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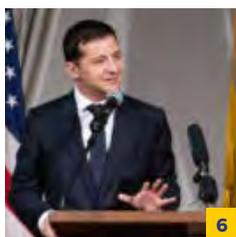


ROYAL JORDANIAN

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IN THIS ISSUE



6

■ **Volodymyr Zelensky** The comedian who took centre stage..... p.6

■ **Beware Of Russians Bearing Gifts**

Is Russia's investment bank a Trojan Horse?..... p.11

■ **Venezuela** More European Union sanctions p.16

■ **Siberia** Lab explosion causes fear of deadly disease..... p.18



18

■ **Walls Cast Long Shadows**

30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall p.23

■ **Human Rights Court**

Men who criticized politicians in the media suffer rights violation.
Lack of Norwegian court oversight allows the removal of a child
from its mother..... p.29



23

■ **Malta**

Swift action needed against increased money laundering says Moneyval p.32

■ **United Kingdom**

The Ministry of Defence intends to develop hypersonic propulsion systems... p.34

■ **Europol Dismantling Illegal Adoptions**

66 suspected of arranging illegal adoptions, surrogacies
and human egg trafficking in Greece..... p.35



32

■ **Crossrail** Europe's Biggest Railway Infrastructure Project p.36

■ **Equinor** A pilot project for floating offshore wind p.38

■ **Genoa** The New Bridge on the Polcevera is now visible..... p.40

■ **Bruges Steps To Face Tourism** p.42



44

■ **At The 29th Monaco Yacht Show**

A tiny high tech submersible used by Vladimir Putin p.44

■ **All That Glitters** Monaco's prestigious auction place..... p.46

■ **Timeless Chic** p.48

■ **Books** Our selection..... p.50

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Nikola Hendrickx

EDITORIAL

WHAT LESSONS CAN BE LEARNT FROM THE FALL OF THE BERLIN WALL

November 9, 2019 will mark the 30th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall - an event that signaled the end of the Cold War that had split Europe into two camps, and divided Germany into two separate countries. History will remember this event as a triumph over Soviet Russia's centuries-long practice of determining how the peoples of Central and Eastern Europe were governed, and also as the subsequent acceleration of efforts towards a Europe of free peoples, in charge of their own destinies. The collapse of the Soviet Union and of its dominance over Eastern Europe in December 1991 restored sovereignty to several nations that became free democratic countries.

Today, as if history was repeating itself, we are observing a similar pattern of sly and malicious political and military activity aimed at destabilizing the long achieved peaceful, free and democratic systems that Europe has established during these decades.

In recent years, Europe has seen several aggressive, political and military offensives against sovereign states such as Georgia and Ukraine.

With our new era's high-tech revolution, these offensives have also taken on a new dimension by using modern techniques that were not available during those long, Cold War years.

These include cyber war, computer hackings and social media use, to mention just a few.

REESTABLISHING RUSSIAN INFLUENCE

After all, Vladimir Putin who served as a KGB officer in Dresden when the Berlin Wall fell, views the collapse of the Soviet Union as a great tragedy, contrary to advocates of a free Europe. One would be either blind or totally naïve as to not realise that he is seeking to re-establish Russian influence, particularly in Central and Eastern Europe, by sowing the seeds of discord in Western societies, meddling in foreign elections and corrupting foreign political elites.

Among this array of malign means also figure the old Soviet disinformation tools.

It is quite obvious from his remarks and speeches how he feels about our Western democratic systems. In an interview given to the Financial Times on the eve of the G20 summit in Osaka, Japan in June 2019, President Putin said: *"The liberal idea has become obsolete. It has come into conflict with the interests of the overwhelming majority of the population."*

Donald Tusk, the then European Council president strongly disagreed and remarked sharply: *"What I find really obsolete is authoritarianism, personality cults and the rule of oligarchs"*.

Russia's ongoing efforts to meddle in elections and inflict chaos and division within Europe represent Russia's attempt to implement its ancient policy of controlling other nations' destinies using modern methods and to restore, symbolically if not physically, the same sorts of barriers to freedom represented by the former Wall.

"RUSSIA HAS ONLY TWO FRIENDS IN THE WORLD: ITS ARMY AND ITS NAVY"

(TSAR ALEXANDER III)

One of the areas in which Russia is demonstrating a 'come-back' to the strategic war-game is its renewed military power. The extent of modernization of the Russian armed forces has been witnessed during recent conflicts worldwide. (The Russian defense budget grew from \$24.6 billion in 2008 to \$45.6 billion in 2017).

As of now, the Red Army can cover a large field of military operations and therefore use pressure and influence on a number of weak European nations.

This brings us to a much more sensitive military issue threatening Europe's security: nuclear weapons proliferation.

On August 2, 2019 the United States formally withdrew from the Intermediate-Range Nuclear Forces Treaty (INF), after giving Russia six months to return to full and verifiable compliance with the treaty provisions. For over a decade, Moscow has gradually eroded this cornerstone of arms control by secretly developing multiple, non-compliant weapon systems that can target the European continent - America remains outside their operating range. These include the Tsirkon, Rubezh, and Kalibr-K missiles. This Russian effort is part of a broader campaign to drive a wedge between the United States and its European allies over its arms control policy. Russia clearly violated the Treaty. It has never provided credible evidence to support its denials. President Putin and other senior Russian officials have openly and consistently criticized the INF Treaty for nearly two decades, going so far as to say that his predecessors were 'naïve'. Russia publicly contemplated withdrawing from the Treaty but seems to have finally opted for cheating in order to change the circumstances around the INF Treaty. It has spent the last decade rebuilding its intermediate-range missile forces in order to enhance its ability to target Europe; many of these weapons are Treaty-compliant. UN Secretary General António Guterres, addressing the expiry of a cold war-era arms control treaty remarked: *"The world has lost an invaluable brake on nuclear war"*.

EXPIRATION OF THE NEW START TREATY

We shall soon be facing another important deadline; one that makes the Russian nuclear threat more ominous. And that is the New Start Treaty which is set to expire in February 2021 but which - if both parties agree - can be extended in its present form for a period of up to five years.

Russia wants to extend the Treaty without changes since Russia is well ahead of the US in terms of nuclear modernization, resulting in troublesome new weapons and doctrines that are unconstrained by arms control.

According to many European politicians, it seems obvious that Russia has found ways to manipulate or circumvent the Cold War-era arms control security architecture in order to threaten and destabilize Europe. According to NATO Secretary-General Jens Stoltenberg: *"Russia showed no willingness and took no steps to comply with its international obligations"*

Russia does not seem genuinely interested in an arms control protocol that places rules on this type of behavior.

According to European military experts, Russia has a blossoming and non-transparent inventory of unconstrained Non Strategic Nuclear Weapons and is prepared to use them in a conventional conflict, raising the risk of a nuclear battleground in Europe to its highest levels since the Cold War. Russia has at least a ten-to-one advantage in non-strategic nuclear weapons which it is increasing both in number and diversity.

The NATO nuclear force, in contrast, has remained small and transparent.

"Those who fail to learn from history, are doomed to repeat it." said Winston Churchill.

The Editor-in-Chief
Trajan Dereville



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VOLODYMYR ZELENSKY

The comedian who took centre stage

Volodymyr Zelensky, star of the TV series “The Servant of the People”, in which he played the role of a history teacher who is elected president of Ukraine, has indeed become the 6th president in the history of independent Ukraine. Many political analysts and sociologists gave the comedian with no political luggage behind him, but also no experience, unconditional victory in the first round of voting. As for the second round, his chances against the incumbent head of state, Petro Poroshenko were again seen as very high. And it turned out the experts were not at all mistaken. But the next two questions for many Ukrainians as well as foreign political observers – depending on the political ground on which they stood – were : (a) how did this former stand-up comedian get to such heights ?... Or (b) how did Ukraine manage to sink to such depths ?

THE SELF-MADE MAN

Zelensky’s biography makes it quite plain that he made it all by himself. He had no affluent or influential relatives or friends; he was born in January 1978 into a typical middle-class family of Russian-speaking academics from Krivoy Rog, a fairly large city and important industrial centre in the Dnipropetrovsk Oblast of Ukraine.

It was towards the end of the 1980s when a Soviet specialist in engineering, together with his wife and nine-year-old son returned from Erdenet in Mongolia, at the end of a four year official posting.

And no one could possibly have guessed the consequences that this move would have on the life of the young Volodymyr Zelensky.

Soon afterwards, his father was nominated head of the department of cybernetics and computing hardware at the the Krivoy Rog Institute of Economics; his mother also worked as an engineer.

At school, Volodymyr Zelensky became an activist and tried his hand at all sorts of sporting activities, from Greco-Roman wrestling to basketball and from ballroom dancing to playing the piano.

It was during this period that he organized his first group of players and also met his future wife, Elena Kiyashka.

Later he wanted to study to become a stage manager but ultimately enrolled at the Institute of Economics where his father was a professor. There, he studied law and graduated successfully but he never entered a practice, despite two months of internship; the experiments

with comedy and acting during his school years had already determined his future profession.

ZELENSKY, THE SHOWMAN



In 1997, Zelensky together with a band of friends created his first project, 'Kvartal 95', a team of authors and actors who specialized in writing and staging comedy sketches for public performances.

Two years later, 'Kvartal 95' was invited to Moscow to participate in the Major League of KVN by the famous Russian television game show host, Alexander Maslyakov.

The acronym KVN stands for 'The Club of the Happy and Inventive', a television game show which has been on air since 1961. It involves teams of enthusiastic and clever young people – usually university students – competing against one another in a series of improvised, as well as rehearsed comedy and musical sketches before a live audience and a jury comprised of stars of the stage and screen.

The sketches were also peppered with witty repartee and often politically risqué satire and scathing criticism of social issues.

And it was in this context that young Volodymyr Zelensky took his very first steps in politics.

The invitation to Moscow proved to be a lucky ticket that everyone in the

team took advantage of. Zelensky and the other members of the team spent a lot of time in Moscow and frequently toured around post-Soviet countries. They soon became celebrities.

The next major event in Zelensky's career path was the founding in 2003 of Studio Kvartal 95. This is an audiovisual company that provides a full range of services in the production of TV programmes, films and series. It is also a leading provider of entertainment TV content. Kvartal 95 began producing TV shows for the Ukrainian TV 'Channel 1+1' and three years later, the team moved to the rival channel 'Inter TV'.

In fact, the company tops the ratings every year in Forbes Magazine's list of the most successful showbiz companies in Ukraine.

Volodymyr Zelensky, the co-founder and creative producer of Kvartal 95 has reportedly said: "*Our ambitious objective is to make the world a better place, a kinder and more joyful place with the help of the tools that we have, that is, humor and creativity. We are moving towards this goal, and we will try to conquer the whole world, of course!*".

THE REVOLUTION THAT FORGED A DESTINY

In 2010, soon after Viktor Yanukovich won the Ukrainian presidential election, Zelensky became the executive producer of Inter TV and Kvartal 95 turned into a powerful commercial organisation.

It has been reported that by the end of 2013, the capital of Zelensky and Co. had reached 10 million US dollars.

But at about the same time, in November 2013, dark clouds began to gather over Ukraine, which would lead to the momentous events that reshaped, yet again, the course of Ukraine's modern history.

It led, among other crises, to the occupation of Crimea and Russia's conflict with Ukraine.

And unbeknownst to Zelensky and his close circle of friends and collaborators at the time, this event would, albeit tangentially, affect his destiny and put him on the path that would lead to Ukraine's ultimate seat of power.

The Euromaidan demonstrations, named after Maidan square in the centre of Kiev, began after the decision by the then president Viktor Yanukovich to suspend the signing of the Association Agreement with the European Union in November 2013.

This agreement would have provided Ukraine with loans in return for political reforms, but would also have thwarted trade relations with Russia, Ukraine's biggest trade partner at the time.

Yanukovich's decision to postpone the signing was seen as an attempt to back out of the deal and led to a wave of violent protests. Some 130 people, including 18 policemen were killed.

As tensions continued to rise, Yanukovich fled to Russia in February 2014.

Demonstrators took control of the streets of Kiev and parliament voted unanimously to strip Yanukovich of the presidency.

Volodymyr Zelensky was an ardent supporter of the Euromaidan demonstrators.

He organized live concerts for the nationalists from Dobrobats in the Donbass region, which experienced great unrest following the Euromaidan events in Kiev. It was this unrest that later grew into an armed conflict between pro-Russian separatists and supporters of the post-revolutionary Ukrainian government.



Zelensky also donated millions of Hryvnias (the Ukrainian currency) to various nationalist organisations as well as the Ukrainian army and made speeches in which he firmly condemned separatism, as well as military aggression.

He even addressed the Russian president on the air in what was seen as an attempt to negotiate with Vladimir Putin.

Two years after the bloody events in Maidan Square, Crimea was lost and the Donbass region entered a period of prolonged crisis and tension.

But Zelensky and his team continued to tour and perform in those regions, in support of the nationalists.

BEGINNINGS OF A POLITICAL CAREER

In August 2014, the ministry of culture declared that it would henceforth ban Russian artists from performing in Ukraine. Zelensky vehemently opposed this move.

At the same time, after Ukrainian media reported that he had made donations amounting to millions of Hryvnias to the Ukrainian army and other nationalist groups, a number of Russian artists and politicians launched a petition for Zelensky's works to be banned in Russia.

Again, he spoke out against censorship and discrimination in both Russia and Ukraine.

However, it was in March 2018 that Zelensky's company, Kwartal 95 Studio created a new TV series that would truly launch his political career.

He seized the opportunity to also found a new political party bearing the same name as the series : 'Servant of the People'.

Zelensky plays the role of a humble and honest high-school history teacher, Vasily Goloborodko, who is elected president of Ukraine after his scathing criticism of government corruption is filmed by a student and goes viral on social media.

There are dream sequences in which we see his determined efforts at fighting corruption by avoiding at all costs, the extravagant luxury associated with former leaders of Soviet states.

As president, Goloborodko fights corruption and self-righteousness honestly and fairly. He wins peoples' hearts by speaking out against the establishment, promising to put an end to corruption and to raise Ukraine's status abroad.

This is something Ukrainian audiences had never seen or heard previously.

And since a political party called 'Servant of the People' actually did exist and what's more, was headed by Zelensky himself, a large majority of Ukrainians wished they could vote for the fictitious character associated with Zelensky.

And in a surprise move, Zelensky declared his candidacy for the April 2019 presidential election on the New Year's Eve edition of his variety show on 1+1 TV

Zelensky emerged as one of the front-runners among the more than three dozen candidates, including the incumbent Petro Poroshenko and Orange Revolution veteran Yulia Tymoshenko, virtually from the moment he declared his candidacy.

IN THE TWILIGHT ZONE

Many experts and political analysts have pointed out that behind Zelensky the famous actor and comedian, lies also a very savvy businessman.

Other than being one of the main founders of Studio Kwartal 95 which, over the years, has made very handsome profits and a big name for itself, especially after the creation of the Servant of the People TV series, he also owned several profitable businesses in Russia linked to television production and broadcasting.

According to Ukrainian website opinionua.com, in early 2019, investigative journalists unearthed documents showing that a Cypriot company co-founded by Kwartal 95 had established production facilities in Russia and that Zelensky was one of the beneficiaries.

However, he later announced that he had relinquished his shares and had withdrawn from the company.

Zelensky worked as artistic director of Studio Kwartal 95 until 2011; he then became the general producer of Ukrainian television channel, Inter TV.

However, one year later, he made a move that would have significant consequences on his later career.

In October 2012, Zelensky left Inter TV and signed a joint production agreement between his own company, Studio Kwartal 95 and a private Ukrainian television network that was owned by Ihor Kolomoisky, one of the wealthiest oligarchs in Ukraine.

He sided with the Ukrainian government when the Russian-backed separatists started advancing in 2014. Then he fell victim of the anti-corruption reforms that made it very difficult for oligarchs to extort public funds.

At that point Kolomoisky went anti-government and began promoting Zelensky on his TV channel.

Kolomoisky is a majority share-holder in the 1+1 Media Group, whose TV channel 1+1 first broadcast Zelensky's comedy series 'Servant of the People'.

It was also on 1+1 TV, on 31 December 2018, that Zelensky first announced his candidacy in the upcoming presidential election.



© Kremlin



Volodymyr Zelensky With Trump At The UN

The announcement in effect preempted then president Petro Poroshenko's annual New Year's address and was seen as a provocative move. It also raised questions about Kolomoisky's role in Zelensky's election campaign.

This relationship would in fact, become the subject of close scrutiny ever since Zelensky declared his intention to enter politics and run for the presidency.

Observers and political analysts have repeatedly noted that his past financial connections with Russian businessmen and oligarchs such as Ihor Kolomoisky in Ukraine, could damage his reputation and more seriously, compromise his independence.

Among these is the Warsaw-based Centre for Eastern Studies (OSW) which said that should Zelensky obtain favourable results, Kolomoisky would be able to send more deputies allied to him to parliament, thereby increasing his influence in the country.

It was also suggested that Kolomoisky gave his support first to Yulia Tymoshenko and then to Volodymyr Zelensky because he was seeking revenge for the nationalization of his PrivatBank and the lost revenues that ensued.

Ihor Kolomoisky is the co-founder of PrivatBank, Ukraine's largest lender and commercial bank. He is also involved in other fields of activity including finance, mass media, metal and petroleum industries in Ukraine, Russia and Romania.

He was at first a staunch supporter of president Petro Poroshenko.

But in December 2016, in order to

protect its millions of customers and to preserve its fragile financial stability, PrivatBank was nationalised by the Ukrainian government after an audit showed that large scale fraud had been taking place.

Kolomoisky was accused of embezzlement running into billions of US dollars and the Ukrainian government had no choice but to inject over \$5.5 billion into the financial institution as a bail-out package.

Kolomoisky, who holds triple Ukrainian, Israeli and Cypriot citizenship left the country in 2017 and lived in self-imposed exile.

After PrivatBank brought the lawsuit to the High Court in London, \$2.6 billion worth of Kolomoisky's assets were initially frozen, but that same court ruled in 2018 that it had no jurisdiction for further proceedings.

And finally, in April 2019, in spite of a Ukrainian court's ruling that the nationalization of PrivatBank had been illegal all along, Ukraine's central bank refused to reverse the nationalization and said it would appeal the court's decision.

THE ROAD TO THE PRESIDENCY

In due course, Volodymyr Zelensky took active measures to distance himself from Kolomoisky and restore his public image. He embarked on a very unorthodox campaign strategy that had never before been witnessed in Ukraine.

He actively avoided press conferences and complicated policy statements in favour of comic sketches and short explanations which he posted on YouTube and Instagram.

He also elaborated parts of his programme together with social media users and asked them to list their most pressing concerns, so that he could include them in his political agenda.

He also promised to assume the presidency for one term only and to pass a bill ensuring that all crucial government policies shall be determined by the Ukrainian people through referendums.

He plans to strengthen the economy through free competition, development of domestic production and plan-

ified long-term and low-cost loans. The income tax system is also to be overhauled, as will the social security and health care systems, among others.

He became in fact, a screen onto which a majority of Ukrainians projected their expectations.

No wonder that in the first round of voting on March 31, 2019, Zelensky obtained over 30% of the vote whilst the incumbent Petro Poroshenko managed to win only 17%, despite his very strong pro-European stand.

On April 19, 2019, two days before the second round, a packed Olympic Stadium in Kiev witnessed the long-awaited debate between Zelensky and Poroshenko.

The incumbent tried with all his might to portray Zelensky as an inexperienced novice who lacked the courage and character to confront Russian president Vladimir Putin, but utterly failed to scathe his opponent in any significant manner.

And so, on April 21, 2019, Volodymyr Zelensky was elected president of Ukraine after winning an impressive 73% of the vote in the second round.



THE FIRST CHALLENGES

Within days of his electoral victory, Zelensky faced his very first challenge in the field of foreign policy.

Russian president Vladimir Putin announced that he would offer Russian passports to Ukrainian citizens in



Zelensky visiting the National Guard Units

areas controlled by the Russian-backed separatists in the war-torn eastern part of the country, where hundreds of thousands of Ukrainians had been displaced.

Zelensky however ridiculed Putin's announcement by posting a reply on Facebook in which he said that he in turn, would extend *"Ukrainian citizenship to Russians who lived under, and suffered from authoritarian and corrupt regimes"* !

In his inaugural address on May 20, 2019, which was delivered in Russian and Ukrainian, Zelensky called first and foremost for national unity.

But since his party, Servant of the People had no parliamentary seats and what's more, his victory did not confer a legislative mandate, the dissolution of the 'Verkhovna Rada' (Supreme Council or parliament) became unavoidable.

