

## Braverman in Washington

"Thank you so much for this third invitation to speak to you. When I first did so last year it was in London, in a venue just round the corner from Westminster Abbey, the week after the King's Coronation.

I was then the Home Secretary, so the minister responsible for public order. I had a very good seat in the Abbey for the Coronation, but also all the worry about 'what if?' something went wrong on my watch.

Happily nothing did and the following week I came to speak to you.

NatCon London was a huge success. A tribute to Yoram and James Orr and so many more good people. But my speech, like several others, was interrupted by placard waving protestors, who had infiltrated the event and jumped up to solemnly tell us off as we started speaking.

Tim Unes, who's done so much for President Trump's logistics, did a brilliant job organising that conference. But I remember him saying he had never seen anything like it. The protestors were very British.

They were polite, and, like everyone else, unarmed. But they were sanctimonious and smug. However, we just laughed them off and carried on.

That wasn't what happened later in the year though, when you invited me to speak in Brussels. There the man shut us down. And set the ... police on us.

In fact, I think the heroic organisers - hello again Yoram and James! - had to change venue three times before we were allowed to speak.

But they tried to stop us. By squeezing private businesses. By using useful idiot local politicians. By having the police follow their rules. By going to court and expecting to win. Which they would have done if it wasn't for the heroes at ADF. The Alliance Defending Freedom are lawyers who give other lawyers a good name.

But it was such a telling moment.

There was I, a former Tory Home Secretary, waiting to speak when, in a civilised, law-abiding, Western democracy, right at the heart of the rules-based EU, the police came in to shut us down. For talking. Those of you who were there may well remember the barnstorming speech Nigel Farage made undaunted. But then Nigel, a bit like Donald Trump, is not one to shy away from a fight. He and I don't agree about everything, and we're in different parties, but you have to admire courage.

What does this crazy episode teach us? Have good lawyers. But also, just how nakedly intolerant the left are. Rather than let us speak, they tried to shut us up. Why? Because we're intolerable. We're not legitimate actors. Our humdrum speech isn't permissible. And they have the rules, and the laws, and the politicians, and the brazen expectation that

they'll get away with doing stuff like that. Needless to say, once they had tried it on, the usual voices who'll screech about civil liberties were remarkably quiet when it came to mine, or Nigel Farage's, or yours.

But who are they, the people who stop us from even speaking? It would be too easy a mistake to say that they're "*the hard left*". Because they're not, or not just. They're entirely respectable, utterly conventional, quite mainstream progressive politicians. With all their obvious, unabashed followers in the bureaucracy. In a word, they're liberals. And what they're doing is liberalism.

Which is the thing we National Conservatives have to fight. Before I get to why and how we should do that, I must say a few words about the general election last week in my country. We were slaughtered. Shellacked. Given a good hiding. Kicked while we were on the ground. Headbutted by reality. And who are we? We're the Tories, the oldest, and until last Thursday, the most successful political party in history.

We're older than most countries, most constitutions, and most ideas, good or bad. But we got socked in the face. We lost half our votes from the previous election, and two thirds of our MPs. It was brutal. So as of this week, everyone is learning their hard lesson, and learning it good, right?

Of course not. We had won a truly great majority in 2019 promising to do what the British people wanted. We were going to use our Brexit freedoms and stop waves of illegal migrants landing on our shores. We were going to cut taxes. And we were going to stop the lunatic woke virus working its way through the British state. In fact, we did none of this, then tried, sometimes, when campaigning, to pretend we had.

What the government mostly did after 2022, when Rishi Sunak became Prime Minister, was roll out a programme our new Labour government today could quite happily do. And probably will. There were farcical gimmicks, like proposed smoking bans applied to people depending on what year you were born. So that in the future an 80 year old might be able to lawfully smoke, but a 79 year old, born just slightly too late, would not.

There was more nonsense, like letting criminals out early and scrapping shorter sentences for lower level crime- undermining confidence in our criminal justice system, letting down victims. Something I fought back against. Were there to be new homes, to solve the housing affordability crisis in the UK, which has been gutting the middle class, and retarding family formation, with all the stability and social good that brings with it? Nope. We talked big, released pretty Photoshops, and did nothing.

