## Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>On the Movement of Peoples</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Anthony Daniels</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>St. Augustine &amp; Migration Policy</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rocco Buttiglione</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Sketch of Guy Verhofstadt</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harry De Paepe</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Brexiting the EU</td>
<td>12</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filip Mazurczak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whither Jacob Rees-Mogg?</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Daniel Blackman</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>French Secularism vs. Freedom</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Guillaume de Thieulloy</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Europe’s Crisis of Hope: An Interview with Rocco Buttiglione</td>
<td>19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Filip Mazurczak</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Iraq’s Displaced Christians</td>
<td>23</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Andreas Thonhauser</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>On Serbian Conservatism — A review of Conservatism &amp; Conservative Parties by Miša Đurković</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dušan Dostanić</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11th Annual Vanenburg Meeting</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The Editors</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Briefly Noted: A Window on a Vanishing World — A review of Comrade Baron by Jaap Scholten</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Emõke Dénes</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kirkian Conservatism — A review of Russell Kirk: American Conservative by Bradley J. Birzer</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Harald Bergbauer</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ernst Nolte, RIP</td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Till Kinzel</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A Vindication of Edmund Burke</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steven Kessler</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>At the European Freedom Awards: An Interview with Nigel Farage</td>
<td>43</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Karl-Gustel Wärnberg</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How to Be a Conservative: An Interview with Roger Scruton</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Peter Robinson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Repurposing Europe</td>
<td>51</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Pierre Manent</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The King Who Saved Europe: An Interview with Miltiades Varvounis</td>
<td>56</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carrie Gress</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Editor-in-Chief: Alvino-Mario Fantini
Editor-at-Large: Brian T. Gill • Assistant Editor: Filip Mazurczak
US Correspondent: Gerald J. Russello
Advisory Council: Rémi Brague, Robin Harris, Mark C. Henrie, Annette Kirk, Sir Roger Scruton
Contact: editor@europeanconservative.com
Donations: ABN/AMRO Account No. 60.17.73.993, IBAN: NL71ABNA0601773993, BIC/SWIFT: ABNANL2A
When Life Imitates Art

Although much of the material we publish in this publication has to do with the ‘political’, we also try to promote a broad, rich, and varied life — one that embraces the artistic, the literary, and the poetic. Hence, for example, in the past we have included articles about a modernist composer who produces deeply sacred music, and a philosopher who writes novels and operas.

For us, the pursuit of such an ‘artistic life’ is really about the lifelong pursuit of the True, the Good, and the Beautiful — through creative acts of self-expression. Of course, these can take a variety of forms and be expressed in numerous ways. So, for example, a creative act can be a short story, novel, or poem, just as it can be a score or libretto, film or video. Regardless of the exact nature of its output, there is also at the core of the artistic the act of re-presentation — of nature, reality, and the self. ‘The Philosopher’ called this the “mimetic function” of art. This function allows art to serve several other important purposes.

To use one simple but relevant example, the 2012 movie “The Day of the Siege: September Eleven 1683” — which depicts the story of the famous triumph of King Jan III Sobieski and his alliance of German and Polish forces over Ottoman Turks on Kahlenberg Hill in Vienna — re-presents the battle to modern-day viewers in visual and rhetorical terms that may resonate more easily today. It’s not only a matter of using technical wizardry to enhance the battle’s action scenes; it also involves the filmmakers’ efforts to ensure political relevance and timeliness. Given the Islamo-fascist attacks on New York and Washington on the 11th of September 2011 — and the countless other attacks that have occurred in Europe since then — the film successfully taps into a shared, collective memory of tragic events.

It also reminds European audiences of a key, decisive moment in their own centuries-old history, which — it is hoped — will encourage them to take more of an interest in their past and perhaps even help them to start thinking in ‘civilizational’ terms that go well beyond the ‘here and now’. Additionally, the film educates and inspires, presenting the theologically-based arguments of the monk, Marco d’Aviano (played with ferocity by the inimitable F. Murray Abraham), advocating for a firm, robust defence of the Christian West. With this film, art achieves a nearly perfect and highly useful re-presentation of the exact nature of its output, there is also at the core of the artistic the act of re-presentation — of nature, reality, and the self. ‘The Philosopher’ called this the “mimetic function” of art. This function allows art to serve several other important purposes.

When Life Imitates Art

The novel, which appears this year in a Dutch translation (see p. 32), describes a Europe that one might mistake for today — where tree-lined boulevards in capital cities like Paris are used as latrines and where the outskirts of other cities have become “no-go zones”. The shocking misogyny that often accompanies these situations is yet another aspect of this nightmare. (A more recent novel that some consider a warning is Michel Houellebecq’s 2015 bestseller, Soumission, which we reviewed in Issue 12 — but Raspail’s was the precursor.)

Putting aside its inflammatory language and occasionally over-written passages, Raspail’s novel presciently described a situation which has, particularly in the past two years, become a reality, with millions of people risking their lives to cross land and sea to get to an already overtaxed Europe. It’s a situation that’s both tragic and appalling.

In this edition, we have invited several writers to tackle the issue of immigration. In his brief but incisive essay, Anthony Daniels (pp. 4–5) addresses some of the complexities surrounding immigration, while Rocco Buttiglione (pp. 6–9) expounds on the moral obligation to accept refugees. Steven Kessler (pp. 39–42) considers what useful insights we may derive from Burke when considering immigration, while Carrie Gress’s interview with historian Miltiades Varvounis (pp. 56–58) rounds out this edition with a discussion about the “King Who Saved Europe” from foreign invaders.

Other contributors, too, provide nuanced insights into this seemingly intractable problem. But the consensus seems to be that Europe cannot have free or open immigration — especially as long as it has a welfare state (as Milton Friedman argued decades ago). And so long as Europe also continues to see declining birth rates, the Continent shall remain on what some consider a ‘death spiral’ — something which Douglas Murray investigates in The Strange Death of Europe (review forthcoming).

At this magazine, we are doing our bit to avoid such a death spiral. We therefore insist tirelessly on nurturing a love for European civilization — its artistic heritage and riches, its people and traditions, its communities, churches, and synagogues, its fundamental freedoms. Recognizing that these are the very things that our enemies hate, we will continue to promote and celebrate different ways to contribute to the preservation and renewal of Europe — through the religious, the political, and the artistic.

The European Conservative is a non-profit pan-European conservative magazine founded as a 4-page newsletter in 2008. It seeks to make available articles, essays, and reviews representing the different varieties of “respectable conservatism” in Europe. It is published twice a year by the Center for European Renewal (CER). The magazine is written, edited, and designed by volunteers across Europe. We welcome unsolicited manuscripts and submissions. Back issues are available in PDF format at www.europeanconservative.com. For information about the CER, visit: www.europeanrenewal.org.

About the cover: A partial view of “The Battle of Vienna”, a 1683/85 painting by the Flemish ‘battle painter’ Pauwel Casteels (c. 1649–1677). Measuring 1.56 m x 1.84 m, the painting is located in the Wilanów Palace Museum in Warsaw.
There are few subjects more delicate than immigration. No person of goodwill could deny that no subject is more likely to arouse base emotion, or act as better grist to the mill of crude demagoguery. But the fear of being labelled a precursor or apologist of the next Hitler has paralysed almost all thought on the subject among civilised people other than a blanket and uncritical celebration, largely insincere, of virtually unlimited entry into the country of which they are a citizen. The consequent ‘diversity’ is held by all right-thinking people to be an unmitigated blessing, as if life were nothing but a choice of cuisines.

Oddly enough, this way of thinking — or rather of feeling — is dehumanising, for it implies that an immigrant is just an immigrant, and it doesn’t matter much where he comes from or what he brings with him. The fact of his immigration outweighs all his other characteristics: his culture, his education, his skills or lack of them, his political and religious beliefs, even his personality or character. At most he will bring few quaint folkloric customs with him which will add to the gaiety of the anthropological museum that some countries, or at least cities, are in the process of becoming. This doesn’t matter because all cultures are fundamentally compatible: are we not all equal in the sight of God, the same God whom we all worship?

And the fact is that many of us have migrants in our ancestry at most a few generations back. My wife’s grandfather was a Greek from Smyrna, but she is French. My mother was German, but I am English. Movement and assimilation of people have been more or less continual, even in countries that do not consider themselves lands of immigration: but the nature of migration has changed, at least in Europe, for numerical, cultural and ideological reasons.

It is unprecedented that a third of Londoners, for example, should have been born outside Britain; Paris is slightly less de-nationalised, as only a quarter of its population was born outside France. At the Gare du Nord you wouldn’t know, if you didn’t know already, what continent you were in — people of European extraction are a distinct and even small minority there — except for the fact that such an admixture is to be found only in the modern western world. There are plenty of foreigners in Bangkok, say, or even in Bangui, but in neither city would you have any difficulty in knowing what continent you were in.

For many, this admixture is a cause for celebration, even for self-congratulation. After all, most people rub along together without too much conflict, at least if you don’t look too carefully, and no disaster, give or take a bit of terrorism, has so far happened as a consequence. The admixture is proclaimed to be the triumph of tolerant cosmopolitanism over narrow nationalism, of enlightenment over bigotry. But is it really, or is it rather the triumph of exhibitionistic self-hatred and moral superiority? And is not tolerance only required if you disapprove of the someone or something to be tolerated?

True cosmopolitanism, it seems to me, is not merely the presence of a lot of people of different origins living cheek by jowl, generally in the less attractive areas of cities, but of a relatively small number of nationalities subsisting together in a city whose individual members take an interest in, and have a real knowledge of, one another’s customs, cultures, languages and religions. I suppose that pre-Nas-serian Alexandria is my model; there, deep separation and mutual sympathy were not inimical.

Sweden is often held up as a moral example to the world, but it is not a cosmopolitan country despite having taken in migrants who now form at least 10% of the population. Its moral superiority is really an example of spiritual pride, of moral grandiosity; it was under no obligation, ei-
ther practical or moral, to transform itself in this fashion. If I have understood correctly — I speak in generalisations, of course, to which there must be exceptions — the Swedes take very little interest in the strangers in their midst beyond paying their taxes to secure them a standard of living considered the minimum in their country. And once the migrants get the vote, there are no prizes for guessing who and what they will vote for.

The madness is far from confined to Sweden. I used in my medical practice in Britain to meet a large number of asylum-seekers, more young men than women. At the very least they were enterprising and determined, as one must be to cross, say, from Iraq to the far west of Europe in a container or on the underside of a truck, passing through distinctly hostile territory en route. How far they were fleeing political or economic conditions I could not tell, and I suspect that our distinguished bureaucrats charged with the task could not tell either.

The asylum-seekers, the vast majority of whom would never be deported, were granted leave temporarily to stay, on condition that they did not work. They were expected to live in a hostel, often in the kind of place (in which England abounds) so horrible that, I surmised, it was hoped by officialdom that they would soon apply to be repatriated, regardless of the danger. Those who obeyed the rules soon sunk into a state of querulous lethargy, complaining that they could not go to the English lessons provided for them a few hundred yards away because of the rain. These were people, be it remembered, who had recently traversed thousands of miles in hazardous conditions.

Those of them who disobeyed the rules were generally in much better condition, psychologically and spiritually. They had purpose in their lives and some hope of betterment. But it must be a bad law that demands of people that they should sink into querulous lethargy and that the only way for them to live decently is to break it.

We then come to the knotty question of whether immigration in large numbers lowers the wage or employment rate, especially among natives at the lower end of the social and economic scale. Certainly, those at this end of the scale believe so; but I do not think that this is the sole reason why Britain, for example, found it expedient to import hundreds of thousands of Poles while millions of its own people remained inactive at taxpayers’ expense.

There were three main factors at work. The first is that the Poles had a better attitude to work, were better trained and educated, and in general had a better manner, than the natives. The second is that, at the lower end of the scale, the economic difference between working and not working was not great enough to make work attractive, let alone imperative, to the natives. And finally there was the rigidity and inadequacy of the British housing market. Immigrants were willing to put up with housing conditions that Britons were not prepared to put up with, merely to find work.

In other words, our welfare state, educational system and regulations have has so distorted our society that it makes the importation of labour necessary while at the same time permitting and even requiring at least some migrants either to become dependents of the state or to break the law.

Finally, I think it is far from a reprehensible desire to give asylum to people who are fleeing war or persecution, indeed it is an honourable one. The problem arises when the state is involved. I would suggest that private individuals who felt strongly about these matters, or associations of such individuals, should be allowed to sponsor refugees, provided that they accepted strict financial responsibility for their upkeep and welfare for at least twenty years.

This would have several benefits. Sponsors would select the refugees they sponsored carefully. The refugees would then not just be refugees to them, but individuals, so that they, the refugees, would not feel the correct but cold welcome of the Swedish state, for example. And people would not be able to pass on the costs of their moral enthusiasm to others. They would be obliged to put their money where their heart was, or where they claimed that it was.

The main problem with my proposal is that it would not be adhered to for long. Those who feel that the state should have a monopoly of human solidarity, as it has of violence, would soon seek to overturn it, and probably succeed. To be good at other people’s expense is, after all, the summum bonum of modern morality.

A sound migration policy needs to be grounded on principles. I shall try to propose a foundation for migration policies on some commonly accepted principles of Western Civilization, derived from Judeo-Christian revelation and the juridical and philosophical tradition of the Greeks and the Romans.

I shall not discuss the relative merits of these traditions. As a matter of fact, they converge on the affirmation of the unique dignity of the human person. St. Ireneus of Lyon, for example, writes that Gloria Dei vivens homo ("The glory of God is the life of man," Adversus Haereses IV, 20, 7), while Seneca has a similar principle: Homo homini res sacra ("Man is sacred to man," Epistle to Lucilius XCV, 33). The German Constitution even begins with the words: Die menschliche Würde ist unantastbar ("Human dignity is inviolable").

This is our starting point. Here is the first foundation of the whole tradition of human rights.

Some inferences can be drawn. Men have the right to live. This right is not limited to the right to not be killed, but also the right to not starve and to make a living through one’s work. In other words, all men have a right to exploit the earth in order to produce what is needed for their lives. In the language of theology, we say that God has created the earth and gave it to all men so that they may live. Private property is legitimate because it is the best way to take care of the earth. Private property, however, stands under a social obligation. Some men will be diligent and make good use of their property and become wealthy; others will be lazy and make bad use of their property, lose it, and become poor.

There is, however, an absolute limit to this historical process of redistribution of wealth: man’s life. No man must remain absolutely without land, without the means of subsistence and without the possibility to work. In the language of the Old Testament (and, to a large extent, of St. Thomas as well) the right to live is linked to the right to the land. In a post-industrial society, the earth is no more the unique or even the principal source of wealth; today, knowledge is the most important factor of production. The general principle, however, remains valid: We shall maintain that every human being has the right to participate in the social production and to earn his bread through his own work.

We derive this principle from the dignity of the human person. The same consequence can be reached from a different starting point. If some people will not be able to make a living through their labour they are likely to struggle for their lives and to seize by force what they need in order not to perish. If the main purpose of politics is to preserve peace, it is then the task of politics to take care that nobody is driven into desperation. Thus full employment is a necessary end of economic policies.

The tension between the principle of the universal destination and the principle of the private property of the goods of the earth also applies to another domain. The earth has been appropriated not only by individuals, but by nations as well. Men possess the earth not just as individuals, but also as communities in which men are united with one another through the multifarious bonds of language, blood, history, and, above all, culture. The public equivalent of private property is sovereignty. The individual needs the support of a community to protect his or her rights and to guarantee the cooperation required to make his or her work fruitful.

The medieval philosophers had an aphorism that appropriately brings to evidence one essential feature of what we have been saying: a semetipso incipit bene ordinata caritas ("well-ordered charity begins from oneself"). Something similar can be found in St. Augustine's The Enchiridion on Faith, Hope, and Love. This implies that everyone has to take care of him or herself and to gain bread through the sweat of the brow, applying labour to a plot of the earth or to a social activity. Well-ordered charity begins with, but is not limited to oneself. It continues with one's spouse and children, parents and siblings, neighbour, etc. Well-ordered charity extends to all of mankind in a certain order. What would one think of a woman who is so completely dedicated to the welfare of children of some distant country that she does not take care of her own children? Her charity would not be “well-ordered.” I am more responsible for my children than for the children of my sister, and for the children of my sisters than for the children of my cousins and so on ...

The responsibility for the other is elastic and flexible. Those who are more distant can become more proximate and fall within the scope of our responsibility.

Jesus gives us the most fascinating formulation of this principle of responsibility through the story of a man journeying from Jerusalem to Jericho who met a band of thugs who ambushed him, cudgelled him, robbed him of his money and of all his goods, and left him naked and dying in a ditch at a side of the road. None of the passers-by stopped to succour him. Nobody recognized him as his neighbour. Only a Samaritan did.

The parable of the Good Samaritan does not contradict St. Augustine’s principle according to which I have to first take care of my children and my sister of hers. He asks instead: What if I fall out of the chain of the well-ordered love of which St. Augustine speaks? Who is my neighbour?
if I have no neighbour? In the first stage, there is an order of parenthood that provides the child with alternative parents. But if that collapses, who has the duty to take care of a child without relatives? Jesus’ answer is clear: you. This is a necessary corollary of the ordo amoris: all men are responsible for each other. Under normal circumstances, we exercise this responsibility by first taking care of those who are near to us and later of those who are far away and fall within the responsibility of somebody else. If, however, one is left alone, then he or she is entrusted to my care.

We have tried to lay down some foundational principles for a judgment on migration phenomena. Now, we can turn to politics. Is there a general right to migrate and settle in a country different from one’s country of origin? At first thought, the answer seems to be no. There is a peculiar right of a man to the country in which he was born. There is a bond between a land and a culture that has inhabited that country and given to it its own form. A nation grows if each generation leaves to the next a country better endowed with material and immaterial capital than the country they had received from their ancestors. Through human labour and history, a peculiar bond is forged between nation and land. Property implies a right of exclusion. If we use the word “sovereignty” to express this bond between the land and the nation, we can say that a nation has a right to exclude others from its own territory. There is no unconditional right to migrate to any land of our choice, and a nation has the right to forbid migration to its territory.

We have established that a nation has the right to forbid migrations and close its borders. Is this unconditional? There is one fundamental exception to this right to sovereignty: the right to asylum. In the parable of the Good Samaritan, nobody else could succour the man left to die on the road from Jerusalem to Jericho and the Samaritan saw that he was in charge, that that man was entrusted to his responsibility. A refugee is a man who no longer has a fatherland because he has been deprived of his native country, like the Jews in Nazi Germany. If they were sent back to Germany, they’d be delivered into the hands of their executioners. Therefore the right of sanctuary limits the right of exclusion. It is the principle of the Good Samaritan: if they have no father, I am their father.

We must carefully distinguish between refugees and immigrants. Refugees have the right to be received. The first country that has the duty to receive refugees is the first country to which they submit their demand. Typically, this is a nearby country. Nowadays, refugees are often large masses of victims of ethnic or religious cleansing. Whole populations are displaced and compelled to flee. This could easily become an important burden for their country of first arrival. It seems reasonable to say that responsibility for them cannot fall only on the countries of first asylum.

They have of course the right to demand to be accepted by the country of their preference, but does this country have the right to refuse this demand? It seems that they do not have a right to decide where they want to settle. We have a duty to help, but we have a right to decide how and how we divide among ourselves this responsibility. How shall we then divide the responsibility for them within the international community? Here there are no clear rules; it seems to a large extent to be a matter of prudence. It may seem reasonable to keep the refugees in the first country of asylum in the immediate proximity of their country of origin. If there is a high level of probability that they will be able to come back to their country of origin soon, then it
may be reasonable to keep them in the immediate proximity of this country. The international community should, in such cases, give financial support to the country of first asylum. So, for instance, it seems reasonable to keep Syrian refugees in Turkey, Jordan, and Lebanon, giving these countries adequate financial support and waiting for the end of war and dictatorship in Syria.

This is not always ideal. For example, Palestinian refugees were in refugee camps for years, ill fed and ill sheltered, and exposed to nationalist propaganda inciting them to guerrilla warfare and revenge. It would have been much better if they were divided among different countries, integrated in their societies, and helped build a new life in a new homeland. The choice between the two alternative models is a matter of prudence. In any case, if the refugees are kept in the country of first asylum for a long time, the support of the international community should not be limited just to a subsistence minimum; it should also include the financing of infrastructure and jobs. When refugees are redistributed, they should be redistributed according to the capacity of integration of the different countries.

Migrants who are not refugees do not have the right to settle in the country of their choice. They do, however, have the right to ask to be admitted. In evaluating their demands, several criteria should be considered. One is their state of need. An economic migrant is not a refugee. He has a homeland where he can live. Sometimes, however, he lives in abject poverty. His desire to move to another country thus should be seriously considered. There are also situations similar to that of a refugee, such as people deprived of their homeland because of a natural catastrophe, like desertification in some sub-Saharan regions. The state of need of these would-be migrants is surely a criterion that should be considered.

A second criterion is the labour market of the host country. Most Western countries have low birth rates and need workers. The consent given to immigration is not only an act of generosity, but also well-understood self-interest. Of course, the number of legal immigrants allowed must have limits to prevent labour market tensions. The poor in wealthy countries often resent immigration policies and protest against a violation of a semetipso incipit bene ordinata caritas. They say that immigrants receive better treatment than themselves or that they "rob their jobs". Such protests are often unjustified, but sometimes they are not. A prudent immigration policy should not cater to xenophobia.