On July 21, 2019, snap elections were held which Zelensky himself described as *"probably more important than the presidential election"*. 'Servant of the People' obtained an absolute majority. It won 254 seats out of the 450-seat Supreme Council.

This was the first time in post-Soviet Ukrainian history that a single party had absolute control of the legislative agenda.

The old demons however didn't take long to resurface. As Zelensky set himself to the task of building a new administration, the ties to his former business partner became the subject of scrutiny again.

Ihor Kolomoisky had returned from exile a few days before Zelensky's inauguration and he had publicly

declared that he would in no way be involved in any of the policy decisions of the new administration.

Zelensky in turn, declared that despite the valuable platform that Kolomoisky's media empire had provided for his election campaign, his office would not grant any special favours to the oligarch.

IN THE EYE OF THE STORM

In September 2019, as a result of a formal complaint against president Donald Trump, lodged by a whistleblower in the US intelligence community, Zelensky and his administration suddenly found themselves thrust into the global spotlight and at the centre of an American political scandal.

The matter concerned a very large military aid package of some \$400 million to Ukraine that was allegedly withheld by president Trump unless the Ukrainian government launched an official investigation into irregularities by former US vice president Joe Biden and his son, Hunter.

Joe Biden is of course the leading Democratic party's front-runner who hopes to challenge Trump in the 2020 US presidential election.

A Ukrainian natural gas company, Burisma Holdings that was accused of corruption, appointed Hunter Biden, a complete newcomer in this field, to their board of directors. They paid his firm more than \$1 million per year.

And Ukraine wasn't the only country where Hunter Biden's business and his father's diplomacy as former vice president intersected...it also happened in China.

In July 2019, in a telephone call to Zelensky, Donald Trump discussed the possibility of an investigation into the affairs of the Bidens, and he admitted that he had ordered the military aid package to be withheld until after the call.

But he insisted that nothing was offered to or demanded from Zelensky in exchange for the investigation that he was seeking.

However, Zelensky declared that he would have the Burisma Holdings matter investigated and also sacked Yuriy Lutsenko, Ukraine's prosecutor general, for having initiated contacts and

held discussions about the Bidens with Trump's personal lawyer, Rudy Giuliani.

The \$400 million military aid package was finally released in September 2019, but at that point, US lawmakers had already embarked on their quest for more information on details of Trump's telephone conversation with Zelensky.

BACK ON THE HOME FRONT

Irrespective of what will ultimately come of Zelensky's involvement with President Trump's dealings with his political adversaries, Ukraine's western allies are closely monitoring Zelensky's first moves and appointments.

Some of them amid concerns about his inexperience, especially in discussions and dealings with Vladimir Putin, regarding the crisis in eastern Ukraine and Crimea.

But there has already been something to cheer about for the people, and that is when, in early September 2019, 35 Ukrainians were freed in a long-awaited prisoner exchange with Russia.

Zelensky, who had discussed the matter with Vladimir Putin over the phone was on hand to greet them personally on the tarmac at Kiev airport. This event was praised internationally as a first step in mending the difficult relations between Ukraine and Russia.

He has also gone to the front lines of the war in eastern Ukraine to assess the situation firsthand and travelled to Brussels to meet with EU leaders to reassure them of Ukraine's pro-European stance as well as to confirm its intention of ultimately becoming a member of NATO.

However, there is still a lot of work to be done. The most difficult to achieve on a long list of objectives seems the return of occupied territories in the east under Ukrainian control and the payment of war damages by Russia.

His agenda for reshaping society and creating a new Ukraine will certainly be fraught with many challenges and riddled with difficulties and pitfalls. He is, in all probability more acutely aware of these than anyone else.

Ukrainians now await to see President Zelensky put his words into action.



© IIB

BEWARE OF RUSSIANS BEARING GIFTS

Is Russia's investment bank a Trojan Horse?

According to Virgil's epic poem, the Aeneid, written between 29 and 19 BCE, in the final stage of the Trojan war at least two people, Laocoön, a priest of Poseidon, and the unfortunate prophetess Cassandra, had grave doubts about the massive wooden horse left outside the gates of Troy by the supposedly defeated Greeks.

"Either Achaeans hide, shut in this wood, or else this is an engine built against our walls... I fear the Greeks, even when they bring gifts." Virgil has Laocoön say.

The Achaeans, of course, were the Greeks, and the war had been dragging on, according to the much earlier Greek poet Homer, for ten years. Homer doesn't mention the unlucky Cassandra's prophetic gifts, but later stories of the Trojan War have her agreeing with Laocoön that

the horse is probably full of Greek soldiers. Unfortunately for Troy, Laocoön is promptly swallowed by serpents, while Cassandra's curse was to be always right but never believed. The Trojans, according to my Lemprière's Classical Dictionary, believed Cassandra to be mad. The rest, as they say, is history. Or possibly just myth. But it's a story that's been being told for more than two-and-a-half thousand years, so it deserves our attention, if not our actual credence. Virgil's quote, attributed to Laocoön, gave rise long ago to the well-known expression in English, "beware of Greeks bearing gifts", meaning that you should view unexpected acts of generosity with suspicion. It's a saying that has found much currency in Hungary of late since Russia moved the headquarters of its International Investment Bank to Budapest.

The decision to relocate to Váci út 188 in Budapest - a less impressive building than its former headquarters in Moscow, but still quite imposing - was taken by the International Investment Bank (IIB)'s board of directors last December. It's said that the Americans vetoed an original plan to site the IIB just across the road from their Budapest embassy. It held its first meeting there in July. At that meeting the Chairman of the Board outlined the Bank's priorities, highlighting the further expansion of lending and investment activities in the Central and East European region: "The Board approved a number of strategically important documents and unanimously supported a new initiative for a Hungarian investment project," according to the bank. Fitch have given the IIB a credit rating of BBB+, Standard and Poor have rated it at A-.

IT'S NEVER JUST KINDNESS

Most western observers believe that Vladimir Putin seldom if ever takes a decision that isn't to his direct advantage. He is not known for his altruism. Hungarian politicians not aligned with Prime Minister Victor Orbán's ruling party, Fidesz, have expressed their concern. "I do believe that the direct support of the move of the IIB to Budapest was an absolutely unacceptable step from the Hungarian government," said Hungarian Socialist MEP István Ujhelyi, "due to the fact that while Fidesz's propaganda spreads crystal clear lies and threats of a 'Brussels conspiracy', the government commits treason."

The International Investment Bank (IIB) is an interesting creation, being the successor to the Comecon (Council for Mutual Economic Assistance) Bank of Soviet times, which was long regarded as being linked with Russia's secret services. Hungary's ultra-nationalist Prime Minister, Viktor Orbán, says that hosting the bank will "expand his country's economic horizons", although the two would appear an unlikely fit. Hungary is just one of five former Communist countries which have since joined the EU and NATO and are members of the IIB. Cuba, Vietnam and Mongolia join Russia as the other members who are not, of course, in either the EU or NATO. Russia, though, holds a 47% stake in the IIB compared with Hungary's 12.87%. It's hard to see how hosting what is, in fact, a smaller bank than most of those already based in Hungary is going to expand the country's horizons, but it will certainly make western powers nervous. In fact, IIB's estimated balance sheet is only around €1.3-billion, while it has just €319-million in capital - small stuff indeed (the EU's European Investment Bank has a capital stock of €243-billion and a loan book much larger than that of the World Bank) - but despite its diminutive size it is anticipated to have a staff of around one hundred and ten, many or all of whom may enjoy some kind of special status, like the bank for which they work. It could be seen as a welcome advantage after so many Russian agents were expelled from western capitals following the botched attempt to murder a former spy and his daughter in Britain.

As a multinational financial institution, the IIB "will not be subject to financial or regulatory supervision or audits, nor will it have to apply audit standards or comply with authorisation or registration

obligations," according to a European Parliamentary question to the European Commission from former Hungarian MEP Péter Niedermüller. He expressed concern that the IIB, which he described as "clearly under Russian influence", might "constitute a legal loophole to avoid economic sanctions imposed on Russia". The sanctions followed the seizure of Ukraine and the attempted murders by Russian military operatives of the former Russian spy Sergei Skripal and his daughter Yulia in the English cathedral city of Salisbury. Mr Niedermüller also pointed out that Hungary plans to give diplomatic immunity to the IIB's staff and guests, facilitating entry permits without EU checks. Hungary's Ministry of Foreign Affairs seems to have changed its mind on that point since then. In a written reply, Commission Vice-President Federica Mogherini



Zita Gurmai, former member of the European Parliament

agreed that the IIB, as a multi-national financial institution, "is not targeted by any EU restrictive measures." However, she added that, under those restrictive measures, "it is prohibited (*for the IIB*) to participate, knowingly and intentionally, in activities the object or effect of which is to circumvent these measures". Finding out might be the slight problem here, though, especially if it means relying on the Hungarian authorities to report such activities to Brussels. The Hungarian parliament had wanted to grant the bank diplomatic immunity so that monitoring its activities would not appear to be an option and it may not be, even now. In any case, with a minority stake Hungary would have no real say in how the bank is run.

Could the Orbán government be being needlessly naïve? According to Attila Arakócs, a Hungarian MEP who sits with the Socialist group, Hungary was not even Russia's (or the IIB's) first choice. "Earlier

the Russians wanted to establish a centre for IIB in Bratislava, but the Slovak government denied to grant diplomatic immunity for the staff and building of the bank. This was the reason why they have moved to Budapest." He also thinks it will lead to more Russian secret service agents in his country, using it as their doorway into Europe. "It was an estimation which was published in press," he says, "that around 4-500 SVR (Russian Foreign Intelligence Agency) agents were operating in the last few years in Hungary. Their target was not primarily Hungary, but the EU."

SHORTCUTS TO THE WEST

The other fear in western capitals is that the IIB could provide an easy conduit for money being moved out of Russia. It's been estimated that over the last quarter of a century some \$1-trillion (€0.91-trillion) has been shifted westwards and not been returned to Russia. Not all of it is from criminal activities but there has been enough dirty money passing through to have caused legal problems for banks in Malta, Cyprus, Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania. Money-laundering accusations have also been levelled at financial institutions in Moldova and especially Azerbaijan. The biggest money-laundering case involved \$230-billion (€209-billion) moved through the Estonian branch of Danske Bank over a period of eight years. Officials believe that some of it is now invested in London properties, offshore British tax havens and luxury villas in the south of France and Spain. It may not be clear how Russian crooks made their money but it's fairly obvious how they choose to spend it. Or hide it. The word "bling" springs to mind. Hungarian Socialist MEP István Ujhelyi is angry because, he says, the Hungarian government is being irresponsible. "They threaten the security of not only Hungary but the entire European Union by opening the gates wide to the International Investment Bank, which is considered to be the cover of Russian intelligence. The Hungarian Parliament approved a law supporting the organization's headquarters in Budapest instead of Moscow. The law that has been voted for solely by pro-government representatives, grants outrageous benefits and special treatment to an institution that is officially part of the Russian administration."

Viktor Orbán himself seems certain that the establishment of the IIB in Budapest

is a good thing. He called it “a significant development” during his meeting with the IIB’s president, Nikolay Kosov. According to Orbán’s head of communications, Bertalan Havasi, the Prime Minister said that “the IIB’s move to Budapest can be seen as a significant step forward.” The position of Kosov, though, is controversial. Kosov’s parents were allegedly both officers of the KGB in Hungary during the 1956 revolution. When that uprising began, it looked as if there could be reform and improved conditions in the country, despite the early death of a student protester at the hands of the State Security Police, known as the ÁVH (Állam Védelmi Hatóság) but then Russian troops arrived and the bloodshed really began.

Some 2,500 Hungarians and 700 Russians were killed in the clashes. A further 200,000 Hungarians had fled their homes as refugees and the government of Imre Nagy was crushed. As Russian tanks poured into Budapest, a Hungarian army artillery unit had just set off on an exercise and was heading out of the city. Its commander had to weigh up his pledge to support the Soviet Union against his pledge to defend Hungary. He opted for the latter and turned his force around, shelling the invading tanks. He was sent to prison where his guards tortured him, fracturing his spine, although he survived. He told me many years later in a Budapest graveyard that he forgave his torturers because to go on hating would sour what was left of his life. He was by then a very old man but was about to marry again and he was looking to the future. Many others were also denounced and jailed following the failed uprising.

Those Hungarians who were killed were buried in a separate and guarded part of a Budapest cemetery. The bereaved were not told the names of those buried there, nor were they allowed to visit. The brutality of the Russian actions turned many former supporters in the west against Communism and did nothing to enhance Nikita Khrushchev’s reputation as a moderniser following the death of Stalin. Rapprochement is one thing but not everyone is as magnanimous as that former artillery officer.

POPULARITY AND POPULISM

Although Viktor Orbán enjoys a large majority, there are opposition parties that are unhappy with the IIB move. Zita Gurmai, an opposition MP and former

member of the European Parliament, has dismissed the IIB as “Putin’s Trojan horse”, while Jobbik, the main opposition party for Orbán’s Fidesz government, has warned against the move, arguing that it will create a “nest of spies”. Strangely, Jobbik, once viewed by many as almost a neo-Nazi party, complete with a uniformed youth wing and a record of anti-Semitic and anti-Roma rhetoric, has moved towards the more moderate centre ground just as Fidesz has moved decisively to the right. It now sits to the left of Orbán’s party and describes itself as “moderately conservative”. Jobbik MEP Marton Gyongyosi was a member of his country’s national parliament back in March when legislation was passed at Orbán’s behest under an urgency procedure, exempting the IIB from any sort of oversight and also granting it exemption from taxation. “It was very controversial at the time,” he said. He raised a number of questions then and asked the government to make public what was going on. “Orbán likes Vladimir Putin,” said Gyongyosi, “and it raises national security concerns for NATO and the European Union.”

Gyongyosi is also worried about the IIB providing a conduit into Europe and the West for Russian funds and people. “It’s not only the tax exemption,” he said, “it’s the allowance to get people into the country without proper procedures and investigations.” Ujhelyi goes further, arguing that the president and the staff of the bank will be immune from legal and administrative obligations. “The law passed by Fidesz,” he says, “stipulates that the Russian bank and its financial operations cannot be controlled by any authority or supervision. Russians are not required to comply with accounting rules, nor do they have to comply with licensing or registration obligations. The vehicles used by the bank cannot be stopped, searched, or seized, moreover no-one can enter the office of the Russian organisation in Budapest without their approval.” Game, set and match to Putin? Well, maybe not. There has been a change in the IIB’s conditions of operation, according to Ara-Kovács. “The Hungarian Ministry of Foreign Affairs declared recently, as a consequence of American intervention, that they will not guarantee immunity for the IIB,” which doesn’t really reassure him because he suspects secret deals may lie behind it. “In contrast with the earlier decision of Moscow to move the bank from Bratislava to Budapest because of the lack of diplomatic

immunity - the Russians yet persist to open the institute in Budapest. For us, who know very well Orbán, it is clear: in reality the Russians have received already guarantees of freedom for their operation from Hungarian authorities.”

As you will have gathered from the Foreign Ministry’s intervention, the move of the IIB to Budapest hasn’t gone down too well on the other side of the Atlantic. US President Donald Trump had viewed Orbán as a like-minded ally, but US Secretary of State Mike Pompeo was allegedly moved to warn Hungary’s Foreign Minister Peter Szijjártó that welcoming IIB to Hungary could be dangerous, for US-Hungary relations if for nothing else. Last year, the US Senate’s Foreign Relations Committee stated in a report its fears that “instead of defending Hungary against Russian malign interference, Orbán appears to have welcomed it”. In fact, Orbán has been trying to get closer to Trump, buying weapons from America, although US intelligence agencies have become suspicious of his commitment to the West, given his open admiration for Putin, whom he sees as embodying his ideal of an “illiberal democracy”.

There is concern also about Hungary’s blocking of NATO membership talks for Ukraine. Speaking in a press conference in Ukraine in July, Szijjártó promised to permit the talks to resume once he has assurances that the rights of some 140,000 ethnic Hungarians, mostly living in Ukraine’s Transcarpathia region, will be protected. Hungary insists they must have the right to study in their own language. Once that undertaking is made, he told the media, Hungary already had a plan for improving economic relations and had set aside €50-million for various infrastructure projects. “Once the Ukrainian authorities return the rights of the Hungarian community and stop provocations against them,” said Szijjártó, “there will be an opportunity for economic cooperation serving the interests of both countries”. The problem arose in April with a new law passed in Kyiv that is intended to preserve the position of Ukrainian as the official language (largely in response to the creeping use of Russian during the Soviet days) but effectively making the use of minority languages for education illegal. The newly-elected President of Ukraine, Volodymyr Zelensky, promised before his election to review the law “to ensure the constitutional rights of minorities.” At the time of writing he has not yet done so, however.



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Niedermüller Péter

“After the spring presidential election, we trusted that rapid change will occur,” the European Parliament was told in July by Fidesz MEP Andrea Bocskor, herself an ethnic Hungarian from Ukraine. She complained to fellow-MEPs that “the Central Election Commission has again refused to set up a Hungarian majority constituency,” and she said that there are also concerns about “numerous serious abuses” faced by Transcarpathian Hungarians during the campaign that led up to the July parliamentary elections. Matters were made worse following a visit to the Transcarpathian town of Berehove in Ukraine by Szijjártó and several other Hungarian officials during the election campaign, which was in breach of Ukrainian electoral law. Ukraine’s foreign ministry in Kyiv warned Budapest in a statement “not to interfere in the internal affairs” of Ukraine. The Ukrainian foreign ministry had already criticised an earlier informal visit to a public event in the Uzhhorod region by the head of Orbán’s Office, Gergely Gulyás, using a diplomatic passport. The issue is causing annoyance in Washington and at NATO headquarters, both of which have urged the two sides to find an urgent solution, although with national feathers ruffled it begins to look as if one side or the other must back down and risk losing face in order to achieve that.

IT’S ALL ABOUT MONEY

Historically, all Warsaw Pact countries were linked to the Comecon Bank and Hungary - like others - remained a member after the fall of Communism. During Orbán’s first administration in 2000, his government opted to quit the Comecon bank, which had dwindled since its glory days. Orbán complained

that it lacked transparency. It was twelve years later that Putin resurrected the bank under its new name. Two years after that, Orbán rejoined Hungary to the IIB, just after Hungary and Russia reached an agreement that provided a €10-billion loan from Russia for Rosatom, a Russian company, to build a new nuclear reactor at Paks in central Hungary. Certainly, the move to Budapest came with some generous sweeteners: not only the initial (but since apparently withdrawn) offer of diplomatic immunity but also an acceptable headquarters building and a residence for the bank’s president, all courtesy of the Hungarian government, together with a range of tax breaks and other financial advantages. Some critics say it will operate as a “state within a state”. Supporters point out that the International Monetary Fund enjoys similar privileges in Hungary.

But some see it as further evidence of Orbán’s slide towards the east. One recent incident involved the arrest in Hungary through a joint operation with the Americans of two Russian spies. Washington wanted to extradite them but they were sent instead to Moscow. “It raises a series of questions regarding Orbán’s foreign relations policies,” says Marton Gyongyosi, “especially at a time when the European Union is talking of cutting cohesion funds to Hungary because of the situation of media and judicial freedom, NGOs, civil society and the like.” He is also concerned about where Orbán may look for funds if Brussels turns off the tap. Russia is one possibility but so is China. Take, for example, the Budapest-Belgrade railway line, part of China’s flagship Belt and Road project, agreed in Hungary behind closed doors and under contracts that remain classified. “I can’t see any EU or Hungarian interest in the line,” says Gyongyosi, “but it’s very important for China. Orbán is trying to draw Hungary out of its western alliances through backdoor deals with Russia and China.” Orbán admires Donald Trump but he also seeks to find financial and political links elsewhere, where he faces less pressure to ease up on his more repressive policies and where there are fewer strings attached to any financial help. EU subsidies to Hungary came to some €25-billion during the 2014-2020 Financial Framework period, but the EU has threatened to close the taps to a trickle unless Orbán eases up on his attempts to rein in Hungary’s judiciary, its media, the NGOs and other aspects of civil

society he doesn’t like. Even NATO is said to be less willing to share information with Hungary these days in case it’s leaked to Moscow.

Hungary’s attitude to NATO has always been somewhat ambivalent. Even after it joined the Alliance, Orbán continued to impose restrictions on Hungarian citizens who had spied for the Alliance during the Cold War. One of them, a former army intelligence officer called István Belovai, moved to the United States to avoid his constant monitoring and badgering by the police. He died in 2009. He and fellow-spy Gábor Rimner had supplied information to the West but, together with a third man who died under suspicious circumstances, their punishment didn’t end when their country joined NATO. Belovai had been posted to Hungary’s London embassy where his job was to receive data on Western defences from pro-Soviet agents and simply pass them on to a KGB official. He told me he’d already realised that the Soviet Union’s plan was to let the Hungarian military block any advance from Italy in the event of a continental war, effectively sacrificing all of Hungary’s armed forces to protect Russia. Disgusted, he later received information on American troop movements from Clyde Lee Conrad, an American NCO working as an administrator at secret NATO archives in Bad Kreuznach, Germany, and in the pay of Hungarian intelligence (although the material he supplied was passed, often unread, to Moscow). Belovai informed the US embassy in London that they had a well-placed and dangerous spy in their midst and became a regular supplier of further valuable intelligence. Belovai showed me a map of Europe he claimed he’d taken as evidence of dirty dealings in the Cold War, a map Conrad had shared with his handlers, showing the location of what he described as a string of American nuclear mines stretched across Germany that could be detonated to block any Russian advance overland. The Germans had not been told about it, he said; yet more sacrificial lambs to the slaughter as the big boys slugged it out?

Rimner was a teacher and civil servant, passing low-grade information on the movements of Hungarian officials to the CIA through the use of dead letter boxes around Budapest, which he pointed out to me during an interesting and unusual walking tour of the city, also taking in the prison where he’d been held. Both men had been sent to prison, where, in

a crowded cell, Rimner said he was only offered fresh fruit once. “It was oranges, grown near Chernobyl, just after the nuclear power plant exploded there,” he said. But he and his cell-mates ate them anyway. Both Rimner and Belovai had to report regularly to the police and in Rimner’s case he had to seek permission before taking on a new student. The Hungarians blamed their continued punishment of the men on a claim that they had done it “for money”, not for any issues of conscience. The state-influenced Hungarian media reinforced that view, which meant the men got little or no public sympathy. My repeated attempts to get an interview with a government spokesperson about the issue were declined. Both Belovai and Rimner always denied the financial incentive and I believed them, although I’m equally sure that their out-of-pocket expenses were met. I’m no secret agent but neither man became rich, although there must have been some incentive, however meagre. Chaucer got it right in his 14th century Canterbury Tales with the Prologue to the Wife of Bath’s Tale:

Wynne whoso may, for al is for to selle;
With empty hand men may none haukes
lure.

*(Let win who may, for everything's for sale;
With empty hand men may lure no hawks)*

CHANGING TACK?

Orbán seems to be softening his tough line towards Brussels. It was demonstrated in July when his party raised no objection in the European Parliament to the election of Germany’s Ursula von der Leyen as the next President of the European Commission, to replace Jean-Claude Juncker. He would have preferred the other leading candidate, the much less liberal German Christian Democrat MEP, Manfred Weber, but the European Parliament chose von der Leyen by a narrow majority. Although she holds more liberal views than the rejected top candidate, she was voted for by representatives of both the Hungarian and Polish governments. Viktor Orbán seems to be trying to reconcile with both Brussels and the European People’s Party, which had threatened Fidesz with expulsion.

Meanwhile, the IIB itself has lost no time in trying to establish its credentials as a modern, forward-thinking lender, doing its bit to combat climate change by allocating what it calls an “eco-grant to support a large-scale environmental program ‘Clear water. Happy Tisza’ aimed at com-

bating the plastic pollution of Hungary’s second largest river.” The Tisza is a thousand kilometres long and flows through five East European Countries - Hungary, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia and Ukraine, three of them participants in the IIB. So, could the bank be the Trojan Horse some fear? Its management board, in an on-line statement, says no. “EU countries control more than half of the voting shares, and the decision-making process is fully transparent and fair due to the ‘double majority’ principles applied during voting,” says the bank. “In accordance with Article 25 of the IIB Charter, all international officers of the Bank are fully independent from any authorities or officials of the states, of which they are citizens. At the same time, the citizens of EU countries currently have four out of six positions allocated at the Management Board.” The statement goes on to argue that more than 50% of the loan portfolio is focused on the European Union and more than 60% of long-term funding originated from European investors.” The board seeks to reassure a nervous West about its links with Russia, too. “IIB can never be a ‘Russian bank’ or ‘Hungarian bank’ as it does not comply with national jurisdiction of any country,” says its website. So that’s alright, then. Except it isn’t, certainly not as far as István Ujhelyi is concerned: “In the light of the well-known facts,” he says, “it is needless to say that the move of the IIB to Budapest by the direct help of the Hungarian government is indisputably intolerable.” Ara-Kovács agrees: “The logistic and communication ways were granted by the Russian embassy which is one of the largest in Europe. The Hungarian authorities were unable to monitor their operation and activity in Budapest and countryside.” Some things never change.

WHEN IS A HORSE NOT A HORSE?

As for opening the door to dodgy financial transfers and even dodgier people, the board insists the bank carries out its activities “strictly in accordance with international compliance regulations (FATF, Basel Committee for Banking Supervision, OECD) and taking into account existing sanction restrictions.” It’s basically a “move along, nothing to see here” kind of statement that may not fully allay suspicions. More will become clear, perhaps, when the Budapest headquarters starts to receive more unchecked visitors from across its borders. But the board is dismissive of the “Trojan Horse” allegation. “IIB



Viktor Orbán Prime Minister of Hungary

emphatically rejects this statement,” says the board. “For almost 50 years of IIB existence, no cases have been registered when any of the Bank’s employees have been accused in activities incompatible with the status of an international official. There is a high-quality international team currently working at the Bank with specialists from nine different countries.” But Gyongyosi is unconvinced and, he says, disappointed with the direction being taken by Orbán: “I’m very concerned,” he admits. “Thirty years ago, I thought we were becoming a democratic, more open country and that we’d left the bad old times behind.” Now, he’s not so sure. Ujhelyi agrees: “While the whole country is becoming more vulnerable to Putin-led Russia, in parallel, the leaders of the European Member States, as well as the European citizens step by step are getting more concerned and increasingly worried about the direction Hungary is heading towards.”

So, the IIB says it’s not really a Trojan Horse, whatever the modern-day Laocoöns and Cassandras may say. Remember, though, nobody in Troy took any notice of their warnings. In Cassandra’s case, nobody ever did. And just look what happened next. The Trojans dragged the suspicious-looking horse - actually too high to get through the gate without a lot of effort - only to have the dire predictions come true: the Greeks came out from the horse at night, opened the gates and laid waste to Troy. The Trojans dismissed Cassandra as mad. She may have been. But the thing to remember is that, like Laocoön, she was right.

T. Kingsley Brooks



VENEZUELA

More European Union sanctions

EU has decided to apply additional targeted measures against seven members of the security and intelligence forces of Venezuela

The people of Venezuela continue to face a dramatic situation. The regional impact of the crisis is unprecedented, with severe risks for regional stability. On the political front, the dismantlement of institutional checks and balances has eroded democracy and the rule of law, while repression, including against members of the National Assembly, and serious human rights violations take place with impunity. This grave situation, as reported by the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights (UN HCHR), cannot be ignored.

In this context, and as stated in its Declaration of 16 July, the EU has decided to apply additional targeted measures against seven members of the security and intelligence forces involved in torture and other serious human rights violations. The EU reaffirms its backing for the UN HCHR in her efforts to protect the human rights and fundamental freedoms of all Venezuelans. In this respect it supports the steps taken towards ensuring a permanent presence of OHCHR in Venezuela and the free access of UN Special procedures to the country. The EU underlines the need to fully implement the totality of the recommendations from the UN HCHR report.

The EU expresses its concern at the temporary suspension of the Oslo facilitated talks and calls on the parties to return to an inclusive, credible and serious negotiation on the basis of the previously agreed agenda. The EU reiterates its willingness to contribute to promote the enabling conditions for such a process, through the International Contact Group, including by working with other relevant actors in the international community to provide a supporting framework.



Hugo Chavez



A negotiated transition leading to transparent and internationally monitored presidential elections, the reinstatement of the public powers and a package of guarantees enabling political coexistence are essential elements to overcome the crisis.

The EU confirms its readiness to work on further targeted measures to foster such a negotiated transition. At the same time it recalls that its targeted restrictive measures do not affect the population and can be reversed in light of progress made towards the restoration of democracy, rule of law and human rights in Venezuela.

In the meantime, addressing the humanitarian and social emergency in Venezuela is urgent and long overdue. The EU considers vital the increase and acceleration of a coordinated assistance, both inside and outside the country. In this context, the EU will hold an International Solidarity Conference on the Venezuelan Refugee and Migrant Crisis in Brussels end of October. This initiative will be co-hosted with UNHCR and IOM, in close articulation with the Quito process. *(Declaration by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on Venezuela)*



Hugo Chavez and Vladimir Putin

Venezuela: EU adds 7 members of the security and intelligence forces to sanctions list

The Council has added 7 members of the Venezuelan security and intelligence forces under restrictive measures. The measures include a travel ban and an asset freeze. The persons listed are involved in torture and other serious violations of human rights. Four of them are linked to the death of Captain Acosta Arévalo.

Today's decision brings to 25 the total number of individuals under sanctions in view of the situation in Venezuela. It is a direct follow-up to the declaration issued by the High Representative on behalf of the EU on 16 July 2019 where the EU indicated that it was ready to start work towards applying targeted measures for those members of the security forces involved in torture and other serious violations of human rights.

The declaration underlined that the report of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights confirmed in a clear and detailed manner the extent and seriousness of the human rights violations, the erosion of the rule of law and the dismantlement of democratic institutions in the country. Moreover, the declaration mentioned the tragic death of Captain Acosta Arévalo while in custody of the Venezuelan security forces as a stark example of the continued deterioration of the human rights situation..

Restrictive measures by the EU on Venezuela were introduced in November 2017. They include an embargo on arms and on equipment for internal repression as well as a travel ban and an asset freeze on listed individuals. These restrictive measures are intended to foster a peaceful, political and democratic solution, through credible, transparent and internationally monitored presidential elections, leading to the restoration of democracy, rule of law and human rights in Venezuela. They are flexible and reversible and designed not to harm the Venezuelan population.

Source : Council of the European Union



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GENIES, BOTTLES AND BLASTS

*Keeping the jinn confined - or not
Lab explosion causes fear of deadly disease*

According to the Holy Qur'an, the Jinn are spirits, invisible to us, made by Allah "from a smokeless fire". We ordinary mortals were made later. According to Sura (Chapter) 55, "He created man of a clay, like the potter's", while angels were made from light. In Islam, the Jinn could be good, evil or (like most of us) somewhere in between. Indeed, Sura 55 rather suggests they are an equal but separate form of being, not unlike humans, sharing the same temptations and obligations and anticipating the same rewards for holiness, including "maidens restraining their glances, untouched before them by any man or jinn".

*"O tribe of jinn and of men, if you are able to pass through the confines of heaven and earth, pass through them!
You shall not pass through except with an authority."*

(Translation by Arthur J. Arberry, Oxford University Press)

During what is sometimes called the Golden Age of Islam (generally thought to have been between the 8th and 14th century) a number of Middle Eastern folk tales were gathered together and set down in Arabic, although they came from a variety of traditions, including Indian, Jewish, Turkish and Persian. They are known as the Tales of One Thousand and One Nights. The surrounding story that gathers them together gives the names of the main players (at least in the Medieval European version) as King Shahryār and his wife-of-one-day, Scheherazade, who saves herself from execution by telling him stories with cliff-hanger endings he simply must hear, thus postponing her demise. His previous wives had all been

ordered to tell him a story and then, after one night together, he'd had them killed to prevent them from ever being unfaithful. Eventually, the country ran out of virgins so he married Scheherazade, his Vizier's daughter. Aladdin and Ali Baba were not in the original Tales but were added in the 18th century by a French lover of oriental folklore, Antoine Galland. The one about the genie, though, is there and features a poor fisherman who finds a bottle which, when he tries to clean it, releases a genie. It takes trickery on the fisherman's part, playing on the genie's boastfulness and pride, to get it back in the bottle.

In some ways, bacilli and viruses could be compared with genies (or jinn, which

is the plural of the original word for a single one, jinni): they came along eons before we humans evolved, (3.8-billion or more years ago for microbes, 900-million years for the first multicellular life) only they're invisible, some are very good for us, like our gut biome bugs, and some are horrible, like smallpox, Ebola and HIV. The latter types are much better kept in sealed bottles, never to be released. Which is why news of an explosion and fire at a biological research laboratory in Russia has caused widespread alarm. The facility, known as the Vector Institute, is one of only two facilities in the world permitted by the World Health Organisation (WHO) to store the smallpox virus, variola (the other is the US Centers for Disease Con-

trol and Prevention, in Atlanta, Georgia). Many experts wonder why the virus is allowed to be retained anywhere since the disease was declared by the WHO in 1980 to have been eradicated. What use can the virus be to researchers when the last known case - fatal, as usual - was in 1978? But the Advisory Committee on Variola Virus Research is divided on the issue. At a meeting in September 2018, most members agreed that samples of the live virus should be kept in order to help develop other anti-viral drugs that could be needed in future. Others say that new vaccines could be developed using gene fragments, sequenced from the live virus or from similar viruses, such as monkeypox.

But there is another concern: the scientist who ran the institute for five years from 2005 to 2010 disappeared without trace in January, 2017. Professor Ilya Drozdov, reports the Siberian Times, was under investigation for fraud, although not a big one by global standards. State investigators accused him in absentia of misappropriating around 2-million roubles (€28,000), which he is believed to have used to buy an apartment. He is also accused of abuse of office. After leaving Vector, he returned to his native Saratov but Russian police say he is no longer there. Interpol has put him on its wanted list which suggests the Russians believe he has left the country.

He was not a popular head of Vector. The Siberian Times reports one of many complaints. "In an open letter Pavel Korchagin, director of Prospekt, the largest construction company in Koltsovo scientific city, claimed executives were paid 'exorbitant' salaries while there were 'humiliatingly low wages' for regular employees and 'destruction of the most significant research areas.'" Many staff left in disgust during his tenure there. So far, no-one has suggested the Professor, who was 63 when he disappeared, took any samples with him - after all, it's now nearly a decade since he left Vector. But he is a leading microbiologist with a vast knowledge, while a Russian defector, Professor Ken Alibeck, now living in the United States, claims that not only was Vector in the front line of biological weapons research, weaponizing both Ebola and smallpox viruses, but also that Russia retained an undeclared cache of variola viruses at the Virology Centre of the Scientific-Research Institute of Microbiology, a Russian Defence Ministry laboratory near the city of Sergiyev Posad, just outside Moscow. No wonder Russia is worried. The most dangerous thing Drozdov took with him is his knowledge.

So, what happened in the at the Vector Institute in this most recent incident? According to Institute sources, a gas cylinder exploded on the 5th floor of a six-story building, built of reinforced concrete. It happened while the so-called "sanitary inspection room" was undergoing repairs. The official statement assures us that "no work with biological material on the body was carried out" and that the fire caused by the explosion didn't spread to areas where viruses are stored. It's just as well: the pathogens held there include not only smallpox but also Ebola, anthrax (not a virus, in fact, but a bacillus) and the Marburg virus; all killers, in other words. But in any case, western experts say it's unlikely the fire would have caused the viruses to spread and incineration should have killed any that could have escaped. Or most of them, anyway.

A BANG FOR YOUR BUGS

The Vector Institute, also called the State Research Centre of Virology and Biotechnology, is based in Koltsovo, near to Novosibirsk in Siberia and was certainly used as a laboratory for bio-weapons research during the Cold War. It is formed of around a hundred buildings and even has its own cemetery so that any workers accidentally killed by a deadly pathogen can be laid to rest where everyday mourners won't be passing by to lay flowers on granny's grave.

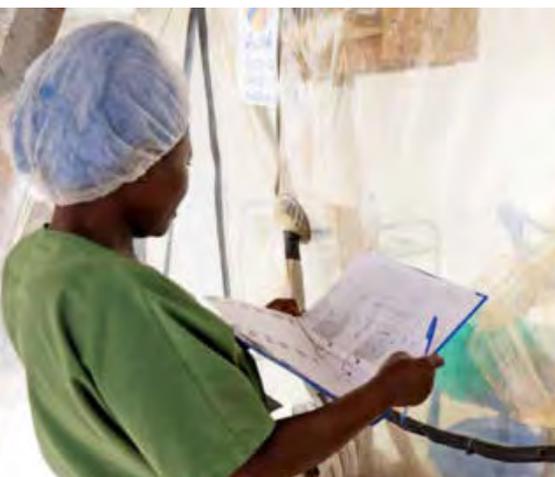
The Institute is said to have given up bioweapons research by the year 2000, when a delegation from the United States General Accounting Office paid a visit, declaring afterwards that there were indications that scientists working there were no longer "engaged in offensive activities". That was five years before Professor Drozdov took charge. The facility now claims to carry out research into the spread of infectious diseases, the development of new vaccines, sequencing virus genomes and studies which the Institute's website describes as being "to counter global infectious threats". In the recent blast one worker received third degree burns. The explosion blew out the glass in the building before causing a fire which then spread through the ventilation system. The Russian authorities insist that no biohazardous substances were being held in the room and that there was no major structural damage. The mayor of nearby Koltsovo said that the building contained no pathogens because of the repair work being undertaken at the time in preparation for repainting.

LUCKY MILKMAIDS

In Europe - and certainly in the United Kingdom - it's most often believed that we have Edward Jenner to thank for finding a vaccine against smallpox which he tested on a young boy, James Phipps, in 1796. It was already known by then that milkmaids never caught smallpox, at least if they had already suffered the much less deadly cowpox because of their work. The vaccine was simply pus extracted from a pustule on the hand of a milkmaid and administered by rubbing into an incision made in the boy's arm. Jenner wrote in 1801 that the eradication of smallpox, which he called "the speckled monster", was now within reach, but it was not until 1959 that the World Health Authority, as it was then called, passed a resolution to attempt to get rid of the disease for good. In fact, Jenner was late to the game; the first successful vaccine against the disease was used in China in the 10th century. It was a potentially dangerous procedure, however, taking the pus from an existing smallpox sufferer and using it to inoculate others. It was known as variolation (the smallpox virus is called variola) and up to 2% of those treated developed the full-blown disease and died. Even so, it gave a better chance of survival than catching smallpox, which killed up to 30% of sufferers.

Variolation was brought to England by Lady Mary Wortley Montagu in the late 18th century. After surviving the disease herself although terribly scarred by it, she heard about variolation in Constantinople where her husband was the British ambassador. She had her own children inoculated and persuaded the then Princess of Wales to do the same. It seems to have worked.

The earliest evidence we have of the existence of smallpox comes from the mummified body of the Egyptian Pharaoh, Rameses V, which shows a pustular rash. He had died in 1157 BCE. Trading caused the disease to spread to India first, then on to China by the first century AD and to Japan in the 6th century. Returning Crusaders brought it back to Europe where it spread rapidly. Smallpox was instrumental, too, in the conquering of the New World: the Spanish brought it - unintentionally - to Mexico in the 16th century, killing thousands of Incas and Aztecs, while other European colonists brought it to native Americans and, finally, to the Aborigines of Australia. It's arguable that it was the variola virus that conquered new lands, not the pikes, canon and swords of the conquerors.



© WHO Chris Black

An Ebola patient is cared for at the ALIMA treatment centre in Beni, DRC

A CATALOGUE OF KILLERS

It's worth taking a moment to look at the viruses Vector is storing. Firstly, there's smallpox, which comes in two common and two rarer forms. Of the common versions, variola minor is less fatal, killing only around one in a hundred sufferers. The other common form, variola major, is much more common and much more deadly, accounting for around 90% of cases and killing one victim in three. The two rare forms, haemorrhagic and malignant are the deadliest of all. Across the world during the last century, smallpox in its various forms killed around 300-million people. Symptoms of smallpox are slow to reveal themselves, taking up to seventeen days for the sufferer to develop flu-like symptoms: a high fever, chills, a headache, severe back pain, abdominal pain and vomiting, which can last for two or three days, after which the patient will start to feel better. Then a rash would appear, starting on the face and spreading to the hands, arms and torso. At this point the patient is highly contagious. After two days, the rash would turn into pus-filled abscesses that would burst open and scab over. The scabs would eventually fall or rub off, leaving the familiar unsightly scars. Those who suffered the scars were the lucky ones; they had, at least, survived.

