to 500,000 migrants each year.



In a government report published last month by the German newspaper *Rheinische Post*, experts recommended an annual intake of up to 300,000 migrants a year for the next 40 years, to counter lower German birth rates. According to these official estimates, Germany will have to take in 12 million migrants to keep the current size of the German population -- 82 million -- stable through 2060. As they embark on a bizarre social engineering project on a continental scale, members of Germany's political class evidently do not see the need to consult even their own electorates. Instead, they apparently believe in creating irreversible facts on the ground. **They are even proposing a contingency plan to thwart a potential backlash from the population. In case of any future national referendum, Germany's Federal Commissioner for Refugees and Migrants, Aydan Özoguz, recommends giving voting rights to migrants permanently residing in Germany.** Considering the ironclad support for Merkel's "Refugees Welcome" policy in the German media and across the political establishment, there seems to be a consensus within Germany's political establishment to keep the floodgates of mass-migration open, no matter how high the price. For Merkel and Germany's political elite, the victims of Islamist terror attacks across Germany or the hundreds of women who were sexually assaulted in Cologne's central square on New Year's Eve are merely roadkill on the Autobahn leading to their promised multicultural paradise.

**UPDATE:** However, it now looks as if all deals might be off, as Turkey has yet to receive much of the €3 billion it was promised in this deal, it is being brokered, very slowly through various NGO's, and Turkish Prime Minister Erdogan, making lots of loud noises, due to his upcoming referendum, is demanding more Money! **"Europe has not kept its promises on the migrant deal, for us that agreement has ended."**

Which means that one year after it (or only some of it!) for the migrant deal, Turkey has just pretty well voided the agreement, and the next step would be that Turkey is about to flood Europe with refugees currently held inside Turkish borders. And since by some estimates Turkey currently harbors over 2 million

potential migrants, Europe's refugee situation is about to get far worse, and as a corollary, support for anti-immigrant political organizations across the continent is about to take another step function higher.



## EUROPEAN POLITICIANS JUST AREN'T LISTENING – THEY ARE LIVING IN LA LA LAND !

**Chancellor Merkel surrounded by her Protection Posse - when asked how Europe could be protected against Islamification. Merkel, who has a personal security team of 15-20 armed bodyguards around her, working in shifts, answered: "Fear is not a good adviser. How comforting! I'll bet lots of women voters in Germany would like their own security guards when shopping!"**

Uninhibited by the obvious fear of their citizens, the EU nevertheless carries on its immigration policies. Ironically, Western political elites consider this clearly widespread sentiment against Muslim immigration "racist" and "Islamophobic" and consequently disregard it -- thereby empowering anti-immigration political parties.

"Islam has no place in Slovakia.... [the problem is not migrants coming in, but] rather in them changing the face of the country." — Robert Fico, Prime Minister of Slovakia.

The European Union's reaction to terror has been to make Europe's already restrictive gun laws even more restrictive. The problem is that this restrictiveness contradicts the EU's own reports: these show that homicides committed in Europe are mainly committed with *illegal* firearms.

In Eastern Europe, on the other hand, it is still normal to want to defend yourself. Last summer, Czech President Milos Zeman even encouraged citizens to arm themselves against Islamic terrorism. "I really think that citizens should arm

themselves against terrorists. And I honestly admit that I changed my mind, because previously I was against

[citizens] having too many weapons. After these attacks, I don't think so". Since the president's remarks, the Czech Interior Minister, Milan Chovanec, has proposed extending the use of arms in the event of a terrorist attack. He explained that despite strict security measures, it is not always possible for the police to guarantee a fast and effective intervention. Fast action from a member of the public could prevent the loss of many lives. Such reasoning, often seen as laughable in Western Europe, reflects an understanding of the fear that has become a recurring theme on the continent. In Germany, a recent poll showed that two out of three Germans are afraid of becoming the victim of a terrorist attack and 10% perceive an "acute threat" to their safety. Among women, the figures were even higher. 74% responded that they sometimes feel unsafe in crowded places, and 9% said they felt permanently threatened and scared. Western European leaders, on the other hand, pretend not to understand this fear. In 2015, German Chancellor Angela **Merkel was asked how Europe could be protected against Islamization. Merkel, who does not move without her own personal security team consisting of 15-20 armed bodyguards around her, working in shifts, answered: "Fear is not a good adviser. It is better that we should have the courage once again to deal more strongly with our own Christian roots." In December, she told members of the Christian Democratic**

Union (CDU), who were asking how to reassure the public about integrating migrants, "This could also broaden your horizons."