A third criterion is cultural compatibility. Not all nations and cultures are in an equal relation to one another. Geography, history, and, above all, culture create situations of greater similarity or difference among families of cultures or nations. Individuals from more similar cultures are integrated better. It is reasonable to facilitate the immigration of such people. It is difficult to deny that religion plays a major role in determining the similarity or difference of cultures.

A last criterion is the load-bearing capacity of a nation. In deciding on immigration policies, an honest politician should consider the limit that must not be trespassed to prevent violent xenophobia.

If we apply a generous but prudent migration policy, we are likely to admit only a fraction of the vast masses of people willing to leave their country and work to improve their living conditions and create a better future for their children. Shall we decry all responsibility for the others? The principle a semetipso incipit bene ordinata caritas tells us that we have a responsibility for all men. It orders this responsibility, but does not deny it. If we are not morally obliged to receive within our borders all the poor of the earth, we still have a moral obligation to improve their lot in their native countries. To support their economic development is both a moral obligation and an act of enlightened self-interest. The growth of their economies also stimulates our growth. Free trade treaties have helped millions of people exit poverty. They should be enhanced, especially in the countries of origin of the migrants heading to Europe.

Having established a philosophical framework and elaborated resultant political criteria, we can now test these criteria in the concrete case of European migration policies.

Millions of people move to Europe, demanding admission into our borders. Some arrive by land, while others traverse the Mediterranean on old boats. Many arrive by airplane with a tourist visa and remain illegally after their visa has expired. What shall we do?

First, we have a moral duty not to let people drown in the sea. Next, we have the right and duty to identify them and to investigate who is a refugee and who is an illegal immigrant.

The country of asylum has a right to attempt to identify all migrants and to deny them free access to its territory until they have been identified. This identification is the starting point of all rational immigration policies. It is crucial for the protection of the immigrants themselves. Unidentified migrants can be more easily sold to criminal organizations that will exploit their labour, induce them to prostitution, or even kill them to sell their organs.

Identification is also crucial for the protection of our people because it allows us to prevent the immigration of criminals and the expansion of crime. We need to identify migrants also in order to prevent the formation of large masses of illegal immigrants. An illegal immigrant is a human being who cannot rely on the protection of the law. He does not see in the policeman an ally and a protector of his rights but an enemy and a threat. What can an illegal do if he or she becomes the victim of violence or is robbed? He or she can only seek revenge through his own private exercise of violence or seek the protection of the local mafia boss. The result is a spreading culture of illegality and violence. Instead of opening channels of legal migration, we tolerate illegal immigration, thus expanding the underworld of organized crime.
Identification is also the precondition for the processing of asylum demands and to distinguish between refugees and illegal immigrants. Refugees should be integrated in our societies; illegal immigrants should be sent back to the countries of origin.

The identification and expulsion of illegal immigrants is challenging, especially if the subjects do not want to be identified. It requires cooperation with the countries of origin of immigrants. This cooperation needs to be encouraged and becomes more effective if we offer two counterparts. The first is channels of legal immigration. The other is economic cooperation for development. It is unrealistic to expect poor countries to cooperate cordially for the repatriation of illegal migrants if they have no perspectives of economic development and job creation for their people. We need a ‘Neighbourhood Policy’ that supports the creation of an area of shared prosperity. This involves free trade agreements, the creation of a free exchange area in the Maghreb, and the building of adequate infrastructure on the southern Mediterranean coast together with interior reforms based on the rule of law. The main obstacle is the ISIS caliphate in Libya and in Syria. The very existence of the caliphate is a consequence of the lack of a European policy in the Middle East. The Arab Spring was at the same time a demand of freedom and a revolt for bread. If the pro-Western elites that led the uprisings could have offered immediate humanitarian relief and a perspective of economic development they would likely have consolidated their leadership. We did not provide them with any adequate support, and, consequently, fanatical anti-Western forces defeated them. Now, everything is more difficult. It is, however, apparent that no reasonable immigration policy is possible if they are without a government that has control of territory both in Libya and in Syria.

The crucial distinction between refugees and illegal immigrants must remain theoretical if there is not a minimal respect of human rights in the migrants’ countries of origin. We cannot allow all of them to settle among us, but to send them back home we must help them to build a home in which they can live. The material and cultural costs of such a Neighbourhood Policy would, however, be much more bearable than those of unrestricted immigration.

In conclusion, from the principle of well-ordered charity we derive three consequences: We have a moral and juridical (according to the international law) obligation to accept and integrate refugees; we have the right to determine the number of economic immigrants on the basis of a reciprocal convenience; and we have a moral obligation to support the economic development of the countries of origin.

Rocco Buttiglione is an Italian philosopher and statesman. He has been a member of Italy’s Parliament for many years and has served as the nation’s European Union Policy Minister and Minister for Cultural Assets and Activities. A professor at St. Pius V University in Rome, Buttiglione is an expert on the thought of Pope St. John Paul II and was a long-time personal friend of the late Pope. This is an abridged version of a speech delivered at the 2016 Vanenburg Meeting held in Cirencester, England. It appears here by permission.
The EU last year appointed its greatest crusader, Guy Verhofstadt, as one of the negotiators dealing with Brexit. Although the former Belgian Prime Minister and Flemish liberal seems to be one of the most consistent politicians, Belgians — and the little grey cells on which they must rely (think Hercule Poirot) — tend to know better.

‘Baby Thatcher’

In the mid-80’s, Verhofstadt was one of the youngest party chairmen ever. He became Belgium’s budget minister in 1985 at only 32 years of age. But he did not hold the post for long. Because of his Thatcherite views he was considered to be too radical. “He wants to turn Belgium into a desert”, complained a prominent politician. It was during these years that the Flemish press gave him the nickname of ‘Baby Thatcher’. Later, in the coverage of the Iron Lady’s passing, Verhofstadt denied ever having Thatcherite sympathies. A denial that turned out to be exemplary for his political behaviour.

Although his electoral success as a party leader from the late 1980s on, he — and his liberals — had become political loners. The social democrats and the leading Christian Democratic Party had gained a profound dislike of the way he conducted politics. In the early 1990s Verhofstadt re-branded his liberal party to the Open Vlaamse Liberalen en Democraten (Flemish Liberals and Democrats or VLD). They had become more liberal and more lenient to the demands of the Flemish movement that was striving for a strong devolution of the Belgian state.

In the build-up to his new party he had several meetings with Paul Belien — who now works for the controversial far-right Dutch politician Geert Wilders — and with the very liberal Flemish nationalist the late Lode Claes. Although they eventually had no further role in the development of the party they were important for it’s founding. Verhofstadt wrote his famous political book, The Civil Manifesto, in those days. In the end he wrote four of these manifestos.

The first two were quite revolutionary in Belgian politics and acted as a liberating wind for the right-wingers in the Flemish parties. Verhofstadt was trying to reply to an ever more desillusioned electorate that was looking for comfort in the arms of the far-right Vlaams Blok. It’s a strategy that resembles what Nicolas Sarkozy was applying in France. But Verhofstadt wasn’t successful in his attempts to break the power of the ever-ruling Flemish Christian Democrats. Until ‘the events, dear boy’. In 1999 in the middle of the electoral campaign — which the governing party seemed destined to win — a political scandal broke out. It seemed that the food chain had been contaminated — it was the chickens that got misfed with dodgy things — and the government had to take the blame for it. The ruling PM Jean-Luc Dehaene — who was once torpedoed by John Major in his attempt to become chairman of the European Council — lost the vote and stood down. Finally, Guy Verhofstadt got the keys to the Belgian equivalent of 10 Downing Street: Wetstraat 16.

A changing mood

Verhofstadt turned out to be a game-changer — but not in the ways he promised in his civil manifestos. The Flemish movement ended up very disappointed with the ‘light’ version of the devolution reform that he promised — a reform that still would have cost Flemish taxpayers a lot of money and which favoured the French-speaking part of the country. The seed for the later political deadlock in Belgian politics was thus planted.

There was also a radically progressive wind blowing in government social policy: Same-sex marriage was realised, the possibility of euthanasia became liberalised, and a ‘soft approach’ towards marijuana was introduced. But both the federal government as well as Flemish regional governments, led by the Flemish liberals, were big spenders. The tough budgetary discipline formerly espoused by the Christian Democratic Chancellor, Herman Van Rompuy — who would later go on to become the EU’s first President — was abandoned as soon as Verhofstadt got into power.

Verhofstadt’s coalition won the federal elections in 2003. But it was his partners — the socialist parties on both sides of the Belgian language divide — that had gained the most. They made their demands and Verhofstadt granted migrants the right to vote in local elections. This caused a huge rift within his own party and he had to defy party chairman Karel De Gucht (who became an important figure in the subsequent TTIP-negotiations as European Commissioner). Eventually Verhofstadt won this political battle and De Gucht stood down. But the party was by then badly damaged and the prosperous winds that were once Verhofstadt’s started to die.

In 2004, the Belgian Prime Minister and his VLD lost heavily in the regional and European elections. He thus started to look for a European exit. But the gracious solution of getting the job of chairman of the European Commission was blocked by British Prime Minister Tony Blair.
The Flemish liberals were like a sinking ship and important figures in Verhofstadt’s government were leaving it in rapid succession for other jobs.

In 2007 they received an electoral ‘uppercut’ in the federal elections with the alliance of Christian Democrats and Flemish nationalists. The latter were united in a new party called N-VA. It was ideologically inspired by the earlier civil manifestos written by Verhofstadt — and it has since become the dominant political force in Belgian and Flemish politics today.

But the man who let this genie out of the bottle has since changed. He has distanced himself from his early manifestos. And he has grown a dislike of leading British politicians.

Power plays

Verhofstadt played an important role in the aftermath of Brexit. With one single Tweet, he gave the Scottish National Party (SNP) some legitimacy in the European Parliament, writing: “It’s wrong that Scotland might be taken out of EU, when it voted to stay. Happy to discuss w. @NicolaSturgeon next time she’s in Bxl. #EUref.”

It’s worth remembering that the SNP has ties with the Flemish nationalist party N-VA. At the time, prominent figures in that party burst out in laughter when they read Verhofstadt’s Tweet. Was this really the same man who in 2010 claimed in a Flemish newspaper that “identity thinking leads to Auschwitz’s gas chambers”? Once he proclaimed in his second Civil Manifesto that nationalism could be a “liberating energy”. In 2012 he told a Belgian newspaper that N-VA was an extremist party. Two years later he welcomed the N-VA to join his liberal ALDE-faction in the EU parliament so that it would become the second largest. Instead, the Flemish nationalists joined David Cameron’s European Conservatives and Reformists, thereby drowning his hopes of becoming a European commissioner.

Verhofstadt’s road to power and prominence was one marked by numerous U-turns. He is like a windmill when he’s orating in the European parliament. His arms go up and down like a mill’s wicks. And like a mill, he is subject to any way the wind blows — as long as it gains power. It makes one wonder: Who is that Guy, really?

Harry De Paepe is editor for the Flemish political online magazine Doorbraak.be. He is a history teacher and is currently working on a book about the English.
Brexit: The Eu

Filip Mazurczak

The outcome of the Brexit vote in June 2016 was clearly an historic moment. Despite the predictions of some early UK polls, the population of the United Kingdom voted to part ways with the European Union. And Theresa May, Britain’s new prime minister, has said that there will not be a second referendum on her country’s membership in the bloc — with polling suggesting that most Britons don’t want a second referendum, either. In other words, the matter has been settled. Although it will likely take a few years for Britain to officially be outside the European Union, this will eventually happen — barring any surprising event that turns the tide.

Of course, the question on everyone’s mind continues to be: Will this trigger a domino effect? Will a Frexit some day follow? Or a Spexit, Denxit, etc.? The answers to such questions are of great importance to the bureaucrats who run the European Union — and to the people living in Europe. And the way they will act, as well as the conclusions they draw from last summer’s British vote, will determine if the British thread is the one that eventually leads to the unravelling of the 28-member bloc.

Take a mental journey back to Western Europe in the early post-war years. Although not as devastated as northeastern Europe, the western half of the continent had also experienced its share of suffering and had seen war destroy its industries. The horrible atrocities that took place during the Second World War — the bloodiest conflict in human history — made pan-European cooperation seem like a pipe dream. Meanwhile, the Soviet Union was rapidly expanding its sphere of influence, making Europeans nervously wonder if, after getting rid of one tyrant with a moustache, they would soon be ruled by another one.

In such a situation of undoubted crisis, the European project was born. In fact, Italian, French, and German statesmen like Alcide de Gasperi, Robert Schuman, Jean Monnet, and Konrad Adenauer were fundamentally inspired by the Christian notion of forgiveness, and thus invited the Germans to re-join the European community of nations. They established a ‘European Community’, beginning as everyone knows with the European Coal and Steel Community in 1951, followed by the Treaty of Rome, signed in 1957 by West Germany, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands, and Luxembourg.

This was a European Community — not a union — based on the principle of subsidiarity. That principle, established by Thomas Aquinas and popularized by Pope Leo XIII, suggests that policy problems can be best solved at the most local level where there is suitable knowledge for solutions. It assumes that no one central authority has access to all the necessary information needed to make informed decisions — Hayek’s “dispersed knowledge” problem — and suggests that the determination of the appropriate level for solutions is not top-down but works sequentially from the bottom up.

The keyword in all this was ‘cooperation’ not domination. The western European participants in this project thus worked to establish free trade, rebuild the war-ravaged economies of the Continent, and counter the growing Soviet menace.

If Alcide de Gasperi or Robert Schuman could learn what eventually became of their project, they would likely be shocked. After the Treaty of Maastricht, which established the European Union, and the Lisbon Treaty, which subordinated national legislation to European laws, the European project has begun to reflect more the interests of a clique of out-of-touch bureaucrats in Brussels than of the populations they are supposed to represent. Today, as has been so widely documented, the European Union meddles into every aspect of its member states’ public lives — from how many migrants they should accept to how much carbon dioxide they are allowed to emit to the pettiest matters.

Additionally, the European Union wasn’t even entirely true to its name, as the government of Germany has increasingly used the EU to exercise its hegemony over the continent and mould the policies of its member states to reflect its own interests. Witness: the European Central Bank, based in Frankfurt or the EU’s migrant policy overwhelmingly being dictated by Angela Merkel, despite the strong objections of many member states (especially those in the former communist bloc, such as Poland and Hungary). One would be tempted to say that, in a way, the days of Charlemagne are back (minus the great flourishing of Christian culture).

Without a doubt, no nation likes to be treated like a child, and this has provoked a growing backlash in almost all the European lands. Last year, the British people simply reached their limit and said: “Enough!” Incessant meddling from Brussels was just too much for feisty Britons.

It’s worth noting that one of the main arguments used by the opponents of Brexit was economic. Leaving the European Union, they argued, would likely throw Britain into a recession. Yet British opponents of the European Union were undeterred. For them, the notion of national sovereignty was more cherished than simple material or commercial interests. In this way, Brexit challenged the axiom

T
prevalent in the social sciences that voters are motivated primarily by their economic interests.

Such demands for national sovereignty will only grow. From Scotland to Catalonia, pro-independence nationalist movements are surging across Europe. And in this age of increasing assertiveness for greater sovereignty, such movements simply cannot bode well for the European Union — at least in the form created by the Treaty of Maastricht. Meanwhile, there are a growing number of governments — on both sides of the ideological divide — across Europe that are pro-EU yet simply won’t let themselves become colonies of Brussels.

One excellent example of this is the centre-right, Christian democratic government of Viktor Orbán in Hungary. He has frequently clashed with EU bureaucrats, both on the migrant issue and on internal matters. Yet Orbán is officially pro-EU. In late 2016, Hungary’s economy minister even said that his country wanted to adopt the euro as its national currency by 2020.

Eventually, however, Hungary’s patience will reach its limit, as will that of Poland and Greece, two other pro-EU countries unwilling to be ‘walked on a leash’ by Brussels. They could easily go the way of the Czech Republic, for whom joining the EU was a matter of utmost pride, as a post-communist state, in 2004. Yet today the country is one of the most Euro-sceptic. If there is Brexit-like scenario in another European country in the near future, a likely first candidate could thus be the ‘Czeexit’.

If the European Union does nothing to return to its federalist roots, then the successful Brexit vote will likely end up being the first domino in a long protracted process that could ultimately obliterate the European Union. Rather than making cosmetic changes, as it usually does, the EU must return to the idea of being a ‘community’ — not a bureaucratic juggernaut threatening national sovereignty. Brexit should have been a wake-up call, but more than a year later most bureaucrats seem to have missed the message. And emboldened by the defeat of anti-EU parties in Austria and France, the political elites seem to have been assured that nothing really needs to change; all that they need to do is fight off the occasional threats from what they see as the populist extreme right.

The European project is certainly something worth pursuing. Free trade among nations always brings economic benefits. But today, there are growing external threats that also require a united front. Russia is increasingly aggressive, for example, and its invasion of Ukraine should be a warning to Europe. Meanwhile, it seems that hardly a week or two goes by without learning of another terrorist attack, usually perpetrated by recent immigrant or, what’s worse perhaps, a radicalized European-born son of migrants.

In light of all these growing threats, Europe should be united, both internally and externally. However, at the same time, Brexit and the growing Euro-sceptic voices across the Continent should serve as signs that a united Europe must seriously re-evaluate its proper role.

If the European Union continues simply to be a bureaucratic monster that increasingly strangles the liberty of its member states in regulatory red tape, then the outcome is clear: It won’t collapse because of a sovereign debt crisis — but rather because of millions of angry voters at ballot boxes located from Lisbon to Tallinn. Time will tell.

Filip Mazurczak is a translator and journalist whose work has appeared in the National Catholic Register, First Things, The Catholic Thing, and other publications. He is the Assistant Editor of The European Conservative.
Whither Jacob Rees-Mogg?

Daniel Blackman

The political and social embers may still be glowing in the UK following its monumental referendum last year to leave the EU. The number of ordinary citizens who turned out to vote broke all records: 72.2% of the voting population (33.6 million) made their voices heard.

And by doing so, they shook the established cultural, academic, financial, and political elites. As British Prime Minister David Cameron rightly said, it was a “giant democratic exercise, perhaps the biggest in our history.” Seldom do we see such determination and passion when it comes to politics from the general public.

The popular protest against the UK’s involvement in the second Iraq war, and more recently, a packed House of Commons debating whether to support bombing campaigns against ISIS in Syria spring to mind as other examples.

As I listened to David Cameron’s resignation speech early on the Friday morning after the referendum result was announced, I was reminded of another political and social maelstrom which, like the EU referendum, sparked an unprecedented mobilisation of the people.

The contemporary rise of same-sex marriage around the world was sudden, and generated staggering levels of furore by those determined to usher in a new era in the long march of the sexual and cultural revolution.

The UK’s coalition government, under Cameron, passed its same-sex marriage act in February 2013, by 400 votes to 175. “I believe we’ve made great steps ... enabling those who love each other to get married whatever their sexuality,” Cameron said. Opponents of the act were branded bigots, homophobes, hate-filled, and ‘anti-love’.

Imagine my surprise when in 2016, I heard a staunch opponent of the act, well-known Catholic MP Jacob Rees-Mogg claim that Cameron “was the most Christian prime minister in 50 years.”

He was speaking at the London [Brompton] Oratory, South Kensington, to a gathering of young conservatives and Catholics in their 20s and 30s.

When asked about his thoughts on Cameron’s same-sex marriage act, Rees-Mogg said: “It’s really hard for MPs because they get criticised for not standing by what they believe. Yet when David Cameron put forward his same-sex marriage plans he got criticised a lot, so it’s really hard, he really believed in it.”

Rees-Mogg is the Eton and Oxford educated Tory MP for North East Somerset. His father was the late Lord William Rees-Mogg, former editor of The Times. He is also a Catholic, and a traditional one at that. In fact, he is quoted as saying that he believes in a “strong papacy, an obedient laity, Latin Masses and sermons that last no longer than three minutes.” He’s married to heiress Helena de Chair, who gave birth to their sixth child (Sixtus) earlier this year.

So, if you were looking for a politician who was truly a traditional conservative and Catholic, Rees-Mogg has all the credentials, which made his further comments all the more surprising.

“I’m a Catholic, and I greatly value the Church’s sacrament of marriage. I voted against same-sex marriage, but I’m happy as long as the Catholic sacrament is left alone. The government is free to legislate and do as it pleases with secular legal marriage; however the legal arrangements are decided.”

When challenged by members of the shocked audience, Rees-Mogg resorted to anecdotes about how happy he was to have a Catholic marriage, and repeated that the government had the job of legislating marriage. It was for the government to decide how marriage was arranged in secular, civil society.

Absent from his answer was any notion of natural law, the common good of all, and the clear Catholic teaching on Church-State relations. No mention was made about the social effects of same-sex marriage on wider society. Rees-Mogg also fell into the erroneous concept that Catholic marriage is merely a ‘private sacrament’, something pious for the church that has nothing to do with civil society.

It was a baffling and somewhat intense moment, not helped by a member of the audience who suggested, with obvious libertarian flavour, that governments should have no involvement at all in marriage. For Catholics and conservatives, that’s just not an option.

Speaking about natural law, the Catechism of the Catholic Church teaches: “It provides the necessary basis for the civil law with which it is connected, whether by a reflection that draws conclusions from its principles, or by additions of a positive and juridical nature.” Therefore, the common good and natural law require that governments and rulers take seriously their responsibilities to safeguard and serve the family.

