
BREXIT DIARIES 18: MOVING VANS, HYPOCRISY AND CHEEKY RUSSIAN TWEETS

-

21.11.2017

Deutsche Welle (20 November 2017)

Brexit hasn't even happened and already Brussels is dividing up the post-divorce spoils. Meanwhile, hypocrisy remains rampant in British politics and Russia sends its love to Theresa May.

Going, going, gone

It was the first act of sharing the spoils of Brexit. And competition was fierce for the relocation of the European Medicine Agency (EMA) and the European Banking Authority (EBA). Almost everybody who is somebody in Europe put in their bid, from Athens to Budapest, from Milan to Paris. In order to guarantee a fair voting system, it had been made extremely complicated, likened to the Eurovision song contest. And similar to this show of pop music mediocrity horse trading, emerging voting blocks of countries made the day and Germany was left on the outside looking in.

Amsterdam won the EMA honors, while Paris landed the EBA. Congratulations.

But the theatrics also sent a message to London: Sorry, but even if Britain changes its mind about Brexit, what's gone is gone. The moving vans will roll on.

Hypocrisy

Was Davis trying to be funny in Berlin?

Britain's Brexit minister, David Davis, was invited to Berlin to talk about his country's looming divorce from European Union. And you have to admire his sheer chutzpah: He admonished his audience, the German government and the EU at large, saying they should not put "politics above prosperity" when it comes to Brexit.

And how would Davis himself describe Brexit?!

A natural disaster? An act of god? On the continent, we call it politics.

Mutineers in the stocks

The Telegraph newspaper undertook the honorable task of putting in the stocks the so-called mutineer Tory MPs who dared to go against the party line. They don't agree with the last minute amendment in the Brexit bill, which fixes the exact date and time of the UK's exit from the EU and makes it legally binding. What if, they ask, we need a few days or weeks longer to come to an agreement with Brussels?

Or as Ken Clarke, leading Europhile in the Tory party, said: "I ask the government to reconsider silly amendments that were included because they got a good article in The Telegraph but might eventually actually do harm."

The Telegraph pulled no punches with the Brexit 'mutineer' Torrie MPs

After their appearance on the front page of the newspaper, several members of the so-called mutineers received serious threats. MP Anna Soubry complained it "was a blatant piece of bullying." She had at least five threatening tweets referred to the police. But wasn't that the point of being put in the stocks? People are free to throw stuff at you.

From Russia with love

In the Russian Foreign Ministry they were clearly having fun with Theresa May's speech at the Mansion House dinner. "We know what you are doing," she had said at the ceremonial event, looking eastward, "and you will not succeed." The British prime minister was referring to a flood of tweets, sent by Russian bots and trolls, during the days of the Brexit referendum. Tweets which were promoting the joys of voting yes and slamming the EU. But in Moscow they also know what May is doing, showing their total awareness of the prime minister's agenda.

May's speech left the Russian Foreign Ministry laughing

Russia should not underestimate "the commitment of Western nations to the alliances that bind us," May had gone on to explain. Ouch, who wrote that speech? Was she not supporting Brexit and therefore actively unbinding one of Britain's most important alliances? Logic can be a difficult thing in politics.

More hypocrisy

John Redwood is a backbencher in Westminster, but one who as a Brexiteer has risen to relative prominence. Redwood mainlines Brexit. And he wants the hard stuff: a no-deal, no-holds-barred, crash-out Brexit. Even Brexit minister Davis qualifies the no-deal option as a negotiating tool. Redwood, however, fights for the real thing, the mother of all cliff edges. Only there lies happiness for a true Brit.

Redwood was slammed for his Brexit hypocrisy

But the parliamentarian has a side job where he earns 180,000 pounds (££££££ \$240,000) as chief global strategist for investment firm Charles Stanley. And in that capacity he wrote an article in the Financial Times warning investors to "look further afield" and not put their money into the UK because of looming insecurities.

This riled Forbes columnist Frances Coppola. "To me, this smacks of disaster capitalism," she wrote. "Engineer a crash while ensuring that your own interests are protected, then clean up when it hits." The Center for Economic Performance has just made the calculation that the average British family already loses 404 pounds a year through Brexit preparations.

Grimsby

Grimsby is a scruffy little harbor town on the east coast of the UK. It's no tourist destination and has been poor for decades. The only viable industry is fishing and the processing of seafood. The

last big local factory employs 5,000 people. Yet citizens felt in the Brexit referendum that they did not profit from Britain's membership in the EU and the town voted 70 percent percent in favor of leaving the bloc.

It seems Grimsby residents feel different about Brexit than they did on referendum day

Now, however, recent explanations about the future of Britain's relationship with Europe have led to second thoughts. Grimsby representatives began lobbying MPs in Westminster in order to gain the exceptional status of a free trade port after Brexit. All of a sudden they seem scared of new tariff barriers, customs checks and delays because they import 90 of their fish from Europe. They also worry about losing the 20 percent of Europeans who make up their work force. Hindsight is a beautiful thing.

Kaynak/Source: