

## Epitaph #1:

Losing control. Written between August 20<sup>th</sup>. and October 18<sup>th</sup>. 2015. Shortly after I returned from Calais, France, on August 15<sup>th</sup>. to my base-camp I tried to follow the daily and hourly news newsreels about the refugee crisis and I must admit that I often almost lost control read overview over the whole situation.

But one thing was and is clear: the E.U. is the one losing total control. Why? Because there is not a federal government like the USA has and is only glued together by the Euro. But even that does not unify the E.U. because every member has a veto right in the parliament leading to a Euro-Diktatorate.

Now, I will not give you a total overview of the refugee situation and as is but I do want to give you some and mostly 'down-' and some, be it few 'highlights' that especially drew my attention.

Also, here and there I might repeat myself i.e. certain quotes and facts but again it's quite a job to try and give an overview.

## GREECE

22,000 refugees are currently on the island of Lesbos. That is about one-fifth of the total population of the island, where the situation is becoming unbearable according to the Greek Minister for migration, Jannis Mouzalas. To relieve the capital of Lesbos the authorities now also opened a second port, now in the city of Sigri. Only a few refugees who washed ashore in Greece seek asylum in the country. Almost all head further to the Balkans by Macedonia and Serbia in the hope to be able to travel further through Hungary and to north Europe.

In the meantime the Greek government uses a kind of Machiavellian and conquer and divide strategy when they chartered a cruise ship as a temporary shelter for Syrian refugees only and to bring them to Athens BUT 'them' were only 'for Syrian Christians.' This sounds very much like racial profiling to me.

In the meantime the strategy seems to work where most Syrians say: "We are here because of war and they (the other refugees in general) for the money." Also, at the Serbian borders, Syrians demands free flights to bring them to northern Europe.

By the way, Greece is a member state of the E.U. and recently received a new IMF/ECB loan of 86 billion Euro on top of billions they received before and to avoid the country going bankrupt. And now doing so little for the refugees, SHAME ON THEM!

## TURKYE/GREECE

France has its Honorary Consul in the Turkish city of Bodrum suspended. The woman has a shop in the city and sold boats and life jackets to refugees

they use for crossing to Greece. According to the UN this year 124,000 refugees arrived in Greece: Afghans; Iraqis and Syrians that via Turkey are trying to get to Europe. But with rubber boats crossing to the Greek Islands is not without danger. That also prove the photos of the 3-year-old Kurdish-Turkey's Aylan who late last month was found dead on the beach of Bodrum. Also his a little bit older brother and his mother drowned. A journalist of the French channel France 2 was investigating how refugees in Bodrum got a hold of boats and life jackets. In his report he stepped in the shop of Honorary Consul Françoise Olcay. Olcay admits she sold the inflatables even though knowing that the trip to Greece is dangerous. She says she regrets it but adds that also others exploit the situation including local authorities. "If I don't sell stuff, anyone else does though." Outside the shop there was a French flag hanging with the message "French Honorary Consul". Unlike traditional diplomats honorary consuls are not part of the diplomatic corps. But for the French Ministry of Foreign Affairs this news is very inconvenient.

## HUNGARY

After the 175 kilometer barbed wire fence on the border of Macedonia. The Hungarian government shortly after also decided to build a steel wall next to it and armored with razor blades, almost making it impossible for refugees to travel from Greece to north Europe.

After days of chaos, waiting, hope and despair for the thousands of stranded refugees in Hungary the Hungarian Government announces that they want to use buses to bring refugees to the border to Austria. According to the spokesman of premier Viktor Orban that decision is made because of the countries' safety and security. "This does not mean that they will be allowed to leave the country automatically", adds the spokesman.

The confusion about the approach continues to persist. After months of leaders such as German Chancellor Angela Merkel and the French president François Hollande advocate openly for quotas for each E.U. Member State for the reception of asylum seekers, but countries such as the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland continue to stubbornly resist quotas.

