

The Brexit Rejection of Neoliberal Tyranny

With the Brexit repudiation of the E.U. – in defiance of Establishment scare tactics – British voters stood up for common people who face marginalization in the neoliberal scheme of global economics, explains John Pilger.

By John Pilger

The majority vote by Britons to leave the European Union was an act of raw democracy. Millions of ordinary people refused to be bullied, intimidated and dismissed with open contempt by their presumed betters in the major parties, the leaders of the business and banking oligarchy and the media.

This was, in great part, a vote by those angered and demoralized by the sheer arrogance of the apologists for the “remain” campaign and the dismemberment of a socially just civil life in Britain. The last bastion of the historic reforms of 1945, the National Health Service, has been so subverted by Tory and Labour-supported privateers it is fighting for its life.

A forewarning came when the Treasurer, George Osborne, the embodiment of both Britain’s *ancient regime* and the banking mafia in Europe, threatened to cut £30 billion from public services if people voted the wrong way; it was blackmail on a shocking scale.

Immigration was exploited in the campaign with consummate cynicism, not only by populist politicians from the lunar right, but by Labour politicians drawing on their own venerable tradition of promoting and nurturing racism, a symptom of corruption not at the bottom but at the top.

The reason millions of refugees have fled the Middle East – first Iraq, now Syria – are the invasions and imperial mayhem of Britain, the United States, France, the European Union and NATO. Before that, there was the willful destruction of Yugoslavia. Before that, there was the theft of Palestine and the imposition of Israel.

The pith helmets may have long gone, but the blood has never dried. A Nineteenth Century contempt for countries and peoples, depending on their degree of colonial usefulness, remains a centerpiece of modern “globalization,” with its perverse socialism for the rich and capitalism for the poor: its freedom for capital and denial of freedom to labor; its perfidious politicians and politicized civil servants.

Saying ‘No More’

All this has now come home to Europe, enriching the likes of Tony Blair and impoverishing and disempowering millions. On June 23, the British said “no more.”

The most effective propagandists of the “European ideal” have not been the far Right, but an insufferably patrician class for whom metropolitan London is the United Kingdom. Its leading members see themselves as liberal, enlightened, cultivated tribunes of the Twenty-first Century zeitgeist, even “cool.” What they really are is a bourgeoisie with insatiable consumerist tastes and ancient instincts of their own superiority.

In their house paper, the *Guardian*, they have gloated, day after day, at those who would even consider the European Union profoundly undemocratic, a source of social injustice and a virulent extremism known as “neoliberalism.”

The aim of this extremism is to install a permanent, capitalist theocracy that ensures a two-thirds society, with the majority divided and indebted, managed by a corporate class, and a permanent working poor.

In Britain today, 63 per cent of poor children grow up in families where one member is working. For them, the trap has closed. More than 600,000 residents of Britain’s second city, Greater Manchester, are, reports a study, “experiencing the effects of extreme poverty” and 1.6 million are slipping into penury.

Little of this social catastrophe is acknowledged in the bourgeois-controlled media, notably the Oxbridge-dominated BBC. During the referendum campaign, almost no insightful analysis was allowed to intrude upon the clichéd hysteria about “leaving Europe,” as if Britain was about to be towed in hostile currents somewhere north of Iceland.

Dismissing ‘These People’

On the morning after the vote, a BBC radio reporter welcomed politicians to his studio as old chums. “Well,” he said to “Lord” Peter Mandelson, the disgraced architect of Blairism, “why do these people want it so badly?” The “these people” are the majority of Britons.

The wealthy war criminal Tony Blair remains a hero of the Mandelson “European” class, though few will say so these days. The *Guardian* once described Blair as “mystical” and has been true to his “project” of rapacious war. The day after the vote, the columnist Martin Kettle offered a Brechtian solution to the misuse of democracy by the masses.

“Now surely we can agree referendums are bad for Britain,” said the headline over his full-page piece. The “we” was unexplained but understood – just as

“these people” is understood. “The referendum has conferred less legitimacy on politics, not more,” wrote Kettle, adding: “the verdict on referendums should be a ruthless one. Never again.”

The kind of ruthlessness for which Kettle longs is found in Greece, a country now airbrushed. There, they had a referendum against more austerity and the result was ignored. Like the Labour Party in Britain, the leaders of the Syriza government in Athens are the products of an affluent, highly privileged, educated middle class, groomed in the fakery and political treachery of post-modernism.

The Greek people courageously used the referendum to demand their government seek “better terms” with a venal status quo in Brussels that was crushing the life out of their country. They were betrayed, as the British would have been betrayed.

On Friday, the Labour Party leader, Jeremy Corbyn, was asked by the BBC if he would pay tribute to the soon-to-be-departed Cameron, his comrade in the “remain” campaign. Corbyn fulsomely praised Cameron’s “dignity” and noted his backing for gay marriage and his apology to the Irish families of the dead of Bloody Sunday.

Corbyn said nothing about Cameron’s divisiveness, his brutal austerity policies, his lies about “protecting” the Health Service. Neither did he remind people of the warmongering of the Cameron government: the dispatch of British special forces to Libya and British bomb aimers to Saudi Arabia and, above all, the beckoning of World War Three.

Ignoring Russia’s Memories

In the week of the referendum vote, no British politician and, to my knowledge, no journalist referred to Vladimir Putin’s speech in St. Petersburg commemorating the seventy-fifth anniversary of Nazi Germany’s invasion of the Soviet Union on June 22, 1941. The Soviet victory – at a cost of 27 million Soviet lives and the majority of all German forces – won the Second World War.

