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## **Nicola Sturgeon - A Populist Against Brexit**

by J. Luyken

### **Nicola Sturgeon receives a media award in Potsdam for standing up for European values. This accolade for the leader of the Scottish National Party is a mistake.**

They've gone mad, the British - that much is clear by now to every German. So it is good to remember that there are still sane inhabitants in the far north of the British Isles. One of the best for the German taste is in Potsdam this Tuesday. Nicola Sturgeon, the Scottish First Minister, will receive the M100 Media Award which every year honours those who stand up for liberal European values. Last year Deniz Yücel, correspondent for "Die Welt", got it.

In Germany, Sturgeon is considered a woman of reason in unreasonable times. A head of government who stands up for cohesion - unlike Boris Johnson, the chaotic Brexit berserker.

The leader of the Scottish National Party (SNP) knows what her European audience likes to hear. She said in a speech that Scotland is an open and tolerant country that must continue to play a key role in Europe. It is positioning itself against the populist Tories, who ruthlessly ignore the interests of the Scots. It stands for openness, tolerance and justice.

However, one will hardly hear Sturgeon criticize a concept damned by liberal democrats: nationalism. This is quite understandable: If the questionable is in the name of her party, she can hardly badmouth it.

### **The SNP dresses the Scots in a custom-made victim role**

And that's the amazing thing about this remarkable award in Potsdam. Sturgeon is carved from the same wood as Boris Johnson and his Brexit brigade. She is the leader of a party that carries almost all the features of modern populism. Not only does the SNP have a questionable attitude to the freedom of the press, it also provides the Scots with a victimhood that explains any mishaps with the malignancy of English politics and promises everyone exactly what they want to hear. Ms Sturgeon's nationalist ideology is so meaningless that she recently sincerely announced that the SNP is the party of every single Scotsman. If this is not an exclamation of a one-party state, what is it then?

Allegedly, the M100 award stands for "Services for the Protection of Freedom of Expression." One wonders if the jury knows the name Stephen Daisley. Mr Daisley would certainly have something interesting to contribute to the love of the Scottish nationalists for press freedom. He was head of the editorial department of the TV channel STV's online site until he appeared too critical about the SNP's style of governance in 2016. According to his story, he was not allowed to further publish his opinions after two SNP MPs insulted him in a meeting with his boss as a "crap journalist".

Mr Daisley, who preferred to quit his job rather than working under such conditions, later warned on his blog: "For ten years the SNP has centralized power, repressed the diversity of opinion, mobbed its opponents and split the country between nationalists and unionists."

Perhaps the latest accusation reminds the M100 jury of headlines it can currently read in British newspapers. Two years before the Brexit referendum, we Scots had a plebiscite on independence. In the present chaos this has fallen somewhat into oblivion .

## **Poverty exists, according to Sturgeon, "thanks to the shameful Westminster system"**

In a debate that tore families apart the nationalists covered themselves with Scotland flags to show who the proud and optimistic inhabitants of our rainy homeland are. Just as Brexiteers currently like to claim, the BBC was accused of conducting a hate campaign against the independence movement. Journalists and economists who expressed doubts as to whether a region dependent on English taxpayers could really afford the step into independence were scolded that they talked Scotland down. Some newspapers were completely excluded from press conferences.

Mrs. Sturgeon was at that time deputy party leader. At that time it was the pompous Alex Salmond, who in the meantime had to answer in court for allegations of sexual assault in several cases, who split the country. His successor is drier and likes to appear modest. Yet she has never distanced herself from the tactics of the recent past. All you have to do is listen to her speech at the party conference last April to understand that she is pushing the same buttons as her predecessor.

Scotland is a wonderful country where things are going well, she said, and of course she attributed that to the SNP. Because the Scots are so egalitarian, universities would always be free of charge. There is no question that billions of Euros in financial compensation from London make such generosity possible in the first place. Later in the speech she talked about things that did not go so well. Many Scots could not afford to serve enough food for the family. The responsibility for this, of course, is not in Edinburgh. Such poverty exists "thanks to the shameful Westminster system." The parallels to the Brexiteers' Brussels bashing are obvious.

## **In a populist style Sturgeon promised everything to everyone**

The Scottish victim role played by the SNP sometimes makes it difficult for them to have a clear view of their own past. Glasgow's many central streets still honour businessmen, who accumulated their wealth through the exploitation of slaves. But a country that sees itself as the ultimate victim of colonialism does not like talking about its own share in such crimes.

The populist temptation to promise everything to everyone can not be resisted by Ms Sturgeon. At the party conference she announced to great applause the proclamation of the climate emergency. Shaken by the "Fridays for Future" movement, she will use all her energy to make Scotland carbon neutral by 2050. Unfortunately, she had no time to mention the attitude of her party to Scotland's oil reserves: the SNP wants to pump them to the last drop from the North Sea. An independent Scotland could hardly do without the oil. Tax revenues from the North Sea are Edinburgh's only chance to at least partially offset the huge deficit.

I know, it's probably too late. Nevertheless, I have a request to the jury of the M100 Media Award: Could you not revoke your decision at the last minute? It is understandable that it is difficult to be neutral in these heated times. It still looks a little bit as if the motto "The enemy of my enemy is my friend" played a certain role at this award ceremony. If you are looking for a pro-European Scottish politician we really have a great choice.

Ruth Davidson, the former party leader of the Scottish Tories, has just resigned because of her party leader's Brexit strategy. Unlike the grim First Minister she is an entertaining and funny speaker. After her resignation she would certainly be able to make time for a spontaneous invitation.