

# London letter

Cian O'Neill speculates on the electoral futures of yet another Dave and the recently re-selected Ahhadmydindinjidah and recommends some sunny summer play.

Two years on and the 'slow-bleed' credibility-assassination strategy employed by the Conservatives has come to full fruition, leaving the commentators, somewhat deflated now that the exciting part is over, to behold a once venerable kudu working its way agonisingly and in ever-tightening circles to the inexorable centre and end of things. 'Bottler Brown' they called him when hubris and election nerves ended the honeymoon of his early premiership. Now he is 'Bloodless Brown'. Nothing is left the man, and the killing job is done, if in an unsportsmanlike fashion that Ernest Hemingway or any other big game hunter would not have commended.

The polls show that while few really believe Cameron, they find him generally credible, pretty much convincing, quite well presented enough, it would seem at least, to qualify him for control of an island nation battered by the waves of economic distress and worried about Afghanistan and a fresh nuclear arms race, amongst other things. What, though, as Humphrey Littleton might have asked, lies in the leaves at the bottom of Labour's chipped TUC mug of destiny? It's the burning gap year student, of course – Dave Miliband.

Showing a greater intelligence than his Adrian-Mole-goes-to-Washington-and-attempts-a-coup routine of last year would ever have suggested he had, Miliband played the recent leadership challenge best of all. Better even than Hazel Blears, who in spite of being native to rat-like cunning overestimated even the high threshold of the English public for open smuggery and had to beg pardon from her Salford constituents for rocking the dinghy. Now that things have calmed down, Miliband by contrast has come up looking fine, wearing no such ashes on his head – despite the odd follicular discolouration on his crown that makes one reach in elder confusion for the contrast dial on the television set. He chose to be loyal at the crucial moment when Alan Johnson decided not to wet his blade in Caesar's robes.

After the now inevitable defeat of the Government at next year's General Election, Johnson will probably look too old and weak-willed, the Blairites too befouled by plotting, and Miliband, having held onto the Foreign Office for another year and so accumulated more of the gravitas that the role bestows, will probably look just about seasoned enough to convince as a leadership candidate. It could make for interesting times in Westminster, having three intelligent, ambitious young men leading the three main parties in a Lower House supervised by an equally young new Speaker who speaks [for it is He] with

all the narrative pulse of the Bayeux Tapestry.

In Iran, meanwhile, the gutters ran with the blood of those who durst question the meagre few hundred irregularities of the recent election that confirmed as winner the incumbent, President Ahhadmydindinjidah. A very short man as it happens, he seems to enjoy Ayatollah Ali Khamenei's favour because he's the person so drudgingly anti-semitic he's least likely to be CIA, or circumcised, so at least we don't have to worry about that one or having a long list of Christmas cards to send out every year because we don't have any friends whatsoever. Iran actually seems to employ a diplomatic foreign policy scripted by Larry David. If only there were fewer bombs involved, it would be terribly amusing.

What was interesting about the outburst of popular dissent in Iran was what it intimated for the country's future. It was either Iran's Tiananmen Square / failed Burmese Saffron Uprising; or actually the death knell for the regime as it stands currently. With the Supreme Council shown to be held in no great esteem by not only the young but part of the old [Revolutionary] Guard, and Khamenei looking rather left behind by events, the regime looks for the first time to be not invulnerable to comment, or even the tides of history.

Those tides, which signal variations in the routines of power and its interchange amongst and within nations, go on, heedless of our shoreline heckles, our changes of the guard, our periodic conflagrations. The summer tides may bring in their autumn wake a movement for secular/meta-Islamic democracy in the Middle East, Swine Flu, war with North Korea or the overdue admission by Israel that Palestinians might just be human and so in need of a viable state. But for now the sun, at least in London, has got his hat on, and one might as well go out to play.

