

A Specter Haunting Europe



Irish police officers apprehend a man after a demonstration near the scene of an attack in Dublin city center, Thursday Nov. 23, 2023. A 5-year-old girl is receiving emergency medical treatment in a Dublin hospital following an attack on Thursday that involved a knife. A woman and two other children were injured. Irish police said they weren't treating the case as terror-related, and that a man in his 50s, who was also hospitalized with serious injuries, is a "person of interest." (Brian Lawless/PA via AP)

by Theodore Dalrymple

A specter is haunting Europe, and it is fascism. I don't mean by this the insulting term that radical students have long hurled at anyone who disagreed with them in the slightest. I mean a brutal, violent mass movement that will not hesitate to intimidate, oppress, and kill in the name of a nation.

Geert Wilders is not a fascist, but if his [electoral triumph in the Netherlands](#) (relative, not absolute) does not result in genuinely assuaging the discontents of which his triumph is a symptom, it is not unlikely that at least some of his voters will become so disillusioned with, and frustrated by, normal politics that they will look elsewhere for a solution.

Last year, a number equivalent to slightly more than 2 percent of the population of the Netherlands immigrated into the country, while half that number emigrated. The former Soviet Union (excluding Ukraine) was the largest source of immigrants. A fifth of the immigrants sought asylum, and just under a third came for family reasons, meaning mostly for family reunification. Only a third came to work. This means that an obligation to support a quarter of a million people has been created, at least for some time and possibly permanently, and a crisis of accommodation already exists in the Netherlands, which such immigration can only deepen.

It's likely that Wilders will not succeed in changing much. If he is to govern at all, it will be in a coalition, which will demand concessions from him. In modern Europe, besides, governments propose, but bureaucracies, often to the left of them, dispose. Wilders will also have to contend with the European Court of Human Rights, which will be anxious to clip his anti-Islamic wings, not to mention the substantial proportion of the population that voted left rather than right.

If, then, he fails to effect real change, the temperature on the right might rise.

Meantime, in Dublin, the rumor that a man who stabbed three children and two adults outside a school was an Algerian immigrant set off a riot in the city center, resulting in the burning of a bus, tram, and police cars. Hooded young men, shouting slogans, used the opportunity to smash storefronts and loot sporting goods, in a kind of pale imitation of

the *Kristallnacht*. It was the worst disorder seen in Dublin for many a long year.

What most alarmed me, other than the possibility of a resentful mob being one day wielded by a demagogue into a disciplined party, was the reaction of readers of the French conservative newspaper, *Le Figaro*, to its report of the disturbances in Dublin. It was almost entirely favorable, with readers impressed that the Irish did not stand for the kind of terrorism that the French so meekly accepted. No one (at least by the time I gave up reading the voluminous reader commentary) questioned how representative of the Irish population the young thugs were, nor asked whether the rumor to which they were supposedly reacting was true, nor doubted the connection between what they were doing and their supposed political purpose.

In France, the nervousness of the political class, its mistrust or fear of public reactions, has been revealed by the murder of a 16-year-old boy during a party at a village hall in the *département de la Drôme*. About nine youths and young men, some with criminal records, descended on the party from a housing project 12 miles away and set about stabbing the partygoers. This brought to mind the events of October 7 in Israel. The authorities have so far been coy about the ethnic identity of the perpetrators, waiting for emotions to cool, hoping to avoid the conflict that they know lies not far below the surface of French society, even in *la France profonde*.

The impotence of the political class in the face of the concerns and anxieties of so much of the European population makes fertile soil for the breeding of fascism.

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