

Don't be Shy, Tories

My Path to Radical Moderation

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Eternal vigilance is the price of liberty. It was the price yesterday. It is the price today, and it will ever be the price... Let us not blink from the fact that the days which lie ahead of us are bitter ones.

– John Fitzgerald Kennedy

The possibility of a radical, idealistic anti-socialism has never quite taken root in the Western mind.

– George Watson

As I write, in the spring of 2020, Britain is in lockdown, the country's economy and civil society being trashed as the government, egged on by most of the population, frantically tries to squash a novel coronavirus known as COVID-19. One of the most alarming aspects of this coronapanic debacle is that so many conservatives have endorsed, whether vociferously or meekly, the government's ruinous draconian measures. Even conservative intellectuals, whom, one might assume, have more freedom than party apparatchiks to make principled arguments, have on the whole failed to support the principle of freedom at a time when their support was needed more than ever. True, a few big hitting conservatives opposed the lockdown. But note: there are very few who opposed the lockdown *before* it was implemented, way back in March. There was a moment when Boris Johnson attempted to stay true to his conservative instincts, by advocating a 'herd immunity' strategy which would have set the UK on the same sensible path as Sweden – with most schools and businesses permitted to remain open, and individuals being entrusted with the responsibility to behave in a public-spirited manner during the pandemic. Alas, at the crucial moment, Johnson received very little back-up from his own supporters, and he promptly caved in to the hysterical demands of the left. Soon enough Britain was in lockdown, and the slogans of the health totalitarians – 'Stay Home! Protect the NHS! Save Lives!' – could be heard in every corner of the land; highly questionable propositions had ossified into unchallengeable propaganda.

Granted, some conservatives may have been slow in opposing the lockdown because they didn't want to make a hasty decision. I salute any conservative (or anyone) who opposed the lockdown at any stage. The real travesty is that so many conservatives have supported it without hesitation or reconsideration. Let us remember that conservatism is supposed to be about making calm, reasonable, pragmatic decisions based on self-control, conscientiousness and unflinching realism. Conservatives ought to have listened very closely to the many experts who warned from the start that the lockdown was a drastic overreaction; increasingly, these experts appear to have been vindicated. There is no evidence that corralling people into their houses has slowed the spread of the virus; the opposite may even be true. And there is no evidence that keeping the UK open would have led to calamity; no such calamity has occurred in Sweden or any other country that remained open. Indeed, the lockdown may have ended up harming the very same vulnerable people whom it was designed to protect. The logic behind the herd immunity strategy was to isolate vulnerable people temporarily while the rest of the population swiftly caught the virus (relatively harmlessly) and eradicated it through their ensuing mass immunity. Delaying herd immunity could mean that vulnerable people stay vulnerable for longer, which would mean that they need to remain in hiding for longer, or come out of hiding and be in danger.

Conservatives also ought to have borne in mind that our concerns about the origin of the virus should have been irrelevant to our reaction to it. Even if Covid 19 turns out to be a bioweapon that was accidentally released from a laboratory in communist China, the last thing we ought to have done in response was to trash our economy and society. The same is true even if the virus was deliberately released. Self-harm is not a sensible reaction to being harmed. Whichever way you look at it, the politicians were

spooked into an overreaction. They should have held their nerve. Conservatives are supposed to understand that sensible decisions are paramount in a world full of tragedy and evil. One of the few conservatives I know who publicly opposed the lockdown from the start is a sufferer of cystic fibrosis. His illness is such that he is always one respiratory virus away from being in a severe condition. He told me that he would never consider his own frailty to be a reason to destroy other people's lives or livelihoods. He placed his principles above his justifiable fears: a brave man.

The hysteria of many conservatives during the coronapanic has consolidated a long-held suspicion of mine: too many Tories aren't brave enough. This may sound harsh, so let me clarify. I am not suggesting that anyone should have been forced to expose themselves to danger during the outbreak if they didn't want to. This is especially true of folk who were in the 'vulnerable' category; I assume they were wise to stay out of harm's way. But I am suggesting that the risks that people took and the costs that people incurred should have been a matter for individual discretion (including the risk of receiving inadequate treatment in the event that the NHS was 'overwhelmed'). And, most importantly, I am suggesting that the primacy of individual discretion is a conservative principle that conservatives ought to have defended, especially at a time when, outrageously, 66 million of their fellow countrymen had been placed under indefinite house arrest for no good reason.