Rees-Mogg's voting record demonstrates that he is opposed to same-sex marriage. Speaking on Radio 4 about the opposition between being a Roman Catholic and a Conservative MP, whose leader was pushing through same-sex marriage, Rees-Mogg commented: “I’m not under any pressure. I’m a Roman Catholic and have made it clear to my constituents that in this sort of matter I take my whip from the hierarchy of the Roman Catholic Church rather than the Whip’s Office.”

Very well, so why make confusing comments about Cameron being “the most Christian prime minister in 50
years,” and give him *carte blanche* when it came to experimenting with marriage?

Was Rees-Mogg under pressure not to publicly criticise his party leader? Had he been warned that to do so would threaten his chance of promotion and re-election? Perhaps that explains the disconnect between his words and his voting record.

During his talk, Rees-Mogg quoted liberally from pre-Vatican II popes. Yet these same popes condemned the positions Rees-Mogg favoured in his talk.

For example, Blessed Pope Pius IX, in his *Syllabus of Errors*, condemned the idea that “The State, as being the origin and source of all rights, is endowed with a certain right not circumscribed by any limits,” and the error that “The Church ought to be separated from the State, and the State from the Church.”

In an earlier interview, Rees-Mogg said: “My great hero is probably Pius IX, because of his traditional view of the state and the Church and his *Syllabus of Errors* was a clear view.”

A fellow member of the audience suggested privately that Rees-Mogg was “a child of Vatican II, bereft of authentic Catholic formation because of these changes ushered in following the council.” Whatever the case, it is hard to reconcile Rees-Mogg’s apparent familiarity with traditional Catholic teaching with his public comments.

In another interview, Rees-Mogg was asked how same-sex marriage might impact Catholic school teachers, pupils and their families. He replied: “I think this is going to be a matter for the leadership of the Church. Are they willing to take a strong view on what they believe is right? Or are they going to go along with secularism?”

However, the neat separation that Rees-Mogg seems to want and think possible quickly dissolves when laws seep into everyday life, and its schools, parents and teachers on the front line.

Allow me to conclude with a prescient and prophetic statement by another Pius, this time Pope St Pius X. Writing in September 1907 in his encyclical against modernist doctrine, *Pascendi Dominici Gregis*, he warned:

“For given the principle that in temporal matters the State possesses absolute mastery, it will follow that when the believer, not fully satisfied with his merely internal acts of religion, proceeds to external acts, such for instance as the administration or reception of the sacraments, these will fall under the control of the State.”

Let’s hope Jacob Rees-Mogg and the rest of us don’t forget this.

*Daniel Blackman is a news and features writer based in London.*

---

*Jacob Rees-Mogg seen debating at the Cambridge Union Society, to the enjoyment of spectators, in January of 2012.*
In France, religious believers — and especially Catholics — are very often presumed not to be good citizens. It is commonly assumed that they refuse the idea of revolutionary liberty. That’s why their civil liberties — and, more precisely, their religious freedoms — are sometimes restricted by French politicians.

These restrictions are covered by the word “secularism”, which is used in a very specific French sense — and which is sometimes called “laïcité à la française” (that is, the French way of understanding secularism).

Of course, all forms of secularism in all countries are not always inimical to religious freedom. In fact, French secularism itself is not always against religious freedom. Quite the contrary, it is very often the way that the French express support for religious freedom.

There are, however, many different ways to interpret French secularism. One of them in particular can lead to a position that is, paradoxically, antithetical to the idea of religious freedom.

What is secularism?

In brief, secularism is the principle of separation between political institutions and religious institutions. But this broad principle has many divergent applications. In the United States, the state can neither establish a religion nor regulate the free exercise of religion. In Britain, by contrast, the state’s religious neutrality is accompanied by a state religion. And in France, religious matters are supposed to be solely private matters.

The history of French secularism begins in 1789, with the French Revolution. Under the “Civil Constitution of the Clergy” (1790), an important religious matter had been raised. The Revolution allowed priests to follow Rome in dogmatic, moral, and canonical matters only after the prior authorization of the French Parliament. Yet they were also supposed to remain loyal to a papal authority that wasn’t recognized in France — and which did not have the agreement of the nation as represented by the Parliament. (The “Civil Constitution” was, of course, a religious statement that had been coerced through abusive political power). Many “nonjuring” clerics refused and were condemned to banishment or death.

The Concordat of 1801, signed by Napoleon and Pope Pius VII, restored the freedom of worship, but bishops remained subjects of the state and submitted to the state’s control — even in matters of faith and morals.

Under the Third Republic in the 1870s, many anti-Catholic laws were passed, including the main “secularist” law, the law on the Separation of the Churches and the State (9 December 1905).

Although the 1905 law’s implementation could have been better, it was the end of a long process and French Catholics opposed it for several reasons. The 1905 law deprived the Church of its goods, including all its buildings. It deprived clerics of any state salary, even though the Civil Constitution itself had afforded them a salary as compensation for the Revolution’s first deprivation of ecclesiastical goods. And it did, moreover, a final break in the relationship between France, the “eldest daughter of the Church”, and the Vatican.

Many of the Catholic faithful were shocked by the subsequent nonsensical aggressiveness of those in power. Georges Clemenceau, for example, then the minister of the interior, ordered French policemen to conduct an inventory of all churches — “even inside the tabernacles”.

So the history of French secularism is not a peaceful history. This history explains why French secularism is not synonymous with religious freedom. Fortunately, after World War I, religious peace again began to be restored in France. But occasionally, the old anti-religious tendencies of French secularism began to reappear.

A secular religion

In the decades following World War I, the application of secularist laws — especially the 1905 law — has usually been peaceful. But on occasion, there have been expressions of extreme anti-religious sentiment, and there have been some incidents that have amounted to a virtual war against Catholics.

We can just give a few examples. In 1984 the French government tried, unsuccessfully, to outlaw all Catholic schools. More recently, France’s Association of Mayors has argued that displaying crèches in municipal town halls is detrimental to the French “law of separation” — even though recent jurisprudential decisions have said the exact opposite!

French secularism often sees itself as competent in these sorts of religious matters. Thus it is not only an idea that ensures state religious neutrality, but also something that becomes a sort of state religion.

As an illustration of this, consider the recent “anti-sect law”.

In 2001, the French Parliament passed a law against sects, called the About-Picard law after its parliamentary rapporteurs. A list of minority religions considered ‘cults’
or ‘sects’ — like Jehovah’s Witnesses — was published and these religions were deemed dangerous to the French Republic.

The new law imposed many controls on these minority religious organizations. It expanded control even into children’s education, for example. It also stipulated that religions deemed ‘cults’ would not benefit from the standard tax deductions allowed for gifts and donations made to religious organizations.

The list of minority religions targeted by the new law seemed wildly arbitrary. On the one hand, some organizations mentioned on the list were not even considered dangerous for their members or for society (like the Jehovah’s Witnesses). On the other hand, radical interpretations of Islam — which can easily become dangerous for their followers and all of society — were not included in the list of ‘sects’.

The original justification for the law was to combat mental manipulation and fraud, apropos of the mass suicides often associated with “doomsday cults”. As some observers pointed out at the time, however, it was still possible to punish such offenses without necessarily establishing a list of so-called sects or cults. The French penal code already prohibited fraud and mental manipulation, especially by people in positions of authority like priests, teachers, or religious ‘gurus’. (In fact, the existence of such positions of power in cases of manipulation is what the law terms an “aggravating circumstance”.)

This anti-sect law is still in effect, even though there is no longer a list of sects and cults. It provides a very good illustration of how French secularism becomes a sort of ‘state religion’.

In other words, efforts to police the boundary between the state and religion eventually becomes its own sort of religion dedicated to defining ‘acceptable’ and ‘unacceptable’ religious practices.

**State neutrality & societal secularism**

French laïcité is not only the insistence that the state have neutrality in religious matters. Sometimes it extends to the rejection of any public religious statement whatsoever. That’s why France was opposed to the European Union’s
official recognition of the Christian roots of European civilization (despite how obviously historically accurate this acknowledgment would have been).

So one should not try to mingle the state’s neutrality and society’s laïcité. On this issue, we should remember General de Gaulle’s famous quotation: “The Republic is secular and France is Christian.” Both can be true at the same time.

Furthermore, we can even say that the French Republic is secular because France is Christian. The specific distinction between political and spiritual power is rooted in the teaching of Christ and the famous sentence, “Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God, the things that are God’s” (Mt 22:21).

That is also the reason why arguing for strict secularism — as, for example, the National Front has been doing — is not necessarily a good response to the new Muslim presence in France: Islam does not recognize such a distinction.

I can give two examples of the effect that banning religious statements in public can have:

Christine Boutin, a former government minister, was prosecuted and sentenced in 2015 for having stated publicly that homosexuality was an abomination. While this was perhaps an ill-advised political statement, it remains, of course, a simple quotation from the Bible.

Recently (as noted above), the Association of the Mayors of France declared that putting a Christmas crib in a town hall should be considered as an injury to laïcité — despite the fact that this supposed injury is not prohibited by the law. Further, as many judges have already ruled, in many instances such displays are not religious symbols but merely cultural ones.

French laïcité against a higher law

The most important point about the specific idea of a “state religion” is perhaps that most French officials reject the idea of the existence of any law higher than positive law. Since Antigone, this has been a great problem in political thought. Insistence on higher law is one of the main distinctions between civilization and barbarism — or even between civilization and totalitarianism.

Two quotations will illustrate the mentality that I have described as widespread among French officials. First, on the right, former President Jacques Chirac said during his campaign in 1995: “[We say] ’no’ to a moral law which would take precedence over the civil law and [which] would justify one’s placing oneself outside the law. This cannot be conceived of in a secular democracy.” Second, on the left, former Senator Jean-Pierre Michel, during the debate about same-sex marriage, said: “The law is only an expression of a balance of power.”

Given such conceptions of the supremacy of positive law over any other moral laws, the French Parliament is to be considered almighty. Through its own legislative agenda, it can thus forge a new human being and a new society — which are exactly the elements of the totalitarian project.

We should recall that the totalitarian project was “to reuniﬁe the two heads of the eagle”, as Jean-Jacques Rousseau said, and to refuse the Christian distinction between political and spiritual power.

Here lies the main paradox we face: secularism is supposed to be the consequence of the distinction between church and state. But if secularism is enforced so strictly that it becomes its own “state religion”, then it achieves the exact opposite of its desired result. Instead of what Pope Pius XII described as “healthy secularism”, it results in the uniﬁcation of both powers — the uniﬁcation of the two heads of the eagle — and signiﬁes the end of religious freedom.

Conclusion

Nevertheless, we can see some rays of hope. Some French officials — one of them is former President Sarkozy — have been talking about “positive laïcité”, by which they mean a neutrality of the state accompanied by an inducement to make public religious statements and public participation for religious leaders.

But as we await a concrete and juridical notion of what this “positive laïcité” would look like, we must notice that the French government is anything but consistent. It works against a select number of small religious communities, which seem not to be dangerous to the public — groups like Jehovah’s Witnesses — while, at the same time, offering esteem and encouragement to bigger and less tolerant religions like Islam, in which apostasy is punishable by death.

The French government must choose. If it wants to assert some religious competence, then it must seek and promote the truth, even in religious matters, and therefore explain the principles which lead to this truth. (It must also be willing to accept the fact that the public will have to discuss these principles.)

On the other hand, if the government chooses not to engage in any kind of religious debate, then it must remain truly neutral — which means allowing the free expression of all religious opinions and making sure that it only condemns and prosecutes real offenses and actual crimes — not the opinions themselves.

Guillaume de Thieulloy is a French publisher. He holds a Ph.D. in political science and was a former member of the staff in the French Senate. He founded the Renaissance Institute, an organization dedicated to promoting conservative values in the French Parliament.
In 2015, the lowest number of births was registered in Italy since the country’s unification in 1861. But early in 2016, Italy’s government legalized civil unions, including for homosexual couples. Under the threat of a demographic implosion, shouldn’t the traditional family and traditional values be promoted in Italy?

This is not only the problem with Italy. The situation in many other European countries is not much better. Europe is experiencing an increasing number of old people and decreasing number of young people. If we do not change this trend, this will lead to disaster in many, but not all, European countries, especially Italy, Germany, Poland. France and Great Britain are a bit better off in this respect. Without any change, these countries will disappear completely.

I think this has something to do with the decline of Europe’s Christian roots. When my mother and father made the decision to have my sisters and me, they were much worse off than the average Italians today. They did it because they had hope. It seems that our continent has lost hope, and we have lost this idea of the importance and value of women. This was the great battle of John Paul II.

Women carry children, the life of the world, in their bodies. To be a person means to be able to carry children not in the uterus, but in the heart to maturity and to eternal life with God. Now we have a society that educates people to not carry anybody in their hearts. In the heart there is a void. Everyone is alone with himself. There are no lasting friendships. There are no great loves.

Well, that’s not entirely true. Young people fall in love. When they fall in love, they have the intuition that this is forever. We tell them: “No, that is not true. Love is not real. The one who loves more will suffer more.” We don’t tell them that it is worthwhile to persevere. In love, there are difficult times.

What are the political and economic implications of this depressing demographic situation? Policymakers seem anxious to try to preclude this looming disaster.

This is the most important problem that we have. These social matters will cause economic problems. We have too many old people and too few young people, so we do not have enough taxpayers. The situation will become even worse.
I will give you an example. My parents had three children. My mother did not work and took care of the family. My father died when he was 58. Thus three people paid for the pension of one person, a small pension. We all were better educated than our parents and have greater incomes than our parents.

Now, on average an Italian woman has 1.3 children. Both the father and mother typically work, and when the children are grown up, 1.3 children have to pay two pensions, although their salaries will not be much larger than those of their parents, because there is not a big economic boom.

How long can we go on like this? We can invite people from other countries, but that is not a long-term solution. If young workers have to pay such a large amount of taxes to support such pensions, the labor costs will be high. If they make 2-2,500 euros, they will get 1,100 euros. Then we will have few jobs. We cannot have any way out of this situation without moral renewal. The question of the family is also the question of the economy.

You have noted that some European countries, such as France or Britain, are in a better demographic situation than the rest of the continent. Both countries provide generous tax breaks and subsidies for families, especially larger ones. Do you think that there are other policies that could improve a nation’s demographic prospects?

Of course, there are policies that could improve the situation. The first set of policies is already implemented in some countries and consists of significant allowances and tax cuts for each child. These policies recognize to a certain extent the fact that children are the workforce and taxpayers of tomorrow and will support with their taxes and contributions the welfare state and, in most countries, also the pensions of the age group of their parents. In that age group there is, however, a consistent number of people who have had no children and did not pay for the rearing and education of the new generation.

This is today perhaps the greatest social injustice in our countries: there is an enormous transfer of wealth from families to non-families; families pay for the new generations and the non-families reap the fruits. It is a matter of strict justice that the non-families should pay at least in part those costs.

There is, however, a problem. Monetary transfer policies often increase the number of births, but they may also tend to increase of births out of wedlock by too young mothers. Having children may become a way for young girls to make a living out of the public assistance and to become emancipated from the family authority.

This, of course, does not create a proper environment for the education of the child. A thoroughgoing investigation would probably give evidence of the fact that a con-
sistent number of births in Great Britain and France show these characteristics.

A second set of measures is related not so much to births as the family in itself. These imply measures that favor the acquisition of a home for young couples offering them lower interest rates and longer terms for the repayment of capital, parental leaves in occasion of the birth of children, cost free or low cost kindergartens for children. An alternative to public kindergartens is now in Germany the Tagesmuttergeld (daily mother’s money), the state provides the mother with a certain sum of money she may use to pay for the assistance to her children. This allows small private kindergartens to flourish that offer better services, better adapted to the demands of the mothers, at a lower cost to the state.

Much remains to be done. All policies should be considered from the point of view of the family. The labor market is tailored on the measure of a male without family obligations. We need flexible hours for mothers and fathers. The labor market demands increased mobility; workers often have to move from one place to another, from one city to another. What happens when one spouse has to move to another city to find a new job? What can be done to help to preserve the unity of the family? Vast opportunities are offered now by the new technologies that allow for the fulfillment of the working obligations without being physically present on the working place. Who takes care to use these opportunities in the service of families?

Young people need to spend an increasingly long part of their lives in school and college in order to be capacitiated for increasingly sophisticated jobs. The time of marriage is more and more delayed. As a consequence, they often become engaged in a sexually promiscuous life style. Some of them will never be able to enter into a marriage relationship. Others will find it difficult and end up in divorce. All will put off the date of birth of the first child and many will have fertility problems, because after a certain age the capacity to conceive (especially for women) sharply declines.

An urgent question is: what can be done in order to allow young people to get married and have children at an earlier age? The answers may differ in different countries. In some countries, we have a retributive system that privileges the older and it could be modified in favor of the young. For those who pursue careers that require several years of academic preparation we could revise our system of scholarships and loans to the students etc.

In general, all social policies should be reconsidered assuming families and not individuals as the main partners. This might be also an answer to the crisis of the welfare state. A fundamental problem of our welfare system is the assistance to the senior generation. If we succeeded to keep the older people integrated in the family and to assist them in the family, giving to the family the appropriate support, the aging people would be happier, they
would live longer and the public would spend less. On the contrary, today families willing to assist their aging or disabled members are often unable to do that for the want of adequate public support. All this is important, but not decisive. We need a cultural revolution that educates the new generation to appreciate the value of the archetypes of manliness and of femininity, of their being one for the other and of their encounter in conjugal love and in the creation of a family. The key issue is cultural, although of course politics could do a great deal in favor of families.

**Speaking of demographics, there has been a lot of debate about Muslim migrants to Europe. What are your thoughts on this?**

I know two things: The first is that when the Muslims arrive, they have a strong identity. This is a challenge to us. They are Muslims; what are we? I think we should ask ourselves the question of our identity, which is the question of the Christian roots of Europe.

The second thing is that Muslims are more difficult to integrate. I am a friend of numerous Polish families. After a few years of living in Italy, the parents become as Italian as I am. Meanwhile, their children are more Italian than I am. With the Muslims, things are not so easy.

Sociologists have discovered that in the case of Turks living in Germany, after one, two, or even three generations, the Turks are still Turkish. You can be a Pole and Italian. There’s no problem with that. Jan Kochanowski [one of the most important Polish poets who lived during the Renaissance and who studied in Italy — editor’s note] was a Pole, the first great Polish poet. He studied in Padua and knew Petrarch better than I do. This is because we have families of nations.

The crime rate among Polish immigrants to Italy is only minimally higher than it is among native Italians. Among Filipino immigrants, it's actually lower, because Filipino immigrants in Italy are overwhelmingly female. This is not necessarily so in the case of immigrants from the Middle East. We are all the children of God, but there are similarities between nations. The way in which Poles see women is not very different from the way Italians see them. With Muslims, it’s different.

Is it wrong to say that we should favour immigration from culturally related countries who can be integrated more easily? I don’t think they can be more easily integrated necessarily because they are Christian.

I will give you a counter-example. Albanians are Muslims, but they integrate very well. In Poland, there is a Muslim Tatar minority that has lived there for centuries. Throughout history, the Tatars have been as much Polish patriots anyone else. They gave their lives for Poland in many wars. This is not only a matter of religion. There are those immigrants who can be integrated easily, and those who cannot. As a rule, Christians are more easily integrated, with exceptions of course.

Filip Mazurczak is the Assistant Editor of The European Conservative.
Iraq’s Displaced Christians

Andreas Thonhauser

Our interpreter suddenly paused, then swallowed slowly. He obviously did not feel too comfortable with what he had just heard. There are some things that people simply do not like to talk about, especially if they are from the Middle East.

Salam was not just our interpreter and guide but an Iraqi refugee as well. As a legal organization, we were trying to gather evidence of genocide perpetrated against Christians, Yazidis, and other religious minorities, in order to ensure that witness statements could eventually be submitted to the International Criminal Court (ICC) or other international tribunals.

During our visit, Salam had been bold, courageous, and resourceful. But here he was, for the first time, hesitant to translate what the other man, Surlak, had just said. But eventually he began to tell Surlak’s story.

“They tied a rope around his leg, just above his left ankle”, Salam told us. “They then let him hang head down from the ceiling for hours, day in and day out. They poked him with nails, whipped him with wire rods, and used pliers and scissors on his body until he passed out”, he said. “This went on for a whole month”, he added, his eyes wide.

It was not easy to write down and record Surlak’s detailed account of the torture he had experienced. He had suffered greatly. Many times he thought he would die there. In fact, he confided that more than once he had wished for a quick death. Frankly, it is a miracle that Surlak is still alive. ISIS does not usually let its prisoners go — unless they are in a body bag.

Surlak’s story is like many others. Like many Iraqis, he grew up in a small town — in his case, near the city of Mosul on the Nineveh plain in northern Iraq. Many Christians lived in that region — until the summer of 2014 when ISIS forces attacked. Mosul fell in July of that year.

Qaraqosh, a mainly Christian city in the same region, followed Mosul’s fate in August 2014. Most people managed to escape to Erbil, the capital of the Kurdish-controlled region of Iraq. Thousands of people are still there, housed in refugee camps, living in tents, and relying on the benevolence of the few Christians in the city. Those with sufficient financial resources — or those with cars to sell — were able to purchase visas and airplane tickets to escape to nearby countries like Jordan.

This is where our team met Surlak. He was there in the city of Amman, hiding in a ghetto, hiding in the cheap, worn-down districts of Amman, along with thousands of Iraqi Christian families similarly struggling for survival.

One of the difficulties is that none of these refugees are allowed to work. Technically speaking, Jordan received Iraqi Christians as ‘visitors’ not ‘refugees’. This makes their lives a bit more complex.

