

Monday, January 6th, 2020

Dear Chris,

Although the trail is steep and winding the crisp air (it is -3c) keeps my pace brisk. I am climbing to the original 'fairy tale' castle of my youthful imagination. Neuschwanstein castle or 'New Swan Stone', appears, perched on a 1,000m hill, commanding the valley below that is now dusted with fresh snow.

This extraordinary castle was built by Bavarian King Ludwig II (1845-1886). He built many whimsical castles whose extravagance led to his being deemed 'mad'. However, this one remains unfinished as he and his doctor drowned mysteriously after taking a lakeside walk. At New Swan Stone Ludwig II imagined specific themes for each room within the castle. Many have reference to the works of Richard Wagner, the king's favourite composer, and his romantic German knights.

In addition there was also to be a Moors room, more turrets and a new castle entrance. This unbuilt section was not lost, instead it was copied by a certain Walt Disney, who visited the castle in the 1930's, turning Ludwig's design into Disney's global logo with the motto "where dreams come true".

After Ludwig's death, Bavaria was quietly gobbled up by Prussia and was enfolded into Bismark's German Empire, even though Bavaria is predominately Catholic, closer to Austria, and had a history of independence.

Being in this fantasy castle leads me to other fanciful thoughts... The stories within each room of the castle, with their local heroes, suggest that a future Federal European state does not

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need our current national boundaries. Europe, with the UK jettisoned, can simply return to its roots of the principalities of the Old Holy Roman Empire that had lasted for a 1,000 years from 800 to 1806.

The modern Bavaria's GDP of \$750b is about the size of Switzerland, making it the 20th largest global economy. The boundaries of these principalities still exist today within the nations of Europe. Given that Europe now has a single currency and an internal borderless environment of travel, all that is required today is a single military. And for that to occur Europe would have to say "auf wiedersehen" to NATO, which has outlived its original purpose of fighting the Soviets. The European Union project can then revert back to a structure that lasted ten centuries - being politically and culturally local for most things and external for foreign affairs and defence. The modern European states within the EU would become redundant and Europe would hark back to the structures and conventions of the past. Ludwig II's heart, supposedly kept in the crypts of St. Michael's Church in Munich, would be filled with hope that Bavaria will once again be a Free State. This castle does stir the imagination, no wonder Disney was so enchanted.

See you Tuesday. Mustafa