When conservatives are not brave enough to defend a conservative principle – *when they are not brave enough to fight in the realm of ideas* – something has gone badly wrong. In Britain, of all places! The problem, alas, seems to be quite entrenched. During the Thatcher years, socialists became increasingly hostile and hysterical, creating an atmosphere that was poisonous to their critics. By the early 1990s, political commentators began noting the phenomenon of 'Shy Tories' – conservative voters who weren't willing to admit their voting intentions to pollsters, for fear of disapproval. Today, the fury of socialists has reached fever pitch. Any criticism of socialism has become beyond the pale. Conservatives get the blame for absolutely everything, including the fiasco of the New Labour years when public spending rose drastically and the economy duly crashed; Tony Blair was retrospectively dubbed a conservative. Tories are routinely called 'evil', 'nasty', 'scum', and 'vermin'. It's a frenzy of scapegoating, which has been exacerbated by the rise of so-called 'social media'. People who dare to dissent from the twisted norms of socialism and political correctness are routinely hounded by online mobs. Freedom itself has become taboo. No wonder Tories are shy.

But we can't go on like this. Shy Toryism is simply not good enough as a response to socialism. Socialists have spent 75 years marching through the institutions. Almost every corner of the British state and civil society is now dominated by the left: the BBC, the media, the housing sector, the NHS, primary schools, secondary schools, universities, the legal system, the police, charities, local authorities, and almost any government department you care to mention. Moreover, Britain's institutions have been heavily shaped by the EU, which is a fundamentally left wing project. Steve Hilton, a former adviser to David Cameron, complained that, when he and his colleagues were in power, their efforts to run a conservative administration were often confounded by unilateral initiatives from the civil service: 'the bureaucracy masters the politicians', he explained. In other words: whoever we

vote for, we'll get socialist governance every time, because Britain has a permanent socialist bureaucracy. In such a situation, being a Shy Tory is delusional. You cannot expect your vote to automatically translate into conservative governance when the executive arm of the state consists of millions of die-hard socialists who dance to their own tune. The British state is like a supertanker that steams ever-leftwards while elected conservative politicians armed only with oars try to steer it rightwards by leaning over the side and paddling. And that's when Conservative MPs can be bothered to do what they were elected to do. Increasingly, they are simply capitulating to socialism – deliberately steering left, just to stay in 'control'.

The domination of Britain's institutions by socialism dates back to the immediate aftermath of the Second World War, when Prime Minister Winston Churchill was ousted in a landslide victory for the Labour Party. The British population had defeated the racist socialism of the Nazis only to vote for a massive programme of socialist measures at home. Led by Clement Attlee, the post-war socialists nationalised the railway system, as well as the production of steel, iron, gas, coal and electricity. They created the NHS, they expanded the welfare state, they passed the Town and Country Planning Act (which stipulated, unprecedentedly, that landowners now required central government permission to build on their own land), and they implemented the Education Act, which ushered in the state school system as we know it. Actually, the Education Act had already been drafted during the war by the previous Conservative administration. And many of Labour's reforms in housing, health and welfare were rooted in previous initiatives: the power of the state had been growing in Britain since the turn of the century. Still, in 1945 when the Labour Party sang the 'Red Flag' in the House of Commons, socialists had every reason to be crowing. Socialism had come to Britain.

And vice versa. Some say that Labour won in 1945 because the public was angry that Neville Chamberlain had appeased Hitler prior to the war. Yet Labour had supported appeasement until 1938. And Churchill obviously couldn't be accused of the same. No, his real problem was that the public wanted socialism. And that's what they got – for the long haul, thanks to the juggernaut-like momentum that comes with socialist governance. No political party, including the Conservative Party, has ever reversed all the socialist reforms of the post-war period. Yes, the major industries have been re-privatised, but the four epoch-making reforms – in education, health, housing, and welfare – for which the post-war socialists are renowned are still in place. In four of the most important aspects of our lives, socialism has reigned supreme for 75 years.

During this period, public spending has risen and risen, including under every Conservative administration. Even under Margaret Thatcher, who was such a principled conservative that she was ousted by her own colleagues, the state flourished. In an effort to neutralise 'loony lefty' local authorities, Thatcher extended the role of central government within education, health, housing, welfare, and many other areas of the public sector. Soviet-style 'targets' and 'league tables' proliferated under the Iron Lady, as her government tried to make public institutions more competitive without actually making them genuinely competitive. As part of the same flawed mission, her government began to enlist private companies to deliver public services, a trend which has continued until the present day, including under New

Labour. These public-private arrangements are often touted as a counterexample to the growth of socialism in the UK, but, in fact, they have increased the government's influence over the economy. While a select group of companies have gorged themselves on monopolistic power and taxpayers' money, government bureaucrats have extended their reach but divested themselves of responsibility. Such is socialism.

The most woeful effect of the rise of socialism in the UK can be seen in our universities. These once-great institutions are now little more than socialist madrassas. This is especially true when it comes to humanities subjects, although the sciences have not been immune to infiltration by socialism (the current obsession with 'climate change' being an example; supposedly only government intervention based on socialist science can protect the environment). Academia is now mostly funded by the government, and the funding system is dominated by socialist bureaucrats. To pursue an academic career, researchers must jump through a demeaning series of bureaucratic hoops. The government insists on knowing the 'social impact' of any proposed research – as though any such thing could ever be known in advance! Academics are required to publish a certain number of articles in government-approved, peer-reviewed journals, ensuring that no research that challenges the left wing consensus slips through. It's a communist system, pure and simple. The mainstream intelligentsia is under ideological control. Universities produce wave after wave of socialist graduates, who go on to acquire careers in the government, or funded by the government, whether directly or indirectly. If academia is supposed to comprise a forum for freethinkers, and if freethinkers are supposed to comprise the imagination of society, then the left has now gained the most sinister sort of power: society can hardly imagine itself free of socialism.

Worse, socialism in the UK is increasingly resembling the nastiest form of socialism: the racist socialism of the Nazis. You seldom hear National Socialism described as socialism, because socialists are keen to distance themselves from this disgusting stain on their ideology. But some stains are so enormous and indelible that they cannot be hidden. The Nazis were racist socialists who believed that the Jews were a 'capitalistic people'. Supposedly, the Jews had gained undeserved wealth and power in Germany and throughout the world by engaging in a capitalist conspiracy against other races; Hitler even thought *communism* was a Jewish capitalist conspiracy. Supposedly, the Jews were a decadent, abstract and calculating race, estranged from the soil, enemies of nature. Supposedly, the Jews were overrepresented in influential professions in Germany. The National Socialists managed to marshal support from within many divergent groups – including squabbling socialists, Volkish nature-lovers, reactionary conservatives, various Christian sects, and various Muslim communities around the world, including the ever-disgruntled Palestinians – by unifying them against a single scapegoat: 'money-grubbing Jews', to use Hitler's horrible socialist phrase.

Now, fast forward to today. Socialists are once again propagating the fascistic idea that one race is responsible for all the woes of the world. But I am not talking about the stench of antisemitism that still surrounds the left; few socialists would be brazen enough to openly resurrect the antisemitic socialism of the past. No, I am talking about a new but no less arbitrary scapegoat: white people. Supposedly, white people are conspiring to rig capitalism in their favour. Supposedly, white people are

ransacking the environment for their own benefit, thus harming everyone else in the process. Supposedly, white people are overrepresented in influential professions in the UK, ensuring that everyone else is permanently exploited. Moreover, the socialists say, even within the white race, there is a hierarchy of culpability, the worst offenders being straight white men. Women, homosexuals, transvestites, racial minorities, and religious minorities, especially Muslims: only a socialist revolution, so it goes, can liberate all these 'marginalised' people from the sexism, homophobia, transphobia, racism, Islamophobia, and ecological destructiveness of their oppressors.

Obviously, National Socialism and today's fascistic socialism are not identical. The scapegoating engaged in by the modern left is in some ways a mirror image of Nazism. Still, the parallels are creepy. And the policy of scapegoating a single 'capitalistic' race is as ghastly as ever, even if people don't realise that that's the policy they're endorsing when they piously bemoan their 'white privilege', or that of others. Indeed, one of the problems with modern socialism is that its fascistic streak is often so insidious, thanks to the sneaky agenda of political correctness. As the comedian George Carlin observed, political correctness is fascism disguised as good manners. When I was a child, I was taught to be polite to everyone, regardless of their colour or creed or gender or sexual persuasion. I was taught to treat everyone as an individual, to respect their individual rights – and I have never deviated from this simple policy, which clearly is the morally right one. Alas, treating people politely as individuals is not so simple these days. Political correctness has hijacked common courtesy, turning it into an ever-expanding, ever-shifting list of rules and taboos that you must adhere to when talking to (or about) people from the marginalised groups. The list is designed to catch you out, to expose you as a bigot when you say the wrong thing. And the list contains an obvious double standard. Whereas anyone can say pretty much whatever they like about straight white men, the reverse is not true. The rules of political correctness are designed to single out one section of the population for guilt.