Uncertain passage

The Kingdom of Jordan is known for its tolerance towards other religions. Minorities generally have a fairly safe life there. Nevertheless, Iraqi Christians have to pay for their food and lodging — and Jordan is not cheap. Since they are not allowed to earn money, most of the new refugees have used up whatever financial resources they had stowed away. They are now desperate because they know that they will be unable to survive much longer. Many of them have applied for visas to go to other countries. But after months and even years of waiting, most are still waiting — and hoping — for visas to Canada, the United States, or Australia.

“We are all hoping to be granted refugee status to leave the Middle East and continue on to Canada or Australia — or any other safe place — where we can start over again”, Salam explained to us.

Salam, who is a young Christian from Qaraqosh, the Assyrian city in northern Iraq, introduced us to other Iraqi families in Amman. Like him, all of them admitted to being desperate to leave Jordan. Most of them don’t even want to go back to Iraq: They simply don’t trust their neighbors anymore.

One man recounted how he saw several of his former friends enthusiastically welcoming ISIS into Mosul. He told us how he saw them giving little chocolate bars to A Rosary, prayer beads, and a white tile with the first letter of the Arabic word “Nasrani”, which means ‘Christian’.

All photographs courtesy of ADF INTERNATIONAL.
the fighters. Other refugees shared stories of friends and relatives undergoing the same kind of imprisonment and torture that Surlak had describe. For many, there is simply no going back.

The importance of evidence & accountability

We videotaped and recorded the testimonies of many Christians and other religious minorities who had escaped ISIS. It was crucial to have such evidence and eyewitness testimony of the crimes they had been committing. We worked against the clock, for we knew that the more time passed between the actual atrocities and their examination, the more likely it was for crucial evidence to be lost.

We had gone to Jordan to make sure that this would not happen, that evidence would be preserved — and the families we met were grateful. As one of the refugees told us: “My greatest fear is that once ISIS is defeated, the people who committed all these terrible things will just shave off their beards and go on living their normal lives without being held accountable for what they have done.” Thus, accountability — holding people responsible — is also essential.

History is much on our minds as we do this difficult work. Holding torturers and the perpetrators of genocide accountable is something that we recognize as crucial for the preservation of civilization. In fact, if we recall the 70th anniversary of the Nuremberg trials in October 2016, we remember that they were the first of their kind. War criminals of the Third Reich had been tried and sentenced for the atrocities they themselves had committed or had helped others to commit. This had only been possible with the voluminous evidence that had been gathered.

A clear definition of genocide

At the time of the opening of the Nuremberg trials, US chief prosecutor Robert H. Jackson declared in a famous opening statement: “Civilization asks whether law is so laggard as to be utterly helpless to deal with crimes of this magnitude by criminals of this order of importance.” The Nuremberg trials not only condemned the crimes against humanity perpetrated during World War II, by documenting these atrocities, the trials also helped to strengthen the international community’s resolve to punish those who inflict bloodshed on innocent populations. At the time, “never again” had been the unanimous response to Nazi atrocities.

Consequently, on 9 December 1948, the United Nations General Assembly adopted the “Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.” The document, which has been ratified by 147 countries, defines genocide as “acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group”. It further refers to acts that cause serious bodily or mental harm to such people, deliberately inflicting conditions of life on that group calculated to bring about its physical destruction, imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group, and forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.

This is exactly what has been happening in the Middle East since the rise of ISIS in 2014. The terrorist group has deliberately targeted religious minorities for destruction and in just a few years, the number of Christians has dropped from over 2 million to less than a million in Syria, and from 1.4 million to under 260,000 in Iraq.

The Yazidis in the region of Kurdistan have been almost entirely wiped out. The atrocities against them include the assassination of church leaders, torture, mass murder, kidnappings, sexual enslavement, and the rape of Christian and Yazidi girls and women. In addition, ISIS has overseen the destruction of churches, monasteries, and cemeteries across the region under their control. If the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide were reduced to a check list, ISIS would tick every single box.

Timid international reactions

So far, the international community has reacted timidly at best. Nothing has been done despite the outrageous crimes committed by the terrorists — and despite the recognition of these atrocities as genocide by the US State Department, the British Parliament, and international institutions such as the Council of Europe and the European Parliament. And even with thousands of documents, videos, and other supporting evidence, much of it made available on social media by ISIS itself, all of which testify to the group's intent to destroy everything that does not adhere to its ideology, the international community has been unable and seemingly unwilling to act.

So far, the ICC has refrained from getting involved — although it was designed precisely to prosecute perpetrators of genocide. In April 2015, the ICC Prosecutor even decided not to launch an investigation into ISIS-perpetrated crimes. The ICC will only get involved if the United Nations Security Council officially refers the matter to the ICC through a resolution calling for an investigation.

Despite several attempts to pass such a resolution, the UN Security Council has yet to refer the matter — nor does it seem likely in the near future given the political deadlock between its permanent members (especially Russia and the US). Once again the law appears to be utterly laggard, as Robert H. Jackson said 70 years ago.

A change of attitude is needed. A resolution passed on
11 October 2016 by the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE) could bring about this necessary change. Parliamentarians representing 47 Member States of the Council of Europe unanimously urged the ICC to recognize its jurisdiction over the perpetrators of genocide in Iraq and Syria as far as possible. To date, there has been no response.

The resolution was partially motivated by another fact that has been ignored for too long: that Europe is the biggest exporter of terrorists. More than 7,000 Europeans are engaged in fighting on behalf of ISIS in Iraq and Syria. With European combatants involved in genocidal acts, the ICC can and should claim jurisdiction over them — especially the leaders amongst them.

Assisting the desperate

The Christian refugee families we met in Amman have a very hard time understanding why the international community is so slow to act — especially since it has been proven beyond measure that genocide is indeed taking place. They not only seek justice; they also desire simple freedom of movement. Having lost everything, they want to be able to start over in a different place, rebuild their families and communities, and provide their children with a better life.

“There is not future for us in Iraq”, Mikhail, another refugee, explains. But even here, in Amman, his family feels unsafe. There are rumors that ISIS is growing rapidly in the city. Yet Iraqis like Mikhail cannot leave. And since they have not been granted refugee status, they cannot work either. So he and his family, like so many others, are now stuck in Jordan with no prospects, no future, and little hope.

Under the definition of international law, Mikhail and his family should be considered victims of genocide. They deserve some kind of protection and, at the very least, the right to migrate elsewhere, if they wish to do so. But so far, they are being ignored and perhaps forgotten.

Elsewhere, the situation is not much better. In the US, the government has officially recognized the atrocities being committed against Christians, Yazidis, and other religious minorities as genocide. But only a tiny fraction of the refugees accepted into the country belong to the minorities most being persecuted. The same is true of most European countries.

Perhaps the testimony obtained from Surlak and Mikhail will help convince those in positions of power to do more to assist those who are most desperate. But until the international community decides to be more firm in its efforts to bring those committing genocide in the Middle East to justice, the desperate will have to wait.

In the meantime, Mikhail only has one dream for his family: “I want my children to grow up in a better place, where they are safe, and where they can live without fear.” That place is certainly not the Middle East — at least for now.

Andreas Thonhauer is Director of Communications for ADF International, Europe.
More than two hundred years ago, Goethe said that world history has to be rewritten from time to time. In the case of the history of ideas, we must agree with him. Just like Goethe, the classics are always fresh and open to new interpretations and reinterpretations under different circumstances and from different points of view. Therefore, we can and should always go back to the works of Homer, Plato, Aristotle, or Thucydides. In the realm of the history of ideas, such a process of reinterpretation is to be found in the book, *Conservatism and Conservative Parties*, by Miša Đurković, now in its second edition.

We might ask whether this new interpretation is necessary. However, more than ever Eastern European nations these days need a new approach to conservatism. Readers should bear in mind that Eastern Europe was under communist rule from 1945 onwards, which meant that Marxist doctrine dominated public discourse. Thus, for over 50 years conservatism was hardly ever considered as a serious political option. There were very few books (including translations) that dealt with conservative thought — and even then, conservative ideas were almost exclusively seen as wrong and dangerous, and conservative politicians regarded as “enemies of the people.”

Marxist authors were unwilling to distinguish conservatism from the extreme right or fascism, and even less to differentiate between various currents within the conservative family. They were all put under the same label: Burke was essentially the same as Metternich, Maistre was no different from Tocqueville, Bismarck was father to Hitler, and Churchill was regarded as Mussolini’s relative.

Under such circumstances, the history of genuine Serbian conservatism was utterly neglected. Apart from a few names (mostly men that took part in the Second World War), which were used as symbols of universal evil or as suitable catchwords, no one was really interested in studying the Serbian conservative tradition. It was far more important to show — sometimes even invent — Serbian socialist thought. The framework was thus set with the socialist progressives on one side and everyone else on the other.

After the fall of communism, few things changed. As Đurković puts it, the terms ‘conservative’ and ‘right-wing’ still carry a pejorative connotation as synonyms for ‘backward’ and ‘outdated’. In other words, a leftist type of thinking prevailed in Serbia and kept a position of prominence within the public discourse long after the fall of communism. There is also the factor of ‘personal continuity’ as well: Many ex-Marxists and social revolutionaries from 1968 continue to play a significant role in academia, as they do elsewhere.

In 2007, Đurković boldly decided to step into that *terra incognita*. The aim of the first edition of his book was to legitimize conservative thought in the Serbian context. The book was only a brief introduction to conservative principles and values, and provided brief insights into three
major conservative traditions (British, American, and German) accompanied by a history of their respective parties. When the time came for the second edition, Đurković decided that this time it should not serve only as an introduction but rather offer a new approach and provide some deeper insights.

In the ten years since that first edition, we can say that conservatism has become an integral part of Serbian public and political discourse — up to a point, of course. A number of mostly young academics now identify themselves as conservatives and are publicly recognized as such. The situation calls for a reconsideration of the Serbian conservative tradition, since it is no longer enough to deal with general conservative principles and values. Instead, there is a need for a closer examination of the actual life of an idea in the ‘here and now’.

Đurković thus identifies several ‘blind spots’ or phenomena in Serbian political thought that deserve more research and closer examination. His approach raises an important question: What did it mean to be a conservative in Serbia in the past? And what does it mean today, particularly after the failed ‘Yugoslav experiment’, years of communist rule, and 25 years since the transition to democracy began? In other words, what is left to preserve in Serbia — and what is the best way to do it?

In order to answer these questions, we must first rediscover our own traditions and, in effect, rewrite the history of Serbian conservatism. Đurković believes that such a re-evaluation is urgently needed because there are a number of issues in Serbian political life today that he believes only a robust conservatism can resolve successfully. This is the main point of the new edition of his book makes. And, it must be said, it is good that we finally have a book about conservatism written by a conservative and from the conservative point of view.

Much of the structure of the first edition of the book has been preserved. First, the author presents the history of conservative thought, discusses the place of conservative thinking within a broader political framework, and distinguishes between the democratic and authoritarian types of conservatism. The ‘Introduction’ also contains an interesting description of Russian conservatism, explains some of the main conservative principles, and discusses the complicated relationship between conservatism and the nationalist tradition.

Đurković then proceeds to give a historical overview of the development of the British, American, and German conservative traditions, and does not shy away from reinterpreting the role played by Lady Margaret Thatcher in the UK, who he says should not be reduced to a one-dimensional caricature as a free market fanatic. Đurković insists that she was fundamentally a conservative, a nationalist, and a traditionalist in the best sense of these terms. The third and final part of the book considers the Serbian conservative tradition, including the period after the fall of communism.

For the foreign reader, the most interesting part might very well be the overview of the development of Serbian conservatism, which is quite useful. The author presents an array of mostly liberal-conservative intellectuals, beginning with Jovan Sterija Popović (1806–1856). For most Serbs, Sterija is only remembered as an artist and comedy writer, not as one of the first Serbian conservatives. But, as Đurković points out, even his comedies should be read in the context of a broader conservative agenda, reminding us once again that conservatism is more than just politics.

The profile of Sterija is followed by a long line of 19th century politicians, all of whom recognized the necessity of establishing institutions and modernizing Serbia’s political, economic, and cultural life. However, they also recognized the importance of honouring tradition, continuity, religion, and faith. Although Đurković never says so explicitly,
his conclusion seems to be that the modern Serbian state was the work of these moderate conservatives. They were the ones who completed the effort at national liberation, established the rule of law, organized the armed forces, and established a framework for a sound and vibrant economy. In the words of Edmund Burke, they wanted to modernize in order to preserve.

Reading this book brings to mind several important aspects about modern day Serbia. It reminds us that we must make an effort to re-acquaint ourselves with our pre-Yugoslav and pre-communist traditions and heritage. We need continuity — or, as Burke put it, a partnership with our forefathers — in order to be able to respond to modern-day revolutionaries or the self-proclaimed reformists and progressives, those who think that history begins with them and their abstract political plans.

At the same time, it cannot be denied that, as Đurković says, Serbian most recent political experiences are full of rebellions and uprisings, revolutions and wars. How can a respectable conservatism — with its demand for evolving, organic political development — emerge out of such an unstable, chaotic setting?

Our first priority then should be to re-establish the institutional order because no continuity or preservation is possible without order, stability, and recognized rules. Only conservatives can establish a political consensus around these principles. In Serbia, the words of the German writer and cultural historian Arthur Moeller van den Bruck (1876–1925) are still very much true: “a conservative's function is to create values which are worth conserving.”

The cautious reader will certainly appreciate the critical attitude adopted by the author, especially when he writes about conservative parties in Serbia. Đurković is not ready to turn a blind eye to the anachronisms, exaggerations, even eccentricities of the programmes of some existing conservative parties, or in the writings of some right-wing Serbian authors, especially after the 1990s. Such healthy scepticism is more than welcome and shows that a sense of realism is more important than an ideological label.

Conservatism is not about posing but about dealing with actual challenges. In the end, Đurković’s book is more than just an introduction to conservatism; it is also a call to action — and the rebuilding of a conservative intellectual infrastructure. The post-ideological age was a delusion. We still need a conservatism for the 21st century — and in order to establish one we must carefully re-examine its history. This book is a solid contribution to such efforts.

Dušan Dostanić is Research Fellow at the Institute for Political Studies in Belgrade, Serbia, and a member of the Centre for Conservative Studies. He is currently finishing his doctoral dissertation about the political thought of the German Romantics.
The annual Vanenburg Meeting, organized by the Center for European Renewal, was held 19–21 August 2016. This was the 11th such meeting — and, once again, the recently re-named Royal Agricultural University in the little town of Cirencester, England, served as the venue. (It had previously served as the venue for the 2012 Vanenburg Meeting.)

Nearly one hundred guests attended the 11th Vanenburg Meeting, with some of the world’s most interesting and outspoken conservative thinkers, writers, and academics gathering for a weekend of lectures, debates, and fellowship. Participants last year came from Belgium, France, Germany, Hungary, the Netherlands, Poland, Sweden, and the United States.

The 2016 Meeting was structured into three days of plenary sessions and small, formal seminars, followed by evening presentations — and opportunities for informal discussions over meals. While the broader purpose of the Meeting is to provide an opportunity to grapple with some of the most pressing issues facing Europe, and to consider various conservative responses to today’s challenges, each year’s chosen theme helps to focus deliberations. The theme of last year’s Meeting was “The Sacred and the Profane”.

As in previous years, participants could choose from among various simultaneous sessions. Sessions in 2016 included seminars on Mircea Eliade led by Dutch legal philosopher Andreas Kinneging, “The Revenge of the Sacred in Secular Culture” led by Polish scholar Agnieszka Kola-kowska, a discussion of the concept of “political religions” led by German political scientist Harald Bergbauer, a consideration of “Tyranny, Ancient and Modern” by Hungarian political philosopher András Lánzci, and an examination of the “Presuppositions of the Sacred” led by American scholar Vigen Guroian.

Other topics that emerged included threats to religious freedom in Europe, the challenge of secularism in the West, the de-sacralization of European culture, and the challenge of mass immigration.

The Vanenburg Meeting, which is held every summer over a period of three days in a different European city, was first held in 2006. Since then, it has brought together hundreds of conservatives from across Europe and the United States for discussions and networking.
I started reading this book filled both with excitement and dread. The former because I am Transylvanian, the latter because I was suspicious of an outsider writing about such a topic who could stay true to the reality of what happened and not worry about ruffling any historical or political feathers. Scholten’s captivating storytelling, however, put both concerns to rest.

The subject Scholten has chosen to tackle, the liquidation of the Transylvanian aristocracy by the Communists in the 1940s and 1950s, is not an easy one. It is barely known in the West and rarely mentioned in schools and homes even in the countries where it occurred, yet this great tragedy is a part of Transylvanian history and should not be forgotten.

Scholten gives us an overview of Transylvanian history as an introduction, but the story ultimately centres on the night of the 2nd and 3rd of March, 1949. On one night, the entire aristocracy, titled and untitled, was awoken by hordes of armed men led by the militia and the Securitate (the Romanian secret police), loaded onto trucks — babes, grandmothers and all — and driven far away to new “homes”, with their identity papers stamped with “DO”, meaning Domiciliu Obligatoriu — obligatory place of residence. It was soon recognized as a dramatic change, a permanent stamp not only on paper but on the souls of the Transylvanian aristocracy.

Their lives changed radically. It was more than “moving from a castle to a cellar,” as one of his interviewees puts it. They were dispossessed of everything: lands and properties, jewellery, gold, art collected over generations, even photos and personal items — treasured mementos of the past. Those who didn’t end up with long and heavy prison sentences, those who weren’t executed on made-up charges, were sent to work on the construction of the Danube — Black Sea Canal — the equivalent of slave labour. Other displaced aristocrats had to find means to support themselves and their families. This was made almost impossible as they were classified as “enemies of the state” and could earn money only by taking on the most menial jobs. Counts and countesses, barons and other nobles now worked as cleaners, chicken pluckers, warehouse clerks, ditch diggers, rodent eradicators, gravediggers, factory workers, seamstresses, and button painters. Some eventually managed to escape to the West.

Scholten has done his homework. He travelled extensively across Hungary and Romania and is not squeamish about Transylvanian mountain roads nor put off by the common feeling, when in some of the more remote villages, that you’ve been transported back in time. He visited prisons and ex-labour camps, as well as castles and manor houses — or at least what remains of them. He managed to interview a great number of the remaining Hungarian and Transylvanian aristocrats, most of them a humble shadow of what their families used to be.

The trepidation of having an outsider address this painful and sensitive topic wore off quickly, especially as we find out that he is married to a Hungarian, a descendant of one of the Transylvanian aristocratic families. In fact, he writes in such a loving and candid manner that the book is hard to put down. Scholten manages to roll together “the good, the bad, and the ugly” and present it in a way that will leave indelible marks on the reader’s heart.

There are idyllic accounts of Nicolai, one family’s pet bear, on whom little countess Erzsébet T. used to take naps and read her books; of family gatherings and hunting parties; of grand balls and dancing into early hours of the morning; of secret loves, honour, and duties of the nobles to their families and their people. Though they lived in a very class-conscious society, “in Transylvania there was solidarity between the people and the aristocracy,” states one interviewee. The aristocracy played a crucial role in the propagation of culture in both countries. They founded universities, theatres, libraries, and museums and took up the patronage of new artists. They travelled and studied in Western European universities, bringing back new ideas.
These were the privileges of the blue-blooded one might want to envy, but with some exceptions, most Transylvanian aristocrats used their newly acquired knowledge to better the land they called home.

When in 1947, “the bad” came along — the aristocracy was officially outlawed both in Romania and Hungary, most of them were not prepared for what was to come. Communism could not bear any rival authority, and so a long odyssey of persecution began: the aristocracy, the ones who dared to speak up, the clergy who didn’t want to submit to the new rules of the tyrants — all paid the price.

“The ugly” continued through the meticulously prepared nocturnal raids and mass deportations. The Communist Party became stronger and stronger as the power of the aristocracy and the church faded. Nobility, priests, members of the opposition parties were imprisoned and tortured in the most horrendous ways; their families were left to fend for themselves, their wives and daughters raped and made to beg for mercy.

Béla Bánffy, son of author Miklós Bánffy, shares with Scholten about his father and his own decades of hardship: “He taught us to keep our back straight. We bore the name of Bánffy, which conferred obligations. Even without any possessions we had a duty to behave with dignity. We had to do our work well and be honest under all circumstances.”

Scholten provides much detail in this book to give a realistic and thorough picture of what Communism was like in Hungary and Romania and how it impacted not only the immediate victims of the 1940s but the generations that followed. The story Scholten tells here is not only important for Transylvania, Hungary and Romania. As the memory of the victims of Communism fades and romantic images of Communist regimes take their place, it is crucial to recall its horrors so that they may not be repeated.

We can be grateful that Scholten has taken upon himself the task of unearthing the mostly hidden past of the 20th-century Hungarian nobility. By his own admission, “I fell in love with that whole great mess beyond the former Iron Curtain. I find it impossible to say whether it was simply because of [my wife] Ilona, a kind of Pavlovian reaction that led me to embrace the entire Eastern Bloc along with her, or whether I would have developed the same affection for the region even without our love.”

I am glad he met the love of his life, a descendant like me of Transylvanians, and fell also for my homeland, the beautiful and exuberant, tried and tested Transylvania. Reading Comrade Baron I laughed and cried, was angry and disgusted, rejoiced and was sad with the characters presented. Scholten opens a window on a segment of people who were made to forget their past, nearly forgotten by us, and who are vanishing slowly.

