



## *Wait and Sea, in Brexit's troubled waters*

Rob: I'm joined by Simon Coss and Antoine Tracou, who have both together worked on a film that they have just shown to the public here. The film is called "Wait and Sea; In Brexit's Troubled Waters." Simon, could you just give us a brief outline about the subject of your film?

Simon: Yeah, well it's a film that came out of the fact that I decided to take French nationality after Brexit, which I guess is maybe something that a lot of your listeners will understand. And I was very upset and angry about Brexit when it happened. And, I talked to a lot of my friends about that, including Antoine, and I think I probably annoyed them quite a lot with my constant moaning. And, at one point Antoine said, "Stop moaning. Let's make a film about this instead." I said, "Yeah, that's a good idea." At that point we didn't really have an idea for a film, but we just knew we just kind of based it on this idea of what happens to me, and how I felt about, kind of my identity getting ripped in half by, by this thing that I have no control over, cause again, probably like a lot of people who listen to this, I'm one of those people who didn't have the right to vote in the referendum, because I'd lived outside of the UK for more than 15 years, so I went through the process of getting a French nationality, and then I got it, I was very fortunate to get it. And, then I got the information about when I go and get my first passport. So, I said to Antoine, well why don't we film that, and that can maybe be the beginning of the film. We didn't have anything after that point; we just had that sequence.

Antoine: We were at this time thinking about question about European identity: In what way could I feel like a European citizen too? That's the reason why we make this first sequence, and when we start the editing of the film, it was really evident that the first sequence has to start with that.

Simon: Yeah, we didn't want to make a kind of big, global film about "what does Brexit mean?" and make a big journalistic inquiry into Brexit's this that and the other – partly because we just weren't interested in doing that and partly because everybody else we knew in the media was doing that, and we really didn't feel that we had anything to add to that particular discussion.

Rob: So you picked a, picked a subject very close to Breton people's heart, which ...

Simon: Yeah.

Rob: ... which is fishing.

Simon: Yeah, and that came from the idea, as Antoine was saying, is we were talking about what it means to be European and the identity and all of that, and we then said, Well, Europe's also here where we live. It's not, you know, elsewhere, and here, where we live and what's important to people, fishing came up pretty quickly, as anyone who lives in Brittany will attest to. And, also the idea of, you know people who are working in this sea that is between the UK and Brittany very quickly emerges as a powerful metaphor for Brittany, because either this sea is something that unites us or that divides us, you know. The zones that we were fishing in have been a shared resource for a long time. Somewhere where French and/or Breton, and Cornish fishermen worked in the same waters and, you know, deal with the same very dangerous lifestyles. And this event, Brexit, was kind of going to change that and we didn't



know how, but we just wanted to go meet people and talk to them. The idea of fishing came out of that, and then there's the technical things about finding the boat we were going to go on, and all that.

Rob: You went to sea, in fact.

Simon: We went to sea twice, yes.

Rob: And have you done this kind of thing before?

Antoine: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Rob: Oh, you're a fisherman ...

Antoine: No, I'm not a fisherman at all, but I've been a long time ago on a big boat – two weeks, in winter.

Rob: You set off on a fishing boat from southern Brittany ...

Simon: From Guilvinec.

Rob: To Newlyn.

Antoine: Usually this boat stayed two weeks in sea, on sea, you know, and it decided it was OK to bring us to Newlyn after one week. So, they give us time, their own time for our film. I feel they were, they feel concerned by our film at this time, so maybe that's the reason they decided to help us. Antoine: I don't know what happened in my head this day.

Rob: Well, it's "Wait and Sea." I should explain to listeners that the "see" is actually "s-e-a."

Antoine: Yeah, like the sea.

Rob: And it's troubled waters, in fact, it's a very difficult issue to resolve, isn't it, because both sides of the Channel have different opinions.

Simon: Yeah, there's a kind of paradox around the fishing world and Brexit, which is that the UK fisherman voted in a vast majority for "leave," over 90% of them, with the argument, essentially "We want our waters back." They felt that the European fisheries' policies were unfair to them. Boats from other European countries can fish more fish in the UK waters than they can and, objectively, quite often that is the case. But, the flip side of that is they sell the vast majority of their fish in Europe – between 75 and 80%, depending upon who you speak to. And if they take back control of their waters and don't let the European boats in, then there'll be a tit-for-tat, which is they'll find it very hard to sell into Europe and that's a real economic problem for them. And so that was really, this paradox in the fishing world came up and it kind of was metaphorical perhaps with the paradox of the whole Brexit paradox, really, which is looking at a situation where everybody loses if we don't get it right.



Rob: Your film is 52 minutes long; it's destined for television viewing?

Antoine: Yeah.

Rob: It's shown already on French TV?

Antoine: Yeah, on March, on April, at the beginning of April, on France 3.

Rob: And how about showing it in the UK?

Simon: Yeah, we'll be really keen to show it in the UK. We showed it in Guernsey, that's as near the UK as we've got so far. We're trying to get closer and closer.

Antoine: We're arriving!

Simon: We showed the film at the Dinard British film festival at the end of September, and we met some people there who were quite keen to try to show it in the UK. One of the problems we come up with in the UK is what they're calling "Brexit fatigue" over there, when we've tried to contact broadcasters and places where the film could be shown, a lot of people have just said, "We've had it up to here with Brexit, and just really want to move on and not another film about Brexit." We obviously think that our film is a little bit of a different way of looking at the whole debate, where we've tried to focus on the importance of listening to people you don't necessarily agree with, trying to bring people together, trying to keep links, instead of driving people apart.

