

1980s. "Independent" Scotland and the Way to European Union

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Abstract: The article addresses Scotland policy in 1980s in the context of its European aspects. Formation of all-European political and economic institutions after World War II had to engage accelerating processes in Scotland political system. After obvious growth of national movement in 1970s and abrupt decrease within next decade because of many reasons the opposition in Scottish political culture addressed European Union, which to a great extent liked non-conservative circles of British elite.

Key words: EU • Scottish National Party • Conservative Party of Great Britain • Labour Party of Great Britain
National identity • increase in life level • Independence • Membership in EU

INTRODUCTION

One of the conclusions made by a group of authors - Elis Brown, David MacCrown and Lindsey Patterson - in their work "Politics and society in Scotland" was an idea that advantages of Scotland perceived by European Union in the end of 80s-beginning of 90s, among other things, is a cultural shift, which was unprecedented for all history of Anglo-Scotland Union. From now and then London, which presented the whole England ceased to look as the only and direct source of progressive ideas - its place was taken by Europe. The Scotland itself just forgot that many years ago it was independent victorious nation. By now it looked more as a victim, producing nothing for itself and needing more powerful patron - England or Europe [1]. Thus, naming themselves "Europeans" in the end of XX century the Scots repeated to some extent, though in a bit modernized form, the events taking place several centuries ago when they were also fed up with Britainism and for about 2 centuries - from XVII to the middle of XX centuries had to get used to identify themselves as "British" [2]. In addition, in Great Britain because of very specific achievements the attitude to European Union was changing: regions which disapproved membership of Great Britain in European Union in 1975 (at the Referendum) started to treat European structures more "warmly", while rich regions in the South of England

which were eager to join European Union in 1975 became skeptical on this issue. This can be explained by the fact that Scotland which was for 300 years a member of economic and political union was quite happy with the idea of participation in multi-national organization and up to some period did not think about its independence, but apart from other parts of the United Kingdom which did not regard the loss of sovereignty as big threat, did not believe that the Union is the only solution [3].

Such opinion seems rather interesting for detailed examination because new wave of nationalistic movement in Scotland which took place in the end of 1960-70ss which was the effect of the by-elections in Hamilton, discovery of oil fields near Scotland coast in the North Sea in 1969 and the general elections of 1974, a campaign in support of Scotland parliament (which was an Assembly then) resulted in failure to adopt Scotland Act of 1978. After stormy decade Scottish National Party ceased its active political actions-and renewed its activity only in the middle of 90s when Tory's reign was finished and Labour came into power. However nationalists' interests were supported in 1980s by European events - Euro Commission often conflicted with Tory government on many aspects-women's life conditions, rights of the workers, social sphere expenditure [4] which in its turn led to opinion that the political figures in Scotland with left-centrist views will find no difficulties in coalition with Euro Commissioners.

Indeed, Scotland for the whole after-war-period was supporting the idea about welfare state sown by the first after-war Labour governments. In the sphere of economy the elimination of unemployment was a key task. Its level was changing and this was aggressively perceived by the population and became the key problem for many governments during all XX century. There was no single one reason for these events, by the way, in different years number of unemployed and employees in different economic sectors was always different. For example, if in metallurgy and heavy equipment building since the end of 1940s till the beginning of 1990s the number of employees changed from 300 000 (high, 1961) to 150 000 (low, 1990), but in comparison with the 1st half of the century this value was almost the same, in agriculture the decrease was quite obvious: from about 200 000 in the beginning of 1950s to 50 000 in 1990s though in the 1900 this value reached 250 000 employees [5].

Life of the Scots was quickly changing under impact of new moral: improvement of housing conditions when over-crowded in the beginning of 1950s sector of one- and two-room apartments where ordinary Scottish family dwelled was reduced for 18% in 1960s [6], in other words, because of state policy in the sphere of housing construction the area of flats was enlarged.

