

A special birthday gift

IN OTHER WORDS



AMITAVA KAR

A state of numbing grief to the point of being lost is what Anwara Syed Haq seems to be in as I meet her at her residence.

"Everyone is telling me to move on. But it's easier said than done. It takes time. It feels like I don't even have time to grieve. It's not easy to forget overnight the memories of 50 years of memories," she murmurs.

She seems disoriented. "I don't have any time for myself. Mr. Haq is not giving me time to mourn," she says, more as a statement than a complaint. I am confused. What does she mean? "I have had no time for myself. Journalists, publishers, officials have been calling and stopping by; friends have been calling from home and abroad. I knew that he was a great writer but I did not know that he was loved by so many people. His books are getting published. I have to proofread those. I have to sort out poems that he dictated to me while in the hospital," she says, all in one breath.

What books?

"Three books of poetry, three books of short stories and two collections of stories. Besides these, about 22 books are being published in the book fairs in Dhaka and Kolkata. These books contain stories and poems both published and unpublished. I have to go to different places and newspapers. I have to write about his final days.

Although he is gone, I am busy doing his work."

Would she not feel lonelier without these tasks? Has she thought about that? "That's probably true," she says taking a long pause.

What was his health like during the last days of his life? "He retained his sanity and intellectual capacity till the very last moment. On April 12 we

found him reading Sharatchandra. Then he read a book by Hemingway and a couple more. He even read Sandesh edited by Satyajit Ray. He bought a book on women's liberation and gave it to me as a present. All these books he read while translating Hamlet in about two weeks."

How was it after coming back home? "He did not die of cancer as such. He

loved his friends."

Was he afraid of dying? "Not at all. He took death as a continuation of life. Even at 80, he made plans for the next two years. That means he never thought of dying. That's because the creative stream in him never dried up. Most writers become mundane when they reach sixty or seventy. He never repeated himself. After coming back, at

remembered? "He received a lot of adulation. But he received a lot of criticism as well. Some people said awful things about him. I see that they are remorseful now. He knew a lot of people. But he was a lonely man. I believe that a truer appreciation of his work will come from the youths of this country. They are more modern in thinking."

What did he say about her writing?

"He always encouraged me to write. It was difficult to find my own voice living under the shadow of such a great and talented writer. I was always careful so that I would not get motivated by his thoughts. Now when I read his books and I don't understand something, I repeat that I should have read them earlier so that I could ask him questions. But I don't want to write. I want to finish the work he has left for me."

That sounds like a pretty big sacrifice even by the standards of a mourning wife. After all, she is an accomplished writer with several books to her credit. She is also a renowned psychiatrist who has her own practice. "I wish I spent more time with him. I wish I wrote down everything he said to me. I will do everything to keep him alive even if that means no more writing for me. I am an independent woman. But I cannot see anything but love in my heart now—an overwhelming love that overshadows everything else. You have to understand it."

What could be a greater birthday gift?

The writer is a member of the Editorial Team at The Daily Star.



Today is the 81st birth anniversary of Syed Shamsul Haq.

PHOTO: STAR

learned that he had cancer. We left for London three days later. The doctor said that he did not have much time left; he would have to finish his work fast. Going back to my sister's house, I

died of intercurrent infection due to pneumonia. Every day he had so many visitors who sat on his bed, shook his hands, and took pictures with him. He said no to no one. He loved people. He

the hospital he used to get up around during the wee hours of night and tell me to wake up. He wanted me to take notes."

How would he like to be

PROJECT ■ SYNDICATE

The coming Brexit tragedy

THIS past year changed everything, except how governments think. Nowhere is that more apparent than in the pre-negotiations for Brexit. With both sides ignoring the far-reaching implications of Donald Trump's election as US president – namely, the decline of the liberal world order – the process seems set to produce a tragedy for the United Kingdom and the European Union alike.

Judging by the behaviour of British Prime Minister Theresa May's diplomats, one might believe that Brexit is the only real uncertainty nowadays. Indeed, they seem convinced that their only imperative – beyond protecting the unity of the Conservative Party, of course – is to secure as many benefits for the UK as possible.

Because the government's Brexit negotiators are assuming that they can count on continued global growth, they are focused on securing a bigger piece of the pie for the UK. And because they also assume that the liberal international economic order will endure, they expect that, once "liberated" from the shackles of the EU, the UK will find eager partners with which to sign trade deals. Finally, the Brexiteers seem unconcerned about the security implications of going it alone, because they assume that the United States will maintain its role as global policeman, not to mention continued protection from NATO.

