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Borexit, Brexecution?

The rise and fall of Boris Johnson ©

Charles Dennery

Like many Tory politicians, Alexander Boris de Pfeffel Johnson comes from a very wealthy and privileged family. Like David Cameron, he studied at Eton and Oxford, and they were both members of the infamous Bullingdon Club. He had already developed his eccentric and popular style, before being elected President of the Oxford Union the famous debating society. After university, he got a job in a management consultancy and left after a week, finding it too boring. He became a journalist at The Times and was sacked when he forged a quote in one of his articles. He then joined The Daily Telegraph, the leading conservative newspaper in Britain. At the Brussels office he became a strong opponent of the Commission, inventing stories and making false claims. He wasn't particularly conservative or Eurosceptic himself, but he knew that those irresponsible stories would sell well. After an unsuccessful attempt in 1997, he was elected to Parliament in 2001. His eccentricity became his trademark, it was as if Mr Bean had become a politician. He would lie and avoid questions and sometimes act goofy, but in a funny way, and many people found it charming and amusing. This eccentric, middle England behaviour helps people to forget his privileged background. In 2008 he was elected mayor of London, and his blonde hair was seen everywhere. He also managed to get the credit for some of his predecessor's projects, including Barclays "Boris" bikes and the 2012 Olympics. As mayor of London, he advocated immigration and openness as bringing wealth and talent to the City.

In 2015, he decided to go back to Parliament, hoping to replace David Cameron later. It is an unwritten rule that the Prime Minister must be a Member of Parliament, and David Cameron had announced that he would resign before 2020. When David Cameron finally announced a referendum, he tried to recruit Boris Johnson on his side because he was so popular with the average voter. After much hesitation, Boris Johnson decided to back Leave instead. Many people saw it as cynical and opportunistic. Boris is neither very conservative nor very Eurosceptic, and his own father was a diplomat and politician in Brussels, but he wanted to challenge David Cameron and position himself for the succession. De facto, he became the leader of the Leave campaign. He claimed that with a Leave vote, Britain could get a better deal than the one negotiated by David Cameron. But he also made absurd claims that the EU was becoming a totalitarian regime dominated by Germany, much like the Nazis during World War 2. His habit of telling big

lies with a big smile proved very effective in the campaign, because he was able to woo both the moderate and the die-hard Eurosceptics.

Some people claim that he didn't intend to win, and just wanted to lose while scoring points with the Eurosceptic part of the Conservative party. But he won, and it appeared very rapidly that he had no plan. On Monday he wrote a column in the Telegraph claiming that Britain could remain European while getting rid of the EU bureaucracy. That it would retain access to the Single Market without any regulation. And that there was no need to start Brexit negotiations immediately. Was he trying to get elected, and then never deliver on the Brexit promise, with a very big smile for his gullible voters? In the end it simply infuriated everyone. Remain voters hated him for his demagoguery, and Brexit voters started to feel betrayed. Even worse, Conservative voters do not choose their leader directly. Conservative MPs first select two candidates, and then the party members decide. Boris has not been an MP for very long, so his colleagues don't know him well or appreciate him very much. The party is split between Europhiles and Eurosceptics, but an "Anyone but Boris" coalition started to emerge. Theresa May, the Home Secretary, and Michael Gove, the Justice Secretary are more popular in Parliament. Michael Gove was supposed to support Boris Johnson, but he betrayed him at the last minute, declaring his own candidacy and forcing Boris to give up. Even though he remains popular with the voters, he would not have enough support among his colleagues in parliament to go to the final stage. Or maybe he was afraid of the daunting task that the next Prime Minister will have to face. After having contributed to political havoc, he realised he's not capable of fixing it.