

## Chapter 2:

France - Calais august 9<sup>th</sup>. – august 15<sup>th</sup>. 2015: "The eye of the storm."

### Day 1:

On my day of arrival I could, when walking the streets, immediately sense the tense atmosphere in this small town. And this not only among the locals but also and moreso among the refugees who, when I talked with some, told me they were only waiting for the evening/night to come and for (another) chance to get to the UK and that many were searching for food. Since it was already around 17.00 PM I decided to walk towards the Eurotunnel and as a matter of speaking only had to follow the growing number of people with the same intention. Having more or less arrived it was visibly more than clear that both the French as well as the UK governments had joined forces to try and stop the refugees through erecting barbed fences.

I decided to search for an indirect way to the highway where most tried to get in trucks and a fellow refugee invited me to follow him to show me the best place where people tried to get over or through the fence and after to the highway. And having arrived I immediately knew I arrived at part of the eye of the storm where already 200-plus people tried to get in trucks. But that was easier said than done, and not because I tried because I had no intention to go to the UK, but because the 'competition' was big so to speak and in the meantime many trucking companies had installed extra preventive locks. And that's why it was damn more dangerous than ever because one could get hurt more easily than before. Anyways, I decided to kind of stay on the side of the road and observe how many succeeded to get into a truck. Not many I'm afraid to say.

At around 20.00 PM I decided to go back to the other side of the fence and to search for 'The jungle', an illegal camp that in the meantime has become world famous and was unofficially allowed by the Calais government.

And when arriving I couldn't believe my eyes. This place was huge and packed with tents and a kind of barracks made of all kinds of materials like plastic; wood; aluminum etc. and whatever people could find for shelter!

I sought a small place where I could sit down for a while and rest and also here I could feel a kind of tense atmosphere in general but also towards me which I did not understand. So after trying to talk with somebody I finally found Khaled who was willing to do so. He had fled from Afghanistan and was hoping to be able to join his family in the UK and after to get his wife and daughter there too.

I asked him why there was this hostility I felt towards me and he said that many people fear infiltration from the police and hence avoided contact with who looked suspicious. Well, I was in the eye of the storm so nothing should surprise me. Khaled also told me that there is a small mosque and a church, both erected with whatever material that could be found and with plastic roofing.

Anyways I decided to stay here, explore 'The jungle' and at the end of the day crash here. Tomorrow was another day and surely one I had to brace myself even more.

### Day 2:

Well, I sure had to brace myself to get through the night. I did manage to talk with some other people and they told me that there are about 3000 people 'living' in 'The jungle' and that it is kind of divided in a kind of 'suburbs' where refugees group according to the country they've fled from and in total consisting of about 10 to 12 'suburbs'. Most refugees had been fleeing from war or a country ruled by a dictator and in the last case hence the constant fear of being arrested; tortured and killed because of (alleged) subversive actions, and a minority seeking possibilities to improve their lives and that of their wife and children and family in general i.e. the so-called economical refugees. I visited all 'suburbs' when allowed in because not everybody was happy with a semi-coloured stranger who might look like a snitch to the police. Not altogether a wrong suspicion because in 'The jungle' plans of

action were discussed as somebody told me. (Lucky me I always look people straight in the face expressing that I've nothing to hide.)

Anyways, after quite a short night sleep I went back to the fence to at first explore the surroundings and what caught my attention was that many people came from where 'The jungle' was located but not walking towards the fence directly so I kind of followed them and bingo, there was a kind of a food distribution activity inside an abandoned small storage building that had been squatted. After having talked with a few people distributing a kind of breakfast it turned out to be run by a group of anarchists. Now, apart from refugees, that is also my kind of people! Whoever said anarchists were extinguished he is wrong! And there was a moment when one of them took me apart and at first kind of questioned me like where I came from and what I was doing (there). I answered her truth only and then she told me that they not only distributed food but also gave the refugees tips how to deal with the fence and how to get on trucks and trains the best way possible. Also she told me that they tried to distribute cooked food in the early evenings as much as they could but that they were depending on gifts from the locals. Don't misunderstand me but I liked that woman so I decided to stick around a bit 'till early evening, the time to go back to the fence.