That's a lot of assuming. But the British are not alone in thinking that nothing has changed. In Brussels, EU institutions – and European

Commission President Jean-Claude Juncker in particular – still regard a Brexit-triggered Eurosceptic domino effect as the biggest threat to the Union.

In such a context, the goal of the EU's Brexit negotiators would be straightforward: make clear that being a member of the European club brings substantial benefits, and that leaving carries substantial costs. That is the logic that drove EU Council President Donald Tusk to declare that the UK has two options: hard Brexit or no Brexit. It

and his then-Finance Minister Yanis Varoufakis were shocked by the EU's intransigence during the 2015 negotiations, in which it, too, had much to lose. Nonetheless, Tsipras took the deal – and the Greek crisis is still not resolved.

Despite this experience – and the fact that the global environment is even less stable now than it was then – the EU seems set on employing the same negotiating technique today. Already, Michel Barnier, the EU's lead Brexit

causing severe economic damage to both sides, such an outcome would generate so much acrimony that the two sides would find it next to impossible to work out arrangements in myriad other areas, such as territorial defence and counter-terrorism, trade and sanctions, international diplomacy, and climate change.

There is no moral equivalence between the self-defeating solipsism of post-Brexit Britain and attempts by the EU to defend a European order that has

international institutions are likely to undermine peace and cooperation – with potentially devastating security implications.

Contrary to what the British government may like to believe, it is the EU, not NATO, that is most critical to its security. NATO is currently confronting serious challenges. Beyond Trump's apparent lack of interest in upholding US responsibilities to the bloc, NATO members – from the Baltics to Turkey – are under pressure.

In any case, the EU, not NATO, has driven the biggest foreign-policy successes in recent decades, from the pacification of the Balkans to the Iran nuclear deal to the response to Russia's annexation of Crimea. Though Trump's election has impelled the EU to agree to a permanent structure for defence cooperation, the incoming US administration's overall effect on European security will not be positive.

It is time for Brexit negotiators to accept reality – and change their game plan accordingly. The British cannot continue to pursue negotiating tactics that erode the foundations of the very system from which they expect to benefit. And the EU must back away from its harsh stance, however understandable it may be.

John Maynard Keynes once noted that "practical" people – those who believe that they are "exempt from any intellectual influences" – in fact "are usually the slaves of some defunct economist." Today, Britain and the EU have become the slaves of defunct thinking. If they do not break their intellectual chains, they will secure for themselves nothing but more misery.

The writer is Director of the European Council on Foreign Relations.

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(Exclusive to The Daily Star)

The reality, outside the Berlaymont and Westminster snow globes, is that Europe's holiday from history has been brought to an abrupt end. Trump's protectionism-tinged trade policies are likely to take a serious toll on global economic growth.



is also the logic behind member states' refusal to engage in pre-negotiations or to accept a transitional arrangement.

But this logic is for the world of yesterday – and even then, it didn't quite work. During the Greek crisis, the EU's strategy was to decide the terms of a deal and tell Greece to take it or leave it. If Greece tried to negotiate, the EU made the conditions progressively less attractive, until the pressure was too much to bear.

Greek Prime Minister Alexis Tsipras

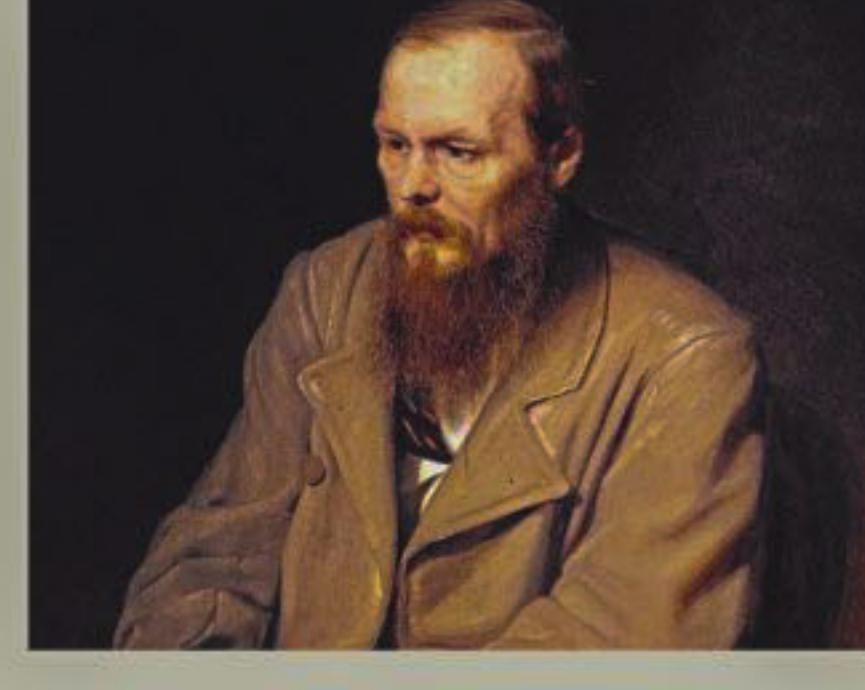
negotiator, has presented the UK government with a €50 billion (USD 52 billion) bill to cover pensions and other obligations until 2030. British politicians do not believe EU officials really mean it, but they do.

