

Will we learn from Boris Johnson?

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Does anyone really doubt who will win the Tory leadership contest? Prime Minister Johnson here we come.

That awareness resulted in me re-reading [Max Hastings's comments on Johnson](#). Hastings knows Johnson well. He was his editor on the Telegraph. And he is a Tory, of course. He said of Johnson:

Why should he not be prime minister? Why should Boris not be the man to leap forward and save party and country from the dark forces? My own answer is that if the mayor of London is the answer, there is something desperately wrong with the question.

It is hard to disagree. He added:

Most politicians are ambitious and ruthless, but Boris is a gold medal egomaniac. I would not trust him with my wife nor — from painful experience — my wallet. It is unnecessary to take any moral view about his almost crazed infidelities, but it is hard to believe that any man so conspicuously incapable of controlling his own libido is fit to be trusted with controlling the country.

And:

His chaotic public persona is not an act — he is, indeed, manically disorganised about everything except his own image management. He is also a far more ruthless, and frankly nastier, figure than the public appreciates.

He also suggests he is happy to resort to blackmail. And then continued:

I would not take Boris's word about whether it is Monday or Tuesday.

But the killer comment is more general, and could have applied to every candidate in the Tory leadership campaign, barring (maybe) Rory Stewart:

I knew quite a few of the generation of British politicians who started their careers in

1945 — the likes of Roy Jenkins, Denis Healey, Edward Heath, Enoch Powell and [Iain Macleod](#). The common denominator among them all, whatever their party, was that they entered politics passionately believing they could change things. They were serious people. It does not matter whether they were wrong or right — almost all of them had real beliefs.

Today most aspirant politicians of every party have not a personal conviction between them. They merely want to sit at the top table, enjoy power, bask in the red boxes and chauffeur-driven cars, then quit to get as rich as Tony Blair.

I think that is true. And if we get the prime ministers we deserve and not those we would desire then maybe Johnson reflects what we deserve for having permitted all the excesses and moral failings of the neoliberal era.

There is only one bit of good news. And that is that Johnson will now have to take responsibility for his failure. And that will surely come. Almost without exception premierships end in failure, and this one surely more assuredly than most.

Which does leave a final question. Will we learn?