

EUROPE DIPLOMATIC

MAGAZINE

RISHI SUNAK

**UK's Prime
Minister moves
past Brexit**



April 2023

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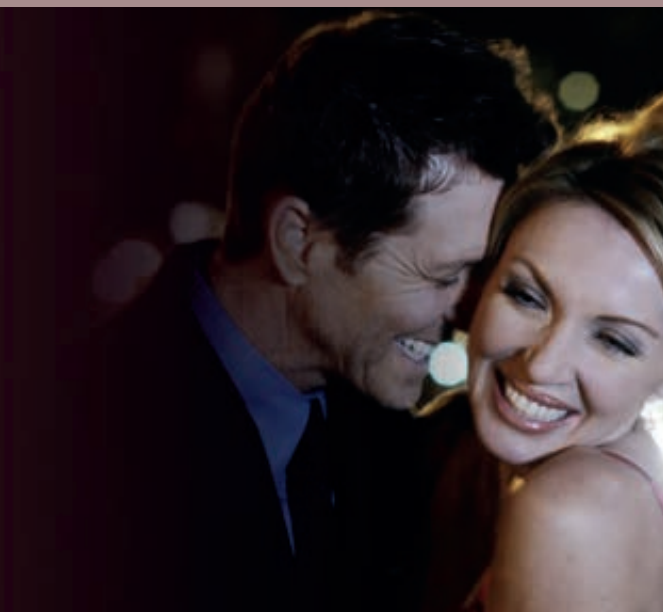


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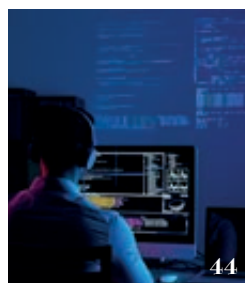
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"Europe Diplomatic Magazine" is characterized by a very open editorial line that allows it to capture all the themes that affect directly or indirectly the European political, economic, social and security issues. Whether piracy in the Gulf of Aden and its threats to the global economy, articles about political leaders, geostrategic situations or technological developments affecting our civilization, Europe Diplomatic Magazine strives to work in comparing opinions and providing an objective analysis based on extensive research. For a wide audience composed of both members of the diplomatic corps, lobbyists, international officials or academics, the magazine gives everyone the necessary and useful information about all topics that make up our daily lives. Covering sensitive issues such as nuclear, the rise of Islamism and energy dependence, the magazine opens its pages to recognized specialists who would like to express first order and exclusive information. But Europe Diplomatic Magazine is not only a source of information on recent topics. It is also addressing older facts with deep thought for further analysis. Whether it's news, security, diplomacy, technology, energy, terrorism, European affairs, no subject is treated superficially. Europe Diplomatic Magazine is an independent media, conveying balanced ideas of openness and analysis based on almost 30 years of experience in the journalistic world.

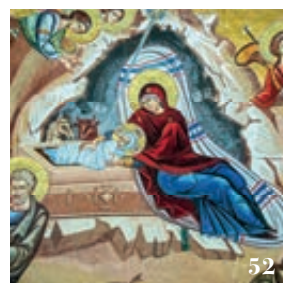
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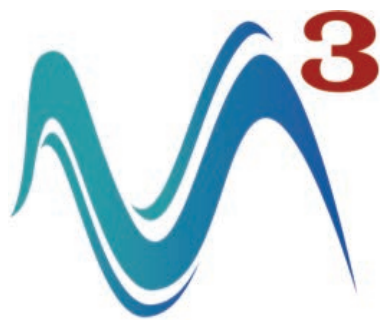
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NIKOLA “IOA” HENDRICKX

EXHIBITION



Nikola “Ioa” Hendrickx was born in 1982 in Dendermonde. Since 2012, he has settled in the city of Carnival Aalst (Belgium). Although he graduated as a civil engineer from the Royal Military Academy, drawing and painting were always a passion for him. His passion for cartoons started in 2004, when he participated in a cartoon contest for the first time.

Since then, he has won prizes in Belgium, Poland, Romania, Syria, France, Slovakia, Germany, Italy and China. In 2013, he won second prize in the prestigious Knokke-Heist Cartoon Festival. He currently produces a monthly political cartoon for the international magazine ‘Europe Diplomatic’.

For several years now, he has mainly focused on illustrations for children’s books for which he has already collaborated with authors such as Marc de Bel (“Prinses Pruilsnuit”, “Prins Oliebol”, “Kleine Pan”) and Mario De Koninck (“Maarten en de magie van de mantel”, “De prinses die alles had”). With this last book, he won the “LangZullenWeLezen” trophy from the Belgian Broadcasting Company (VRT) in 2018. He is currently working on a new picture book about war and peace commissioned by the Ministry of Defence.

With influences from among others Gerard Alsteens (GAL), Carl Cneut, Sassafras Debruyne, Rebecca Dautremer, Dalí and Magritte, his works are characterised by surrealist, poetic and imaginative scenes, sometimes dark, sometimes colourful, and often spiced with black humour.

“I am a very introverted person. I feel most at ease in a quiet environment without too many people around me. In my studio, I can therefore completely shut myself off from the outside world and I lose myself in my inner world. Drawing does not so much relax me, for that I am too concentrated and it is usually tiring. I am also a perfectionist and I am never one hundred per cent satisfied with my work. Frustrating sometimes, because you think ‘this or that could be different’, but it is always a challenge to do better next time.”



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THE SASH MY FATHER NEVER WORE

**UK premier Rishi Sunak's
Brexit by-pass for
Northern Ireland**

King William III at Battle
of the Boyne, 1690 Jan
Wyck (1640 - 1702)

The long-running “troubles” in Northern Ireland gave rise to a lot of things: shootings, bombings, death, hatred (the hatred was built in, somehow) and, of course, folk songs. The Sash My Father Wore is one such song, in this case celebrating Unionism and the Protestant belief that Britain should remain in charge. The words celebrate the victory of King William III in a series of brief but bloody 17th century wars. The problem with wars in this case is that it's not just politics that people are fighting over. It's religion. Things are never clear-cut when religion is involved. Let's just take a look at the problem, which arose (as did many others) when Britain left the European Union. With Ireland and the United Kingdom inside the EU there could be no borders or border checks to worry about, so goods flowed freely. Even the ardent Brexiteers seemed surprised when that stopped. It was a downside to their dream that they seem to have not anticipated. My wife and I were on all the protest marches, calling for a rethink about leaving the EU.



February 2023 roundtable with President of the European Commission, Ursula von der Leyen (L) and UK Prime Minister, Rishi Sunak (R). Second and third from left respectively: Stéphanie Riso, Deputy Head of Cabinet of Ursula von der Leyen, and Eric Mamer, Chief Spokesperson of the European Commission

On one of the marches, we sat in a café just before everyone set off and at the next table were three young and well-spoken businessmen, one of whom was telling his colleagues about a friend who'd voted to leave and was then surprised to discover it would affect his business badly, especially concerning the goods he shipped to mainland Europe, and make further exporting of his goods virtually impossible. Apparently, the friend about whom this sorry tale revolves had said to him afterwards: “I would never have voted to leave if I'd realised it would affect my business.” He must have been exceedingly dim, but, of course, the keen Brexiteers kept very quiet about the possible negative aspects of voting to quit Europe. Like many others, the chap who had voted to leave and then regretted it never got a chance to change his mind, nor had he had the real issues explained to him. The marches were calling for a chance to vote again, but the keen Brexit-lovers were never going to permit that. The argumentative nature of hard-line Unionists is something few outside the Province and the field of British politics understand. Unionists believe in union with the UK and with no affection for those from the Republic of Ireland. Their political party is the Democratic Unionist Party, or DUP. On the other side of the argument, of course, are those who sympathise with the IRA – the Irish Republican Army, as its followers call it – and they are equally intransigent, and just as likely to kill people. Perhaps even more so. Hatred is very addictive. Years ago, I had to travel to Belfast in Northern Ireland to conduct a radio interview

with a woman; I forget the topic. Her back garden was little more than a small patch of untidy grass, but over it all was a wire mesh net. It was there to stop Molotov cocktails – petrol bombs – from landing. In this much divided city they were not uncommon.

Let's take a look at the issue that UK Prime Minister Rishi Sunak is trying to resolve: the problem of cross-border trade, exports, imports and the sudden demand for lots more paperwork for every shipment. His chosen solution is something called the “Windsor Framework”, which seeks to avoid the creation of a hard border by rewriting the deal that saw Britain withdraw from the EU. The name has nothing to do with the Windsors – Britain's Royal Family – it's just a well-connected Berkshire market town and it's the place where Sunak reached a deal with Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, about future trading relations between Britain and the EU. Under the deal, most of the goods being transported from Britain to Northern Ireland will no longer need customs checks as long as there is paperwork to say they won't be going on to an EU country. Some of the food products will have to bear a label saying “not for the EU”, in case anyone fails to understand its destination. Sunak has promised that any goods sold in British supermarkets will also be available in Northern Ireland. In much the same way, medicines that UK regulators have approved will not be held back from sale in Northern Ireland. Sunak has also proposed what he calls the “Stormont Brake”, which would authorise the Province's elected rulers, the Stormont Assembly (currently being boycotted by Unionists) to veto any laws proposed by the EU and applying to the province. Even so, EU legislation will still apply to certain industries and their products, especially with regard to food and to animal products, with the European Court of Justice having the final say on how it works, something that some keen Brexiteers don't like.



Mary Lou McDonald

© SHIN FEIN



In January 2021, Dublin Port welcomed Samskip's first direct container service between Amsterdam and Ireland. A new weekly short-sea container freight service between Dublin and northern continental Europe was launched with RMS Veritas, which at the same time expands opportunities for importers and exporters post-Brexit

Republicans, though, are by and large supportive of Sunak's initiative. I asked Mary Lou McDonald, a former MEP and now a member of the Irish Parliament for the Sinn Féin party she represented in the European Parliament and which she now chairs. Her opinion of Sunak's success is positive. "The negotiations between London and Brussels are now over and a deal is done," she told me. "I welcome that the negotiations have now come to a conclusion. Now it is time to get back to business and to have a government back up and running at Stormont (Northern Ireland's parliament). To deliver on the issues that matter- creating jobs, investing in our health service and providing support with rising costs for people across the north who need help with the cost-of-living crisis." Considering the rancour that has gone before on both sides, it's a conciliatory comment that promises a more peaceful future. "Sinn Féin have always said that any issues with the Protocol could be resolved through positive solutions and constructive dialogue. It is welcome that progress has now been delivered. There is a particular onus now on the DUP (Unionist politicians) to get back on board and make politics work. If they do, the next number of months will be of enormous benefit and opportunity for all people in the north as we make our economic pitch to international investors in the US over St Patrick's week, and as we mark 25 years of the signing of the Good Friday Agreement in April. There are huge opportunities to be grasped now and make a real difference for people across the north."

Sunak's predecessors had been seen in Brussels as too negative and unhelpful in seeking a deal all parties can accept. The winning formula would seem to be the power of Stormont to veto EU laws it doesn't like. It's become known as the "Stormont Brake". However, there are tough conditions to meet before it can be applied and there is a provision for retaliation by the EU,

which could suspend market access. The "Brake" would allow the Unionist parties to block any attempts by the EU to change European laws that apply there. It would allow members of Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLAs) at Stormont, from two or more parties, to suspend the rule from becoming law, but only if the MLAs can show definitively that it would have a significant impact on everyday life. In response, the EU would be authorised to suspend Northern Ireland's access to the single market, subject to international arbitration. Neither side seems to favour such a damaging move. At the time of writing, the DUP members are trying to assess if that gives them the sort of leverage that they think they might need.

I Diplomatic approach

In the negotiations, Sunak secured the right not to apply certain EU laws that Unionists considered damaging to Northern Ireland's trade, such as the bans on the movement of sausages (which led to something referred to by the media as "Sausage Wars"), seed potatoes and, strangely, trees from the UK mainland to Northern Ireland, while also making the rules on alcohol duty that are applicable throughout the rest of the UK also apply to the Province itself. Importantly, customs provisions have been eased off so that products from mainland Britain not destined to go further than Northern Ireland will not have to undergo checks on the way across the Irish Sea. At least that prevents the idea of customs officials arriving by submarine to inspect passing cargo vessels (that was never proposed, in fact).



Frontier between the United Kingdom and the European Union: the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland

The DUP, however, always suspecting a trick of some sort, still fear it could mean too much red tape, causing British businesses not to sell their products in Northern Ireland. Sunak also scrapped Boris Johnson's Northern Ireland Protocol, under which inspections and document checks would take place at Northern Ireland's ports, rather than at the Irish border for goods entering the Province from England, Scotland or Wales, even for goods that would not go any further. Businesses complained that it added costs and caused delays, but scrapping the rule has prompted Johnson to say he may vote against the deal. The EU now says it will not take legal action against the UK for introducing Johnson's plan. Even so, the deal has its opponents within the DUP who may vote against it.



Boris Johnson campaigning for Brexit

There's no doubt that progress was made in Sunak's negotiations with the EU. Sunak took a much more conciliatory approach than Johnson had done, despite his seeming support for Brexit in Parliament. Johnson had favoured (as he has usually done) grandstanding about Brexit and making rude jokes about the EU. They were always counter-productive and made the UK understandingly unpopular in Brussels. Even when we were both journalists working in Brussels I never understood his dislike of the EU. He hasn't given up, either. He seems determined to torpedo Sunak's deal, which had ended with Sunak shaking hands with Ursula von der Leyen. In a speech he gave inside the Palace of Westminster, Johnson rejected Sunak's deal, seemingly turning his back on Sunak's carefully thought-out diplomacy (Johnson was never a diplomat). One former minister is quoted by the "i" newspaper as saying of Johnson: "The man is a narcissist with no loyalty to the party that made him. He is praying for a trouncing in the local elections so that he can bully his way in again." Could anyone in the Conservative Party be persuaded to give him that chance? Who can say for sure? It seems that some on the right wing of the Conservative Party favour his uncompromising approach to the Northern Ireland problem, however much trouble it causes for the government and the people living in the Province, as well as for companies trading there. Johnson's supporters (and yes, he still has some) believe that he'll be viewed by the party faithful as a martyr to left-wing manoeuvring and thus return to power in triumph.



Former UK MEP for Northern Ireland, Jim Allister

Within Northern Ireland itself Sunak's deal also has its opponents, such as former MEP Jim Allister, who wrote on his website that Sunak's solution: "makes no alteration of substance to the protocol, nor could it, because of the legal framework within which it arises, namely, Art 164 of the Withdrawal Agreement." He then goes on to explain in greater detail: "Article 164 is emphatic: there can and will be no changes to the 'essential elements' of the Protocol. Tinkering only is what is permitted and tinkering only is what we got – still under a foreign customs code, within a foreign single market, subject to all attendant foreign laws and ECJ adjudications." This fails to mention that many traders in Northern Ireland might actually want access to this "foreign single market" so as to sell their goods and services more widely and with fewer problems. Certainly, Sunak seems to feel that the problems now lie in the past. At a press conference in Windsor, not far from London, Sunak said that the "Windsor Framework," will deliver "smooth flowing trade" within the UK, "protects Northern Ireland's place" in the UK and that it "safeguards" the sovereignty of Northern Ireland.

As to how it will work in practice, that's a little complicated but it can certainly function with a little good will on both sides. During negotiations the EU and UK agreed a Northern Ireland Protocol that there would be no new checks on goods crossing the border between Northern Ireland and the Republic of Ireland (ROI). The protocol is aimed at avoiding a hard border, ensuring the continuing integrity of the EU's single market for goods and ensuring that access continues unabated for goods being transported into mainland Britain from Northern Ireland, as well as making sure that Northern Ireland goods are automatically included in any free trade agreements with third countries.



European border control

Trading places

The long-running negotiations to reach a Northern Ireland protocol on which everyone could agree finally got a deal under which there would be no new checks on goods crossing the border between the Province and the Republic of Ireland. As a result, Northern Ireland has effectively remained inside the EU's single market for goods, while England, Scotland and Wales have all left. This means that goods can continue to flow between the Province and the Republic just as they did while the UK was a member of the EU, without customs checks, tariffs or new paperwork requirements, although the EU's rules on customs and regulation of agri-food products continue to apply to goods arriving in Northern Ireland.

This looks (on paper) like the sort of deal that Johnson would love to have achieved but of which it seems he proved incapable. He is capable, however, of causing a lot of problems for Sunak and other Conservatives merely by being there and announcing himself to be a candidate for leadership.



Budget Day 2021. Prime Minister Boris Johnson and the Chancellor of the Exchequer Rishi Sunak visit Fourpure Brewery in South East London

It's strange because Johnson will soon be called upon to give evidence over the so-called "partygate" scandal, in which Johnson and his various advisors and staff allegedly organised drinking parties inside No. 10 Downing Street or its garden at a time when Johnson's own government had banned such activities to prevent the spread of COVID 19. It was very much a case on "one law for the rich (the government), another for the poor (the rest of us)." Now Johnson is courting further controversy by nominating his own father, Stanley, a somewhat mediocre fiction author, for a knighthood in his resignation honours list. I met Stanley Johnson before I ever met Boris and I interviewed him for a radio programme about something to do with animal welfare, a subject in which he was interested and involved. He had briefly been an MEP himself and I rather liked him.

Will Boris Johnson succeed in this latest 'outrage'? It has certainly angered quite a lot of people, but he is totally unmoved by controversy. He is unmoved by the Conservative Party's need to secure a deal on Northern Ireland, too, and fears have been expressed that the political noise he is making in a bid to get himself noticed could scupper Sunak's plan and also wreck the Conservatives' chances of success in the next election. Could Johnson somehow take back the keys to Downing Street? Most senior Conservatives think it's unlikely, despite Sunak's support for what is clearly a compromise. As for Boris Johnson? One senior Conservative has been quoted in the "i" newspaper as saying: "Boris had his chance and he blew it," going on to add: "A period of silence would now be most desirable." Silence? From Boris Johnson? That would seem to be unlikely.