Next, we have Ebola, also known as Ebola haemorrhagic fever. This is a severe and most often fatal disease, caused by a virus and first reported in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) in 1976 as well as in an area of Sudan along the Ebola River. Up to nine out of ten sufferers die from it. It is spread through infected bodily fluids, which means that those most at risk are family members, close neighbours and

health professionals. The death of the victim does not signify the death of the virus, so those preparing a corpse for burial are also at risk. According to the World Health Organisation, the route into the human population is through wildlife. "The virus is transmitted to people from wild animals (such as fruit bats, porcupines and non-human primates) and then spreads in the human population through direct contact with the blood, secretions, organs or other bodily fluids of infected people, and with surfaces and materials (e.g. bedding, clothing) contaminated with these fluids." In the various outbreaks, death rates have ranged between 25% and 90%, averaging around 50%, which implies more survivors than many media reports would suggest. According to the WHO, "The 2014–2016 outbreak in West Africa was the largest and most complex Ebola outbreak since the virus was first discovered in 1976. There were more cases and deaths in this outbreak than all others combined. It also spread between countries, starting in Guinea then moving across land borders to Sierra Leone and Liberia." Fruit bats of the pteropodidae family are the commonest vector for the disease because they are natural Ebola virus hosts. Five different Ebola viruses are recognised by the International Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses, one of which, known as RESTV, only seems to affect non-human primates, although humans coming into contact with the infected animals can develop antibodies, suggesting that there could be a species jump in the future. The latest outbreak, in the DRC and Uganda is still on-going at the time of writing. The disease spreads with alarming speed and in many cases the emergency medical response has been hampered by armed conflicts and by local superstition.

Unlike smallpox and Ebola, anthrax is not a virus but a bacillus. Furthermore, it's a very common and widespread bacillus to be found in soil all over the world, less so in developed countries operating hygienic farming techniques. As a result, of course, it's also found in domestic animals in many parts of the world. Also unlike smallpox and Ebola, anthrax is not contagious. According to the website of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDCP) in the United States, "Domestic and wild animals such as cattle, sheep, goats, antelope, and deer can become infected when they breathe in or ingest spores in contaminated soil, plants, or water." In affected areas, routine vaccination has been found to be effective, but even so, humans can be infected and when they are it's serious. As the CDCP website puts it: "When anthrax

spores get inside the body, they can be 'activated'. When they become active, the bacteria can multiply, spread out in the body, produce toxins (poisons) and cause severe illness." Anthrax is a killer, of course, and the bacillus spores have been used in terrorist attacks and threats of terrorist attacks because they are easy to deliver to their target without risk to the sender, if he or she is careful. It is still regarded as the deadliest biological weapon available to armed forces, although the use of such weapons was banned after the First World War, that ban having been reinforced in 1972 and 1993. The development, storage and transportation remains illegal but doesn't mean governments don't covertly still work on them. After all, if someone else used one you'd need an antidote, wouldn't you? In 2001 twenty-two people in the United States were infected by anthrax spores sent through the post. Five of them died. Although rare in developed countries, anthrax is sometimes reported among domestic animals in agricultural regions of Central and South America, sub-Saharan Africa, central and southwestern Asia, southern and eastern Europe, and the Caribbean. There are four different ways in which a person can be infected by anthrax. Most commonly, it is caught by getting anthrax spores onto a cut or abrasion. This is known as cutaneous anthrax. Another way is by eating meat from an infected animal. The rarest but most serious way is by inhaling spores. With pulmonary anthrax, as it's called, symptoms may not become apparent for several weeks. Eventually, though, it often leads to haemorrhagic meningitis and death. More recently, cases have occurred of infection through the use of shared needles by heroin addicts.

MICROSCOPIC SOLDIERS

The other pathogen known to have been stored at Vector is the Marburg virus, which causes Marburg haemorrhagic fever. This one is closely related to Ebola and is just as deadly. It affects people and non-human primates. First recognised in 1967, it showed in outbreaks of haemorrhagic fever in Marburg and Frankfurt, Germany, and also in Belgrade, then in Yugoslavia, now in Serbia. It affected thirty-one people, twenty-five of them laboratory staff, along with medical personnel and one family member. All had come into contact with blood, organs or cell cultures from a number of African green monkeys imported from Uganda. The most recognised vector for the pathogen is the Egyptian fruit bat (*Rousettus aegyptii*), which seems to be a

natural host. The virus is easily passed on to monkeys but it quickly kills them, ruling them out as the reservoir hosts. The largest outbreak to date was in 2005 in Angola. There were 374 cases leading to 329 deaths. A more recent outbreak in eastern Uganda was quickly brought under control by the country's health authorities and those of neighbouring Kenya, with some coordination from the WHO. It was described as "an exemplary response" to the potentially lethal outbreak, which restricted the death toll to three.

Biological warfare isn't new. Ever since armies faced each other in combat, there have been attempts to cause illness to the enemy by poisoning wells and contaminating water sources. One popular move among armies besieging a town or castle was to use a catapult or trebuchet to cast the decomposing bodies of those they'd killed inside the walls. Those on the receiving end had no means to dispose of them safely, especially as the bodies thrown in were those of their own soldiers, families or friends. It was even more effective to use diseased cadavers, as the Tartars did in 1346, while besieging the Genoese-controlled seaport of Caffa in the Crimean peninsula, which was heavily fortified. The Tartars had an outbreak of plague in their camp and decided to spread it around, hurling their decomposing dead into the town, where plague rapidly spread. Foreign merchants, escaping by sea, promptly carried the outbreak all around the Mediterranean. It has even been suggested - possibly erroneously - that this Tartar act of germ warfare was what caused the outbreak of plague known as the Black Death that spread across the whole of Europe, wiping out more than 25-million people (some estimates suggest it was closer to 60-million), roughly a third of the population, during the 14th century. If so, black rats have been wrongly accused.

The siege of Caffa was little more than a minor skirmish in a forgotten conflict but its long-term affect may have been ghastly. In any case the use of plague as a weapon killed a lot of people in a seriously horrible way. There have been plenty of other examples, such as when the Spanish mixed the blood of leprosy patients into wine they sold to their French enemies in Naples. During the 18th century Franco-British wars in North America, the French had native American allies. The British deliberately gave them the blankets of smallpox victims to infect them and take them out of the fight. There were reports during the First World War of attempts - unverified - by the Germans to export to the United States and elsewhere horses and

cattle deliberately infected with anthrax and a disease called glanders. It's claimed the same diseases were used to infect Romanian sheep being exported to Russia. Germany has always denied the allegations, probably justifiably. At the time all sorts of rumours of dirty tricks abounded (although it's hard to imagine anything much dirtier than mustard gas).

KEEPING KILLERS UNDER LOCK AND KEY

Talking of dirty tricks, that's how viruses live and survive. Scientists disagree as to whether or not a virus is really alive since it can only exist inside a normal cell whose protein-making machinery is hijacked to produce more of the virus instead of proteins. The viruses then escape from the host cell, wrapped in part of the cell's own membrane, thus destroying the host's protection and killing it, going on to attach itself and its descendants to other cells in order to spread. The virus may use DNA or, as in the case of the common cold, RNA in order to pass on the required instructions to build more viruses. DNA stands for deoxyribonucleic acid, the famous double helix, while RNA, ribonucleic acid, is a single strand molecule that serves a variety of functions, including acting as a template for making new proteins. Scientist and writer Richard Dawkins is very dismissive of viruses. In his book *The Greatest Show on Earth* he writes that: "A virus has pointless futility written into its very DNA - actually RNA in the case of the common cold virus, but the principle is the same. A virus exists for the sole purpose of making more viruses." Well, yes, but then we mainly exist to create more human beings to populate the Earth, although we go about it in a rather more complicated way, as do, say, elephants, bald eagles and hedgehogs.

Viruses, though, are reckoned to be the most abundant biological entities on the planet and arguably the simplest. They consist of a collection of genetic material, either RNA or DNA, covered in a coat of protein called a capsid which in turn may be covered by a lipid (fat), or glycoprotein. They don't contain a ribosome - the molecular complex that assembles proteins - which is why they are totally dependent on the host cell. As viruses cannot replicate without a host they are classified as parasitic. They cannot be simply destroyed in the way antibiotics can destroy some bacteria; anti-viral treatments developed in response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic

only slow down the way the disease progresses. The best solution is vaccination; it's how smallpox was eradicated. But the social media-led anti-vaccination movement now risks giving old diseases like measles a new lease of life. A vaccination rate of less than 92% to 95% means the so-called "herd immunity" is lost, opening the doors to the sorts of pandemics seen by our grandparents. It's hard to see how any possible side effects from vaccination, feared by some parents and much touted on anti-vaccination websites, could be worse than the death of a child but fashion is an inexplicable thing. As were viruses until relatively recently.

Why should laboratories hang on to dan-



gerous pathogens, even if they're kept safely contained? The argument is that they may provide a clue to new ways to tackle today's viral infections. But the work really started and received funding because viruses could be harnessed as weapons. Just about every country did it. The bio-weapons development programme in the United States was officially halted by President Richard Nixon in 1969. Anyone found conducting such research now faces prosecution. In 1975, the US ratified the 1925 Geneva Protocol on biological warfare and the 1972 Biological Weapons Convention, too. But work continues on countering an attack from outside, for which examples of the kinds of entities an enemy might use must be kept to hand. It's hard to imagine any group, however mentally unhinged, releasing smallpox back into the world but fanatics can do some very wicked and stupid things in the name of their ideology, misplaced patriotism or their religion. So, research for purposes of defence remains vital.



Ebola in Congo

VERY SMALL AERIAL FORCES

Even so, according to Science Daily, concerns remain. “A project funded by a research agency of the US Department of Defense is now giving rise to concerns about being possibly misused for the purpose of biological warfare,” it writes. “The programme called ‘Insect Allies’ intends for insects to be used for dispersing genetically modified viruses to agricultural plants in fields. These viruses would be engineered so they can alter the chromosomes of plants through ‘genome editing’. This would allow for genetic modifications to be implemented quickly and at a large scale on crops that are already growing in fields, such as corn.” There is more, according to the journal Science, which says that scientists from the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology in Plön, Germany, and the Institut des Sciences de l’Evolution de Montpellier, France, along with legal scholars from the University of Freiburg point out that this type of system could be “more easily developed for use as a biological weapon than for the proposed agricultural purpose.” Just as a virus itself has the capacity to evolve into a new form, so the logistics for how it may be used can change, too. Science Daily flags up another direction in which biological research - especially research with the potential for weaponization - is going: “At the end of 2016, DARPA (Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency) put out a call for tenders for a 4-year research work plan. This program has distributed a total of \$27-million, aiming to develop genetically modified viruses that can genetically edit crops in fields.” This could, of course, allow genetic changes to make plants, say, more drought resistant when there is insufficient rain, or increase resistance to disease. Here again, the researchers are choosing insects, under the US “Insect Allies Programme” to do the infecting:

“Dispersal insect species mentioned include leafhoppers, whiteflies, and aphids,” says the website.

No-one has mentioned insects in connection with Russia’s State Research Centre of Virology and Biotechnology at Novosibirsk. Indeed, any insects would be unlikely to survive an explosion and fire, unlike some (but not all) pathogens. So far, the risks to the world at large are being played down and would seem to be negligible. The one researcher hospitalised following the incident was ordered to be kept in conditions of medical isolation for three weeks, but that sounds like simple common sense, rather than anything more sinister. The knowledge inside the head of Drozdov may be a more worrying escape.

Plenty of experts see something rather disturbing in DARPA’s use of insects and genetically modified crops. Scientists and legal scholars from Plön, Freiburg and Montpellier, says Science Daily, “believe that a broad social, scientific and legal debate of the issue is urgently required.” They are arguing that DARPA has offered no convincing reasons for using insects as a means of dispersing synthetic viruses into the environment. They also fear that the results of the Insect Allies Program could be more easily applied for biological warfare than for agricultural use: it is much easier to use gene editing to kill a plant or to render it sterile than it is to make it resistant to herbicides or insect pests. Guy Reeves of the Max Planck Institute for Evolutionary Biology in Plön, Schleswig-Holstein, told Science Daily that the details of the Insect Allies Programme remain shrouded in secrecy and could well be seen as a programme that is designed to have other than peaceful uses, as the Biological Weapons Convention demands. It may encourage other nations to indulge in similar research, too, if they are not already doing so.

THE DANGERS OF STAYING SAFE

Research involving deadly pathogens is, by its nature, extremely hazardous. There have been previous incidents at the Vector site in Siberia in the past. In 2004, a researcher accidentally pricked herself with a needle infected with the Ebola virus, becoming what Russian media claimed was the only fatality from the disease in the country’s history. However, it’s been claimed that when Vector was a Soviet weapons research establishment in the 1970s there had been outbreaks of anthrax and smallpox that were covered up. On a scale of potential dangers to emerge from such a research facility, an explosion such as that which happened at Novosibirsk ranks fairly low. According to the Journal of Global Biosecurity it’s not comparable with, for instance, a needle-stick injury, misplaced biological samples or shipping errors but that doesn’t mean it is without risk. As the Journal points out, “The building was physically breached by an explosion that would have resulted in propagation of aerosols at subsonic speeds. Preparedness planning principles can be applied to this event, starting with environmental testing, screening, surveillance and containment. Other considerations would be stockpiling of countermeasures for pathogens known to be housed in the building and planning for human resources and physical space for isolation of cases and quarantine of contacts.” It seems, though, that there were no pathogens close to the blast site because, basically, they had the builders in at the time. But minds won’t be entirely at ease until the missing Professor Drozdov, with all his vast knowledge of biological weapons and virology, is found and, one assumes, arrested.

This explosion at Victor won’t be the last such scare; humans are incredibly ingenious when it comes to finding new and exciting ways to kill or maim other humans. Because of that, research will inevitably continue, with all its contingent risks, into finding effective countermeasures. This, of course, means continuing to work with some of the deadliest bacilli and viruses yet found, and at some point someone will see these tiny biological entities - our modern-day jinn - as potentially useful warriors in their ongoing conflicts. We have come some way from the days of flinging the bodies of plague victims into our enemies’ fortifications. But not that far, really.

Robin Crow



WALLS CAST LONG SHADOWS

30 years after the fall of the Berlin Wall

The American poet Robert Frost, perhaps best remembered for his evocative poem “Stopping by Woods on a Snowy Evening”, also wrote one called “Mending Wall”. Written in 1914, it predates both the world wars of the last century, but it contains the following few lines:

*“Before I built a wall I’d ask to know
What I was walling in or walling out,
And to whom I was like to give offence.”*

Those sentiments were not shared by the government of the German Democratic Republic (DDR, or GDR in English) when, on 13 August, 1961, they started to construct from concrete and barbed wire what they called their “Antifascistischer Schutzwall” - anti-fascist bulwark - that became known as the Berlin Wall. It divided the Communist east of Berlin from the western part, even though Berlin itself was firmly within the boundaries of the DDR, 160 kilometres from the border with West Germany. They said at the time that this was to keep

Western “fascists” from entering East Berlin and “undermining the Socialist state”. In reality its main purpose was to prevent defections to the West. There were many, and a lot of East Berliners died in the attempt. Even so, some 5,000 people successfully made it by various means during the wall’s 28-year existence; many more died trying to escape via other routes.

“The enormity of the horror is what sticks in my mind,” says Martyn Bond, a former BBC Berlin correspondent who travelled widely in the East. He knew the Berlin Wall only

too well. “It was big. Very. And not just long. It was deep. There were four ‘generations’ – from simple barbed wire and bricked up windows, to round concrete pipes topping a high wall... the death strips raked to reveal footprints, the dog runs, watchtowers, automatic firing devices, vehicle traps and more.” The traps, dogs and automatic machine guns were on the DDR side, so were clearly intended to catch and kill anyone trying to reach the West, rather than to repel “fascists”. On 17 August 1962 would-be escaper Peter Fechter was shot by DDR border guards and



Mikhail Gorbachev

left to bleed to death where he fell. Nobody from the West could go and help him; they knew that they would be shot if they tried.

The bizarre circumstances of life in a city divided in two were a constant presence in the life of all its inhabitants, including journalists like Bond. "I could travel around without DDR control and talk to dissidents wherever I could find them," he said. "My risk was confusing 'plants' with the genuine article. They were the ones who took a risk, and what impressed me was the widespread courage – obstinacy really, being prepared to put up with everything from petty chicanery to gross mistreatment by their own 'government'. The politics of course were a lesson in double-speak and lying through your teeth but it went all the way down society."

THE ENEMY WITHIN?

The existence of West Berlin so far inside East Germany made the Communist powers very nervous. According to the Russian President of the time, Nikita Khrushchev, it "stuck like a bone in the Soviet throat". The Russians tried to drive the western countries out of Berlin, despite the agreements reached at Yalta and Potsdam on sharing out the territory of conquered Germany, and in 1948 the Soviet Union imposed a blockade in a bid to starve the United States, Britain and France into leaving. Instead, the western powers instigated what became known as the Berlin Airlift, ferrying over 2-million tonnes of food, fuel and other essentials by air. Eventually, one year after introducing it the Soviets decided to end the blockade, which clearly wasn't working. After that, a flow of refugees towards

the west caused a lot of embarrassment to the Communist states. The people leaving - almost three million of them - were mostly young and skilled and a series of meetings and negotiations with Western leaders failed to resolve the issue.

Berlin was a favoured route for East Germans wanting to head west. According to the history.com website, "19,000 left the DDR via Berlin in June 1961 alone. In July, the numbers rose to 30,000 and in the first eleven days of August, 16,000 crossed the border. On the 12 August, 2,400 East Germans followed, the largest number of defectors to leave in a single day. That night, Khrushchev gave the go-ahead to the East German government to stop the flow of immigrants by permanently closing its border". The permission was given reluctantly. The East German leader Walter Ulbricht and his regime



Ronald Reagan

had wanted to build a wall for more than eight years, despite having denied the intention at a press conference in June of that year, and had been secretly stockpiling barbed wire and concrete fenceposts. Khrushchev had resisted their demands, fearing it would make the Soviet Union appear brutal. He only gave way because the flood of people leaving for the West risked leaving an East Germany without essential workers and intellectuals. And so it was that on 13 August the head of the East German security forces, Erich Honecker, who later went on to become First Secretary of the East German Communist Party, ordered police and troops to erect a barbed wire fence and to begin construction of concrete barricades. The first version of the wall was put up with commendable speed,

says history.com: "In just two weeks, the East German army, police force and volunteer construction workers had completed a makeshift barbed wire and concrete block wall – the Berlin Wall – that divided one side of the city from the other." Honecker famously (and erroneously) predicted it would last a century or more. President John F. Kennedy didn't like it but conceded that "a wall is a hell of a lot better than a war."

Before its construction, a great many people crossed the border on a daily basis to work, do their shopping, visit friends and family or go to the theatre or the cinema. Trams and subway lines across the city made it easy. Few people took easily to the restrictions imposed by the wall, with its three crossing places: Checkpoint Alpha at Helmstedt, Checkpoint Bravo at Dreilinden and most famously Checkpoint Charlie at Friedrichstrasse in the centre of the city. On 22 October, 1961, an American official on his way to see an opera in East Berlin got into a heated argument with an East German border guard there. It led to American and Soviet tanks facing off against each other at Checkpoint Charlie for sixteen hours. History.com cites one observer who described the episode as "a nuclear-age equivalent of the Wild West showdown at the O.K. Corral".

CROSSING BARRIERS

Even after the wall went up, there was still some carefully-controlled contact. Michael Shackleton, Special Professor in European Institutions at the University of Maastricht and Former Head of the European Parliament Information Office in the UK, was born in Berlin and spent many school holidays there



George Bush



with his German grandparents. “We had relations in East Germany,” he said, “and they would come to East Berlin to meet us and to collect medicines that they could not get at home. It was always a somewhat nerve-wracking experience going through the checkpoints, wondering if they would ask us what we were bringing in.” It’s not surprising, perhaps, that Berlin, especially Checkpoint Charlie, features in so many spy novels and movies. “The extraordinary contrast between East and West Berlin remains very strongly in my mind,” recalls Shackleton, “the dim lights in the East, shops with virtually nothing in the window and black-market money changers. And of course, watching armed guards on the station gantries at Friedrichstrasse as we made our way back to the West, knowing our East German relations could not follow.”

Felix Dane, Director of the Konrad Adenauer Stiftung for the UK and Ireland, recalls meeting with relatives in the DDR at a time when crossing the border with his parents and sister involved a long drive from Bonn followed by a long, tense wait at the border while everything was checked by guards. He described suddenly finding they could drive across the border easily as “surreal and joyful”. The year after it opened, his father, a diplomat, drove them through the various *länder* of the old DDR to see them as they had been during the long years of Socialism. “We watched the news as a family every evening and followed developments very closely,” he said. By 1992, when he did his military service, much of the euphoria had gone. “The two parts of Germany were back together,” he said,

“but true unification would take much longer.” He found it “very interesting” that many of his fellow recruits were from the former DDR. “Having been on military summer camps in their youth, they knew far more than we did,” he said.

