

# Brexit Britain: A financial Noah's Ark in the coming deluge?

by Theodore Dalrymple

As anyone who has been a foreign correspondent will tell you, taxi drivers – at least those who speak at least some English – are the fount of all wisdom. I have been to countries of which I learnt nothing more than what the taxi driver told me on the way from the airport – everything else was but confirmation. Barbers are also good sources of information, though fewer of them in foreign parts speak English.

I happened recently in England to take a long taxi ride with a Polish taxi driver. He was very polite and he seemed a happy man. On the dashboard I was pleased to see a little enamelled pin in the shape of the British and Polish flags.

Eventually I plucked up courage and asked him what he thought of Brexit, which otherwise would have remained the elephant in the taxi, as it were. His English was not perfect, but he could certainly express himself well enough in it.

He did not think that Brexit would affect him much. He certainly did not expect to be rounded up and deported. He was a little concerned that the pound had fallen 10 per cent against the zloty, which meant that he had to work harder to send the same amount back to his family; but he thought the pound would recover. A devaluation might even be a good thing.

As to Brexit's long term effect, he thought it would be good. 'We,' he said, 'should go more with the old commonwealth. It will be good for us.'

I liked, and was even moved by, his use of 'we' and 'us.' It

was not forced, it came to him naturally. It meant that he had some attachment to Britain other than as a cash cow. He was loyal to it and wanted to see it prosper. Moreover, his replies showed he had thought about it.

This did not mean that he had ceased to be Polish. Speaking of the European Union, he that 'We don't want to be told what to do' – quite understandably, I should have thought. The Poles have had enough of that in their history, some of it quite recent.

Here was a man who was genuinely loyal to two countries: just the kind of man, I should have thought, we would want to come to our country. Of course, he was but one man: though in my experience, far from unique or unusual in his attitudes.