

He'll get his deal!

Wouldn't it be great if David Cameron's charm offensive achieved nothing of any substance? That he came back empty-handed from his whistle-stop tours of Europe and announced that, in view of the intransigence of his fellow EU leaders, he had not secured any concessions on the UK's concerns about the EU and would therefore recommend we vote to leave? Recent media reports have highlighted some of the obstacles the Prime Minister is facing. Having already recognised that there is no wiggle-room as far as free movement of people is concerned – not that Cameron was ever really interested in securing a modification to this principle – Poland's Prime Minister has raised objections to any thought of stopping benefits for EU nationals resident in the UK or forcing them to wait four years before being eligible for benefits at all.

And now, according to the Guardian, Joschka Fischer, the former German foreign Minister, has warned the Prime Minister not to indulge in "wishful thinking" about German support for reform of the EU. He also pointed out that Chancellor Angela Merkel was preoccupied with Greece at the moment, adding that it would be an illusion to presume the UK could get special treatment because of its large contribution to the EU's budget.

While there are genuine grounds to believe that some EU heads of state and senior ministers are genuinely fed up with Mr Cameron and his demands for special treatment, it would be hopelessly naïve to hope that ultimately, they are going to get so sick of his demands that they will tell him to get lost and take his country with him. The Guardian article quotes an advisor to the German Chancellor, saying that she would consider it a failure of her chancellorship if the UK withdrew from the EU during her term of office.

So, however much frustration senior figures from the EU may

feel, Cameron will get his deal. He will come back from Germany, like Neville Chamberlain when he landed at Heston aerodrome in 1938, proclaiming "Peace for our time." He will wave a piece of paper that will be just as worthless as the Munich agreement, but it will sound impressive. Present indications are that EU states may agree on declarations to be added to the treaties, firstly acknowledging that the UK no longer aspires to the "ever closer union" specified in the treaty of Rome and secondly to modify the bald assertion that the EU's currency is the euro. Neither would reduce any existing EU powers over us at all. The supposedly eurosceptic press will rally behind the new deal and we'll all be encouraged to vote to stay in under these renegotiated terms which our plucky Prime Minister has fought tooth and nail to extract from his reluctant EU partners. It will all be choreography and spin, but there will be no substantial improvement of the UK's position, just like Harold Wilson's renegotiations of 1975 which did little more than secure a lower tariff for New Zealand butter. We can but hope our countrymen won't be deceived again.

As the old saying goes, fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me.

Photo by Steve Bowbrick 

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