What had begun as a crude barbed-wire and cinder-block barrier, hastily-constructed and closing off the crossing points, the Wall eventually stretched to 155 kilometres in length and 4 metres in height. The Berlin section alone, dividing just the city itself, stretched for 45 kilometres, the rest of it separating West Berlin from the rest of the DDR. It was also a double wall, the two being separated by a mined and heavily-guarded area known as the “death strip”. It was under constant surveillance by guards who had orders to shoot anyone attempting to cross over to the West. Its construction cut people off from their work, their schools, their friends and their relatives. It divided not only districts and local communities but families, too. Windows of apartments and houses facing the new barrier were bricked up. By the end, the East Germans had laid more than a million landmines along the East-West border, 55,000 of them in Berlin itself. Not all the mines have been found and disarmed even now. They also employed 3,000 attack dogs, in case anyone survived the mines and the tripwire-fired machine guns.

“Bad enough by day; much more scary by night,” says Martyn Bond, recalling a visit from two senior BBC executives while he was based there. “They came to see me for a few days and we watched the last old pensioners (who were allowed out on foot over

the Oberbaumbrücke but had to be back by midnight) as they hurried to get over in time. A small DDR patrol boat glided silently under the arches of the bridge and shone a searchlight on the warehouses on ‘their’ side to check nobody was chiselling their way out into the Spree. John le Carré could not have invented a more spooky scene. It certainly sobered up my visitors.” For anyone familiar with the spy novels of le Carré or even Ian Fleming, it sounds almost romantic. But it wasn’t. For those East Germans hoping for a new life in the West any thoughts of escape were tinged with terror and the very real prospect of being killed.

“The death toll was also appalling,” says Bond. “Not just at the Wall itself – bad enough at close to 200, I believe (currently estimated at 171 but the numbers are uncertain and research is continuing) but it was thousands if you add up those killed trying to cross the inner-German border, escape off the Baltic coast, or even slip out to Czechoslovakia. And those even abducted back from West Berlin after they had escaped. They had no compunction at all.” Thirty years on, it’s easy to forget; there are a great many Berliners who never knew what it was like, having been born after the Wall came down. “Now it sounds just like statistics,” says Bond. “What is left as a memorial is really just the few crosses near the Reichstag – where Peter Fechter bled to death twenty yards the wrong side of the border; even doctors from ‘our’ side would be shot at if they crossed to help.” Bond is concerned that the memory of those times will fade. “Even the museum at Checkpoint Charlie is a private initiative. There is some danger that the horror of it will be forgotten, or beautified away.”

SOWING THE WIND, REAPING THE WHIRLWIND

It’s easy to forget, of course, the fact that the Red Army soldiers who had “liberated” Berlin were themselves dirt-poor and had seen at first-hand what the Nazis had done, which gave them a somewhat jaundiced view of Hitler’s former capital. They had been brutalized by their experiences and were surprised by the luxurious homes (most had never seen indoor plumbing) and comfortable lifestyles they could see all around them in Berlin, very different

from the picture of capitalist repression painted by Moscow.

The invasion by Germany of the Soviet Union - Operation Barbarossa - began just before dawn on 22 June, 1941. In his book "Stalin's General", historian Geoffrey Roberts writes: "Leading the assault across a 1,000-mile (1,600 kilometre) front were 152 German divisions, supported by 14 Finnish divisions in the north and 14 Romanian divisions in the south. Later, the 3.5-million-strong invasion force would be joined by armies from Hungary and Italy, by the Spanish Blue Division, by contingents from Croatia and Slovakia, and by volunteer units recruited from every country in Nazi-occupied Europe." We tend to forget these days that not all Nazis were German.

Hitler had set out his goals in December, 1940: "The German Wehrmacht must be prepared to defeat Soviet Russia in one rapid campaign," he said. The German plan was to undertake what they called "Vernichtungskrieg" in Russia - a war of destruction and extermination. Again, according to Geoffrey Roberts, Hitler told his generals: "The war against Russia cannot be conducted in a knightly fashion; the struggle is one of ideologies and racial differences and will have to be conducted with unprecedented, unmerciful and unrelenting harshness." It was. German soldiers were assured they would be exempted from punishment for any atrocities they might commit in Russia. All Communists were to be executed on the spot. By the middle of July, the Germans had penetrated some 500 or more kilometres across a broad front before the tide was turned on the outskirts of Moscow, largely through the strategies of Georgy Zhukov, arguably Stalin's most brilliant General. "The Germans considered Slavs to be sub-human," writes Anne Applebaum, in her book "Iron Curtain - the Crushing of Eastern Europe", "ranked not much higher than Jews, and in the lands between Sachsenhausen and Babi Yar they thought nothing of ordering arbitrary street killings, mass public executions or the burning of whole villages in revenge for one dead Nazi."

As they advanced into recaptured territory, Red Army soldiers saw what the retreating Germans had done - it was the Red Army that liberated Auschwitz-Birkenau and discovered the



Construction of the Berlin Wall 1961

monstrous crime committed there - and they took their revenge when they conquered Berlin, mainly on its civilians. Zhukov attempted somewhat feebly to rein them in, directing his soldiers to "remain on army premises". But Stalin's attitude to the many, many tales of rape was less critical, according to Geoffrey Roberts, again in "Stalin's General". Stalin told a visiting group of Yugoslav Communists: "a man who has fought from Stalingrad to Belgrade - over thousands of kilometres of his own devastated land, across the dead bodies of his comrades and dearest ones. How can such a man react normally? And what is so awful in his having fun with a woman, after such horrors?" For the women of Berlin, then, the horrors continued, since Stalin clearly saw rape as "fun" for his troops. His attitude towards territories that later fell under Soviet control should not then surprise us perhaps.

In fact, the Nazis had made it easier for the Soviets who took over Eastern Europe. Many small and medium-sized businesses were seized and then run by Germans as the Nazis advanced, especially but not exclusively Jewish-owned businesses. Because they formed an inward-looking closed market, their trade links ended with Germany's collapse and the Soviet Union could simply move in and take over. In any case, the German or at least Nazi-sympathising new owners had mainly been killed or else had fled, their businesses abandoned. "Most of these abandoned properties were eventually nationalised," writes Applebaum, "if they had not already been packed up and moved, lock, stock and barrel, to the Soviet Union, which considered all 'German' property legitimate war reparations." There was little opposition,

even from local populations still bitter and angry with their pre-war and war-time leaders for the catastrophe that had befallen them.

NOT-SO-SPLENDID ISOLATION

So, in East Germany, the Communist party opted for isolation from the "pollution" of western ways and capitalism. Life behind the Wall went on, with workers in the East saving for years to acquire the latest Trabant while workers on the other side were able to purchase much more advanced Volkswagens or - if they were really successful - Mercedes, Audis and BMWs. It was a different world. The relative sophistication of the various vehicles tells its own story. Fashions were also important. Michael Shackleton remembers a visit to East Berlin's Bertolt Brecht theatre in 1971 with a couple of friends from Oxford who were "doing their year abroad in Germany: the attention we attracted not because of what we said or because we spoke English but because of the clothes we wore which were so unlike what everyone else was wearing was remarkable. Rather like going to a football match in a dinner jacket!" But we shouldn't forget that there were many people living in East Germany who believed fervently in Communism and the dictatorship of the proletariat. Not everyone wanted to escape to the West, not everyone even approved of Western ideas, although most probably hoped they could earn a little more, get a nicer apartment, have better work prospects and look forward hopefully to a brighter future for their children.

And so, from 1961 to 1989, the Wall stood as a symbol of division. Those

who were born and brought up in the DDR know the stultifying effect of walls. German Chancellor Angela Merkel recalled her experience at a press conference during her visit to Ireland in April, 2019. She talked with the Irish people about their fears that Britain's departure from the EU would create an unwanted border between the North and the South. She said that together they must find a solution that works for the people, not just for the politicians and businesses. "We will simply have to be able to do this. We hope for a solution. We have to be successful. Where there's a will there's a way." She, of all people, knows the consequences of barriers and the delight at tearing them down. "For 34 years I lived behind the Iron Curtain so I know only too well what it means once borders vanish, once walls fall," she said. While it stood, the western side was repeatedly decorated with graffiti, earning the soubriquet "the world's longest art gallery".

European People's Party. When I asked him in 2004 what he thought about the Wall coming down, he said: "For me of course, it is a tremendous thing because I entered the European Parliament with that goal exactly. I was the first to speak a language of Central Europe (Hungarian) here, just as a symbolic gesture. And now, to have it all true! It is a great thing."

THE END DOESN'T MEAN IT'S OVER

It was also, in the end, an accidental thing. Because of the protests going on, leaders of the DDR decided to waive the visa rules that required citizens to give justifiable reasons for travel, such as a funeral or other major family event. They would still need visas but they should be granted more quickly and easily. However, the party official who was given the task of announcing the changes,

at the Bornholmer Street checkpoint simply opened the barrier just half an hour before midnight. Guards at other crossing points soon followed suit and the divided Berliners met, cheered, danced, drank, hugged, celebrated and put the dark days behind them, at least for a while. The nightmare wasn't quite over but they were starting to wake up at last.

Celebrating the event, though, is not easy for many Germans. Tearing down physical walls doesn't in itself unite the people on either side and there is hostility among many in what was East Germany over continued high levels of unemployment and relative poverty there. It has fuelled support for the far-right Alternative für Deutschland party, with its populist promises. I can understand why they feel resentment," says Felix Dane, "first changing from the Ostmark to the Euro, and now facing more change through technology, migration and climate change. They feel left behind." Ironically, apartments near the vanished Wall on the eastern side in Berlin now command very high prices because they didn't suffer the "modernisation" inflicted during the 1960s and 70s on properties in the West. Original features are valuable and, in the old West Berlin, rare. What's more, the date the Wall fell, or at least gave rise to what was described as "the world's biggest street party" is the same date the Nazis commemorated Kristallnacht, the notorious attack on Jewish businesses, homes and synagogues conducted by Nazi paramilitaries throughout the lands they controlled in 1938. For that reason alone, 9 November is not a date that's easy for Germans to celebrate, even now. In addition, they recall that the deaths along the Wall were the result of Germans killing Germans, not a comfortable memory.

Brendan Donnelly, Director of the Federal Trust and a former pro-European Conservative MEP, recalls the policy of Ostpolitik, instigated by then Chancellor Willy Brandt to reach out to the citizens of the DDR and keep them informed about real events their own media wouldn't mention. "I was at the British Embassy in Bonn in the 1970s working on Berlin questions," he says. "I became more and more convinced that the Ostpolitik was not only morally right but also effective in hollowing out from within the rotten East German state. I used to read



East German border guard Conrad Schumann jumps to freedom in West Berlin in 1961

According to former German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, the first few bricks were taken from the Berlin Wall at Sopron, in Hungary. There, the Pan-European Picnic had been organised by Otto von Habsburg, the man who would have become Emperor of Austria Hungary if the First World War had ended differently. It attracted people from all over East Germany and even its neighbouring states, not only Hungary. As the picnic progressed, Hungarian border guards agreed to turn a blind eye as hundreds of picnickers crossed over into Austria. Having campaigned against Hitler from inside Switzerland, and then against the Communists, von Habsburg eventually became a member of the European Parliament for the centre-right

Günter Schabowski, had been absent from most of the meeting when the decision was taken and went to the planned news conference without having been briefed. One journalist asked him when the new relaxed rules would come into effect. In fact, the decision had been to let people apply for the visas straight away with a view to issuing them a little later but instead he replied "immediately, without delay", which launched a rush of East Berliners for the border. As the guards had not received instructions about how to deal with crowds nobody expected, it took them by surprise. After telephoning his superiors for instructions without success and in the face of increasingly angry crowds, the senior guard

Neues Deutschland every day and the contrast between its tired clichés and the Western reporting to which GDR citizens had access through the Ostpolitik was overwhelming.” He thinks the seeds of East Berlin’s destruction as a separate state were sown then. “No regime could ever survive for long such a daily challenge to the lies on which it was constructed from a richer, more numerous, more developed neighbour. I certainly did not foresee the end of the USSR but I never believed the GDR could survive for very long.” Even so, Felix Dane says the final reunification came with a mix of joy and disbelief, because after the fall of the Berlin Wall, unification still had its opponents. The then British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher was not in favour and was not alone in having doubts while there were disagreements about exchanging Ostmarks for Deutsche Marks on a one for one basis, against the advice of the Bundesbank. The decision was political, not economic, and seriously damaged the economy of the old DDR.

CRUMBLING HEROES

In 2011, while working with Deutsche Welle TV, I travelled to Berlin where we filmed a current affairs programme, European Journal, in the deserted Russian enclave of Wünsdorf, about 40 kilometres outside of the city itself, from which any war with the West would have been conducted. It had been the Red Army’s headquarters in Germany and home to some 75,000 men, women and children. It was a sizeable housing complex and a well-supplied barracks, known to Germans living nearby at the time as “Little Moscow”. There was the large concrete bunker that had been the Soviet air force’s air traffic control centre. Back then, it had been packed with computers, screens and many kilometres of cabling. Now it is just a slightly damp old building, crumbling slowly into the ground beside the “village” in which Russian forces had lived. They were not forbidden to interact with ordinary Germans living nearby but contact was limited and, in many ways, unnecessary. The Russians had their own theatre, cinema and shops (goods were cheaper there than in German shops), now covered in graffiti with damp peeling stucco and missing plaster. The nearby flats, built for Russians, were being slowly made habitable once more while we were there, so that they

could provide homes for locals. And there were locals. We had a rather lugubrious guide who had worked as a fixer back when the settlement was still busy with Russian military personnel.

Among the other sites, he took us to the railway station, long disused, whose line ran straight to Moscow. It had been, he told us, a daily service, which took two days to complete. The train didn’t stop along the way. Weeds sprouted from the platform and all along the trackside were young silver birch trees. He pointed them out nostalgically as “proper birch trees,” grown from seeds the train picked up as it ran through Russia. The officers’ “club” at the Russian enclave was the building in which had been lodged the German athletes training for the 1936 Olympics. The building looked a little sad and run-down, but then so did the large but somewhat more recent statue of Lenin outside, a testament to its later occupants. Now they deteriorate together.



BERLIN Wall original piece of the Potsdamer Platz at EU HQ in Brussels

It doesn’t take long for the seemingly immutable present to become the forgotten or misremembered past. All those words of propaganda, uttered to praise one political philosophy and disdain another. It goes on all the time. It still goes on today in the United States, Britain, Poland, Hungary, everywhere. The only memorial to the wall is the small private museum near Checkpoint Charlie, the Mauermuseum (Wall Museum), which was created one year after the Wall went up. It exhibits things connected with it, both tragic and heroic, including objects used in escapes, like the modified Isetta bubble car in which one successful escape was made. And, of course, escapes and attempts at escape went on, despite the terrible risks. Martin Bond remembers: “A high point. Attending the West Berlin premiere of the Balloon escape film and meeting the families who got away by sailing over the obstacle at 2,500 meters. Winning was what mattered, my job was to broadcast back to the DDR when we had a good story like that.” Tiny parts of the Berlin Wall have been turned into fridge magnets (I have one on my fridge) and whole sections of the wall have been exported as symbols of the fight for human rights and against tyranny. Two adjacent sections stand outside the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg, a memorial to what can happen when those in power consider human rights unimportant.

Those pressing for new walls, or taking decisions that make more walls inevitable, would be well advised to look at Berlin. A bustling city today - one of my personal favourite cities in the world - but still haunted by the memories of thirty and more years ago. “Full unification will take two to three generations,” Dane believes, “It can’t be done in ten years.”

There is an old saying that good fences make good neighbours, but they don’t when they divide people from their families, friends and the places in which they grew up and went to school, or from a better future for their kids. They merely help to ensure that the affection and friendship that preceded the construction are never quite as close or amicable afterwards. President Reagan, in his 1987 speech in Berlin, said “Tear down this wall”, but today’s would-be wall-builders should note the underlying message: it would have been far better if it had never been built.

Jim Gibbons



NORWAY VIOLATED MOTHER'S RIGHTS THROUGH FORCED ADOPTION

Lack of Norwegian court oversight allows the removal of a child from its mother

Lack of Norwegian court oversight allows the removal of a child from its mother

At what point does the removal of a child from their parent become necessary, and what is the best way to go about this? When is it ever okay to remove a mother's parental authority in order to allow a child to be adopted without her consent?

These are some of the questions at the very heart of *Strand Lobben and Others v. Norway*, a case recently ruled upon by the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR). The applicants - Ms. Strand Lobben and her son, named in court documents as 'X' - challenged a series of legal decisions by both the ECHR and her native Norwegian court system concerning the non-consensual adoption of X by his foster parents. Specifically, the argument presented in this latest case was that a lack of oversight and a series of shortcomings in the decision-making process had led to the removal of her parental rights and authority.

Cases that make it all the way to the Grand Chamber of the ECHR are unlikely to be so clearcut, of course, and *Strand Lobben and Others v. Norway* is no different.

THE FACTS OF THE CASE

Born in 1986, Ms Strand Lobben fell pregnant with X in 2007. After facing a series of difficulties - a difficult relationship with the child's father, a brain injury, and with no permanent home - she applied for an abortion at six months, but was denied. This is the first time she came into contact with the welfare system.

She gave birth and, still without a permanent home, was admitted to a mother and care unit voluntarily. During her stay, it was noted that she had to be constantly reminded to feed X. She seemed, according to court documents, to be unable to care for her child on her own, and when she insisted on leaving the facility with X in tow, staff were concerned. According to court documents, medical staff

were concerned that X wasn't "receiving enough food to survive." He "was not gaining sufficient weight and lacked energy," and was suffering from a severe eye infection. He was also considered to have special needs, and she appeared uninterested in learning how best to care for these. Instead, "she continued to focus on herself."

More concerning, however, was the mother's inability - or unwillingness - to cooperate with staff. Though all nappy changes and feedings were to be reported, she did not. Even more alarming was that the mother often needed to be not only reminded, but pressured into feeding X, despite being told that he was not developing as usual.

Faced with a situation that required obvious and immediate intervention, the County Social Welfare Board (*Barnevernet*, literally "child protection") temporarily approved an order for emergency foster care, which was subsequently appealed by Ms Strand Lobben. The appeal was rejected. Ms Strand Lobben then appealed this decision to the

City Court. It was also rejected, on the grounds that X “had shown clear signs of neglect, both psychologically and physically.” X was, at the time of its judgment, “in better health and showed normal development,” and it ruled that “this was due to the emergency foster parents’ efforts and follow-up.”

In the years following, a series of appeal decisions (and then even more appeals, by both the mother and the local courts) clouded the issue further. As is necessary in an appellate court, rather than focusing primarily on the best interests of the child, it became a question of technicality. Had the appropriate courses of action been taken in order to justify such an extreme strategy by the Norwegian state? And where should the balance of interests lie: with the child alone, or with both the mother and child?

X’S CONTINUED (HEALTHY) DEVELOPMENT

Throughout these legal challenges which, by now, had taken years, X continued to live with his foster parents and was developing at the normal rate for a child his age.

Though Ms Strand Lobben had been

granted a series of contact hours under supervision, court documents outlined the observations of court-appointed psychologists: her ability to care for her son, despite the passing years, had not improved, and she continued to appear to have ‘inadequate basic parenting skills.’ She was argumentative and resentful of supervising staff as well as the foster family, convinced that she was the subject of a conspiracy against her.

However, as the case progressed, another challenge presented itself. Now three years old, X had developed a particularly strong relationship with not only his foster parents and brother, but his extended foster family. The question then became: should the appeals be granted in favour of his mother, would it be healthy and appropriate to remove him from what had been his home for his entire life?

Psychologists appointed by the court opined that it would, in fact, result in serious, long-term harm for X, who would likely mourn the loss. Considering this, and the seeming inability of Ms Strand Lobben and her parents to not only empathise with the young boy, the Board ruled that X’s foster family be able to adopt him, and any and all parental rights of Ms Strand Lobben be removed.

It was at this point that Ms Strand Lobben took the case to the ECHR.

FACING THE EUROPEAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS

The case of Strand Lobben and Others v. Norway finally came to a close on 10 September 2019. The Grand Chamber - the highest chamber within the ECHR - ruled that under Article 8 of the European Convention of Human Rights, Ms Strand Lobben’s rights had been violated.

Article 8 provides “a right to respect for his private and family life, his home, and his correspondence.” It is the most broad of the articles ; that is, it is not well-defined and can thus be widely interpreted. This may well have been deliberate ; the more one defines legal provisions, the more restrictive and specific it becomes. This is both a positive and a negative: it can be widely interpreted and applied by the courts in many different situations.

However, it’s the second part of the Article that is perhaps of more interest. It limits one’s right to privacy, stating that “there shall be no interference by a public authority,” except in instances of, among others“.

PORTUGAL CONVICTED OF VIOLATING FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Are politicians exempt from criticism in the media? The ECHR doesn’t think so

The right of citizens to be critical of the State and its government is an important one, and it’s a right that has been put in the spotlight by a recent ruling by the European Court of Human Rights (ECHR) in the case Antunes Emídio and Soares Gomes da Cruz v. Portugal.

After being convicted and fined for defamation in two separate cases, Joaquim António Antunes Emídio and Dr Luís Manuel Soares Gomes da Cruz, applied for their cases to be seen by the ECHR. Their applications argued that their convictions constituted a violation of their freedom of expression.

At the heart of both cases is a delicate balance: does the right to one’s freedom of expression outweigh the protection of one’s reputation?

A JOURNALIST’S RIGHT TO CRITICISE

When journalist Antunes Emídio wrote an opinion article in March 2011 for O

Mirante, a regional weekly newspaper, titled “Only Chickens Were Left,” he was heaping criticism upon Portugal’s political class. In it, he mentioned in particular Rui Barreiro, the then State Secretary for Agriculture, Forests, and Development, writing “...he is the most idiotic politician I know... It is known for certain that one day he will be Minister of Finance, or

Education, or Justice of some government, trusting the apparatus of the Socialist Party, where it seems that all the good people have gone on holiday and only the chickens were left...”

Following the publication of the article, Barreiro filed a criminal complaint against Antunes Emídio, and in July 2012, the journalist was convicted of aggravated defamation under Articles 180 and 184 of Portugal’s Criminal Code. Interestingly, the judgment by Santarém Criminal Court found that the statements made by Antunes Emídio were value judgments and, having no connection with Barreiro’s conduct as State Secretary, “went beyond what could have been considered objective criticism.”

The conviction was subsequently upheld by the Évora Court of Appeal in May 2013, further commenting that as the journalist’s use of the word ‘idiotic’ was not followed by any further clarification or examples, his use of it was not justified. He was ordered to pay a fine of 2,500€, and a further 2,500€ in compensation to Barreiro.



Joaquim António Antunes Emídio

A DOCTOR'S RIGHT TO COMMENT

Around the same time as the case against the journalist, as a doctor and managing director for the oldest clinic in Lourinhã (a district of Lisbon) providing occupational health services, it was Dr Soares Gomes da Cruz's job to apply for the clinic's accreditation to the Portugal's Authority for Working Conditions. Lodged in 2000, the Clinic continued operations pending the outcome of the application, providing care to the local community. It was granted in 2010.

But in 2009, the Lourinhã Town Council set up their own occupational health service, holding negotiations with three local service providers. Dr Soares Gomes da Cruz's clinic was not among them.

The Mayor of Lourinhã explained that the reason Dr Soares Gomes da Cruz's clinic was not included in the initial negotiations was due to its lack of accreditation. This reasoning, however, was a bit strange; other companies included in the negotiations were similarly unaccredited. For this reason - inadequate to Dr Soares Gomes da Cruz - the doctor published 'An Open Letter to Lourinhã Town Council' in the local newspaper Frente Oeste. In it, he accused the Mayor of corruption, saying

"... The reason for this letter lies in the huge anger (revolta) aroused by this total lack of honesty and seriousness and this cowardice on the part of the mayor. ... The Town Council operates like a hunting ground where hunting is only allowed for those whom the mayor wants ... This letter has nothing to do with politics, but with his lack of character and honesty and his cowardice, which I will publicly fight against... The citizens of Lourinhã missed a great opportunity to be happy when they did not elect ... - a true leader, with integrity, not subject to influence-peddling that is harmful for Lourinhã."

A week and a half later, Dr Soares Gomes da Cruz printed leaflets and handed them out at the local town hall, this time stating *"... The mayor is not worthy, nor does he deserve to be the highest representative of the citizens of Lourinhã, since he rarely defends the community's legitimate interests; on the contrary, he invests in local tribal chiefs in exchange for a lentil dish... It just so happens that the mayor, contrary to what he thinks and is told by his sycophants, is not loved among the serious and honest citizens of Lourinhã, but since most people are humble and poor, unfortunately you can mislead them with five cents' worth of strained honey!"*

It's time that you were properly reported, unmasked, in a loyal and honest way, for your cowardice and dishonesty which

you have displayed throughout your previous terms of office! But do we deserve such a cruel punishment? To have such an ungrateful and incompetent mayor?"

Criminal proceedings began following the lodgment of a civil suit by the Mayor and the Lourinhã Town Council, and in February 2013, Dr Soares Gomes da Cruz was convicted on two counts of libel through the media, and one count of insulting a legal entity. He was fined 27,000€ and ordered to pay 6,000€ in damages to the Mayor.

A DELICATE BALANCING ACT

What is in question in both cases is the extent of the right to freedom of expression. How do you balance one's right to freely express criticism, their opinion, or share ideas and information with the right to respect for private life and reputation, particularly when it comes to the political class? These are both rights that are enshrined and enforced by the Convention of Human Rights by the ECHR under Article 10 and Article 8, respectively.

Article 10's wording is very specific:

"Everyone has the right to freedom of expression... without interference by public authority... The exercise of these freedoms, since it carries with it duties and responsibilities, may be subject to such formalities, conditions, restrictions, or penalties as are prescribed by law and are necessary in a democratic society... [and] for the protection of the reputation or rights of others..."

As is the wording of Article 8:

"Everyone has the right to respect for his private and family life, his home and his correspondence. There shall be no interference by a public authority with the exercise of this right except such as is in accordance with the law and is necessary in a democratic society... for the protection of health or morals, or for the protection of the rights and freedoms of others."

So in order to balance the protection of Article 8 with those encompassed by Article 10, the Court asked whether the

"assertions contributed to a debate of general interest; how well known the person concerned was and the subject of the report; the prior conduct of the person concerned; the method of obtaining the information and its veracity; the content, form and consequences of the publication; and, lastly, the severity of the sanction imposed."

As both cases involved statements against political figures, the Court noted that these statements should command a high level of protection under Article 10, which does not make any mention of limits on political speech - except those that are 'necessary in a democratic society.'

Which begs the question: were those statements necessary for the democratic functioning of Portuguese society?

THE RIGHT TO FREEDOM OF EXPRESSION

Again, in both cases, the Court reasoned that yes, the statements made by both journalist and doctor were "clearly of general and public interest."

With the scales tipping in favour of freedom of speech, the Court found that the Portuguese courts had violated Article 10 in both situations. It condemned Portuguese domestic courts, saying that matters of general and public interest "should have been accorded a high level of protection".

Another issue raised by the court was the matter of journalistic freedoms. As a journalist, Antunes Emídio should have been afforded the journalistic freedom to criticise "to a degree of exaggeration, or even provocation," according to ECHR case law.

Interestingly, as both politicians were public figures, the Court further mentioned that the level of their celebrity "influences the protection that may be afforded to his or her private life."

CONSEQUENCES OF THE ECHR'S RULING

It takes strong reasoning for the ECHR to substitute their ruling for a sovereign state's own findings. And yet, in the case of Antunes Emídio and Soares Gomes da Cruz, it found sufficient justification to do so. The violation of Article 10 - as well as the disproportionate punishment of the crimes for which they were convicted - led to the overturning of the penalties imposed by the Portuguese Criminal Court. The Portuguese Government was ordered to repay the fines both men had paid in damages plus domestic court costs.

But perhaps more importantly is the extension of the rights of freedom of expression in Europe. The phrase "you are the most idiotic politician I know" is now protected under Article 10 as freedom of speech. As far as political criticism goes, it's an important protection indeed

Chloé Braithwaite



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Swift action needed against increased money laundering and terrorist financing risks says MONEYVAL

In its annual report for 2018, the Council of Europe anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing body MONEYVAL calls on states to ensure that they have appropriate measures in place to combat “dirty money”.

The impact by economic crime, organised criminal groups and terrorism continued to be felt in Europe and other parts of the world during 2018. In the report, the Chair of MONEYVAL, Elzbieta Frankow-Jaskiewicz, underlines that, in light of the increased risks, it is urgent that countries and territories in Europe and beyond apply robust measures against money laundering and terrorist financing.

The Chair highlights a number of initiatives that MONEYVAL carried out in 2018 to address several pressing challenges. These include the need to raise the awareness and effectiveness of prosecutors and judges in the repression of money laundering, associated offences and terrorist financ-

ing; as well as to step up efforts to combat the financial flows associated with slavery, human trafficking and forced labour.

Another priority for MONEYVAL is tackling the negative consequences of the so-called “de-risking”, a phenomenon by which in recent years global banks have cut business relationships with foreign banks to avoid (rather than to manage) possible money laundering and terrorist financing risks. Consequently, the money laundering and terrorist financing risks have increased in certain countries.

In 2018 MONEYVAL continued its role as an international player in the global network of anti-money laundering and counter-terrorist financing bodies led by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF). The Committee actively monitored 24 countries and territories through the adoption of mutual evaluation reports or follow-up reports.

Malta should step up its efforts to investigate and prosecute money laundering as well as to strengthen its supervisory system

In another report, the Council of Europe’s anti-money laundering body MONEYVAL calls on the Maltese authorities to strengthen their practical application of their measures to combat money laundering and financing of terrorism

The report makes a comprehensive assessment of the effectiveness of Malta’s anti money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism system and its level of compliance with the Recommendations by the Financial Action Task Force (FATF).

MONEYVAL acknowledges that the authorities have demonstrated a broad understanding of the vulnerabilities within the system, but a number of important factors - notably predicate offences, financing of terrorism, legal persons and

arrangements, the development of new technologies and the use of cash - appear to be insufficiently analysed or understood.

The Financial Intelligence Analysis Unit is considered to be an important source of financial intelligence for the Police in Malta. However, only in a limited number of cases are the disseminations used to develop evidence and trace criminal proceeds related to money laundering and terrorism financing.

The report considers that money laundering is mainly investigated together with the predicate offence on which the investigation is centred. Limited resources, both human and financial, weigh negatively on Malta's capability to effectively pursue this offence. Investigations and prosecutions do not appear to be in line with the country's risk profile. The report expresses concerns that the law enforcement authorities are currently not in a position to effectively and in a timely manner pursue high-level and complex money laundering cases related to financial, bribery and corruption offences. Fundamental improvements are also needed with regard to the confiscation of proceeds of crime from money laundering and associated predicate offences.

While Malta has a sound legal framework to fight the financing of terrorism, the report notes that few investigations have been conducted so far which have not resulted in any prosecutions or convictions. While noting recent progress, the report concludes that the actions undertaken by the authorities are not fully in line with the country's exposure to possible terrorism financing risks.

Through a combination of supranational and national mechanisms, Malta ensures the implementation of the United Nations targeted financial sanctions regimes on terrorist financing and the financing of proliferation of weapons of mass destruction without delay. Overall, the authorities could demonstrate a competency in co-ordinating their activities with respect to implementation of various targeted financial sanctions' regimes.



Council of Europe

The report concluded that obligations are being effectively implemented by financial institutions and designated non-financial businesses and professions (DNFBPs) to some extent, with major improvements needed. It considers that the appreciation of money laundering and financing of terrorism risks is varied across the sectors. Banks and casinos demonstrated a good understanding of risks and an adequate application of preventive measures, but some non-bank financial institutions and other DNFBPs were unable to clearly articulate how money laundering might occur within their institution or field of activity. Consequently, a low level of reporting of suspicious transactions remains a concern in some sectors.

MONEYVAL noted that supervisory authorities do not have adequate resources to conduct risk-based supervision, for the size, complexity and risk profile of the country's private sector. There are weaknesses identified with respect to the appropriate consideration of the wider money laundering and terrorist financing risks at the market entry stage, the adequacy of fit and proper measures for certain types of DNFBPs and the lack of a coherent and comprehensive graduated risk-based supervisory model. Sanctions for non-compliance with anti-money laundering and countering the financing of terrorism requirements are not considered effective, proportionate and dissuasive.

Malta is lacking an in-depth analysis of how all types of legal persons and legal arrangements can be misused for money laundering and financing of terrorism purposes. There are shortcomings in a multi-pronged approach to obtaining beneficial ownership information. Considering the nature and scale of business undertaken in Malta, the fines for failing to submit beneficial ownership information on legal persons are not effective, dissuasive and proportionate.

Finally, the report notes that Maltese legislation sets out a comprehensive framework for international co-operation, which enables the authorities to provide assistance with a general positive feedback.

Based on the results of its evaluation, MONEYVAL decided to apply its enhanced follow-up procedure and invited Malta to report back in December 2021.

The Committee of Experts on the Evaluation of Anti-Money Laundering Measures and the Financing of Terrorism (MONEYVAL) is a monitoring body of the Council of Europe entrusted with the task of assessing compliance with the principal international standards to counter money laundering and the financing of terrorism and the effectiveness of their implementation, as well as with the task of making recommendations to national authorities in respect of necessary improvements to their systems.

Source COE

UNITED KINGDOM

The Ministry of Defence intends to place a £10M contract to develop hypersonic propulsion systems for increased aircraft performance and capability

Defence Equipment and Support's Technology Office intends to place a circa 2-year, single sourced contract, of approximate value £10M, for a UK programme to undertake design studies, research, development, analysis and experimentation relating to high-Mach advanced propulsion systems. The contract will be with Rolls-Royce Plc, (RR) and its technology partners, BAE Systems and Reaction Engines and will focus on enabling technologies for increased aircraft performance and capability

Speaking at the 2019 Air and Space Power Conference, the UK's Chief of the Air Staff, Air Chief Marshal Sir Stephen Hillier, said:

"As part of the technologies being developed in parallel with Project Tempest, I am delighted to reveal that in concert with Rolls-Royce, Reaction Engines and BAE Systems, we are developing hypersonic propulsion systems, which will be designed and tested over the next 2 years, paving the way for the UK to become a centre of excellence in this technology and contribute to meeting future UK Defence needs."

A joint industry statement by Rolls-Royce, Reaction Engines and BAE Systems welcomed the initiative:

"By bringing together acknowledged aerospace innovation capability from British companies, Rolls-Royce, Reaction Engines and BAE Systems, critical high Mach propulsion technology elements will be developed over the next 2 years, paving the way for a UK centre of excellence in this technology and contributing to meeting UK MOD future defence needs."

"This work highlights the importance of collaboration with our partners and will allow us to focus on developing innovative technologies for increased aircraft performance and capability."

High-Mach, or hypersonic, air systems are of growing world-wide interest for a variety of defence and security applications. The extra speed developed enables new capabilities, including: decreased time to target; improved penetration in contested environments; and the ability to access previously unreachable areas.

For a range of defence uses, speeds over Mach 4 are desirable and the ability to bridge the gap between required aircraft speed and propulsion system capability is a key enabler. This programme will address this capability gap by developing a variety of technological options and solutions



© BAE



© MOD

Air Marshal Stephen Hillier



EUROPOL DISMANTLING ILLEGAL ADOPTIONS

66 suspected of arranging illegal adoptions, surrogacies and human egg trafficking in Greece

On 23 September 2019, Greek law enforcement authorities, supported by Europol, dismantled an organised crime group involved in the trafficking of human beings (selling ova), illegal adoption and money laundering.

€25 000 TO €28 000 PER ILLEGAL ADOPTION

Active since 2016, the criminal network recruited vulnerable pregnant women from Bulgaria. The group transported them to Thessaloniki, Greece where they were placed under medical observation and sent to private hospitals to deliver their children. The newborns were then illegally adopted for between €25 000 and €28 000 each. The fees included paying the biological mother, all legal expenses, hospitalisation, delivery itself and the members of the criminal group. Some of the mothers brought to Greece were also used as surrogates.

The same criminal group was also involved in ovum trafficking. The criminals recruited donors in Greece,

mainly from Bulgaria, Georgia and Russia. The women were then transferred to Thessaloniki to undergo a series of fertility treatments to increase the number of ova.

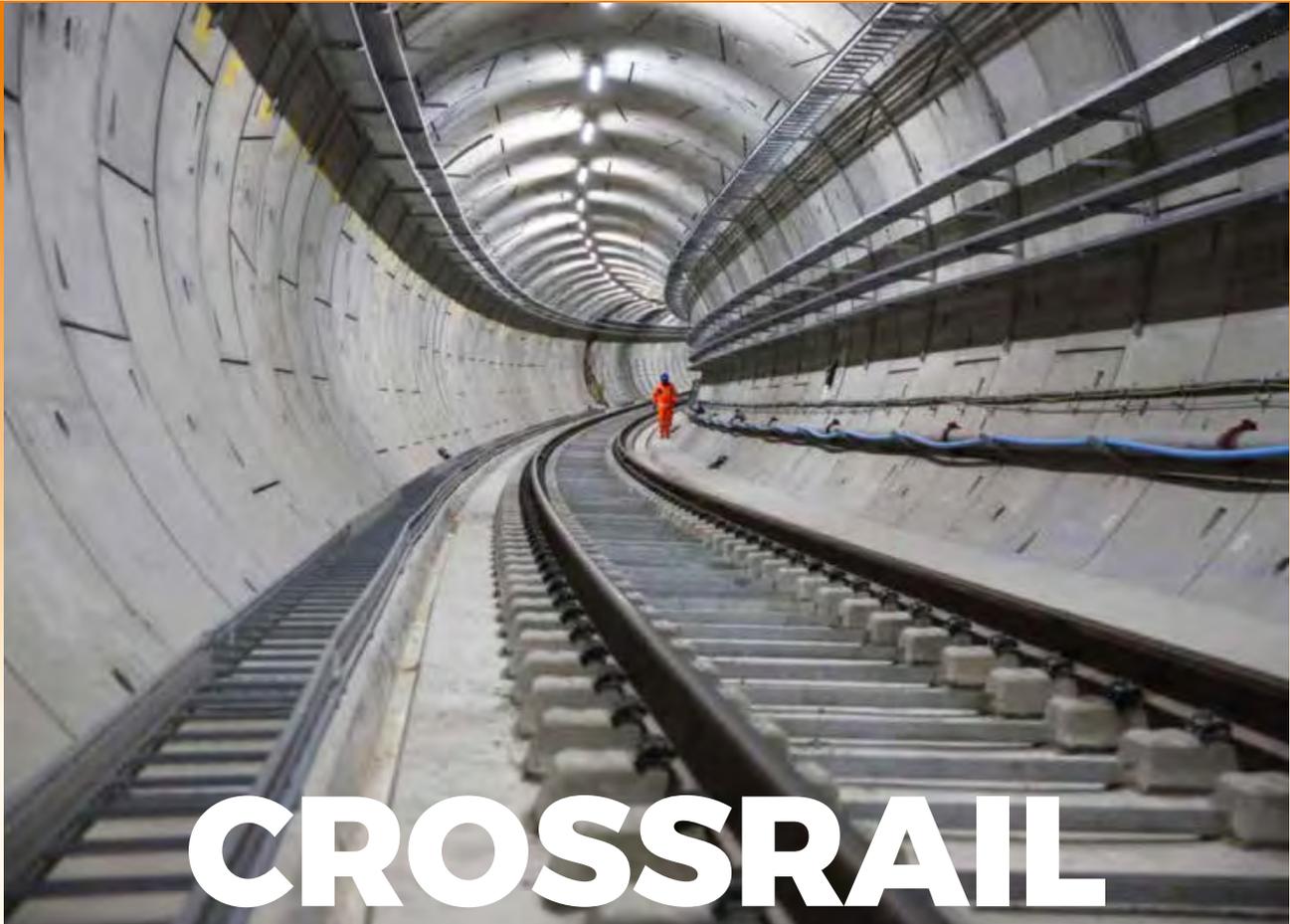
AT LEAST HALF A MILLION EUROS IN PROFIT

During the action day, officers from the Hellenic Police conducted 12 house searches and arrested 12 individuals suspected of belonging to a criminal group. The investigation led to the identification of 10 more members of the criminal organisation. In total, the case involved 66 individuals, including a lawyer, an obstetrician-gynaecologist and employees of private clinics. Officers seized €13 000 in cash, three cars, mobile phones and electronic devices, various documents

related to adoption and surrogate procedures, birth certificates and bank statements.

It is estimated that the criminal activity generated at least €500 000. The money was laundered through financial institutions, luxury goods and properties. Europol conducted operational and financial analysis, which confirmed the involvement of individuals and corroborated other evidence collected in the investigation.