What we particularly didn't do was mention immigration. And the role out of control population growth, in one very small place, has played in pushing asset inflation sky high. Thus putting owning your home beyond the dreams of everyone, bar those with substantial family wealth. As Home Secretary, I cut a deal with the then Prime Minister: I backed him for the job, as long as he pledged to back me dealing with "*boats*".

“Boats” is our way of describing the rush of illegal migrants crossing the English channel. These people, generally expensively shipped in by cruel and evil criminal gangs, are in liberal theory fleeing cruel and unusual France. Now normally, in progressive British political discourse, France is everything we’re not. It’s sophisticated and modern and sensible and humane, supposedly. But for some bizarre reason now over 100,000 people have fled this modern paradise and come instead to miserable, racist, Brexit Britain. They do this in flimsy rubber dinghies which cross twenty miles of the most dangerous and crowded shipping waters in the world. Many of them have tragically drowned in the process. I wanted to stop it and fought with the then Prime Minister for a year to try and make that happen. Rather than do it, rather than live up to the pledge he had given on entering Downing Street, he refused to do what was necessary, then sacked me.

He pledged – boy did he pledge – that the scheme I was put forward, a deterrent proposal to offshore illegal migrants in Rwanda, so without letting them putting legal foot in the UK, would go ahead without me. He promised, before he called the recent, disastrous election, that of course the flights to Rwanda would take off. Friends, I don’t expect you to have total knowledge of the ins and outs of domestic British politics. But tell me this: do you think those flights ever took off? Of course they didn’t. Yet Rishi Sunak then called an election as if they had, or as if they were about to, this time, if only the Tory party was re-elected. Oddly enough he wasn’t believed.

This story illustrates so much. But the key thing to understand for us in the UK, and I suspect for your and so many other countries too, is why. Too many conservatives comfort themselves with the claim that things like this happen because of “*the blob*”. That a mysterious, implacable entity in the administrative state stops politicians from doing the things we claim we’ll do when we’re asking for your votes. This is garbage. And the Tory failure to implement the Rwanda scheme, and stop the boats, shows you why. It didn’t happen because Rishi Sunak didn’t want to do it. It was a choice by that politician not to do it. It wasn’t because it was impossible. And it certainly wasn’t because he bravely tried yet nobly failed to get it done. It was because, although he publicly claimed time after time he wanted to do it, he simply didn’t. He set his face against doing it and accomplished that goal.

The moral here is that we conservatives have got to stop searching for phantoms which explain our failures, and start looking at the politicians who never meant their big talk in the first place.

Having lost the election so disastrously, Tories must now be realistically facing up to the future? Aware of the mistakes we’ve made, and learning the appropriate lessons from them, however personally or politically painful?

Let me tell you a story. It’s the story of how I knew Donald Trump was going to become president, for the first time. I watched a primary debate and there he was, the only man on stage saying what everyone knew: that our wars in Iraq and Afghanistan had been futile failures. All the other candidates disagreed with him. All the talking heads said - and how

familiar this refrain was to become – “*he’s really done it this time!*” Well he had, but the only thing he had done was tell the truth. That the wars were hubris, which weakened, not strengthened the West. This was also something just about every ordinary conservative voter could see too. Whatever the commentators in the studio told them they should in fact be thinking.

Exactly the same thing is happening in the UK at the moment. Why did we suffer the worst election result in our three hundred year history? Because of what we had done, and left undone, in the last fourteen years? Because of our record, which the clear-eyed public had seen all too clearly? Of course not! How naïve of you to think that. If you listen to professional right-wing pundits in Britain, the Conservative party was decimated because, and in no particular order, of ... “division”, ‘disagreeableness’, ‘not signing from the same hymn sheet’, ‘disloyalty’. Because people like me had said, look! there’s a cliff ahead! that’s bad for business! Please don’t drive the bus over the cliff! But it wasn’t driving the bus over the cliff that was bad. No, of course not. It was being vulgar enough to point to the warning signs, apparently.