(This is the same Merkel, who in 2010 said that multiculturalism had "utterly failed").

As Western Europeans are discovering, however, that the state is increasingly unable to protect them, they have begun acting on their fears:

Recent surveys showed : In France in increase of almost 40% in demand for gun licenses, In Belgium, Liege, demand has doubled in five years, In German cities as well, after the Cologne attacks, 304 requests in two weeks, In Switzerland also a huge increase, and Austria, Meantime in the EU, "I believe Europeans should understand that we need migration for our economies and for our welfare systems, with the current demographic trend we have to be sustainable," said Federica Mogherini, the EU's high representative for foreign affairs and security policy. She added that the continent "does not and will not close its doors" to migrants.

Mogherini is probably not interested in a recent Chatham House study, in which an average of 55% of the people across the 10 European countries surveyed wanted to stop all future immigration from mainly Muslim countries. Only two of the countries surveyed were from Eastern Europe. **A ban was supported by 71% of people in Poland, 65% in Austria, 53% in Germany and 51% in Italy. In the UK, 47% supported a ban.**

It is also a reality that many more European citizens want "less Europe" than "more Europe", with a Pew Survey of 10 major EU countries finding that nearly twice as many EU citizens wanted more power to flow back to EU capitals than to Brussels.

**Several countries in Eastern Europe, such as Poland, Hungary and Slovakia, the Visegrad 4, including Czech Republic, have refused adamantly to take in migrants, and several Balkan countries have completely closed their borders.**



### **Visegrad Group throw bomb into the EU works –**

**Prime Ministers of Visegrad Group (Visegrad Four or V4) countries: Poland's Beata Szydlo (2-R), Czech Republic's Bohuslav Sobotka (L), Hungary's Viktor Orban (2-L) and Slovakia's Robert Fico (R) with a 'Warsaw Declaration' on innovativeness in the region at the Central Eastern European (CEE) Innovators Summit, in Warsaw, Poland, 28 March 2017.**

**Leaders from the Czech Republic, Hungary, Slovakia and Poland (the Visegrád Four) rejected yesterday (28 March) what they called Brussels' use of "blackmail and diktat" over planned resettlements of migrants across the EU.** Long opposed to sharing the burden of hosting mainly Syrian refugees, the four eastern EU states ruled out any links between accepting them and future disbursements of EU funds.

Eastern EU states "will never accept blackmail and diktat" on migration policy, Polish Prime Minister Beata Szydlo said at a press conference in Warsaw with her Czech, Hungarian and Slovak counterparts.

Czech Prime Minister Bohuslav Sobotka insisted that all four countries "oppose linking the debate about migration to European funds".

"This is blackmail, that we reject in the name of the Slovak government," added Slovak Prime Minister Robert Fico. EU members have until September to take in 160,000 refugees from Syria and elsewhere currently living in Greece and Italy, which have been on the frontline of the migration crisis.

So far only 13,500 have been relocated in a laborious process that has been bogged down by resistance from central and eastern European states that oppose Muslim immigration.

This month, the EU warned that countries could be punished if they fail to share the burden, raising the possibility of fines on member states.

Austria will seek an exemption from having to accept more asylum-seekers under an EU relocation system, it said (28 March), arguing that it has already taken in its fair share during Europe's migration crisis.

The move is a new blow to a relocation system that would cover only a fraction of migrant arrivals to the European Union and which has barely been implemented because of opposition led by Eastern European countries including Poland and Hungary.

It coincides with a tightening of security and immigration rules by the centrist coalition in Austria, where a wave of arrivals that began in 2015 helped fuel a rise in support for the far-right Freedom Party that still leads in opinion polls.

"We believe an exception is necessary for Austria for having already fulfilled its obligation. We will discuss that with the European Commission," Chancellor Christian Kern told reporters after a weekly cabinet meeting. "We will send a letter as quickly as possible and then begin discussions."

