



PRESS RELEASE

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History repeats itself in Brexit - even to the day

As we move inexorably towards the 31st October 2019 when Britain severs its links with its European neighbours through a unilateral act, Robin Chater retraces the steps of a disturbingly parallel move exactly 502 years ago when Martin Luther pinned his 95 theses onto the door of the castle church in Wittenberg to herald in the protestant reformation.**

Reform vs Reformation

"Every year **October 31st** is celebrated as Reformation Day and, in its time, it was as politically important to the future of Europe as Brexit Day. For out of it came the decision by Henry VIII in England to also dispose of the connection with Rome. A Rome that was also significant as the place where the European Union was born on January 1st 1958. In both cases, therefore, it involves a rejection of Rome and also the influence of "foreign interests". But can the sixteenth century tell us anything about our current situation?

The reformation is often portrayed as a great liberating movement that emancipated the English population, improved the position of women and encouraged literacy. But was it not also something else? It certainly led to the widescale destruction of historically beautiful buildings, the execution of unrepentant Catholics and isolation of Britain from its strategically important Catholic neighbours such as France and Spain. It also led (via the Catholic/protestant divide thus engendered) to the 30 Years War - proportionally the most destructive war in human history that saw the embroilment of 60,000 English mercenaries. Most importantly it created a schism across Europe that lasted for centuries.

What next?

So what about Brexit? What will be the likely aftermath of this huge secular reformation?

* As in the sixteenth century reformation, religious strife will also arise with a vengeance. There is probably only one politician less capable of leading the country than Teresa May - and that is Boris Johnson. He will, in his naive brashness, suspend Stormont and impose direct rule on Northern Ireland, thus reawakening paramilitary sympathies in both the catholic and protestant communities. The fragile peace, so hard won through the Good Friday Agreement, will be broken.



* There will also be a more widespread form of social disorder. After a post-Brexit lull the economic consequences of Brexit will sink in as jobs are lost. But instead of Catholics it will be the Polish, Romanian and Portuguese communities in Britain who shall be blamed. This will widen to more traditionally persecuted ethnic groups and by the Summer of 2020 riots will be common in many UK cities. The examples in France and Hong Kong recently show how violent and uncontrollable largely motiveless riots can be.

* A newly isolated Britain will try to secure trade deals with other nations and the most likely one is the USA. Early attempts to do so have been described by American officials as "desperate". If a deal does arise it will no doubt allow the US to dump lots of goods that have been blocked by the Chinese trade war. There will only be token advantages for UK businesses.

* Internal institutions such as the NHS and BBC are already under strain and these will suffer major breakdowns.

* Finally, as Margaret Thatcher found in 1982, if all else fails then political consensus and national unity can be engendered by a War. A war of some sort will need to be found that is big enough to engage the population to the point of actual or threatened conscription and in part of the World that the British population might have some inkling where it is. It cannot be with an established nuclear nation and there is unlikely to be cause enough for a War in Europe, so it is most likely to be somewhere where there is already tension building up - and that is **Iran**. The US general election is due in November 2020 - so the prospect of war to help Trump get re-elected could bring matters to a head far faster than the UK population are ready to accept. But, like in seventeenth century Europe, the important elements are a sharp religious divide (Islam vs west), the huge prizes of war (oil and removal of the agent provocateur in middle east conflicts) and home populations that are willing to tolerate declining living standards as a gesture of patriotism and not see the political ineptness that underlies them.

**** British-born Secretary-General of the Federation of International Employers ([FedEE](#)), in a speech given in London today.**

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What is FedEE?

The Federation of International Employers ([FedEE](#)) is a leading organisation for multinational companies. It was founded in 1988 with financial assistance from the European Commission. Today it is an independent body with corporate members all around the globe.