That’s why we lost, according to some. Yet here’s the thing: we weren’t divided. We were united. The vast majority of the Tory party loyally backed Rishi Sunak and his disastrous policies. Whatever he wanted, he got. He pushed all of his policies through the House of Parliament without obstruction. Contrast the Theresa May parliament- where we were able to stop her moving forward. Our problem, in fact, was that there far too little audible division. If you listen to these self-same pundits, the guys who cheered Rishi Sunak’s strategy on, and proclaimed him and his gang the only grown-ups in the room, we lost because ... our campaign, and even more ridiculously, Rishi Sunak’s government, was “*too right wing*”! So, you see, that’s a mistake we must learn, now that we’re in shattered opposition. We mustn’t be so unpleasantly right wing. How right wing were we? Where do I start? Shall I start with the BLM homilies senior British civil servants would give to their legions of juniors? Our civil service is famously politically neutral.

So if you were a junior civil servant, getting an email from the person who controls the promotion track of your entire career, where this person lectures you on something you know nothing about, thousands of miles away, to make tendentious points of that faraway, and complex, foreign country, and which have no relevance to your home situation, beyond you all too keenly getting an appreciation for which way the virtue signalling winds are blowing, what then? Nothing. We Tory ministers, nominally in charge of the system, completely failed. The Progress flag flew over our buildings as if they were occupied territory – I actually asked, as a minister, “*why is this happening? who says that it has to?*” - and could get no answer.

None that would be committed to paper anyway. I wanted to scrap the unconscious bias training which basically taught people how bad and racist Britain was. I was told that ‘I was on the wrong side of history’ by my senior civil servant. I don’t say this to boast or curry favour with you as an audience, but to starkly confess my failure: I couldn’t even get the

flag of a horrible political campaign I disagreed with taken down from the roof of the government department I was supposed to be in charge of.

Again, some of you I suspect will be tempted to knowingly say, the blob. But it wasn't. It was other Tory politicians. My question – why is this happening? – went to 10 Downing Street. To the Prime Minister's office. And that's where the answer failed to come from. Because, to repeat this point once more, far, far too many Tory politicians agreed that the Progress flag must be flown. It shows how liberal and progressive we are. Which is something many Conservatives want us to be. Well the Progress flag says one, monstrous, thing to me: that I was a member of a government that presided over the mutilation of children in our hospitals.

We Tories, right through our smoking ruin of a general election campaign, claimed that we were doing something about Trans fanatics. When in fact, what we did was let it happen. I am too physically repulsed to go into what "it" is. But it is something that the true grown-ups in any civilised society should NEVER have allowed to happen to their or anyone else's children. And this is our best defence: that we "let" it happen. That the fanatics who had worked their way through the institutions were negligently let get away with it. Perhaps by innocent ministers who couldn't comprehend their sick ambitions. But again, I have to tell you, this simply is not true.

I, in the last parliament, had colleague after colleague who didn't turn a blind eye to this. Who weren't simply somehow tricked by monsters seeking to mutilate children. I had colleagues who supported it. Who were fully signed up to the project. And who saw people like me, who opposed it, as being not just the real villains, but, somehow, the people losing the party votes too – with our "hateful" words.

I can only apologise for what has thus far been a negative and dismal speech. But that's the thing, things are REALLY terrible for my party. I cannot exaggerate how bad they are. We lost half our vote. We lost two thirds of our MPs. This was justified punishment by the public because we didn't deliver on our promises. And it gets worse yet.

The Tory party dominated the twentieth century in Britain for any number of reasons, but one we shouldn't kid ourselves about was the fact that the left was divided. For most of the last hundred years, left wing voters in Britain have been taxed with a choice of parties to vote for. Whereas we Tories have monopolised the affections of conservative voters. All that has changed with the arrival of Nigel Farage and the Reform party.

We now face a credible national rival for right wing voters. This, with our electoral system, will shred our votes, massively reducing the number of Conservative, and Reform, MPs who are elected. It means that Labour, on not even 34% of the vote, won almost two thirds of the seats in the House of Commons. This is not just a defeat for my party therefore, it's a moment of existential crisis we may not recover from. But people have finally woken up? They've realised it's not just dark, it's the asteroid's shadow, and that we've got to act?