And kind of to my surprise more people turned up than ever. Hundreds if not at least one thousand. And could feel the tension rising 'till something like a chant broke loose: **"Open the border!!!"** while they were trying to climb over or through holes they've cut to get to the other side. But there partly the police and the army were waiting for them and trying to drive them back. But as a kind of 'veteran'\* I know a minority (police and army) cannot stop a highly determined majority. Still, I could also see that many of the refugees got injured and I was wondering if there was some kind of help for them so I decided to go back to my anarchist friends to ask. My 'girlfriend' was not there at that moment but somebody else told me that the injured refugees were helped by the Médecins du monde – Doctors of the world – and he told me where I could find them but that they were also constantly patrolling in search for the injured. In any case I'm going to stay here for a while with my anarchy and refugee friends and then later on return to the fence and to, late night, crash there.

\*I've been in warzones before (Palestina; Sarajevo and the war between narcotraficantes –drug traffickers - in Cd. Juarez (MX))

Day 3:

Sleeping near the fence is not what one can call a stay in a \*\*\*\*\*star hotel stay but I wouldn't want it otherwise. Either one stands together with the refugees or not and why would I deserve more? Still, there's a constant moving around from people trying to get over it. Coming to think about that I know that they also try to get on trains in the tunnel (but that's damn dangerous because one can get seriously injured or killed as happened a few times already) so yes, trying to get on a truck is the best option really. And speaking of that I was going to try and get more information about the Médecins du monde so I went back to my anarchist friends and they told me there was a small field hospital in 'The jungle' so off I went and after searching very hard I did find a simple wooden structure staffed with doctors and nurses who tended to approx. 90 people a day and with either small or serious injuries like for example fractures. Thing is, they were only active for about 2 hours a day and that is not what one can call an ideal solution but they told me their efforts to offer help would improve soon.

I decided to go back to the fence and also the food distribution there. And really, it was packed with refugees who tried to get something to eat. Coming to think about that I consider myself wise that I don't eat much and certainly not 3 meals a day.

In the evening they all went again to the fence for yet other attempts to get over or through it. But the number of police and soldiers had increased leading to even more tension and

aggression, especially from their side and very late that evening the tension kind of exploded in yet another chant:

**"We are human!!!"**

I had to think back about the Monday demonstrations in 1989/1990 against the then DDR, the east part of Germany and under the rule of then the communist USSR, when they shouted "We are one people."\* meaning they wanted the Berlin wall down and to reunite with the BRD, the west part of Germany.



By and by the Berlin wall felt under the massive pressure of the demonstrations and on October 3<sup>rd</sup>. 1990 both Germanys reunited. Alas and again people in general and especially governments do not learn by the lessons history have given us. On the other hand the people's power will al-ways prove to be stronger than any rule.

Ok, it's about time to go to sleep again with the sky as my blanket.

\*But alas also, during writing chapter 2 there are many demonstations in Germany today and organized by neo-nazis who are fiercely against the coming of refugees and who kind of 'hijacked' the chant/slogan used in 1989/1990.

Also, the minister of the interior fears armed attacks and explosive attacks against refugees.

Day 4:

I really feel drained and especially more and more very angry because the E.U. in general and an increasing number of specific countries more and more have a inhuman policy towards refugees because basically they screw them. But I can guarantee you that, if one throws a boomerang, it will return! I will write more about this in "Epilogue #1" and to be published around the end of October.

In the meantime I found out that there are, and apart from 'The jungle', different other illegal but smaller camps and also smaller food and clothing distribution centers run by civic volunteers and who receive food; clothing; sheets and blankets and tenting from Calais inhabitants. And it must be said that where the E.U. in general including a majority of anti-refugee inhabi-tants raise their voice against refugees more and more civilians do try to help refugees out of solidarity.

Anyways, I'll take it easy today and will try to find a place where I can give myself a thorough wash and this not so much to wash off the dirt of sleeping rough but the dirt of being a E.U. citizen.

Day 5:

Last night I went back to 'The jungle' to crash there and I could not but notice that the tension and an increasing violence among refugees has increased but also, and this is the worst, violence against women and single mothers. Now, if there's something I cannot stand

and find unacceptable, refugee or not, it's violence against women. It's not only depictable but it proves a man to be a coward!

But really, overall there's a lot of solidarity among the refugees in general.