Moreover, even if you avoid getting caught out by the rules of political correctness, that's not good enough. As a straight white man, if you don't want to be considered a bigot, then – bizarrely – you must openly admit that you are inherently bigoted. It's a message that reassures nobody! You are expected to tell the marginalised people that they are under constant attack – by people just like you. As a supposedly exclusive beneficiary of capitalism, you are required to 'check your privilege', your 'heterosexual privilege', your 'male privilege', your 'white privilege'. You are supposed to kowtow to the people you have marginalised. You are supposed to acquiesce quietly when socialists demand affirmative action to minimise the influence of people like you – another policy which has echoes of Nazi Germany. And if you ever, in good faith, dare to say anything candid, critical or even humorous about any of the marginalised groups, well, you might as well kiss goodbye to your reputation and your career, perhaps your freedom too. Political correctness is designed to shut down the free speech of anyone who challenges the fascistic presumptions of modern socialism.

Notably, the rise of the term 'white privilege' here in the UK has coincided with a period of unprecedentedly high immigration, which has been fanatically supported by the left. 1,500 immigrants have arrived on these shores *every single day for the last*

twenty years, leading to an average annual net migration figure of around 240,000. To accommodate the extra people represented by this figure, we would have needed to build a new city every year for twenty years – an impossible prospect. The upshot has been a housing crisis that has severely curtailed the life chances of a generation of young Britons, especially those on low or average incomes. House prices in the UK have more than trebled in real terms since 1997. At the same time, congestion has increased, public services have been overwhelmed, the low-skilled job market has been saturated, and wages have been suppressed, all of which have hit poorest Britons the hardest. No wonder they feel the most aggrieved. They don't have much, but they have their country. If your property is confiscated, your freedom is curtailed. Likewise, if people lose ownership of their own country, their freedom is curtailed. The freedom of the British people has been undermined by the deliberate loosening of Britain's borders.

And that's before you take into account the cultural effects of mass immigration. Many Britons have been dismayed by the failure of some immigrant communities to integrate into British life. The Islamic community has been a particular source of concern in this regard, with anti-Western attitudes rife among Muslims, not to mention Jihadism: an estimated 23,000 Jihadis are being monitored by the security services in Britain. Muslims have also been the driving force behind the notorious 'grooming gangs' that have raped or abused many thousands of young girls, 19,000 in the last year alone. This is all bad enough without Britons who happen to be white being condemned for their 'white privilege' and told that if they complain about mass immigration or Islam then they themselves are being 'racist'. You cannot help but conclude that socialists are orchestrating a systematic attack on white Britons, with straight white males being further smeared by the accusation that they are bigoted in just about every way imaginable. I am sure I speak for all right-thinking Britons, of all colours, creeds and persuasions, when I say we are sick of this nonsense. We want to live in a society where race is unimportant, and where anyone can defend the interests of British people or criticise a religion without being called racist. We support British values *because* we oppose bigotry. And on a personal note, I am sick of being under chronic suspicion of bigotry when I have spent my entire life opposing bigotry and I will continue to do so.

According to today's fascistic socialism, white people are racist insofar as they are capitalistic; capitalism supposedly encourages all kinds of bigotry. Yet the truth is that capitalist countries tend to be the least bigoted in the world. Capitalism has proven itself to be the most inclusive social system in history, largely due to the fact that businesspeople are always keen to cast the net of commerce as wide as possible, to include as many potential customers and colleagues as possible. In capitalist societies, the profit motive has ushered in liberal values, human rights laws, racial equality, gender equality, gay rights, gay marriage, freedom of speech, freedom of association, freedom of religion, and widespread wealth and health, from the top to the bottom of the economic scale; indeed, socialists and their allies have benefitted from all these opportunities. Meanwhile, history's most extreme socialist regimes have proven themselves to be swamps of inequity, poverty, misery, division, intolerance, violence and environmental depredation. And, as for socialism's favoured religion, Islam, well,

it's a much bigger threat to women, homosexuals and religious minorities than capitalism will ever be.

