

Report from Glasgow

Having travelled up to visit relatives who were not well, it was a surprise to find that the ORANGE WALK had been routed past our hotel, so we heard many, many flute and accordion bands, from Scotland, England and Northern Ireland – drums under the window – the rattle of the drums and the deep booming thud of the bass drums against the shrill flutes – on their way to Bellahouston Park where their leaders were to demand that the SNP Scottish government should STOP TRYING TO OVERTURN THE REFERENDUM which resulted in a vote for Scotland to remain part of the UK.

“The best-laid schemes of mice and men gang aft agley” – Robert Burns

I reflected how the Labour planners of devolution had congratulated themselves that their scheme was ingeniously clever. It gave so much power to the Scottish Parliament that it would surely take the wind from the nationalist sails and the electoral system was such that no single party would ever be able to command a majority. They were wrong on both counts!

Flute bands are a bit samey and I lost count of them. We had been told to expect twenty six but press reports said there were over sixty. Tunes varied from “When the Saints Go Marching In” and “Onward Christian Soldiers” to the more traditional Irish tunes, including the oft-repeated strains of “The Sash” with which I had become familiar on other occasions-

“Sure it’s old but it is beautiful and its colours they are fine.

It was worn at Derry, Aughrim, Enniskillen and the Boyne.

My father wore it when a youth in bygone days of yore,

And on the Twelfth I'll always wear the sash my father wore".

Many of the Scottish and English bands would be with their Northern Ireland brethren on that day. Brethren and sisters too. Ladies were playing in many of the bands. Lodges were often headed not just by a drum major but by a young person carrying an open bible, ahead of the lodge banner and other colours – a symbol of the sole claimed source of authority, freely available to all without the intervention of a church hierarchy.

It was a sweltering day. We decided to seek a quieter quarter of the town. If there was going to be any trouble, it would be when the lodges returned from their meeting in the park, having drunk deep. I believe there were four arrests that day which, considering the thousands of marchers and spectators, was insignificant.

So we adjourned to a quiet bar parlour where the television was showing the England v Sweden football match. Not being a sporting enthusiast, I had not watched a match from start to finish before. I found the skill quite gripping. The crowd in the pub was certainly not anti-English, cheering the English goals scored and getting equally excited when Sweden came close.

"It's never difficult to distinguish between a Scotsman with a grievance and a ray of sunshine" – P.G. Wodehouse

As a (small u) unionist I sometimes get fed up with the incessant aggressive whingeing tone of Scottish and other nationalists but find this site to be frequently businesslike and objective. The distance between the author, James Kelly, and his subject, Theresa May has lent an accurate perspective and sharp focus to the author's view. His latest post is reproduced in full.

"The Brexit Delusion over who calls the shots

I don't know about anyone else but I've been rubbing my eyes in disbelief over the last few hours. If you've been listening to the mainstream media's verdict about what was agreed a Chequers, you'd be forgiven for thinking that the fabled Brexit deal that Theresa May has been tasked with striking needed only to be a deal with the rest of her own cabinet, and not with the European Union. By that rather lower standard, what has just happened might be seen as a stunning personal triumph for the Prime Minister and a guarantee of a (somewhat) softer Brexit, exactly as Stormfront Life is claiming tonight. The agreement will only be subject to a few modifications if Brussels raises any objections, reveals The Guardian, which apparently believes that the EU has only a limited consultative role in the whole process.. It's the old imperial delusion – decisions are things that happen in London. The same commentators who complacently tell us that an indyref is a non-starter because Theresa May will say "no" also apparently believe that it's a mere point of trivia that the EU have already ruled out many elements of May's Brexit proposal. Back in the real world, without the EU's assent there is no deal at all, and that would mean the hardest of hard Brexits.

A rare injection of realism was provided by Sam Coates of The Times, who acknowledged that the EU may well still insist on a straight choice between a looser Canada-type deal and the Norway model that would entail the retention of the single market. But he argued that the Chequers proposal was about 80% of the way towards the Norway model, thus making it that much easier for the Prime Minister to jump towards Norway if forced to choose. What he didn't expand on is the consequence of such a decision. It's highly debatable whether the government really are now 80% of the way towards Norway, but even assuming for the sake of argument that they are, the reason they haven't travelled the remaining 20% of the distance is that doing so would completely breach the red lines on formally leaving the single market and ending freedom of

movement. Some may say that a Soft Brexit is inevitable because there is a natural parliamentary majority for it – but that majority is cross-party in nature and neither the government nor the Prime Minister are sustained in office on a cross-party basis. I find it inconceivable that a Tory government led by Theresa May could keep Britain in the European Economic Area or retain freedom of movement, even if they wanted to.

And if that proves correct, there are really only four alternatives –

1. The EU backs down and accepts British cherry-picking of the most desirable aspects of the single market and customs union. This is almost unimaginable because it would create a precedent that Eurosceptics in other countries would try to follow, thus risking the unravelling of the EU.
2. A Canada-type deal is negotiated after all. This is possible but it would require turning the super-tanker around, because it's clearly not close to what Theresa May has in mind at the moment. It would mean a very hard Brexit in any case.
3. There is no deal at all
4. The Prime Minister's failure to strike a deal (or a deal that is consistent with her red lines) triggers a political crisis that results in a change of leadership and/or a general election.

I can recall at least two previous occasions when we've been told that the PM has made a decisive move towards a soft Brexit, only for us to realise weeks later that there had been no change of any real significance. I fully expect the same to prove true on this occasion. "

(My emphasis because I remember exactly the same thing – Edward)