Of course, both Sunak and Johnson were all in favour of leaving the EU, although in Sunak's case the reason was never very clear. Britain is and always has been a trading nation and the EU is a trading organisation. The current government's apparent desire to repeal all the laws passed during Britain's membership of the EU – including those it appeared to support and argue in favour of – makes little sense. In any case, it looks as if Northern Ireland, alone among the parts of the UK, is effectively remaining within the EU, whatever Johnson and like-minded Europe-haters may think. They'll mainly support repealing those laws that were passed at the EU's behest, though, including laws on such unrelated issues as human rights, workers' rights, animal welfare and so on. The reason for wanting to repeal them would seem to be simply that they were proposed by the EU, not that they're bad or damaging to British interests.

Sunak had made it a personal priority to normalise relations between Britain and the EU. Sunak has poured praise on his immediate predecessor, Liz Truss, for supposedly helping to thaw cross-Channel relations, despite her brief tenure of No. 10, Downing Street. The real

breakthrough came, though, at last year's G20 summit, held in Sharm el-Sheikh, Egypt, where Sunak first talked about negotiating with Ursula von der Leyen. There was an immediate retreat from Johnson's hard-line demands, which eased the path towards more fruitful discussions. According to the "i" newspaper, one of the negotiators said afterwards: "We went in with a mindset that not everyone can get everything they want, but everyone will get everything they need." This realistic approach was a breath of fresh air after Johnson, with Sunak far more receptive to the demands of Brussels, including rapid access to on-line data so that the negotiators can assess any possible risks. The negotiators on the British side only realised how close the talks had come to a viable deal when von der Leyen announced that she would be travelling over in person. In fact the deal isn't finally and completely done until the DUP and the Eurosceptic Conservative MPs have agreed it. Only then will Sunak be able to claim victory. Meanwhile, the quibbling over the finer points of detail will continue.



President Biden at the Glasgow Climate Change Conference in November 2021

Sunak is not the only one awaiting a confirmed outcome. The EU will be able to finalise a discussion forum at last for EU and UK financial regulators, long delayed by the wrangling over a Brexit deal. It will be similar to the forum that already exists between the EU and the United States. It was due to have been completed by March 2021 but ongoing disagreements delayed it. Now, with agreement apparently reached, the work can go ahead. "We are ready to start work on the finalisation of the Memorandum of Understanding on financial services regulatory cooperation," a Commission spokesman told the International Business Times. This would, in theory, allow for a relationship not unlike those with other third countries in possession of an important financial services sector. Brexit was very damaging for the UK's thriving financial sector, forcing some 7,000 of those working in it to relocate to mainland Europe, with Amsterdam overtaking London as the largest share trading centre. The creation of the forum would certainly be welcomed by David Schwimmer, the Chief Executive of the London Stock Exchange

Group, who has said that an improvement in relation between the EU and UK would be a “good thing”, which the International Business Times says would “help avoid fragmentation in markets”.

Meanwhile, President Joe Biden’s administration has announced more subsidies and incentives to boost decarbonization, while the EU struggles to keep up. Biden is planning to propose a budget to scrap all oil and gas industry subsidies, according to a document seen by Reuters, although it’s unlikely to meet the approval of Congress. At the same time, the US government wants to direct \$6-billion (€5.59-billion) to projects to speed up decarbonisation projects, according to Reuters, in such high-energy-consuming industries as steel, aluminium and cement production, which together account for 25% of US greenhouse gas emissions. It’s all part of Biden’s long-term project to create a more sustainable world; he has been very critical of the large oil companies making record profits at the same time as raising prices. It’s a courageous plan but it could put Europe at a disadvantage as it strives to catch up. Some in Europe fear that Biden’s plans and the grants being offered to universities and developers of alternative energy packages could also lure away some of Europe’s brightest and best. Indeed the risk it poses was discussed at the CERAWEEK energy conference in early March, where delegates debated (among other issues) such things as balancing security, transition and affordability: no easy task.



The Hover Wind-Powered Microgrid™

But decarbonizing industry was one of the key issues under discussion. They discussed a wide range of fascinating projects that hold promise for the future, such as the advent of Wind-Powered Microgrids™ and how they are literally changing the skyline of how major military and corporate consumers are seeing success. Furthermore, Russia’s invasion of Ukraine is inevitably raising oil and gas prices. Another potential energy source that came under discussion at CERAWEEK is Hydrogen, along with electrification and efficiency. Hydrogen is an integral part of a low-carbon future, delegates considered. Government incentives have turbocharged interest in it, particularly for green hydrogen. Critical questions facing hydrogen development include how government policies can jumpstart the industry, and where can low-carbon hydrogen be produced.

Some of the scientists trying to find signs of alternative forms of life on other planets, members of the Laboratory for Agnostic Biosignatures, LAB, had considered the presence of oxygen as a sure-fire sign, but they now think there is no such thing as a sure-fire sign. Others are working on ways to manufacture concrete and cement with fewer emissions. One method is to use basalt instead of limestone, or else carbon-negative limestone, produced with waste CO₂.



Irish children tease British soldiers in Londonderry. Northern Ireland, 1972

These are all technologies for the future and may not be relevant for Northern Ireland just yet, but there is certainly room for the Province to get more deeply involved. Tech companies in Northern Ireland raised £45.6 million in investment in 2020, a record figure for the sector despite the pandemic, which beats the previous record of £30.4 million set in 2018. According to The Irish News, Northern Ireland has 2,195 digital tech firms, employing 21,140 people and with a combined £3bn turnover. That’s a significant contribution to the local economy. In addition, Digital DNA recently published its listing of the Top 100 tech companies in the Province, showcasing leading firms across software development, fintech, IT managed services, health tech and other areas. Maybe the time is drawing towards an end when children were warned “don’t wander away”, not out of concern about paedophiles or getting into trouble but in case the children became involved with children following a different religion and things turned violent. One problem is that the Falls Road (a stronghold for Catholics) and the Shankill Road (similarly a stronghold for Protestants) run roughly parallel towards the centre of Belfast, connected by various cross streets. The area had seen many barricades and quite a few riots. The two sides were also split by internal divisions; the IRA – the Irish Republican Army – became divided and a new, more violent branch began its operations as the Provisional IRA.

The old hatreds have not gone away, although they seem to have subsided a little. Successful trading with other parts of the world should make the Province wealthier and perhaps (only perhaps) less inclined to devour its own children, figuratively speaking. I cannot foresee a day when Catholics and Protestants bury their differences completely, instead of just burying their slaughtered kinfolk. Maybe that lady I mentioned having interviewed will one day be able to take down that bomb-proof netting that marred her garden. Rishi Sunak’s compromise deal has an awful lot to live up to, but it’s a start. Perhaps Ulster will one day be seen as an exporter of high technology instead of bullets and bombs. If Ian Paisley and Martin McGuinness could find it in their hearts to become friends (or at least not enemies any more), perhaps there’s hope for all of us.

Jim Gibbons

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NEWS IN BRIEF

EU AGENCY EMA AGAINST CREATION OF AMSTERDAM'S 'MEGA BROTHEL' NEAR HEADQUARTERS

« EMA is very concerned that this will create safety, security and nuisance issues » for staff and for visiting delegates, who often have to leave late in the evening, the regulator said in a statement » adding « The change of the location of the red light district is motivated by concerns of nuisance, drug-dealing, drunkenness and disorderly behaviour. Locating the Erotic Centre in close proximity to EMA's building is likely to bring the same negative impacts to the adjacent area ».



A depiction of Amsterdam's proposed Erotic Center

“With the establishment of the Erotic Center we are reducing the pressure on the Red Light District and creating a place where sex workers can work safely and undisturbed. A place where sexuality and eroticism are also connected to culture and entertainment.” says Mayor Halsema adding: “Sex work is part of Amsterdam and will never disappear. But the situation in the city center is not sustainable. The quality of life for residents has been under pressure for years due to the flow of tourists for whom the windows are only an attraction.”.

The center will have approximately 100 workplaces for sex workers: women, men, trans persons/LGBTIQ+. There will also be spaces for care, safety, catering, entertainment, culture and education.

CYBERMYTH: WITH MY IBAN, ADDRESS AND A COPY OF MY ID CARD, MY ONLINE BANKING ACCOUNT CAN BE HACKED

In many types of fraud, the attackers demand personal details such as name, address and telephone number. In some cases, they also ask for an IBAN or ask the victim to send a copy of a passport or ID card. A widespread myth is that it is possible to hack an online banking account with this information alone.

Nowadays, everyone should know that we should be very careful when giving out credit card details and passwords. In

various fraud attempts, however, fraudsters also demand other information such as IBAN, address, name or even a copy of an ID card or passport. Most of the time, this data is not relevant for the actual fraud, and only serves to build trust with the victims and to reinforce the supposed seriousness of the offer. Even if the fraud is noticed in good time, a queasy feeling remains if such information has already been passed on to the fraudsters. For example, the NCSC receives reports every week from people who are afraid that their online banking account could be hacked or money could be stolen in some other way using such information, or even that the fraudsters are suddenly ringing their doorbell.

No danger for online banking accounts

The good news first: an IBAN and a copy of someone's ID card are not sufficient to withdraw money from an account. Such information has to be provided in many business processes and is not particularly sensitive. For example, you have no doubt handed over your passport many times when checking into a hotel, or given a copy of your ID card during other transactions.

The NCSC is also not aware of a single case where fraudsters have appeared in person at a victim's home. The fraudsters usually operate from abroad and fraud is a mass business: if a victim does not take the bait or notice the fraud, they simply move on to the next person.

Possible fraud using the identities of others

However, any data provided can be used for other scams. In order to make their offers look serious, the fraudsters use such stolen identities and include the name and ID as proof that the offer comes from Switzerland and is genuine.

Is it possible to misuse an IBAN?

Theoretically, it is possible for someone to use your IBAN to make a direct debit payment to an online shop. However, this payment option is not widespread among Swiss online shops, and you can easily make a complaint to your bank about such fraudulent payment orders for up to a year and have them reversed. This option is therefore not lucrative for fraudsters.



Always be sceptical

It is generally important to be sceptical if you receive emails that require action on your part and that carry a threat of consequences (loss of money, criminal charges or criminal proceedings, blocking of an account or card, missed chance, misfortune) if you do not do what is required. Always be cautious about providing personal details.

If you have provided your IBAN or identity details and you are feeling unsure, consider the following:

- Regularly check your account statements so you can spot in good time if a direct debit payment has been made that you did not initiate.
- If you notice any inconsistencies, contact your bank immediately.
- Do not pay invoices for orders you have not placed. Contact the company concerned as soon as possible if you suspect that someone has made purchases using your name and IBAN.
- If you have provided your passport or ID card as part of a fraud attempt, we recommend that you report the incident to a police station or directly to an ID centre.

Source : ncsc.admin.ch

SECOND OIL AND GAS DISCOVERY OF THE YEAR NEAR THE TROLL FIELD IN THE NORTH SEA



© HARALD PETERSEN / EQUINOR ASA

The Troll B helicopter deck

Equinor⁽¹⁾ has again struck oil and gas near the Troll field in the North Sea. This is Equinor's eighth discovery in the area since 2019.

The volumes are estimated at between 24 and 84 million barrels of oil equivalent, with slightly more oil than gas. Named Heisenberg, the discovery well was drilled by the Deepsea Stavanger drilling rig, Equinor is the operator, and DNO is a partner.

The discovery is considered commercially interesting, partly because it can utilise existing infrastructure connected to the Troll B platform. However, an appraisal well is needed to get a more precise estimate of the size before it can be concluded whether the volumes can be recovered. The parties are considering drilling the appraisal well in 2024.

(1) Equinor is an international energy company committed to long-term value creation in a low-carbon future. Equinor's portfolio of projects encompasses oil and gas, renewables and low-carbon solutions, with an ambition of becoming a net-zero energy company by 2050. Headquartered in Stavanger (Norway), Equinor is the leading operator on the Norwegian continental shelf. Equinor is present in around 30 countries worldwide.

"Our Troll exploration play keeps delivering. With discoveries in eight out of nine exploration wells, we are approaching a success rate of 90%. We plan to further explore the area, while looking at possible development solutions for the discoveries that have been made. We have a good infrastructure in the area and can quickly bring competitive barrels from here to the market at low cost and with low CO2 emissions," says Geir Sørtveit, Equinor's senior vice president for exploration and production west.



© ALINE MASSUCA / EQUINOR

Geir Sørtveit, Equinor's senior vice president for exploration and production west

Five of the eight discoveries have been made in licences awarded through APA rounds.

It is just over a month since Equinor together with partners made the Røver South discovery in the same area. Through acquisitions two weeks ago, Equinor increased its ownership interests in four of the discoveries made in the area.

The seven previous discoveries are: Echino South, Swisher, Røver North, Blasto, Toppand, Kveikje and Røver South.

IAEA BOARD OF GOVERNORS REAPPOINTS DIRECTOR GENERAL GROSSI FOR NEW 4-YEAR TERM

The Board of Governors of the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA) has reappointed Director General Rafael Mariano Grossi for a second four-year term in office beginning in early December 2023.

In a decision adopted at its regular meeting this week, the 35-nation Board requested that the General Conference – the annual meeting of the IAEA's 176 Member States – approve the reappointment when it meets in September.



© IAEA

Rafael Mariano Grossi, IAEA Director General

"I'm deeply honoured by the Board's unanimous decision to appoint me for another term in office, and very grateful for the confidence and trust Member States continue to place in me as head of this truly remarkable organization. It comes at a time when we face many major challenges and I'm fully committed to continue to do everything in my power to implement the IAEA's crucial mission in support of global peace and development," Director General Grossi said.

"In the different areas of our work based on nuclear science and technology – preventing the spread of nuclear weapons, ensuring nuclear safety and security, mitigating and adapting to climate change, fighting cancer and much else – the Agency's role and work are more important than ever. This is an organization that delivers very real and tangible benefits to people all over the world. As a result, our workload is constantly increasing. I will make sure that we continue to deliver and meet the growing demands and expectations of all our Member States, whose continued support is indispensable," he said.

Director General Grossi took up his first term of office on 2 December 2019, following the General Conference's approval of his appointment by the Board. His second term starts on 3 December this year and runs until 2 December 2027. He is the sixth Director General since the IAEA was established in 1957.

JETBLUE STARTING NON STOP FLIGHTS FROM NEW YORK TO PARIS

To Celebrate JFK-CDG Launch, Limited Roundtrip Fares Starting \$479 and €399 in Core Available.



The US based airline company JetBlue today announced its highly anticipated entrance to Continental Europe with nonstop service from New York's John F. Kennedy International Airport (JFK) to Paris Charles de Gaulle Airport (CDG). Service will begin June 29, 2023.

This marks JetBlue's second transatlantic market debut, following the airline's successful launch of London service in August 2021. With the introduction of Paris, another long-requested and top destination, JetBlue will play a unique role in disrupting high-fare legacy carriers that have dominated this route for decades.

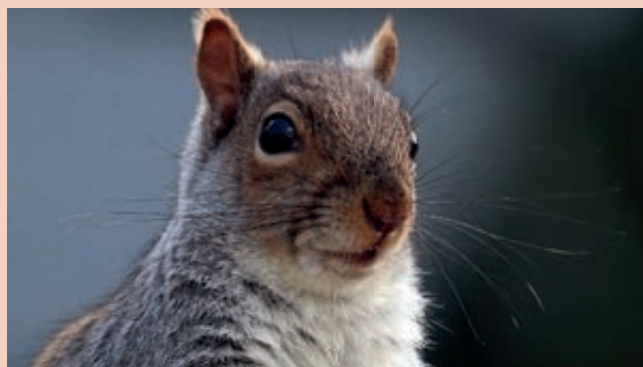
"Our successful London service proves customers can book low fares without compromising great service," said Robin Hayes, chief executive officer, JetBlue. "We are excited to continue disrupting the transatlantic market and offer business and leisure customers traveling to and from Paris an opportunity to experience our highly acclaimed Mint and core products in a market that has suffered from high fares by legacy carriers for far too long."

Flights will operate daily on JetBlue's Airbus A321 Long Range (LR) aircraft with 24 redesigned Mint Suite® seats, 114 core seats and the sleek and spacious Airspace cabin interior.

Seats on the new Paris route are on sale with low fares for U.S.-originating travelers starting at \$479 roundtrip for the airline's award-winning core experience and starting at \$1,899 for JetBlue's premium Mint experience, available on jetblue.com (a).

France-originating travelers can enjoy special introductory roundtrip fares starting at €399 for core and €1,299 for Mint when booked through their preferred travel agent or online travel provider.

LIFE SYSEL BOOSTS EUROPEAN GROUND SQUIRREL NUMBERS IN SLOVAKIA



Grey squirrel (*Sciurus carolinensis*)

In Slovakia, LIFE Sysel has increased the population of European ground squirrels from 20 000 in 2020 to 36 000 today.

The European ground squirrel is a rodent found in central and southeastern Europe. Its numbers have dropped significantly due to a lack of grassland management and urbanisation. Parasites, diseases, flooding, trapping, poisoning and poaching also threaten the species.

The ongoing LIFE Sysel project aims to improve the European ground squirrel's conservation status in selected parts of Slovakia, Czechia and Poland.

Actions include:

- Improving the grassland management of habitats where the squirrels tend to be found.

- Increasing food availability and decreasing predation pressures.