"Germany and Austria should close their borders"

Also the Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orban has lashed out at the policy of Germany and Austria. According to him, they must close their borders to refugees, otherwise according to him "millions of people will invade Europe." Human Rights Watch (HRW) describes the conditions in the Hungarian reception camps where approx. 52.000 refugees are detained on the border with Serbia as "terrible". It is based on video images that have been made available to the organization and on testimonies from refugees living in the camps. "The refugees are imprisoned in horrible in camps in Röszke. They are hungry and get no medical supervision, "said HRW Director relief Peter Baldwin. According to him, the Hungarian authorities have the obligation to

ensure that "migrants and asylum seekers be treated well and their human rights are respected".

The Hungarian authorities do not allow journalists and virtually no representatives of human rights organizations in the camps at the border city of Röszke. The Austrian politician Alexander Spritzendorfer has images on YouTube. The pictures from the haunting scenes were made by his wife. What is shown is how Hungarian police officers, some with mouth mask, throw packaged sandwiches under the divide people or in the pushing crowds. Men, women and children desperately try to get at least one sandwich. The images spread quickly through social media and Twitter and shocked people and responded as such.

In the meantime Hungary has declared a State of emergency in two provinces on the border with Serbia and deployed the army. "600 soldiers are already on site, and there will be 500 more coming in the course of the day."

More fenced/walled borders.

"Works have started on the border to Croatia and Serbia too to shut crossing down too." said Orbán on the Hungarian radio. Also the chance that refugees are granted asylum in Hungary, however, is almost nonexistent. Orbán has already said that those who do not have requested asylum in Serbia also cannot get asylum in Hungary. The Hungarian Government is also about to plant a barbed wire fence along the border with Romania. "We have decided to start preparatory work for a fence that starts at the border triangle between Hungary, Romania, Serbia and Croatia and that " at a reasonable length in case the migration pressure is shifting in the direction of Romania". Hungary also has started the construction of a barbed wire barrier on the border with Croatia as Prime Minister Viktor Orbán announced. In the meantime Croatia "until further notice" and since last night, closed seven of the eight border crossings with Serbia. The country has taken that decision after the influx of thousands of migrants from Serbia.

Traincorridor to Germany.

There are also talks with Germany, the Czech Republic and the Slovak Republic to organize a train corridor. "If Germany publicly promises that it will record the Syrian refugees and those who already registered in another country, will not return, then we are prepared to free up a transit," said the Czech Minister of Interior Milan Chovanec after a conversation with his Slovak colleague Robert Kalinak. "We let these trains pass through without the refugees still to check. We would just accompany them, with police assistance," said Chovanec. It is according to them to ensure Hungary "that it is indeed for Syrians only." He pointed to the trade in fake passports in the civil war-ridden country to anybody wanting to buy a Syrian passport.

By the way, in 1956 and during an uprising in the country against the government and the influence of the USSR (the former Russia) more than 200.000 Hungarians fled to north Europe. It again proves that politicians and people in general use amnesia as a kind of 'conscious reliever'.

**Newsflash:** the Hungarian government recently has decided to also put up a fence at the border of Croatia. When one thinks about all these fences and walls this whole policy sounds to me like a contradiction in terminus where Hungary with its fences and walls keeps refugees trapped in the country where they prefer to get rid of them asap. In the meantime Croatia decided to bring as much refugees as they can to Slovenia (both are E.U. member states). The question is, can Slovenia handle it?

BALTIC STATES: Estonia, Tsjechië, Slovakia, Hungary and Poland.

The Baltic states continue to oppose the quote proposal as made in the E.U. parliament and especially supported by Germany and France. That the four countries of the Visegrád group made clear during a special summit in Prague.

#### TSJECHIE

Milos Zeman, the president of the Czech Republic, has expressed its support for a petition against migrants that was launched by his controversial predecessor Vaclav Klaus. That petition states that "immigration is a fundamental threat to the stability of Europe".

