

The 'Athens of the North' will go south if it becomes an EU provincial capital

*CIB chairman **Edward Spalton** reflects that an independent Scotland would be forced to endure years of crippling austerity if it chose to rejoin the EU. Moreover, the EU elite has a history of treating its smaller member states with contempt.*

It was not just the classical style of architecture in the New Town which gave Edinburgh the proud title of the 'Athens of the North', but the remarkable flourishing of arts, philosophy, science and industry which occurred from the late eighteenth century onwards – a fair enough comparison with classical Athens in its days of glory.

But that glory of Athens itself departed long ago, most recently under the inhumanely severe treatment inflicted by the EU authorities which has shrunk the national economy sharply and forced the sale of Greek publicly owned assets to foreign countries. They have succeeded in balancing their books in a Germanic sort of way (in 2019 government revenue was 87.66 billion euro and spending 86.6 billion – a positive balance of 1.22%) – but only with savage cuts of jobs, pensions, and public services such as healthcare.

A retired Greek diplomat told me his pension had been reduced from 3,500 euros per month to 1,200 – and he is one of the lucky ones! A leading lawyer informed me that his wife, a civil servant with two doctorates and 18 years' service, now received a salary of 800 euros per month. A senior insurance manager related that he had been unemployed for three years. Social security benefits and health service entitlements cease

after one year. So he felt quite fortunate in getting a job at the same salary which his secretary was getting ten years ago. That was real austerity. I was in Athens in 2018 to address an independence rally in Constitution Square when these stories were related to me, and received similar accounts from people outside our political circle who also expressed bitter condemnation of Germany in particular as the source of their woes and plunderer of their economy.

The Scottish government's figures for 2019/20 (including oil) show a deficit of 8.6%, compared with an overall UK deficit of 2.6%. Heaven knows what the cost in austerity to Scotland would be to get its finances in order for EU membership to the satisfaction of the European Central Bank. Protocol 12 of the TFEU (Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union) stipulates that member states' 'planned or actual government deficit' must not exceed 3% of GDP. With the additional crushing costs of the COVID pandemic to meet, it would take years of crippling austerity for Scotland to be able to meet this criterion, inflicting untold suffering on the Scottish people.

Professor Anthony Coughlan of Trinity College Dublin describes the reality of the EU power grab in his article, 'The Treaty of Lisbon: A Constitutional Revolution by Stealth' which appears on pages 16–21 in our pamphlet *A House Divided*. It would be the same relationship with a member state parliament in Edinburgh as for the UK Parliament before we left the EU.

Slovakia has almost the same population as Scotland. The contempt in which the EU holds its smaller member states was demonstrated in 2012. **Despite** Slovakia having kept **to** all the rules when it joined the euro, the EU presented a massive demand for extra cash to prop up the currency. The Slovakian Deputy Prime Minister Richard Sulik objected.

Article 125 of the Treaty said that no country would ever be made liable for the debts of another. Yet here the money was

being demanded with menaces. The EU despatched their bully boy Martin Schulz, president of the EU parliament, to collect the dues, expecting Slovakia to be humbly grateful for the opportunity to display its 'solidarity' with the ever-beneficent EU. After all, Sulik only represented a small minority in a piffling little country, whereas Schulz laid claim to the unanimous support of all MEPs in the full majesty of the EU. The exchange, in which Schulz was unable to answer Sulik's points and resorted to personal insults, can be viewed in the following video (in German but with English subtitles).

The Slovak revolt lasted only a few days and there was no Barnett formula from the former Czechoslovakia to top up Slovakia's treasury! The contemptuous attitude the EU displayed to a small nation like Slovakia is exactly what Scotland could expect once embroiled within the EU.

Having been in favour of British independence from the European Project since 1972, I can understand why Scottish nationalists might wish to run their own show – although, with family on both sides of the border, I would rather they didn't. But I cannot for the life of me understand why they should wish to have the EU running it for them. What is the attraction of subjection to the EU, which aims for the permanent extinction of independence in its member states? The SNP and other parties with similar objectives really ought to call themselves Eunionists – certainly not nationalists.