

The scorched earth policy begins as Johnson moves into ...

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We know that Boris Johnson is failure at everything but being a buffoon.

He has failed on Brexit, Covid and now the economy.

He has failed the public services.

He has failed the public.

He has even failed at complying with his own laws, so now he is a criminal. He has admitted it.

The trouble is, an authoritarian element of the UK population do love a buffoon. They were brought up on Dick Emery and Benny Hill. The same people were brought up in awe of Churchill, with a sneaking regard for Hitler. So they bought into Johnson. They probably still do.

On any rational analysis Johnson, and the Tories who support him, are finished. No one who cannot spot a birthday party should be in charge of our nuclear deterrent. But absurd lines of reasoning that people openly laugh at are being brought out in Johnson's defence.

And no one, from Sunak onwards, is willing to bring him down within the Tory party where there is no one to replace him, let alone provide an alternative cabinet in waiting.

So we now move to the familiar territory of the failed tyrant, which is the scorched earth policy as they retreat towards their inevitable demise.

Today we have an attack on migrants with a policy being announced that cross-Channel migrants are to be sent to Rwanda. I rather strongly suspect that Rwanda has not been asked whether it agrees as yet. I also suspect it is illegal. But the Benny Hill fans will like it. And that is all that matters.

Expect more like this. All the usual targets will be hit, starting with benefits for single parents. Then there will be an announced crackdown on serious crime (because going to banned birthday parties is minor crime). There might even be a consultation on the death penalty. That would be incredibly popular. There will also, no doubt, be attacks on Wales and Scotland. Expect some limitations on powers. Green policy will effectively be abandoned. And who knows what will happen with the EU? All of which will simply be to fill front pages of the Mail, Express and Sun.

And what is sad is that it might just work. Maybe thirty per cent of those likely to vote in the UK want this sort of authoritarian posturing, and think they have little to lose from it. If the other parties don't align against it - and for the common good - the policy may just work.

We are in for a torrid two plus years of a remaining Johnson government. And who knows thereafter? Watching Rachel Reeves on Channel 4 last night she managed not a single blow on the Tories. If that is the best Labour can do don't presume that the scorched earth policy might not last a very long time.