- Taking care of individuals as required.

The project says that the recent rise in squirrel numbers was helped by translocating them among isolated colonies. Doing this has improved the genetic fitness and reproduction of populations.

Also, providing more food in bad weather and reintroducing grazing in areas where it had been absent for many years helped significantly.

The team plans on creating at least 190 hectares of new grazing habitats for ground squirrels in Slovakia. This is area the size of around 300 football pitches.

They also want to ensure the long-term sustainable management of grasslands by working with local stakeholders.

Data on the squirrel, especially its genetic structure, will be collected and examined.

Despite the population of ground squirrels dwindling across Europe, the numbers are rising in Slovakia.

This is a direct result of the LIFE project's work.

'We think the population of ground squirrels will continue to rise in Slovakia. So, we will keep taking the lead, and hopefully, other EU countries that are home to the species will follow,' says LIFE Sysel project coordinator Katarína Tuhárska.

To this end, the aim is to replicate the project's results in different EU countries where the ground squirrel lives.

LIFE Sysel supports the EU's Biodiversity Strategy for 2030^{EN•••} and the Nature Restoration Law^{EN•••}. It also contributes to the EU's Habitats Directive.

MEP INVESTIGATED FOR FRAUD INVOLVING PARLIAMENTARY ALLOWANCES: EPPO SEIZES OVER €170 000

The European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) in Milan (Italy) has executed a seizure of more than €170 000 against Ms Stefania Zambelli, Member of the European Parliament (MEP), and four of her assistants, as part of an investigation into possible fraud involving parliamentary allowances.

The investigation, led by the EPPO and carried out by the Brescia branch of the Italian Financial Police (Guardia di Finanza), concerns a suspicion of fraud detrimental to the EU budget, regarding the remuneration of four parliamentary assistants hired in Italy.

According to the evidence, the four members of staff did not carry out the activities related to the function for which they were hired, or only carried them out partially, falsely documenting their activities to the European Parliament.

In addition, they misrepresented their qualifications, having declared educational and professional skills that they did not have, according to the investigation.

It is believed that the MEP, who is closely related to at least one of the people hired, also benefited from the sums paid by the European Parliament for the work activities that the staff should have performed.

The estimated damages to the EU budget amount to €172 148.82.

The execution of the seizure order was completed last Thursday, 23 February, by the Italian Financial Police, and included bank accounts and luxury cars.

The judicial measures were issued based on the evidence gathered during the preliminary investigation. All persons concerned are presumed to be innocent until proven guilty in the competent Italian courts of law.



Stefania Zambelli

The European Public Prosecutor's Office

The European Public Prosecutor's Office (EPPO) is an independent public prosecution office of the European Union. It is responsible for investigating, prosecuting and bringing to judgment crimes against the financial interests of the EU. These include several types of fraud, VAT fraud with damages above 10 million euro, money laundering, corruption, etc.

Since starting its operations on 1 June 2021, EPPO has registered more than 4000 crime reports from participating EU Member States and private parties; over 929 investigations have been opened (as of June 2022).

THE NEW NATIONAL PORTRAIT GALLERY – OPEN 22 JUNE 2023

The *Inspiring People* project is transforming the National Portrait Gallery. Designed by Jamie Fobert Architects and made possible by major grants from the Blavatnik Family Foundation, The National Lottery Heritage Fund, the Garfield Weston Foundation and the Ross Foundation, the project comprises a complete re-presentation of the Collection, combined with a significant refurbishment of the building, the creation of public spaces, a more welcoming visitor entrance and public forecourt, and a new Learning Centre.

In order to complete the building project, the Gallery in St Martin's Place closed to the public in spring 2020. Since then *Inspiring People* has seen the Gallery's most extensive programme of activities, working in partnership with museums, communities and schools across the UK and reaching new audiences locally, regionally and online.



© NATIONAL GALLERY

The project provides the unique opportunity to re-display the entire Collection as well as upgrade the gallery spaces, while celebrating the existing architecture and decorative features. Maintaining a chronological approach, this comprehensive top-to-bottom re-hang will display works that are relevant to a wide range of audiences and present missing or hidden stories from British history. Set amongst the Gallery's best-loved paintings will be more works from its collection of 250,000 photographs, ranging from 1840 to the present day.

The Gallery will reopen to the public on 22 June 2023 – to guarantee entry book your free ticket now.

National Portrait Gallery

St Martin's Place
London, WC2H 0HE
+44(0)20 7306 0055

OLAF FINDS IRREGULARITIES IN DIGITAL PROJECT FOR SCHOOLS IN HUNGARY

The European Anti-Fraud Office (OLAF) finalised an investigation into a digital project in Hungary with a recommendation to recover more than €3.6 million of EU funding.



Ville Itälä, Director-General of OLAF

The project, financed by the European Social Fund, had the scope to modernise educational facilities while enhancing and increasing access to e-learning. One of the principal elements of the project was the purchase of IT equipment for elementary and high schools and to provide the relevant e-learning training for teachers.

OLAF's investigation identified a number of breaches in the public procurement procedure. These included a last minute modification of the technical specifications of the call and the exclusion of the cheapest bid that gave competitive advantage to the winning company. OLAF found that the irregularities had an impact not only on EU taxpayers but also on the learning experience of the students, as superior hardware could have been purchased for the same price with the correct project implementation.

Ville Itälä, Director-General of OLAF, said: *"The EU has been investing important resources into making Europe digital, and into making sure that this transformation works for people and businesses. Digitalisation is also one of the pillars of the EU's Recovery and Resilience Facility. It is crucial for our resilience and innovative potential. In this case, OLAF's investigators found that the impact of the digital project was lower than expected and did not make a good use of the money of European taxpayers."*

OLAF's financial recommendation for the recovery of €3.6 million was sent to the European Commission's Directorate-General for Employment, Social Affairs and Inclusion.

The mission of OLAF

The European Union budget finances a wide range of programmes and projects which improve the lives of citizens across the EU and beyond. The improper use of funds provided by the EU budget or the evasion of the taxes, duties and levies, which fund the EU budget directly harms European citizens and prejudices the entire European project.

OLAF fulfils its mission by:

- carrying out independent investigations into fraud and corruption involving EU funds, so as to ensure that all EU taxpayers' money reaches projects that can create jobs and growth in Europe;
- contributing to strengthening citizens' trust in the EU Institutions by investigating serious misconduct by EU staff and members of the EU Institutions;
- developing a sound EU anti-fraud policy.

What can OLAF investigate

OLAF can investigate matters relating to fraud, corruption and other offences affecting the EU financial interests concerning:

- all EU expenditure: the main spending categories are Structural Funds, agricultural policy and rural development funds, direct expenditure and external aid;
- some areas of EU revenue, mainly customs duties;
- suspicions of serious misconduct by EU staff and members of the EU institutions.

AIRBUS WELCOMES BOEING TO H175M TASK FORCE FOR UK NEW MEDIUM HELICOPTER COMPETITION



H175M helicopter

Oxford, Boeing has become the latest and final defence and aerospace company to join the H175M Task Force addressing the UK New Medium Helicopter requirement.

As training services partner, Boeing Defence UK will provide aircrew, groundcrew and maintenance training, if the super-medium class Airbus H175M, to be built at Broughton in Wales, is selected to replace the Airbus Puma HC2.

The company joins a UK-based industry team created to offer, supply and support the British-built H175M which includes some of the most respected players in international aerospace.

Managing Director of Airbus Helicopters in the UK, Lenny Brown, said: "Boeing Defence UK is rightly respected in this country for its long-standing support of the British Chinook and Apache fleets. As training services partner it completes a rock-solid line-up of UK-based first tier aerospace partners who bring a guarantee of world-class service provision to the UK Ministry of Defence for decades to come."

"We are delighted to collaborate with Airbus and join their innovative team of aerospace leaders to meet the UK's New Medium Helicopter requirement", said Steve Burnell, managing director of Boeing Defence UK. "Our local team has supported the British armed forces for decades, sustaining hundreds of jobs across the country in helicopter training. As a member of the H175M Task Force, we look forward to leveraging our current expertise to ensure availability and readiness for the UK's future helicopter fleets."

Launched at the UK's RIAT 2022 airshow, the H175M Task Force also includes defence and helicopter specialist Babcock fulfilling the critical role of support partner for the H175M in UK service at military operating locations.



Managing Director of Airbus Helicopters in the UK, Lenny Brown

Martin Baker, at Denham, Middlesex, with more than 70 years of aerospace experience, is providing specialist troop seating and cabin integration services.

In Belfast, Northern Ireland and Prestwick, Scotland Spirit AeroSystems, already an Airbus partner on the CityAirbus NextGen eVTOL aircraft, has begun extensive detailed design and manufacturing activities on the H175M.

In addition, Pratt & Whitney Canada, is formally partnering in the team for which it supplies and supports the highly reputed PT6C-67E turboshaft engines from its market leading family of powerplants.

H175M Powerful, fast and agile

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Up to 16 troop seats

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- Unrivalled pilot assistance
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<p>MTOW (Max TakeOff Weight) 7,800 kg 17,196 lb <small>Optional AGM</small></p> <p>USEFUL LOAD 3,000 kg 6,615 lb <small>Without Optional AGM</small></p> <p>CARGO SLING 2,700 kg 5,952 lb <small>(Single hook operation)</small></p> <p>MAXIMUM ALTITUDE In flight 15,000 ft density altitude T/O & Ldg 13,000 ft density altitude</p> <p>FUEL CAPACITIES 2,067 kg 4,556 lb <small>(Standard fuel tank (all underfloor without cabin restriction))</small></p> <p>ENGINES 2 proven and reliable Pratt & Whitney PT6C-67 E with dual channel FADEC Full Authority Digital Engine Control</p>	<p>MAIN PERFORMANCE (7,800 kg MTOW at ISA SL) 600 NM 1,111 km <small>Max range at best range speed with standard fuel tank</small></p> <p>6 hours <small>Max endurance at best endurance speed (80 kts) with standard fuel tank</small></p> <p>SPEED Cruise 150 kts <small>With maximum combat</small></p> <p>CAPACITY 1-2 Pilots Up to 16 commandos Up to 18 passengers Cargo: 2.3m³ <small>with direct access from cabin</small></p> <p>OPERATING TEMPERATURE Max +50°C Mini -40°C</p>
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José María Gil Robles

A PEACEFUL SON OF RADICALISM

**The European Parliament
marks the passing of one
of its best-liked former
Presidents**



© EUROPA/EU

The President of the European Parliament Roberta Metsola, paying tribute in plenary session to the late former President of the Chamber, José María Gil-Robles

“Be of good cheer about death,” wrote Socrates, “and know this as a truth: that no evil can happen to a good man, either in life or after death.” I don’t think I’m in absolutely full agreement with that particular aphorism, I’m afraid, but clearly Socrates believed that a good man lived on, at least in memory, and I hope that proves to be true in the case of José María Gil-Robles Gil-Delgado, one-time President of the European Parliament. We must remember that Socrates was writing more than two-and-a-half millennia ago, and things have changed a bit since then, but he clearly felt that a great man lives on, at least in people’s memories, as indeed he (or she) should. The “bad apples” we must try to forget about; there will always be a few of them about. Some great men achieve the affection and admiration of others by a calm belief in doing one’s duty without making a fuss about it. I always enjoyed the occasions on which I had to interview Gil-Robles, whether for television, radio, or the written press, because he was such a pleasant and polite person with whom to hold a conversation. That cannot be said – sadly – for all MEPs, then or now. He invariably tried to supply the information being requested, too, and appeared to take an interest in the question and the questioner, which is quite unusual.

“This House mourns him and pays tribute to his legacy,” said the current President of the European Parliament, Maltese conservative member Roberta Metsola, after firstly evoking the parliamentary career of Gil-Robles and asking her fellow MEPs to join her in a minute’s silence before the voting began on the issues of the day. She also reminded members about some of his achievements: “He will be remembered for having ensured that the Parliament was directly involved in the negotiations of the Amsterdam Treaty, including the inclusion of the legal basis for the adoption of the Members’ Statute, thanks to which the Parliament became more independent,” she said.

José María Gil-Robles Gil-Delgado, who died in the middle of February, cut an unusual figure: a tall, imposing, quietly-spoken man who never-the-less helped pilot the European Parliament through a variety of important changes during his fifteen years as a member and two-and-a-half

years in the President’s chair. From 1997 until 1999, he served as President, and proved to be a remarkably good and a popular one. He could never have been mistaken for any other member, either: his huge beard and bald dome of a head ensured instant recognition. In her tribute to him before the whole House, though, it was his achievements, of course, that were highlighted by Metsola. She reminded Members of the many capacities in which he had served. He will, perhaps, be best remembered for ensuring the Parliament played a central rôle in negotiations ahead of the Treaty of Amsterdam, under which a diverse range of powers were transferred from national governments to the European Parliament. Indeed, some of the right-wing British politicians who lobbied for their country to quit the EU altogether cited the Amsterdam Treaty as one of their main motives for leaving. The legislation involved in this, included laws on immigration and on civil and criminal issues as well as enacting common foreign and security policies. The Treaty also implemented institutional changes for expanding the EU as new member nations joined. Significantly, the new Treaty included the legal base for the adoption of the Members’ Statute, which gave the European Parliament much wider independence.



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European leaders in Amsterdam in 1997

We must not forget the arrival of the euro as the EU’s common currency in 1999, either. It was introduced in 11 countries for commercial and financial transactions only to begin with, the notes and coins arriving later. The first countries to adopt the euro were Austria, Belgium, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Luxembourg, the Netherlands, Portugal and Spain. Fellow-members Denmark, Sweden and the United Kingdom opted to stay out for the time being (in the UK’s case indefinitely, as

it transpired). Gil-Robles played an enormous part in the preparations for the change. He was also deeply involved in the accession negotiations for the acceptance into the EU family of ten new member states, although the actual enlargement came a couple of years later, in 2004.

Altogether, it involved ten new member countries: the Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia, Slovenia, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia, Malta and the Greek Cypriot Administration of Southern Cyprus. Bulgaria and Romania followed suit on the 1 January 2007. Throughout the endless meetings, reams of paper and hours of negotiations, Gil-Robles remained a devoted and ever-patient participant and architect of change.

A man and his achievements

Certainly, Gil-Robles seems to have left behind a favourable impression on those with whom he worked, including those from very different nationalities and political families. Take, for instance, Frank Schwalba-Hoth, a founder of Germany's Green Party. "In general, there is every two-and-a-half years a (new) president in the European Parliament – that means that I have seen since 1984 a broad range of personalities in this post," he told me, referring back to Gil-Robles. "Compared to the others, Jose María Gil-Robles was someone with a rare mix of natural authority, determination, friendliness, political values and sometimes even shyness." I was a journalist at the European Parliament for many years, so I never had to work really closely with him, although I interviewed him a great many times. Schwalba-Hoth made a further observation about his character that strikes me as being especially truthful and appropriate: "He was the opposite of a charismatic populist." That doesn't mean he wasn't popular, of course, merely that he didn't just seek personal popularity for himself (unlike quite a few of today's leading politicians), although he certainly was charismatic, a quality that seemed to come naturally to him. In politics, that makes him quite a rarity. Born in Madrid in 1935, but growing up in Portugal, Gil Robles served as an MEP through three consecutive legislatures, from 1989 to 2004, that period including his Presidency, of course, from 1997 to 1999.

In many ways, Gil-Robles' term of office was marked by drama. Under his Presidency, the House contributed to the many and various decisions that preceded the arrival of the euro as the EU's common currency. Britain's decision to leave the Union without ever adopting the euro seems to have done irreparable damage to

the country's trading opportunities and options for the future. Gil-Robles' were the careful hands that handled the delicate negotiations prior to the mass resignation of Jacques Santer's Commission. He was also instrumental in the founding of Europe's anti-fraud office, known as OLAF, and in helping to prevent genocide in Kosovo. Gil-Robles saw the institution through some of its darkest days, always delivering it safely on the other side.

From 2009 until 2014, Gil-Robles presided over Europe's Jean Monnet Foundation, described on-line as "an independent, non-partisan and non-militant institution of public utility, which operates from the Ferme de Dorigny, located at the heart of the University of Lausanne campus." It was created in 1978 by Jean Monnet, creator and first president of the first European Community (the coal and steel Community) and he was the first honorary citizen of Europe. He entrusted it with his entire archive, a great historical document that will long be pored over by students of European history. Today, it holds many other private archives which it promotes. One of the most enjoyable tasks I have undertaken in a long career of working within the European Union was to work with Dirk Spierenburg when he was putting together his thoughts (and his notes) for the best written record available on what things were like and how they developed, under the title "The History of the High Authority of the European Coal and Steel Community – Supranationality in Operation. Yes, I know: it's not the snappiest of titles. It had been co-written by Dirk Spierenburg and his long-term Collaborator, Raymond Poidevin. Spierenburg even signed my copy.



Dirk Spierenburg

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Gil Robles President of the European Parliament from 1997 till 1999

Gil-Robles was no sympathiser with Franco or his followers; he had no time for Fascism. He was a dedicated Roman Catholic and seems to have seen nothing holy about Franco or his followers. He was also much liked and admired across a broad political spectrum. His bonhomie was proverbial, which is why so many of the obituaries written since his death on 13 February have been sympathetic towards him. The writers seem to have liked and admired him. He was a big man in every way: tall, erect, imposing and friendly, while also being a serious man. It was, of course, his large and imposing beard that initially impressed those meeting him for the first time. That, and his smile. Perhaps it was the perfect distraction that led to him being thought of as both left wing and right wing: right-wingers thought he was left wing while left-wingers thought of him as being on the side of the right; the regime, in other words. He wasn't.