Europol supported the investigation since the early stages by facilitating secure information exchange, providing operational and analytical support, and intelligence and financing one operational meeting. One Europol expert was also deployed in Greece on the action day to perform live cross-checks of operational data against Europol's databases.



CROSSRAIL

Europe's Biggest Railway Infrastructure Project

Crossrail is the biggest railway infrastructure project in Europe and is one of the largest single investments undertaken in the UK. The Crossrail project is delivering the Elizabeth line.

Since the construction of the new railway began in 2009, over 15,000 men and women have worked on the project and over 120 million working hours have been completed. Over 1,000 apprenticeships have also been delivered by the Crossrail programme.

Testing of new trains and infrastructure is underway and continues alongside the remaining fit-out of the stations.

All of the permanent track has been installed and the new Elizabeth line trains are currently being tested using the line's new automatic train control system which operates in the central section of the route.

Crossrail started testing the new railway in 2018 to verify the design and installation of the railway systems match the requirements of the Elizabeth line. Crossrail expects to trial run the trains over many thousands of miles on the completed railway to ensure the highest levels of safety and reliability when passenger service begins.

Testing of the railway remains ongoing and Crossrail expects that commissioning will conclude at the end of 2020 before opening the central section of the Elizabeth line.

The Crossrail project is delivering new stations at Paddington, Bond Street, Tottenham Court Road, Farringdon, Liverpool Street, Whitechapel, Canary Wharf, Custom House, Woolwich and Abbey Wood.



WHI station

Each of the ten new stations will have its own, distinct character, conceived by different architects, which reflect the environment and heritage of the local area. However, at platform level, common design components such as seating, signage and full-height platform screen doors will create a consistent and familiar feel to the rest of the Transport for London (TfL) network



© Crossrail

A dedicated team of engineers has worked around the clock to install tunnel ventilation, power, signaling, communications and overhead line equipment.

Crossrail expects that the remaining fit-out and systems installation in the stations and tunnels will be completed at the end of 2019. This will allow the new stations and rail infrastructure to be integrated with the rest of the railway.

More than 50km of new, permanent track has been installed between Westbourne Park in west London and through to Plumstead and Pudding Mill Lane in the east. Having started track installation in 2015, the final section of track was completed in the eastbound tunnel of the new Whitechapel station in July 2017.

The majority of the track in the central section is formed from standard track slab. This connects with the other track forms that will be used at specific locations.

Around three quarters of the route will run above ground on the existing rail network in outer London, Berkshire and Essex.

Network Rail is delivering this part of the Crossrail programme to add capacity, improve reliability, upgrade stations and electrify sections of the Great Western Main Line



© Crossrail

Romford Control Centre

ELIZABETH LINE

Crossrail (to be known officially as the **Elizabeth line**) is a 73-mile (117-kilometres) railway line under development in England that crosses London from east to west. At each end of the central core, the line will divide into two branches: in the west to Reading and stations at Heathrow Airport, and in the east to Abbey Wood and Shenfield. In May 2015, a section of one of the eastern branches, between Liverpool Street and Shenfield, was transferred to TfL Rail; this precursor service also took control of Heathrow Connect in May 2018.

The project was approved in 2007 and construction began in 2009 on the central section and connections to existing lines that will become part of the route. A main feature is 13 miles (21 km) of twin tunnels below the city running from Paddington to Stratford and Canary Wharf. An almost entirely new line will branch from the main line at Whitechapel to Canary Wharf in part under the River Thames with a new station at Woolwich and connecting with the North Kent Line at Abbey Wood.

New nine-carriage Class 345 trains will run at frequencies in the central section of up to 24 trains per hour in each direction. It is expected to relieve pressure on existing east-west London Underground lines such as the Central and District lines, as well as the Jubilee line extension and the Heathrow branch of the Piccadilly line. Crossrail will be operated by MTR Corporation (Crossrail) Ltd as a London Rail concession of Transport for London, in a similar manner to London Overground. TfL's annual ticket revenues for the project were forecast in 2017 to exceed £800 million per year in 2020/21 and over £900 million per year from 2022/23.

Crossrail was originally estimated to cost £15.4 billion and open in December 2018. However, in 2018 it was announced that the project would require a further £1.4 billion and open in late 2020 or early 2021. In 2019, the estimated cost rose to £17.6 billion.

Source : WIKIPEDIA



© Equinor

EQUINOR

The Norwegian government enterprise Enova supports Equinor's pilot project for floating offshore wind

The state's decision to support Hywind Tampen through Enova represents a contribution toward demonstrating a technology that can cut greenhouse gas emissions, and has a potential for global proliferation.

“The development of floating offshore wind is an important milestone for Norway, and for the world. This is an industry where Norwegian business and industrial companies along with expertise and technology communities have an opportunity to be at the international forefront. That can contribute to more profitable jobs, new industry and increased value creation all across the country,” says Prime Minister Erna Solberg.

Floating offshore wind could become an enormous energy resource if we succeed in reducing costs, which would help floating wind become competitive with other energy sources in a long-term perspective. The state's decision to support Hywind Tampen through

Enova represents a contribution toward demonstrating a technology that can cut greenhouse gas emissions, and has a potential for global proliferation. This pledge of support is the largest ever granted from Enova.

“If we can curb the costs associated with floating offshore wind, the technology could be applied in many countries, thus reducing global greenhouse gas emissions. The state is an important advocate when the business community develops new climate technology. That is why the government has substantially increased budget appropriations to Enova since 2013. That has given them the financial muscle to support projects of this scope,” says Minister of Climate and Environment Ola Elvestuen.



Erna Solberg



© Equinor

Pål Eitrheim, executive vice president for New Energy Solutions in Equinor. The state's decision to support Hywind Tampen through Enova represents a contribution toward demonstrating a technology that can cut greenhouse gas emissions, and has a potential for global proliferation

The floating offshore wind park that Equinor and the other licensees on the Gullfaks and Snorre fields want to establish will consist of a total of 11 floating wind turbines, of 8 MW each. The turbines will produce 384 GWh of renewable power annually, which will replace one-third of the current power requirement on these platforms. The project will thus also contribute to reducing CO₂ emissions by approx. 200,000 tonnes every year the platforms are in operation. Nevertheless, the emission cuts are not the primary reason for Enova's support for this project.

“For us, this funding is about bringing floating offshore wind one step closer to commercialisation, and all the positive ripple effects this could have both for the global climate challenge and Norwegian business and industry, for a very long time to come. This is precisely the type of initiative Enova must support to fulfil our role as a driving force in this transition,” says Enova's CEO, Nils Kristian Nakstad.

Floating offshore wind has an advantage over bottom-fixed solutions as the technology can be used in deeper waters. Nevertheless, the world has just one floating offshore wind farm, namely Hywind Scotland, developed and operated by Equinor. This wind farm consists of five wind turbines

of 6 MW each. While bottom-fixed offshore wind has experienced rapid development and is in the process of becoming competitive, more progress is needed before floating offshore wind is profitable.

While Enova has now given a funding commitment of NOK 2 329 800 000 for the project, there are still some hurdles to pass before the project is realised. Equinor and its partners must make a final investment decision, and EFTA's supervisory body ESA must approve the grant. A change in the power supply on Snorre and Gullfaks requires an investment decision by the licensees, and that the authorities then also approve an amended Plan for Development and Operation (PDO) pursuant to the (Norwegian) Petroleum Act. Part of this process will involve an assessment of considerations relating to the natural environment and aquaculture, including impact on fishery activities. If all goes according to plan, the wind farm will commence operation during the course of 2022.

Equinor and its partners are considering the possibility of supplying electricity from a floating offshore wind farm to the Gullfaks and Snorre fields. Today the licences received confirmation that the Hywind Tampen project has been granted funding of up to NOK 2.3 billion

from Enova's programme for full-scale innovative energy and climate measures.

“The support that the licences have received for the Hywind Tampen project demonstrates the will of Norwegian authorities to invest in and develop floating offshore wind farms and renewable energy supplies. With this support we have taken an important step forward in realising the project. Now it is up to the licences to further mature the project towards a final investment decision this autumn,” says Pål Eitrheim, executive vice president for New Energy Solutions in Equinor.

Earlier the Business Sector's NOx Fund decided to support the Hywind Tampen project by an investment grant of up to NOK 566 million.

“The Hywind Tampen project will contribute to further developing floating offshore wind technology and reducing the costs of future floating offshore wind farms, offering new industrial opportunities for Norway, the licences and Norwegian supplier industry in a growing global offshore wind market,” says Olav-Bernt Haga, project director for Hywind Tampen.

Hywind Tampen may be the first project in the world for supplying electricity generated by floating offshore wind turbines to oil and gas platforms. The project will ensure profitable oil and gas production from the Snorre and Gullfaks fields with low CO₂ emissions. The project may reduce CO₂ emissions by more than 200,000 tonnes per year, equivalent to emissions from 100,000 private cars.

The Hywind Tampen offshore wind farm will consist of 11 wind turbines with a total capacity of 88 MW. The wind farm will be able to meet around 35% of the annual demand for electricity of the five platforms: Snorre A and B and Gullfaks A, B and C. In periods of strong wind, the percentage will be much higher.

The seven partners in the Snorre and Gullfaks licences are planning to make a possible investment decision for the Hywind Tampen project during the autumn of 2019.



GENOVA

*The New Bridge on the Polcevera is now visible.
The President of the Council of Ministers, Conte,
inaugurates the first section of the deck*

The Spazio Ponte, the infopoint available to the city to follow the progress of work, has been inaugurated at the Porto Antico.

On October 1 2019 at 10:10 a.m., two huge cranes, already used to dismantle the Morandi Bridge, lifted on Piers 5 and 6 the first span of the new viaduct, 50 meters long and with a weight of 500 tonnes, about 50 meters above the ground.

This is the first part of the deck to appear on the Valpolcevera skyline, and will constitute – together with the other 18 that will be lifted in the coming months – the new bridge built by Salini Impregilo and Fincantieri Infrastructure (a Fincantieri Group company) through PERGENOVA.

The event was held in the presence of the President of the Council of Ministers, Giuseppe Conte, the Minister of Infrastructure and Transport,

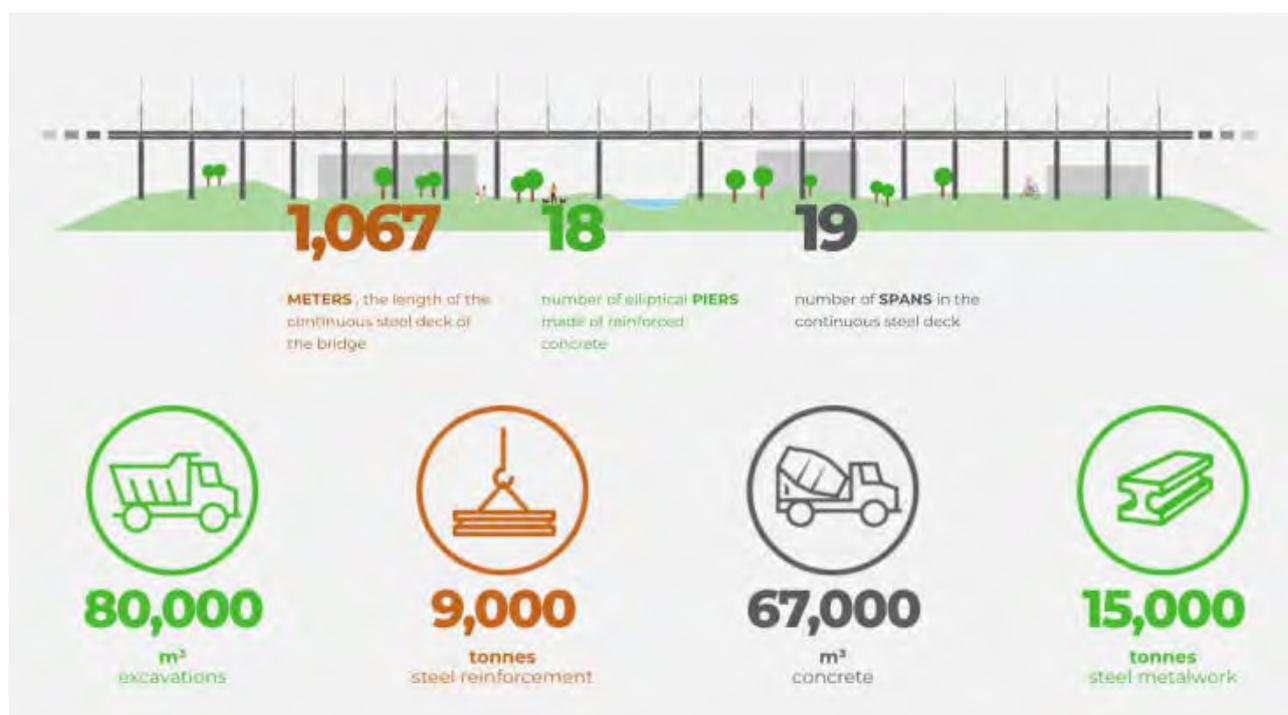
Paola De Micheli, the Commissioner responsible for the Emergency of Ponte Morandi and Governor of the Liguria Region, Giovanni Toti, as well as the Extraordinary Commissioner for Reconstruction and Mayor of Genoa, Marco Bucci, the President of Fincantieri Giampiero Massolo and the CEO of the company, Giuseppe Bono. The architect and life senator Renzo Piano, who signed the project of the work, and the Metropolitan Archbishop Cardinal Angelo Bagnasco also took part in the event.

A ceremony of high symbolic value, as it combined the memory of the tragedy which happened on 14 August 2018, when 43 people lost their lives due to the collapse of the Morandi bridge, to the image of the new bridge

currently being built, increasingly seen as an opportunity for relaunch, not only for Genoa but for the whole of Italy.



Collapsed Morandi Bridge



“We have kept a promise made less than twelve months ago,” says Giuseppe Bono, CEO of Fincantieri. “That is, to work well, and to work quickly. We have made it as an act of gratitude for a city we consider home, we are a Genoese company, and we have this land in our DNA. However, the entire Italy is working on this bridge, with steel coming from our sites, from Veneto to Campania, with over 1,000 people including technicians, engineers and workers from all over the country, a single great team that shares successes from North to South and overcomes challenges together. The aim is to return a strategic infrastructure to the city and the Country in record time. We like to think that this first span symbolically traces the path to follow, that is, to go on showing that great works can be built well even in Italy, especially when the productive forces of this country work together combining unique know-how and experimenting with innovative models of collaboration between companies and the institutions.”

“We are dealing with a highly symbolic work,” Pietro Salini continues, “produced by a spirit of collective initiative, an experience of collaboration that from today we would like to call ‘Cantiere Italia’, as we would like to consider it as a model to be exported to the rest of the Country, to have its infrastructures restarted. This

is considered the country of blocked construction sites, we have 36 billion euros in works blocked in Italy – this means having jobs, development, growth of young people blocked as well. Yet, this work shows that infrastructures can be built in Italy. And that they can be done quickly and transparently, while maintaining a very high quality standard. Therefore, Genoa has become a symbol and a precedent for the rest of the country. What we are going to build,” Mr. Salini continued, “is a hyper-technological bridge, sustainable because it is able to power itself, safe, delivered to the citizens in record time, and built in the first totally transparent construction site in the world, with webcams active 24 hours a day, seven days a week. A construction site that we have decided to open to children, with visits from primary and secondary schools in Genoa, and to the citizens as well: thanks to the Spazio Ponte, a permanent exhibition set up in the Porto Antico, they will in fact be able to participate in the construction of this beautiful infrastructure.

” The day was also the occasion for the inauguration of the Spazio Ponte in the old heart of Genoa, at Porta Siberia, Porto Antico. A meeting and information point dedicated to the new bridge, where it is possible to learn the technical characteristics of the work, admire the model tested in the wind

tunnel, measure oneself against digital reconstructions of the infrastructure, practice in the laboratories, immerse oneself in the construction site following the images taken from the drones, discover how to build a bridge. The Spazio Ponte is a place open to the public and to anyone who wants to learn more about the work, another door to enter the site, but also a space for collaboration between citizens and the administration, for the exchange of ideas in meetings where it is possible to share the future of sustainable infrastructure and mobility.”



DESCRIPTION

The new bridge will have a continuous steel deck measuring **1067 metres totally**, with **19 spans**, divided as follows:

14 spans

of steel-concrete, measuring 50 metres



3 spans

of steel-concrete, measuring 100 metres



1 span

in steel-concrete measuring 40.9 metres near the Eastern side



1 span

in steel-concrete measuring 26.27 metres near the Eastern side

The bridge will be supported by **18 elliptical-section**, constant-shape reinforced concrete Piers.

The external dimensions of the Piers (9.50 x 4.00 metres) are the same for both the 50 and 100 metre spans, in order to guarantee the uniformity of the perspective of the work and the speed of construction, thanks to the use of a single type of external formwork.

The geometry of the ellipse, with no sharp corners, allows the light to “slide” on the surface, therefore mitigating the visual impact and the presence in the urban context of the new Piers.

The articulation of the Piers is the result of an architectural choice aimed at using more frequent but slim elements that will fit better into the urban fabric.

The deck, made of a mixed steel-concrete structure, will lay on these Piers. The steel part of the deck will be made up of three transversal segments, so as to make the construction and assembly of several spans in sequence simple and quick. The internal structure, composed of steel diaphragms, will allow the optimization of the performance of the materials themselves, in relation to both the speed of construction and the



assembly of the parts. The deck will be completed by the slab, made with prefabricated elements in reinforced concrete and subsequent finishing casting.

The shape of the deck will recall the hull of a ship, and the gradual reduction of the section towards the ends of the bridge will attenuate the visual impact. The use of a light colour for the painting of the steel elements will make the bridge bright, harmonising its presence within the landscape.

A SMART AND SUSTAINABLE BRIDGE

Robotic and sensor automation systems for infrastructure monitoring and maintenance.

Special dehumidification system to avoid the formation of salt condensation and to limit corrosion damage.

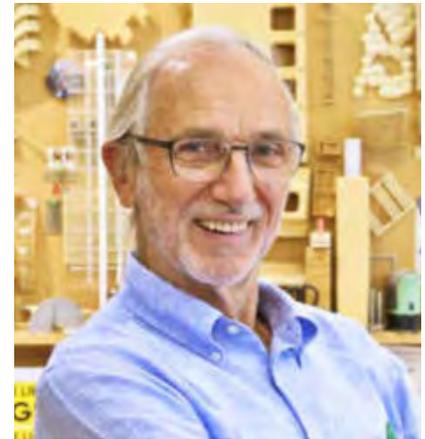
Low environmental impact thanks to photovoltaic panels, which will produce the energy required for the operation of the bridge’s own systems (lighting, sensors, systems) both at night and during the day.

Creation of a database that can be studied and monitored constantly, and be used as a basis for the future design of infrastructures of the same type.

Renzo Piano :« The new bridge will have to be simple and parsimonious, but not trivial. It will look like a ship moored in the valley; a light and bright steel bridge. It will reflect the sunlight during the day and absorb solar energy to return it at night. It will be a sober bridge, respecting the character of the Genoese. »

RENZO PIANO

Chairman. Founding Partner. Architect DPLG based at Paris Office. Renzo Piano was born in Genoa in 1937 into a family of builders. While studying at Politecnico of Milan University, he worked in the office of Franco Albini. In 1971, he set up the “Piano & Rogers” office in London together with Richard Rogers, with whom he won the competition for the Centre Pompidou. He subsequently moved to Paris. From the early 1970s to the 1990s, he worked with the engineer Peter Rice, sharing the Atelier Piano & Rice from 1977 to 1981. In 1981, the “Renzo Piano Building Workshop” was established, with 150 staff and



Renzo Piano

offices in Paris, Genoa, and New York. He has received numerous awards and recognitions among which: the Royal Gold Medal at the RIBA in London (1989), the Kyoto Prize in Kyoto, Japan (1990), the Goodwill Ambassador of UNESCO (1994), the Praemium Imperiale in Tokyo, Japan (1995), the Pritzker Architecture Prize at the White House in Washington (1998), the Leone d'oro alla Carriera in Venice (2000), the Gold Medal AIA in Washington (2008) and the Sonning Prize in Copenhagen (2009). In 2004 he also founded the Renzo Piano Foundation, a non-profit organization dedicated to the promotion of the architectural profession through educational programs and educational activities. The new headquarters was established in Punta Nave (Genoa), in June 2008. In September 2013 Renzo Piano was appointed senator for life by the Italian President Giorgio Napolitano and in May 2014 he received the Columbia University Honorary Degree.