Rob: Do you have a particular audience in mind?

Simon: I'm – anybody who wants to watch it, really. I mean I'd like people who voted "leave" to come and see it as much as people who voted "remain" and we certainly didn't set out to judge anybody.

Rob: Have you come across anybody who has changed their minds about Brexit?

Simon: No, I don't think so, no. Not because of our film.

Antoine: It's too late.

Simon: What was important for us was the idea that people need to keep talking to each other, you know. And, listen to each other, and not judge each other. One of the things that I've found most upsetting about what happened with the Brexit situation in the UK is actually is how it's ripped that country in half. Whether or not we leave the EU, that's not going to go away. If there's a second referendum and "remain" pulls it off, or if we leave on the 31st of October, or whatever, those divisions that have been brought out by Brexit are not going to go away on their own.

Rob: You chose two ports that have similarities in that they are fishing ports, but did you notice any important differences between the two communities?



Antoine: Yeah, the main difference is the fish industry in Guilvinec is all over the city, you know, everything is around that. And in Newlyn, it's in a little part of the city. You don't feel, it's not ...

Simon: It's not the main driving force of the local economy in Newlyn. Guilvinec, it really is. It's at the heart of their local economy, there's all sorts of industries that rely on fishing. One of the quotes we gave was that for every job at sea, you have four jobs on land, and that's also true in Newlyn, but you really see that in Guilvinec. If you took fishing out of, of that community, it would rip the heart out of it, and it's hugely important. In Newlyn. The fishing industry, as Antoine was saying, Newlyn is actually next to Penzance, which is a bigish tourist town in Cornwall, and I'm sure it's got other parts of the economy as well. I can imagine that listeners from Penzance are going to be spitting their cornflakes out, but the fishing industry within that part of Cornwall is clearly not at the heart of the local economy in the same way that is in Guilvinec, so that's the biggest difference. Beyond that, we saw a lot of similarities. The countryside, the landscapes, the seascapes are very, very similar obviously. The local languages Breton and Cornish are very similar, and obviously, one of the things we learned very quickly was that local beer in Cornwall is called "Korev" and here in Brittany it's called "Coreff," and it's just two different ways – I think that means "horse" in Breton, as far as I know. There's lots of places in, as you probably know, if you know Cornwall, that begin with the prefix "pen-" like we have in Brittany, so you could really sense a shared culture in the two parts of this Celtic world we visited. And, obviously when you get into the fishing communities, you very quickly realise that the people in those communities are fishermen or - women first and then they're perhaps Breton second, or Cornish second, then English third. So, we went out with a kind of the idea that actually these people had a lot in common—that was our intuition and that really was, that was borne out.

Rob: Was the experience of the two boats, the English boat and the French, the Breton boat, was it any different?

Simon: Yeah, I mean, the French boat had a French crew from Guilvinec. It was a five-man crew on the French boat, we ate together three times a day. The crew took turns in cooking for us. TAnd you could... there was a real sense of unity between the crew members and they also came from that part of the world. If they didn't live in Guilvinec, they lived in the next town. On the, on the UK boat, the skipper David lived in St. Ives, so not very far away from where we were fishing. The other crew members, there's a chap who came from up near Newcastle-Upon-Tyne, who drove down about 800 kilometers to work, and the two other crew members were from Latvia. They worked for three months a year on the boat and then they went home. And so, the atmosphere on board was very different. It was much more work-a-day. I'm not saying that, you know, clearly the French people worked very hard and were highly professional, but on the English boat the relationships between the people were pretty much work relationships. We only ate together once a day, apart from that you could go and make sandwiches in the kitchen when you wanted. That was the way they run their boat, so the sense of "friendship" -- I'm not sure necessarily the people on the French boat were "friends," as such -- but there was a much stronger link between them as people who all came from the same community, which wasn't exactly the same thing on the UK boat, so that was the biggest difference. Afterwards, everybody was extremely welcoming and kind on both boats, you know. We certainly felt very welcome.

And obviously on the English boat we had taken the decision to go to sea for eight days with somebody who, on principle, I quite seriously disagreed with, and that kind of worked out alright in the end, you



know. We talked and we got on. I'm not going to change David's mind and he's not going mine, but we talk, we still email each other now and again, you know and when David came over to Guilvinec – we suggested he come over – it was the first time he'd ever come to France or to Brittany, and I thought that he and Soazig, who's one of the other characters in the film who runs a French fishing company, they had a very frank and open discussion. But what struck me in the discussion they had was actually that they agreed on most things, certainly when it came to Europe. Neither is particularly happy about the way the European Union worked. The only difference they had was what's the best way to change it. And David had taken the decision that the only way we can change this thing is to get out and Soazig – and I guess it's my point of view too – is that best way to change Europe is to stay in and we change it all together. But that it needs changing, everybody agreed on that. That's why Brexit makes me sad, really, 'cause we could have worked this one out together.

Rob: Has your film been a springboard for your next project?

Simon: I don't know. We haven't got a next project yet, but we're quite interested in getting to know the people who live in this part of Brittany a bit better. So, that might be a next project. We've talked to the Kreiz-Breizh people, with pleasure.

Antoine: What happens for British people who live here, after Brexit will be ...

Simon: It's always a pleasure to come to this part of Brittany, anyway.

Rob: That's just the right way to finish interview. Simon Coss, Antoine Tracou, thank you very much. Cheers! Yec'hed mat!