Emőke Dénes was born and raised in Transylvania. She studied history and international relations at Babeş-Bolyai University in Kolozsvár. She emigrated from Hungary to the UK in 2003 and currently works for Release International, a Christian charity that helps persecuted Christians across the world. This review originally appeared in the Summer 2017 edition of The University Bookman.

* The University Bookman was founded in 1960 by Russell Kirk. It seeks to “redeem the time by identifying and discussing those books that diagnose the modern age and support the renewal of culture and the common good.” Its Editor is Gerald J. Russello, who also serves as our US Correspondent. For more information about subscriptions, submissions, or republications, visit: www.kirkcenter.org/index.php/bookman.
Jean Raspail, (France, *1924) has published more than two dozen books as a travel writer and anthropologist looking at unknown tribes and peoples. *The Camp of the Saints* (1973) is one of his few novels but perhaps the most famous. It influenced people like President Ronald Reagan, political scientist Samuel Huntington, conservative author and commentator William F. Buckley Jr., and many others.

Forget *1984* and *Brave New World*. A book written in 1973 predicted the greatest European tragedy of our time — the immigration crisis — and identified its causes. But the book is also about the crisis of Europe itself as she loses her identity, and shows herself incapable of choosing her own fate or acting in her own best interests.

Four decades ago, Jean Raspail had a simple idea: What if one million of the poorest Indian people embarked on a hundred ships and set course for Europe? Inspired by this, he sat down and wrote his novel in one breath — and later said that it had been as if all the words in the book had suddenly come to him. It had been that easy.

One of Raspail’s greatest achievements in the book is how he manages to describe rising tensions and worries in Europe, especially among politicians, journalists, clerics, and other Gutmenschen. It is as if he had predicted the challenges of our time in such detail, that even we can’t see everything yet.

The title, *The Camp of the Saints*, comes from a Biblical verse in the apocalyptic Book of Revelation. But it also describes the ‘new spirit’ that possesses the politicians, journalists, and clerics in his novel, all of whom are obsessed with social activism, and pursuing good intentions and a theology of liberation. Raspail often refers to this ‘new spirit’ as “the Beast” of the apocalypse.

The mass of people slowly approaching Europe in his book, however, isn’t interested in the activism or ‘goodness’ of public figures at all. They are the shadow of the Beast.

Europe can’t decide what to do or how to respond until boatloads of people have landed on France’s southern coast and their human cargo have begun to slowly dominate the region, subjecting locals to gang life and killing all the men who resist, while the women are willing to enslave — and even prostitute — themselves to the savage new arrivals. In the end, Europe descends into an apocalypse — which really means the end of Europe.

Raspail’s great prose style, and his precise descriptions and crisp dialogue, help keep the reader engaged from the first to the last page of this stunning book. It’s no wonder why this book has been translated into so many languages. At the same time, it is a shame that the Spanish, German, and now Dutch editions have only recently been published.

‘In the tradition of *Brave New World* and *1984*, Jean Raspail’s *The Camp of Saints* is not so much a prediction as a devastating exposure of the frivolity of liberal European opinion and policy. Written more than 40 years ago, no one will fail be chilled by its contemporary resonance.’

Theodore Dalrymple
When Carl Schmitt wrote this classic text in 1942, it was meant to be a story for his 12-year-old daughter, Anima. In this very concise book, he presents a model of the last 3,000 years of world history as the continuing clash between sea empires and land empires. The book is part of our ‘young-classical’ series, which also includes Chesterton’s *Orthodoxy*, Unamuno’s *The Tragic Sense of Life*, Spengler’s *Man and Technics*, and Raspail’s *The Camp of the Saints*.

Father Daniel Maes, O.Praem (Belgium), has been working in Syria since the beginning of the war. He lives in the Monastery of Mar Yakub (Saint James) in Qara near Lebanon. He began writing about his life in Mar Yakub as early as 2010 and, since then, his dispatches have reached a global audience. Contrary to the mainstream narrative about the Syrian war, Daniel Maes has a completely different view about what has happened in the country. He has since been interviewed by many newspapers.

Tom Zwitser (*1979) is a publisher and philosopher. For about six years he has been working on a ‘Trilogy of Surfaces’. This planned trilogy is an attempt to analyse the modern world according to surfaces or layers. The first part starts with politics because politics in the modern world is considered to be the Alpha and Omega of our lives. Contrary to Christianity and the Classical world, modernity cannot presume human nature, religion, and tradition as the primordial elements of being.

Last April, Part I of this trilogy was published as *Permafrost, a philosophical essay on western geopolitics from 1914 until now*. It contains the first philosophical concept of geopolitics.

In September, a brief Prologue for the trilogy will appear as *Brave flat world*. The book contrasts the modern world with human existence. It offers a philosophical critique of modernism and is illustrated with essays about love, city structures, medieval life, and other themes.

Part II of the trilogy will be devoted to human nature and will focus on the question whether authority does or does not exist in human nature. It will be published in 2020. Part III will deal more purely with metaphysics.
Conservatism in each country is a mixture of intellectual endeavours and political decisions. Conservative ideas, though permanent, must be adjusted according to different historical challenges, and practical politicians have to adapt them to prevailing conditions. Sometimes conservative ideas influence pragmatic decisions; sometimes, political situations provoke theorists to look for new answers. In the United States it is common to talk about the “conservative intellectual movement” (George H. Nash), which stretched from the 1940s to (at least) the 1980s. In this, a number of passionate people forged both the intellectual movement and the course of practical politics.

Russell Kirk (1918–1994) is not only part of this intellectual development but one of its leading figures and trendsetters. For more than 40 years, from 1953 to 1994, he profoundly influenced the direction of American conservatism. Recently, several interesting books on Russell Kirk’s achievements were published, examining different aspects of his life and work. Especially worth mentioning are the profiles of James E. Person’s Russell Kirk. A Critical Biography of a Conservative Mind (1999), Wesley McDonald’s Russell Kirk and the Age of Ideology (2004), Gerald Russello’s The Postmodern Imagination of Russell Kirk (2007), and John M. Pafford’s brief Russell Kirk (2013).

The latest contribution to the comprehensive study of Kirk’s oeuvre was written by Bradley J. Birzer. Titled Russell Kirk: American Conservative, it focuses primarily on the intellectual development of Kirk’s ideas, paying special attention to his philosophical predecessors — such as Edmund Burke, Alexis de Tocqueville, Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmer More, Leo Straus, Christopher Dawson, and T.S. Eliot.

Kirk’s reputation as one of the principal architects of the conservative intellectual movement in America is primarily founded on the publication of The Conservative Mind in 1953. Two features account for its outstanding quality: first, the inclusion of a ‘canon’ of principles which define the core of conservatism; and, second, the assertion of a rich conservative tradition in the US starting with its founding and stretching to the 20th century.

The former consists of the following: 1. belief that a divine intent rules society as well as conscience, forging an eternal chain of right and duty; 2. affection for the proliferating variety and mystery of traditional life; 3. conviction that civilized societies require orders and classes; 4. persuasion that property and freedom are inexorably connected; 5. faith in prescription and distrust of “sophisters and calculators”; and 6. recognition that change and reform are not identical — societies must change, but slowly to preserve their destined shape. Even if the canon was somewhat altered and amplified in later publications, it contained a clear “table of contents” of what conservatism stands for.

The other and still more important quality of the book was the presentation of a vivid and rich conservative tradition in the US, which often was considered a nation built upon enlightenment beliefs, expectations, and hopes. In order to prove the existence of a great current of conservatism up to the present, Kirk drew upon an impressive number of intellectuals and politicians alike; the main thoughts of John Adams, Alexander Hamilton, Samuel Coleridge, John Randolph of Roanoke, Thomas Macaulay, Orestes Brownson, Irving Babbitt, Paul Elmer More, and others were dissected in view of their conservative core. It’s inter-
Birzer’s treatment of Kirk has the advantage of not only summarizing the contents of Kirk’s main books — in addition to *The Conservative Mind* — but of also emphasizing certain key aspects of his thought. Birzer highlights, in particular, Kirk’s 1954 book, *A Program for Conservatives*, as “Kirk’s most profound and well-written non-fictional work.” This is a surprising judgment. What argument justifies this assertion? It is the observation that in it, Kirk no longer speaks (historically) through the minds of Adams, Burke, Calhoun, Newman, Santayana, Eliot, etc. but (systematically) on the basis of selected topics such as order, power, tradition, mind, heart, permanence, etc.

The book, which was published one year after *The Conservative Mind*, directly reveals its author’s positions by picking up a series of core topics of human existence and laying bare his central viewpoints. Whereas Kirk termed his treatise a “polemical book”, Birzer asserts that only *Eliot and His Age* came closest to matching the intellectual depth and style of *A Program for Conservatives*.

Birzer notes that Kirk’s wife, Annette, reported that her late husband was most attracted by three thinkers and their government’s — will, it is the underlying culture that constitutes and steers this will. The culture of a people — being in a high degree the outcome of historical traditions, religious beliefs, and a set of moral values — is much stronger and more influential in governing a people than are mere political deliberations. It stays on the surface of a people, whereas the whole process of civilization — to which the man of letters has privileged access — constitutes the bedrock and substratum on which human beings actually build their lives.

Birzer elaborates on this further, explaining that the foundation of the quarterly journal, *Modern Age*, by Kirk in 1957 can only be understood against the background of the idea of a “Republic of Letters”. In order to establish such a “Republic”, a journal had to be created, and a dynamic network of friends and supporters maintained. Kirk did both.
With *Modern Age*, Kirk created a new organ for the expression and dissemination of conservative ideas. It remains probably the most important intellectual conservative periodical in the US today, despite the considerable problems Kirk faced in the very beginning — and which are examined in detail in Birzer’s book. Three years later, Kirk followed with the publication of *The University Bookman*.

If *Modern Age* was envisaged as a successor to Eliot’s venerable journal *Criterion* (1922–39), *The University Bookman* was a re-launch of the periodical *Bookman* (1895–1933), a conservative literary journal which had promoted, among many others, the ideas of Irving Babbitt and Paul Elmer More, eminent representatives of America’s New Humanism. Kirk’s grandfather, Frank Pierce, had even subscribed to the *Bookman*.

Despite his high appreciation of literature and his disdain for practical politics, Kirk occasionally entered the political fray as well. From his elevated literary vantage point, Kirk had originally dismissed politics as the sphere of the “quarter-educated”. But eventually he began publishing articles and books on politics and politicians. Especially worth mentioning are his close relationships with Barry Goldwater in the 1960s, Ronald Reagan in the 1980s, and Patrick Buchanan in the early 1990s.

Kirk’s articles during these decades comprise a defence of conservative measures, while also condemning, for example, liberal or neoconservative policies and actions.

His political commentaries during these years go even further. Under the heading, “To the Point” and “From the Academy”, between 1962 and 1975 Kirk published almost 3,000 syndicated newspaper columns, covering all possible national and international political issues.

Birzer’s book not only enters this realm of political journalism, describing Kirk’s ambivalence towards his role in it, but repeatedly (and rightly) points to Kirk’s unwavering high esteem for literature and cultural criticism. The novels — for example, *Lord of the Hollow Dark* (1979) and collection of short stories — such as *The Princess of All Lands* (1979) — that Kirk wrote over four decades were, Birzer points out, a highly cherished medium for Kirk to communicate his moral and religious ideas. As he tended to do, Kirk expressed his humanistic convictions not only at the historical and political level but on the literary and artistic level as well.

It is one of the great merits of Birzer’s carefully and meticulously written study (96 pages of footnotes and a 44-page bibliography!) that it manages to present the main ideas of one of America’s most passionate representatives of the humanistic tradition — while also putting the author’s own touch on the reconstruction of the Kirkian oeuvre.

The “Platonic soul of Russell Kirk” received a very great tribute in Birzer’s book, which shows that conserva-

Ernst Nolte, who died on 18 August 2016, was a German historian, writer, and philosopher. The recipient of numerous prizes for scholarly work, including the Konrad Adenauer Prize, Nolte remained for most of his life a problematic figure for many on the left. His obituary (which begins on the next page) attempts to shed light on one of the 20th century’s most interesting German thinkers.

Till Kinzel, the author of the obituary, is a humanities scholar and currently a member of the board of the Förderstiftung Konservative Bildung und Forschung (FKBF) in Berlin.
Ernst Nolte (1923–2016)

Till Kinzel

Ernst Nolte, who died on 18 August 2016 at the age of 93, was the most controversial German historian of the 20th and 21st centuries. No other historian has published such a wealth of books and essays that have sparked not only controversy (as they should) but vitriolic hatred and unjust condemnation on the part of his enemies.

Nolte, a grammar school teacher of Greek before becoming a university professor of history, had always been a kind of “outsider” in his field. He had come to history through his early interest in philosophy, particularly that of German Idealism as well as of Marx. (Incidentally, his earliest scholarly article dealt with Marx and Nietzsche in the young Mussolini’s socialist ideology.) Nolte was also deeply influenced by Martin Heidegger who had suggested to him that he write his dissertation on Plotinus — and had he done so, his scholarly career would almost certainly have taken a very different turn. So, in retrospect, it is hardly surprising that his indefatigable research into the complexities of 20th century totalitarianisms and their 19th century antecedents should have raised eyebrows among mainstream academics.

Nolte’s later fortunes (or misfortunes) were decisively influenced by the outcome of the so-called Historikerstreit of the 1980s, the “historians’ quarrel” (it could not really be called a “debate”). This Historikerstreit followed in the wake of denunciations of Nolte and others as alleged “revisionists” and “relativizers” of the horrors of National Socialism. Chief among his accusers was Jürgen Habermas, the main representative at the time of the Frankfurt school. Habermas and his friends — people like social historian Hans-Ulrich Wehler — subscribed to the typical left-wing anti-anticommunism that served them as the moral reason to polemize against all detailed comparisons of the two great totalitarianisms as well as fascism. At the same time, an implicit theological conviction of the “absolute evil” of Hitler’s National Socialism was employed in order to prevent a more nuanced discussion of the interplay and interdependence of the Communist, National Socialist, and fascist regimes.

Nolte had argued for what he called a “causal nexus” between Bolshevism and National Socialism — in the sense that the latter developed its own conceptions on the basis of the perception of the former as a Schreckbild — that is, as an image of danger to which one has to react. Unfortunately, this reaction took a very radical form and was, in fact, an overreaction. This kind of contextualization was not meant to “relativize” any of the horrendous crimes committed by these totalitarian regimes in the course of their history. Rather it was an attempt to gain an almost philosophical understanding of the tragic element in world history and, more to the point, in what Nolte considered a “European civil war”.

Strangely enough, the historian’s quarrel of the late 1980s was publicised as the “controversy concerning the singularity of the National Socialist destruction of the Jews”, and Nolte was thereby charged with denying this very singularity. However, nothing could be further from the truth, as Nolte actually affirmed the singularity thesis (which as perceptive an observer as Armin Mohler clearly recognized).

In view of his later reputation as a ‘right-wing historian’, it should be noted that Nolte’s first major book, Der Faschismus in seiner Epoche (1963), contributed decisively to establishing ‘fascism’ as a key term of historical analysis. Not only did Nolte regard German National Socialism as a form of fascism, but he also considered Charles Maurras and the Action française as fascist — both of which are actually rather doubtful claims.

Another controversial aspect concerns the relative importance of anti-Marxism and anti-Semitism for understanding National Socialism. Nolte considered his 1963 book as the first instalment of what would later be a trilogy, the other parts of which would deal with Germany and the Cold War (1974) after fascism and Marxism and the Industrial Revolution (1983). The latter book remains probably his least read work, although it stands as one of Nolte’s greatest scholarly achievements.

Nolte was in many ways a paradoxical intellectual. He did not confine his activities as a professor to scholarly discussions but actively played a role in founding the Bund Freiheit der Wissenschaft in 1970, one of the most important organizations to fight left-wing student rebels and their academic partisans. The Bund Freiheit der Wissenschaft quickly became the academic left’s chief bugbear and was invariably denounced as conservative or even reactionary. Nolte had experienced the onslaught of the radical left at the University of Marburg where the communist influence was comparatively strong, and he self-published an important and well-documented report about these developments already in 1969.

Despite this public role, Nolte was always more of a scholar in his habits and in his style, never going so far as to attack anyone in ad hominem fashion. His noble manners were not repaid in kind, however, for Nolte’s enemies did not even refrain from using violence to intimidate him (e.g., setting fire to his car). And after Nolte had become...
persona non grata in the German scholarly community, he was no longer invited to conferences in his own country.

In contrast, he was regularly invited to Italy where some of his later books had also been published — sometimes even before the German original. His so-called Italian Writings (2011) contain statements and comments on various subjects, and can therefore serve as very convenient entry into the intellectual cosmos of Nolte, whereas his last great book, Die dritte radikale Widerstands bewegung: der Islamismus (2009), focused on the “third radical movement of resistance” [to modernity] and deals with one of the greatest challenges of the 21st century: Islamism. That Nolte, in his old age, should even have made at least the effort to learn Arabic in the course of this project, is an indication of the remarkable intellectual curiosity and vitality of the man.

In general, Nolte’s productivity in the years after the Historikerstreit was awe-inspiring, leading to books about Nietzsche and ‘Nietzscheanism’, Heidegger and politics, controversies about National Socialism (Streitpunkte, published in 1993), the role of revisions and revisionism in historiography (Der kausale Nexus, published in 2002), and a study on the attitude of Germans to their past.

It was also in Italy that Nolte first got to know the great French historian and ex-Communist Francois Furet, with whom he engaged in a respectful exchange concerning fascism and communism, occasioned by a lengthy footnote in Furet’s Le passé d’une illusion (1995) on Nolte. Unfortunately, the mere fact of quoting and discussing Nolte without engaging in name-calling and moralizing denunciation was already too much for some of Furet’s allegedly liberal colleagues. Furet specifically mentions Eric Hobsbawm and Tony Judt, both of whom had complained to him about this. One need not deny that Nolte’s rhetoric and his particular way of thinking occasionally led him astray; but this cannot detract from the fact that his whole work was governed by an overriding concern — that of understanding, as best as possible, the motives and intentions of actors (and perpetrators, as the case may be) in history, especially Communists and National Socialists.

Nolte did not found a ‘school’ of historical interpretation. In fact, his phenomenological approach to history always remained at odds with the fashions of historiographical methodology in the 1960s, 1970s, and 1980s. Nolte would later publish a lengthy tome on Geschichtsdenken (1991), a term that is difficult to render in English, as it denotes a kind of thinking about history that is not as such philosophy of history. The book offered a comprehensive survey of 20th century “thinkers of history”. It was later supplemented by Nolte’s own contribution to the field, his true chef d’oeuvre, Historische Existenz (1998; new edition 2015). This was originally based on lectures he gave at the Freie University Berlin that took place in the early morning hours and which were as intellectually challenging as anything on offer during the 1990s. Nolte’s wide-ranging considerations of what it means for human beings to live historically encompassed not only ancient and modern history but also challenged the prognosis of a so-called “post-histoire” or an “end of history”. Nolte responded to this with clear misgivings about the prospect of a society of so-called “last men”.

Looking back on his life, Nolte said he was regarded as a kind of ‘leftist’ in the ’60s but had since been taken to be a ‘right-winger’. He did not think, however, that this was due to a change in his own outlook. Rather, he suggested, this divergence in the perception of his character was a reflection of the transformations in public opinion since the ’60s. There is certainly some truth to this, although one should not underestimate the fact that Nolte became intellectually much more daring as he grew older. This meant engaging in thought experiments and speculations that were in strong disagreement with the demands of ‘political correctness’ and, therefore, understandably avoided by mainstream historians and other scholars. All this is perhaps most evident in Nolte’s 2011 book, Späte Reflexionen: Über den Weltbürgerkrieg des 20. Jahrhunderts, a collection of brief essays, reflections and aphorisms that extend beyond questions of historical interpretation and approach philosophy as well as theology.

Although there are two good books on Nolte by Volker Kronenberg (1999) and Siegfried Gerlich (2009), as well as two substantial Festschriften published in 1993 (Weltbürgerkrieg der Ideologien) and 2003 (Das 20. Jahrhundert: Zeitalter der tragischen Verkehrungen), one may surmise that the true significance of Nolte’s work as a thinker concerned about history has yet to be recognized beyond the confines of small non-conformist circles. Nolte’s main contributions to intellectual life concern his conception of history, his genealogical theory of totalitarianism, and his reflections both on the nature of the “liberal system”, as well as on the current challenge posed to it by Islamism. In addition, the German historian was an unforgettable model of intellectual freedom as a cornerstone of European identity.

Nolte’s personal example of a scholar who would neither yield to any collective ideology nor respect any taboo in the academy is well worth remembering. For it is perhaps particularly modern mass democratic society that is most governed by hypocrisy and political correctness to such a degree that freedom of thought and expression can no longer simply be taken for granted.

It was thus most fitting that the Catholic priest celebrating at Nolte’s funeral chose, as his motto for what turned out to be a remarkable speech, the Latin saying: Etiam si omnes, ego non: If all others act, speak, or think in the officially approved way, I will not. Nolte’s scholarly and political non-conformism could not have been better expressed.
A Vindication of Edmund Burke

Steven Kessler

“Al circumstances taken together, the French Revolution is the most astonishing that has hitherto happened in the world.” These words, spoken by the Right Honourable Edmund Burke, reflect his bewilderment over the French Revolution and its socio-political effects. He could not find anything else in history that resembled it.

