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## TEN LESSONS FOR BRITISH POLITICS FROM PETERBOROUGH AND STRASBOURG

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All is not what it seems in the UK, after Nigel Farage's Brexit party suffered a major setback in its bid to win a seat in the UK parliament, writes Denis MacShane.

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1) Never trust the bookmakers. Until the polls closed at 10 pm. last night all the money was on Farage's Brexit Party to win big in the Peterborough by-election. Bookmakers make their odds on what they read in the papers and where the money goes.

Since the flawed, corrupt 2016 plebiscite won on lies, most of the press, many academics, and the BBC have been telling us Britain is an anti-European nation closer to Donald Trump than Angela Merkel. It isn't.

2) Never trust Farage if you want to be one of his MPs. After he came top in the 2014 European election, Professor Matthew Goodwin, the chronicler of nationalist populism, insisted UKIP would win 4 or 5 seats in the House of Commons.

There are no UKIP MPs. Farage has been rejected seven times by voters in his efforts to become an MP. There is a solid 25-30 per cent of voters who are hostile to Europe. But they are not a majority.

3) Labour should use Gordon Brown more. His denunciation of PayPal Farage and the occult foreign financing of his one-man Brexit party resonated. Brown wrote to every Labour Party member asking for help in Peterborough. It is not hard to work out what he thinks of Jeremy Corbyn but he has not joined the Corbyn haters of New Labour grandees.

4) Peterborough is usually dismissed as a London commuter town. But it is also part of the East Midlands manufacturing belt. 2,500 industrial workers are employed at Perkins Diesels which is a major exporter.

This week's news on Ford shutting down in Wales and British Steel faced with closure is breaking through. Brexit means de-industrialisation and job losses. The North East MP and shadow Transport Minister, Andy McDonald, was eloquent during a TV appearance.

Labour's Islington and London-based leadership MPs have ignored the damage leaving the EU will do to manufacturing jobs. The pro-jobs campaign in Peterborough led by the new MP, herself Ed Miliband's candidate in 2015, shows how Labour can reconnect to industrial heartland seats.

5) The line from some northern Labour MPs like Lisa Nandy or Gareth Snell that if a constituency

voted Leave in 2016, it will not be won by Labour unless Labour embraces Brexit has turned out to be false. Mary Creagh, the MP for the former coal mining seat of Wakefield points out that more people voted Remain in Wakefield than in Oxford.

Other MPs like Sunderlands Bridget Phillipson and Redcars Anna Turley have been very clear that leaving the EU is a disaster for FDI and jobs. Their voices should be heard more.

6) John Rentoul is right that Peterborough is an icy shower for the Conservatives. So dare they elect as Leader a Prime Minister committed to a crash out No Deal by the end of October? There is no majority in the Commons for such an extreme policy.

Thus if Prime Minister Johnson or Raab or Leadsom insists on it as the price to be elected Leader by the Farageistes in the Tory rank and file the Commons would reject No Deal and move to a vote of confidence and a general election which Corbyn would win with a minority government.

7) Being embraced by Donald Trump is being kissed by a viper. He met Farage on the eve of the Peterborough by-election and made his remarks about the NHS being on the table in any putative UK-US trade deal.

This terrifies most British voters and even if Trump half-modified his suggestion, the damage was done. Farage was swaggering around the Peterborough count last night but scuttled out when he saw he was going to lose.

8) The Lib Dem balloon lost air. Alistair Campbell and hundreds of thousands of Labour voters, including prominent ex-Labour MPs voted Lib Dem as a protest vote in the election to the Strasbourg parliament to send a signal to Corbyn. Perhaps Lib Dem voters cast a tactical vote to defeat Brexit. But that can apply in other seats as well where Tory and Brexit candidates are indistinguishable.

9) The EU27 will have to try and work out where British politics is heading. After the European Parliament election which led to Theresa Mays eviction it was assumed that a hard-line anti-European PM dancing to Farages tune – step forward Boris Johnson – would emerge.

Now it clear there the 52 per cent majority (37 per cent of all electors) for Brexit in 2016 has evaporated. But no-one yet has an alternative policy. The smart move by the EU27 would be to leave the Brits working out their contradictions but not to be in any hurry to enforce a departure.

10) The terms of trade for Labour have changed with the courage of Tom Watson and Emily Thornberry to speak out against the anti-EU coterie surrounding Corbyn. Other than Len McCluskey, most trade unions now reject Brexit.

On Today Andy McDonald, spoke for Remain and Reform – a policy for Britain not leaving Europe which makes sense. Corbyn may not be able to go that far but the direction of travel for the broad progressive common sense majority in the UK against amputating the nation from Europe is slowly emerging.