Orange or Lemon? - General Briefing

Recent Events

Towards the end of last year (1688) the wife of King James VII and II gave birth to a son. This brought home to those that he had upset with his toleration of Roman Catholics and Protestant dissenters that this policy would continue. Accordingly a number of English nobles and bishops invited his son-in-law, Prince William of Orange, to come to England and replace James as King[1)].

The relevance of this to Scotland is, of course, that both Kingdoms share a King. When Prince William of Orange landed at Torbay in the extreme South West of England the Scots army (then commanded by General Douglas with John Graham of Claverhouse as Lt General). The Scots army mustered in Wiltshire where it joined elements of the English army in the path of William's army. A large number of defections took place before the King decided to disband the armies rather than putting Britain through another bloody civil war.

The King fled to London, where he made some attempts to persuade William not to proceed. When it became clear that William was still coming James threw the Great Seal of England into the Thames and took flight for France. The English Parliament declared that this was evidence that King James II had abdicated and that William was now King of England in February 1688.

William then called the Scots Parliament into session to repeat the exercise in Scotland. Meanwhile King James gathered together some troops and has landed in Ireland.

Scots Convention

Legality

Normally when the King calls Parliament he nominates a High Commissioner who acts as the President of the Parliament. However this time it is not a Parliament as it has not been called by the King, but by Prince William of Orange who is hoping that they will declare him King. It will be necessary for the members to decide

- who their President ought to be; and
- whether or not they have any legitimate authority to act

Once that has been done then they will (assuming that they do decide that they can legitimately act) be able to make a decision about their King and any other relevant matters that are introduced.

Structure

There are three estates in the Scots Parliament but unlike the English Parliament they all sit as a single body and vote together. In total there are about 150 members.

There is no real consensus for either William or James, although both have their supporters. There is a consensus for having a King, the memory of the inter-regnum and the chaos that was caused by English Commonwealth armies is strong and universally negative.

No-one wants to be on the wrong side, but apart from a few extremists no-one wants to be in the vanguard of showing their disloyalty to the Stuart King. (Remember that the Stuarts have ruled Scotland since 1370 - about as far back from 1688 as it is from now).

Religion

Religion is a very big factor in life for a large section of the population. Even those that do not care much for organised religion, which includes some of the main public figures, need to take account for public opinions on the subject. There has been almost continuous religious strife in Scotland since the start of the reformation.

Church of Scotland

The established Church of Scotland is currently episcopalian[2)], as is the Church of England. This has not always been the case. From 1638 to 1660 the majority of the Church (or Kirk as it is usually known) were presbyterian[3)]. Even in the early 1660s it took some time for the Episcopalian ministers to be re-established in many parishes because it was difficult to find them. There is still tension between the officially sanctioned episcopalians and the presbyterians in the Kirk.

Conventicles

These are the descendants of the many covenants that were common amongst Scottish protestant dissenters through the sixteenth and early seventeenth centuries. By the 1680s they are largely confined to the South West but have increased in both religious and political radicalism. The Covenanters, lead by Richard Cameron[4)], refuse to accept the King's authority over their religion and want to re-establish a republic.

In 1685 following King James VII's accession to the throne it was declared treasonable to take or defend the Covenants. The death penalty was introduced for all those who attended field assemblies. In response the Cameronians held their own field parliament and agreed a Protestation against the accession of James, who was described as a murderer, idolater and a subject of the Anti-Christ. The Cameronians saw King James VII as the ultimate nightmare - a Catholic king as the supreme arbiter in civil and religious matters, about as remote from the Covenanter ideal as is possible.

Roman Catholics

Until recently Catholics were forbidden to hold public office. King James VII over-turned the Test Act by an order in council and instead used royal prerogative to put in place a simple oath of allegiance to the Crown. This benefited the protestant dissenters as well, but was deeply unpopular with the established church. The King is himself a Catholic, hence his policy of enforced religious toleration. There have also been a number of conversions from unscrupulous and ambitious members of the

nobility, most notably from the Drummond brothers.

1)
technically they invited his daughter to be the queen but Prince William insisted on being the King and not a prince consort
2)
i.e. it has bishops and an internal hierarchy. Ministers are appointed either by a bishop or by the local laird
3)
In this form the minister is chosen by the parish (or sometimes the Laird) and acts merely as a facilitator in their worship rather than as an interlocutor
4)
who formed the Cameronians, the only regiment in the post-restoration British Army raised specifically to overthrow a monarch

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