

Mehmet's Flight

Mehmet turned in his sleeping bag and groaned. He had been woken by a loud explosion and he felt the ground shake. 'That was too close for comfort', he thought. 'I wonder who is bombing who.'

He wondered also if he would get through another day without being caught or killed. How had things come to be like this?

It was David Cameron's wretched referendum that had sparked off the troubles. Those changes he had negotiated with the European Union pleased neither the pro-Europeans nor the Euro-skeptics in his party and, although the Government officially campaigned that people vote "Yes" to stay in the EU, everyone knew his cabinet was divided. The whole thing was a mess. With all the tabloids campaigning for a "No" vote, it was not surprising that the result was a narrow majority to leave the EU.

Scotland, however, had largely voted "Yes"; it unilaterally declared independence from the UK, withdrew its fifty-six MPs from the Westminster Parliament and informed the EU that it was remaining within that organization. Chaos followed; the army was certainly not going to step in to bring Scotland into line. Cameron had lost the referendum and was forced to resign as prime minister; the Conservative party tore itself apart with one faction blaming another for the mess and England had no effective government. Riots had broken out in London and spread to Liverpool, Manchester and, far too quickly, to most other English cities.

In London and in Manchester "Islamic State in Britain" was proclaimed by fanatics, and this soon spread to other cities in the north and the Midlands.

"It's not a state," his father had said with feeling, "and it's not Islamic! It's that Daesh lot trying to plant their murderous fanaticism in Britain."

Indeed, moderate Muslim communities feared, with real justification, that the daeshites would provoke a backlash from English right wing groups. The Shia communities were especially alarmed as the daeshites considered them heretics to be eliminated and the English fascist groups looked upon them as one and the same as all other Muslims.

The English Defence League and the British National Party had been emboldened even before the referendum by the anti-European feeling in many parts of England and there had been sporadic outbursts of anti-Semitism and what they considered anti-Islamic violence. The trouble was that these and other similar fascist groups treated Hindus and Sikhs as Muslims also! Afro-Caribbean and other minority groups had formed militias for their own self protection. Law and order had simply broken down in English cities, and London was affected most of all, with widespread internecine fighting, looting and destruction of buildings.

Some in Wales had thought the principality should follow Scotland and declare independence within the EU; but the sudden rise of an off-shoot of Daesh centred on Bristol, Newport and Cardiff together with right-wing violence from the British National Party and similar organizations had caused law and order to break down in the Welsh cities of the south.

The fanaticism of the daeshites, their apparently endless supply of suicide bombers and their cynical manipulation of the population as human shields had made them particularly difficult to deal with. But the English and Welsh fascist groups were as equally fanatical and just as cynical in their use of human shields.

The police had been completely overwhelmed. The armed forces were doing what they could and had brought much of the rural areas of Wales, southern England, Cumbria and Northumberland under control but securing urban areas effectively without serious loss of innocent civilian life was difficult. It was a complete mess. How would it all end, Mehmet wondered; and muttering to himself "How will it all end? How will it all end?" he drifted off into sleep again.

Mehmet gasped when he looked at his watch.

"Quarter past eight! That darn explosion! I wanted to be off before dawn!"

Mehmet crawled quickly out of his sleeping bag and listened to see if he could hear anything. All seemed quiet. He had slept in a vault beneath one of London's now-ruined churches. He had hoped that the dead in the coffins in the niches around him would deter any intruders. So far they had. But he needed to leave; he had to get out of London. If he did, he would try and reach Dorset where he had an uncle and aunt.

Mehmet's parents had both died at the hands of English Defence League thugs. His father was of Turkish descent and so fair game as far as the EDL was concerned and his mother, though a white English woman from Dorset, was regarded as a 'racial traitor.' Mehmet had been left for dead when the EDL thugs fled, thinking they were about to be attacked by a greater force of daeshite fighters. Fortunately for Mehmet, it was a Sikh militia merely trying to defend its own territory. When they realized Mehmet was still alive, they rescued him and looked after him till he had recovered.

He found the Sikh community was sheltering several other refugees from the fighting in the city. He could have stayed with them, but he wanted to get out of London and to his relations in Dorset. Thus it was they had supplied him with a sleeping bag and other equipment and provided him with a guide to take him to another group who would help him get beyond the now disused M25 and into country controlled by the British army. Mehmet and his guide, however, had come under fire from a rogue sniper. Mehmet's guide had been killed but Mehmet himself had managed to escape into the ruined buildings nearby where he had discovered the church and its vault.

Mehmet cautiously crept out of the vault and looked around. He saw rubble everywhere, but no sign of human life. This must be no man's land between two warring territories, he thought. He needed to be very careful. There might be odd snipers about from either side; there could be mines planted here. He kept as much in the shelter of ruined buildings as possible and carefully avoided places where mines may have been planted.

Suddenly he stopped, frozen to the spot. He thought he heard a whisper. He heard it again.

"Over here, man. It ain't safe out there."

Mehmet looked; he could just about make out a black face in a dark corner of a bombed out building.

He's obviously not a British fascist, thought Mehmet, and he's not bearded like the the daeshite lot. So Mehmet went cautiously over.

"Quick, man, down here!" whispered the face, disappearing into the ground.

Mehmet hastily followed and found himself in an underground tunnel and that the face belonged to someone call Kingsley. As he followed Kingsley, he learnt that many underground systems – the tube, utilities and other passages – had been taken over by different groups who had sealed off their passages from others. Not that some did not try to mine through to other groups; but that was

always risky as there was, in fact, so very much under the modern city of London. You were as likely to find some medieval or even Roman burial ground as you were to bump into another group, and even more likely to get blown up in a booby trap.

As he followed Kingsley through the tunnels, Mehmet was met here and there by friends of Kingsley emerging from other tunnels; some, he was glad to see, were carrying food. He did not bother to ask where it came from. Eventually they came out into the open somewhere south of the Thames; he was not sure where and Kingsley was not over-keen to be explicit on this point.

He was told that he was now in the Rainbow Republic of Hope which, he understood, was an enclave holding out against the warring factions around them and trying to help refugees from the fighting.

He noticed that the people there were predominantly of Afro-Caribbean origin, but he did see a fair number of people of other ethnic origins. Mehmet soon settled in, and was glad of the respite from fighting and fleeing.

But he was only too aware that the enclave could come under attack at any time. Its defenders, though contemptuous of the British fascist groups, recognized they were bullies one had to be constantly on the guard against; and they feared the daeshites whom they regarded as fanatical and evil. They watched with dismay as the daeshites tightened their grip on west London.

They were, however, not the only ones alarmed at the spread of the daeshite and fascist groups. The remnant of the Westminster Parliament had assembled in Windsor. The Labour and Conservative Parties had put aside their differences to form a national coalition. The coalition government approached Minhaj-ul-Quran and other Muslim reform groups as well as leaders from other communities to work together to restore order and to defeat both the fascist and the daeshite groups.

With a national government restored and taking the initiative, the ordinary people of all communities, who had no desire to see the country slip into civil war, rallied to the government's support and the fascist and daeshite groups became more and more isolated. Soon relief was brought to the Rainbow Republic and similar enclaves, which now became part of England once more.

The worst was over for Mehmet who thanked those who had looked after him before being taken to his aunt and uncle in Dorset. He was glad that the government was now actively supporting Muslim reformers, something his father had said the British should have been doing years ago. He missed his father and his mother, but was happy enough with his aunt and uncle and certainly enjoyed Dorset much more than he had ever enjoyed London. He was glad that where he lived was at peace and he hoped that the national mood of togetherness and cooperation would continue after the daeshites and fascists had been defeated.