The UK and the EU are now locked in a deadly dance, one that may well continue until time runs out. The result will be even worse than a bad Brexit; it will be a non-negotiated Brexit, in which the UK doesn't leave the EU so much as it falls out of it. Beyond

been painstakingly built from the ruins of World War II and the Cold War. But both sets of response could contribute to the same tragic result: a Europe stranded in Trump's new Hobbesian world order.

The reality, outside the Berlaymont and Westminster snow globes, is that Europe's holiday from history has been brought to an abrupt end. Trump's protectionism-tinged trade policies are likely to take a serious toll on global economic growth. And his attacks on

QUOTABLE Quote



FYODOR DOSTOYEVSKY

RUSSIAN NOVELIST, SHORT STORY WRITER, ESSAYIST, JOURNALIST AND PHILOSOPHER

For all is like an ocean, all is flowing and blending; a touch in one place sets up movement at the other end of the earth.

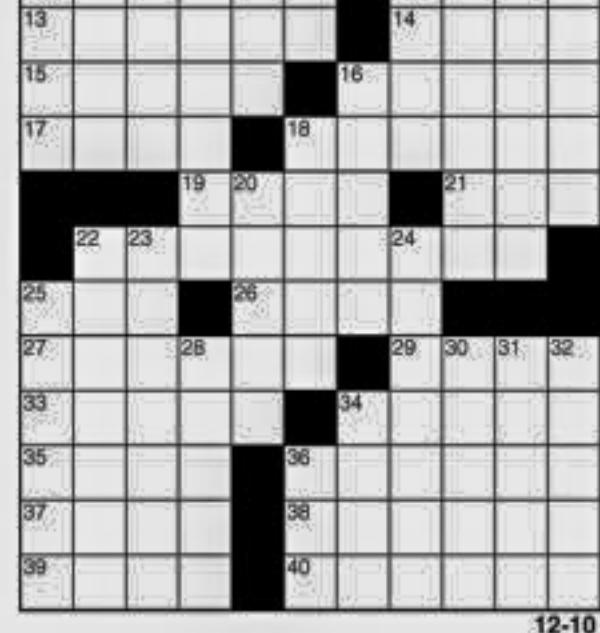
CROSSWORD BY THOMAS JOSEPH

ACROSS

- 1 Stand up to
- 7 Soda choice
- 11 Street crosser
- 12 Steel ingredient
- 13 Sculpted
- 14 Shamus
- 15 Borders
- 16 "Love Story" writer
- 17 Dancer or Prancer
- 18 Buccaneer
- 19 Spotted
- 21 Ran into
- 22 Pierre Trudeau, by birth
- 25 Recipe amount
- 26 Whole lot
- 27 Whips
- 29 Cartoonist Thomas
- 33 "Loot" playwright
- 34 Excessively emotional
- 35 River of Russia
- 36 Ransom demander
- 37 Henri's head
- 38 On the go
- 39 Winter glider
- 40 Calls

DOWN

- 1 Entered Indy
- 2 Stay away from
- 3 Suit material
- 4 Opposite
- 5 Takes to court
- 6 Danson of "The Good Place"
- 7 Fall quaff
- 8 Folding craft
- 9 Finds
- 10 Short sock
- 16 Following
- 18 Facial treatments
- 20 Buddy of "The Beverly Hillbillies"
- 22 Spat
- 23 Non-city part of New York
- 24 Admit
- 25 Belts or socks
- 28 Drilled
- 30 Sean of "Rudy"
- 31 Push rudely
- 32 Lorry quartet
- 34 Flying speed word
- 36 Upper limit



YESTERDAY'S ANSWER

H	A	T	E	S	P	I	T	O	N
A	R	U	L	E	E	D	U	C	E
N	O	R	M	A	S	O	R	T	A
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P	E	D	A	N	T	E	D	E	
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R	I	C	E	G	R	A			
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T	A	S	T	E					

BEETLE BAILEY



BABY BLUES



by Mort Walker



by Kirkman & Scott