These words come to mind when reflecting on the migrant crisis in Europe right now. Is there any other event in history comparable to the situation in Western Europe now? The parallels are striking: the liberal left’s desire to help those who are visibly suffering versus the conservative’s desire to maintain continuity and stability; the clash of cultures between Islam and the West; the natural rights of men versus the duties of European citizens; and nationalism versus globalization. The tenets of all these issues are present in the migrant crisis — and were similarly present at the forefront of the French Revolution.

The repetition of history may be surprising to some, but not to Burke. “People will not look forward to posterity, who never look backward to their ancestors,” he said. Santayana said as much in his famous quote, “[t]hose who cannot remember the past are condemned to repeat it.” The revolution & the migrant crisis

The historical event that the current migrant crisis in Europe most resembles is the French Revolution. In fact, it is Edmund Burke’s Reflections on the Revolution in France that helps us to make the comparison between the two events apparent — and, ultimately, to vindicate his positions on human nature and government.

To Burke, the French Revolution and the Enlightenment philosophy leading up to it were a disaster. It was, to him, something that had “very much the complexion of a fraud.” The migrant crisis has a similar feeling because, despite what the media tells us, four out of five migrants are not from Syria, according to official EU figures. These migrants are coming from North Africa, the Middle East, and Central Asia, and they are able to enter Europe freely largely due to the leniency of the European Union — and, specifically, due to Germany’s exaggerated hospitality.

Essentially, Germany and other European nations are using an abstract principle of tolerance — of empathy coupled with an earnest desire to help the suffering of others. Burke, of course, detested governing people on abstract principles. “Circumstances,” he writes, “which with some gentlemen pass for nothing, give in reality to every political principle its distinguishing colour and discriminating effect. … [they] are what render every civil and political scheme beneficial or noxious to mankind.”

Thus, Europe’s open door and sheltering policies may certainly work for certain groups of people. But if the character and culture of the guest group clashes with that of the host group, then such abstract principles fail and, eventually, fall apart. Furthermore, it may even lead to risky or dangerous situations — something which we are seeing now, as ISIS admits that it has infiltrated Europe by taking advantage of good-natured and naïve European liberals and sent jihadists pretending to be refugees.

At first, Europeans welcomed the waves of refugees — in much the same way that people welcomed the promises of the French Revolution. But Burke was sceptical, saying: “I should therefore suspend my congratulations on the new liberty of France.” Burke was astutely aware of the ramifications of the removal of external authority and liberation of the individual from moral restraints. Knowing that the radical liberal philosophy would spread like wildfire across

Bust of Edmund Burke in the main chamber of the Old Library (the Long Room) of Trinity College Dublin.
the population, Burke worried and said: “It looks to me as if I were in a great crisis, not of the affairs of France alone, perhaps of more than Europe.”

Accusations & phobia

Unfortunately, anyone adopting Burke’s conservative stance on the problem of mass immigration today can be immediately labelled an “Islamophobe.” President Donald Trump is one such example. He seems to share Burke’s view that it is “[b]etter to be despised for too anxious apprehensions than ruined by too confident a security.” In other words, both Burke and Trump agree that national security and stability, accompanied by external vitriol, are much more important than capricious generosity and popularity.

The liberals of both our day and Burke’s have been quick to label anyone who opposes unchecked Muslim immigration a “bigot”. Burke referred to them as “Sophisters” who “substitute a fictitious cause, and feigned personages, in whose favour they suppose you engaged, whenever you defend the inheritable nature of the crown.”

Burke here is defending the aristocracy, the hereditary nature of community that is not simply given by mere whimsy, and the importance of tradition against those who attack his beliefs speciously. These liberals, who defend the Revolution, are the same as those who are quick to accuse of Islamophobia anyone who points to evidence showing the problems and dangers of mass Islamic migration.

Destroying the old order

The pillars of the faith of European liberals are equity, autonomy, a devotion to the individual, social rights without their correspondent duties, and liberation from ancient ties. In the name of equality and autonomy, today’s liberals have opened their country’s doors. Three centuries ago, the revolutionary liberals destroyed the old order, which had been based on authority, community, and a sacred tradition based on equity and liberty, and replaced it with the foundations of the modern, globalist, borderless state.

According to German reports, 81% of migrants lack job qualifications, have high rates of illiteracy, import their social and political conflicts from home to Europe, free ride on government benefits, and treat women and children deplorably, including religiously sanctioning child marriages and paedophilia. What is the benefit of bringing people with such views to Europe?

Burke raised the same concerns and asked the liberal radicals of his day to ask similar questions: “Compute your gains: see what is got by those extravagant presumptuous speculations.” He warned that “[b]y following those false lights, France has bought undignified calamities at a higher price than any nation has purchased.” The Europeans should have seen the writing on the wall.

At the same time, Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates have not participated in any effort to help with the migrant crisis. They have not taken in any refugees, citing reasons of national security. These Gulf States, which are well equipped for military conflict, are also doing little to fight ISIS.

Burke knew about the dangers of implementing change recklessly, without a method for conservation. He quoted Alexander Pope when he said: “Fools rush in where angels fear to tread.” In our day, Europe has rushed in — all the while ignoring the enormous red flag the Arab nations have waved in their refusal to accept any of what, by all accounts are, refugees from more culturally congruent neighbouring countries.

The ideology of political correctness

The French Revolution was speciously enacted in the name of equality; today’s migrant crisis has taken place in the name of the other ideology of our day: political correctness. Burke, like all conservatives, knew that life contains natural and just inequalities — and that any attempt to equalize people is just a fool’s errand.

Due to political correctness, no one today can admit that allowing migrants who bring crime, conflict, and misogyny — and, to a certain degree, a dependence on the European welfare state — is wrong. Political correctness disables anyone’s ability to create hierarchies, prioritize, or criticize anything. Under political correctness, we are all equal at all things at all times.

This concept, to Burke, is based on another specious and faulty premise. With regards to equality, he said: “In this you think you are combating prejudice, but you are at war with nature.” To the liberals, everything is equal; to the conservatives, it is a denial of reality and human nature.

To reiterate, liberals base their positions on more than just equality or equity; they base them on social rights which they want to extend to all people everywhere. While this is a generous sentiment, the Burkean conservative knows that “rights” must only be given in fulfilment of a correspondent duty. The migrants have been given the full rights and privileges of European citizens without any duty, labour, or communal inheritance. And how have they reacted? They have complained about the food, criticized the free shelter they’ve been given, bemoaned the lack of amenities, and rioted against the modest size of their free government allowances. Is this the “injustice” Burke spoke of?

The legitimacy of refugees

While it may seem that Islamic migrants have been painted in an overly negative light, it is necessary to add that some migrants are legitimate refugees. In a similar way, Burke
also knew that not all the claims of the radical liberals were false: “In denying their false claims of right, I do not mean to injure those which are real,” he writes.

Burke further shows a soft spot — later echoed by J.S. Mill in *On Liberty* — when he says, “Whatever each man can separately do, without trespassing upon others, he has a right to do for himself.” However, Burke believed in this freedom only in moderation. When the revolutionaries removed moderation and moral restraint from this pursuit, trespassing on others occurred.

This is the case with, for example, the Muslim demand for the removal of pork products from all restaurants because it is offensive to Muslims (whereas most Jews, who are also forbidden to eat pork, would simply say “no, thank you” if offered pork). The demand for equality and an appeal to political correctness are now “trespassing upon others.”

Burke repeats that he is aware that not all the revolutionaries are bad; but, this time, he adds a caveat — that extremists who, “under the name of religion teach little else than wild and dangerous politics,” are a problem. In the context of today, this means that not all Muslims are “bad” and, in fact, some are heroes (like Lassana Bathily, the Malian Muslim who risked his life to save the Jewish customers of the Kosher restaurant that was the victim of a jihad attack in France).

Today, the religious “wild and dangerous politics” Burke spoke of is today called shari’a law. Burke spoke of the destruction of the ‘old order’, which had been based on kinship, community, duty, moral restraint and religion; it has to be said: This strongly resembles shari’a and the Jihadist agenda in Europe and in the rest of the world.

**The role of women**

One especially problematic aspect of shari’a law is the treatment and view of non-Muslim women. Essentially, non-Muslim women are seen as infidels, captives, and/or slaves in times of jihad, male Muslim authorities often condone their rape. A shocking number of European countries are now dealing with a “rape epidemic”. And, as has been widely reported after the fact, on New Year’s Eve 2016, the Western world was introduced to something called Taharrush. This is the Muslim cultural practice of gang-rape.

In fact, Norway, Sweden, Finland, Germany, and other European countries are actually dealing with a rape epidemic — as if it were a contagious disease. But liberalism and political correctness have been guiding European authorities into staging mass cover-ups of migrant rape and other crimes.

“Where are the men of Germany?” you may ask. Burke has an answer: “[T]he age of chivalry is gone. That of sophisters, economists, and calculators has succeeded; and the glory of Europe is now extinguished forever.” To Burke, the same ideology made the men of France soft. This is a parallel to what is going on in Europe today. Liberal progressivism has hen-pecked Western men, making them appear weak and soft to traditional Muslims and their male-oriented societies.

A Hungarian police officer looks across the rails at a crowd of Syrian refugees protesting on one of the platforms at Keleti railway station in Budapest.
Reflections

No. 135
Spring 2017
The threat to Western societies

Burke knew the goal of the radical revolutionary's machinations was to subject all people to some abstract, radical ideal. This is eerily similar to the manipulative tactics of today's European politicians. Towards the end of his Reflections, Burke quotes M. de la Tour du Pin, who describes the consequences of a military state, saying it “is a species of political monster, which has always ended by devouring those who have produced it.”

Seeing constant headlines about the world on the brink of World War II in the 1930s is one thing; reading a headline saying that the “German Army [is] to train ‘refugees’ before sending them back to Syria” is quite another. This should be particularly alarming to people, given the long history of some Germans allying with the Muslim world — siding with Turkey in the Thirty Years’ War; with the Ottoman Empire during WWI and support for the Turks during the Armenian Genocide; and the anti-Semitic “bond” that seemed to exist between Nazis and some Muslims during World War II. And as the corporatist and technocratic German elite has risen to power again, this time through monetary authority and the power to sanction or penalize smaller countries in the European Union. And it is this power has given them the ability to impose “legal action against EU countries ignoring quota” for migrants.

As the rise of “no-go zones” across Europe seems to continue — for example, in Sweden — the allure of a military (or militarized) society seems to grow stronger. Robert Nisbet says that two things precipitate the rise of the military society: military socialism and the growing threat of terrorism. Europe finds itself in just such a spot now — and political authorities seem powerless to do anything.

What redress do the people of Europe have? It appears that some are responding with vigilantism. Headlines like “German vigilante group vows to protect women from migrant attackers as 34 suspects are arrested — including three for gang-raping two teenagers” may be the inevitable outcome under the current circumstances. But it is this power has given them the ability to impose “legal action against EU countries ignoring quota” for migrants.

As the rise of “no-go zones” across Europe seems to continue — for example, in Sweden — the allure of a military (or militarized) society seems to grow stronger. Robert Nisbet says that two things precipitate the rise of the military society: military socialism and the growing threat of terrorism. Europe finds itself in just such a spot now — and political authorities seem powerless to do anything.

What redress do the people of Europe have? It appears that some are responding with vigilantism. Headlines like “German vigilante group vows to protect women from migrant attackers as 34 suspects are arrested — including three for gang-raping two teenagers” may be the inevitable outcome under the current circumstances. But it is this power has given them the ability to impose “legal action against EU countries ignoring quota” for migrants.

To Burke, liberty “is the greatest of all possible evils; for it is folly, vice, and madness, without tuition or restraint.” He knew that “[t]o make a government requires no great prudence;” however, to make a government that works, one that is a “free government; that is, to temper together these opposite elements of liberty and restraint in one consistent work, requires much thought, deep reflection, a sagacious, powerful, and combining mind.”

Burke believed in change, knowing that a nation unwilling or unable to change would collapse. However, he believed in prudence, moderation, moral restraint, and gradual implementation with reflective assessment. Had European leaders today believed in the same things, had they been inspired by the kind of enduring values of which Burke spoke, then perhaps European countries might not be in the predicament in which they find themselves now.

Beyond ideologies

Equity, political correctness, and the suppression of free speech are threatening to thrust Europeans into a cultural and religious civil war. This will only be the beginning. Their only recourse in the short term is to take hard-line positions against radical Islam, as French Mayor Robert Chardon has done, by calling for the banning of Islam from France after the Bataclan Massacre. Furthermore, European countries must take conservative views on immigration — perhaps inspired by the likes of Garrett Hardin, who came up with the idea decades ago of “Lifeboat Ethics”.

The metaphor Hardin created was, of course, that of a ship that capsizes (like the Titanic) and which has a limited number of lifeboats capable of only accommodating ten people per raft. If an 11th person is brought on board, all ten people and the 11th person will die. But if the passengers in the raft take a conservative approach and emphasize in-group loyalty and say “no” to any more additional passengers, the ten passengers will survive.

Europeans need to take similar conservative approaches. They need to abandon the ideology of political correctness and talk openly about how to ensure that their societies, and the civilization they represent, survive. This requires a sober look at themselves and at foreign societies. Not all things are equal, not all people are equal, and not all cultures are equal.

Russell Kirk believed that there is, in fact, an enduring moral order — meaning that right and wrong are absolute. A firm firm voice is necessary to say that crimes such as sexual assault and violence are unacceptable; and a courageous stand needs to be taken in defence of our societies and against the disrespect for local customs and traditions so often shown by newcomers.

Only if the governments of European nation-states and their citizens unite will Europe survive. Through prudence, restraint, and Burkean insights we can all work towards the realization of a bright future — one in which the values and principles that sustained European culture and Western civilization over the centuries are strengthened.

Steven Kessler is a graduate student at the University of Rochester and was a Fellow of the Russell Kirk Center for Cultural Renewal.
At the European Freedom Awards

On the 4th of November 2016, members of various Eurosceptic parties met at a gala event in Stockholm — ironically, in the same room of the five-star Grand Hotel (and with very nearly the same menu) where a similar gala event had been held in 1901 during the very first Nobel Prize Dinner. The 2016 event inaugurated the ‘European Freedom Awards’, which was awarded to the guest of honour, the former Prime Minister of the Czech Republic, Vaclav Klaus. Organized by the Alliance for Direct Democracy in Europe (ADDE), in collaboration with local hosts, the Sweden Democrats, the gala event brought together some of the leading centre-right parties of Europe.

Earlier in the day, delegates from various European countries had signed a joint statement called the ‘Stockholm Declaration’. In it signatories agreed on the importance of upholding national sovereignty and traditional cultural values, as well as keeping taxes low. They also promised to tackle radical Islam. (Rather oddly, the Declaration omitted any mention of Christianity, which one would think would be central in a declaration on Europe’s future.)

After the signing of the Declaration, a press conference was held with former UKIP leader, Nigel Farage, who stated that there can be no half ‘yes’ to Brexit. It would be treason, he said, to go against the electorate and not follow through with the amicable separation for which 17.4 million people had voted. At one point, asked about his feelings towards Russian President, Vladimir Putin, Farage simply said: “I don’t like him” — though he emphasized that the most reasonable thing to do is to speak with him and not ‘poke the Russian bear’.

Farage also introduced Klaus before handing him his award. Calling him “a good bloke”, Farage said the former statesman “represents the respectable end of our movement.” He praised Klaus for having spoken firmly to members of the European Parliament in 2009, scolding them for not listening to European people, and for maintaining his composure as 200 left-wing MEP’s walked out during the remainder of his plenary address.

Upon receiving the prize, Klaus spoke at length about the problems he sees facing Europe. Having lived through Communism, he mentioned that he now sees similar totalitarian tendencies among some groups in Europe. He said he also detects a return in some parts of Eastern Europe to the failed statist policies of the past. Part of this, he said, seems to stem from the ‘green ideology’ of modern-day environmentalism, which he sees as nothing more than a new

An Interview with
Nigel Farage

Nigel Paul Farage is a British politician and political analyst. He was a founding member of the UK Independence Party (UKIP), after leaving the Conservative Party in 1992 — when the ostensibly Conservative Prime Minister, John Major, signed the Treaty of Maastricht. He served as leader of UKIP from 2006-09 and then again from 2010-16. He has been an MEP for South East England since 1999. He co-chairs Europe of Freedom and Direct Democracy (EFDD), the Eurosceptic group in the European Parliament.
form of the old socialist doctrines. In conclusion, he said the European Union is not a real democracy; rather, it is an amalgamation of nations based on a weak common identity and increasingly exhibiting a tendency towards greater centralization.

Those attending the gala event and celebrating Vaclav Klaus all shared similar concerns about the future of Europe. While people engaged in sometimes animated discussions, we slipped away for a cigarette after dessert and, on behalf of The European Conservative, managed to exchange a few words with Farage himself. Below is a transcript of our brief conversation:

How important are small and local communities?

I live in the same building in which I grew up 52 years ago. Our population is under 1,000. I know virtually everybody there. If I go to the church or the pub, I know everyone there. I love that sense of connection, interconnection, community, and — dare I say it — that sense of mutual love. That’s with a small-l not a big-L.

When you live in communities you care for people next door. If, for example, the milk hasn’t been collected by some of the elderly, you know something is wrong. So you knock on the door. And I think community, and belonging, and interrelating is actually what makes mankind its best.

So you’ve asked the right question to the right person here. I really care about that, and I think identity and community matters in a village. For me, it matters. I am very proud of my village and I am very proud of my county. I’m really proud of my country.

Since you mentioned Church in your speech, let me ask you: How important is Christianity for Europe and for you?

Well, I would say this to you: Christianity itself is not as important as Christian values. And I see no inconsistency or contradiction between the two. Some very ‘churchy’ types might — I mean, I’m a Christian myself! But that is not the point. I am a Brit and we actually have a written Christian constitution. I mean, our Head of State is the ‘Defender of the Faith’. It is an absolute fundament in what we are as a nation.

Now, much of Europe is secular and I get that, by the way. But whether it is within or without your constitution, the fact that Europe has a Judeo-Christian culture and background I think is fundamental. It’s very interesting that when the European constitution was drafted there were several repeated attempts to get written into that constitution that there was a Christian culture. They were rejected. Rejected!

What are the greatest challenges facing Western civilization?

Islamic terrorism is the number one threat — an imminent threat. The loss of democracy I think is a very, very serious threat. And the third one, which is a bit longer term, is demography. We face a demographic problem.

Now, it doesn’t have to be a problem — if those who have come here with different faiths and races and religions become integrated, and become part of our same shared hopes and aspirations, then we won’t have a problem. At the moment, my confidence in that happening is quite low. And that’s a problem that I won’t face. I’ll be dead.

Karl Gustel Wärnberg holds an M.A. in the History of Science and Ideas from Uppsala University. He is the Chairman of the Swedish Conservative Association in Stockholm. He has held several positions in the Swedish Moderate Party’s youth organization. He has also worked as Conservatism Research Fellow at the Bow Group and for the UK-based Thomas More Institute.

Two UKIP neckties — with the elusive ‘cranks and gadflies’ tie on the left.
In How to Be a Conservative, you write: “It is not unusual to be a conservative. But it is unusual to be an intellectual conservative. In both Britain and America some 70% of academics identify themselves as ‘on the left’, while the surrounding culture is increasingly hostile to traditional values or to any claim that might be made for the high achievements of Western civilization.” The press, the bureaucracy, the universities: all hostile to conservatism. Why?

It’s a very good question. I think I spent my life trying to answer it, in fact. My impression is that this hostility comes in part because people who self-identify as intellectuals and thinkers also want to identify themselves as in some way outside the community, standing in judgment on it, gifted with superior insight and intellect, and therefore, inevitably critical of whatever it is that ordinary people do by way of surviving. So we have created an intellectual class, which by its nature does not identify with the way of life around it, and tries to gain another kind of identity through its critical stance.

And this produces the paradox that within academic circles and within the press, to be a liberal instead of a conservative is almost boringly conventional.

Yes. That’s right. The convention is to be hostile to conventions.

You begin How to Be a Conservative with a marvellous essay on your own journey from left to right, and you identify a couple of events in particular as crucial in that journey. I quote How to Be a Conservative: “[The Paris riots of] May of 1968 led me to understand what I value in the customs, institutions, and culture of Europe.” Paris explodes and you decide not to join the students in the street. Why?

Gosh. Why? For a start, the thing that most struck me about those students in the street was the sentimentality of their anger. It was all about themselves. It wasn’t about anything objective. Here they were, the spoiled middle class Baby Boomers, who’d never had any real difficulties to cope with, shouting their heads off in the street, burning the cars belonging to ordinary proletarians, whom they pretended to be defending against some imaginary oppressive structures erected by the bourgeoisie. The whole thing was a complete fiction based on the antiquated ideas of

Sir Roger Scruton is an English writer and philosopher. He is the author of more than 50 books on topics ranging from philosophy, aesthetics, and architecture, to wine and hunting. His most recent book, On Human Nature, was published in 2017 by Princeton University Press. He is a Fellow of the British Academy, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Literature, and is a Senior Fellow at the Ethics and Public Policy Center in Washington, DC. He is also one of the founders of the Center for European Renewal and is an adviser to this publication. Sir Roger was knighted in 2016 by Queen Elizabeth II for his “services to philosophy, teaching, and public education”.

An Interview with Sir Roger Scruton

Courtesy of “Uncommon Knowledge” / The Hoover Institution.
Karl Marx, ideas which were already redundant in the mid-19th century. They were enacting [...] a self-scripted drama in which the central character was themselves.

