

Scotland is Europe's new Balkans - Not wanted on EU voyage.

Europe's most virulent outbreak of tribalism is nowadays evident in Scotland's determination to quit the United Kingdom and team up with the EU.

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The problem is that the EU has no intention of participating in this particular version of the Highland Fling.



Scotland's main economic dowry of whisky is now almost entirely owned outside Scotland. Its two banks, the Bank of Scotland and the Royal Bank of Scotland are bankrupt and nationalised and controlled from London, writes our European correspondent.

Its oil and oil services industry is badly depleted. That leaves salmon. Here Scotland indeed holds a global trade asset. Its commercial fish farming has added to instead of depleting its tourist value.

Then there is of course tourism itself and here again Scotland possesses a unique asset in that its hospitality is far more competitive and generous than anything south of the border.

The reason that the EU is not courting Scotland is that Scotland is regarded as a potential Greece whose insoluble finances have been mercifully camouflaged by the near-hysterical Project Fear attendant upon Brexit and the subsequent panic-attack entirely generated within London and its elites.

Scotland's romantic attachment to near-Europe began in Elizabethan times with a focus on France.

It is here one might imagine that Scots in the years since the UK joined the EU might have accomplished something that proved too much for their English neighbours. Namely, to learn French. In the event Scotland put its educational thrust behind reviving Gaelic which is now pronounced as in "garlic."

So instead of immersion courses concentrating on a living language one encounters in the Western Isles especially eccentric communes devoted to re-instilling a long-forgotten language. At least French president Francois Hollande has stalled in giving the green light to France's 75 nascent languages.

The failure of Scotland to institute its own engine block-grade production engineering industry began to make itself obvious in the middle of the last century and this concern intensified as Asian ship builders took over from the Clyde.

As recently as 20 years ago there was a strong hope that Silicon Glen would become a fixture in the IT sector. In the event and through lack of scale it too became submerged, as did Finland's and Canada's.

All this is not apparent to anyone passing through Scotland. To the question of how exactly Scotland will make its way in the world as a country in its own right one receives the breezy reply that whisky and salmon will do the trick.

The country which provided the New World with its doctors, engineers, and educationalists has become Europe's current version of such vintage, yet currently quiescent, nationalistic trouble spots as Catalonia, the Balkans, and the Basque region.

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