

Starmer and the terror that might yet come

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Keir Starmer said [in his Labour conference speech](#) that the threat from Reform was, as far as the UK is concerned, as great as the challenge of rebuilding after World War II ever was, and that to rebuild will require as much energy as was required to restore this country after 1945. As he put it:

We can all see that the country faces a choice, a defining choice.

Britain stands at a fork in the road.

We could choose decency, or we could choose division; renewal or decline; a country proud of its values, in control of its future, or one that succumbs against the grain of our history to the politics of grievance.

It is a test, a fight for the soul of our country, every bit as big as rebuilding Britain after the war.

And we must all rise to this challenge.

As ever, Starmer failed to join the dots in a way that has become his own particular political art form.

What he did not, apparently, appreciate as a consequence of what he said was that if the threat is so great, but Reform has yet to deliver the destruction it is promising, then the issue that we face now is not one equivalent to rebuilding, but one equivalent to rearmament, when all the while all that he is offering at present is appeasement.

Reform does not have power as yet, and there are four years left to prevent it from doing so, but if that is to happen, then what Labour needs to do is put in place the defences that will ensure that it can never take control of this country, rather than put in place the rebuilding process that might be required in the aftermath of fascism. For somebody in charge of the country, Starmer's command of sequencing appears staggeringly poor.

So, what are those defences?

Firstly, and most obviously, we need proportional representation. Never again should a political party supported by a very small part of the UK population have a sweeping majority enabling it to act without taking into consideration the wishes of all the people in the UK, which is the position Starmer finds himself in. If he believes that we are in peril, then adopting proportional representation is the first thing that he must do.

Secondly, a country at risk abandons fiscal caution. Instead, it does everything necessary to ensure that the threat is countered. In this case, that means throwing aside the stupidity of fiscal rules, and ignoring the demands of the City of London (just as these were ignored in 1914 and 1939) to then use the power of the state to:

- * Build the physical resources required to defend the nation.
- * Mobilising finance to achieve that goal, in the ways that Lord Keynes explained, most particularly in his 1941 book, '[How to pay for the war](#)'.

In other words, Starmer should be putting the country on a war footing to prove that we do not need Reform because he can:

- * Build the houses that we need.
- * Rebuild the NHS in the way that people want.
- * Deliver education that gives everyone a chance in our society.
- * Put our key industries and services under state control so that they serve people, and not profit
- * Fight inequality.
- * Make finance our servant, and not our master.
- * Tackle climate change, and build resilience, not least that required to ensure we have sufficient domestic food production, where, unless action is taken, much of our most productive land will be lost to the sea within the foreseeable future.
- * Create an industrial strategy that is also focused on these goals, and not providing an opportunity for financial engineering.

That is what he needed to say.

He did not, of course, say it.

He spoke about change, without specifying what it meant.

He spoke about working people, without realising how alienating this is to the young

who have yet to work, to the elderly who no longer work, to those who cannot find work, and to those who society prejudices so that finding a job because of who they are, where they are, what conditions they suffer from and what biases employers have against them, is impossible.

[As I predicted](#), Starmer spoke in sentences that could technically be strung together in the English language, but almost none of them made any sense.

Speaking to an audience that included cabinet ministers who sat, childlike, waving flags they had been given as if they were about to place them on sandcastles at the seaside, knowing that they would inevitably be swept away by the next tide, his gibberish flowed forth, but none of it, however, included a measure of substance.

Journalists know that Starmer is doomed. Long before 2029, they are sure his political career will, like most, end in ignominious failure, which he will have deserved more than most do. The sooner that happens, the better. But, unless there are those in Labour who will rise to the challenges that I note above, nothing will change, and the stage will be set for Farage.

What will happen? I do not know. As ever, I can only live in hope. But the truth is the failure of successive Tory and Labour governments, in the style that also typified those of the 1930s, might have already laid the foundations for the terror that might become us with Reform, and I use the word deliberately.