

Farewell to Prime Minister May

The legacy interview with Mrs May by the BBC was predictably sympathetic from a BBC who has always been the mouthpiece of Project Fear and who refuses to run Project Opportunity for Brexit. They will not interview those of us with plans for a great future out of the EU cleanly on 31 October. There is no discussion of how we can spend the money, cheer up the economy, change laws, back a UK fishing industry, grow more of our own food and all the other advantages leaving can bring.

Throughout the long wasted months of the May premiership as she allowed delay after delay in proper Brexit preparation I asked myself if she was a very clever Remainer deliberately seeking to dilute, delay and maybe wreck Brexit, or if she was just naive in thinking there was a compromise between Remain and Leave which would unite MPs and the country.

It was true she surrounded herself with Remain in crucial roles. Her main official negotiator, her Chancellor, Business Secretary, Chief of Staff and her Deputy were all staunchly pro Remain. Her Brexit Secretaries were Leave but were marginalised and excluded from helping form what became the disastrous Chequers negotiating policy. Strong Leavers with a history of knowledge and understanding of how to do Brexit were excluded from government. Iain Duncan Smith on borders and migration, Owen Paterson on fishing and farming, Peter Lilley and Marcus Fish on trade, Bernard Jenkin on machinery of government, Theresa Villiers on Northern Ireland, Mark Francois on European politics, Bill Cash on constitution and law and others all had plenty of good advice and commitment but none were allowed to be Ministers. David Jones, a very able and committed Brexit department Minister was sacked, presumably because he was too good.

It was also clear from the beginning the One sided Withdrawal Agreement was rejected by a huge majority of the electorate, uniting Leave and Remain voters in condemnation, yet she ground on with it. It violated the Manifesto which said future relationship and Withdrawal issues had to be negotiated at the same time and wrapped up in the two years allotted. Her eventual decision to delay exit also implies a wish to damage Brexit, overturning her stance that No deal is better than a bad deal. As the government limped on more and more Leave Ministers felt they had to resign, so the government became more and more Remain, cut off from the growing Leave and Brexit vote in the country. It was the decision to delay the exit which meant the Conservatives under Mrs May collapsed from a creditable 43% in February 2019 in expectation of a No Withdrawal Agreement departure to just 9% in the European election which followed the ignominy of giving in over departure. Much of the collapsed Conservative vote went to the Brexit party who campaigned for a No deal exit.

She says in her valedictory interview she underestimated the resolve on both sides against her compromise. So she claims she was trying to find a compromise between Leave and Remain. It is amazing she thought she could do this when both sides endlessly explained to her their positions. The

Agreement was nothing like Brexit and quite unsaleable to Leave. To Remain it was obviously worse than staying in properly with voice and vote.

The May premiership fell into three phases. The first short one with the inherited majority was fine, with the PM laying out a sensible and firm approach to Brexit. The second phase after the election losses was also fine, with Mrs May working closely with the 110 strongly Leave MPs in the Conservative party to get the EU Withdrawal Agreement through. We did so despite the concerted opposition of up to a dozen or so Remain Conservative MPs. The third phase was when she decided to stop working with the 110 Leave MPs and side more with the minority of Remain MPs, including those in the Cabinet. That was the phase which led inevitably to her departure with no Brexit result. It was characterised by a blitz of negative publicity about a so called NO Deal Brexit, with Ministers fuelling the gloom and helping some of the misleading scare stories. It was unusual to see a government trying to talk down everything instead of being sensibly optimistic about prospects.

I reached the point where I decided it did not matter if it was a Remain plot or a massive well intended misjudgement. Either way it was enormously sad for our country that we wasted three years looking weak and foolish internationally because we would not just leave as required by voters. It has left both Remain and Leave voters unhappy. The country says get on with it. We voted to leave, not to stay in for another 21 to 45 months three years on, and certainly not to sign a Future Partnership Treaty which might well be much like staying in without voice or vote.