

MADELEINE REES ON BREXIT

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Inequality between people and between nations... a root cause of war. WILPF was right in 1915 and now we see what can happen when it deepens and is globalised.

Brexit is the result of a combination of two manipulated narratives: migration, and the need for austerity. The latter has led to greater inequalities in the UK than are sustainable, the right as usual, is able to find an "other" to blame for those inequalities and framed the debate as one of migration, this they blame on Europe. No point in telling the truth of the numbers and the economic advantages/ necessities of migration, the truth is irrelevant. What happened was the manipulation of an impoverished working class, impoverished as a result of the neo liberalism of the conservative party, by the extreme right of that same party and the neo fascism of Nigel Farage. The media delighted in misinformation. There was violence and murder. This is not democracy and it is frightening. And as if that were not bad enough, Britain sold out its younger generation who voted by large majorities to remain in the EU.

There is a real fear that the hatreds unleashed by the poisonous campaign will not be easily appeased. France and the Netherlands now want their referendums and in both cases it is the extreme right calling for them on the same narrative of hatred that won it in the UK. There is real fear over Ireland and even over Gibraltar. How quickly this is unravelling into the next phase: Militarism as a way of thought; the attendant creation of violent masculinities. It has already started.

As a peace organisation we have a great responsibility. We have to prevent what has started from descending even further into chaos. For WILPF Sections in Europe, we need to develop a real and coherent strategy of engagement which will bring both human rights, law and decency back into preeminence. We keep calm and we carry on, but with much more urgency than before.

On a personal note I am greatly saddened.