I walked around a bit, moving as cool as I could, and usually I am ☺, and I saw a very young mother with a very small baby. I asked her if I could have a talk with her and she invited me to sit down. Her name was Mwangi from Kenya and said she was hoping to find a good future for her baby that was crying without end. Mwangi said it was very hungry but that she can hardly breastfeed her because she almost has no milk because she can hardly find food for herself let alone eat.

I am not a women so there are many things I don't understand about them ☺ so I called a friend and young mother at my base camp and she told me that a mother who has just given birth needs to eat very well so she can produce sufficient vitamins to breastfeed her baby. Well, it again proves that one is never too old to learn.

Anyways, I turned my full attention to Mwangi and the baby again and sang a small lullaby to the baby:

fingerfingerfinger

tatata

finger on your nose ☺

fingerfingerfinger

tatata

fingerfingerfinger

tatata

finger on your ears ☺

fingerfingerfinger

tatata

and eyes – bellybutton and ...

the baby stopped crying for as long as it took so I made as much variations as I could.

Inbetween I invited Mwangi to come with me to a place where there was food distribution and off we went to my anarchy friends. On our way I asked Mwangi the name of the baby which was Kiptandi and where the father was. She reluctantly said that they'd lived at the border of Somalia and that he joined the boko haram and wanted her to join him there but she didn't want her child to grow up under muslim extremists so she fled the country. A wise decision but as we know now also a dangerous one which Mwangi could only confirm with her own story of how she finally arri-ved in Calais and hoped to finally reach the UK. We arrived at the food distribution warehouse and lucky us 'my girlfriend' was there and now I took her aside and told her about the situation of Mwangi and the baby and the need for very nutritious food because she needed to produce breast milk full of vitamins.

'My girlfriend' asked us to wait for a minute and disappeared to the back of the warehouse and returned with a full box. It would be an offence if I would check on what it held so Mwangi and I thanked her full heartedly and retur-ned to The jungle. And only on our way did we check the content of the box and really, it was loaded with foods a young mother needs to eat to be able to feed her baby well. And for the first time Mwangi smiled. Now that's what I call a reward ☺ In 'The jungle' I stayed with her and the baby for another 2 hours or so and sang to the baby again and after saying goodbye I went back to the fence and there was a lot of tension because the word has gotten around that there would be more police and soldiers and indeed, when there were about 500 refugees trying to get over or through the fence but got beaten back and a new chant arose: **"We are not animals!!!** Ok, I've had it again for today. And it was not the chant that does me in but the baby. Now people, I have a very simple question: can you sleep well knowing this?

## Day 6:

The Mayor of the French port city of Calais has threatened to open the borders and a flow of refugees to pass through to Britain. The British Prime Minister David Cameron " looks down on our area and puts his own laws on to Calais ", said Natacha Bouchart, who demands that Cameron open talks with her and the French president François Hollande. " The president of the Republic must puts his fist on table once and for all, in the interest of us all, and if need we need to create a diplomatic incident. " she said.

The three of them did meet and the result was a buy out from the UK with 7 million Euro to enable France to expand the building of fences. Unfortunately for all politicians involved the French workers went on their yearly and payed vacation.

Before the French government announced plans to turn a former children's centre in Calais into a refuge for some of the port's 2,300 migrants. It follows days of violence in the town as refugees whose numbers have soared. The announcement by the interior minister sparked concerns the centre in Calais could become the "new Sangatte" – the Red Cross camp just outside of the port which acted as a magnet for thousands of migrants before being shut down in 2002 following a number of riots. but Philippe Mignonet, Calais deputy mayor, says he can't guarantee that it won't become another Sangatte., and said it was a possibility the new centre would "be an attraction" but said there was no other option. The migrants are currently living in appalling conditions in make-shift camps on fields and in scrubland in Calais.

"Some people are saying, 'you will do a centre that will become a Sangatte, a place of attraction and migrants will want to come'," said Mr Mignonet. "But what people must understand, it could become a magnet but if we don't do something, Calais is a magnet anyway because Calais is the shortest point to England."

The new centre did not open. Maybe the buy off from the UK was not enough says this anarchist cynically.

Chapter 2 was written in the period August 20th 'till September 10th. 2015.