

Independence Thirst

"Injustice in the end produces independence" Voltaire

A new era beckons: An Independent Wales in Britain

DESPITE the high stakes of Brexit and all its associated risks, these are undoubtedly exciting times in Wales.

Whatever your views on last year's Referendum, it is undeniable that the result has galvanised Wales in a way that has not been seen for many, many years. It could even be ventured that the present atmosphere is akin to that sense of national awakening which promised so much at one stage during the late 1960ies.

Plaid Cymru's annual conference in Galeri over the weekend seemed more animated than usual, featuring an almost evangelistic address from Adam Price invoking the Israelites' journey from captivity in Egypt to the freedom of Canaan, and a rousing television interview with Dr Dai Lloyd leaving a browbeaten BBC journalist in no doubt whatsoever that Plaid would now be more of an out and out nationalist party.

Then there was Neil McEvoy's fringe event which attracted 120 people to the Celtic Hotel to hear his barely-veiled pitch for the leadership of the party, in the form of his "2020 Vision" declaration. It was an undoubted coup for McEvoy to attract such a gathering, and although his presentation of a dream of a Sovereign Wales might have been slightly underwhelming following the whole hype created beforehand, he certainly has a dedicated and growing following within the party.

Time alone will tell of course whether he will have the opportunity to fully develop his vision, seeing that he is currently suspended from the Plaid Cymru group in Y Senedd, and is considered almost a person non grata by several key members of that group.

Then we have the growing YES CYMRU movement which seems to be establishing new groups on almost a weekly basis, dedicated to taking the message about Welsh Independence directly to the people of Wales in their own communities, beyond the usual party political boundaries.

And if that was not enough, in two weeks time, a meeting has been called in Aberystwyth with the aim of establishing a new national party to adopt an unashamedly Wales First/Pro Wales approach. Apparently the original venue has now been changed to accommodate the substantial numbers expected to turn up.

We will have to wait to see how all of the above pans out and whether indeed the disparate groups can work together in any shape or form, or whether they prove to be another manifestation of that damning Welsh characteristic, so evident in our national history, of division and disunity.

Extract From 'cymro2020.co.uk'. October 23rd 2017.

Whatever happens, surely the above groupings have to acknowledge that we are now in completely uncharted political territory and that their pitch to Welsh voters and citizens from now on has to reflect this new world we find ourselves in.

For better or worse, the Brexit decision has been taken and there can be no doubt that the UK is now leaving the European Union. Indeed, the most likely outcome is that the UK Government will crash out of the EU over the next few months without a formal deal in place

WTO tariffs will probably be in put in place , at least temporarily, which will obviously hurt the Welsh export economy in the short run. But despite that initial shock to the system, a new emphasis on developing a self-sufficient internal market is likely to emerge to take up any slack both within Wales itself, and the rest of these isles as well.

The Welsh National Movement has to adjust itself quickly to this new reality and show an unprecedented amount of agility and imagination to deal with this momentous change. I would argue that it needs to quickly adopt a fresh approach which can acknowledge this new state of affairs and turn it to Wales's advantage.

An Independent Wales in Britain could be the way to both acknowledge this new reality and transform it.

Such a slogan would accept that the UK has taken a democratic decision to leave the European Union, but it would also provide a clever twist on the popular "Take Back Control" mantra in order to ensure that Wales can truly flourish in what are sure to be very challenging and trying economic and social circumstances post Brexit.

Many nationalists will be aghast at such an argument of course. Such people have invested everything in their view of the European Union as a benign, philanthropic and a force for good on the continent .

Unfortunately, wearing those rose-tinted spectacles has meant that many have failed to see that the EU is in fact a deeply anti-democratic institution which favours a parasitic Banking Sector and Big Corporations above all else. Furthermore, it is, and has been for many years, an Empire-building project with the clear intention of deleting national identities in favour of one European state run by technocrats. History tells us to be deeply sceptical of such Empires and its leaders.