Fewer than 14,500 asylum-seekers have been relocated from Greece and Italy, the first EU countries that many refugees and migrants from the Middle East and Africa set foot in, under the two-year EU plan that was supposed to cover 160,000 people and which expires in September. Austria took in roughly 90,000 asylum seekers in 2015, more than 1% of its population. More than a million migrants arrived in Germany that year, most of them having passed through Austria after crossing the Balkans.

"We are of the opinion ... that the people in question here already sought an asylum application or arrived in Italy or Greece," Kern said. "We must check whether we have already fulfilled our quota and discharged our obligation."

## **Goodbye Old EU, Hello 2 Speed, New Multi-Speed NO Speed Europe !**

Hit by a wave of crises, the European Union is urgently searching a new model of functioning in order to survive in one form or another.

It is expected that the final decision on the future functioning of the community will be made in December. The coming months are likely to see further turbulence. The EU – the EC has just faced down the recent Dutch election, calling it a triumph, and a defeat of "Populism" which is not exactly borne out by the results.

To shortly to be followed by presidential elections in France in April and May.



Germany holds legislative elections in September.

French President Francois Hollande hosted his counterparts on March 6 in Versailles, near Paris, to prepare for a larger EU meeting in Rome on March 25. **France, Germany, Italy and Spain used the occasion to express support for a multi-speed Europe in a joint effort to cushion the impact of the Brexit.** «Unity does not equal uniformity», French President Francois Hollande told reporters ahead of a working dinner with German Chancellor Angela Merkel, Spanish Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy and Italy's Premier Paolo Gentiloni. «For this reason I support new forms of cooperation», he said at a joint press conference with the other leaders. Some EU member states could «go more quickly» and «further in areas such as defence and the eurozone, by deepening the economic and monetary union, and by harmonizing fiscal and social policy», the French president said. Other EU members could choose to opt out of measures intended to deepen integration, he added. Hollande also emphasized the need for a European defense that would operate in coordination with NATO. He was backed by his German counterpart. *«We must have the courage to accept that some countries can move forward a little more quickly than others»*, German Chancellor Angela Merkel said. She insisted that other member states should be able to join the more advanced ones when they are ready. «A Europe of different speeds is necessary, otherwise we will probably get stuck. If Europe gets stuck and doesn't develop further, then this work of peace may run into danger faster than one might think», Merkel noted. The chancellor was one of the first to mention this solution in February at the informal EU summit in Malta. The concept allows some member states to press ahead with integration faster than others. Those in the «slow lane» would restrict themselves to participation in the single market and co-operation on foreign and security policy.

**Besides Germany and France – the European Union's «engine» – the concept of multi-speed Europe is supported by Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Luxembourg and several other rich EU nations. The Baltic States are likely to back it too.** In the preparation for the EU summit in Rome on the occasion of the

60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Treaty of Rome, the European Commission unveiled on March 1 new ideas to keep the bloc unified. The White Paper on the Future of Europe foresaw five possible scenarios for the continent by 2025: to carry on as usual; function as a single market only; do less but be more efficient; allow groups of member states to advance at their own pace; or do far more together. Thus, the EU's executive branch is passing the buck to the member states to decide in which direction the EU should be heading.

The Commission President, Jean-Claude **Juncker, argued in the European Parliament that a multi-speed Europe was the best solution.** EU leaders considered Juncker's options ahead of the Rome summit, where they made their own declarations about the way forward after Britain's expected departure in 2019. The implementation of the multi-speed Europe concept would see some EU countries grow more united on economic and defense matters while allowing other states to catch up later. The «core» EU states could move faster and further in deepening the eurozone and harmonizing their fiscal and social policy.

**The idea presupposes breaches in the basics of European integration, such as the single market, or the four freedoms of movement, capital, goods and services. In a nutshell, it all boils down to EU integration in subgroups, which is already de facto happening.** Today, the EU is divided into clubs, at times overlapping mini-coalitions based on shared geography or interests. Some countries belong to the Eurozone, some belong to the Schengen Zone, and some EU members strengthen cooperation within the European Patent Network.

**Germany, Sweden, Belgium the Netherlands and Austria consider the idea of creating a «mini-Schengen» and collectively close off their borders to the rest of Europe to halt the flow of refugees into their countries.**

**Last September, Greece organized a summit of Southern European countries – the so-called Club Med.** They are prone to support more protection measures and want Brussels to give individual governments more leeway to spend and borrow as they see fit.

Then there is the Visegrad Group of emerging Central European powers – Poland, Hungary, Slovakia and the Czech Republic (V4). There are the tiny Baltics

who share much in common. And there is the Nordic Council (whose members include non-EU Norway and Iceland). Actually, Scandinavia is already a bloc within a bloc. These nations are historically close to make them natural bedfellows. The Nordic Council's activities never hit media headlines, but this union already exists to aid the Northern European international governance.

**The Visegrad countries have refused to take asylum seekers and migrants despite EU demands for solidarity.** Hungary's leader Viktor Orban wants to build an «illiberal democracy» and the Polish government is under EU monitoring over alleged constitutional violations. On March 2, a day after the White Paper came to light, the Visegrad group members issued a joint declaration to the effect that find the idea of a multi-speed Europe unacceptable. They look upon a multi-speed Europe as a sign that they will be treated as poor relatives or second-class citizens.

**Multi-speed Europe would create rival blocs and perpetuate divisions, with France and Germany setting the rules with others left to catch-up.** Countries outside the core will be marginalized being kept outside of the decision making process. The EU is to become a loose alliance, a patchwork of blocs within blocks.

Calling a spade a spade, **the EU is a bloc on the verge of destruction.** The process of disintegration has started and it is unstoppable. **A multi-speed Europe is merely recognition of the reality.** This is the time to say goodbye to the EU we once knew. A patchwork of clubs is emerging instead to change the European political landscape once and for all.

**So despite J.C.Juncker, Tusk et al of the EC pretending to present a united front of 27 EU Partners to the UK in the face of Brexit, they face huge challenges, behind the doors of the EU.**

**Even now, they have composed – signed with some reluctance by Poland and Hungary - some sort of new Rome Treaty document, with new ambitions, new guidelines, stressing unity, unity, noble aims etc. , all seemingly woolier than the last.**

**Remember Bratislava, nothing came out of that, and Valletta, only a promise to pay billions to North African countries to halt immigration.**

As usual the Rome new declaration, a newly signed Treaty, to celebrate the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary was totally opaque on substance, and implementation. Noble to the last, but impotent. After all if the EU is so incredibly wonderful, why, oh why, has it not been creating jobs, particularly jobs for the EU youth generation, and preventing economic stagnation? They will forever be judged on that.

#### Meantime

The Poles and Hungarians are seething about political heavy-handedness in Brussels, the Greeks are chafing about German-imposed austerity, the Italians want more help on immigration, the Germans want to avoid paying for everyone else, the rich northern states are no longer unequivocal supporters of Free Movement – Sweden in particular, just like Germany!, has announced they are not picking up the tab, following the departure of the UK - and the some in the core EU still cling to dreams of a united Europe that are rejected by half the continent.

If the UK side is clever, these divisions are waiting to be exploited as a deal takes shape that will affect the interests of all member states differently – if the EU 27 wishes to remain united, it will have to make compromises internally that will be to the UK's benefit.

### IMPORTS V EXPORTS

The growth of goods exports of the UK to 11 long-standing members of the EU over these 43 years are barely distinguishable from those of 14 countries exporting under WTO rules, and they, of course, have not incurred any of the costs of EU membership

Quote: It's Quite OK to Walk Away report

**The UK imports far less from the EU, and has far more trade outside the EU. Somehow, it is possible that those in charge of big business in the EU, the German car companies, chambers of commerce, many of whom have already on the side-lines been cosying up to the UK, will prevail upon the EC to be more sensible, conciliatory and less vindictive. But unfortunately one can never overstate, or underestimate the gigantic political egos in charge of the EU.**

In 2016, the UK exported £142.7bn worth of products and services to the EU, while it imported £236.7bn in return. This led

to a trade deficit of £94bn in 2016 - up from £42.8 in 2010.

After the UK has left, the Government will hope to make free trade deals with countries outside of Europe

#### UK IMPORTS

**One huge problem facing them, which no one is really acknowledging, is the huge hole in the budget, that the UK's departure will mean. Oh they are going to wreak punishment on the UK, the only trouble is that the more they berate the UK, the more it might rebound, like a boomerang, to hit EU exports where it hurts most.**

#### For example.

Those who believe the EU can easily absorb the hard Brexit blow - should wonder why the Spanish are keen to cement relations with the UK with a state visit from the King and Queen. It might be because Spain's exports to the UK amount to nearly £17 billion, accounting for 7.5 per cent of overall exports. Little wonder then, that a leaked Spanish government paper implies – according to the Spanish newspaper El País – that “Madrid wants a soft Brexit and not a punitive approach that makes London suffer”. It's because serious trade disruption would ensure Madrid suffers badly too.

What about the Netherlands? Dutch exports to the United Kingdom amount to over £41 Billion, 9.5 per cent of its exports. The UK is the Netherlands' third most important market with the global hub port of Rotterdam receiving a huge amount of business from the UK. Can they afford for this to be disrupted? Clearly not.

The Irish have been clear that they sit on the other side of the table and that's where their loyalties lie. Fine, but it's not credible to believe that they won't be striving to protect access to their second most important market that accounts for 12.7 per cent of its overall exports and is worth over £13 Billion.

The UK has been building an alliance with Poland before negotiations begin, but because we represent 6.6 per cent of their overall exports as their second most important market worth over £10 Billion; the motivation for a good deal already exists.

Our old rivals the French may talk the talk about showing us what for, but the UK accounts for 7.1 per cent of their exports to the tune of around £28 Billion; can their sluggish economy take that?

Equally Germany is resolute in the face of Brexit, but its exports amount to nearly £80 Billion and that isn't peanuts for the EU's leading economy.

The more you look at it, the clearer reality becomes. A country as economically fragile as Italy needs to lose easy access to its fourth most important market like it needs a hole in the head. The UK is also the fourth most important export market for Portugal, the Czech Republic, Belgium and Sweden.

Underpinning all of this is the City of London; Europe's investment banker that keeps the eurozone ticking over. The EU needs easy access to it, as confirmed by Michel Barnier himself, and access is what they shall have; in return for an agreement that meets our needs.

Both sides will huff and puff; but no one will be blowing the house down. The choice is quite simply between mutually assured destruction or a future of cooperation, prosperity and stability. For the EU and the UK, there is only one option.



### THE DUTCH ELECTION

The outpouring of relief from the European political establishment that Geert Wilders did not come first in the Dutch general election is a clear measure of current anxiety-levels among the continent's ruling elite.

The leaders of France, Germany, Italy and the European Union institutions all rushed onto their secure lines (and then Twitter) to congratulate Mark Rutte and the Dutch people for holding back the populist tide.

They declared a victory for tolerance and optimism, but the reality for the European project is far messier, and the 'victory' far more pyrrhic, than those celebrations would have you believe.

As the exit polls of the Dutch election started to filter through, with a positive result for Prime Minister Mark Rutte, EU President J.C. Juncker et al in the Brussels Barlaymont building could hardly restrain their glee, slapping each other on the back, at what they felt was a convincing victory over "populism".



Don't you find it interesting how the political elites devise euphemistic, but pejorative words, to describe the reactions of the voting public, as obviously they consider them, the Electorate stupid,. Pro-EU compatriots took to Twitter to congratulate the Dutch PM.

"I warmly congratulate [Mark Rutte] for his clear victory against extremism," outgoing French President François Hollande tweeted.

Mainstream German politicians, about to contest their own general election later this year and facing right-wing headwinds, were quick to claim the win. Martin Schulz, the Social Democrat candidate for chancellor, said he was "relieved." Peter Altmaier, the German chancellery chief of staff, tweeted: "The Netherlands you are a champion. We love Orange for your actions and what you do."

Manfred Weber, the European People's Party group chair in the European Parliament, said the result was "a real blow for all anti-Europeans."

Italy's Prime Minister Paolo Gentiloni wrote: "No Brexit. The anti-EU right has lost the elections in the Netherlands." Luxembourg's PM Xavier Bettel tweeted that "Populism didn't pay off."

European Commission spokesman Margaritis Schinas said President Jean-Claude Juncker had congratulated Rutte, and the result was a vote for Europe and against extremism.

## BUT WAS THE RESULT ALL THAT WONDERFUL?

But the result was not all that wonderful. Prime Minister Rutte lost something like 8 seats, Geert Wilders, the anti Islamic opponent gained at least 5 seats, and from having been third in percentage votes, his party, for which he campaigned very little, because of immense security problems – two Dutch liberal politicians have been murdered in the past few years – has now the second largest percentage of votes. Not what one would term a total "landslide" victory.

But EU Elites, are extremely unwilling to acknowledge these facts.

As Bloomberg.com reported from interviews in Holland, all along the Rhine, one of the main vectors of the Dutch economy:

"Like the two generations before him, Van Meel, a 45-year-old Dutch barge captain works on it by day and sleeps on it by night. When he was 21, he kissed his

future spouse on it. Now he and his wife, co-captain Miranda, are split over how to protect their livelihood from competition and secure their futures.

"Hungarians, Bulgarians, Romanians – they come here with diplomas they probably bought back home and they work as barge captains for much less money than us," Van Meel said as he guided his vessel, the blue-and-white Tiamo, through the Rhine delta on a rainy night. He was inspired by U.S.

President Donald Trump's campaign promise: "He says 'America First,' and I understand that. We should say 'Netherlands First.' Protectionism is good."

Van Meel wants a Dutch exit from the European Union. Miranda, 44, supports more screening of migrants, but wants to remain in the seamless single market. "I want open borders for trade, not for people," she said.

Whatever their age and social background, many who live and work on the river voiced grievances over jobs, migration, sovereignty and security – and discontent with the euro and the EU.

Equally, many were desperate to maintain the freedoms of the single market and defend integration." And this is the problem, how to marry these two very diverging opinions.

**Let's look at the facts.** Geert Wilders' Party for Freedom made a substantial gain. It won 20 seats (of 150) according to the preliminary results, which is 5 seats more than in the previous election in 2012. The two governing parties got half as many seats as at the last election in 2012. The prime minister's Party for Freedom and Democracy lost 8 seats and its coalition partner, the Labor Party (PvdA), lost 29 – an impressive defeat!

**Actually, it's a significant loss for those who ruled the country and a big gain (not big enough but still) for the right wing Eurosceptics led by Wilders.** Many key points of the Party for Freedom's program were «borrowed» by PM Mark Rutte's People's Party for Freedom and Democracy (VVD) and Christian Democrats. The popularity was raised due to the tough stance taken in the conflict with Turkey – something Wilders had been calling for. Actually, Prime Minister Rutte was riding to power on a wave of anti-migrant, anti-Islam sentiments.

**So how big a victory was it really, not so great, and even if other parties refuse to collaborate with Wilders party, they must presumably pay some attention to that part of the Dutch electorate that voted for Wilders.**

One might not like Wilders, or his policies, but he is voicing the concerns of a great many of the Dutch voting public. Next up will be the French election, which has the Euro elite quivering in their beds, with Marine Le Pen hammering on the door!



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## THE END OF THE UNBEATEN RUN, THE NEVER-ENDING MATCH AND FRENCH SKULDUGGERY

By SIMON EVELEIGH



### England win Calcutta Cup – again

The 2017 6 Nations came to its conclusion on Saturday 18<sup>th</sup> March with England claiming the trophy, but not back to back Grand Slams.

Bunched tightly behind England were Ireland, France and Scotland, separated only by points difference, Ireland benefitting from their romp in Rome and Scotland paying for their thrashing at Twickenham (more of which later). France finished in the top half of the table for the first time since 2011 and Italy collected yet another wooden spoon.

Those are the bare facts behind a thrilling tournament, which this year was closer than it has been for many years. What is not evident from the above is the drama that unfolded on that final afternoon, particularly in Paris, where the match ran for a full 100 minutes and even delayed the kick off of the match in Dublin.