Alas, socialist nonsense has always attracted people, especially intellectuals and young people. The Nazis overran Germany's universities and soon captured the hearts and minds of its younger generation, before achieving cultural pre-eminence by the end of the 1930s. Similarly, in the UK, today's fascistic socialism is rampantly popular among academics and young people and is increasingly shaping popular culture. Fascism, it seems, is like a bump in the carpet; you can squash it down, but it will inevitably reappear somewhere else in a slightly different form. However, I don't think we should be unduly pessimistic. Focusing on socialism at its worst is apt to make us feel overwhelmed, and therefore passive – and this plays into the socialists' hands. One of the core aims of socialism is to convince individuals to submit themselves to the so-called greater good. To oppose socialism, we need to reassert our own agency as individuals. We need to point out that socialism doesn't inevitably triumph over freedom.

We can start by noting that there was nothing inevitable about the socialist takeover of Britain's universities. This is an awkward truth. It requires us to make some awkward observations about the outgoing generation of conservative academics. Yes, there were a few heroic exceptions, but generally speaking, conservative academics didn't do enough to defend conservatism and freedom within academia. *By definition they didn't do enough.* They were not assertive enough. They were not principled enough. They acquiesced in a government funding system that was bound to lead to academia being overrun by socialism. They didn't live up to their responsibility to inspire or bring through a new conservative generation within academia. They failed to keep the intellectual flame of conservatism burning brightly in Britain, the home of freedom.

Something similar can be said about conservatives in every other public institution in Britain – although the more practical the work of an institution, the more forgiving we can be of the conservatives who allowed the socialists to take over. Perhaps in some of the institutions there were socialists who were at least doing a decent job; we can sympathise with conservatives who might not have wanted to penalise competent employees for their political beliefs. We can even sympathise with conservative academics who might have presumed that there would be practical benefits to ideological diversity in universities, even if the socialists themselves did not share this presumption.

However, there is one institution in which the failure to defend and propagate conservative ideals is completely unforgivable. I am talking of course about the Conservative Party. Its failure in this regard is notorious. There is a 'culture war' raging in Britain, with concerned members of the public engaged in a desperate rearguard action on behalf of freedom, doing their utmost to hold back a tide of nasty socialist nonsense, yet the Conservative Party is scarce to be seen on the battlefield. In the last few decades particularly, Conservative politicians and leading party members have virtually given up on defending conservatism. Disgracefully, they are more concerned with pandering to socialism than refuting it. And when a Conservative politician does stick their head above the parapet to say something 'controversial', for instance something true but politically incorrect, or something critical of socialism,

they are invariably disowned by their colleagues amid the inevitable socialist backlash.

Meanwhile, the Conservative Party rarely does much in the way of outreach – by which I mean turning up at schools, colleges, universities, clubs, societies, festivals, and other events, to explain and defend conservative ideas. Nor does the Conservative Party do much in the way of sponsoring creative individuals who are willing to campaign for conservatism, whether intellectuals, artists, musicians, writers, filmmakers, and the like. You would think that with all those rich party donors there would be plenty of bursaries and scholarships available to people who are passionate about communicating conservative ideas to a new generation. You'd be wrong. The Conservative Party promotes conservatism with about as much enthusiasm as the Labour Party does.

If I sound bitter, it's because I'm speaking from personal experience. As a philosopher, ideas are my stock in trade. Naturally I am frustrated that my own ideas do not have a niche in which they can flourish. And I passionately believe in the importance of ideas. Human beings live by ideas; this is our glory as well as – at times – our downfall. The corruption of academia and the Conservative Party by socialism has left British culture bereft of good ideas and good guidance. This is a bitter truth for us all.

My journey as a conservative intellectual, both before and after I became a conservative, is illustrative, I believe. I started out at Durham University, where I majored in Philosophy and Psychology as part of a Natural Sciences degree. I was a 'working class' cockney and I readily admit I had a massive chip on my shoulder. But gradually I began to question the socialist beliefs I had grown up with. By the time I had completed my PhD in Philosophy at Cambridge University, I was challenging the views of my fellow socialists. And within a few years of my graduation I was openly calling myself a conservative. However, at no point during my ten years at university did I ever hear an academic openly criticise socialism. Not once – not in my sphere of activities, anyway. (In contrast, I heard plenty of philosophers heap abuse on Roger Scruton). My evolution away from socialism came from my own reading, my own off-putting experience of arguing with hostile socialists, and my own friendships.