Again: “Only someone raised in the Anglophone could believe, as I believed in the aftermath of 1968, that the political alternative to revolutionary socialism is conservatism.” Only someone raised in the Anglophone?

Yes. I think if you look around the world, those political parties and political movements that identify themselves as conservative, it’s only in Britain, America, Australia, possibly India, that people would even use that word. Because there’s a tradition which we have inherited from Edmund Burke and the reaction to the French Revolution of recognizing that there is an alternative to revolutionary change, and that is not changing.

This extraordinary original idea only enters the heads of English speaking people. I don’t know why, but it’s something to do with the English language. It’s sort of accommodation of eccentricities, the fact that we live a life based on compromise, the common rule, which tells us that the ordinary person is charge of the law, not the people there who are pretending to impose it on him. All those things, which we’ve inherited from hundreds of years, actually, of discussion and debate, they make it natural for us to say, “let’s not change”.

The second large event in your own journey was “a visit to Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1979 [which] awoke [you] to the fraud that had been committed in socialism’s name”. What did you see? How were you awakened?

I was there in Poland in the wake of the Pope’s pilgrimage to his country. There was a visible sense that there is an alternative to revolutionary change, and that is not changing.

As I understand, your formal training is as a philosopher. […] You intended to work in the tradition of Aristotle — philosophy as it bears on ordinary political life. Is that correct?

Well, yes. I’ve always thought that philosophy has ordinary life as its subject matter. That’s what it’s about. But it is also a reflection on ordinary life and its meaning. When it came to working in Eastern Europe, my main thought was that what young people there especially needed was not merely philosophy but the whole range of knowledge, which had been excluded from the official curriculum. For instance, knowledge of history, knowledge of literature, knowledge of the way in which those things connect, how music and art and literature feed into a vision of your society, and of course, knowledge of the religious traditions of their countries.

All those things had been excluded by the Communist Party from the national sense of identity. But it didn’t alter my view that they’d also been excluded from our societies too by the universities themselves. Most young people today leave a university having studied history but not actually knowing very much about it. They will know about the periods of revolutionary struggle and other things that have appealed to their professors as part of their own self-glorification, but they won’t know that they are [...] interred within the spirit of the people.

Your visit to Poland and Czechoslovakia took place in 1979. Mrs. Thatcher became Prime Minister in the same year. On the one hand — again, I’m quoting — “In the midst of our discouragement, Margaret Thatcher appeared, as though by a miracle.” On the other hand: “I never swallowed in its entirety the free market rhetoric of the Thatcherites.” Explain that.

She came into our lives as a representative of our country at a time when the country looked particularly enfeebled by the trade unions, by the whole labour party attempt to rope society into a communal prison run by the state. All that was wonderful. We felt, we don’t actually have to go along with all that crap. We can do our own thing. And we can revert to our natural condition as rebellious, eccentric Englishmen. But she felt that she had to embellish it with a complete doctrine, which she borrowed from the Institute of Economic Affairs, and about the need for market solutions to every social problem.

Now, I’m all in favour of market solutions where they apply, but not every social problem [has] a market solution. There is a need for the maintenance of traditions in education and in culture and in the law, which are not traditions of free enterprise, but much more conditions of some kind of collective renunciation.

Renunciation of the state?

And a renunciation of one’s own individuality. That’s what her culture is partly. I think she wasn’t sensitive to all that aspect of things. You have to remember that at the time
when she became prominent, we inherited a society and an economy that had been radically changed by the Second World War, and by the socialist governments that came into being because of the Second World War. [...] People wanted a government based on planning because they had felt that the war showed the need for planning. If it hadn’t been for planning, we wouldn’t have survived it. We almost didn’t survive it because we weren’t ready for it.

Winston Churchill had the capacity to articulate a deeper conservatism. Throughout the war he [talked] about love of native land. [...] He actually used the phrase [...] “Christian civilization”. Yet, in the 1945 election, in the face of the socialists, because he lacked a vocabulary to talk about free markets, he was naked before Attlee and [the] socialist impulse. It almost seems to me as though there’s a kind of ideological teeter-totter: Conservatives in Britain either get to talk about free markets or they get to talk about cultural conservatism. Somehow, the two don’t seem to go together. Is there some reason for this?

That’s a very insightful observation. I think since Edmund Burke, we’ve had this tension between the adoption of the free market as the instrument of economic organization, the primary way in which a society should create and exchange goods, and the sense that some things should be withheld from the market, and that those things are just as important but much more difficult to defend. Of course, Burke was talking about those things which should be withheld from the market, love, family and so on. All societies have recognized from the beginning of history that a market in sexual relations is the end of all social coherence. It’s always very hard to say why. That’s just one example. All the things that matter to us, as soon as we recognize how much must they matter, we want to withdraw them from the whole business of exchange and proliferation and, as it were, have them to ourselves. It’s that aspect of humanity which is so difficult to articulate. But as you rightly say, Churchill did articulate it. And it is so much easier when it’s under threat.

One more large question about Britain: Brexit. [...] Speaking on the BBC, you said: “The experts failed to see that the British people are profoundly democratic and do not accept to be governed by bureaucrats who are not accountable for their mistakes.” [At the same time] one also hears, over and over again, that Brexit was a reaction against immigration. Explain.

Well, [it] could be both. I think [...] the feelings of opposition to the European Union are much longer standing than the recent feelings about the mass immigration from Europe. They have been about democratic accountability, the thought being that more than half — I think nearly two-thirds — of the laws rubber-stamped by our parliament originate in Brussels in the minds of bureaucrats who have no knowledge of, or interest in, the peculiar social conditions of Britain, which are very peculiar because we haven’t been interfered with in this way before.

People have resented that, and rightly, because after all, what is democracy, if it’s not the ability of a people to decide for themselves about the laws that operate in the country that is theirs? That reference to the country, our country, is absolutely fundamental to the democratic idea. It is true, of course, that British people also reacted strongly to the mass immigration — the rate of something like 300,000 a year of people from the former communist countries. They were brought into the European Union without any mandate, any popular mandate from the existing members. They were people living in countries ruined by communism, suddenly given the opportunity to settle in places which were not so ruined.

England, in particular, and Britain in general, has the advantage that its infrastructure was not destroyed in the war. [...] It speaks the international language. The freedom to settle there and to enjoy what the British people had defended at great cost to themselves was suddenly offered to these people. Inevitably, they all transferred to Britain. It’s not xenophobia to recognize that your life, if you’re an ordinary person, has been changed — when suddenly people better qualified than you compete for your job, when your child is going to a school where English is the second language, when your right to social housing has been conferred on people who never paid anything to obtain it, etc.

You’ve spoken about the peculiar customs of Britain and the distinctiveness of the Anglophone. Is it your position simply that Britain ought to have left the European Union or that the European Union is bad for everyone?

Well, I would say, and I did say this prior to the vote, that what is needed is not simply for us to withdraw from the treaty. What is needed is a new treaty, one that we could accept, and that everybody else could accept, too.

My view is that treaties are dead hands. They weigh upon you, maybe beneficially if they’re restraining you from doing something that would otherwise be destructive, as peace treaties do. But they might actually prevent you from taking the measures needed to cope with new situations. Treaties don’t adapt. The more signatures for them there are, the less likely it is that they ever will adapt. That is the problem. We were living under a treaty signed or conceived 70 years ago by people long since dead, in a situation that has vanished. Why should we be governed by it? It’s unusual for a treaty, in that it sets up a system of government. So you have a system of government, which is essentially non-adaptable.
My view is, get rid of it, and everybody come together again, seeing if they can get another kind of treaty which [responds to] all their separate national interests. [...] Take the Poles. They thought it was great to join the treaty because at last they would have a system of law, which would replace the complete nonsense of communist legality. They had access to proper infrastructure and markets and so on. What they did not realize is that they would also lose all their youth, so that Poland is in a state of demographic collapse.

Everyone goes off to London to work.

Yeah. Clearly, each country has a different problem. Likewise, the Greeks thought, “Great. The single currency, as you say. We can transfer all our debts to those reliable Germans.” Then suddenly they realize: “Well of course, we can no longer govern our economy as we used to by periodic devaluation.” […] The result is a total collapse in youth employment.

In a talk on the BBC the week after the American election, you said: “In America as in Britain, the indigenous working class has been put out of mind, even overtly disparaged by the media and the political class. All attempts to give voice to their anxieties over immigration, over the impact on their lives of globalization and the spread of liberal conceptions of sex, marriage, and the family have been dismissed or silenced.” How can it be that Franklin D. Roosevelt, in establishing modern liberalism seven decades ago — of which the Democratic Party is the great champion — placed the working class at the very centre of that coalition, and now that same party — that same liberalism — has turned its back on the indigenous working class? How did this happen?

Yes. Well, it’s happened everywhere. I think […] it’s one of those deep mysteries, but I think there are two important factors that contributed to this. One is the change in the economy, which has transferred an awful lot of economic activity to service activities, to activities we conducted through the Internet or through companies based outside the jurisdiction. [This] means that the old traditional working class no longer has that cohesion that it had before and it’s no longer an identifiable social mass in the way that it was in Roosevelt’s day. That’s one very important thing.

The other important thing is that the liberal establishment has ceased to represent the interests of that class anyway. It represents the interest of people who are saying that they represent the interests of that class. It’s a self-serving ideology — people who want to appear virtuous without the cost of it. People in the media, the administration, and so on, who love the image of themselves as defenders of the people but [who] recognize that, when in the proximity of the people, they feel nothing except repugnance.

You’re making a moral point. It all happened through pride and vanity and sloth and inattention on the part of very comfortable people.

Well, I said that’s only one factor. […] There are also lots of good people who are liberals who really do worry about these things. But I’m just talking about these new social factors, which we have to recognize.

Now and again, one will hear: “American anxiety over immigration is xenophobia. It’s just immoral to think you can draw a line at the border. Why should anyone be anxious over immigration?” Yet, you would argue that it is actually a legitimate concern.

Well, yes. Again, there are many factors, but illegal immigration has been a great concern to people. There are ten million illegal immigrants possibly in this country. And I think ordinary people would say, “Look, if the first thing that somebody does when coming into the country is to commit a crime, should he really be allowed to stay?” I think it is a very strong argument. Of course, legal immigration, which has the consent of congress, and therefore the consent indirectly of the people, is not something that people are complaining about, not in the same tone of voice, anyway.

Then again, you have to recognize that what is being asked of the people is to offer hospitality to those who are not currently part of their home. You can offer hospitality to others if you have a secure home from which to offer it. But if that home has become insecure, as it has in large parts of Europe because of immigration, then what are asking of people? You’re asking of them, essentially, to de-territorialize themselves, to detach themselves from the place that is theirs without giving them any alternative.

Another concern you’ve mentioned: “The spread of liberal conceptions of sex, marriage, and the family.” This is a legitimate concern. But the argument could be made that the indigenous working class has no right to be upset about these liberal conceptions of sex, marriage, and the family because they’re the ones who’ve embraced them. To which you reply …?

I would reply that […] all of us fall away from the standards that are required in this area. That is undoubtedly the case because this is the biggest area of temptation. But it is also the biggest area in which examples are needed and in which a culture of resistance is needed. That culture of resistance was absolutely vital to the protection of the
working class family, and especially of children who need a father at home and have lost that protection. It is undeniable that it’s liberal propaganda which has made it almost impossible to say those things. It’s not possible to say the things that are needed in this area — unless you’re Charles Murray and don’t care what’s said about you anyway. […] The point is, it’s an area in which the truth has been made ‘unsayable’ by the liberal censorship.

_All right. Along comes Donald Trump. Does Sir Roger Scruton approve of the 45th Chief Executive of the United States?_

Well, that’s a direct question, which is not strictly relevant to my vision of the world.

_I’ll rewrite the question. How do you want to grapple with Donald Trump?_

Well, I’d rather not. But of course, his defects of character are so manifest that one can, as it were, recognize that he’s put you in a new position. He is the legitimate President of the United States. He won the election on the basis of things, which were rightly said — some things were rightly said — and also on the basis of other things, which you could criticize, which perhaps should not have been said.

_To go back to the point you were just making, did he have the virtue of saying the unsayable?_

Yes. One of the reasons why he was elected is exactly that, which is one thing that I said in my BBC talk that you referred to earlier, that people have been living under a regime of liberal censorship, which makes it very hard to say things without being accused of faults like racism, xenophobia […] which nobody wants to be accused of but which are very easy to [make] because there’s no criteria on the basis of which to make them other than the feelings involved.

_Senator John McCain, speaking very recently at the Munich Security Conference, said: “What would the founders of this security conference say if they saw our world today? They would be alarmed by an increasing turn away from universal values, and toward old ties of blood and race and sectarianism.” You and Trump both champion the native land, the organic culture. [Critics would say that] you want to turn us back to blood and soil, blood and race and sectarianism._

That’s the kind of language which I reject. My view is that the country is a vital part of our identity. I don’t mean by that ‘blood and soil’ in the Nazi sense; I mean, this land, the place where our jurisdiction operates. This is a crucial thing about the national idea. It’s a defence of territorial jurisdiction against religious or quasi-religious jurisdiction, like the Universal Doctrine of Human Rights or the Sharia, to take another competitor. We are fortunate to live in countries where the law is defined by the land over which it operates.

_Within that land, of course there’s a sense of belonging on which the law draws for the democratic process. There’s nothing blood and soil about this. It’s to do with neighbourhood. We’re settled among neighbours. We want to get along with them. We don’t want to force them to agree with us about everything nor do we require them to be of the same race, whatever that means. But we do require them to share our commitment to the place where we are because this is where we’re building a home. Other people might want to come into that home and we should be entitled to invite them, provided they agree to abide by the rules._

_All this is perfectly reasonable in my view. It’s only because the left have dominated the language in which these things are discussed that my reasonable position can be made to look like that unreasonable position, which you were just attributing._

_There is Trump’s now famous executive order imposing a temporary travel ban from seven countries in the Middle East where there’s been terrorism. The United States Conference of Catholic Bishops criticized this, stating: “The bond between Christians and Muslims is founded on the unbreakable strength of charity and justice. […] Welcoming the stranger […] is the very form of Christianity of itself.” There you get the notion that drawing lines at the border is unchristian or immoral. Who is Donald Trump — who is Sir Roger Scruton or Prime Minister May — to say: “We have the right to keep people out.”_

_You have a house, which you share with your wife and children, assuming you have them. You do recognize the right to keep out of that house people whom you’ve not invited in. Don’t you?_  

_I do._

_Having invited people in who start smashing things up, you recognize a right to exclude them. […] Just multiply that by a few hundred thousand and you’ll recognize that people taken as a whole have that right. That is another part of democracy: that we live in a place. We have the right to exclude from that place those whom we think are not going to fit into it or to whom we don’t want to extend a welcome. If we didn’t have that right, we wouldn’t feel secure in occupying the place that we claim as ours._

_It’s a simple part of human nature and although I think Trump should never have mentioned the Muslim idea in_
this — because that goes against the whole American tradition that religion is not what it’s about but settlement — nevertheless, he wasn’t exceeding the natural powers of a president in saying what he said if he’d left out that reference to religion. He did make various promises to people prior to the election, which he’s obviously under some obligation to follow through anyway.

Wonderfully compelling, everything you say. But it’s nostalgic. It’s the shire. It’s Tolkien, for goodness sake! Even England isn’t green and pleasant in quite the same way. We live in a modern world and for seven decades, in both your country and throughout the Anglosphere, the state has expanded and expanded. I love the world that you describe in the same way that I love Tolkien, but they belong on the bookshelf together. It’s not practical. Tell me why I’m wrong.

Well, you’re not entirely wrong. The expansion of the state to absorb more and more of civil society has happened everywhere — more outside the Anglosphere than inside the Anglosphere. Let’s face it: You still have private education available here if you want it and can afford it. You still have all the ‘little platoons’, as Burke called them. If you have a problem, you can get together with your neighbours to solve it. You probably belong to all sorts of clubs and discussion groups and so on. All that free association, which made the English speaking countries what they are, still exist. It’s just that there are attacks on it.

Roughly speaking, half of what you earn goes to maintain a shadow community of parasites whose only justification is that they pretend to be governing us. We belong in an organism which is accompanied by a cancerous version of itself. That’s the way it is. All you can do is every now and then diminish it. Cut off this or that bit of it. But it will always be there.

At the same time, focusing on the other thing, it’s not nostalgia, although nostalgia is an underrated aspect of the human condition. Remember the founding work of literature of our civilization describes Odysseus’s decision to give up immortality and life with a goddess in order to travel across dangerous seas to his home. It set the model for what all our literature since has been about and all our art. Why turn away from that? We are in this world as dispossessed and alienated, and we do have that longing for a home. We try to build it. That’s all I’m advocating: that we should go on doing this. It’ll always be a different home, but it isn’t in any way nostalgic to say that this is where our values lie, rather than in that other thing, that great expanding state machine.

The last question: Brexit has happened. Britain has a new government. You have a new Prime Minister and we have a new President. Are you hopeful?

I’ve never in my life been hopeful. I take the view that pessimism is the wise position to adopt because you’re always agreeably surprised.

Peter M. Robinson is a Research Fellow at the Hoover Institution, where he writes about business and politics, edits Hoover’s quarterly journal, the Hoover Digest, and hosts the television programme, “Uncommon Knowledge”. This interview was originally recorded on the 27th of February and broadcast on Wednesday, 19 July 2017. It has been abridged for length and clarity. It appears here by permission.
For the Frenchmen who lived through World War II, the defining event of their lives was quintessentially political. It was the great refusal, embodied by General Charles de Gaulle, to accept the defeat of June 1940. With that refusal came a determined commitment to re-establish national sovereignty. This was more than a matter of overthrowing German occupation. As de Gaulle recognized, it required Frenchmen to recover the spiritual independence of France, to recommit themselves to the project of building a unique and identifiable nation.

For the next generation, the events of May 1968 were their decisive experience. Both its partisans and critics agree that after May ’68 we became a society that undoes its bonds. France was no longer seen as a distinctive nation that strives for unity and independence. Collective rules, both political and social, were delegitimized. The citizen of action was succeeded by the individual of enjoyment. This movement appeared to be very political, even revolutionary, with its various groups competing to be the most radical ideologically. In reality, political differences were levelled in a flood of slogans, and the scene was prepared for the great withdrawal of loyalty from the community, a withdrawal that would take place over the years to follow.

One might be tempted to see in these years a mere inflection of France’s political regime, and a softening of its traits without a change in its essential features — just the Fifth Republic reaching its cruising speed. After the stress that accompanied the assertive leadership of General de Gaulle, some relaxation was deserved, and was moreover very pleasant. This interpretation is plausible and reassuring, but wrong.

After ’68, relaxation became the law of the land. Every constraint appeared to be useless and arbitrary, whether in civic or private life. Now, as each letting go justifies and calls forth the next, successive governments tout themselves, no longer because of the guidance and the energy they give to common life, but because of the “new rights” they grant to individuals and groups. Underlying the ostentatious solicitude for the wishes of society and the desires of individuals, there is a growing incapacity to propose goals for common action. Here is the cause of the growing distance between the French and their political class. Faced with a number of threats, people sense the need to gather themselves for common action. They want to recover something of the Gaullist strain toward national solidarity. But the political class remains locked in the May ’68 mentality and is incapable of putting forward a vision of France as a nation. Instead, they present themselves: their expertise, their earnestness, their celebrity.

The gravity of this crisis has long been hidden by what we like to call the construction of Europe. The energies of our political class have been devoted to buttressing the authority of an enterprise that delegitimizes the nation and promises a new way of bringing humans together. As national political life becomes less and less satisfying, citizens and government officials look elsewhere. The people, unhappy with government, and the government, unhappy with the people, both turn their faces toward the promised land of Europe, a new, post-political way of being, in which each would finally be rid of the other.

These sweet hopes have become less and less plausible. Those who govern and those who are governed remain prisoners of each other. And both are prisoners of a European Union that is now just one more insoluble problem. Neither the institutions of Europe, nor the government of France, nor what is called civil society have enough strength or credibility to claim the attention or fix the hopes of citizens. As rich as we still are in material and intellectual resources, we are politically weak. Nothing seems to have the power to gather us toward the common action we all feel necessary. Faced with crises such as Greek default and the attacks of radical Islamists, we are capable only of offering technical fixes or hollow platitudes. Real political leadership of the kind that calls on our deepest loyalties and highest capacities is nowhere to be seen.

This political weakness has not escaped the attention of those who now attack us. To be sure, when men have at each other, they do not precisely calculate the power ratios, and it sometimes happens that the weaker attacks the stronger. Still, it would be a mistake to look at things this way. When some of our citizens take up arms against us so brazenly and implausibly, this means that not only our state, our government, and our political body but we ourselves have lost the capacity to gather and direct our powers, to give our common life form and force.

What to do about our diminished collective capacity is the great political question of Europe. Whether in relation to European unification or to Islam, it is clear that we have Nothing pertinent to say if we refrain from making claims about European identity. One way to outline essential characteristics of European political and spiritual life is to contrast them with certain fundamental features of Muslim life.

Running the risk of a somewhat rough stylization, we might say something like the following: Islam throughout its history has largely preserved the form, the impulse, and the consciousness of empire (traits that are found with renewed vigour today), while Western Christianity, though born in an imperial form, and very much subject to great missionary and conquering movements, found its relative stability in a very different arrangement. Islam was never able to abandon the
imperial form that Christianity could never assume in a last-
ing way. Christianity instead found its form in the nation, or in the plurality of nations once called “Christendom”, then “Europe”.