The previous week, round four had opened with a ferocious battle between Wales and Ireland. The Welsh players and coaching staff had obviously been stung by criticism of their poor second half showing at Murrayfield, which following a less than inspiring win in Rome and a home defeat to England, left Wales staring down the barrel.

Friday night rugby is great for a television audience and the darkness just seems to add to the gladiatorial atmosphere in the Principality Stadium. However, anyone who has ever tried to cross the Severn Bridge on a match day will tell you that getting to Cardiff is one of the more difficult assignments in the 6 Nations calendar. I know of at least one person who left Bristol mid-afternoon and did not get to the stadium in time for kick off. Everyone pouring out of the stadium at 10pm also puts a great strain on the rail system and stretches local police resources. The RFU have always refused to stage Friday night matches and the WRU have now said no more.

As far as the actual action on the pitch is concerned, Wales were certainly "up for it" and the contacts were bone shuddering and frequent. The decisive moment came when Ireland, 6 points down with less than 10 minutes to play, drove a line out and seemed to be about to score when Robbie Henshaw joined the maul illegally. As Rory Best dived over the line, Wayne Barnes blew to penalise Henshaw.

Instead of being a point up with a few minutes to go, Ireland soon found themselves deep in their own 22 and a last minute Jamie Roberts try put a healthy gloss on the scoreline for Wales. The following day, France toiled against Italy, scoring four tries and claiming the bonus point, but they were far from perfect.

Ireland's defeat in Cardiff meant that England went into their match with Scotland knowing that victory would secure the title with a week to spare. Scotland, however, travelled to Twickenham with realistic ambitions of

their own. After 20 minutes, these ambitions already lay in dust. Hooker Ross Brown was sin-binned after only two minutes for a dangerous tackle on Elliot Daley, an offence which was very close to a red card one. Scotland then lost their best player, Stuart Hog, to injury, with his replacement only lasting a matter of minutes before injury also forced him to leave the pitch.



**Jonathan Joseph scored hat trick of tries**

England had spluttered during the opening rounds of the tournament, but this was the day when it all went right and they ended up scoring 7 tries, with Jonathan Joseph getting three of them. Scotland scored three tries of their own, but it was all too little too late and the final score was a Calcutta Cup record 61-21.

This was England's 18<sup>th</sup> win in a row, equalling the All Blacks world record for a tier one nation (for pub quizzers amongst you, the overall record stands at 24, held by Cyprus).

England, therefore, travelled to Dublin with the 6 Nations trophy already secured, but in search of the first ever 6 Nations back to back Grand Slams and a record breaking win.

Ireland are a good team, who understand their coach's requirements. Their campaign had, like England's been a mixed bag; a dreadful first half in Scotland, a thumping win in Rome, a thoroughly professional victory over France and that Friday night loss in Cardiff. Last year it was Ireland who brought New Zealand's run to an end and England knew that this was a very real test of their credentials.

A wet, windy day in Dublin (are there any other types of day there?!), saw Ireland execute their game plan marvellously and England were outmuscled. Peter O'Mahony, a fine rugby player who cannot get in Ireland's first choice team, stepped in as a late injury replacement and was man of the match. Jonathan Sexton, despite seemingly being targeted by England, at times illegally, showed his class and

controlled the game, more than making up for the absence of his half back colleague Conor Murray.

The final score was 13-9, but it seemed that flattered England.

That match brought the curtain down on the 2017 6 Nations, but there had been events of note elsewhere earlier in the day.

At Murrayfield, Scotland celebrated Vern Cotter's last match as head coach with a bonus point victory over Italy. Three wins, a narrow defeat in Paris and the chance to finish second if other results went their way later in the afternoon, were all positives, but that drubbing at Twickenham sits very heavy on the other side of the ledger.

Wales went to Paris with hopes of building on the Irish win, whilst France hoped to round off with another home win and a top three finish.

France rushed into a 10-0 lead but were gradually pegged back by the infallible boot of Toulon's Leigh Halfpenny.

As the match reached the end, Wales led 18-13, but France were on the attack. As the clock went red, France were awarded a penalty 5 metres from Wales' line and opted for a scrum, an area where they had been dominant for most of the afternoon. The problem for France was that replacement prop Uni Atonio is nowhere near as good a scrummager as the man he replaced, Rabah Slimani.

