

# Summer reading: This Sovereign Isle by Robert Tombs



*This Sovereign Isle. Britain In and Out of Europe*

By Robert Tombs. Allen Lane, 2021, 203 pp, £16.99.

Prof. Robert Tombs will be well known to many CIB members as co-editor of the Briefings for Britain website, a CIB affiliate organisation which allows academics and senior professionals to make the evidence-based case for Brexit. He is also Emeritus Professor of French History at the University of Cambridge, and the celebrated author of *The English and Their History*.

*This Sovereign Isle* explains the historical, economic and political origins of Brexit, putting it in the context of Britain's status as an island nation. While Tombs does not view our unique geography and history as making Brexit inevitable, he stresses that nor can it be fully understood without them.

The first few chapters gallop through Britain's long history with our continental neighbours, and provide a useful potted history of our almost half-century of EU membership. But perhaps of greatest interest are the later chapters, which tackle the unpleasant issues of why almost the entire British Establishment backed Remain, and how that Establishment then 'revolted' against the people's democratic decision, almost succeeding in overturning it entirely.

As with the Briefings for Britain website, Tombs states that one of his motivations for writing the book was, 'to reassure

people who voted Leave that their choice was reasonable and respectable.' While our members may not need such reassurance, Tombs' short, pacy book is a articulate reminder of just how hard we have had to fight since 2016 to hold our politicians to their word, and why we cannot afford to rest on our laurels any time soon.