

ANGELA MERKEL

A poignant political tragedy

Fly on the wall ...



The 2016 Nobel Peace Prize was not awarded to Angela Merkel. She was perhaps less likely to get it this year than last, and she did not get it last year either. The reason Fly thought she might crack the nod, some 16 months or so after all the fuss, was because the committee always waits for a touch of the ironic to attend the thing before they commit. In the case of President Santos of Colombia, recipient of the 2016 award, that touch came in the form of the wafer-thin defeat in a national referendum of his almost historic peace deal with FARC leader Rodrigo Londoño. In the case of Merkel, the touch would have resided in that glorious spring's turning winter of discontent for her, for Germany and for Europe. For, as certain as the day is blue, Merkel's "refugee politics" will end up being the ruin of her coalition government and of her remarkable reign as Chancellor. And this, surely, will end up ranking among the most poignant of political tragedies of the early twenty-first century. This is the good deed not going unpunished writ large.

For a few heady weeks, one of the richest nations in the world opened its doors. The crushed and the meek walked in, to safety, to kindness, to possibility and

to true and unbelievable humanity. The hosts acted as if there were some weird party on, and the normal business of fear and distrust was banished. St Pauli football club organised a special trip for thousands of new arrivals, who were all waiting for the catch when confronted with banners proclaiming 'Say it Loud, say it clear: Refugees are Welcome Here!' Everybody was misty-eyed and bigots were nowhere to be seen, or, if seen and heard, shouted down. "Wir schaffen es" ("we will get it done") was the heartfelt slogan of the day, no doubt partly inspired by the eponymous "yes we can" movement of a few years before from across the Atlantic. Merkel had done a truly beautiful, truly incredible

thing. And some good had crept in under the carpet. Everyone was drunk with it.

And now? "Wir schaffen es" has become a slur. It is best spat out with a sneer. Those naïve enough to wish to point to anything redeemable in the Flüchtlingspolitik of last year find themselves adopting the same guarded and apologetic stance as was de rigueur for any doubters only a year or so before. The most despicable specimen ever to grace the American Presidential candidacy is able to use Merkel as an example of what his opponent might become if given half a chance – and she is compelled to deny, to refute, to resist, this horrible analogy. The British (yes, John Stuart Mill's heart must burst, the British) draw their laager with buses depicting crowds of hungry people in scary veils invading their dear island as a vision from hell. And the French, bless their sanctimonious secular souls, criminalise muslim women for affronting the tolerant polity with their provocatively aggressive displays of excessively modest beach-wear.

What Santos and Londoño almost achieved is similar to what Rabin, Peres and Arafat almost achieved. Far be it for Fly to downplay it. Good on them, or on him (Fly is not sure why this time one side of the coin got the nod but the other lost out). Yet.... Will someone, somewhere, when Merkel is hounded out of office, look back on the German spring of 2015 and recognise it for what it promised about what we as humans could be if we tried a bit? Even if it lied? Will someone give that season, if not an award, then a song, a poem, something? **A**



Answers
Cryptic
Legal
Crossword
Number 1

Solutions Down
1 PABST
2 IRONERS
3 CONSTITUTIONAL
4 SINE DIE
5 TEAPOT
6 DISPROVES
7 HYPOCRITICALLY
8 FEE
9 ADORED
10 ILL-JUDGED
11 MESSIER
12 HER
13 EDIFIER
14 STONED
15 EASES

Solutions Across
1 PRINCIPLES
2 STUD
3 BROWNING
4 BYLAWS
5 THEFT
6 REIMINDICATIO
7 INSET
8 THEWS
9 JUSTICE DENIED
10 CRIME
11 GANJAH
12 VILLAINS
13 DODO
14 COURTYARDS