My scepticism towards socialism took a further leap forward when, towards the end of my PhD, I realised that I would struggle to acquire a postdoctoral position in a university, due to the socialist bias of the academic funding system. I wanted to continue to explore an idea that I had introduced in the final chapter of my PhD: that philosophy itself systematically undermines personal responsibility. I had come to believe that most intellectuals these days, especially in humanities subjects, are afraid of existence, including the existence of their own freedom. I dubbed them 'philosophical hypochondriacs': they hide from life by making a needless abstract problem out of life itself, and coming up with needless abstract solutions to this needless abstract problem, while claiming the moral high ground and bossing everyone else around. Alas, despite its somewhat prophetic relevance to the world today, this topic was never going to pass muster with the socialist bureaucrats who ran the funding system. They were bound to be unimpressed not only by the conservative tilt of my research, but also, bizarrely, by its originality. My research didn't fit into any preordained bureaucratic category; I might as well have written a funding

proposal in Swahili. My PhD supervisor, the late Professor Peter Lipton, summed up the situation to me: ‘Ben, you are brilliant, but you are an iconoclast. There should be funding for someone like you, but there isn’t.’

So I walked away from academia. My plan was that I would self-fund my writing by working as an entrepreneur. I founded two publications, including a free cycling magazine and a journal of philosophical essays, and I’m proud to say I made a profit – albeit I had to supplement my income by working as a delivery driver in the evenings, which I am still doing to this day. All the while, I tried to stay in contact with the academic world. I befriended a few conservative academics, and I hoped they might open a few doors for me, but no doors were opened. I soon discovered that my new academic friends had mostly kept quiet about their own conservatism during their careers. Clearly, this didn’t bode well for me. If conservatives weren’t willing to champion their own conservatism on campus, they were hardly likely to champion mine. One of my friends, a Professor of Psychology, told me that he had reconciled himself to the idea that communists had hijacked his university and that they would soon take over the government: ‘There’s nothing we can do’, he said.

I also tried to make some headway with the Conservative Party. I started attending meetings of the Cambridge branch and helping out with canvassing. I informed the local party leaders that I was a writer and campaigner, in the hope that they might be able to open a few doors for me. But again no doors were opened. I was never invited to speak at any events, even though I repeatedly volunteered to do so. I found this snub a bit strange. Perhaps I am being arrogant, but I would have thought that, with my background and my achievements, I might be something of an asset to a Conservative Party that is supposed to care about aspiration and social mobility. Apparently not.

There was only one time when my work with the Cambridge Conservatives presented me with a career opportunity, but a combination of fate and fickleness intervened to deprive me of it. The episode began at a branch meeting where an old man introduced himself to me by telling me I was ‘a breath of fresh air’. A very practical man with a long history of success in business and a keen interest in political philosophy, he was a sort of yin to my yang, if you like. He was one of the best people I ever met, and he ended up being one of the best friends I ever had. I soon found out that he was in the process of setting up a conference at Cambridge University to promote a topic which he called ‘Universal Responsibility’ – a pun which referred to both personal responsibility and the responsibility each person has towards others. I was honoured when he offered me an amazing job – to spend a year and half, on a generous salary, promoting the conference in advance then summarising its findings in a book. He told me that he could trust me to uphold his vision for the conference: to promote the much-neglected idea that conservative values can help solve collective problems. Of course, I eagerly accepted his offer. But then tragedy struck. He was diagnosed with terminal cancer and I watched him fade away and die within a matter of weeks. I read out the tributes at his funeral, a sad and surreal day. After his death, his wife, also a conservative, proceeded with the conference. However, she wasn’t as thick skinned as her husband. There were numerous left wing academics she needed to keep onside to make the conference viable. Afraid of provoking them, I presume, she quietly shelved my role within the proceedings, despite my awkward insistence that

my friend's wishes, indeed his dying wishes, should be honoured. The conference was a success and it went on to become an annual event, but without the guidance of my friend it degenerated into a socialist talking shop, which it remains to this day.

