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# All Aboard Alex's Mystery Train

## Why I wrote "The Illusion of Freedom"

I wrote this book because Scotland is displaying some of the negative consequences of a country where democracy arrived late and in an incomplete form. For centuries it has been dominated by a clutch of interest groups united in the belief that to govern Scotland it is best to 'involve as few people as possible'. Alex Salmond and the SNP, far from being the 'change' party, remain wedded to that principle. It looks as if they are about to acquire domination over a small, hitherto sheltered, and therefore unavoidably naive country.

Salmond could be described as the tallest man in Lilliput. His party is as much a cult as a normal political force. It thrives owing to the decline of community and a retreat from religion (a high proportion of its members don't have links with civic groups and are unchurched). The SNP is benefiting from the deepening social isolation of Scots since a growing sense of rootlessness enables the party to project itself as a surrogate family.

It is increasingly composed of people who prefer the 'feel-good factor' and the sense of moral superiority embedded in a doctrine which is quasi-religious in its appeal. These are permanent campaigners who prefer others to do their thinking for them.

No leader of a Scottish party has ever been as powerful or popular as Alex Salmond. The personal and strategic choices he makes are potentially of great importance for Scotland's future. But he faces few constraints within his own party. Hotheads are allowed considerable leeway by Salmond in order to unnerve opposition parties whose paralysis was another reason for writing this book. These zealots wish to deepen the country's isolation or else forge dubious foreign alliances. They have no interest in tackling a ballooning crime rate and other social pathologies which merits using the term 'broken Scotland' to describe the country nowadays. As a Glaswegian fearful about the rising tide of criminality in my city, I fear for its future if the SNP fully takes over.

Confrontation with the rest of the United Kingdom of the kind that the non-Unionist Irish quickly dropped nearly a century ago appears guaranteed. Its domestic policies after independence are an enigma but we already know that the SNP believes in super-Unionism through its commitment to an EU wedded to administrative centralism.

Bodies which might have been expected to challenge a demagogue have instead abdicated without the need for any midnight knocks on the door or threats of reprisals. The role of much of the Scottish media has been particularly ignoble. There has been a point-blank refusal to explore Salmond's audacious schemes to not only bust apart the Union but place Scotland outside the Western family of nations. Once weighty press titles like the *Herald* and the *Scotsman* have become superficial and even opportunistic. Until far too late, they have declined to explore Salmond's Middle East links, and his manipulation of Islam for political ends. Instead, they indulge in celebrity politics and, in different ways, encourage forms of multiculturalism that have done great damage in England.

Church leaders also have had their heads turned by a masterful politician. Scotland has just not seen his like and anyone who wishes to take his measure ought to read Thomas Mann's *Mario and the Magician*. This novel describes how the minds of normally-level headed people in an Italian town in the 1920s are captured by a travelling magician who gets them to debase themselves until one among them wakes up and slays their tormentor. In part, it is an allegory of fascism: Salmond is no Hitler but he is driven by a mixture of deep-seated resentments towards England and the West in general that anyone who has studied the career of the Austrian corporal who swept to power in Germany, would instantly recognise. Cardinal O'Brien would do well to familiarise himself with the writings of Bishop Galen of Munster, one of the few bishops of the 1930s Germany who got the measure of extreme nationalism, or Cahal Daley, the Irish prelate who played a similar role in the Ulster conflict.

A trusting churchman known for good works, he is in danger of becoming a recruiting sergeant for a mainly secular party imbued with a fanaticism capable of doing lasting harm to Scotland; younger clerics are also in danger of being taken in. The anti-American emotions deliberately stoked up by the al-Megrahi affair are just a prelude to what lies in store with Scotland in danger of ending up as a tartan multi-cultural statelet already busy forging alliances with countries where Christians are unable to freely worship their religion.

I frankly don't consider the SNP to be an authentic nationalist movement which wishes to see sovereignty invested in the Scottish people. Instead, it is parochial force driven by petty resentments. If it succeeds in severing the links with the rest of the United Kingdom, Scotland's role in the world will be equivalent to that of a left-leaning London borough which has somehow acquired a seat at the United Nations.

I believe in a broad nationalism where much practical power resides in Scotland while the constitutional link with the rest of the United Kingdom is maintained. If the book helps stimulate a political realignment in which those who stand for such a broad nationalism finally challenge the emotion-laden and essentially barren outlook of the SNP, then it will have been well worth writing - despite the imprecations raining down on my head from furious folk who brand me as a 'traitor'. I believe I am just as patriotic as Alex Salmond, so are millions of other Scots who should stop and ask themselves just what kind of destination they will arrive at if they climb aboard his mystery train.

*Editor's Note: An article in reply to Professor Gallagher will be published in the next edition of Open House.*

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