Twitter Thread by Alex Taylor



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So now it really is goodbye, and it hurts. On a storm-filled Sunday, here's a thread (OK ! my 3rd in 8 years !) on why Brexit has affected so many of our lives - yours, I'm sure, if you follow me - and the only one I can really talk about with any expertise – my own /1

I grew up in Britain. It comes out in the mince pies which even now are my go-to at Christmas, my never ending search for the perfect cup of tea and my accent when I speak the French I worked on TV and radio in for 30 yrs, even write books in (but not my diary) /2

There will be a part of me that is forever England. But my England was never the England that has so noisily taken over these last few years, parading Union Jacks so noisily in its alarmingly nasty xenophobic newspapers no other country would tolerate /3

My England was full of Sixties sunlight, the Beatles, Mrs Peel and Carnaby St. It was the 70s, watching glam rock on the telly while eating spam by candlelight during the 3 day week when we really were "the sick man of Europe" /4

It was also being called queer and pansy in the school playground and the little boy who somehow understood that foreign languages were his passport to one day being accepted somewhere else. French irregular verbs and German grammar were my visa "out" /5

To this day, I don't care what anyone says, I still get a thrill when they ask on Eurovision, "Bonsoir Londres, may we have your votes please ?" It was Belgians dressed as bears fighting Germans with sausages on "Jeux sans Frontières" – a brave new world without spam ! 6/

It was also my parents. If any generation could be proud to be British it was them. They really did play a huge part in saving Europe. My Dad got medals in the war but like so many others never really talked about what he had done - and like so many others I never asked 7/

He would have been the last to go round sabre rattling about fish quotas. It was their generation that knocked on the door of Europe – trying hard for thirteen long years to get us into the European Common Market 8/

left in the early 80's and discovered Paris, a beacon of light for a young gay man. In 1981 the French government was the first in the world to sponsor a 24 hr gay radio – compared to Thatcher's shameful homophobia (Google Section 28) /9

I was proud to work on it and stayed because ? … I could. Free movement in its then form gave me the right to live in someone else's country. Hardly a day goes by without a French person telling me I have an accent. No one has ever told me I don't have the right to be here /10

I even went and tried out a life in Berlin for ten years, half and half with Paris, simply because … I could. And had the time of my life, getting to know the U Bahn, Berghain, and crispy Sesambrötchen. Because I could /11

That's why all this matters. Brexit has taken away that identity. I get that the Brexiteers felt they had lost theirs. I will never forgive them for not once, any of them, acknowledging that being British and European is the essence of who we are /12

This identity was taken away without me even having a say. No vote if you'd "betrayed the country". Moreover since 2016, none of the more than a million of us "UK migrants" have mattered a jot in UK media, even though our lives have been thrown in turmoil /13

So, the nano second after the referendum result I gathered together all my 80's fiches de paie and became French, one of the proudest days of my life. But it was more than that. France helped me remain what I am above all – a true European /14

In 4 days, I will say goodbye to a part of me, less British, more European. There are many millions of us whose lives are infinitely richer because we had the right and were proud to be both. I love our continent. That's why, in these last flickering days, Brexit really hurts /15