#### CROATIA

Serbia earlier responded to Hungary's crackdown with a warning that it could not become the dumping ground – or, as its foreign minister put it, "a collection centre"

Croatia's prime minister, Zoran Milanovic, criticized Hungary's decision to seal its border with Serbia and promised that Croatia would not do the same. "We are ready to accept and direct those people," he said.

#### BULGARY

Bulgaria has deployed thousand soldiers on the E.U.'s external border with Turkey, fearing an influx of refugees on the route via Hungary. That is what a representative of the Bulgarian Government announced. The soldiers will assist the security patrolling forces at the border. The country already set up a fence on the border with Turkey, consisting of 30 parts and covers the 259 km long border with Turkey.

#### GERMANY

German Chancellor Angela Merkel warns for terrorism in her country by the locals as part of the protests and attacks on refugee camps. She calls for a zero tolerance on hate and xenophobia. The list of places in Germany where the last few weeks and months protests or attacks against refugees and asylum centers just keeps getting longer. Merkel condemned that kind of violence time and time again but now her voice against it becomes more strong. She warns of a new kind of legal terrorism in her country.

Also she is in favour of a review of the Schengen Treaty if there is no fair quota within the E.U. from the number of refugees. "Also the asylum procedure must be completed faster and the German State have to honestly contribute to the costs of the (note: German) Federal States and the cities and towns." Merkel also pleaded for a new immigration law, which, in her view, is necessary in order to fill labour shortages. A new immigration law is "in the interest of Germany". "Germany needs "immigration" said Merkel. The German Labor agency announced today that the number of vacancies this month has reached a new historical high. The peak is due to the positive German economic climate.

Germany and Austria have abandoned the European regulations which says that refugees should need to register in the first "safe country", for example in the present case Hungary, Turkey or Greece. That way the refugees in Germany could quickly be taken care of without much administrative fuss. At the same time however Merkel is also in favour of setting up camps just outside the E.U. borders for refugees who will not obtain an asylum status. Overall I must say that Germany, politicians and people alike, in general are the most open minded and welcoming towards refugees.

#### AUSTRIA...

...has, from the very beginning, worked very close together with Germany because that was the country where most refugees wanted to go to. They went as far as to set in hundreds of buses to transport them to the German border.

#### NETHERLANDS

At the beginning\* and with beginning I mean the day I started to write this Epitaph #1 and the end when I stopped writing, I, with my experiences of having worked at a refugee camp in the period 1997-1999 and the absolute negative attitude from the Dutch towards refugees, I was kind of surprised how welcoming they reacted now. But that changed quickly, especially because prime minister Rutte was avoiding his responsibilities i.e. taking the lead to deal with the increasing problems and also the protests from villages; cities and towns. Not a surprise really because image, you live in a village of 150 inhabitants and all of a sudden the government decides to, almost literally, dump 750 refugees in the middle of your community.

Here I have to explain something: when a refugee is granted an asylum status he is entitled for social housing. But at present there is already a waiting list of up to 30.000 people with an asylum status who sometimes have to live at a refugee camp for up to 7 years in a room of 4 square meters, with their husband/wife and children or with 3 roommates. Update: recently and increasingly Dutch people are attacking refugee camps.

## BELGIUM.

State Secretary for asylum and migration Theo Francken (N-VA) of Belgium (known for his neo nazi statements) stated that he will participate in the European quota plan, but only if all Member States do that. The east European Visegrád group refuses.

But what really worries me is that Belgium has a so-called push back strategy like Australia has meaning they are in favour to push refugees on the seas back to either Libya or Turkey. Remember how 3-year young Aylan drowned. As far as I can see it now Belgium is one of the E.U. countries that takes the least refugees. And when they accept refugees only if one is a Christian. One can call that Moslimofobia. Flashback and in case the Belgian 'suffer' from a national amnesia too: during WW1 1 million people and during WW2 1.5 to 2 million people fled the country. So much for solidarity. Some time ago a colleague German poet said to me that she was ashamed to live in the E.U.. I'd like to add that I'm ashamed to live in this country which I'll leave soon.

## E.U.

According to the European president Donald Tusk the current increase in the number of refugees in Europe is but the beginning of an "exodus" that will last for many years. Also the UN Envoy to Syria warns that the number of refugees will only increase.

"The current emigration wave is not a one-off incident, but the beginning of a true exodus. That means that we still have many years with this problem to have to deal with" said Tusk during a visit to the Bruegel Institute, a European think tank in Brussels. "So it is very important to learn how to deal with that crisis, without loading the debt on to each other" he said.

The European Commission has a plan ready for the mandatory resettlement of a total of 160,000 refugees from Italy, Greece and Hungary. That was fiercely announded by Commission Chairman Jean-Claude Juncker in its "state of the union" in the European Parliament. Juncker wants on 14 september an agreement on the distribution of 160,000 refugees, the 40,000 included that was spoken of earlier this spring. (Note: it was not agreed on).

"I hope everyone this time is on board. We don't need rhetoric, but action! There is no rhetoric, no faith, no philosophy goes when talking about refugees". It was the first policy statement by Jean-Claude Juncker, who in

contrast to his image especially was very enthusiastic and driven. The President of the European Commission of the E.U. (European Union) Member States the E.U. too little union and too little Europe nor solidarity during the refugee crisis that Europe has to go through. "Brussels is always blamed by the member states where they themselves do not do their work."

"It comes to humanity, to human dignity, and for historical honesty," said Juncker. "In Europe almost anyone once was a refugee. Our common history is characterized by millions of Europeans who have fled for religious or political persecution, war, for tribulation."

"We forgot that after the destruction after the second World War 60 million refugees were in Europe?", says Juncker. "A right for asylum is one of the main international and European values. We must not forget this."

"It is true that Europe cannot bear all the misery of the world." says Juncker. "But let us be honest and see things in perspective. There is certainly a huge number of refugees heading for Europe, but in total it's only approx. 0.11 percent of the whole population of the European Union. Refugees in Lebanon represent 25 percent of the population, in a country that only has a fifth of the wealth in comparison with us in the EU. Who are we that we never make such comparisons?"

Also the Commission President disagrees with those who say that the majority of the refugees from the Middle East are Islamic terrorists."

"We have to accept these people on European soil." According to Juncker, the current refugee issue can be perfectly mastered. He also opposes accusations against the European Union. "Brussels is always blamed as the Member States themselves do not do their work."

The EU will take steps to speed up the asylum process and draw up a list of safe countries of origin. That means according to Juncker that people from Albania or Bosnia, for example, from now on, have no right for asylum unless their lives are in danger."

Juncker is not going to fiddle with the Geneva Convention nor the Schengen agreement of open borders, which guarantees the rights of open borders and uncontrolled traffic of people and goods and of refugees. "We also must have more Union in our refugee policy," Juncker. He would therefore like a permanent EU resettlement program for the future. "I am also a strong supporter to allow asylum seekers to work while their procedure is running. Those who work, find their dignity back. "

On the other hand Juncker also say that a permanent migration should be able to and legal, and yes even needed. "We are a demographic ageing continent. Instead of seeing refugees as a problem we should see it as a source to strengthen the E.U.

Those who work, find their dignity back. " The free movement of people within the Schengen area will not be questioned by the President of the Commission. "The Schengen Agreement will not be abolished under this

Commission. But the surveillance of the external borders must be better. We have the Frontex (Note:the European agency that guards the external borders) and strengthen it sharply to a full external border and coast guard system. "

On the other hand Juncker sees "the necessity that a permanent migration should be able to, yes even needed. We are a demographic ageing continent. Instead of a problem it should be seen as a source of good migration. " Juncker also in favour for resettlement programme in the near future. As he is a strong supporter to allow refugees to work while their procedure is running.

Jean-Claude Juncker makes himself no illusions and knows that the current refugee crisis of a long time. In this context, he wants a more effective foreign policy in which new crises be avoided so that no new refugees will want to come to the E.U..

This is one of the reasons why the EU has agreed on an emergency fund of EUR 1.8 billion to deal with crises's in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and in North Africa to tackle it better. The goal is to bring more stability by, for example, to create more work opportunities on site. The European Commission has a clear message for the European citizens. Prevention is better than cure and Juncker makes himself no illusions knowing that the refugee crisis cannot be solved with a tablet against a headache. In that sense he pleads for a more effective foreign policy with which new crisis's can be avoided.

"Pushing back boats with refugees, attacking refugee camps or closing ones eyes for the poor and needy people: that is not Europe. Europe is the baker at Kos GR) who gives away bread to the hungry and weary souls. Europe: that are students in Munich and Passau that donates clothes to the new comers in train stations. Europe, that is the police officer in Austria who welcomes exhausted refugees at the border. That is the Europe in which I want to live. The E.U. needs more union and the union more Europe."

Refugees who have no residence permit, must leave the European territory faster. The intention is to put up new external borders with closed camps. Europe also wants the countries of origin to accept the refugees faster. If not the consequence most likely will be that development subsidies will be cut. E.U. governments will come together in Luxembourg to discuss this.

In several major European cities thousands of sympathizers of refugees and migrants went to the streets. That was the case in London, Berlin, Paris, Stockholm and Copenhagen. The protesters asked their respective Governments a "warmer policy" towards refugees. In some places there were also smaller demonstrations against Muslim refugees.

In London tens of thousands, according to organizers, even 100,000 people came on the streets to protest against the policy of the Government of Prime Minister David Cameron. That would be too reluctant to receive more refu-

gees. The protesters carried slogans as: "Open the borders" and "The life of refugees counts". The European council of Ministers still did not agree on the matter of the quota. Especially the Visegrád group remain against it. If they do not agree The European council can push through the decision, even against the will of the Visegrád group. Concerning the latter and especially Hungary that some practices of that government made him think of the nazi period says the Austrian Chancellor Werner Fayman, in this referring to the refugee prison camps. One does not often hear the Chancellor speaks in such a harsh tone and words. Also and in general the E.U. criticizes Hungary quite harsh too about them closing its borders. But it reminds the government about its economical situation and the fact that it in a far going way depends on the International Monetary Fund. So they should share the burden the E.U. has too carry. If Hungary does not take up its responsibilities concerning refugees risk financial and economic repercussions.

UNHCR (The UN Refugee Agency).

More and more E.U. countries from the north are demanding that the refugees are seeking shelter in neighbouring countries from the ones they fled from. Thing is, they don't keep up to their agreement to pay 1.7 billion USD as part of the 4.5 billion USD needed to give aid to these refugee camps as agreed with the UNHCR.

And as you have read above the E.U. reserves 1.8 billion Euro to tackle crisis's in the Sahel, the Horn of Africa and North Africa but it is clear enough it's easy to say one thing and but then to act to it?

And this brings me to the Syrian refugees again seeking asylum in E.U.. I have the utmost respect for the suffering of the Syrian refugees but I know I'll not make myself not popular but I have more than noticed that they want to sit first rank above all the other refugees as if also they are saying 'we are, in numbers, the largest group of victims and "All animals are equal but some animals are more equal than others." ("1984" George Orwell).

Well, I got a wake up call for them and you: at present the following countries are at war and or suffering under a dictator: Jemen, Ethiopia, Ghana, Sudan, Somalia, Nigeria, Mali, Burundi, Central African Republic, Eritrea, Iraque, Afghanistan (read below Cemetery of the continents) and Palestine. Result: over 3 million civilian victims and over 19.5 million refugees. Of the approx. 4 million Syrian refugees approx 3 million refugees fled to countries such as Lebanon (1.14 million), Jordan (608,000) and Turkey (815,000) and the remaining spreading out to other countries including the E.U..

In the meantime there is an increasing number of conflicts between Syrian refugees (with different religious backgrounds such as Sunis sji'ites and Salafists) and towards other refugees in E.U. refugee camps and one should very vigilant that this does not lead to a kind of 'War of the worlds / refugee

civil war'. Also, most of the approx. 50.000 Syrian refugees say they served in the Syrian armee as a cook or driver. The question is: did the Syrian armee needed that much cooks and drivers?

Update October 14<sup>th</sup>.: E.U.2

They promised to invest 1 billion Euro to Turkey to help them to aid them to relief the refugees in the refugee camps. They only transferred 8 million Euro until now.

Cemetery of the continents.

The Soviet-Afghan War lasted over nine years from December 1979 to February 1989. Between 850,000–1.5 million civilians were killed.

The USA-Afghan-Taliban War started 2001 and has not ended despite the fact that president Obama ordered his troops to withdraw in 2013. However, there are still boots on the ground and recently they air-bombed a Doctors without borders hospital thinking it was a Taliban hide out. Result: 14 doctors and 9 patients died. The US calls it "collateral damage". I HATE THESE WORDS.

Until now between 1 - 1.2 million civilians have been killed since as a result of the war.

Why am I writing this? Because 'till this very day thousands of Afghani refugees are still fleeing to Europe but nowadays also wash ashore the beaches of Greece.

Ok, I rest my case, for now. It was a hell of a job trying to get a clear overview over the refugee situation in the E.U. but I should really say over how the E.U. is losing control. The only member state that really doesn't lose its grip is Germany and Chancelor Angela Merkel who, about 2 months ago said: "Wir schaffen das!" (We can do it!) before announcing that Germany should be preparing itself to receive more than between 800.000 and 1 million refugees.

And I'm not saying this because Germany is going to take up the most refugees and really, Merkel is not out of the woods yet so right now I'm packing to head for Berlin for a stay of approx. 10 days. Or as the German saying goes: "Abwarten und thee trinken." (Let's wait and see.).

\*with beginning I mean the day I started to write this Epitaph #1 and the end when I stopped writing.

Mind you, the above are not a final conclusion but ... I draw one conclusion: apart from Germany and Austria there is no other E.U. member state which is welcoming refugees nor keeping to agreements proposed by the European Commision and agreed on in the parliament more. (Read above).

## **NEWSFLASH**

On October 15<sup>th</sup>. talks started between President Erdogan from Turkey and the Vice-president Timmerman from the E.U. commission about the refugee crisis and how they can help each other, read: Turkey (not a E.U. member

state) to 'house' more Iraqi, Afghani and Syrian refugees in exchange for a possible visa free agreement to the E.U. or a member state status and 3 billion Euro and the E.U. (read especially Germany) to send back refugees that were denied an asylum status. But again, talks have just started. Still, what really annoys me, to say the least, is that apparently the E.U. is prepared to do business with the fascist dictator Erdogan known because of breaching human rights and the freedom of press where many people are arrested and jailed for years without a fair trial and its war against the Kurds instead of the IS. And when it comes to a deal between Turkey and the E.U. it very much sounds to me like exchanging refugees like used tissues between each other and when of no more use they can be just thrown away. Also Angela Merkel seems to be a strong supporter of a deal, most likely because she feels the political (including within her own coalition party CDU-CSU) and the people opposition against her growing. In any case: I decided to change my plans. Germany at this moment is not a hotspot yet but the Netherlands definitely is. The overall opposition from especially the Dutch is growing by the day including a lot of violence against refugees so I'll be heading there. Ok, now my job is done for now. I hope you appreciate it.

Gino d'Artali