After two scrums went down and had to be reset, referee Wayne Barnes was heard to ask Atonio if he was OK. There is no language barrier, as Atonio is from New Zealand and he replied that he had a bit of a sore back but otherwise he was fine. Suddenly, the French doctor appeared on the field to take the "fine" Atonio off for a Head Injury Assessment (HIA). Atonio was replaced by Slimani and the French scrum grew in strength.

Rugby has a duty of care to its players and the HIA is there to protect from the effects of concussion and Barnes could not say to the doctor that he didn't believe him, but it seemed pretty clear to all watching that something fishy was going on. The fact that one of the French coaching team had left the technical area (which is against the rules) to talk to the doctor seconds before he came on to take Atonio away, coupled with Atonio making his own way down the tunnel, just served to increase the feeling that France were pulling a fast one.



After the game Wales' coach Robert Howley talked about the "integrity" of our sport being disturbed and an official investigation has been launched. This was only one sub plot in a game that eventually lasted 100 minutes. France laid siege to the Welsh line and were given a series of penalties, but never were any of these offences enough to warrant the referee awarding a penalty try, although many French commentators would argue that Barnes should have. Welsh prop Samson Lee was yellow carded, but not for a scrum offence. Wales upheld the "integrity" Howley later spoke of by bringing back Tomas Francis, rather than pretending he was injured. If they had done that, we would have uncontested scrums which would have meant that the Welsh back row would be free to defend attacks as they would not have to push to avoid their scrum being shoved over the line.

As if all this was not enough, Welsh winger George North claimed he was bitten and he certainly had a bite mark on his arm. Video evidence showed nothing, so play went on. In a bizarre post match interview, French coach Guy Novès bit his own hand and showed the marks to the press, intimating that North probably did it himself to get the match stopped! An investigation cast no light on the culprit and that particular chapter seems to be closed.

Yoann Maestri who was captaining France by the time all this was going on was particularly scathing of Barnes' handling of the situation (despite most observers thinking he acquitted himself reasonably well) and he has been asked to explain his comments to a disciplinary committee.

France did eventually cross the Welsh line and won 20-18, but the result was almost the least significant part of the whole saga.

None of the six nations will be entirely satisfied with their tournament, but all will point to causes for satisfaction, even Italy who would be very competitive if matches only lasted 40 minutes!

Away from the 6 Nations, life at Toulon has been far from calm and peaceful. This season Toulon have had more coaches than Nation Express and next year it is all change again, as Fabien Galthié will come in as head coach. The off field disruption has had an impact and Toulon are currently in danger of not qualifying for the end of season play-offs

and missing out on European Champions Cup rugby. They are in fourth place, but are only six points above 10<sup>th</sup> placed Toulouse, who they play at the Stade Vélodrome in Marseille on Sunday 9<sup>th</sup> April.

March should have been a month when Toulon cemented their place at the top of the table, with matches against all the teams at the bottom. However, things did not quite turn out that way.

After an uninspiring defeat at Brive, Toulon thrashed relegation bound Bayonne 82-14.

Having seen off the 14<sup>th</sup> placed team, Toulon's next two matches were against the teams immediately above Bayonne. A commanding half time position was thrown away at Grenoble and Toulon only managed a draw. Then, the following week they lost to Stade Français.

The only positive for Toulon is that, other than La Rochelle, who are now 11 points clear at the top of the table, all the teams around them have faltered recently.

Toulon's last four games of the regular season are against four of those teams; Toulouse, Castres, Bordeaux and Pau.

April begins with a European quarter final at Clermont. Mourad Boudjellal has said that Toulon will not be too interested in this, as they stand no chance and they need to concentrate on the Top 14. This is a great piece of Boudjellal kidology, taking the pressure off his team and piling it on to their opponents.

Then comes that Toulouse match in Marseille, an Easter Saturday home match against Castres, a potential European semi-final and the month ends with a trip to Bordeaux.

There is still enough quality in the Toulon team for this to be a successful end to the season, but they cannot afford any more slip ups.

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