BRUGES TO TAKE STEPS TO CURB OVERCROWDING



In 2018, the medieval city of Bruges in Belgium, which is also known as the Venice of the North, welcomed 8,3 million visitors, up 28% from the previous year. Out of this number, some 6 million visited the city in one day alone.

Like many other famous touristic cities in Europe, Bruges is a victim of its own success and wants to regulate this flow.

With a population of 117.000 inhabitants, Bruges is the third largest city in the Flanders region, after Antwerp and Ghent.

About 6.000 local people make a living from their trades but are not very happy with the amount of money spent by these massive crowds.

Although most of the cafés and restaurants are pretty full during the day especially in the summer season, in the evening, the city empties out of people and naturally, business also bears the consequences.

The new, recently-elected city council has decided to take drastic steps to not only avoid a daily overflow of visitors that may have negative effects on the local popula-

tion, but also to encourage tourists to stay for longer periods and to spend more of their money.

This situation has also had a major impact on the charm of the city. Mini cruises on the canals are overbooked, shops have replaced the old medieval houses and large crowds make it

difficult to walk with ease in pedestrian areas, in order to admire the architecture and other curiosities.

The city council is also worried that the attractiveness of Bruges will deteriorate with the years. The first decision will be to put an immediate end to all advertisements aimed at attracting tourists to Bruges and to re-direct them to hotels located in Belgium's other large cities such as Antwerp, Ghent and Brussels.

The intention is to invest in initiatives such as the organization of cultural events, to discourage day parking in the city centre, to encourage the holding of conventions and the construction of a huge conference centre.

A recent regulation allows café terraces on sidewalks and other open spaces to operate until

the end of the Christmas holidays... anything that would bring more visitors willing to stay longer and of course, to spend more money. There are also plans to alleviate taxes on cruises.

After a meeting between the Mayor of Bruges and authorities from the port of Zeebrugge (Bruges's harbour, located 12 miles from the city) it has been decided to reduce the number of cruise ships docking, from five to two.

In Italy, the city of Venice is facing the same problem. Pino Musolino, the director of the port has in fact, asked for advice from the authorities in Bruges.

Dirk De Fauw, the mayor of Bruges said in an interview on Flemish TV : *"We have to control the influx more if we don't want Bruges to become a complete Disneyland here"*. He also emphasized that he wants to aim at quality tourism, and not the huge crowds who arrive on bus tours and return to their cruise ships after a 3-hour visit.



AMONG THE 125 SUPERYACHTS AT THE 29TH MONACO YACHT SHOW :

A tiny, high tech submersible



© Kremlin

Using a C-Explorer, Vladimir Putin recently inspected the wreck of Sch-308 Semga, a Soviet submarine which sank during WWII. The submersible descended to a depth of 50 metres during the one-hour trip.

You'd be right to expect a yacht show such as the one that took place in the Principality of Monaco in September 2019 to put on show an array of the most beautiful boats in the world.

However, this famous event is also an opportunity to display everything related to the yachting industry. From a single maritime rope, to a several hundred million euro ship... everything here can be bought.

No wonder a company such as U-Boat Worx displayed one of their flagship mini submarines.

Based in the Netherlands since 2005, U-Boat Worx has grown to become

the largest private submersible manufacturer in the world. Their large range of products consists of 20 different models, and has changed the norms of private submersible ownership.

According to the company, sitting at the controls of a C-Explorer submersible is among the most awe-inspiring adventures anyone could imagine.

Witnessing underwater life first-hand with a C-Explorer submarine with its 360° panoramic view can only be described as "out of this world".

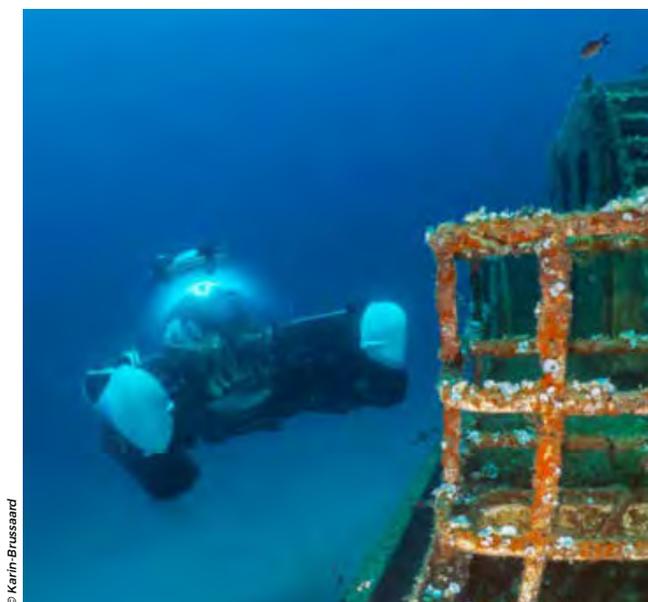
These state-of-the-art submarines are used for private exploration by yacht owners, but are also deployed as tour-

ism submarines from cruise ships and high-end resorts. Equipped with

the scientific toolkits available in the extensive options list, the C-Explorer submersibles are also unbeatable in the field of research and other professional applications.

One has the complete freedom to explore dive sites that have never been visited by recreational or professional divers, or unmanned submersibles equipped with cameras. Thousands of unexplored wrecks, numerous species, and dazzlingly beautiful coral reefs lie, waiting to be discovered

James Lookwood



© Karim-Brussaard

C-Explorer 3 at bridge of wreck



Putin in Sevastopol



C-Researcher 2



HVMC : ALL THAT GLITTERS

Monaco's prestigious auction place

Since opening its doors in 2012, the Hôtel des Ventes de Monte-Carlo has become the address in the principality for the auction of fine and rare collectables. But, for co-founder Chantal Beauvois, her relationship with Monaco dates back more than two decades.

Situated along Quai Antoine 1^{er}, nestled amidst an insurance brokerage and boat dealership, it's hard to not to feel a pull towards the Hôtel des Ventes de Monte-Carlo (HVMC) and its enchanting window displays. Depending on the time of the year – and what upcoming auctions are programmed – a dazzling assortment of precious objects are showcased, a window into the tokens of sentiment and value of others.

While the auction house may only be seven years old, the address has long been associated with art. “Before we took over the location, it was a foundry for the artists from the École de Nice,” explains Chantal Beauvois to *Europe Diplomatic Magazine*. She founded the HVMC in partnership with Franck Baille, an expert in art (specifically XIX Century, impressionist and modernist), and author of many books on the subject.

“Franck and I first met during an auction in Marseille,” she explains. “We decided to open a consultancy in Aix-en-Provence, before moving it to Monaco in 1998.” Transformed into an auction house in 2012, the HVMC has become the go-to destination in the principality to buy and sell articles of value, holding more than 30 catalogued auctions a year.

While Chantal reveals that jewellery, along with modern art and sculpture, comprise its most important categories (and the company hosts half-yearly auctions for each), other disciplines of expertise include classical artefacts, furniture, Russian art, wine, and luxury leather goods – the collections on auction depend largely on what is consigned to them at any particular point in time. “Two times a year, we also organise what we refer to as our “Ali Baba” auction,” she smiles. “We empty

our warehouses of everything people have consigned to us that we can't put in our traditional catalogued sales.”

It's a schedule that keeps Chantal, an Aix-en-Provence native who now divides her time between Brussels and Monaco, busy. “Monaco, for me, is



Chantal Beauvois



© HVMC

Henri Rousseau

a place of work. I don't get to go out much when I'm here," she says.

As she discusses her background, it's easy to see why she's in demand as soon as she sets foot back in the principality. A graduate of the National Institute of Gemology, she also has a Bachelor of History, Bachelor of Art History and a Diploma in Fine Pearls to her name and is a Court and Court of Appeal-licensed expert. She brings 30 years of experience in jewellery and precious stones to the auction house: including nearly two decades as the jewellery expert for the Tajan Auction House in Paris.

The credibility this gives her with a local clientele, for whom trust is arguably the most important criteria, isn't lost on Chantal. "Monaco is definitely a specific market," she acknowledges. "It's a clientele that needs to have confidence in you."



Birman Ruby ring 10.21 cts Sold for 515 000 €

Yet, her scope of business isn't limited to the principality. "Franck and I are very established and we have an enormous amount of connections across Europe and beyond." Sellers come from around the globe – America, Germany, and Belgium are three countries she highlights in particular – and, in many cases, are not afraid to buy sight unseen over the telephone. "We sell a lot of items on trust, especially those which are not so sizeable," she says. "Our clients will call us, ask us to describe the object and its condition and to send some extra photos. They trust us because they are used to buying from us and they know we will explain it exactly as it is."

There is one category, however, where most clients prefer to make their way to Monaco for the auction date. "It is very difficult to buy a precious stone with an estimated value of, say, €150,000, without having seen it," Chantal concedes.

When it comes to investments of passion, gemstones are booming and Chantal, more than most, understands just how much this category has grown. "When I look over my old catalogues, it's incredible, even comical, to remember the prices we sold some pieces for." Certain items, she explains, are now worth almost ten times as much; "especially beautiful rubies which have become very rare and, therefore, very expensive," she says, adding she sold a piece earlier this summer for €150,000.

RECORD-BREAKER

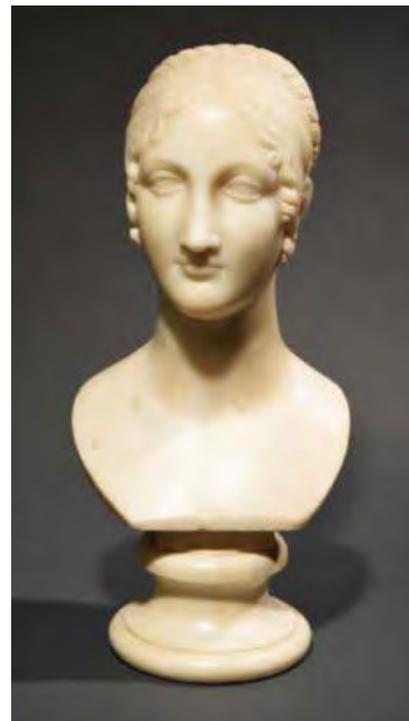
Chantal reveals that one of the biggest auction results ever recorded occurred earlier this year when a diamond and sapphire necklace sold for €2.2 millions

"People who buy stones of such high level are very demanding," she continues. There are certain criteria that she says must be met: "The stones must be in good condition and have good colours and they must come with certification from the right laboratories."

As we talk, Chantal explains that they are preparing to auction a very important collection of archaeology (classic) from renowned French collector Claude Verité. Describing it as "mythical," it is due to go under the

hammer on October 12th. From there, another jewellery auction, Bijoux de Charme, as well as one for furniture and other art objects, is scheduled for before the end of the year.

Having come into contact with so many precious pieces over the years, surely she has a favourite? "When you've been doing this for 35 years, you've had some extraordinary objects in your hands," she responds. "I can't say one stands out more than



Antonio Canova, Lucrezia D'Este, 1821
1822, image sold 2 000 000 €

the others, however." Some have ended up in museums or in exhibitions. "I've sold jewels that belonged to the Duchess of Albuquerque and the Duchess of Beaufort, both collections which were hugely significant, but I still can't say I preferred one object over another," she reaffirms.

What Chantal can single out, however, is what she loves most about her job. "The contact with people," she responds. She describes her role as one akin to that of a doctor. "Because you are touching their family, their patrimony, their history," she continues, adding that inheritance, and estates, provide the source of many auctions. "We are intervening in delicate moments, when people need your counsel, and that is incredibly rewarding," she concludes.

Chrissie McClatchie

TIMELESS CHIC

Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

By Clara Bauman

The 3 coolest ways to wear shearling

No doubt about it, shearling (preferably 'faux') is the season's trendiest material. Softer to the touch than leather and less bulky than a puffer jacket, it is the perfect piece of clothing against the first chills of the season.

And how do you wear it ?

Well...anyway and anywhere you like !

See for yourself...



'Sporty' version by Tommy Hilfiger
(be.tommy.fr)



'De ville' version by IKKS
(ikks.com)



'Biker' version by Other Stories
(stories.com)



Travel with style

XXL hoodies, 'athleisure' and ultra- comfortable trousers, ponchos and overcoats...

The 'Travel Collection' by Twinset Milano focuses on comfort, style and glamour.

Set your sights on our three special favourites with those delicate and powdery colours.

(twinset.com)



Winter time

As a consolation for having to set our watches to winter time, and days getting shorter, let's treat ourselves to this watch by Calvin Klein. You'll love its mother-of-pearl dial, the finesse of its bracelet and its golden, warm glow that will keep out the cold !



Also available
in silver and pink gold
(calvinklein.com)

TIMELESS CHIC

Standout Fashion and Beauty trends

By Clara Bauman

Check fabrics are back...choose your clan !

Unless you're back from a trip in outer space, you can't be unaware of the tide of check patterns that adorn jackets, overcoats and blazers this autumn. What's up as far as inspiration goes ? There is the 'buffalo check' with that 90's look, the houndstooth pattern or jazzed-up tartan. All you have to do is choose between 'colour or black and white'.

Colour

VS

Black and White



Yes, 'grunge' and 'chic' can rub shoulders. Just look at this jacket by Woolrich; it is as stylish as it is casual.

(woolrich.eu)



Long overcoat with XS and XL check pattern
(fr.tommy.com)



Mid-length overcoat in 'sun-kissed' colours
(woolrich.eu)



Ideal overshirt for chilly days
(americanvintage-store.com)



Short overcoat in 'indian summer' colours
(scotch-soda.com)

When the dynamic duo, 'black and white' and houndstooth come together, you have the blue chip of absolute chic and the strongest uptrend of the season.

(fr.tommy.com)



Mid-length houndstooth overcoat
(fr.tommy.com)



Mid-length houndstooth overcoat with leather trimming
(twinset.com)



Waisted dress
(patriziapepe.com)



Mid-length overcoat with XL check pattern
(woolrich.eu)

Size does count : some advice

Very large check patterns :

To be avoided : On rounded silhouettes or if you are short (less than 1,65 metres tall), as well as on areas of the body you dislike for their size.

To be taken on : On accessories such as scarves, handbags, leather items...

Very small check patterns :

To be avoided : As a 'total look'. Just imagine a walking cross-word puzzle ! You get the idea...

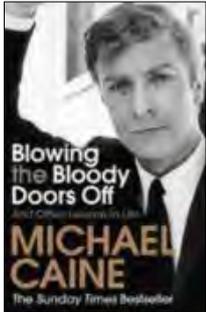
To be taken on : On any piece of clothing that tickles your fancy...irrespective of your size.

BOOKS

BLOWING THE BLOODY DOORS OFF

By: *Michael Caine*

AND OTHER LESSONS IN LIFE



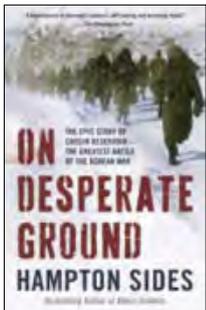
'Wise, funny' Daily Mail 'Chatty and engaging... he often comes across as endearingly humble' Sunday Times 'Thoroughly engaging' Sunday Express magazine 'Fabulous storytelling' Prima Hollywood legend and British national treasure Sir Michael Caine shares the wisdom, stories, insight and skills that life has taught him in his remarkable career - and now his 85th year. One of our best-loved actors Michael Caine has starred in a huge range of films - including all-time favourites - from the classic British

movies *Alfie*, *Zulu* and *The Italian Job* to the Hollywood blockbusting *Dark Knight* trilogy, *Dirty Rotten Scoundrels*, *Hannah and Her Sisters* and *Cider House Rules*. Caine has excelled in every kind of role - with a skill that's made it look easy. He knows what success takes - he's made it to the top of his profession from the toughest beginning. But as he says 'Small parts can lead to big things. And if you keep doing things right, the stars will align when you least expect it.' Now in his 85th year he wants to share everything he's learned. With brilliant new insight into his life and work and with his wonderful gift for story, this is Caine at his wise and entertaining best.

ON DESPERATE GROUND

By: *Hampton Sides*

THE EPIC STORY OF CHOSIN RESERVOIR
THE GREATEST BATTLE OF THE KOREAN WAR



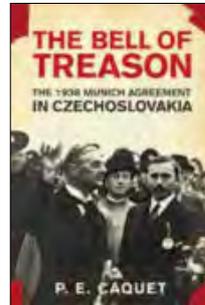
On October 15, 1950, General Douglas MacArthur, Supreme Commander of UN troops in Korea, convinced President Harry Truman that the Communist forces of Kim Il-sung would be utterly defeated by Thanksgiving. The Chinese, he said with near certainty, would not intervene in the war. As he was speaking, 300,000 Red Chinese soldiers began secretly crossing the Manchurian border. Led by some 20,000 men of the First Marine Division, the Americans moved deep into the snowy mountains of North Korea,

toward the trap Mao had set for the vainglorious MacArthur along the frozen shores of the Chosin Reservoir. What followed was one of the most heroic—and harrowing—operations in American military history, and one of the classic battles of all time. Faced with probable annihilation, and temperatures plunging to 20 degrees below zero, the surrounded, and hugely outnumbered, Marines fought through the enemy forces with ferocity, ingenuity, and nearly unimaginable courage as they marched their way to the sea. Hampton Sides' superb account of this epic clash relies on years of archival research, unpublished letters, declassified documents, and interviews with scores of Marines and Koreans who survived the siege. While expertly detailing the follies of the American leaders, *On Desperate Ground* is an immediate, grunt's-eye view of history, enthralling in its narrative pace and powerful in its portrayal of what ordinary men are capable of in the most extreme circumstances. Hampton Sides has been hailed by critics as one of the best nonfiction writers of his generation. As the *Miami Herald* wrote, "Sides has a novelist's eye for the propulsive elements that lend momentum and dramatic pace to the best nonfiction narratives."

THE BELL OF TREASON

By: *P. E. Caquet*

THE 1938 MUNICH AGREEMENT IN CZECHOSLOVAKIA



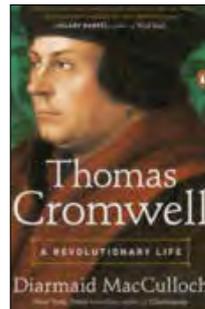
On returning from Germany on September 30, 1938, after signing an agreement with Hitler on the carve-up of Czechoslovakia, Neville Chamberlain addressed the British crowds: "My good friends...I believe it is peace for our time. We thank you from the bottom of our hearts. Go home and get a nice quiet sleep." Winston Churchill rejoined: "You have chosen dishonor and you will have war." P. E. Caquet's history of the events leading to the Munich Agreement and its aftermath is told for the first time from the

point of view of the peoples of Czechoslovakia. Basing his work on previously unexamined sources, including press, memoirs, private journals, army plans, cabinet records, and radio, Caquet presents one of the most shameful episodes in modern European history. Among his most explosive revelations is the strength of the French and Czechoslovak forces before Munich; Germany's dominance turns out to have been an illusion. The case for appeasement never existed. The result is a nail-biting story of diplomatic intrigue, perhaps the nearest thing to a morality play that history ever furnishes. The Czechoslovak authorities were Cassandras in their own country, the only ones who could see Hitler's threat for what it was, and appeasement as the disaster it proved to be. In Caquet's devastating account, their doomed struggle against extinction and the complicity of their notional allies finally gets the memorial it deserves.

THOMAS CROMWELL

By: *Diarmaid MacCulloch*

A REVOLUTIONARY LIFE



Since the sixteenth century we have been fascinated by Henry VIII and the man who stood beside him, guiding him, enriching him, and enduring the king's insatiable appetites and violent outbursts until Henry ordered his beheading in July 1540. After a decade of sleuthing in the royal archives, Diarmaid MacCulloch has emerged with a tantalizing new understanding of Henry's mercurial chief minister, the inscrutable and utterly compelling Thomas Cromwell. History has not been kind to the son of a Putney

brewer who became the architect of England's split with Rome. Where past biographies portrayed him as a scheming operator with blood on his hands, Hilary Mantel reimagined him as a far more sympathetic figure buffered by the whims of his master. So which was he—the villain of history or the victim of her creation? MacCulloch sifted through letters and court records for answers and found Cromwell's fingerprints on some of the most transformative decisions of Henry's turbulent reign. But he also found Cromwell the man, an administrative genius, rescuing him from myth and slander. The real Cromwell was a deeply loving father who took his biggest risks to secure the future of his son, Gregory. He was also a man of faith and a quiet revolutionary. In the end, he could not appease or control the man whose humors were so violent and unpredictable. But he made his mark on England, setting her on the path to religious awakening and indelibly transforming the system of government of the English-speaking world.

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