

WINTER OF DISCONTENT



by Ralph Berry

HASTINGS What news, what news, is this our tott'ring state?

CATESBY It is indeed a reeling world, my lord,

And I believe w/ill never stand upright

Till Richard wear the garland of the realm.

RICHARD III, (3.2.37-40)

Catesby was an aide, or special advisor, to Richard. He didn't make it out of Bosworth but his type is eternal. Substitute 'Sunak' for 'Richard', and you keep the metre and the broad sense. But that was a couple of weeks ago, and Sunak's star has already dimmed. He has had to sack a brutishly incompetent minister, Gavin Williamson, who should never have been appointed on account of the bullying charges lined up against him. Sunak declared that he would not go to the Cop27 conference in Sharm-el-Sheikh, Egypt, and then

reversed his decision. He is a man who yields to pressure. He is also captured by the global movement, in which Boris Johnson starred at the Cop27 conference. He thus sets himself against a powerful resistance movement in England, that believes Net Zero 50 to be hugely exaggerated and damaging to the UK economy. But Sunak is now fully aligned with the orthodoxy of the Johnson government.

That is also seen in his unwavering support for Ukraine. Many countries including the US are questioning the sheer costs of Ukraine, and today we learn that the EU has paid over only a third of the moneys originally promised. On the military side, Zelensky is now calling for blankets rather than arms. It does look as though General Febrier is being recalled to the colours, as Hindenburg was summoned out of retirement in August 1914.

The idiocies of the UK policy on immigration are well known, and many a fine 3-4 star hotel has been requisitioned to find housing for migrants. They are delighted to be billeted in splendid country houses. A piquant example has just emerged. A group of Lifeboat workers has been ejected from their hotel, together with their belongings, to make space for the migrants whom they have just plucked from the sea. I was moved to read that the Esplanade Hotel in Paignton, a nice 3-star hotel had been taken over. Many years ago, I worked there as a student. I liked Torbay, as did Napoleon, who was moored there in HMS Bellerophon for three weeks in 1815. It reminded him of Corsica. He was an enormous draw to the crowds who came out to see the great man, and Napoleon obliged them by showing himself on deck. The British authorities had more sense than to admit him ashore, where he would have instigated the trial of the century.

Would that the present authorities had the same judgment.

I do not think that this Government is made for old bones. Another echo from the past, and my opening quotation here, has

just come up.

Richard III was a Yorkist, and his famous opening speech celebrates the triumph of 'this sun of York.' Today we learn that King Charles, and his Queen Consort, Camilla, have had three eggs thrown at them by a protester still agitated by slavery. All missed. This symbolic event occurred in York. of all places. One wonders if a Lancastrian revival is on the cards.