And of course, we have just witnessed the most glaring example yet of the democratic deficit which lies at the cold heart of the European Union.

The debacle of the Catalunya Independence Referendum where the EU failed to condemn Spanish violence against people merely exercising their democratic right to choose their own national future was quite simply sickening. The Emperor truly now has no clothes.

The national movement in Wales has to see that this is a historic waking up moment for people all over Europe.

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It has to turn its horizons back home- to ensure that Wales can now achieve Independence within Britain.

And there is a clear and successful alternative European model which it could seek to emulate, i.e a Scandinavian Model for Wales within Britain. In Scandinavia, Sweden, Denmark and Norway share a peninsula and a shared culture to some extent- but they they are also all independent countries which then opt to co-operate with each other in some respects.

The Scandinavian model of economic dynamism and social well-being underpinned by a strong sense of national identity provides a clear path for Wales to follow post Brexit.

Independence has been a word that has frightened too many people for too many years in Wales since it has appeared to convey a sense of withdrawal, a drawing up of the bridges, and a wilful turning away into some sort of irrelevant isolation.

Independence for Wales in Britain however can be a way of finally overcoming these fears and turning it instead into a transformational project which can inspire the people of Wales to imagine a better future for themselves, their families and their communities..

Such a concept would acknowledge the cultural and social affiliations that people in Wales feel with people in England and Scotland on several levels, be that through historic events, media, popular music, travel or family ties.

Yes, of course Wales will remain a proud European nation with many links to the continent. But the reality is that for many people in Wales, the links with other parts of mainland Britain are more immediate and more compelling.

The notion of Welsh Independence in Britain could relate the following narrative to the people of Wales: Look, we can be an independent nation, running our country according to our own Welsh values and our traditional loyalties to language, land and people- but we can also choose to have voluntary ties with people in England and Scotland and beyond as well.

And Independence in Britain would also resonate on a deeper cultural and historic level to boot. After all, the name "Prydain" has always stirred the Welsh soul across the passage of time. Brythoneg, the precursor of Welsh, was the original language of Britain, and Welsh poetry all along the centuries has always simultaneously bemoaned the loss of Prydain and prophesized the return of Prydain into Welsh hands. The Welsh name "Lloegr" for England, (which quite literally means the "Lost Lands",) shows how this idea has been a central motif in Welsh thought for at least 1,500 years.

The epic poem "Armes Prydain", written in the 10th century urged the Welsh nation to unite under the leadership of Cadwaladr in the north and Cynan in the south to resist the Saxon advance to preserve the idea of Prydain. The poem reaches a stirring conclusion by stating " Yna y gosodant wr a elwir Owain yn frenin ar ynys y Brythoniaid"(Then they will set a man named Owain as king on the isle of the britons). And

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Y Mab Darogan himself, Owain Glyndwr also paid homage to this traditional view with his Tripartite Agreement in 1405 with Edmund Mortimer and Thomas Percy, where a much extended Wales(reaching to Six Oaks, within 10 miles of Birmingham) would co-exist with two other kingdoms within Prydain.

One of the advantages of Brexit(and least acknowledged so far) is the fact that England in due course will be forced at long last to forego its imperial delusions, and face up to the fact that it is a medium-sized European nation sharing this island with two other nations. It will also need to address the long-neglected truth that it is completely divided nation, with its constituent parts feeling totally at odds with each other.

In this eventual national reckoning, who can say what will eventually emerge. Perhaps England's ancient kingdoms such as Northumbria, Wessex and Mercia could re-appear in a modern guise. Would some parts of England which adjoin the border of Wales actually decide that a Welsh national vision of a future based on the power of language, land and people would be preferable to an England still in thrall to the City of London? Could Glyndwr's dream of an Extended Wales even be fulfilled to some extent in the future that we are now beginning to shape?

History, culture and political reality have now come together to offer the Welsh National Movement a golden opportunity in the wake of Brexit. Let's not waste it.