Today, because we hold the history of Europe at a dis-
tance, because we have emptied Europe of its old nations and its old religion, Islam's entry into European life appears to elite opinion as a problem that does not arise. In our present way of thinking, “Europe” is an abstract social space where the sole principle of legitimacy now resides in human rights, understood as the unlimited rights of individual particularity. No really significant associations or communions remain; fundamentally, none truly exists. In a post-political world in which there exist only individuals and legal machinery to guarantee rights, human associations — that is, nations and churches — are no longer social realities. They are, according to ruling opinion, pretended realities that recalcitrant “reactionaries” invoke only to block newcomers. Treating old nations or the old religion as legitimate realities that must be accounted for in political judgments about the common good is now regarded as attacking Islam.

Because only the individual and the human race are legitimate, intermediate communities in which human beings actually live, such as nations and churches, have no legitimacy of their own and in fact bear the stigma of rupturing human unity. However, to be consistent, this delegitimation of communities should include or implicate the Islamic community. But this does not happen. European political elites speak of Islam and the Islamic community in a way they would never speak of Christianity and the church. In our public discourse, there are Muslims and there are Europeans. Why is it that only one form of living communal identity — the Muslim form — receives the unreserved recognition of ruling opinion?

The most decisive reason, I think, is the following: those who decide what we have the right to say do not engage Islam as a social reality. It is not considered in itself. Instead, ‘Islam’ becomes a test of our post-political resolve. It must be accepted without either reservation or question in order to verify that Europe is indeed empty of any national or religious substance that might get in the way of human universality. The refusal to treat Islam as a social or, more generally, a human reality therefore has nothing to do with Islam but instead with Europe’s self-image.

The fact that human rights might be less well guaranteed within a Muslim polity than in the old, residually Christian nations does not imply any indulgence toward the latter; in fact the contrary is true. It is not a question of comparing the respective characters, including strengths and weaknesses, of human associations that have long histories and distinctive identities. Rather, ‘Islam’ must be accepted so as to verify the absence of anything common — political or religious — in Europe. The unhindered presence of Islam thus takes on a paradoxical role. Its threat to a European future is actually its importance as supreme marker of our spiritual evisceration, which is taken as an achievement of human universality. Precisely because it has been the enemy of Christianity over the centuries, and because its moral practices are now the furthest from those of the Europe of human rights, a post-political European sees Islam’s unhindered presence as demonstrating the triumph of European ideals. We have become so universally human that we have no enemies.

A part of the public, though very detached from the old nations as well as from the old religion, looks at the Muslim community as a reality and worries about whether human rights, and in particular the rights of women, are respected within it. This opinion willingly and sincerely declares itself secular. This secularism that is critical of Islam expresses a cultural attachment to European history and life, an attachment that is sincere and even lively, but that does not perhaps allow itself to think clearly about the political and religious bases of European culture. It has a tendency to treat culture as a self-sufficient reality. For this very reason, it overestimates enormously the powers of secularism to sustain a particular identity, while underestimating Islam’s capacity of resistance and redoubled affirmation. This is because secularism treats religion mainly as a mere ‘culture’.

Therefore, in the two great sectors of politically correct opinion that seem opposites of each other — namely, the opinion
that rejects even the slightest obstacle to the establishment of Islam, and the opinion that demands restrictions derived from the rule of secularity — we see an underlying commonality: Islam is not treated as a social and political reality. Europe is considered on one hand as empty of any common substance, and fortunately so, so that anyone and anything is allowed to find its place among us. On the other hand, Europe is seen as a ‘culture’ worthy of being preserved and extended. The key point is that in both cases Islam exists only as a shadow cast by its relationship to Europe, or in a predefined role in the self-consciousness of the esteemed persons of Europe. What we say about Islam cannot be separated from what we maintain about Europe, about its politics and its religion.

We must recover a view of the European experience that allows us to see Islam as an objective reality, instead of making it the reflection of our self-misunderstanding. We need not claim to determine the truth of Islam. Like Christianity, it too has its uncertainties and its possibilities. Europeans, and especially the French, must come to terms with Islam and try, with its help, to bring about its entry into European life in a way that takes account of European realities and possibilities, not into the dream world of hundreds of millions of individuals united by the promise of ever-greater human rights.

While elite opinion in Europe tends to consider Europe as a ‘nothing’, a space empty of anything common, or at most as a ‘culture’ that is neither religious nor national in character, far from all Europeans agree. After all, despite the efforts of an almost unanimous ruling class over more than half a century, Europeans still live mainly in their old nations, and the prospect of a leap into a post-national Europe, whatever meaning one attaches to that expression, has lost almost all plausibility.

To be sure, our relationship to the nation has changed along with the nation itself. This relationship is more and more defensive and less and less confident and hopeful. We have lost faith in the idea of self-government that animated European nations since they began to take shape in the high Middle Ages. Simultaneously, and perhaps this is not a coincidence, we have lost faith in Providence, in the benevolence and protection of the Most High; or if these expressions appear too obsolete, we have lost faith in the primacy of the Good. Unlike Americans, we no longer call on divine protection over our nations, even if we still pray for ourselves and for those close to us. How long has it been since French bishops prayed for France, except perhaps very rarely and timidly?

I know that this question might appear strange, and yet self-government and petition for the protection of the Most High are two operations of freedom that are inseparable. Every action, and especially civic or political action, is carried out in view of the common good. This common good, which depends on us, is nevertheless bigger than us, too big for us. We are tempted to appropriate it wholly for ourselves, seeing ourselves as the exclusive authors of this good. When we do so, the nation becomes an object of idolatry, an idol that, in the name of its incomparable particularity or its unequalled universality, demands human sacrifices.

We can also, doing what depends on us as best we can, decline to take exclusive responsibility for this good that is greater than us. Softening our pride a little, we can appeal to the Agent who is greater than any action and any human good. As vacillating and prone to fail as we are, it makes sense to put our common goods, so mysteriously substantial and durable, under the protection and the direction of Providence. To do so is a natural expression of the recognition that there are goods too great for us to be their exclusive authors. This natural movement of appeal to the Christian God for the special cares of the nation always carries a risk of paganization, to be sure. But for us as citizens, our part is not perfectly to imitate Divine impartiality. We address the Most High from the site of our action and for the common good of the city of which we are citizens. Moreover, Europeans never excluded their neighbours, allies or enemies, from divine benevolence, until they were subjected to the modern regimes that explicitly rejected the God of the Bible.
It is precisely the crimes committed by such regimes in the twentieth century that now prevent Europeans from turning to Providence with confidence and faith. It can be argued that the destruction of Europe’s Jews has made it impossible to believe in a God who is friend to humanity and master of history. I have touched on this question in other contexts with a trembling hand. It bears down on Europe in more ways than one. The Judge seems to be under judgment. Where was He?

And yet, to renounce divine Providence because of the crime committed would only bring us back to the religion of Epicurus, which teaches that the gods are indifferent to men. Such a view preceded the Shoah by a long time. If we return to it, what would we have learned from the Shoah? We will be going back to the impotent and ill-intentioned gods of paganism, and with them to the aimless, purposeless life of men that encourages apathy and withdrawal from public affairs.

In order to act for the common good, we must have confidence in the possibility of the Good. Why forbid ourselves, out of conscience, this confidence? A great deal is at stake. If we do not succeed in turning once more with confidence toward the possibility of the Good — as we find it in the God of European history and in the nations that history produced — we will not recover the ability to govern ourselves.

Right now, we lack that ability. The idea of acting for the common good has lost its meaning for us. We do whatever it is we do not because it is useful, honest, or noble but because it is necessary, because we cannot do otherwise. In the name of a global marketplace, we have constructed a system of action that can best be described as an artificial providence. We tell ourselves that the only thing we can do, and the best that we can do, is to allow ourselves to be governed by the global marketplace. My, how we love this providence! How docile we are when its invisible hand comes down upon us! And how well the wise and powerful know how to interpret its dictates!

With appeal to the god of the marketplace, as well as to other gods that minister to the high god of utility, we have organized public life in ways that have less and less need of free will, less and less need for political communities. Today, we no longer want to act except as driven by necessity. We will not be able to reopen the domain of communal action if we do not set aside the prestige of this false providence. We need to recover the desire for and hope in a provident God if we are to restore the political order as the framework and the product of choice for the common good.

Here the Church must play a central role. Although Catholics seem to be pushed ever further toward the periphery of public life, even in our secularized present the Church is the spiritual domain at the centre of the West. Her responsibility is proportional to this centrality, which in truth is inseparable from her identity. The universal Church alone is up to the task of holding together a European form of life that has the capacity to offer hospitality to Judaism, Islam, evangelical Protestantism, and the doctrine of human rights. And so, the Church in France — that is, French Catholics — have a special responsibility for the common good in which the other spiritual forces of my country participate. One suspects that these other forces are not necessarily aware of this special responsibility, nor disposed to recognize it. This is only fair. Those who feel responsible for the whole can bring others to accept this special role only if their own contribution to the common good is sufficiently convincing. French Catholics must perform their centrality.

It is my contention that France’s Muslims will find their place only if the French nation accepts them, not just as rights-bearing citizens, along with other bearers of the same rights, but as a distinctive community to which that nation, shaped by Christianity, grants a place. Our Muslim fellow citizens must obviously enjoy the rights of French citizens without any kind of discrimination, which is not always the case at present. They cannot, however, find a place in a vacuum. They find their place only within a nation that has the spiritual and intellectual resources to be generous without being complacent.

To find their place in a France alive to its Christian centre, Muslims must want to participate actively in the life of a
political body that does not and will not belong to the umma; they must therefore accept a degree of separation from the umma. For the nation to accept them as Muslims without reducing their religious mark to a private particularity with no relevance to the political body, it is necessary that they accept this particular nation, the French nation, as the site of their civic activity and, more generally, of their education. A certain “communitarianism” is inevitable. Muslims will inevitably form a visible and distinct community. This will lead to difficulties, on one side or the other. But this is desirable to the degree that it prevents the ideological lie of the new secularism, which obligates us to pretend to be nothing but citizen-individuals who are permitted common action only for the sake of ‘humanity’.

The French Republic in which all citizens have equal rights is not an abstraction. It is a nation of a Christian mark in which Jews play an eminent role. It is in this Republic that Muslims may enjoy their rights, and it is in this nation that they must find their place. The more the nation is able to conserve its historical form, the more the Republic will be able to guarantee the equality of rights. Only a French people capable of political action in pursuit of the common good can offer a place for Islam within the body politic.

Exactly the opposite is happening, however. Islam has sprung up in a Europe that has dismantled its ancient parapets, or has let them crumble. No longer daring to be at home in their own countries, Europeans seek repose in moving toward a post-national future, a movement that nothing can control or slow down. No border must be allowed to obstruct the free movement of capital, of goods, of services, of people, just as no law must circumscribe the unlimited right of individual particularity. A life without law in a world without borders — this has been the horizon of Europeans for at least a generation.

The history of Europe, as I have emphasized, is animated by a very different notion, one elaborated by ancient Israel, reconfigured by Christianity, and then lost when the arc of European history was broken in the great wars of the twentieth century. This notion, without which the history of Europe is unintelligible, has become unintelligible to contemporary Europeans. I am speaking, of course, of the Covenant, the confidence that the Highest Good oversees and perfects the common good of our nations. This is not a simple rational notion, to be sure, but it is not exactly a religious dogma. It is a certain way of understanding human action in the world, of understanding at once the greatness of what we can accomplish and its precariously. God is here the one who gives victory, but who also chastises lack of measure. He confers on actions an excess of good that makes them truly good, allowing us to venture collective ambitions that exceed a sober assessment of our powers. And he prevents the bad from taking the evil they bear to the limit, thereby saving us from despair in our times of collective trial.

It is up to Christians to renew the meaning and the credibility of the political community ennobled by the Covenant. We will not do this by inviting Islam to join a vague fraternity of the children of Abraham. We will renew the meaning and credibility of the Covenant only by renewing the meaning and credibility of the distinctively European association that bore the Covenant until only recently — that is, the nation. Now that the Jewish people have taken the form of a nation in Israel, the nations of Christian Europe cannot break with the national form without fatally wounding the legitimacy of Israel. So long as the walls of the Arab-Muslim world are crumbling and Muslims seem to have more and more difficulty producing a political form from their own resources, to admit them into, or rather to abandon them in, a Europe without either political form or gathered collective action for the sake of the common good would be to take away their best chance for a civic life. It does not suffice to bring men together to declare or even to guarantee their rights. They need a form of common life. In France, a nation of the Christian mark is the only form that can bring us all together.

Pierre Manent was Director of Studies at L’École des Hautes Études en Sciences Sociales, Paris, until his retirement in 2014. This essay is adapted from his 2016 book, Beyond Radical Secularism: How France and the Christian West Should Respond to the Islamic Challenge, published by St. Augustine’s Press. This essay originally appeared in the April 2016 edition of First Things. It appears here by permission.

Manent giving a presentation in Warsaw.
Why did you write the book Jan Sobieski: The King Who Saved Europe?

Jan Sobieski was one of the most illustrious rulers ever to command an army. He gained glory and fame in his thirties through his exceptional military skills and he was acknowledged as the greatest warrior-king of his time throughout the rest of his turbulent life. His patriotism, his strong faith and hope in God, his military reputation, his taste for arts and letters, and his talents — all these were legendary in his lifetime.

Since World War II, no English work has been published about the king who saved Europe from the warriors of Islam at the Battle of Vienna (1683): a battle which was the inspiration for J.R.R. Tolkien’s epic cavalry charge of the Rohirrim that lifted the Siege of Minas Tirith in *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy. Although a great number of books in English have been published on Polish history since the fall of the Iron Curtain, “the Lion of Lechistan”, as Sobieski was called by his enemies, has remained neglected by historians outside Poland.

A personality like Jan Sobieski — the most famous Polish military figure and the saviour of Christendom — can never be ignored and forgotten. I took the initiative to present Sobieski and his immortal deeds to the wide readership in the present-day *lingua franca*.

Tell us a bit about the man Jan Sobieski. What pieces of his life were critical to forming this incredible leader of Poland?

First of all, the Polish world (*Orbis Poloni*) at that time was mainly responsible for producing such a great and devoted man to the Lord. It was a unique world because of its cultural mix of democratic, patriotic, noble and religious traditions that could not be found elsewhere. Of course, the providence and the grace of God were often emphasized in every corner of the vast Polish-Lithuanian Commonwealth, which righteously was considered to be *Antemural Christianitatis* (Bulwark of Christendom) against the Ottomans and Tatars. Polish people — from peasants to nobles and the king — willingly took part in religious life: Masses, rites and pilgrimages. Jan Sobieski could not be an exception to this way of life.

Sobieski also enjoyed learning and during his studies at Krakow, he was fascinated with the Crusades and the legendary battles of the soldiers of Jesus Christ against the centuries-old Islamic imperialist aggression. Fate had him...
visiting Constantinople in the Ottoman Empire as a member of a Polish diplomatic mission in the 1650s, where he had a chance to observe and understand better the Islamic world and the Ottoman diplomacy.

If we add his charismatic leadership and military talents during the endless battles that he took part in, these traits were more than enough to make him a superb leader, known for his knightly virtues and submission to his destiny.

And I say destiny because Sobieski was aware that his purpose in life was not to rule peacefully or to be a patron of arts, but to defend Christendom during the most difficult moment in its entire history.

The Battle of Vienna had huge consequences for Poland, as well as for the rest of Europe. Tell us about it and how Sobieski won it.

The Battle of Vienna was one of the most dramatic and decisive battles ever fought. It marked the turning point in the 1,000 years of relentless struggle between the West and Islam. In fact, the West recovered and struck back, finally ending Ottoman domination in south-eastern Europe. In other words, it was an epic battle that ended the expansion of imperialistic Islam into the heart of the Western world; never again would the armies of the sultan threaten the gates of Europe. The nightmarish scenario of Europe being divided by the Ottoman and French absolutism was avoided.

Regarding the battle that shaped the modern Western world and has no parallel in history, it lasted for 12 hours and was won thanks to the determined leadership of Sobieski and his ‘Angels of Death’ — winged hussars — the best cavalry of all time.

I will not go on to analyse further the tactics and other details that determined the fate of this battle, such information can be found in my book or online. However, I want to emphasize the strength of faith in such moments. Many crucial battles which took place in the name of freedom and Jesus Christ were won by Christian armies because faith and hope — both Christian virtues — existed in the hearts of the soldiers. Sometimes tactics and bravery were not enough to prevail in a battle whose outcome was dangling in the air like an aimless sword. Christian faith was the extra piece that could determine an uncertain struggle, and that was also the case in Vienna, where all the Christian soldiers prayed before marching towards the enemy, knowing that the Lord would bless them and give them strength in those critical times.

What do you think King Sobieski’s lasting legacy is?

His legacy includes many cultural developments, artistic achievements, historical monuments and he contributed to the making of scientific discoveries. He won the mother of all battles, which led to significant geopolitical changes, thus shaping the future of the West.

Sobieski also left a culinary legacy. Austrian bakers devised a kind of cake in the shape of crescents, a figure they had seen in the Ottoman order of battle. The cake was taken to France by the Austrian princess, Marie Antoinette, and became a famous delicacy commonly known as the croissant (or Kipferl). Moreover, Franciszek Kulczyski, a Polish spy and merchant, helped to popularize coffee in Central Europe by using coffee beans left by the retreating Ottomans. He opened the first coffee house in Vienna and one of his innovations was to serve coffee with milk, a practice that was totally unknown to the Ottomans, Persians, and Arabs.

Sobieski’s lasting legacy is most alive in our continuous search for love, freedom, justice, faith, hope, and solidar-
We also have to understand that there are times when the Lord reveals himself to us in someone else’s struggles and victories. The Lord uses such extraordinary people and faithful soldiers of Jesus Christ as Sobieski to enrich our hearts, expand our minds, and empower our bodies. Therefore, Sobieski, who was truly blessed by the Lord, can inspire and motivate people by helping us to dream, believe, take risks for the Kingdom, and to pursue what we otherwise would believe is beyond ourselves.

What parallels, if any, do you see between King Sobieski’s situation and Europe’s current engagement with Islam?

There is an ongoing clash of civilizations between the West and Islam, not because Samuel Huntington claims so, but history and the present situation do. Today the Islamic peaceful invasion of Europe is of the demographic, not military, sort. The continent faces an immigration crisis from at least one generation of young Muslims, many of whom are not only zealously unassimilated, but also are influenced by radical imams to wage cultural and physical aggression against their hosts, establishing parallel communities ruled by sharia and “no-go zones” of violence toward Christian and Jewish infidels.

The reader should understand that we are dealing with a large globalized strong community, where many Muslims see themselves as parts of the same social group of shared interests, goals, concerns, achievements, and grievances. What is worse, the modern-day Islamic terrorism is mostly linked to Salafist and Wahhabist movements, which are very influential sub-sects of Islam today, encouraging their own variant of Islam as the only solution — the ugly version of jihad. The sad reality is that there are no signs that Islam with its aggressive, supremacist doctrine is going to be radically reformed or that a majority of Muslims will distance themselves from the numerous obsolete and outdated teachings of the Quran.

While the mainstream media and several politicians try to convince us that Islam is the religion of peace, they ignore the fact that the West is facing a resurgent Islam both at home and abroad. And the conflict between the two different and historic civilizations continues today with other terms. We are talking about a struggle that is far from being straightforward and elemental like when two armies are facing each other, which means that the new Sobieskis won’t necessarily be soldiers. They will mainly be cultural warriors and Christian activists willing to put themselves on the front lines of the ideological war against this new incursion. The long-neglected Western value of reasoning (almost destroyed by leftist cultural hegemony) urges us to criticize and understand that Islam — an increasingly organized and powerful civilization — shows little or no tolerance toward the Western society and the values for which we have fought for centuries.

Islam as a seventh century political and religious ideology is a threat to humanity as a whole but the novelty about it is that it is no longer limited to one geographical territory. It no longer respects borders. And the greatest difficulty is that it doesn’t only come from outside, it is already here — in the heart of the West. It is, however, never too late to wake up from this sleep and to act like Sobieski by showing our enemies that the free world will not give in to violence and oppression.

Carrie Gress has a doctorate in philosophy from the Catholic University of America and is a faculty member at Pontifex University. She is the author of several books including City of Saints: A Pilgrim’s Guide to John Paul II’s Krakow, co-written with George Weigel. Her latest book is The Marian Option: God’s Solution to a Civilization in Crisis (Tan Books, 2017). This interview first appeared in the National Catholic Register. It appears here by permission.

A Polish-Italian film about the Battle of Vienna entitled “The Day of the Siege: September Eleven 1683”, was released in October 2012. The film features F. Murray Abraham as the Italian Capuchin friar, Marco d’Aviano, and Jerzy Skolimowski as King Jan Sobieski. One of the colourful English-language versions of the movie poster used to promote the film can be seen to the right.
DAY OF THE SIEGE

A Battle of Blood and Steel

SEPTEMBER ELEVEN

1683
The Salisbury Review is one of Britain’s very few non-profit making, independent political journals — which means we have the rare privilege of being free to speak our mind.

The Salisbury Review is published four times a year.
To subscribe or renew, please contact us at:

+44 (0) 1908 281 601 or email us at info (at) salisburyreview (dot) co (dot) uk

Subscriptions by cheque should be sent by post to:

The Salisbury Review
PO Box 6317
Milton Keynes, MK10 1AU
United Kingdom

www.salisburyreview.com