

Britain: Pile on the pressure for a general election - Brexit is blowing the Tory party apart

Tuesday 10 July 2018, by [Socialist Resistance \(Britain\)](#) (Date first published: 9 July 2018).

In retrospect, writes Andy Stowe, the high point of Theresa May's career as prime minister could turn out to have been her October 3rd 2017 speech [1]. She ground to a halt due to a coughing fit and her sign disintegrated behind her back while she ploughed on. Her parliamentary majority had evaporated in the snap general election she'd called earlier in the year and her party has been conducting a very public civil war ever since.

That civil war has got a lot worse. The Brexit compromise she imposed on her cabinet last weekend fell apart when the Brexit secretary David Davis resigned late on Sunday night. On Monday, half an hour before she was due to address Parliament, the man who aspires to be an Etonian Donald Trump, foreign secretary Boris Johnson resigned. Say what you want about the English elite private school system, it teaches its pupils how to stick the knife in at the time and in the place where it does most damage. And Johnson could tell you what the Latin is for "'polishing a turd", the phrase he used to describe May's proposals. Eye-catching phrases like that are one of the ways he keeps his public profile high, as he feels that he is entitled to become prime minister.

Were it not for the fact that Donald Trump is flying into London later this week and will expect to meet an elected head of government, May would be gone before the end of today. Well-informed pro-Tory commentators are reporting that Tory MPs are collecting the signatures needed to trigger a vote of confidence in her leadership [2]. Most reasonable people would walk away from a job they've messed up so badly, but May has indicated she wants to plough on forcing through her Brexit compromise. She's a practising Christian and presumably feels that enduring this misery is part of God's purpose for her. No other explanation makes much sense. She's blown her party apart and is managing to antagonise the most aggressively nationalist part of the Tory voting base.

A peek into the political sewer that is Leave. EU is instructive [3]. Tory MPs are saying that: "Within 48 hours of the prime minister's statement I received over 300 emails disheartened, dismayed, and telling me that democracy is dead".

Extreme right winger Peter Bone described how activists in his local party have mutinied. Bone said: "This week the activists were so disappointed about what happened at Chequers. They said they were betrayed and asked why they go out each and every Saturday to support the Conservative Party and get MPs elected...for the first time in over 10 years they refused to go out and campaign."

Brexit is blowing the Tory party apart. The settlement May tried to impose was too much of a compromise for its right wing. It included a promise to maintain a common rulebook for all goods traded between Britain and the EU, British courts deferring to EU case law and the EU and British state becoming a combined customs territory.

This Tory government is the weakest in since Edward Heath tried to face down the miners and lost a general election in 1974. Labour has to finish it off.

Keir Starmer, Labour's shadow Brexit secretary and Jeremy Corbyn have played the issue very well. A chunk of Labour's electorate supports the idea of Brexit despite the fact that no one knows what it's really going to mean, but most Labour voters and virtually all Labour members are anti Brexit. Starmer is calling for a strong single market deal, based on common standards, protections and regulations [4]. It's also in favour of protecting the rights of EU citizens in the British state.

May's government has no moral or political authority left. Her party is undergoing an existential ideological crisis and many of its voters are saying they will walk away from it, either returning to Ukip or one of the smaller neo-fascist groups. A poll for the *Independent*, carried out before the resignations started, shows a majority want a general election if May is forced out [5]. The last election showed that Labour can win votes and seats with a radical programme.

Jeremy Corbyn was right to call on them to get out of the way and the best way to get rid of them is a general election as quickly as possible. That should be the demand from every Labour MP and councillor every time they speak and should be echoed at the anti-Trump demonstrations this weekend.

Socialist Resistance.org

P.S.

* July 9, 2018:

<http://socialistresistance.org/pile-on-the-pressure-for-a-general-election/12708>

Footnotes

[1] <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=r7r8T6JYPj0>

[2] <https://twitter.com/bbclaurak/status/1016350766288789504>

[3] <https://twitter.com/LeaveEUOfficial/status/1016352798869458944>

[4] <https://www.theguardian.com/global/2017/aug/26/labour-calls-for-lengthy-transitional-period-post-brexit>

[5] <https://www.independent.co.uk/news/uk/politics/uk-election-theresa-may-conservatives-party-leader-brexit-rebels-prime-minister-poll-a8435461.html>