
BREXIT DIARIES 23: ONWARD AND UPWARDS 2018

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09.01.2018

Deutsche Welle (9 January 2018)

What a start to the new year for Michel Barnier. The EU chief negotiator must view his meeting with the self-styled voice of Brexit as penance for his earthly sins. Nigel Farage insists that he speaks for 17.4 million Brexit voters and complains they are not being heard. The man totally lacks a sense of irony. Barnier is meeting with the UK government all the time, stressed his advisor Stefaan de Ryck beforehand, and he also suggested that Farage should "tone it down.

No such luck, sadly. After his talk with the French diplomat, Farage invited the press to his favorite Brussels pub "The old Hack for interviews. However, the majority of real-life hacks found the idea of sharing pints with Nigel quite early in the morning a bit disturbing. Questions were answered in front of the EU Commission building instead.

Barnier still did "not get it why a majority in Britain voted for Brexit, explained Farage, and demanded a better deal on UK services, particularly financial services from Brussels. Otherwise, Great Britain would leave the EU on WTO terms. That is a dire threat, like cutting off your nose to spite your face. Because this would hurt the British economy more than anybody else's.

It seems it's Farage who does "not get a number of things here. Michel Barnier's task is to protect European interests in the negotiations with Britain, not to understand or alleviate the grievances of Brexiteers. And by the way: Who is Nigel Farage? A man who has tried five times to get elected into British Parliament □ unsuccessfully. Last time we looked, he was just an ordinary Member of the EP in Brussels, one of 751.

Signed, sealed and soon to be delivered

Theresa May's cabinet reshuffle came more as a whimper than a bang. And the big beasts of Brexit are all still in place, the Prime Minister does not dare to rock the boat. Strong and stable does it, even though May modestly does not make claims to genius.

In her New Year's message, she was aiming at an upbeat tone. Even though 2017 had held some challenges □ the understatement of the year □ good progress was being made in negotiations with Brussels and 2018 would bring "renewed confidence and pride. The New Year would be about the Government to get on "and deliver a good Brexit" because this was what a majority of people wanted.

There clearly was a majority in 2015, whether it's still there in 2018 is unclear. But Theresa May

will not allow for the public to change its mind or have another say. And what on earth is a "good Brexit? Something like a good hangover or a good toothache? What can be good about cutting yourself off from your main trading partners, alienating your neighbors and damaging your international standing?

What kind of Brexit May wants is as unclear on January 1st, 2018 as it was a year ago. But she has tied her own political survival to some sort of outcome because she insists it has been signed, sealed and will be delivered.

By the way, rumor has it the PM wants to appoint a minister for a no-agreement crash-Brexit in order to impress Brussels with the sincerity of her intentions. A job that seems tailor-made for Nigel Farage.

Shoot the Messenger

Tony Blair is doing it again. The most hated man in British politics raises his voice against Brexit and for a second referendum. He also says that the outcome of the negotiations with the EU will not satisfy those who voted for it. Blair clearly has a point and he formulates it well. What a pity that he totally lacks street credibility in Britain.

After the Iraq war and the lies that went with it Blair is burnt. Even though he was a more astute politician than his successor David Cameron and would not have misjudged the Brexit referendum like he did. The former Labor PM may still believe in his power of political persuasion, but Blair is the messenger who will be shot on arrival. Clearly, the Remainers need a spokesperson, a political operator to give them focus and traction. But in order to save Britain from Brexit, Tony Blair is sadly the wrong man at the wrong time.

Blue is the new black

After Brexit, there will be new British passports the Prime Minister announced shortly before Christmas. They will be blue according to tradition and are to be regarded as an "expression of our independence and sovereignty, symbolizing our citizenship as a proud, great nation", said Theresa May. Everybody rise and join in the national anthem.

Of course symbols matter. And to reject the current nasty shade of European red and bring back the good old British passport in Royal blue was the desired feel-good message for the holiday season. Whose heart would not beat faster, when presenting their British travel document embossed in gold with a pair of British Lions?

Take back control in blue!

But the EP Brexit coordinator pulled the plug on pride and greatness. Guy Verhofstadt explained, that there was, in fact, no EU law to determine the color of passports. The UK could always have had theirs in purple, pink or blue like in Croatia, whatever. Ouch.

And then some spoilsports pulled their old British passports out of the drawer and thought the blue

was looking rather dark, a bit like black almost. In a certain light, they were definitely a very dark blue. With blackish tinges when held under a lamp. Is it possible, that the old British passports were simply black? But to admit that would be sacrilege and clearly blue is the new black.

Kaynak/Source: