

ATTACK: Brexit minister Lord David Frost was threatening the EU this week from the Tory Party conference in Manchester

Touch of Frost puts UK on the road to disaster

Tom COLLINS



AMONG his impressive list of honours, the former Scotch whisky salesman David Frost is a companion of the most distinguished order of St Michael and St George, abbreviated to CMG.

Aficionados of *Yes Minister*, once thought of as a situation comedy but now regarded as a lid-lifting documentary series on the palace of Westminster, will be familiar with Sir Humphrey's description of the order's abbreviations. CMG, he said, stands for Call Me God.

Frost, who left a career in diplomacy in 2013 to become the chief executive of the Scotch Whisky Association, famously wrote a defence of the UK's membership of the EU and the single market in the run-up to the Brexit referendum. Voting Leave would be "risky", he said.

"Can any future trading arrangements… be as good as the current ones provided by membership? I have doubts," he said, before extolling the virtues of an arrangement which meant "no tariffs, no paperwork, and no administrative barriers".

Call Me God Frost – in words of simple clarity – said: "If, as is the case of the UK, a country is already part of a customs union and has already adapted its trading arrangements to it, the case for change has to be overwhelming. It isn't."

He went on to predict that in any negotiations, Europe would have the upper hand: "There is no doubt that leaving would be fraught with economic risk.

"It would be step into uncertainty and, in many key respects, into the unknown."

It's coincidence, I am sure, that his U-turn was followed by the offer of a seat on the red benches in the House of Lords.

Call Me God went on to negotiate the very same shoddy deal he had predicted, knowing full well that he was writing a suicide note for the UK economy. The consequences can be clearly seen today – petrol stations run dry, harvests rotting in the fields, empty supermarket shelves, 100,000 pigs about to be culled and incinerated, and the army on the streets.

Add to that the border down the Irish Sea, dangerously febrile unionism, and a destabilised peace process, and you get some sense of the failure of governance by this current British administration.

Call Me God's about-face is on a par with the cynicism of his prime minister who wrote two articles for the *Daily Telegraph*, one pro-Brexit and one anti-Brexit, before deciding to submit the one he felt would benefit his political career, rather than the one that would benefit his country.

This week Call Me God, now Brexit minister, was threatening the EU from the bully-pulpit of the Tory Party conference in Manchester.

Europe is expected soon to give its official response to the UK government's demand for a renegotiation of the Northern Ireland Protocol – an agreement, let us not forget, that Call Me God negotiated and signed.

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Call Me God told Tory party members that If the EU insisted on sticking to his agreement, the UK would be "robust" in its response. Robust is code for breaking the agreement and in the process threatening Northern Ireland's economic viability and long-term security.

In a companion piece in Manchester, Sir Jeffrey Donaldson also threatened the economic viability of the statelet his party co-governs. He has given British prime minister Boris Johnson until the end of this month to kill off the protocol. If Johnson doesn't, Donaldson threatens to pull down Stormont and any hope of progress on the issues which really affect his constituents: jobs, an effective health service, food on the table, education and a decent life for their children and grandchildren. Political absurdism, then, is manifest in Manchester. We have a British government in denial about the destruction it has wrought, being lectured to by a beknighted politician who is demanding an outcome which will significantly diminish the wealth and welfare of his own people. You really could not make it up.

Having been at the receiving end of more than enough Anglo-Saxon words from the red-top tabloids, you would forgive Europe for flinging a few choice phrases back at them. A four-letter word followed by off springs to mind.

The EU's ambassador to the UK, Joao Vale de Almeida, is much more sophisticated than that, and he refused to rise to Call Me God's bait.

Europe knows, as do we all, that Britain's bluster is an attempt to disguise its weakness. We are witnessing its decline and fall, and not even Call Me God can save it.

ON THIS DAY

OCTOBER 7 1921

De Valera Shock

IT WAS learnt definitely yesterday that the Irish Plenipotentiaries will leave for London tomorrow morning by the mailboat from Dun Laoghaire.

Mr Arthur Griffith and Mr Austin Stack were amongst the earliest Dail Ministers to arrive at the Mansion House yesterday. A full meeting of the British Cabinet was held yesterday afternoon, Mr Lloyd George presiding. Among the PM's callers yesterday morning were Sir Hamar Greenwood [Chief Secretary for Ireland] and General Sir Nevil Macready [the Irish GOC]. The Press Association understands that the British Government will be represented at the Irish conference by the Prime Minister; Lord Birkenhead; Sir Hamar Greenwood; Mr Chamberlain; Sir Laming Worthington-Evans and Mr Winston Churchill. 'I am able to state definitively', writes the Dublin correspondent of the Westminster Gazette, 'that Mr de Valera is not going to London for next week's conference with Mr Lloyd George. He is remaining in Dublin and will be in constant communication with the Irish delegates.'

Co Antrim and Partition

A DEPUTATION of representatives of County Antrim waited on President de Valera at the Mansion House, Dublin yesterday afternoon.

The members included Messrs Louis J Walsh, BA, solicitor, member of Antrim County Council [Ballymoney area]; Patrick Downing, county councillor, Lisburn; Daniel Lynn, RDC, Ballycastle; Thomas Reid, RDC, Ballymena; Archibald MacSparran, RDC, Ballycastle; Frank McCarry, RDC, Ballycastle and William Shaw, UDC, Lisburn.

The members of the deputation were introduced to Mr de Valera and members of the Dail Eireann Cabinet by Mr Sean Milroy, TD. Mr Louis J Walsh stated that they 'desired to register a protest against any attempt to cut us off from the Motherland and nation to which we belong…' Mr McAllister drew attention to the position of Rathlin Island which is an overwhelmingly Nationalist area and as much entitled to be included in Southern Ireland as is County Donegal. In reply Mr de Valera said: 'The unity of Ireland is as much a fundamental principle as that of self-determination and both are based on right and justice.' **(The decision of de Valera not to lead the Irish delegation to the Treaty negotiations took bis Cabinet colleagues and the country by surprise. His role, he argued, was to remain in Dublin to rally the people in the event of a breakdown while Griffith and Collins were instructed to ensure that any breakdown in the negotiations took place on Partition and not the Crown. On the eve on the conference the President received a Co Antrim Sinn Fein deputation led by the lawyer, playwright, Louis J Walsh, author of the humorous skit *The Auction in Killybuck*)**

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