Gil Robles was a lawyer; it was a family tradition and it was a job that suited him ideally, although it didn't make him rich. Sharing his names with his father must have been inconvenient, since the ruling party of Franco regarded Gil-Robles senior as an enemy. His father was a lawyer, too, but having fled the reach of Fascism in 1939 he ended up practicing his professional legal skills in Portugal. The Gil-Robles I knew was a gentle man, as well as being a gentleman, and he was barely 23 years old when he was accepted into the body representing the Lawyers of the Spanish Cortes, long before it came to represent largely the views of Franco. Gil Robles later joined the Popular Democratic Party of Óscar Alzaga, moving on to the formation of the Popular Alliance which was later converted into the Popular Party and which would become a bedrock of the European People's Party, under whose banner Gil Robles would challenge for and win

the leadership of the group and, of course, the Presidency of the European Parliament itself. His first wife, Magdalena Casanueva Camins, granddaughter of the famous Spanish notary and politician, Cándido Casanueva y Gorjón and with whom he fathered four children, died and after her death, he married Rosario Gil-Delgado Queralt.

A man of many countries

At the opening of a plenary session in Strasbourg, President Metsola spoke to the House about Gil-Robles' legacy: "He will be remembered for having ensured that the Parliament was directly involved in the negotiations of the Amsterdam Treaty including the inclusion of the legal basis for the adoption of the Members' Statute, thanks to which the Parliament became more independent," Metsola said. A law professor, after his years in the European Parliament, Gil-Robles occupied the honorary chairmanship of the European Movement International. Between 2008 and 2015, he chaired the Jean Monnet Foundation. He was never a man to let the grass grow under his feet.



© FONDO MARÍN-KUTXA FOTOTEKA

Gil-Robles' father, José María Gil-Robles y Quiñones

Gil-Robles' father was the historical leader of the Spanish Confederation of Autonomous Rights (CEDA). The family was deeply dedicated to Europe and making it better and stronger, albeit not in a militaristic way. Gil-

Robles' depth of knowledge and hard work were recognised with several awards: the Schuman Medal, awarded by the Group of the European People's Party, of which he was a dedicated member in 1995), the Cross of Agricultural Merit, the Great Cross of Isabel la Católica and the Great Cross of Civil Merit (Spain).

Europe has experienced many problems down the years. "It is always worth remembering," Gil-Robles said in an interview about his life a decade or so ago, "that Europe is in a perpetual state of crisis and not to become alarmed by the fact that one crisis is succeeded by another." This forms part of a long interview Gil-Robles gave in 2020 to the *Centre Virtuel de la Connaissance sur l'Europe* (CVCE), which is an interdisciplinary research and documentation centre dedicated to European integration studies. He told the interviewer that some of his views about the need for a more unified Europe come from the fact that in order to escape Franco and his followers, his father had fled Spain for Portugal, where he himself lived until he was 18 years old. Gil-Robles wrote that Estoril, where he lived, had a very international atmosphere and he found himself mixing with boys of his own age but from many different countries: England, Germany, Italy and elsewhere. "I saw a lot of refugees arriving from Eastern Europe," he said, "so for me, European issues were prominent from an early age." He also grew up speaking Portuguese as fluently as he spoke Spanish, so he didn't view Portugal as a foreign country.



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Jean Monnet

Gil-Robles took great interest in South American politics and he was deeply involved with organisations dedicated to taking a more Europe-wide approach to politics. He was involved in making Spain more democratic, that being the only way it could be allowed to become part of the European Union. He gave statements, wrote books and eventually became a candidate for election to the European Parliament. "I was thrilled," he said, "because I've always been a fervent European, so to become a member of the European Parliament was obviously a dream of mine." He said he'd had no particular plans for his future; as with most newly-elected MEPs, he spent his time learning the ropes and making contacts. He was an admirer of Jean Monnet, Robert Schuman, Konrad Adenauer and others who helped steer the European Union into successful existence. Gil-Robles wanted to see the European Parliament function more like a national parliament, with greater legislative capacity and control over the EU budget, although he believes he failed with that particular ambition. The budget remains an intractable problem to this day.

This far and no further?

Gil-Robles was proud of the progress the EU has made, further and further from the hostility and intolerance of his childhood and towards an integrated political system that works for everybody. He didn't believe, however, that it should simply go on getting bigger. In his interview for CVCE he said that he believes the EU has effectively reached its limit in terms of membership numbers. He foresaw a risk of xenophobia being prompted and encouraged by the sight of too many people of foreign extraction and also with alien beliefs. He described attempts to exercise some control as a matter of trial and error. "We must wait and see whether we have any success, but it will be difficult."

However, he continued to believe that there is room for improvement in terms of being good neighbours with each other. He was in favour of more immigration, too, although ensuring the successful integration of future immigrants will always be a challenge, if no longer for him personally. It will also take a very long time, he predicted with some concern. He was especially keen on more peaceful and amicable relations being established with the non-European countries of the Mediterranean, in view of Europe's historic animosity towards several of them (and theirs towards Europe, in some cases). Having a different religion doesn't mean they're not human, after all. Gil-Robles' dream was of a community in which all countries could participate together in friendship. We must all cooperate with our neighbours. Unfortunately, we must now do it without the wise guiding hand of José María Gil-Robles Gil-Delgado. He has left an indelible mark upon the body he admired and supported and which owes him a debt of gratitude. He will be remembered with gratitude and admiration; the EU needs more people like him, but they're very hard to find.

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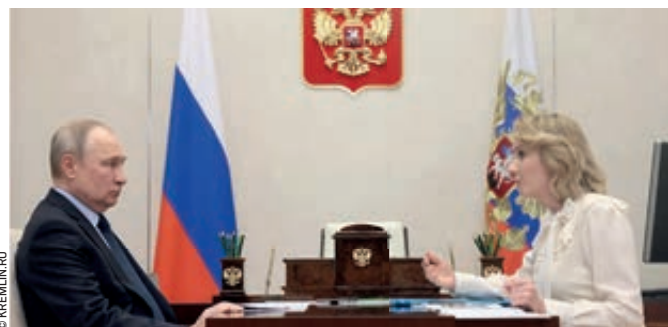
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The war in Ukraine has upended the lives of children and their families for almost a year.

IN HITLER'S FOOTSTEPS

Putin seizes Ukrainian children so he can try to turn them into Russians

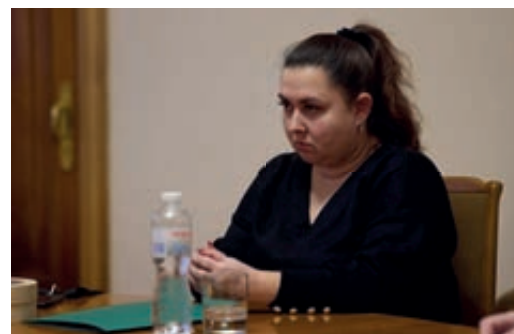
“He alone who owns the youth, gains the future,” wrote Adolf Hitler. He’s hardly a rôle model I would choose, but it seems as if that’s what Russian leader Vladimir Putin is doing, aping a man he claims to hate. Hitler’s comment is based on a famous quote from the Greek philosopher Aristotle, who said: “Give me a child till he’s seven, and I will show you the man,” a saying that was repeated and re-used by St. Ignatius of Loyola, the 16th century Spanish priest and theologian. I can’t see Putin wanting to be closely associated with either a Roman Catholic saint or with the founder of the Nazi movement, which he claims to despise, but the evidence is there for all to see. Whatever excuses Putin may offer, about giving orphans from Ukrainian lands that are now occupied by Russian soldiers, a bright new future in “Mother” Russia, the world knows it to be a lie. I suspect quite a few Russian parents will also find it highly suspicious. One 12-year-old whose mother was taken away from him by Russian soldiers after they were captured together, told how he only escaped enforced “adoption” into a Russian family by remembering his grandmother’s telephone number and calling on her to save him. Russian welfare officials tried to dissuade her by saying she would have to take the child through an area of heavy fighting, while they could easily put him into a Russian orphanage or find a Russian family to adopt him. The grandmother declined their preferred alternatives and took the boy away. A brave lady indeed! Putin has signed into law a decree that makes it quick and easy for Russian families to adopt these stolen Ukrainian children while making their removal back to Ukraine a bureaucratic nightmare. The boy with the brave granny was lucky but hundreds of other Ukrainian children have been less fortunate. Strangely, Russia’s Commissioner for Children Rights, Maria Lvova-Belova, is firmly behind Putin’s policy of forcing the captured children to lose their Ukrainian identities and “teaching them to love Russia”. It confirms her complicity in large-scale state-organised kidnapping. It is – and certainly should be – a war crime, in this case perpetrated by a leader who appears to have developed some mediaeval ideas about raising children. Hitler might have understood but I hope no other modern-day leader would. Putin’s actions are of a type that would have been familiar only to Nazis. Heil Vlad?



Russian President Vladimir Putin with Presidential Commissioner for Children’s Rights Maria Lvova-Belova. Both are subject to an arrest warrant issued by the International Criminal Court

After all, when Joseph Stalin was young, the seminar to which he was sent similarly tried to make him forget that he was a Georgian by teaching him in Russian, debating ecclesiastical points with him in Russian and generally making him more Russian. It didn’t work, although he was fluent in several of the languages used in the Soviet Union. Awful though Stalin undoubtedly was, he was a confirmed respecter of nationality by place of birth and a Georgian he was very determined to stay. Putin, however, has other ideas and very sneaky ones at that, such as telling the children they’re going on a school trip which ends up very much in Russia and a long way

from the border. When I was at school on Tyneside in the Northeast of England, our school trips were to places such as Housesteads Roman fort and the Roman Wall, or to study nature in Kielder Forest. We never ran the risk of ending up in Vladivostok or, more likely, in Novosibirsk. We would have been very cross otherwise: I don’t suppose they make good fish and chips there.



Daria Herasymchuk, Ukraine’s Commissioner for Children’s Rights

Russia’s pressure on the parents of Ukrainian newborns to register their babies as Russian extended as far as denying them free diapers and baby food if they didn’t. It demonstrated the abject cruelty of Russian forces towards babies, children and parents. According to a report by Yale University, more than 6,000 children aged between four months and 17 years are now being held in 43 camps, where the Russian authorities are engaged in ‘re-education’ of their young captives. And since they cannot get home they must be regarded as “captives”. The Russians claim to have “evacuated” 738,000 Ukrainian children, according to Daria Herasymchuk, Ukraine’s Commissioner for Children’s Rights, but she also says it’s not simply evacuation, since the children are not allowed to go home, nor to claim Ukrainian citizenship. Herasymchuk reckons the real number is considerably lower but still in the hundreds of thousands. Herasymchuk says there are various methods being employed, including the murder of parents and simple kidnapping. The shocking thing is that it would seem that Putin sees this as ‘statecraft’. In areas occupied by Russian forces, any newborn has to be registered as “Russian”.



Russian President Vladimir Putin with schoolchildren, winners of Olympiads and competitions in culture, art, science and sport

The Chief Doctor at Kherson City Clinical Hospital – the only working hospital in the immediate area – announced that all of Ukraine’s newborn citizens are now Russian from birth.

Владимир, военный преступник (Vladimir the War Criminal)

According to UNICEF, the kidnapping of children counts as one of six recognised forms of war crimes involving children under United Nations rules. First on that list of infamous acts is the forced recruitment of children into the kidnapping country’s armed forces. So far, that doesn’t seem to be what’s been happening in Ukraine. But there are ways to misuse children other than by forcing them to take up arms against their own people. Girls are especially vulnerable and can be used as sex objects by fighting men. Again, there is no evidence of this happening. According to the UN, however: “Their tasks can vary, from combatants to cooks, spies, messengers and even sex slaves. Moreover, the use of children for acts of terror, including as suicide bombers, has emerged as a phenomenon of modern warfare. Each year, the UN receives reports of children as young as 8 or 9 years old associated with armed groups.” It’s been reported that during Russia’s illegal occupation of the Kherson region, in southern Ukraine, at least a thousand children were seized from schools and orphanages and, it’s been claimed, transported to Crimea, the part of Ukraine illegally seized by Russia in 2014. It’s possible, perhaps even probable, that the seized children were neither armed nor ordered to the front line, nor, for that matter, ordered to engage in sexual activities. The UN, however, lists several ways children can be misused: “No matter their rôle, children associated with parties to conflict are exposed to acute levels of violence – as witnesses, direct victims and as forced participants. Some are injured and have to live with disabilities for the rest of their lives.”



Sheltered Ukrainian children in the war zone

For its part (and, of course, as prompted by Putin), Russia has claimed that it has merely been moving vulnerable children from conflict zones to safer places on Russia’s side of the frontier. The Russians have been trying to give thousands of Ukrainian children to Russian families for “foster care” or for adoption (the latter being more likely and more permanent), even if they neither want nor need such attention. Russia has repeatedly claimed that its activities are aimed at protecting the children from the continuing hostilities. Lvov-Belova has claimed that the children are being moved “for their own protection”, while Russia’s Foreign Ministry claims to be “searching” for any missing parents so that the children can return home. However, a Washington-based think tank, The Institute for the Study of War, claims that it’s a deliberate depopulation campaign, with Ukrainian children being settled in distant parts of Russia under the guise of “medical rehabilitation schemes” or adoption programmes. In one case, children were taken from an orphanage in Kherson in a bus marked with the letter “Z”, which appears to symbolise Russia’s aggression. Why “Z”? That’s a good question without a definite answer, it seems, but it could be short for Zek, a word representing an inmate of a Soviet-era prison or labour camp and therefore may be short for the full original word, Zaklyuchënniy. Lvov-Belova has made the claim that some of these children were offered an opportunity to return to Ukraine but declined. This claim, of course, cannot be verified and seems, at least superficially, to be unlikely.



Ukrainian children being drilled to wear antichemical masks in a subway station

The war has certainly taken its toll of Ukraine’s children, with more than 460 said to have been killed and almost a thousand wounded. The children’s charity Save the Children has estimated that the average Ukrainian child has spent more than 900 hours in underground shelters over the past twelve months, while more than 1,500 schools have been damaged or destroyed, although Herasymchuk thinks the number is far higher. She says it’s all part of Putin’s “Russification” campaign (something Stalin hated as a boy).

Herasymchuk says Russia uses five methods for its deliberate kidnapping programme. These include the simple murders of the child’s parents, the forced long-term separation of child and parent, tricking the youngsters into believing their parents are dead, thinking they’re being sent to sports facilities or health camps and straightforward kidnapping, especially from special schools, boarding schools and orphanages. This is rendered easier by the fact that Ukraine has the highest rate of the institutionalisation of children in Europe. More than 105,000 live in such conditions. According to Herasymchuk, some seven-and-a-half-million children have been directly affected by the war. She says it’s part of Russia’s policy: breaking the children psychologically because

they represent Ukraine's future. The whole issue is now under investigation by Karim Khan, Chief Prosecutor for the International Criminal Court, who says the Russians have been boasting about their "humanitarian kindness" to the young Ukrainians.



ICC Prosecutor Karim A. A. Khan on his recent visit to Ukraine: « In southern Ukraine, two kilometres from the frontlines, I visited a care home for children. The drawings pinned on the wall and the cupboards full of clothes spoke to a context of love and support that was once there. But this home was empty, a result of alleged deportation of children from Ukraine to the Russian Federation or their unlawful transfer to other parts of the temporarily occupied territories. As I noted to the United Nations Security Council last September, these alleged acts are being investigated by my Office as a priority. Children cannot be treated as the spoils of war

Needless to say, not everyone sees it in that way. The Russian government is operating a systematic network of at least 40 child custody centres for thousands of Ukrainian children, which could be classed as a potential war crime, according to a new report by Yale University researchers in a collaboration with the U.S. State Department in a program to hold Russia accountable. Under the title "Russia's Systematic Program for the Re-Education and Adoption of Ukrainian Children," the new report describes a system of holding facilities that stretch from the Black Sea coast to Siberia. "This is not one rogue camp, this is not one rogue mayor or governor," says Nathaniel Raymond, executive director of the Yale Humanitarian Research Lab. "It is a massive logistical undertaking that does not happen by accident." Even Wikipedia reports on the abductions. During the Russian invasion of 2022, it says, thousands of Ukrainian children were abducted, deported and even forcibly adopted by families in the Russian Federation. An investigation by the Associated Press confirmed that Russian forces forcibly resettled Ukrainian children without their consent or that of their parents. The Russians, it seems, lied to them that their parents had rejected them and used them for propaganda. They even set up summer camps for Ukrainian orphans and what they called "patriotic education", further "Russifying" them by giving them Russian citizenship and even false parents, aiming to erase their Ukrainian identity.



President of Ukraine Volodymyr Zelensky

BOYS AND GIRLS, COME OUT TO PLAY (BUT OVER THE BORDER)

According to a report by Raoul Wallenberg Centre for Human Rights, based in Montreal, and also the New Lines Institute in Washington, there are "reasonable grounds to conclude" that Russia is in breach of two articles of the 1948 Genocide Convention, which includes the forcible transfer of Ukrainian children to Russia, itself an act of genocide under international law. Ukraine's President, Volodymyr Zelenskyy, speaking at the European Council summit, which he attended on-line, told delegates that the whereabouts of the children Russian forces seized are unknown and he also accused Russian forces of firing on humanitarian aid convoys and targeting women and children in evacuation corridors. India's Eastern Herald newspaper reports that: "Russia's responsibility for war crimes in Ukraine, as well as for unleashing a war of aggression itself, is increasingly at the centre of attention for the world community." Among the most serious violations of international law are the actions of the Russian authorities and military against children in the Ukrainian territories Russia has occupied. At the end of January, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi, declared that Russia was violating the fundamental principles of the protection of children in wartime by issuing Russian passports to Ukrainian children and having them adopted by Russian families. "We are talking about children who were transported from Ukraine to Russia," he said, "Often against their will". There is a Ukrainian charity trying to reunite the kidnapped children with their birth parents, which Russia opposes. The charity, called "Save Ukraine" is run by the former ombudsman for children, Mykola Kuleba, who told journalists: "We are doing everything we can to get these kids back. What the Russians are doing is pure indoctrination." Getting to the camp where her daughter was being held (what a strange kind of "holiday" it turned out to be) involved a detour via Poland and Belarus because the direct routes were blocked by Russian troops. Even so, some of the reunions took place; the children had been warned that if their parents failed to turn up then they'd be sent to boarding schools or to adoption into Russian families, far from the frontier. There are many other stories of parents separated by Russia's policies, fearful they'll never get their children back.



