

Brexit, England's Independence Day

Today, 24th June, I had to visit one of the poorest towns in urban England. It is a yearly trip I always slightly dread. This once busy little market town which was once also part of the thriving centre of the steel industry now resembles one of those Wild West scenes, where, when a stranger comes to town, the people all vanish. It's a town you wouldn't want to visit, or even want to drive through. The shops are boarded up. Litter is strewn across the streets. The buildings are grey, damp and crumbling, and dark hooded figures lurk in the side streets. Who they might be you just cannot tell. It is a world away from the place I once knew.

However, today was different. The sun was shining, the air felt fresher, and somehow this crumbling little town just didn't feel so neglected.

After pulling up at the front of the shop I was visiting, the owner came to quickly unlock the door to let me in. In recent years she has had to lock the door to stop people blatantly walking in and openly stealing her goods. There are no local policemen any more casually walking our streets, once known as the friendly local bobby. You knew their name back then, you saw them daily, and they were well respected. Local councils, once the servant of the people who had voted them in, have slowly and strangely morphed into our new law enforcers. We are answerable to them.

I made a quick dash.....

Inside, were some of the local stalwarts of the community. The ones who never left. They are what you would affectionately call the salt of the earth. They have character. In this particular part of the country they say it as it is. It

quickly transpired that the dreaded trip would turn into a conversation of optimism and enthusiasm instead of the usual dark complaints. Here, the place was buzzing with the good news that Brexit had won. The UK was leaving the EU.

One of the men in the shop was an elderly Asian man. He was so excited. "Let's make Britain great again he enthused. I was born and bred here and I want my country back" I wanted to hug him.

There was another man with his young son, and he had a great big beaming smile across his face and sparkling eyes. He looked alive. He couldn't believe, just like me, that the news would be so positive. He was hoping there would be more jobs for British workers, more respect for skilled tradesmen, and more controlled restrictions on immigration.

It had been a long time since I had heard such enthusiasm.

Suddenly, you could sense a genuine feeling of encouragement and independence, yet also a sense of belonging and family, as we all stood there amidst the ruins of the landscape.

For me, there was a restored sense of reassurance as you came to realize that the majority of British people had woken up and wanted to choose their own destiny above the intimidation of a political establishment who they didn't even know. They had been down, but not out. The people had spoken.

In the run up to the referendum, negative propaganda had been consistently used, instead of fact, to instigate fear towards the electorate.

One example was of that surrounding the sad murder and death of MP Jo Cox who was recently killed on a Leeds street by a man with mental health problems. Hailed as a 'hate crime' by some of the media, and a crime that should be fought against, it was apparent that it was being covertly aimed against people who wanted to leave the EU, in relation to Jo Cox's

political stance on remaining.

It was very unfortunate that the majority of people who were genuinely sad and shocked by this crime were targeted, for they are also some of the ones who live amidst the reality of the streets where you have to watch your back every day, and where violence and crime are prevalent on a daily basis. They too desperately want hatred to stop. They have seen first hand what happens when your life is controlled by a force you cannot see, protect yourself from, or put a name to.

The Great Divide

In terms of discussing politics, the British can sometimes be quite reserved and secretive. We rarely ask each other who the other is voting for. A bit like religion, it is not the done thing.

But the battle between Brexit and Remain has been different, and people have felt more convicted to vote in this referendum. Never before have I ever heard of so many people passionately and openly put their own personal point across.

At every available opportunity people have been vehemently encouraging each other to either stay or leave the EU, with an emphasis on those who wanted to stay making the most lengthy and I have to say, patronizing of statements, in my own particular view.

Expert opinions abounded from the Remain campaign. Their website featured statements from such people as Stephen Hawking, Richard Branson and Sir Allan Sugar, together with opinions from 150 top scientists and 300 historians. There were also comments from the Director of Europol and numerous world leaders. They included Barrack Obama, Angela Merkel, and my favourite, Bill Clinton.

And who can forget the apparent two finger salute and the abuse that Bob Geldof made to fishermen who were campaigning

for Brexit on the River Thames.

In the aftermath of the results they have also been the ones who have immediately and quite openly visibly shown their disappointment and their disbelief. There is a genuine shock wave amongst those who wanted to remain in the EU, together with a genuine surprise from Brexit supporters, that the British voting system actually reflected what people really wanted. Euro scepticism had appeared to lead to scepticism in general that democracy still existed.

Where does the UK go from here?

My own view is that the advocates of remaining in the EU will not quietly go away. It will not end here. Anyone who personally knows what the escape for freedom is internally like will undoubtedly know that in the aftermath of the escape, there will sometimes come some doubt. Whatever has owned you never let's you go that easily. An excellent rendition on what happens next can be watched here by UKIP leader, Nigel Farage.

What happens next in Europe and also in America will be very interesting to watch.

The answer to real freedom of course cannot be totally solved by what political party you happen to belong to. Answers to our own personal imprisonment do not lie here.

However, June 24th, 2016, now called Independence Day, will go down in history and it has been an interesting event to witness and be part of in terms of how the human spirit still strives to retain and value the very real nature of what constitutes freedom from dictatorship, and the genuine unity and respect which can result when people are allowed to live by their own convictions, and finally have their own voices heard.

“When we get piled upon one another in large cities, as in

Europe, we shall become as corrupt as Europe” –Thomas Jefferson

[These are my views as a woman living in England, on how the culture and spirit of my country has changed over 50 years. Why the country does not feel protected or strong any more, how it has lost, and is losing its values and decency, and how we are daily losing our free speech.]

© 2016 Shirley Edwards – All Rights Reserved