

Does Boris Have A Twin in the U.S.?

by Michael Curtis

Born in New York, he is a provocative maverick with whom the political establishment is ill at ease. He is a colorful, charismatic, undiplomatic, burly individual with a shock of blond seemingly uncontrollable hair, who has difficulty in keeping his mouth shut. He glories as a showman with a talent for theatrics in the culture of spectacle, and has cultivated the image of a bumbling clown. He was a working, highly paid, journalist and editor for many years, and appeared on a considerable number of TV programs.

He is said to be undisciplined, sometimes lazy, unfamiliar with details of issues, seen by some as a politician lacking seriousness, prone to make gaffes, opportunistic, with ambitions to become head of the government of his country, even though he has not previously held a ministerial post. His former political colleague deserted him on the grounds he was unfit for high office.

Yes, this is Boris Johnson, the 52 year Conservative leader of the Brexites who won the referendum on the EU on June 23, 2016 and who was appointed as Foreign Minister of the UK on July 14, 2016. Boris, bicycle riding, guitar playing, former Mayor of London for eight years, made a quick and remarkable political comeback after he was obliged only a few days ago to withdraw from the attempt to become Prime Minister. His withdrawal resulted from being stabbed in the front by his supposed ally Michael Gove, the former Justice Minister who had ambitions of his own to become prime minister. However, Boris, if not prime minister, is now the most senior Brexite in the Cabinet.

News of Boris's appointment was greeted internationally with laughter or derision. Mark Toner, spokesperson for the U.S. State Department when hearing about the appointment barely stopped himself from grinning and ungraciously said, "We're always going to be able to work with the British, no matter who is occupying the role of the Foreign Secretary because of our deep abiding special relationship with the UK." The German foreign minister opined Boris was an "irresponsible politician," because of his behavior after the Brexit vote. His complaint was that Boris, inside of triumphing the victory of his cause, seemed to have deserted his followers by saying, "Britain is part of Europe and always will be."

Similarly, French authorities were critical because of what they regarded as intellectual dishonesty by Boris during the referendum campaign on Brexit. Yet, Boris who speaks fluent French with what he calls "a barbarian form" has appeared speaking French on French media programs and while Mayor of London met with French politicians. However, he has been critical of France and French policies. In 2012 he approved of the "talented French people" who wanted to escape the tax increases proposed by French President François Hollande. He said France had been captured by "sans culottes," who were imposing a tyranny. On his first day, July 14, in office Boris, speaking French, was booed at the Bastille Day reception of the French Ambassador in London.

Boris has been an equal opportunity outspoken commentator. In May 2016 he won the £1,000 prize in the Spectator's Turkish President Erdogan offensive poetry competition by a rude limerick. He described President Recep Tayyip Erdogan having sex with a goat.

He addressed two current American politicians. When President Barack Obama was accused of removing the bust of Winston Churchill from the White House, Boris somewhat carefully remarked that "Some said it was a symbol of the part-Kenyan President's ancestral dislike of the British Empire." In the

first minutes of his appointment as Foreign Secretary, Boris subtly reprimanded Obama. The President during his visit to Britain had said that if Brexit won, the UK would be at “the back of the queue” for US trade deals. Boris quipped that for him Obama would be “at the front of the queue.”

At some point in the 2008 US presidential campaign Boris compared Obama “plainly brilliant,” with Hillary Clinton, portraying her with “dyed blonde hair, pouty lips and a steely blue stare, like a sadistic nurse in a mental hospital.”

If nothing else, Boris is intensely patriotic. Despite all evidence to the contrary Boris declared that ping pong was not invented in China, but derived from the 19th century British game “whiff, whaff.” He has made few statements on Russia, but one of them was that he regards Vladimir Putin as a ruthless and manipulative tyrant.

Boris is a cosmopolitan figure, partly educated in France as well as Eton and Oxford, whose relatives include a Russian grandfather, Turkish grandparents and a half-Indian wife, and who speaks 4 languages. He is a witty, self-denigrator who said only a short time ago that he had more chance of being reincarnated as an olive than of becoming PM.

On one issue he has been clear and forthcoming. Like Prime Minister Theresa May, Boris has been friendly to Israel. Though an Anglican he claims descent from some ancestors, even a rabbi, in Moscow. He showed this friendship during his visit to Israel in November 2015. He visited the Western Wall in Jerusalem, wearing a yamulka and placing his hand on the wall, as well as going to Yad Vashem. He tried out an Israeli bicycle with the Mayor of Tel Aviv. He opened the day trading on the Tel Aviv stock exchange. He played soccer with Arab and Jewish children in Jerusalem. He explained the UK was a natural partner for Israeli companies seeking to grow.

Boris called himself a passionate Zionist during the war in

Gaza. He has called Israel the only democracy, pluralist and an open society, in the region. On November 9, 2015 using strong language he condemned those who advocated BDS against Israel. This activity was "completely crazy," and was supported by "corduroy, jacketed, snaggle-toothed, lefty academics in the UK."

As a result of his public display of support for Israel the Palestinian organizations with which he was going to meet cancelled his visits because of what they termed his "inaccurate, misinformed, and disrespectful remarks."

Boris Johnson has so far not been involved in Middle East negotiations but has expressed the need for peace, reconciliation, generosity, and tolerance in the area. On his past record and statements the outlook is favorable for UK support of negotiations for peace between Israel and Palestinians and for the security of the State of Israel.