



OPINION



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The Ides of October - Year 3, Act Up

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And yet another swing of the pendulum.

And, no, it wasn't the result of the fearless Extinction Rebellion 'alert the world to climate breakdown' activist who scaled the scaffolding of Big Ben the previous day. The aptly named 'Big' Ben Atkinson; dressed as Boris Johnson, complete with blonde wig and crumpled blue suit, no less; who had long been carted off in the Metropolitan Police tumbrel.

No. It was democracy in action. People of all ages and all stripes all come together to have their anti-Brexit voices be heard, even if not necessarily listened to, on what had been billed by the existing powers-that-be as 'Super Saturday'. And, no, it wasn't your everyday 19th October. But it was a day that will, no doubt, be long remembered, for good or for ill, by all who took part.

Everyone marching together as one, in peaceful demonstration and non-violent protest, but in such numbers as had never before been seen on the streets of London. A truly awe-inspiring sight to behold and enough, certainly, to stir this once-upon-a-time-long-time Londoner's heart.

Certainly, in light of so much civil unrest that's erupted around the world this past week: When more than half-a-million people rallied and marched in Barcelona after Spain sentenced Catalonia's former separatist leaders to prison. And when, in Chile, the government declared a state of emergency after a transportation fare increase set off violence and looting in Santiago, the capital, that saw buses and subway stations, and banks and the headquarters of the country's largest electricity provider burned. The violent demonstrations having since continued across the country over the weekend and the unrest already claiming the lives of at least eight people. And, this, in what has, hitherto, been one of the most stable countries in Latin America.

Not to mention the dire happenings in Hong Kong. Where, despite an official ban, tens of thousands of people marched through the streets as part of the now four month's long demonstration against the loss of civil liberties. And where riot-clad police officers appeared all too ready to fire rubber bullets and tear gas at anyone and anything that moved or looked even remotely like an anti-government activist. The be-masked, gas-mask-wearing, umbrella-wielding activists, in the turn, lighting all manner of fires as beacons of dashed hopes, in the all too vague hope they'd be seen and maybe, even, garner some kind of support from the rest of the world.

And as if that isn't enough to alarm or depress you, there were also the Lebanese protesters in Beirut calling for the government's overthrow as well as on-going violent demonstrations and barricades on the streets of Haiti.

In comparison, to all of which, the London march on 'Super Saturday' seemed positively carnival like and if not exactly joyful, then relatively well

intentioned and well mannered; festive, even; and so very, very British and 'Keep Calm And Carry On' and all that.

And if not exactly another 'Glorious Revolution' and no heads set up on sticks. Unless, that is, you count the giant, papier-mâché figure of an Adolph-like 'Demonic' Cummings holding up a big-baby-sized Boris Johnson glove-puppet that was being slowly dragged through the streets of London.

With London's mayor, Sadiq Khan, shoulder to shoulder with local community activists, and British stars of stage and screen, and even one or two best-selling authors in attendance, too; my favourite, no lesser person than spy-novelist John Le Carré proudly wearing his "Bollocks To Brexit" button. All of them in the vanguard of the: 'Together For The Final Say - People's Vote March. 19.10 19.' Or, rather, the People's 'That's All I Can Stand Because I'm Not Going To Stand For You Taking Us Out Of The EU, Anymore March.' Made up of a million and more people by all accounts. And an even bigger rerun of the 'Put It to the People' rally, that took place in London, last March; the one made forever memorable by the massive #LedByDonkeys banner held aloft by hundreds of protesters in Parliament Square; the drone-shot photograph of which still staggers.

The deceptively simple layout of the giant banner, that branded it as yet another remarkably politically cogent billboard broadside from #LedByDonkeys; the brainchild of four of London's finest young dads; specifically designed to remind feckless politicians of words they'd said, written, or tweeted, in the past, that when repurposed made them rue the day they'd ever made such fatuous statements. The 'giant billboard' banner at the 'Put It to the People' rally quoting Conservative MP, David Davis's past statement back at him: "If democracy cannot change its mind it ceases to be a democracy." This said, before he was appointed Secretary of State for Exiting the European Union, when he dismissed, outright, any need for, and, indeed, had pooh-poohed the very notion of a Second Referendum.

Talking of Sadiq Kahn. It's true, I haven't had much occasion to think about him, lately; his Twitter war with President Trump long faded from public obsession. But I still have a lot of time for Mr Kahn as mayor of London; he's not been perfect, no; but he's still very much committed to making Britain's capital city a better place for all who live in it. And from all the BBC TV coverage and press photos of 'Super Saturday' it's abundantly clear he still has the support of masses of people.

But then we all have our own taste in London's mayors and, let's be honest, now, Boris Johnson, when mayor, was never really amounted to much more than a fairground side-show. As evidenced by his attention-seeking buffoonery, back in August 2012, where he somehow managed to get himself stranded on a zip line, dangling 16 feet up in the air, with a small plastic Union flag in each hand, memorable only for the comment of a disbelieving passer-by who likened him to "a damp towel slung over a washing line on a soggy day."

Wring from that what you may.

But that's 'Brexit' and 'The Boris' and 'The Dom' and 'The Jeremiad' and 'The Milne' and the whole 'kit and caboodle' of our 'go against the current' Parliament for you. They can, all of them, always, be counted on to not ring in the necessary changes and, instead, continue to deliver doubt, dubiety, and disquiet; misgiving, apprehension, and uncertainty; whatever it is that best suits themselves, their current agendas, and their all too addled states of mind. As in, to steal a plot line from Le Carré, "Bollocks To The People."

And never a second thought, it would seem, to calling for a Second Referendum. The one thing, that's once again been made all too clear, the majority of people in Great Britain have been calling for, and incessantly, so, since the Referendum on 'Brexit' three years ago. An event that's been more and more revealed as having been a political farrago of distorted fact,

deliberate fiction, and undeliverable promises. Not so much democracy in action; more outright 'flimflammy' and deceit. (And if, perchance, you ever should read Cambridge Analytica whistle-blower Christopher Wylie's recently published book 'Mindf*ck' you'll see there's absolutely no question about that).

Times and tides wait for no man. And politicians of all parties ignore the pent-up force behind 'Together For The Final Say - People's Vote March - 19.10 19.' at their peril. For as with all such concerted demonstrations of heart and body and mind, even if initially dismissed out of hand, the idea that motivated it into action will emerge again, even stronger than before, and even more determined to have their say heard and acted upon.

Ask Julius Caesar. Better yet ask 'Caesura Jeremiad' and 'Brutish Milne' why the continual dithering and continued break with the all too obvious will of the People, given that the 'People of Britain' have so obviously, now, and not for the first time, walked the walk in the hope that someone, anyone, will at last, talk the talk and do what's called for to keep the United Kingdom as a vital part of the European Union.

PS: "The Ides of March" will forever be taken as a portent of imminent death and/or destruction, thanks, in the main, to one of Shakespeare's most admired plays, 'The Tragedy of Julius Caesar'. The Ides of October; ides simply referring to the first full moon of a given month; were actually on the 15th and not the 19th, but then again, who's keeping count; certainly not anyone that really counts. More's the pity.

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