

Two Sources of Europe's Present Plight

Excerpt from *THE STRANGE DEATH OF EUROPE*

DOUGLAS MURRAY

There is no single cause of the present sickness of Europe. The culture produced by the tributaries of Judeo-Christian culture, the Ancient Greeks and Romans, and the discoveries of the Enlightenment has not been leveled by nothing. But the final act has come about because of two simultaneous concatenations from which it is now all but impossible to recover.

The first is the mass movement of peoples into Europe. In all Western European countries this process began after the Second World War due to labor shortages. Soon Europe got hooked on the migration and could not stop the flow even if it had wanted to. The result was that what had been Europe — the home of the European peoples — gradually became a home for the entire world. The places that had been European gradually became somewhere else. So places dominated by Pakistani immigrants resembled Pakistan in everything but their location, with the recent arrivals and their children eating the food of their place of origin, speaking the language of their place of origin, and worshipping the religion of their place of origin. Streets in the cold and rainy northern towns of Europe filled with people dressed for the foothills of Pakistan or the sandstorms of Arabia....

All the time Europeans found ways to pretend this could work. By insisting, for instance, that such immigration was normal. Or that if integration did not happen with the first generation then it might happen with their children, grandchildren, or another generation yet to come. Or that it didn't matter whether people integrated or not. All the time we waved away the greater likelihood that it just wouldn't work. This is a conclusion that the migration crisis of recent years has simply accelerated.

Which brings me to the second concatenation. For even the mass movement of millions of people into Europe would not sound such a final note for the continent were it not for the fact that (coincidentally or otherwise) at the same time Europe lost faith in its beliefs, traditions, and legitimacy. Countless factors have contributed to this development, but one is the way in which Western Europeans have lost what the Spanish philosopher Miguel de Unamuno famously called the "tragic sense of life." They have forgotten what the World War II generation so painfully learnt: that everything you love, even the greatest and most cultured civilizations in history, can be swept away by people who are unworthy of them. Other than simply ignoring it, one of the few ways to avoid this tragic sense of life is to push it away through a belief in the tide of human progress. That tactic remains for the time being the most popular approach....

Mass immigration — the replacement of large parts of the European populations by other people — is one way in which this new story has been imagined: a change, we seemed to think, was as good as a rest. Such existential civilizational tiredness is not a uniquely modern-European phenomenon, but the fact that a society should feel like it has run out of steam at precisely the moment when a new society has begun to move in cannot help but lead to vast, epochal changes. ■



In 2015, German Chancellor Angela Merkel was happy to pose for a selfie with a migrant in Berlin. As a result of her opening Germany's borders, more than a million foreigners arrived in the country that year. Merkel won reelection to a fourth term as Chancellor, receiving only 32.5 percent of the vote on September 24, 2017.