Here's another story for you. The reason Rishi Sunak gave for finally sacking me was that I had said, the police were at risk of treating political marches differently, depending on who was marching. I had said last year that the Islamicist hate marches which were defacing central London in 2023 were ... Islamicist hate marches. This was an inappropriate thing to say.

Fast forward to the election. Labour, in their year of unique triumph, still managed to lose four seats. They lost them to sectarian Islamic campaigns, where Gaza was a bigger issue than anything happening in the UK. Some female Labour MPs – some noted feminists amongst them – were jostled at their counts, where the result of the election in their individual constituencies was declared, by ... well who were they jostled by? who roared abuse at them? who intimidated them and their staff? Well if you listen to some of these infamously gobby feminists, they were jostled by 'idiots'. Or possibly by 'men'. I've no disagreement with that. Go and watch the videos. They were idiots who jostled them. They were men who jostled them. But they were also, patently, undeniably, angry, self-confident Islamicists.

These are the things Labour MPs can't even say out loud after they've happened to them. The Conservative candidate whom Nigel Farage defeated to become an MP had some choice words for his rallies. Although these were entirely peaceful, and the only person who was attacked at any of them was Nigel, who was "*milkshaked*", here's what my former colleague had to say: they were "*reminiscent of the big rallies at Nuremberg*". It goes without saying, no they weren't. But what do you say? What do you say when Conservative politicians, reaching for words to criticise a mere rival, compare him to genocidal murderers? And no one, of course, bats an eyelid at this.

Comparing Reform to the Nazis – hateful language? hysterical? nonsensical? offensive? Obviously not. If anything, restrained and reasonable. I used to chair the ERG. We were, to use the parlance of the time, the "*hard Brexiteers*" inside the Tory party. The battles over Brexit were tough, and some people became excitable. One Labour MP in particular hated us. Not that he has a reputation for being hateful. In fact, he's acclaimed a nice guy by the people who determine these things. And he's just become Kier Starmer's foreign secretary.

But back when he was just a backbench Labour MP hating Brexiteers, what did he have to say about me and the ERG? He too compared us to the Nazis. So appalling a slur was this on us, not least on our Jewish members, that he got a bit of pushback for once. His response? To say that his words "*hadn't been strong enough*". That guy's now our Foreign Secretary. Oh, and this sensitive, cerebral, diplomatic soul had views on President Trump too. He's, according to David Lammy, a "*neo-Nazi-sympathizing sociopath*". I begin to believe that we don't teach history well enough in British schools. We certainly need to start teaching some more basic comparisons. I long for the day when I'm denounced for having, 'something of the whiff of Napoleon the third about her'. But that's just the left being the left. Our problem is us. Our problem is that the liberal Conservatives who trashed the Tory party think it was everyone's fault but their own.

My party governed as liberals, and were defeated as liberals, but seemingly, as ever, it's Conservative who are to blame. Not least, for some of my colleagues, it's Reform's voters who are to blame. How dare they not vote Tory! Don't they know we've a God-given right to their vote, regardless of what we actually do with it? This screaming entitlement goes hand in hand with toxic condescension. I have MP colleagues who believe it's a racist act to have voted for Reform. That far from my shattered party wanting to get back these voters we've spurned, we should be glad we no longer have their tainting support.

I'll say something profoundly British now. The Tory party is never going to recover until it learns some basic manners. We're entitled to not one vote, save the ones we earn by keeping our promises. But Reform aren't going to magically vanish unless we do something about the concerns of THEIR voters. And I have to stress that: they're their voters now because we have driven them there. Reform, a brand new party, has no record to stand on. Their support is overwhelmingly due to how repulsive our record has been. Lots of my colleagues are solemnly muttering about how much they 'respect the result'. But having mouthed those words, what does their solution turn out to be? Liberal conservatism hasn't been tried hard enough! We have to head even faster to "*the centre*". If the Tory party has a future, it's by being Conservative.