Putin likened the current frenzied build up of NATO troops and war materiel on Russia’s western borders to the Third Reich’s Operation Barbarossa. NATO’s exercises in Poland were the biggest since the Nazi invasion; Operation Anaconda had simulated an attack on Russia, presumably with nuclear weapons.

On the eve of the referendum, the quisling secretary-general of NATO, Jens Stoltenberg, warned Britons they would be endangering “peace and security” if they voted to leave the E.U. The millions who ignored him and Cameron, Osborne, Corbyn, Obama and the man who runs the Bank of England may, just may, have

struck a blow for real peace and democracy in Europe.

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The Feel-Good but Misguided Brexit

The Brexit vote delivered a sharp rebuke to the cumbersome E.U. bureaucracy and the Establishment in general, but it won't solve the problems facing the U.K., Europe and the planet, writes ex-CIA official Graham E. Fuller.

By Graham E. Fuller

What an irony that Great Britain should be the one country in the world to deliver what could be the coup de grâce to the modern European order and to a meaningful Atlantic relationship. It is incredible that the population of the U.K. should have so thoughtlessly lurched into such a breathtakingly regressive, ignorant, narrow-minded and destructive act in our contemporary world.

However good the 52 percent who voted in favor may feel about torpedoing this major experiment in the making of a new European world order, their heads are firmly implanted in the sand (if that is what it is) as to what the realities of contemporary global currents are. These realities come with our modern world. Disliking them will not make them go away.

First, widespread large-scale immigration, both legal and illegal, is going to characterize *all the rest of this century* at a minimum. Destructive wars (including those launched by the U.S.), civil conflicts, environmental degradation (with some degree of Western responsibility involved), disease, health crises, lack of education, corruption, instability, bad governance, and the magnet pull of countries in the world that do work somewhat successfully – all of this will drive the refugee flow predictably year after year. It cannot realistically be physically stopped.

This is, in fact, the number one global security issue: only by taking bloated Western military budgets and applying large hunks of that money to some alleviation of conditions in the developing world can anybody begin to treat the problem at its source. Forget the beautiful walls, border guards, ramped-up sea patrols, or buying off Turkey to be a holding pen. Leaving the E.U. will not, in the end, make a whit of difference in shielding the U.K. from these realities as long as the U.K. is going to be part of this world and compelled to partake in much of our common human agony.

Second, “taking our country back” is an unthinking, lame and simple-minded cliché. Anyone can, and will, utter it. Scotland will likely now “take its country back,” and so will Chechnya and Quebec, maybe Texas and California. Or Quebec and eastern Ukraine, or the Uighurs of China in Xinjiang. Or all the Kurds of the Middle East. The list is literally endless. What is a “country” and who is taking it back? And from whom, and in whose name, and over whose objections? And by what means? Five hundred new nations, anyone?

Third, globalization is a reality. It can’t be stopped. It consists of airlines, and internets, and global banking systems and communications. It is a very mixed bag; it is by no means an absolute good. Apart from its demonstrable benefits for many, globalization also has real downsides; it hurts many, including in the industrial world. And it threatens local cultures and autonomies. But no country can stop the process.

When foreign labor is ever cheaper than Western labor, when Asian and other societies are proving just as technically adept as Western ones (if not more so), and when robotics are replacing much unskilled and even skilled labor, what will the Western workforce do? There are some partial answers to this – increased social services and niche industries among other things. But Brexit will not solve this global problem of globalization. It represents the highest and ultimate form of capitalism if you will.

Fourth, broad voluntary regional political associations are the wave of the future if we are serious about the need to diminish the likelihood of (nuclear) war. The E.U. demands that its members accept the principle that war among themselves in pursuit of national interests is “*unthinkable*.” That is a strong but vital word. Europeans well understand the reason why after having run what may be the bloodiest continent in human history in terms of numbers killed in wars.

A Flawed Best Hope

The E.U. represents the best hope humans have put together so far – in just a limited but important region admittedly – to abolish war. Yes, the United Nations remains a noble aspiration and a work in progress, but cannot yet boast of consistent accomplishment. To abandon the E.U. association that has delivered seven decades of peace is retrogressive – maybe even immoral.

Fifth, the E.U. is not a finished turn-key project, but a work in progress. British are churlish to scuttle this unique human experiment in its relatively early history of developing its political and economic vision. Of course there are things wrong with the E.U. Where aren’t there things wrong with large political orders? Is the U.S. a model? Russia? China?

The E.U.'s unelected bureaucracy certainly deserves trimming, rethinking, and reining in some of its excesses. But you don't kill it to solve shortcomings. Political orders are delicate constructs, hard to build, easy to bludgeon. Is the E.U. incapable of further change and reform that it should be abandoned?

Six, increasing regulation is the order of the future. While legitimately irksome to libertarians and individualists, modern societies are aware that nearly all fields of human endeavor require increasing and detailed regulation: health, hospitals, medicines, food, construction safety, highways, guns, vehicle safety, child care – the list goes on. The list will *never* get smaller. Most people are demanding *more* regulation in these fields and not less.

All modern societies will increase regulation of everything as the world grows more crowded and social orders more complex and vulnerable. Eat your heart out, international cowboys, but we don't live on the frontier anymore. You may love to hate Brussels, but fix it, don't kill it.

These, then, are some of the most obvious features and growing realities of our modern world. We don't have to like them, but there we have them. They are in the nature of the beast of the modern international order; they are not going away. Growing populations will increase all of them. And British Brexiteers are not going to change any of that one iota. Nor can they truly shield themselves.

The U.K. will, however, become increasingly irrelevant in sharing in the common human undertaking of trying to build better and more rational structures to live together on this fragile planet.

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