

Arts & Letters

BOOKS

[Reflections on the Revolution in Europe: Immigration, Islam, and the West, Christopher Caldwell, Doubleday, 432 pages]

Continental Drift

By Rod Liddle

I LAST SPOKE to Sheikh Abu Hamza Al Masri, the radical Islamic cleric, in 2005, in the blank corporate vacuum of a London hotel room while his extravagantly bearded aides—with great excitement—raided the minibar for non-alcoholic beverages and Snickers. Old Abu was not happy. He held aloft a copy of the *Daily Telegraph* with his hook—his hands were blown off attempting to defuse a Soviet mine in Afghanistan, or so the legend would have it—and then threw it down onto the table.

“I see that your government is lowering the age of consent for homosexuals to the same as what it is for human beings,” he said, with happy disgust. He says everything with some form of disgust, Abu. There followed a brief and unsatisfactory debate between the two of us about same-sex relationships, brought to an abrupt conclusion by his definitive pronouncement: “You call it homosexuality, Rod. I call it digging filth out of young men’s bottoms.”

I had gotten to know Hamza, an immigrant from Egypt, quite well by then and even, up to a point, liked him, although there was never much in the way of rapport between the two of us, not much consensus. Since 9/11—one of the few events in a relentlessly dismal life that had genuinely cheered him up—he had become a sort cartoon bogeyman for the British right-wing press, with his baleful milky eye, scary prosthetic limbs, fundamentalist beard, and copious robes. Not even the most spiteful editorial writer could have dreamed up a creature more visibly alien and averse than this madman—hooky, Captain Hook, etc.—denouncing everything and urging martyrdom attacks everywhere, smiting the cockroach Jews with one hook and the infidel Western scum with the other.

Without rancor, Hamza would invariably explain to me that I would burn in hell for eternity, being doused from time to time in boiling water. God is calling you, calling you, he insisted. Those were scarier times, of course, the days when al-Qaeda seemed highly competent as well as homicidal, days when you looked closely at your darker-skinned neighbor on the London Underground with his rucksack and strained your ears to hear the ticking.

Things have changed, and they have got a lot worse for Abu Hamza. For one thing, you Americans may soon be about to make his acquaintance: he is banged up in a British prison awaiting extradition to the U.S. on a bunch of nebulous terrorism-related charges. I hope you value his company. Secondly, there are his sons. You wonder if anything could be more hurtful for a dad: Hamza Kemal

and Mohamed Mostafa, both in their 20s, were imprisoned this year for crimes not entirely associated with the hastening of a world Caliphate. They had stolen a million pounds’ worth of cars and spent the money on partying and cocaine. I do not know what Abu thinks of this—I’ve put in a request for him to be my friend on Facebook, but he hasn’t replied—but one can guess. For the British, however, it came as a sort of relief and evidential support for a long-standing paradigm—that, give it time, we will win over these angry young boys from the deserts of Arabia with the wonderful stuff the West has: freedom, consumer durables, pornography, and Class A drugs. All this *jihadi* nonsense will stop when you see what we have to offer. No need to blow yourself up to secure the services of 72 virgins—you can have them now, pretty much, all you have to do is ask, Western women being very obliging that way. OK, they won’t be virgins, but still—fill your boots.

This was what we in Europe all thought when we opened the doors to those low-skilled Muslim textile workers and restaurateurs in the years of labor shortages after the war. We opened them again in the late 1960s when Idi Amin kicked the Asians out of Uganda. And in the last 15 years, the door has been well and truly wedged open with a foxed copy of the Geneva Convention, and a city the size of Savannah has arrived in Britain alone every year—not all of them Muslim but a fair few. Not a moment’s thought was given to integration. We assumed that, coming here, they would find us and the way we lived our lives perfectly irresistible. We were wrong about that.

This is the starting point for Christopher Caldwell's scabrous and excellent *Reflections on the Revolution in Europe*, with its rhetorical subheading (just in case people don't get the message): "Can Europe Be The Same With Different People In It?" As Caldwell puts it, on page one, immigration was sanctioned by consensus among the European commercial and political elites and certain assumptions were made:

Immigrants would be few in number. Since they were coming to fill short-term gaps in the labor force, most would stay in Europe only temporarily. Some might stay longer. No one assumed they would ever be eligible for welfare. That they would retain the habits and cultures of southern villages, clans, market-places and mosques was a thought too bizarre to entertain.

The immigrant population of Europe now exceeds 10 percent of the total, although there is great variance as to where the new arrivals came from. In Britain, non-European immigration has been predominantly from the Indian subcontinent, and especially Bangladesh, but more recently we have seen large numbers arriving from that agreeable adventure playground that is Somalia, some 87 percent of them forever unemployed. In Germany, it is the Turkish *gastarbeiter*; in France, people from the francophone countries of West Africa and the Maghreb, especially Algeria. There has been an overwhelming opposition to the latest influx, particularly in countries that have been seen as historically the most liberal, such as Holland. Two recent opinion polls in Britain, published after Caldwell's book went to the press, suggest that public opposition to any more immigration runs at 62 percent and 79 percent. The figure for the EU as a whole is 57 percent, according to Caldwell.

"If Europe is getting more immigrants than its voters want," Caldwell argues, "this is a good indication its democracy

is malfunctioning." The response from the politicians and the broadcast media, especially the BBC, each time one of these polls is published is always the same: no consideration of stopping immigration or even a genuflection in the direction of perhaps, one day, merely reducing it, but a concerned debate about how we might educate the stupid public to be more welcoming to these wonderful and useful people. Britain has always been a country of immigrants, they argue—a mantra which has remained unchanged for nearly 50 years now and is used to sweep away any and all opposition to immigration, usually accompanied by the Pavlovian howl of "raaacisst!"

Caldwell deals with this swiftly, as well he might, for it was always an easily demonstrable lie. Never mind the Angles, Jutes, and Saxons who from the 4th century brought to the shores of Britain no more than 250,000 people at most or the 10,000 or so who arrived at the time of the Norman Conquest or later minuscule numbers of Huguenots; Caldwell cites the latest genetic evidence to the effect that three quarters of the ancestors of contemporary Britons and Irish were already present in the British Isles 7,500 years ago. "Describing

years of assimilation—has exceeded in just three years of the present century.

Still, you might argue, 10 percent of the population—you should be able to deal with that, surely? The answer would be yes, probably—despite misgivings over sheer population size in these ancient crowded little redoubts—were it not for two attendant problems. First, it would be nice if the incomers sort of liked us and didn't find almost everything about our culture—equality for women, freedom of speech, rights for homosexuals, freedom of conscience—repulsive. And, as a corollary, if we had attempted to inculcate these values into the new communities that quickly colonized the poorest quarters of our industrial cities.

We didn't do any of that; we said that their culture was of equivalent moral worth to the culture of their new country and they should be allowed to pursue it without interference by law. This has led to some magnificent absurdities. A few months after the government passed a law insisting that the religion of Islam and the Koran be treated with "respect," the boss of the Muslim Council of Britain appeared on a BBC news program arguing that homosexuality

THE ENTIRE TOTAL OF IMMIGRANTS TO BRITAIN PRE-1900 HAS BEEN EXCEEDED IN JUST THREE YEARS OF THE PRESENT CENTURY.

the countries of Britain as nations of immigrants is absurd," he writes, "unless you are describing processes which began not just before modernity, but before civilization." He might have added, too, that even those comparatively minor swathes of immigration—those of the Normans and the Norse—were not greeted by the indigenous British as a uniquely enriching experience to be celebrated for the vibrant diversity they brought to our shores. There was, you know, the occasional spot of bother. It is worth pointing out, too, that the entire total of immigrants to Britain pre-1900—that's almost 2,000

was counter to the aims of civil society. The police were immediately dispatched to his house. Iqbal Sacranie faced a charge of inciting homophobic hatred for having divested himself, in the most moderate language, of the Koran's fairly rigorous position on homosexuality: "kill the one who is doing it and the one to whom it is being done." So, we must respect Islam, but simply to express one of its fundamental tenets, even in bowdlerized form, will bring the police around to your door. Presumably arguing that Islam is homophobic would have a similar consequence.