Another way in which I tried to make a success of my career as a conservative intellectual was by engaging with right-leaning journalists, writers, agents, publishers, newspapers and think tanks. Over the years, I have sent out countless emails and countless copies of my books to people whom I hoped might be able to assist me, whether by reviewing or promoting my work, or offering me a writing or speaking opportunity, or pointing me in the direction of other people who might be sympathetic to my ideas. I have also met numerous potential allies in person, striking up what I thought was a rapport with them. Alas, my attempt to engage with the existing conservative intelligentsia has borne little fruit. I was unable to find a publisher for the two books that I have written about conservatism – *Space to Create: A Writer's View on the Housing Crisis* and *Scapegoated Capitalism* – so I had to self-publish them, and they have received very little attention, although an honorary mention is due to James Delingpole who invited me onto his podcast and wrote a positive review of *Scapegoated Capitalism*.

Speaking of my relations with conservative writers, one particular episode makes me sad whenever I think about it. For many years I corresponded with a conservative writer who is a hero of mine. I sent him a copy of *Space to Create*, and I was pleased when he told me he had read it and it made him 'laugh'. He offered to put me in touch with an editor at a prestigious conservative journal where he himself was on the editorial board. He joked that he and his colleagues were 'old duffers'; they were looking to bring through some younger conservatives, as writers and editors. It sounded like a great prospect, and not just for me: I thought I could really help them out. I spoke on the telephone with the editor, and he gave me a bunch of suggestions for articles I could write, although he emphasised that these were just suggestions. One of his many ideas was for an article about how Brexit had, in his opinion, become 'tribal'. He himself was a Leaver but he felt that during the three years when Brexit was being delayed by the shenanigans of Remainers in Parliament, both sides had behaved in an uncivilised manner; both sides were at fault, he felt, and not just in Parliament, but throughout the whole country. He had come to this conclusion after he had had a bitter row with a female Remainder friend of his, who had been very unpleasant to him. I responded by politely disagreeing with his conclusion. I said I thought most Leavers had shown remarkable patience in the face of an assault on democracy itself, not to mention relentless personal abuse from many Remainers; on the whole, I opined, leavers were being reasonable not tribal. Feeling unable to write an article on a theme I disagreed with, I offered a suggestion of my own: perhaps I could write about the curious alliance between upper class and working class Leavers. The editor liked this idea, and we spent a while discussing it.

So, I wrote my article – 'Brexit, Working Pride, and Noblesse Oblige' – and you can read it on my blog. Unfortunately, you can't read the article in the prestigious conservative journal where it was supposed to be published, because they rejected it. I don't know why the editor didn't like my article. He sent me an email saying 'I am afraid I really did want an article about tribalism in politics to explain the extraordinary venom on both sides and the fact that either side has no insight (sic)'.

(Note: that's not what he originally told me on the phone. He told me this topic was a mere suggestion.) Another reason for the rejection, he continued in his email, was that I had mentioned my book *Space to Create* in my article and they were planning to review the book in the next issue. Well, that was good news. But I don't know why the book couldn't have been mentioned twice in the same issue. Or why I couldn't simply have deleted the reference to the book in my article. In truth, I think this was a smokescreen. Above all, the editor seemed to be irked that I had disagreed with him. He signed off his email by adding: 'You say you aren't convinced that leavers are tribal! Rest my case your honour!' Eh? Was that supposed to be some sort of clever rebuttal? Was he saying that you can't deny that Leavers are tribal without being a tribal Leaver yourself? A lame argument, if so! And anyway, why did my article have to support his views? Did he think I was some sort of rent-a-writer?

As it turns out, they didn't review *Space to Create* in the next issue. I have a feeling this was because I offended the editor. At one point I said to him that just because some Remainers were being unpleasant to Leavers this was no reason for Leavers to feel guilty; his angry Remainer friend had tried to bully him, I ventured. I guess he read between the lines: I was saying that he wasn't being brave enough in support of Brexit; I was saying that his conclusion that Leavers were being 'tribal' was an act of capitulation, even self-flagellation. I guess you shouldn't say something so uppity to a wise old Tory. But I'll never know for sure why the review of my book never materialised: he doesn't reply to my correspondence now. Nor, regrettably, does his colleague, the famous writer – my hero – who originally put us in touch. The whole episode was rather odd and depressing. One minute I was dreaming of being a colleague of theirs, keen to help them bring their excellent journal to a new audience, the next minute I was being lamely rebuked for not agreeing with the editor's lame views, while my own article was dismissed without explanation.