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United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi

These kidnappings were not new: there are reports of Russia snatching Ukrainian children almost since the war began. According to the United Nations, there have been credible reports of Russian forces sending Ukrainian youngsters for adoption in Russia as part of a large-scale forced relocation and deportation programme. Ilze Brands Kehris, the UN's assistant secretary-general for human rights, told a meeting of the UN Security Council in February that Russian forces are also running "filtration" operations in which Ukrainians in occupied territories face systematic security checks that have involved "numerous" human rights violations. Exactly what is not specified. The news outlet Al Jazeera reports that United States Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield told a meeting that estimates from a variety of sources, including the Russian government, indicate that Russian authorities have interrogated, detained and forcibly deported between 900,000 and 1.6 million Ukrainians.

One 15-year-old wrote to his parents that after a pleasant couple of weeks he'd been moved to what amounts to a prison camp with no sheets on the bed, only the used clothes of old people to wear and he and his comrades were fed inedible food. They were also beaten if they failed to sing the Russian national anthem, while camp workers were forcing 13-year-old girls to have sex with them. The claim cannot, of course, be verified. The young prisoners were also told that their parents had fled Ukraine and would never come back for them. We must suppose that Russia expects (demands?) total obedience, so the opinions of the young people themselves don't matter.



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French novelist and pilot Antoine de Saint-Exupéry

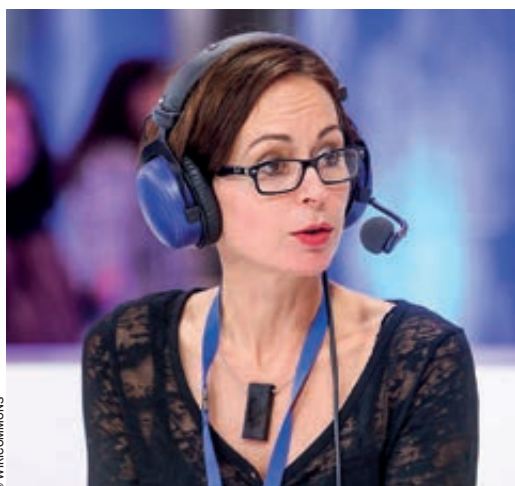
They should remember the words of the French novelist and pilot Antoine de Saint-Exupéry, who wrote: "Les grandes personnes ne comprennent jamais rien toutes seules, c'est fatigant, pour les enfants, de toujours et toujours leur donner des explications." ("Grown-ups never understand anything for themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them") I'm sure my grandson would agree but I don't know if Putin would listen; I suspect not but I could be wrong.

DO WHAT WE TELL YOU, OR ELSE!

According to Al Jazeera: "Filtration of Ukrainian adults allows Russia to identify Ukrainians it 'deems insufficiently compliant' to Russian control, Thomas-Greenfield said. "And there is mounting and credible evidence that those considered threatening to Russian control because of perceived pro-Ukrainian leanings are 'disappeared' or further detained," she said. In his dystopian novel, 1984, George Orwell portrays children as being programmed to turn against their families (and ever-more towards 'the party'), just as children in today's society are brainwashed into falsely accusing a once-loved parent in Parental Alienation cases. Children in Orwell's famous book, 1984, are taught the party's ways when they are young and impressionable, according to the website Bartleby Research, enabling them to act as spies who will sever ties with family members 'for the betterment of the party'. In Orwell's book, every action of an individual is controlled by the state through the use of fear, thus restricting an individual from using their own intellect in order to make effective decisions. That is clearly what's happening in Ukraine. In Orwell's Oceania, the real villain of the piece is called Big Brother, the power figure nobody dare disobey. It begins to look as if Putin now sees himself in that rôle. Now Russia's commissioner for children's rights, Maria Lvova-Belovahas stated her support for the policy of stripping Ukrainian children of their Ukrainian identities to turn the children Russian. They tell Ukrainian relatives that the paperwork is a nightmare (Russia's choice to make it like that, of course) and that a child would be far safer if he or she is adopted in Russia itself. The policy would seem to be one of deliberate depopulation.

Now the European Commission, working in conjunction with Polish authorities, has launched a programme to trace the stolen children so that the process of getting them home can begin. Dana Spinant, a spokesperson of the European Commission, told a media briefing in Brussels: "It's been estimated that since the beginning of the

full-scale invasion of Ukraine, the Russian forces have sent thousands of Ukrainian children to Russia. Kidnapping of Ukrainian children is a big social issue, a tragedy and a crime.” That’s why the Commission is working with Poland at finding and getting back the kidnapped children. “Our goal,” she told journalists, “is to unite the forces in order to collect evidence, find the kidnapped children and prosecute those responsible for these crimes.” Spinant’s remarks were quoted by European Pravda. The whole process is clearly well planned and organised; the mind behind it is as clever as it is evil. The Russian troops apparently target children whose parents are known to have been killed or imprisoned, although in some cases they have promised parents that they are taking the youngsters for a break in a children’s holiday camp.



Dana Spinant

THE PHONE-Y WAR

It’s reported that the Russians take the children’s mobile phones immediately, not only to prevent contact with their families but also so that the signal cannot reveal their locations. It’s a very carefully planned act of criminality whose wickedness is hard to comprehend. Herasymchuk explained: “They collect phones from children right away and don’t allow them to share their location. It’s very difficult to find a child. The Russians are dispersing Ukrainian children across their territory and constantly moving them around,” she said. It makes it very difficult to track them down. The Russians are dispersing Ukrainian children across their territory and constantly moving them around,” she said. Obviously, Putin’s motives are political; I’m not accusing him of paedophilia but he certainly seems strangely keen to get his hands on Ukraine’s children. When all of Ukraine’s children suddenly become Russian, he’ll have got what he wants. It was President John

F. Kennedy who said: “Children are the world’s most valuable resource and its best hope for the future.” I suppose that must be Putin’s motive.



A missile attack in Dnipro, Ukraine

It’s hard to believe that the goal is simply depopulation. Could this be a form of long-term pressure being put on Ukraine to surrender: giving up the fight is the only way to get back their children? The UN is looking into the phenomenon and has expressed concern about Russia’s theft of children, especially (but certainly not only) those who had been living in special state-run institutions. “In Bucha and Irpin, the Commission received information about arbitrary killing of civilians, destruction and looting of property, as well as attacks on civilian infrastructure, including schools,” said the chair of the UN’s Commission of Inquiry, Erik Mose. “In Kharkiv and the Sumy region, the Commission observed the destruction of large urban areas, allegedly as a consequence of aerial bombings, shelling, or missile strikes against civilian targets.” How Putin can justify these sorts of acts is hard to see, except that he appears to believe he and his immediate lieutenants are not responsible for their criminal activities.

It’s clear that the war in Ukraine, with Russia trying to take over the country at any price, is far from over. It seems unlikely that Putin will be persuaded not to keep bombing and shelling civilian areas. He wants to add the territory of Ukraine to his own and to rule both, it seems. It also seems virtually certain that his ambitions will not end there. Putin’s ambitions are keeping NATO leaders on their toes. The alliance has dispatched four battle groups of battalion size to guard its eastern flank: one in Poland and one in each of the Baltic republics: Latvia, Lithuania and Estonia, all of which may be under threat. Meanwhile, the United States has restored heavily-armed units to western Europe, to ensure that the same sort of fate as befell Crimea is not repeated. We may all have hoped that Europe had seen the last of continent-wide war, but it seems that’s not what Putin wants. For much of the West – and for the United Nations – getting back the kidnapped children is a priority, however Putin may see things.

I am reminded once more of George Orwell’s novel, 1984, and the sloganizing that was part of the way in which the people of Oceania were controlled. Russians should get very worried if they see the words “Большой Брат следит за тобой” appearing on posters. Its warning may be all too real. It means: “Big Brother is watching you”. If you count Putin as your “Big Brother”, of course. He wouldn’t be my first choice.

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FREED BY THE THOUGHT POLICE

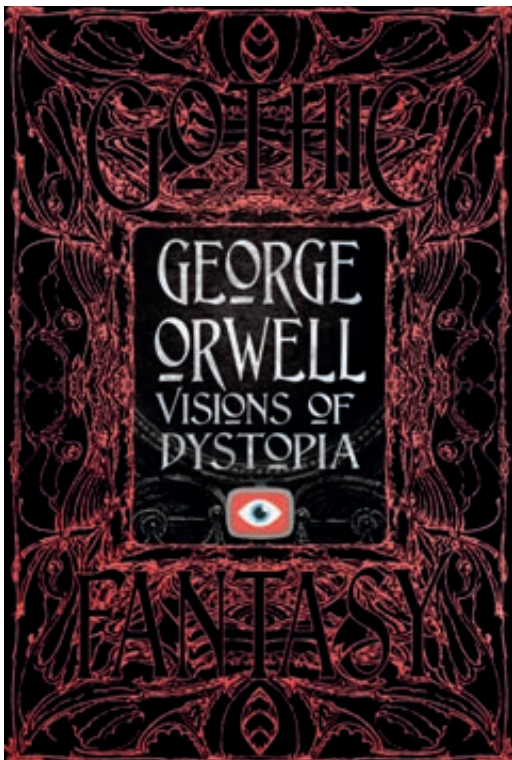
Two in UK cleared of “thought crime” for thinking about prayer in an abortion facility censorship zone, where praying is forbidden



Father Sean Gough, during his ordination ceremony by Archbishop Bernard Longley at St Chad's Cathedral in September 2020

Thoughtcrime is a concept dreamed up by the English author George Orwell in his dystopian book about the future, 1984 (it was written in 1948 and he simply reversed the last two digits). In the book, which is a science fiction horror story, the “thought police” can tell (albeit not always accurately) if anyone is thinking thoughts that are not in agreement with English Socialism, known as Ingsoc in the book, which is the ruling philosophy of Oceania, in which, according to the novel, we all live. It’s interesting because Orwell was himself a Socialist, but based on the example of the Soviet Union under Joseph Stalin, he feared it taking over the permitted thought processes of humankind, making disagreement in thought, word or deed a punishable offence.

That fear is still justifiable as some of today’s “historians” seek to rewrite history. “How great is the danger,” asks Oleg V. Khlevniuk in his gripping and magisterial biography, simply called “Stalin: New Biography of a Dictator”, that a blend of historical ignorance, bitterness, and social discontent will provide fertile ground for pro-Stalinist lies and distortions to take root?”



Most of 1984 is a warning about taking “political correctness” too far, but we’ve all heard or read stories of zealous officials trying to ensure moral compliance with unspoken (and even unacknowledged) rules. After all, just try telling Vladimir Putin that he’s got things wrong. A disturbing case in Birmingham in the UK shows how easily (and how far) it can go astray. Take the case of Fr. Sean Gough, a priest of the Archdiocese of Birmingham,



Isabel Vaughan-Spruce (center-left) and Father Sean Gough (center-right) celebrate their legal win outside the Birmingham Magistrates Court in Birmingham, England, on Feb. 16, 2023

and charity volunteer and ardent anti-abortion campaigner Isabel Vaughan-Spruce, both arrested for supposedly praying in an area close to an abortion facility which had the status of a “censorship zone” where demonstrably religious acts are prohibited by law. In one case, however, they have been repeated, despite warnings. The arrests were not connected to each other, nor did they happen at the same time. Such spaces are covered by Britain’s Public Spaces Protection Order (PSPO) where it is against the law to pray publicly, distribute literatures about pregnancy help services or indeed undertake any other sort of action that could be construed as an “anti-abortion protest”. When challenged by police on the first occasion, Vaughan-Spruce admitted that she “could have been” praying silently, inside her head. Three police officers who were on the scene swiftly rounded up Vaughan-Spruce and, on a separate occasion, Gough, and charged them on the grounds that she admitted that she might be “praying inside her head”, although she told them that she had been helping women faced with a “crisis pregnancy” for more than twenty years. She was charged with “protesting and engaging in an act that is intimidating to service users”, even though the facility was closed while she was there, she said, and that she had claimed she was not there to carry out an act of “protest”. That was very clearly untrue, which means it wasn’t very Christian, if the Bible is any guide. “No one who practices deceit shall dwell in my house; no one who utters lies shall continue before my eyes,” it says in Psalm 101.

Vaughan-Spruce has expressed concern about her arrest, apparently for “silent praying”. After the verdict, she said she should never have been arrested and “treated like a criminal” for silently praying on a public street. “When it comes to censorship zones, peaceful prayer and attempts to offer help to women in crisis pregnancies,” she told a reporter from ADF International, such acts “are now being described as either ‘criminal’, ‘anti-social’.” We should bear in mind, however, that ADF’s full name, “Alliance Defending Freedom” is somewhat limited in its definition of freedom, being an ultra-conservative American Christian legal advocacy group, working to curtail rights for LGBTQI people, as well as to expand Christian

practices within public schools and in government, as well as to outlaw abortion entirely. Based in Scottsdale, Arizona, it also has a branch office in Washington, D.C. So, it is not what might be called a politically or socially neutral body. The “freedom” it supposedly upholds doesn’t include the rights of gay people of either gender, nor of transvestites. Speaking to ADF about the Public Spaces Protection Orders and her arrest, Vaughan-Spruce is quoted as saying: “We must stand firm against this and ensure that these most fundamental freedoms are protected, and that all our laws reflect this.” But, of course, one person’s freedom may be someone else’s suppression. Having been arrested once, one might imagine she had learned her lesson. She has been back, however, doing it again, and far from just anonymously praying, this time she brought a photographer to record the event so that a record of it can be circulated to other anti-abortion groups. That clearly makes this act a deliberate breach of the law with the intention to encourage others to do the same.

Fr. Sean Gough remained silent after he and Vaughan-Spruce were cleared by magistrates, although he had held up a sign in the zone reading “praying for free speech”. One must assume he didn’t mean free speech about LTBQI issues, although he didn’t say so. What he did say was: “I call on the government to look into the overwhelming positive work that pro-life groups do to support vulnerable women at their point of need, before censoring the streets of the UK and allowing good people to be criminalised for acts of love.” Members of the LGBTQI community might argue that that is exactly what the group is seeking to do to them. The acceptable definition of love may need updating. They didn’t ask to be gay and very few would dream of transvestism if it were not for an inner desire to dress and act that way.



Author George Orwell

Mind you, if it became illegal just to think of carrying out criminal acts, the British police would have to block off access to the streets around Westminster and Downing Street. In the light of recent news stories, it seems likely that quite a few members of the public, on seeing MPs and ministers walking about, might have harboured quite murderous thoughts about some of them. It’s worth recalling the nonsensical motto of

Ingsoc, quoted in Orwell’s “1984” and followed by the hollow-eyed and subservient citizens of Oceania: “War is peace. Freedom is slavery. Ignorance is strength.” It seems to come close to how Vladimir Putin would like the citizens of Russia and its dependencies to believe. But I would hazard a guess that not many of us would be keen to bow down to such tyrannical laws. Some of Putin’s followers may, however.



Anti-choice protest

Handcuffs on the brain?

Is it even possible to use chains and padlocks on how people think? Plato’s theory of the soul suggests it may be possible, at least in principle. Heaven knows where the key would fit to unlock it. An ear or a nostril, perhaps? Plato’s beliefs were inspired by the teachings of Socrates, and he was convinced that it’s the “essence” of people that makes them behave in a particular way.

He believed that this “essence” is a very real part of their being and that it continues to exist after death (although I don’t believe he came back from the dead to confirm this). The ‘soul’ he argued remains capable of thought after death and that it would be reborn in other bodies. Reincarnation, I suppose we would call it, although he didn’t call it that himself. Among philosophers (and there have been many) Socrates was the first, it seems, to think that the soul continues to exist after death, and to think for itself. The rebirth of the soul was referred to as “*metempsychosis*”. Plato divided the soul into three parts: “*logistikon*” (reason), “*thymoeides*” (spirit), and “*epithymetikon*” (appetite). It seems that no-one before Plato had believed the soul to be the source of both life itself and also the underlying the mind. Plato clearly believed that the soul bears full responsibility for any actions. The book in which he points out this aspect of his philosophy, something that crops up in both his “Laws” and in “Phaedrus”, still puzzles philosophers today. I’m sure he’d be delighted

to think of the head-scratching he's caused to thinkers more than two thousand years later!

If we could be arrested for what we're thinking, there could be quite an amusing list of charges. "Looking at the picture of the glamour girl in my morning newspaper and thinking improper thoughts", for instance, or "dreaming of setting about my boss with a hatchet" or how about "wondering if I could dig a hole in my garden big enough to conceal my neighbour's thuggish son after I've strangled him, along with his awful music player"? Similarly, it cannot be justice, surely (although some may disagree), to jail some middle aged or elderly man for trying to picture in his mind his neighbour's teenage daughter wearing a bikini (or less)? I'm sure you could come up with lots of similar thought crimes if you tried. The thing is, we cannot always be thinking perfectly innocent thoughts about everyone, however annoying they may be. We shouldn't have to, either. In many cases, the thoughts themselves may have been prompted by dreams, over which we have no control.



