

Second referendum? Nein Danke!!

It is now almost ten months since the referendum on our membership of the EU. After a long wait, Mrs May has now triggered Article 50 and we are finally about to begin the exit negotiations.

While Brexit is likely to feature prominently in the newspapers and on radio and TV news bulletins in the next two years, how much interest the finer points of the negotiations will be to the majority of the population who are not political "anoraks" is debatable. The EU has never been popular in this country, but it has only ever set the adrenaline racing for a tiny minority of voters.

Of course, it took centre stage for the first half of last year, but now we have made our decision, it has retreated into the background as an issue for most people. Whichever way they voted, the result has been accepted and life carries on, focusing on areas of greater concern.

There are a few exceptions, it must be admitted. In Scotland, Nicola Sturgeon is doing all she can to stir up resentment to the Brexit vote in order to pursue her aim of a second independence referendum. In some parts of London, disagreements between leave and remain voters have left a legacy of unpleasantness and even in the Somerset village of Norton-sub-Hamdon, home of a former Lib Dem leader, some neighbourly relations are a bit strained.

But this hardly justifies a German politician urging us to hold a second referendum. The proposal from Katarina Barley, the general secretary of the German Socialist Party (SPD), therefore needs to be firmly rejected. She claimed that, "*when the referendum was held, nobody really knew what it would be*

about – not the British people, not even the political class....A lot of people wrongfully thought that Britain could get a deal like Switzerland or Norway without the inconveniences, without accepting the rulings of the European Court of Justice, without free movement of labour."

This is hardly an accurate summary of the referendum campaign. In reality, the leave campaign gave very little detail about exit strategy – indeed, Dominic Cummings of Vote.Leave decided quite deliberately not to adopt an exit plan. As for the aspiration to end free movement of people and the power of the European Court of Justice, the issue is not so much whether these things will happen but when. Theresa May has been quite specific in stating that Brexit means both of these things. The complexities of the divorce settlement may mean that we cannot distance ourselves from the EU to the degree we would like as quickly as we would like, but we'll get there in the end.

The leave campaign did have its weaknesses – no one could deny that. On the other hand, the remain campaign, with its cranked-up Project Fear and its reluctance to admit that the EU was a political project designed to build a superstate, was equally flawed. After such a bruising and mediocre campaign, it is hardly surprising that only 21% of those surveyed in a recent poll by YouGov want a second referendum. If the same pollsters had asked the speakers and activists who had taken part in last year's campaign, enthusiasm for a re-run would have been even lower.

So Ms Barley's claim that the mood in the UK is shifting towards a second referendum has little basis in reality, not to mention the prevalent attitude in Brussels being a desire to be rid of us ASAP. At the end of the day, we voted to remove ourselves from a project designed to emasculate our national political institutions. Forget last year's debate about the percentage of our laws which originate in Brussels. The reality is much more complicated and as the scale of the

Brexit negotiations becomes clear, it will also become increasingly clear exactly how much independence has been surrendered by 44 years of EU membership. We are getting out just in time – and by the time we actually go, there will be few regrets.