



Theodore Dalrymple **Fascists in Kilts**

The Scottish Nationalist Party could hold the balance of power in the next British Parliament.

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Britain is close to becoming ungovernable. Its first-past-the-post electoral system—the winner in each parliamentary constituency is the candidate who receives the most votes, irrespective of the proportion of votes cast in his favor—preserved the stability of the country when only two political parties were in serious contention. But now that this is no longer the case, there is a serious risk that little more than 4 percent of the adult population could determine the policies of the next government.

According to polls, the Scottish Nationalist Party (SNP) will win 50 seats in the next Parliament. Polls can be wrong, of course, as were those that preceded Scotland's recent independence referendum. But it is at least highly probable that the Nationalists will hold the balance of power in the new parliament and will enter into some kind of coalition with the Labour Party, than which it is considerably more left-wing. As a quid pro quo for making a Labour government possible, the SNP will demand that Britain abandon its nuclear weapons and put an end to government "austerity"—that is, the policy of reducing the budget deficit from 10 percent of GDP to 5 percent, which has taken seven years to accomplish. If this is what counts as austerity, it's easy to guess what the SNP's economic policy amounts to: raising the deficit back to 10 percent of GDP.

Labour will face a dilemma: either of not governing, or of governing with policies that would prove disastrous for Britain's fragile, debt-ridden, house-of-cards economy. The British live by the grace and favor of foreign lenders content to buy the country's bonds at low interest rates, but lenders' confidence that Britain is a relatively safe haven could easily change. The country would then have to earn its current standard of living, which it is in poor shape to do; and a sharp decline could lead to social unrest, leading to a further collapse of confidence.

Under the circumstances, independence for Scotland might be England's best option. It would not come without difficulties, however: last time round, for example, the Scottish Nationalists—their politicians living in an asset-only world in order to convince the electorate how much better off it would be after independence—said that they would refuse to honour Scotland's share of the country's liabilities. Their policies are highly statist or would be until harsh reality forced a change. All private companies would operate, in effect, by license from the government. Another problem for Scotland would be the lack of an effective opposition. The Nationalists would hold all the levers of political power, including powers of indoctrination; and even before the last referendum, according to my Scots friends and acquaintances, an atmosphere of mild intimidation prevailed, such that those who opposed independence felt it better not to voice their opposition too loudly, however deeply they felt.

Curiously enough, the Nationalists are firmly in favor of the European Union, an entity dedicated to extinguishing national sovereignty in Europe, and the formation of a super state with few effective checks on the politico-administrative elite. (The European Union's founders were quite explicit about this goal back in the forties and fifties.) It is difficult, then, not to conclude that the real aim of the Nationalists, whether or not they fully acknowledge it, is increased access of the Scottish political

class to the European politico-administrative elite.

In economics, the Nationalists are socialist, or at least corporatist; in politics, their rhetoric is nationalist. They are, in fact, national socialists. Fascism is returning to Europe, though—for now—with a much less aggressive, brutal face.

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