Briullov, Karl - A Dream of a Girl Before a Sunrise

I'm sure you've had unpleasant dreams, some of which may have involved you taking some sort of action that in reality you never would. Some unlucky souls have ambulatory dreams: sleep walking and other activities undertaken whilst completely asleep. I've been lucky: as a young child I often had dreams involving movement, and fairly pointless movement, too. On one occasion, while on a family holiday in the English Lake District, I woke up with my feet on the pillow and my hands and head buried deeply in the bedclothes at the foot of the bed. What Plato would have made of it I have no idea. I didn't suffocate, so I suppose I must count it as a plus.

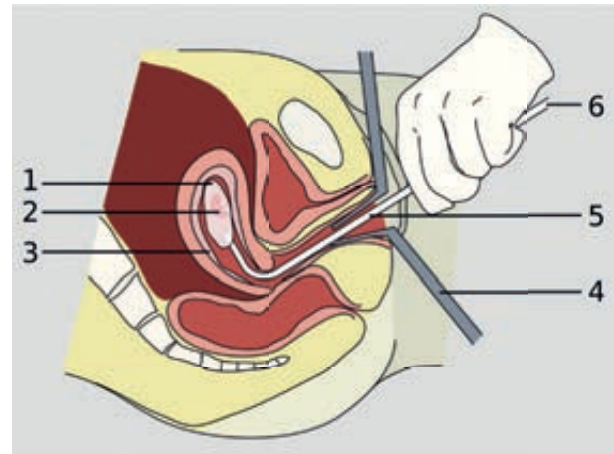
According to the website "The List": "Whether it feels like you dream every night or you rarely dream at all, everybody does it". In fact, according to Medical News Today, most people dream between three and six times every night, with each

mini-movie only lasting five to 20 minutes. However, despite the fact that we are all constantly dreaming, around 95% of dreams have already been forgotten by the time a person rolls out of bed." Thinking about the very few I can remember, I can only say how pleased I am that so many others have been forgotten before I wake up.

Just in case you are bothered by such things (please remember: dreams are NOT real!) there are websites to visit that seek to explain what's been happening, such as <https://www.auntyflo.com/dream-dictionary/crime>, for instance. But I wouldn't take it too seriously, if I were you, although its suggestions may work for some people. The time to worry is when you wake up from a bit of sleep-walking to find you're in the underground vault of a city bank with an oxy-acetylene torch in your hand and the safe door hanging open. Convincing the armed police officers who've come to that it was nothing but a bad dream may prove difficult.

Intimidation or free speech?

There is no doubt, of course, that those attending an abortion facility are normally in a fragile state of mind. Nobody goes there full of cheer and glee, even if the result of the abortion may help to overcome an embarrassing, even job-threatening or marriage-threatening, problem. I should imagine that no woman wants to undergo an abortion, however unwanted or inconvenient the pregnancy may be.



Vacuum aspiration abortion procedure

1. Amniotic sac
2. Embryo
3. Uterine lining
4. Speculum
5. Vacurette
6. The vacurette is attached to a suction pump

A diagram of a vacuum aspiration abortion procedure at 8 weeks gestation. The vagina is held open by a speculum [4] in order for a tube (called a vacurette [5]) which is attached [6] to a suction pump to be inserted through the patient's cervix. The products of conception (amniotic sac [1], embryo [2], uterine lining [3], etc) are then evacuated through the vacurette.



Isabel Vaughan-Spruce being arrested by West Midlands Police

It is not something to be taken lightly and it is never a frivolous matter. The woman involved knows that she is nurturing in her womb a human being, or at least a potential human being, a human child in potentia, so to speak. There is bound to be some sort of spiritual link, a bond of sorts, between the developing foetus and the woman whose body is nurturing it and in which her egg cells were fertilised by a man. If the procreative act was eight weeks earlier, then the legs of the foetus will already be getting longer, although parts of the leg, such as knees, ankles, thighs and toes have yet to develop. The foetus itself is still in the mother's amniotic sac and the placenta has only just begun to form. The womb by this time will be roughly the size of a lemon. The foetus gets all of its nourishment at this stage from the mother's yolk sac. It's a complicated business, growing a baby to the point at which it's ready to enter the big, wide, world. Abortions are supposed to be carried out before the pregnancy reaches the stage of 24 weeks. Women normally seek (or at least are offered) counselling before undergoing the procedure. It is clearly and very obviously not a decision to be taken lightly. It's also one which the mother-to-be may later have cause to regret, and she knows that.

Given the fact that the woman is likely to be disturbed and unhappy, the last thing she needs, in all probability, is the sight of somebody with religious beliefs obviously praying, even if doing it silently. The presence of a minister of religion is also likely to be disturbing, suggesting a judgmental attitude without the judge in question knowing the circumstances. It's worth recalling at this point that in the Birmingham case, the member of the clergy who was there, while completely opposed to abortion regardless of the reasons, is also linked to an organisation that is completely opposed to people who identify as LGBTI. In some American states abortion is already either illegal or as close to it as makes little difference. It's strange how some politicians think they have the right of control over the body of a woman they don't know and have never met, purely on moral grounds that they chose for themselves. But in the United States, that appears to be the case. Some ardent souls dismiss abortion, regardless of its motive, as simply murder. Oddly, they're often the same people who support the notion of the death penalty. Murder by the state doesn't count, it seems. In some states, though – take Colorado, for instance – there is a movement arguing

that men should have no say in the legality of abortions, under the slogan “no uterus, no opinion”. It's also true to say that many of those who are implacably opposed to abortion under any circumstances fail to take into account those that take place because of a serious fault with the foetus that will result in a baby that is simply not viable or that will face a life of pain and discomfort, or whose difficult existence will severely disadvantage other existing siblings.

For some people, however, the sanctity of human life tops any facts or other philosophical thoughts. Religious conservatives (and I certainly don't mean just people who vote that way) believe in the sanctity of life because, they say, it was created by God who alone has the right to end it. They also tend to believe that humans were “created in his image”, without stipulating if that means that God looks Asian, European, African or whatever. The possible choice is a very wide range indeed and all can be beautiful, yet look totally unlike. Some might argue (and have) that it makes the argument nonsensical. In the Book of Genesis in the Christian Bible, it states that: “Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has God made mankind.” That, of course, would mean that judicial executions are OK, although many would argue that it can't be so. The problem is that as soon as anyone introduces religious beliefs into an argument it gets very convoluted and difficult, so I won't go down that path, except to say that the existence or otherwise of God is almost certainly unprovable (except for those people who believe such things to be self-evident) and is purely a matter of personal opinion. It's your choice.

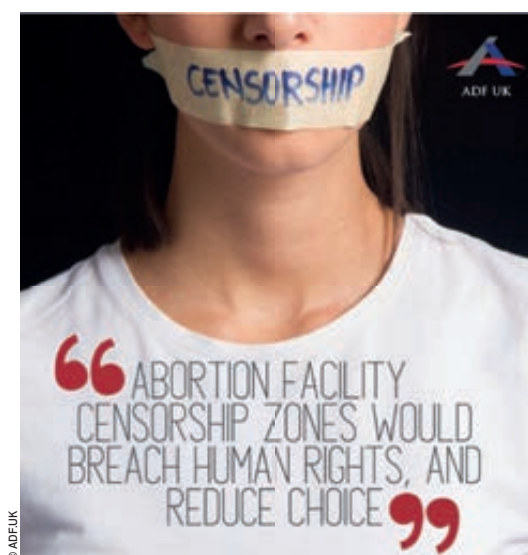


US Anti abortion protest

PHILOSOPHY OF DEATH

Plato was a big fan of fellow-philosopher Socrates, who was born slightly earlier than he was (469 BC instead of 429 BC). Indeed, it was Plato who described Socrates death as he was executed for impiety. It was Socrates who wrote: "It is never right to do wrong or to requite wrong with wrong, or when we suffer evil to defend ourselves by doing evil in return." I presume that means that he would have been opposed to the application of the death penalty, although he remained stoical about the one that was imposed on him. They took philosophy really seriously back in those days.

But that brings us back to that case in Birmingham, in the UK, in which magistrates set free a woman suspected of praying in an area where it was forbidden. It was forbidden because it was felt that women attending an abortion facility were vulnerable to attempts by those convinced that they're always right to bully them into changing their minds. Isabel Vaughan-Spruce was a long-term pro-life activist, known to police and she admitted she "might have been praying". Prayer is not, of course, illegal, but doing so in an obvious manner in a zone in which anti-abortion protests are banned is. She has protested that the creation of anti-protest zones is against free speech.



A poster from the American conservative Christian legal advocacy group « Alliance Defending Freedom » based in the USA

Presumably that's why she returned to the scene on behalf of her "March for Life" anti-abortion group and on several occasions visited the clinic, knowing it would be illegal to do so. She told the policeman attending the action that she was "not protesting" and "not engaging in

any of the activities prohibited". Her bail conditions prevent her from going near the abortion facility. Rachel Clarke, Chief of Staff at the British Pregnancy Advisory Service in Birmingham, said that Vaughan-Spruce "has visited the clinic several times in full knowledge that she is breaching the safe access zone around it." Vaughan-Spruce told the court that at her previous court appearance, "It was made clear by the court that my silent prayers were not a crime, and yet again I have been arrested."

The presence of her photographer may have had something to do with that.



A poster by the American conservative Christian legal advocacy group « Alliance Defending Freedom »

It could be argued that pregnant women who are already suffering crises of conscience don't need the complication caused by pro-life activists. Fr. Gough has said that: "whatever your views are on abortion, we should not be able to agree that in a democratic country we should not be in the business of prosecuting thought crimes." Standing very visibly in a place you're not allowed to be is a rather different matter. Father Gough has called on his supporters to defend what he called "these most fundamental freedoms" that new legislation may erect more barriers to protest.

I am reminded irresistibly of a 1956 song which featured in a musical by Frank Loesser called "The Most Happy Fella" and was released as a single by a group called The Four Lads. The song itself would probably not meet with the approval of either of the defendants or their supporters, being called "Standing on a Corner, Watching All the Girls Go By". The song urges male listeners to head down to main street and stand, watching young women walk past, dreaming possibly rather naughty dreams. The last verse contains words that apply strongly to this case: "Brother, you can't go to jail for what you're thinking, Or for that woo look in your eye." Some of the young women thus gazed upon lustfully by men with nothing better to do may wish that jail could be an option in this case but thinking about things is not the same as doing them, so Vaughan-Spruce and Gough remain free to go on thinking about how to prevent abortions, but not ostentatiously, nor in public close to an abortion facility. The patients have enough to worry about without them.

T. Kingsley Brooks

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A NORTH KOREAN CRYPTO HEIST OF €1.6 BILLION

**Money to fund
the regime and its
nuclear programme**

North Korean hackers have carried out a crypto heist, stealing more than €1.6 billion worth of cryptocurrencies. The heist is one of the largest crypto heists in history and involved the theft of funds from a South Korean crypto exchange. In 2021, a total of €400 million was stolen in another North Korean crypto heist. The hackers used a sophisticated technique called a “spear phishing” attack, in which targeted emails are sent to specific employees of the exchange to gain access to their computers and steal the funds.

In 2022, the Federal Bureau of Investigation was able to confirm that Lazarus Group (1) and APT38, cyber actors linked to the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea (DPRK), were responsible for the theft of USD 620 million worth of Ethereum reported that year.

North Korea is known for using cyberattacks to fund its regime, and this heist is just one example of the country’s efforts to use cryptocurrency to circumvent sanctions and generate revenue. The stolen funds were quickly laundered through various crypto exchanges to avoid detection, but authorities were able to track down and freeze some of the funds.

The heist underscores the need for stronger security measures in the crypto industry and the importance of regulatory oversight to prevent illicit activity. North Korea’s use of cyberattacks to fund its regime is a major concern for international security, and countries must work together to prevent such activity.

The North Korean crypto heist is just one example of the growing threat of cybercrime, which is increasingly sophisticated and difficult to detect. North Korean hackers are sent to Shenyang, China, for special training. They are trained to install malware of all kinds on computers, computer networks and servers. Domestically, there are Kim Chaek University of Technology, Kim Il-sung University and Moranbong University, which select the best students from all over the country and offer them six years of specialised training.



Kim Jong-Un during the launch of the medium and-long range strategic ballistic rocket Hwasong-12 at an undisclosed location



North Korean ICBM

As the use of cryptocurrencies continues to grow, it is important for individuals and businesses to take steps to protect their assets and prevent unauthorised access. Governments around the world are also taking steps to regulate the crypto industry and prevent illegal activity, but more needs to be done to ensure the security and stability of the market. Overall, the North Korean crypto heist is a stark reminder of the importance of cybersecurity and the need for vigilance in the rapidly evolving world of cryptocurrency.

It has long been known that North Korea is working to develop nuclear weapons despite international sanctions and condemnations. Recent reports suggest that the regime is using stolen cyber money to fund its nuclear programme.

Experts believe that the regime also uses these ill-gotten funds to support other military activities.

In this way, North Korea can bypass the traditional financial institutions that are subject to international sanctions and obtain the funds it needs to further develop its weapons. It also allows the regime to deny its nuclear programme to a certain extent, as it can claim that the money comes from other sources.

North Korea’s nuclear weapons programme poses a significant threat to global security, and the use of stolen cyber money to fund this programme only exacerbates this threat. The international community must take action to prevent the regime from acquiring the resources it needs to develop these weapons, including through cyberattacks.

This may include tightening sanctions on North Korea and stepping up efforts to track and disrupt its cyber operations. It may also include diplomatic efforts to engage with the regime and encourage it to fully abandon its nuclear weapons programme.

Despite international sanctions and



WANTED BY THE FBI

PARK JIN HYOK

Conspiracy to Commit Wire Fraud and Bank Fraud; Conspiracy to Commit Computer-Related Fraud (Computer Intrusion)



DESCRIPTION

Aliases: Jin Hyok Park, Pak Jin Hek, Pak Kwang Jin	
Place of Birth: Democratic People's Republic of Korea (North Korea)	Hair: Black
Eyes: Brown	Sex: Male
Race: Asian	Languages: English, Korean, Mandarin Chinese

condemnations, North Korea has continued to pursue its nuclear ambitions, claiming that it needs nuclear weapons to deter the US and its allies from an imminent invasion.

North Korea has conducted numerous missile tests in recent years, that have caused concern and condemnation in the international community. The regime has tested a variety of missiles, including short- and medium-range missiles and intercontinental ballistic missiles (ICBMs).

Experts believe that North Korea currently has about 30-60 nuclear weapons, although it is unclear how many of these weapons are operational. The regime has also made progress in developing miniaturised warheads that can be mounted on ballistic missiles.

North Korea's missile programme is also believed to give the regime the ability to strike its enemies, including South Korea, Japan and the United States. The regime has also claimed that its missiles are designed to deter a possible attack by its enemies.

| Lazarus Group

The Lazarus Group is a cybercrime group consisting of an unknown number of individuals controlled by the government of North Korea. Numerous cyberattacks have been attributed to it between 2010 and 2021. The Lazarus Group has close ties to the North Korean state. According to the United States Federal Bureau of Investigation, the Lazarus Group is a North Korean "state-sponsored hacking organisation". According to North Korean defector Kim Kuk-song, the organisation is known domestically as the 414 Liaison Office.

Park Jin Hyok is allegedly a North Korean state-sponsored computer programmer. He is also alleged to have been involved in a wide-ranging criminal conspiracy carried out by a group of hackers from North Korea's General Bureau of Intelligence (RGB). The conspiracy involved North Korean hacker groups referred to by some private cybersecurity researchers as the "Lazarus Group" and Advanced Persistent Threat 38 (APT38).

James Lookwood
james.lookwood@europe-diplomatic.eu



Going for a coffee? ... Lock your desktop first!



National Crime Agency Director
General Graeme Biggar

RANSOMWARE CRIMINALS

**Sanctioned in joint
UK/US crackdown on
international cyber crime**

Seven Russian cyber criminals who are linked to the group behind some of the most damaging ransomware attacks on the UK in recent years have been exposed and sanctioned by the UK and the US.

The sanctions, announced by the FCDO alongside the US Department of the Treasury's Office of Foreign Assets Control (OFAC), form part of a concerted campaign by the UK and the US to tackle international cyber crime.

They follow a lengthy investigation by the National Crime Agency into the crime group behind Trickbot malware, as well as the Conti and RYUK ransomware strains, among others.

The NCA assesses that the group was responsible for extorting at least £27 million from 149 UK victims, including hospitals, schools, businesses and local authorities, although their true impact is likely to be much higher.

National Crime Agency Director General Graeme Biggar said:

"This is a hugely significant moment for the UK and our collaborative efforts with OFAC to disrupt international cyber criminals."

"The sanctions are the first of their kind for the UK and signal the continuing campaign targeting those responsible for some of the most sophisticated and damaging ransomware that has impacted the UK and our allies. They show that these criminals and those that support them are not immune to UK action, and this is just one tool we will use to crack down on this threat and protect the public."

"This is an excellent example of the dedication and expertise of the NCA team who have worked closely with partners on this complex investigation. We will continue to deploy our unique capabilities to expose cyber criminals and work alongside our international partners to hold those responsible to account, wherever they are in the world."

Ransomware is a tier one national security threat, with attacks continuing to increase in scale and complexity. The criminals behind these attacks specifically target the systems of organisations they judge will pay them the most money and time their attacks to cause maximum damage, including targeting hospitals in the middle of the pandemic.

Although the Conti group disbanded last year, reporting suggests its members, including those sanctioned today, continue to be involved in some of the most notorious new ransomware strains that dominate and threaten UK security.

The seven cyber criminals are now subject to travel bans and asset freezes, and are severely restricted in their use of the global financial system.

Foreign Secretary James Cleverly said:

"By sanctioning these cyber criminals, we are sending a clear signal to them and others involved in ransomware that they will be held to account."



UK Foreign Secretary James Cleverly

"These cynical cyber attacks cause real damage to people's lives and livelihoods. We will always put our national security first by protecting the UK and our allies from serious organised crime – whatever its form and wherever it originates."

An indictment was unsealed today in the US District Court for the District of New Jersey charging one of the individuals, Vitaliy Kovalev, with conspiracy to commit bank fraud and eight counts of bank fraud in connection with a series of intrusions into victim bank accounts held at various US-based financial institutions that occurred in 2009 and 2010.

This alleged offending predates that of the Conti group.

According to research from Chainalysis, the group extorted \$180 million from global ransomware victims in 2021 alone.

Recent victims in the UK include the Scottish Environment Protection Agency, Redcar and Cleveland Council, and forensic laboratory Eurofins.

Internationally the Irish Health Service Executive, Costa Rican Government and American healthcare providers were targeted.

Security Minister Tom Tugendhat said:

"We're targeting cyber criminals who have been involved in some of the most prolific and damaging"

forms of ransomware. Ransomware criminals have hit hospitals and schools, hurt many and disrupted lives, at great expense to the taxpayer.

“Cyber-crime knows no boundaries and threatens our national security. These sanctions identify and expose those responsible.”



© PARLIAMENT.UK

UK Security Minister Tom Tugendhat

The Russian State provides a permissive environment for ransomware actors to operate by neglecting their responsibility to investigate and disrupt such groups and, in some instances, by actively supporting these groups in their criminal endeavours.

The NCSC assessed that key members of the Conti group highly likely maintain links to the Russian Intelligence Services from whom they have likely received tasking.

The group was one of the first cybercrime groups to back Russia's war in Ukraine, voicing their support for the Kremlin within 24 hours of the invasion.

National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) CEO Lindy Cameron said:

“Ransomware is the most acute cyber threat facing the UK, and attacks by criminal groups show just how devastating its impact can be.

“The NCSC is working with partners to bear down on ransomware attacks and those responsible, helping to prevent incidents and improve our collective resilience.

“It is vital organisations take immediate steps to limit their risk by following the NCSC's advice on how to put robust defences in place to protect their networks.”

If you are the victim of a ransomware attack, you should use **HMG's Cyber Incident Signposting Site** as soon as possible for direction on which agencies to report your incident to.

Today, OFSI are also publishing new public guidance [<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/financial-sanctions-faqs>], which sets out the implications of these new sanctions in ransomware cases.

Making funds available to the individuals such as paying ransomware, including in crypto assets, is prohibited under these sanctions. Organisations should have or should put in place robust cyber security and incident management systems in place to prevent and manage serious cyber incidents.

Those designated are:

- Vitaliy KOVALEV (historical use of AKA Ben and AKA Bentley).
- Valery SEDLETSKI (AKA Strix)
- Valentin KARYAGIN (AKA Globus)
- Maksim MIKHAILOV (AKA Baget)
- Dmitry PLESHEVSKIY (AKA Iseldor)
- Mikhail ISKRITSKIY (AKA Tropa)
- Ivan VAKHROMEYEV (AKA Mushroom)



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National Cyber Security Centre (NCSC) CEO Lindy Cameron



SHINE YOUR LIGHT - LIGHT UP YOUR CITY!

**EUROPEAN
CULTURE HAS
ITS CAPITAL
CITY**

**Timisoara elected
European Capital of
Culture 2023**

Timișoara is often considered the unofficial capital of the historic Romanian province of Banat. According to the latest census (2021), it is one of the most populous cities in the country (319 500 inhabitants), with almost half a million people living in its urban area, and the second largest functional urban region after the capital, Bucharest. Meanwhile, Timișoara attracts about 8,000 new residents every year. Timișoara is a multicultural city, home to 21 ethnic groups and 18 religions. Interculturality has long been a special feature of the city.

Timișoara is located in the northern hemisphere, at the intersection of the 45th parallel north and the 21st meridian east, almost equidistant from the North Pole and the equator. Timișoara is located near two rivers: Timiș and Bega, which made the land swampy and frequently flooded. The name of the city comes from one of these two rivers. Timișoara developed on its banks, where the land was fertile and provided favourable conditions for food and human subsistence since 4000 BC. The first verifiable inhabitants of the Banat were the Dacians. Some historians believe that the present location of the town corresponds to the ancient Dacian settlement of Zurobara. After the Roman conquest, the settlement grew around the *Castrum Regium* Themes, an ancient Roman crossroads fortress, with a population consisting mainly of farmers, hunters and craftsmen.

First officially mentioned in 1212, Timisoara was destroyed by the Tartars in the 13th century, but the city was rebuilt and grew considerably during the reign of Charles I of Hungary, who financed the reinforcement of the fortress. He



The Battle of Nicopolis, as depicted by Turkish miniaturist Nakkaş Osman in the *Hünernâme*, 1584–88



Horse tram in Timișoara in 1869

later also commissioned a new royal palace, built by Italian craftsmen, which housed the royal court between 1316 and 1323. Due to its strategic location, which allowed control over the Banat plain, Timișoara's importance grew considerably. In the middle of the 14th century, the city was therefore at the forefront of the struggle of the Western Christians against the Ottomans. In 1394, the Turks led by Sultan Bayezid passed by it on their way to Wallachia, where they were defeated by Mircea the Elder at Rovine. Years later, Timișoara served as a rendezvous point for the Christian armies before the Battle of Nicopolis.

When the Christians were defeated, the Ottomans laid waste to Timișoara. The city remained under Ottoman rule for 164 years and enjoyed a special status similar to other cities in the region, such as Budapest or Belgrade. During this time, a large Islamic community lived in Timișoara. At the end of the 17th century, there was an anti-Ottoman uprising in the Banat. In 1716, the Austrian army decided to conquer Timișoara. The Turkish civilian population was forced to leave the city after a 48-day siege and repeated bombardments that destroyed many buildings in the city. Timisoara came under Habsburg influence and later under Austro-Hungarian rule. After the conquest of the Banat, the imperial rulers in Vienna began an extensive colonisation process, during which a large number of German Catholics settled in the city. The newcomers developed crafts in the region, the entire fortress of Timisoara was rebuilt and the Bega River was regulated, creating a navigable canal. An extensive modernisation process began, with new large boulevards and beautiful architectural quarters, and the city became a progressive and cosmopolitan place. Timișoara was the first city in the Habsburg Empire with street lighting (1760) and the first city in Europe and the second in the world, after New York, to light its streets with electricity. In 1869 Timișoara introduced public transport with horse-drawn trams, a first in Europe. The first public library in the Habsburg Empire was opened at this time and a municipal hospital was built, 24 years before the one in Vienna. The first German newspaper in Southeast Europe was also printed in Timisoara. The first chocolate manufacturer in Romania was founded in Timisoara in 1890.

Between 1880 and 1914, Timisoara was the most important industrial, commercial, financial and cultural city in the region, admired for its artistic achievements in music, literature, painting, sculpture and architecture, as well as for its technical and scientific innovations.

From 1918, Timisoara became part of modern Romania.

During the World War II Timisoara again suffered great

damage from devastating bombing raids, especially in the second half of 1944. German and Hungarian troops tried to take the city by force throughout September, but fortunately without success.

After the war, Timișoara, like the rest of the country, suffered under the communist regime. However, the city developed into a highly industrialised city and the population tripled between 1948 and 1992 as people migrated to larger cities in search of a better life.

On 16 December 1989, the first anti-communist uprising in Romania began in Timisoara. On 20 December, Timisoara was declared the first city in Romania to be liberated from communism. The slogan 'Azi in Timisoara, maine in toata tara' (Today in Timisoara, tomorrow in the whole country) echoed through the streets, which quickly filled with demonstrators. What originally began as a protest by the people of Timisoara against the persecution of the reformed bishop Laslo Tokes developed into an uprising against a repressive system that caused the entire country to collapse and kept it trapped behind the Iron Curtain for decades after the Second World War. Innocent people, children and women died for freedom at that time. It was a bloodshed that was initially tried to be covered up and hidden from the rest of the country. As a child, I remember that the news on TV still contained the same monotonous praise of the Communist Party and its leader Ceausescu. Nothing was reported about what was going on in Timisoara. But I also remember how my grandfather, a former political prisoner in the Russian forced labour camps, secretly listened to the news on the European Free Radio, although this was completely forbidden in Romania at that time. Like him, many others learned the truth about what was happening in Timisoara. A few days later, in all the major cities and especially in Bucharest, people began to rise up against the communist dictatorship, and in the end, after many lives destroyed and buildings machine-gunned, the revolution was victorious and Romania became a free country again, ready to embark on a new path, that of democracy. But Timisoara was the spark for these events.

Timișoara is a thriving city today. It is one of Romania's most important educational centres, with around 40,000 students enrolled in the city's six universities. At the same time, it is a city with an old medical tradition, where much is being done in this field. The first in vitro fertilisation, the first laser heart surgery and the first stem cell transplant in Romania - they were all performed here. In recent years, Timișoara has also become a provider of medical tourism services, especially cosmetic surgery



Two men led away at gunpoint after their car was stopped by soldiers in Timisoara on December 1989



Dominic Fritz, mayor of Timisoara

and dental treatment, due to its high quality and affordable prices. The city is now distinguishing itself alongside other major Romanian cities as a regional technology centre. In 2013, it had the fastest internet download speed in the world.

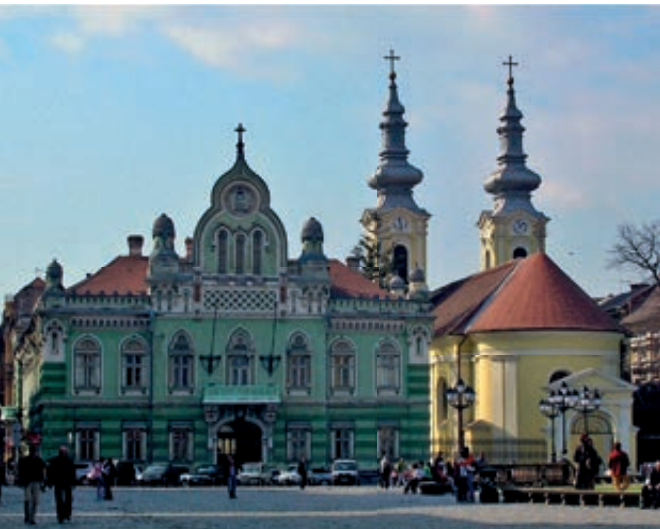
Timișoara, often referred to as 'Little Vienna', is known for its many historical monuments and its 36 parks and green spaces. The city is part of the European Route of Art Nouveau. It is also a member of Eurocities. Timisoara has six large public squares surrounded by monumental buildings.

Timișoara has an active cultural life, and this is one of the reasons why it was chosen as the European Capital of Culture 2023, along with Veszprém in Hungary and Elefsina in Greece.

Timișoara is the only city in Europe that has three state theatres in three different languages (Romanian, German and Hungarian). The three theatres and the National Opera are housed in the Palace of Culture, an architectural jewel built between 1871 and 1875 according to the plans of the Viennese architects Ferdinand Fellner and Hermann Helmer, who had also designed the City Theatre in Vienna, among others. Romanian history and popular fairy tales inspired the wall drawings. Joseph Strauss began as music director in Timisoara, where he composed and premiered the Faust Quadrille. Franz Liszt also performed in Timisoara in 1846.

Ten years after its application, Timișoara is officially the European Capital of Culture in 2023. As the European Commission mentions, the city has won 'a vision not for one year, but for the whole city'.

The organisers and the city administration are sure that Timisoara will attract up to 1,000,000



Piața Unirii, Timisoara. On the left - Serbian bishops palace, on the right - Serbian orthodox Cathedral

guests this year. In naming Timisoara the European Capital of Culture for 2023, the city has set its goals with a view to the impact people have on the community in which they live. Thus, we want to become a city where cultural excellence prevails and which hosts over 30 cultural communities, including Romanians, Germans, Hungarians, Serbs, Croats, Italians, Spaniards and Bulgarians,' said the Mayor of Timisoara, Dominic Fritz.

This cultural palette is the added value of the city, as it has favoured the emergence of public institutions that mainly serve the European citizens residing in Timisoara.

The official slogan of Timisoara as European Capital of Culture 2023 is 'Shine your light - Light up your city! It was inaugurated along with other events in mid-February in the presence of more than 100 high-level representatives from 41 countries, including Romanian Prime Minister Nicolae Ciucă, US Ambassador to Romania Kathleen Kavalec, Adina Vălean, the EU Commissioner for Transport (who had also come to present the 'Melina Mercouri' prize offered by the EU Commission as a reward for the commitment taken on and appreciated by the organisers), or Katrin Goering-Eckardt, Vice-President of the Bundestag. The latter stated in a live discussion with Mayor Fritz on Instagram that Timisoara had given her the impression of an extremely hospitable city.

The organisers have prepared more than 130 events for the first weekend, including gallery openings, rock or electronic music concerts, theatre performances, children's programmes, symphony concerts, guided tours, workshops and film screenings, which will be attended by almost 17 000 people. Meanwhile, the whole of 2023 will be full of cultural events in the city.

According to the European Commission, European Capital of Culture status brings important benefits. The European Capitals of Culture initiative aims to "highlight the richness and diversity of cultures in Europe, to celebrate

the cultural commonalities shared by Europeans, to strengthen European citizens' sense of belonging to a common cultural area and to promote the contribution of culture to the development of cities'. The Commission cannot directly fund cultural projects, but there is a formula to complement the events budget with €1.5 million for each of the awarded cities, coming from the Creative Europe programme, which aims to promote the contribution of culture to the development of these cities.

Moreover, history shows that the event is a perfect opportunity to revitalise these cities by raising their profile, improving their image on the international stage and stimulating tourism.

This initiative was launched in 1985 when Athens was officially declared the first European Capital of Culture. To date, more than 60 cities in the European Union and beyond have been awarded this title.

Culture plays an important role in our lives and in our society; we need culture to understand each other better and to strengthen the bonds between our countries. By being awarded the title, cities can strengthen their cultural activities and reach new target groups. The programme also has a social impact and promotes intercultural dialogue. Hosting the European Capital of Culture Year provides the winning cities with a great opportunity to showcase their cultural life on a much larger scale and enhance the city's image, visibility and recognition on the international map. European Capitals of Culture have a great long-term track record in terms of growth and job creation.

The most obvious and direct economic impact is certainly the increase in the number of tourists. It is estimated that the average increase in overnight stays in a European Capital of Culture is 12%. For example, after the Belgian city of Mons was named European Capital of Culture 2015, it was found that every euro of public money invested brought between 5.5 and 6 euros to the local economy. Similarly, Marseille, European Capital of Culture 2013, experienced a huge and profound transformation due to investment projects worth more than 600 million euros, which revitalised the city for decades to come. To achieve long-term impact and benefits, municipal programmes must be fully integrated and coordinated with the development projects of these cities. There must be a unified vision and a clear strategy.

Following the European model, there are now also national initiatives such as the Italian Capitals of Culture or similar initiatives in Ireland, the UK or Lithuania. They are extremely useful and give a boost to local development.

Sibiu, another beautiful Romanian city, was chosen as



Greek actress, singer, activist, and Minister of Culture Melina Mercouri talks to the press ahead of the launch of the first European Capital of Culture in Athens, 1985



The Gothic Evangelical (Lutheran) Cathedral of Sibiu, Romania elected as European Capital of culture in 2007

European Capital of Culture in 2007, the same year Romania officially joined the European Union.

In 2016, the city of Timișoara was nominated for the title of European Capital of Culture 2021. However, the event was postponed until 2023 due to the coronavirus pandemic. Anyone can follow the city's entire cultural programme this year on the website www.opening.timisoara2023.eu, with numerous events currently listed.

when it comes to Timișoara, people agree that the city is different. Different in the sense of open, courageous and diverse. A city that has not been afraid to swim against the tide and that, in moments of grace, has itself become a tide. A city that is not ashamed of counterculture and that has even understood that multiculturalism is not a term that only applies to ethnic groups and denominations'. (www.timisoara2023.eu)

Dominic Fritz, the city's mayor (a German citizen who speaks impeccable Romanian), has been an active supporter of this ambitious and important project for the city. He recently participated in external campaigns to promote the event in some major European capitals: Paris, Brussels and Berlin. Together with his young and enthusiastic team, he managed in recent years to attract non-repayable European funds of more than 100 million euros for Timișoara, which helped modernise the city's infrastructure and gave it a new European look.



Timișoara National Art Museum

Among the attractions tourists can see in Timișoara this year is a tower decorated with 1306 perennials, located in the middle of the city centre. The temporary modular construction with a height of 26 metres was designed by four architects from Barcelona together with a local team. It will serve as a vantage point. From a height of 20 metres, visitors will be able to admire Victoriei Square and its surroundings. Each level of the construction will include several cultural activities.

Famous Hollywood actors John Malkovich and Isabella Rossellini will appear in two special theatre performances in Timișoara this year.

The 2023 Art Encounter Biennial will begin on 19 May and end on 16 July. This year's edition bears the signature of curator Adrian Notz, former artistic director of Cabaret Voltaire in Zurich, and will take place at several venues in Timișoara.

The Constantin Brâncuși exhibition 'Romanian Sources and Universal Perspectives', curated by Doina Lemny, will be on display at the National Art Museum of Timișoara from 30 September to 28 January 2024. The exhibition of works by the famous Romanian sculptor is one of the most anticipated events in the city's 2023 European Capital of Culture cultural programme. Ovidiu Șandor, the commissioner for the Brâncuși exhibition, recently told Euronews: 'Brâncuși has not been exhibited in Romania since 1970, more than 50 years ago, and I felt that this context, the Capital of Culture, is a special context in which such an exhibition, which we might enjoy once in a generation, could take place. It is a complicated exhibition, difficult to organise, because the most difficult thing is to get the loans. The various museums in the world that hold such works are very choosy about accepting loans and we are happy that in this partnership with the National Museum of Art, with the French Institute, in a project funded by the County Council, we have managed to convince museums such as the Centre Pompidou in Paris, the Tate Modern in London, the Guggenheim Collection in Venice'.

Timișoara will also benefit from this year's cultural title in the longer term. The city's citizens will continue to use the five cinema halls specially set up for this cultural year, the MultipleXity Centre for Art, Technology and Experimentation later on. In addition, the title of European Capital of Culture offers cultural operators the opportunity to assert themselves and put themselves on the European cultural map.

Romania is a country with immense tourism potential that is still largely undiscovered and under-promoted. Timișoara now has the chance to gain more visibility, and can also serve as an impulse generator for other Romanian cities. Time will tell if this great opportunity will be used wisely and efficiently.

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© WIKICOMMONS

People's Salvation Cathedral
(2021 January)

THE CATHEDRAL OF NATIONAL REDEMPTION

Romania's 500 million Euro Cathedral

The People's Salvation Cathedral, also known as the Cathedral of National Redemption, is a monumental Orthodox Christian cathedral currently under construction in Bucharest, Romania. The cathedral is set to become the tallest Orthodox church in the world, standing at a height of 120 meters (394 feet) and with a capacity of 5,000 worshippers.

The idea for the cathedral was first proposed in the early 1990s, following the fall of Romania's communist regime. The project was officially launched in 2007 by then-Prime Minister Calin Popescu-Tariceanu, who saw it as a symbol of national unity and a way to showcase Romania's cultural heritage.

The cathedral's design is a combination of traditional Byzantine and Romanian styles, featuring a central dome and four smaller domes, as well as intricate stone carvings and colorful frescoes. The interior will also feature a series of mosaics and icons, including a massive iconostasis, or screen of icons, that will be one of the largest in the world.

Construction of the cathedral has been controversial, with critics arguing that the estimated cost of over 500 million euros could have been better spent on social services and infrastructure projects. In addition, the cathedral has faced criticism for its location, which required the demolition of several historic buildings and the displacement of local residents.

Supporters of the project argue that the cathedral will become an important symbol of Romania's cultural identity and a major tourist attraction, bringing in millions of euros in revenue each year. The cathedral's construction has also created thousands of jobs and has helped to stimulate the local economy.

Despite the controversy surrounding its construction, the People's Salvation Cathedral has already become an iconic landmark in Bucharest, with its soaring dome visible from many parts of the city. The cathedral is set to be completed in 2024, in time for Romania's centenary celebrations.

In January 2018, the iconographer Daniel Codrescu was designed to make the mosaic of the Cathedral.

Once completed, the cathedral will house the relics of several saints, including the remains of Saint Dimitrie the New, a Romanian saint who lived in the 17th century. It will also serve as the headquarters of the Romanian Orthodox Church and will be the site of important religious ceremonies and events.

The cathedral's construction has been a massive undertaking, requiring the excavation of over 1.2 million cubic meters of earth and the pouring of over 200,000 cubic meters of concrete. The dome alone weighs over 5,000 tons and required a specially-designed crane to lift it into place.

The cathedral's location, on the site of the former Communist Party headquarters, has also been a point of controversy. Some have argued that the cathedral is an attempt to erase Romania's communist



The semi-dome over the sanctuary apse of Romania's National Cathedral seen after removing the scaffolding

past, while others see it as a way to reclaim the space for the people.

Certain spaces inside the cathedral will be dedicated to the confessors saints from the Romanian communist prisons, such as the priests Stăniloae, Sofian, Cleopa, Partenie Gherasim and others

Despite the controversy, the People's Salvation Cathedral is set to become a major landmark in Bucharest and a symbol of Romania's cultural heritage. Its completion will mark the end of a long and complex construction process and the beginning of a new era in Romania's history.

The largest Bell in Europe



The first of the six bells at the Cathedral is the largest moving bell in Europe. The bells, cast in Innsbruck by the Grassmayr Bell Foundry have a 15-year warranty and a lifetime of over 400 years. The 500,000 euro main bell weighs 25 tons with a diameter of 3.35 meters.

On every one of the six bells are engraved the coat of arms of Patriarch Daniel of Romania.

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People's Salvation Cathedral, Bucharest (2018 July)

TO VISIT

THE CAPITOLE DE TOULOUSE A magnificent and stately building



The Capitole de Toulouse is the result of more than eight centuries of history. The purchase of the first building by the councillors of the city of Toulouse in 1190 marked the birth of the “Common House”, the forerunner of today’s Capitol. The name Capitol derives from the word “chapter”, the place where the assembly was held.



Bust of Guillaume de Nogaret, one of the chief counsellors of Philip the Fair, of France (1285-1314) - Capitole de Toulouse

Political power and culture

The building gradually took shape over the centuries, combining new constructions erected according to need (arsenal, prisons, great consistory, archival tower, etc.) to form a disparate whole.

In the 18th century, the monumental facade was designed by the architect Guillaume Cammas, and in the 19th century, the current building was completed. This stately building has the peculiarity of combining political power and culture under one roof with the theatre.

The Capitol, with its rectangular floor plan, is located between the square and the garden. The main facade is more than 120 m long and is marked by the characteristic bicolour of brick and stone. Eight columns of pink marble symbolise the eight ‘Capitouls’ or municipal magistrates on the central forecourt. The officials were originally known as consuls but were christened ‘Capitouls’ in 1295 as part of an effort to connect Toulouse with the greatness of such cities as Rome, Constantinople, and Jerusalem.

The seat of municipal power since the 12th century, this neoclassical masterpiece unfolds its majestic façade on the imposing Place du Capitole.

Inner courtyard and state rooms

In the inner courtyard, known as the Cour Henri IV, is one of the few statues of the king made during his lifetime, as well



© DIDIER DESCOUENS

Salle Henri Martin du Capitole de Toulouse. Summer or mowers - Henri Martin (1860-1943)

as a plaque commemorating the place where the 4th Duke of Montmorency was executed for treason in 1632.

The Capitol houses some famous state rooms. The monumental staircase and the Salle des Illustres, a large gallery is pierced by columns and large openings. The decorations on the walls, which have been enlarged, rearranged and embellished at every turn, recount the great moments in Toulouse's history: from the Cathar episode to the founding of the Floral Games, from the Counts of Toulouse to the siege of the city.

The Henri Martin Room, the City Council Room and the Paul Gervais Room also house remarkable paintings from the 19th and early 20th centuries, reflecting various painterly trends. The south wing of the building houses the Théâtre du Capitole, which is used for opera and ballet performances.

In 1463, the city was ravaged by a gigantic fire fanned by the wind. Much of the commercial centre (whose houses were mostly built of wood) went up in flames and the Capitole was badly damaged. However, it was rebuilt, this time of brick, and the city slowly moved to this new, safer material. King Louis XI came to see the damage and exempted the inhabitants of Toulouse from taxes for 100 years!



© FRÉDÉRIC NEUPONT

Main staircase of the Capitole of Toulouse

On the Place du Capitole

The Place du Capitole is an important meeting place for Toulousians and is rich in symbols.

One of the most emblematic: the Occitan cross, also known as the Cross of Languedoc was introduced during the reign of Raymond VI in 1211, in imitation of the arms of Toulouse. It is a Greek cross with four branches ending in three spheres, for a total of 12 spheres.

As this cross is a symbol of Christianity, the 12 spheres traditionally refer to the 12 apostles. The 12 signs of the zodiac, the 12 months of the year and the 12 hours of the day are represented on the square.

However, the cross that lines the centre of the main square is quite new. It was created in 1995 by the French painter and sculptor Raymond Moretti. In fact, two different lines can be distinguished. The more grainy one is the artist's line, while the smooth and shiny one is that of the finished work. The Occitan cross is made of bronze and reflects the sunlight on the square. The next time you walk across this cross, imagine you are stepping on 20 tonnes of bronze.

Opposite the Capitole is an arcaded gallery built between 1851 and 1854, whose coffered ceilings were frescoed by Raymond Moretti in 1997. These frescoes depict important moments and people in the history of Toulouse.

The Capitole has its own keep... and this one dates from the 16th century. In 1525, after 60 years of work on the ruins of the great Capitole fire, the Capitouls decided to build this keep, also called the Consistory Tower. The aim was to protect the archives and gunpowder to prevent an invasion of Languedoc by the Spanish during the war between Francis I and Charles V.

The tower, known as the Donjon, today houses the Tourist Office. From there, visitors can easily reach most of the important sites in the old town, its museums, historic churches, old streets, canal and river banks.

Le Capitole
Place du Capitole - 31000 Toulouse

Tel: +33 (0)5 61 22 34 12

Tour of the historical rooms from
Monday to Friday: from 8:30 am to 7 pm.
Sundays and bank holidays: from 10 am
to 7 pm.

Closed when receptions take place,
on Saturdays, on December 25th and on
January 1st.

Free admission.

TIMELESS CHIC

STANDOUT FASHION AND BEAUTY TRENDS

DENIM MANIA

Denim lovers, rejoice! This season, your favourite fabric is going to be incorporated into way more wardrobe elements than just pants.

A sure sign is that denim fabric was spotted on countless Spring/Summer 2023 runway shows such as Burberry, Blumarine, Diesel, as well as Givenchy.

Want to know more? Here are the 3 main denim trends to look out for this season.

Cargo jeans

It's no secret that cargo pants with huge pockets have been having a moment for the past few months, and will continue throughout 2023. The casual, grungy style has taken over as the go-to pant to wear with sneakers or heels, to suit your moods.



© AMAPO

Double denim

Double denim outfits are back with a fully modern twist. Denim jacket paired with jeans, denim bustier with a long denim skirt...all combinations are possible!

When styling double denim with similar colours, break up the monochromatic tones with a statement belt or accessory.



© SEE BY CHLOE

Jumpsuits

Find matching your denim too stressful? Then take the easy way out and go for a denim jumpsuit. Oversized or tailored, there are cuts that embellish all body types.



© ISABEL MARANT



© BAASH



© MAGDA BUTRYM



© INSTAGRAM @GRACELOTTI



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Must-haves

Denim Sleeveless top (isabelmarant.com).

Long sleeves knotted shirt (ba-sh.com).

High-rise cargo denim trousers (amapojeans.com).

Striped denim jumpsuit with a contrasting chest pocket (See by Chloé spotted on mytheresa.com).

Midi denim skirt with a central vent (Magda Butrym spotted on farfetch.com).



| When Inès meets Uniqlo

Famous as a symbol of the « Parisian effortless chic », Inès de la Fressange has created her 19th collection in collaboration with the Japanese clothing apparel brand Uniqlo.

This time, she drew her inspiration from her numerous trips to India. This is demonstrated by her colour palette, inspired by Indian spices and flowers; with madras and floral patterns on natural fabrics, such as cotton and linen.

So, what's in store?

Dresses, shirts, trousers, skirts, knitwear, as well as accessories that harmoniously combine Indian aesthetics and French chic. Pursuing true beauty and comfort, this collaboration continues to create wardrobe essentials that will be cherished for years to come.

(uniqlo.com).



| The “bigger the better” bags

Gone are the days when mini and micro bags were the benchmark. This season, fashionistas are crazy about enormous tote and shoulder bags.

What if you could choose only one? Well, let's say three!

Instagram fashion influencers seem to be madly in love with Chanel's large tote, the YSL Icare bag and the Dior Book Tote.

(chanel.com, ysl.com, dior.com).

| Feeling good about yourself?

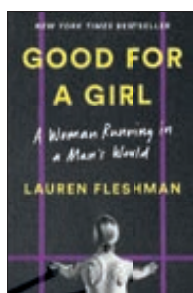
Show it with the ME collection by Pandora!

As a celebration of self-love and friendship, the latest Pandora ME designs represent the whole spectrum of love and all the feelings it can bring. It literally invites you and your best friends to embark on a self-love journey with new pieces inspired by love in all its forms.

The pieces include a sterling silver chain link bracelet with a 14k gold-plated heart connector and new stacking rings in multiple metal tones with pavé and bold contrasting enamel (pandora.net).



BOOKS



I Good for a girl

A Woman Running in a Man's World

By Lauren Fleshman

Lauren Fleshman has grown up in the world of running. One of the most decorated collegiate athletes of all time and a national champion as a pro, she was a major face of women's running for Nike before leaving to shake up the industry with feminist running brand Oiselle and now coaches elite young female runners. Every step of the way, she has seen the way that our sports systems—originally designed by men, for men and boys—fail young women and girls as much as empower them. Girls drop out of sports at alarming rates once they hit puberty, and female collegiate athletes routinely fall victim to injury, eating disorders, or mental health struggles as they try to force their way past a natural dip in performance for women of their age. Part memoir, part manifesto, *Good for a Girl* is Fleshman's story of falling in love with running as a girl, being pushed to her limits and succumbing to devastating injuries, and daring to fight for a better way for female athletes. Long gone are the days when women and girls felt lucky just to participate; Fleshman and women everywhere are waking up to the reality that they're running, playing, and competing in a world that wasn't made for them. Drawing on not only her own story but also emerging research on the physiology and psychology of young athletes, of any gender, Fleshman gives voice to the often-silent experience of the female athlete and argues that the time has come to rebuild our systems of competitive sport with women at their center. Written with heart and verve, *Good for a Girl* is a joyful love letter to the running life, a raw personal narrative of growth and change, and a vital call to reimagine sports for young women.



I Mussolini's Nature

By Marco Armiero, Roberta Biasillo and Wilko Graf von Hardenberg

Translated by James Sievert

This exploration of the environmental practices of Benito Mussolini's fascist regime invites readers to consider the ecological connections of all political projects.

"We might think we see a mountain while it was a war; a forest can actually be an engine; a monument to workers might reflect the violence of a colonial empire."—extracted from *Mussolini's Nature*.

In this first environmental history of Italian fascism, Marco Armiero, Roberta Biasillo, and Wilko Graf von Hardenberg reveal that nature and fascist rhetoric are inextricable. *Mussolini's Nature* explores fascist political ecologies, or rather the practices and narratives through which the regime constructed imaginary and material ecologies functional to its political project. The book does not pursue the ghost of a green Mussolini by counting how many national parks were created during the regime or how many trees planted. Instead, the reader is trained to recognize fascist political ecology in Mussolini's speeches, reclaimed landscapes, policies of economic self-sufficiency, propaganda documentaries, reforested areas, and in the environmental transformation of its colonial holdings.

The authors conclude with an examination of the role of fascist landscapes in the country's postwar reconstruction: Mussolini's nature is still visible today through plaques, monuments, toponymy, and the shapes of landscapes. This original, and surprisingly intimate, environmental history is not merely a chronicle of conservation in fascist Italy but also an invitation to consider the socioecological connections of all political projects.



I Untold power

The Fascinating Rise and Complex Legacy of First Lady Edith Wilson

By Rebecca Boggs Roberts

A nuanced portrait of the first acting woman president, written with fresh and cinematic verve by a leading historian on women's suffrage and power.

While this nation has yet to elect its first woman president—and though history has downplayed her role—just over a century ago a woman became the nation's first acting president. In fact, she was born in 1872, and her name was Edith Bolling Galt Wilson. She climbed her way out of Appalachian poverty and into the highest echelons of American power and in 1919 effectively acted as the first woman president of the U.S. (before women could even vote nationwide) when her husband, Woodrow Wilson, was incapacitated. Beautiful, brilliant, charismatic, catty, and calculating, she was a complicated figure whose personal quest for influence reshaped the position of First Lady into one of political prominence forever. And still nobody truly understands who she was.

For the first time, we have a biography that takes an unflinching look at the woman whose ascent mirrors that of many powerful American women before and since, one full of the compromises and complicities women have undertaken throughout time in order to find security for themselves and make their mark on history. She was a shape-shifter who was obsessed with crafting her own reputation, at once deeply invested in exercising her own power while also opposing women's suffrage. With narrative verve and fresh eyes, *Untold Power* is a richly overdue examination of one of American history's most influential, complicated women as well as the surprising and often absurd realities of American politics.



I While Time Remains

The North Korean defector, human rights advocate, and bestselling author of *In Order to Live* sounds the alarm on the culture wars, identity politics, and authoritarian tendencies tearing America apart.

After defecting from North Korea, Yeonmi Park found liberty and freedom in America. But she also found a chilling crackdown on self-expression and thought that reminded her of the brutal regime she risked her life to escape. When she spoke out about the mass political indoctrination she saw around her in the United States, Park faced censorship and even death threats.

In *While Time Remains*, Park sounds the alarm for Americans by highlighting the dangerous hypocrisies, mob tactics, and authoritarian tendencies that speak in the name of wokeness and social justice. No one is spared in her eye-opening account, including the elites who claim to care for the poor and working classes but turn their backs on anyone who dares to think independently.

Park arrived in America eight years ago with no preconceptions, no political aims, and no partisan agenda. With urgency and unique insight, the bestselling author and human rights activist reminds us of the fragility of freedom, and what we must do to preserve it. (*Good Reads* <https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/61273331-while-time-remains>)

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**THE FUTURE
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