The conditions of women's life were also improved especially in regard to domestic needs-introduction of new kitchen appliances and everyday devices after which permanent meetings of Scottish women in the yards and laundries which sometimes lasted for the whole day were finished all together. By the way, the attitude to work about the house was changing during the century - from purely woman business in 1950s to the vague concept of "gender exchangeability" in the end of 1990s when there was understanding that all house work can be done both by man and woman. Having digested the ideas of tolerance, feminism, the men started to perform a part of house duties by themselves allowing women to enter into professions. This was described in a chapter the book of Linn Abrams and Linda Fleming "From Scullery to Conservatory: Everyday Life in the Scottish Home", where history of Scotland in XX century was depicted.

In 1946 Labourist Government managed to pass through the Parliament the law about creation of National Health Service. Medical aid for all social circles was free of charge, the unified system for this sphere management was created. All this was joyfully supported by the public - though with a little dissatisfaction from doctors' side who wanted to keep private practice. Finally Health Care System in Great Britain became the best in Europe [7].

Improvement of life level, increase in number of working places facilitated population growth. C.G. Brown gives the following facts: from 4 841 241 in 1940 to 5 081 270 in 1990s [8]. Though the history showed that Labourists were mistaken when thought that settlement of things after 1945 and meaningful shifts in the most important aspects of Scots' life will immediately reinforce their Party in Scotland [9] all said above only proved the fact that Scotland remained socially-oriented for the whole second part of XX century.

This led to the pinion that European Union mainly supported left and centrist political figures in Scotland. All non-conservative parties believed that Scotland acting as independent state or autonomy could easily find its supporters in Europe and in such a way increase its influence. In these conditions Tory even considered such radical variant at which Scotland would still be under their control - if not in the framework of UK then as a part of European Union [10].

Thus, the main topic of political debates in the end of 1980s-beginning of 1990s was relations between Great Britain and Europe. Scottish National Party keeping strained relations with Westminster wanted to join European Union as fully-authorized partner. As it was mentioned earlier European Union was seen by the Scots as a new formation able to substitute boring and to some extent depressing union with England. They expected huge potential from trade and the state external security. Labour and Liberals also supported union with EU. The basic principle of European Union-subsidiary principle - when decisions must be made on extra-low level if its results are most efficient-has drawn their attention. Governments of M. Thatcher and later of J. Major regarded such promises as advantages of central power over European Commission but their arguments were soon re-phrased by the supporters of Scottish Parliament in favor of de-centralization within the Great Britain itself [11].

It has become obvious that for all political stakeholders of Great Britain in 80s membership in European Union, in spite of special conditions, was viewed as relatively good measure which led to signing of Single European Act in 1987 [12]. Actually it solved many specific and real problems of ordinary Scots: Thatcher governments facilitated significant investments into Scotland from European Fund of Regional Development. These investments were used for implementation of such projects as A9 highway from Perth to Inverness or the series of bridges on the same road to the north of Inverness which was earlier financed by British government [13].

However in spite of such rosy impression we have to ask: was the status of independent Scotland in which SNP wanted to bring its country into European Union so needed by European Union as it was depicted by the nationalists? Yes, for the Scots it will be much easier than for other nations to realize themselves as a part of Unified multi-national Europe. Yes, they have already had historical experience in joining a more powerful neighbor. Yes, the spheres of their political economic and cultural life were once influenced and even by now are under the control of common center of some kind. But did Europe, where separatist moods appeared rather often, really want to get a precedent about which nobody knew how it can be used in future? Here a very handy argument appears that Scotland looked as very attractive partner for European Union but only in terms of the union with Great Britain. There were strong chances that independent Scotland will face difficulties in gradual joining European Union as fully-authorized member as a state-successor if it will be not refused in membership at all [14]. In this situation “games” of European Union with non-conservative parties of Great Britain during 1980-1990s seem as very well-planned political scheme main principle of which is the slogan: “Independence is good, only not within European Union”.

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