

We Won't Always Have Brussels

Belgium has made great contributions to civilization and world culture. We know that the potato dish unfairly called "French fries" really originated in Belgium. This small country has given us Herge's *Adventures of Tintin*, *Moules-frites*, Brussels Sprouts, Rene Magritte and his pipe that isn't a pipe, tennis champion Kim Clijsters, winner of four Tours de France cyclist Eddy Merckx, Hercule Poirot by adoption, Georges Simenon, Jacques Brel, the memory of Waterloo, and has provided a tax haven for the undernourished Gerard Depardieu.

Alas, Belgium also gave us one of the world's reprehensible and cruel leaders, King Leopold II, second King of Belgium (1865-1909). Leopold founded and was the sole owner of the Congo Free State, exploiting it for his private profit, starting with control of ivory. Under his regime, millions, estimated at ten million people, died as a result of human rights abuses that were investigated and reported by the British consul, Roger Casement.

Belgium left an unhappy legacy in the area. In 1935 Belgium, still in control of the country, introduced identification cards for the area of Rwanda, labeling individuals as Tutsi or Hutu, thus making identification easier and preventing change. It was therefore indirectly responsible for the genocide in Rwanda, the slaughter of Tutsis and moderate Hutus by the Hutu majority in 1994, when an estimated one million were killed, 70 per cent of the Tutsi population, and 20 per cent of the Hutus.

Belgium, an artificial state that became independent from the Netherlands in 1830 is a small country, the same size as Hawaii, with a population of 11 million in which the 640,000 Muslims account for 5-6 per cent of the total. Muslims, nearly all Sunnis, now constitute the second largest religion in the country.

It is essentially divided into three regions: the Dutch or Flemish speaking Flanders, about 60 per cent of the whole and the Francophone Wallonia, each subdivided into 5 provinces; and the bilingual Brussels, the capital.

“Plucky little” Belgium was neutral in World War I but nevertheless was invaded by Germany on August 4, 1914, an action that brought the UK into the war, as a result of the Treaty of London 1839 by which Britain promised to defend Belgium if it was attacked.

The country is not neutral today, nor is it distant from evils largely as its Muslim population has increased and as Islamist terrorism has involved it in world politics. According the book *Iris and the Crescent* by the Belgian sociologist Felice Dassetto, Brussels will have a Muslim majority by 2030. The registered top name of Belgian baby boys today is Mohammed. Over the last decade, several terror plots in Belgium have involved Muslims, and some individuals have been tried in courts in September 2003, October 2004, and November 2005.

Belgium now has the dubious record of the highest per capita number of jihadists fighting for ISIS, estimated at 516, of any European nation. One Belgian convert to Islam bombed a U.S. facility in 2005: she was the first European woman to launch a terrorist attack.

Muslims have largely been responsible for anti-Semitic manifestations. In 2014 Belgium was the scene of 130 anti-Semitic attacks, two of which were particularly notorious. On May 24, 2014, a Frenchman of Algerian origin killed four Jews inside the Jewish Museum in Brussels. That museum remains open and is now protected by metal detectors and three army soldiers. In November 2014, a rabbi in Antwerp was stabbed in the throat on his way to the synagogue.

A Jewish presence has existed in the area of Belgium for 2000 years. Now the Jewish population, totaling 45,000, lives in an

atmosphere of caution, if not fear.

As a result of these attacks and possible future imitation by Islamists of the attacks in Paris, the Belgian government is preparing to install steel doors on major Jewish organizations, doors strong enough to withstand Kalashnikov fire. Noticeably, the Belgian Chief Rabbi, Avraham Guigui, on November 23, 2015 spoke of the sense of fear by Jews, and said that people understand there is no future for Jews in Europe.

In a wider sense, investigation of the brutal massacres in Paris on November 13, 2015 has found that the plots of the attacks were made in Molenbeek, a section of Brussels, which is densely populated with 95,000 Muslims, many from Morocco. Molenbeek, the virtually segregated area currently experiencing a tourist boom, is sometimes referred to as MolMuslim. The area has long been involved in terrorist plots, inside and outside Belgium. Of the 8 Islamist terrorists known to be involved in the Paris attacks, 3 are linked to Molenbeek, noted for its street gangs, petty crime, and for the exodus of Jewish shopkeepers who had been threatened and left by 2008.

Molenbeek had the misfortune of having Philippe Moreaux a Socialist if not neo-Stalinist, as its mayor for twenty years (1992-2012). Suffering from what might be termed cultural amnesia, he encouraged illegal immigration and viewed Muslims as symbols of the new proletariat. His lack of political wisdom went to the extent of favoring the right of foreigners to vote in municipal elections.

Interestingly, Muslims in Belgium do not live in French style *banlieus*, nor has Belgium been involved for over a century in any colonial wars that might be an excuse for hostility.

The Belgian police had already known that the weapons used in the *Charlie Hebdo* massacre in Paris on January 13, 2015 were

traced back to a local Belgium dealer. Nevertheless, the police were unable to detect the new plot. This is not surprising in view of the flawed and dysfunctional political and administrative system.

It is easy to get lost in the Belgian and the Brussels administrative jungle. Brussels, with 1.3 million inhabitants, has three parliaments, 19 borough assemblies, each with a mayor, and two intelligence services. Belgium as a whole suffers from overlapping agencies and administrative units. As well as the tensions between the speakers of the two languages, Dutch and French, the country has 589 municipalities, and a federal police force and 196 other forces.

Clearly, Belgium faces a great threat from Islamist forces, including the home-grown Sharia⁴ Belgium terrorist group, and the growth of Salafism, and has limited ability to deal with it. Its police system is disorganized and its intelligence services are insufficient. This is the moment for the other countries of the European Union to offer all the help it can to Belgium and provide appropriate police and intelligence facilities to combat the greatest threat to civilization Islamist terrorism, not bananas from Israeli settlements.

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