But the second caveat, and one upon which Caldwell spends a fair amount of time, is the rapidity with which the incomers are breeding, to the extent that one of these days, not so far off, “we” (whites) will be a minority in “our own” countries. Caldwell has the stats to hand; the declining birthrate of the Caucasians, the incredible fecundity of the immigrants, the poorest of them being the most fecund, of course. He dismisses comparisons with the U.S. and the speed with which Hispanics are outbreeding whites; this is less of a worry, he suggests, because Hispanics have cultural norms and values very similar to the white U.S. working class of 40 years ago and so the cultural challenge, the problem of assimilation, will be minimal. I don’t know if he’s right about this—you might argue that the Muslim incomers to Great Britain have values very similar to the British lower classes of 1,500 years ago, but I’m not sure where that leaves us.

Even without the breeding statistics, the rate of immigration at the moment suggests that a Muslim majority is possible in some European countries within the next 50 years. Keep your eyes on that flat, hyperindustrialized, rather desolate crescent of our continent from Lille and Metz in France, to the south, to Rotterdam in Holland and even Aarhus in Denmark in the north, where the proportion of Muslim people is already in the region of 30 percent, and rising by the week. That is where you will see the advent of Eurabia.

The arrival in Europe of hundreds of thousands of Muslims might still not be a problem were it not for the painstaking care with which the Western countries have ensured they pick the very worst, most dangerous Muslims to whom they will pay welfare benefits to and later, as a form of thanks, be blown to smithereens by. For this, you can thank the 1951 Geneva Convention on the Status of Refugees. The whole business has a fabulous logic to it: the people who flee the likes of Libya, Algeria, Egypt, Saudi Arabia, and so on and claim asylum in the West are those who fear some form of retribution from the

Islamic hellholes from which they have fled. The reason these countries are ill-disposed toward them, however, is because, often, they are radical Islamists who wish the countries from which they fled to be even more ghastly than they are at present. They are not political agitators who want greater freedom of assembly at home, maybe a bit of proportional representation, trade union rights, etc.—they wish to establish autocratic Islamic theocracies and have demonstrated this commitment by murderous atrocities. Once in Britain—or France or Germany—they cannot be sent back because the law states that, if there is the risk they might be roughed up a bit upon their return, it is an infringement of their human rights and they must be given leave to stay.

There was a recent case in which a British court decided that a Libyan Islamist should be allowed to remain at large in Britain even though, the court accepted, he was probably associated with al-Qaeda, had already carried out acts of terrorism against Western targets, and would “probably” do the same sort of thing in Britain, as soon as he got his welfare check sorted out. But he could not be returned to Libya because the probability was that, Libya being Libya, he might not receive what you or I would consider fair and just judicial treatment, trial by his peers, right of appeal, and legal aid. This sort of case crops up pretty much every week. And every week it astounds the indigenous population. But there is, from our politicians, just a throwing up of the hands, a weary surrender.

It is this liberal weakness, Caldwell suggests, that will undo Europe in the end. He concludes that Islam may not prove assimilable to the West: “When an insecure, malleable, relativistic culture meets a culture that is anchored, confident and strengthened by common doctrines, it is generally the former that changes to suit the latter.” ■

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[*Kissinger: 1973, The Crucial Year*, Alistair Horne, Simon & Schuster, 457 pages]

Super K and the Perils of Power

By William B. Quandt

WHEN I FIRST LEARNED that the British historian Alistair Horne was writing a book on Henry Kissinger, I wondered if anyone had the appetite for another Kissinger book. After all, Kissinger himself has written three weighty tomes about his White House years, as well as a major treatise on diplomacy, and *Crisis*, a focused memoir of the October 1973 War and the last phase of the Vietnam War, to say nothing of the many biographies and case studies by other eminent authors.

To justify another, the author should uncover new information that has hitherto escaped notice or come up with a new interpretation of Kissinger and his role that helps us understand the dramatic events of the early 1970s. To his credit, Horne has partially answered the first of these challenges. He has dug deeply into the massive documentation that is now available and interviewed a significant number of people, including the man himself. As a result, there are a few tidbits that strike me as fresh.

As for presenting an original case, the author offers less. This portrait is pretty much the one that Kissinger has already drawn of himself, and it is quite a bit less critical than the acclaimed biography by Walter Isaacson. It is, in short, an admiring account of the man in his prime. But perhaps, in our post-neocon era, it is worth reminding ourselves what a realist foreign policy as practiced by a master looks like.

Horne decides—wisely, in my view—to confine his focus to 1973. This was the crucial year when Watergate began to undermine the presidency of Richard