My strategy is simple. I don't want to put Nigel Farage, leader of a rival party, in a comfortable place. I want him put in an uncomfortable one. I want the Tories to credibly offer Conservative policies which make the existence of a separate, rival, right wing party moot. And not just moot, but which makes their continued, separate existence seem visibly harmful to Conservative goals being achieved. But the only way - the only way - we're doing that is by talking credibly to Reform's voters. We haven't even started to respect them, never mind seriously address why they no longer vote for us. It's why if we are serious about continuing to exist let alone win elections, we need credibility. Not just the veneer of right-wingery to 'win the base' only for the liberal reality to emerge under the pressure of scrutiny and challenge.

That's what we've just tried- cosplay right wingery only for the reality to be socialism-lite. The voters see through it. They're not idiots. You can take from the example of Britain whatever lessons you think are applicable to your countries. I take, from everything I have read and heard, about the US and so many other Western countries, this painful truth: we are at a moment of crisis. The chickens have come home to roost. All the things that Conservatives warned about for half a century, and failed to stop, are now upon us. The palpable sense of discontent; the crisis of meaning; the dissolution of the ties and bonds of loyalty, and society, which formerly bound us into a cohesive, organic unit; the loss of faith in politics; the descent of formerly stable polities into states we once upon a time would have sneered at as being 'banana republics'.

Even in our countries, things worse than stopping you speak in Brussels happen. Political dissidents are persecuted by lawfare. With all the loss of faith that brings in its wake for democratic politics and elections. The efforts made to delegitimise us seemingly have, in

the US of all places, gone beyond the merely rhetorical we're used to in the UK (hold no opinions the BBC disapproves of). It should not be a custodial matter to contemplate public service. Yet I know American politicians who've had to tell their children, if I'm arrested, it won't be because I've done something wrong.

What has brought us to this place? Liberalism. A creed now so self-righteous, and so intolerant, that anyone evil enough to disagree with it risks actual imprisonment. Yet liberals haven't been winning elections. The people have voted for Conservatives. But the problem is, they're the ones who have delivered liberalism. These ideas are not the irresistible truths liberal ideologues insinuate them to be. They're highly contested ideas we're free to dispute. And dispute them we should. They're fundamentally wrong. Arising as they do from the false assumption that custom, and tradition (for example the Common Law), may be dispensed with in favour of solipsistic, first principles rationalism articulated by educated individuals at any given moment in time.

In practice, liberal conformity and uniformity leads to a cult of the self; wealth is valued for its own sake; and where has that got us as a society? Cultural disorientation and the loss of home and belonging. The solution is conservatism. The conservatism of Roger Scruton. Emphasising community, family, place attachment. I am so proud to speak to you because National Conservatives KNOW that the preservation of a national culture is precious, precisely because it is unifying. The most fundamental insight you offer, so well articulated by so many speakers I've now heard at successive conferences, is that liberalism, both economic and social, has led us to a point of societal dissolution.

My own Conservative Party, far from contesting liberal ideas, has embraced them wholeheartedly, and offered no opposition. Where Thatcherism was national renewal, it was a reaction devoutly to be wished for. When it was degraded into being simple liberal economics, where the objective of personal material wealth is elevated above all else by Conservatives, it forgets what prosperity is for. The slavish elevation of wealth as the purpose of life is fruitless, and has allowed conservatives to be caricatured as venal, selfish, and infamously 'nasty'. We need to rediscover the 'why' in politics, and that's not answered just with money. The Conservative surrender to Social liberalism - the cult of self, of self-esteem, self-realisation, self-absorption - is causing our societies to fracture.

Big C Conservatives have led that cult, and we must take our share of blame. We must be unashamedly the champions of family. The party of duty, of love of our country, service to our people, respect for all, community, traditional culture specific to our nation, The party of home. We must fight to protect our national culture- which is precious because it unifies and allows us to be at home in our national home. That culture is contained in our customs, religion, traditions, common law, architecture, countryside, our art and music, our educational institution, our sporting traditions and our constitution. These things have not mattered to far too many of us who call ourselves Conservatives. And as we emerge from this catastrophe, every conservative policy must be evaluated by how well it serves those fundamental objectives.

Philosophically, then, and politically, the choice is clear: keep doing what got us into this mess, or change. Start listening and start responding. You should be listened to: your message is right. And it has been a pleasure, as ever, to be here and learn so much from you."

Suella Braverman, July 2024, National Conservatism Conference, Washington DC USA