This wasn't the only time I've been invited to write an article by a conservative editor who has subsequently declined to publish it. The editor of a free market campaign website asked me to write an article arguing that National Socialism was a form of socialism. He had read one of my tweets in which I refuted the oft-cited myth that nationalists can't be socialists; history's most extreme socialist regimes were all extremely nationalistic, I had observed. The editor wanted me to elaborate on this point. So I wrote 'Hitler's Racist Socialism', which you can read on my blog. Once again, you can't read the article in the place where it was supposed to be published. On this occasion, the editor didn't even reject it explicitly. He just didn't publish it. During the ensuing weeks, I sent him numerous follow up emails, but he kept stalling me, saying he was planning to publish the article but he had been 'too busy with Brexit'. I gave up in the end. He still hasn't published the article.

I must say I haven't always found it easy to connect with conservatives in my personal life too, whether they're friends or acquaintances. Sometimes I find myself getting waffled at, and interrupted prolifically, when I talk politics with conservatives. I don't know if they're just offloading their angst onto me – maybe they're relieved that someone is finally being sympathetic towards them – or if they're trying to stop me from saying something that makes them feel uncomfortable. Other times I see their eyes glaze over while I'm speaking; I might as well be talking to a brick wall. The irony is, having spent years trying to reason with socialists in my personal life, I am

familiar with these kinds of shifty reactions. The main difference is that when socialists hear something they don't want to hear they typically become openly aggressive, or aggressively irrational, whereas conservatives just become a bit uneasy. There was one time when I was talking to a conservative friend, and I said something negative about socialism, and she suddenly took a sharp intake of breath and blustered: 'Oh, Ben. You just can't say that!' Other times, conservatives shake their heads and say: 'Gosh, you're more of a hardliner than me!'. One conservative lady went as far as telling me: 'Your problem is you have an allergy to socialism'. My problem? I'm the one with the problem, am I? Actually, I don't think there's anything wrong with refusing to capitulate to socialism. That's why I'm an admirer of Donald Trump, whose efforts to confront the hysterical left in the USA have been nothing short of heroic. Depressingly, Trump has elicited much disapproval from many conservatives; they call him 'uncouth', as though their own cravenness is not uncouth.

Conservatives are especially likely to start squirming if you say something negative about Islam. Anyone who has made any serious effort to learn about the doctrines and history of this totalitarian cult with its brutal, censorious founder Mohammed will know that the growing Islamic population in the UK does not bode well for our tolerant liberal democratic values. Unfortunately – no, it's not unfortunate: it's shameful – this appears to be one of those things you 'just can't say' to many conservatives. When you criticise Islam, conservatives are likely, more than ever, to indulge in neurotic blustering. After I recommended a few books about Islam to one of my conservative friends, she announced that I had become 'obsessed with religious extremism'. Apparently she couldn't even bring herself to say the word 'Islam', as though Islam couldn't possibly be singled out for criticism. Similarly, I have raised many a conservative eyebrow for my willingness to applaud the efforts of anti-Islam campaigner Tommy Robinson, a man who has done more than anyone in Britain to raise awareness about Islam. Many conservatives call him a 'thug', including many who understand that Islam is a threat to the West. I think Robinson deserves more respect, not least from people who say they care about defending freedom. Dismissing him as a thug makes his views sound thuggish, and they are not. Robinson is a rough diamond who is disseminating an important message. I'm sure there are plenty of people who could disseminate that message in a more sophisticated manner, but they are not brave enough to do so.

Sometimes conservatives try to convince me that they have my best interests at heart when they warn me against criticising Islam. After the London Bridge terrorist attack, one of my friends went as far as sending me a message pleading with me not to mention Islam on my twitter feed. I was due to attend a meeting with a conservative think tank a few days later, and my friend said she was worried that they wouldn't want to work with me if I publicly criticised Islam; 'please, please, please', she wrote. I didn't take her advice. Still, at least she was honest about her fears. Some people enter into a state of denial when they're thinking about Islam. I often chat to an elderly conservative man in my favourite café. A veteran of the Merchant Navy, he is no shrinking violet. He is an ardent supporter of freedom and British values, and he and I often discuss the perils of socialism and the EU. However, when I suggested to him that Islam, likewise, is a threat to our way of life, he wasn't having any of it. He just kept shaking his head. Then he launched into a story about how one of his Muslim

shipmates had defended him when another shipmate attacked him with a knife. Well, three cheers for that Muslim! Unfortunately, there was another side to the story, I discovered on enquiry: *the guy with the knife was also a Muslim – a much more extreme one*. My friend preferred to accentuate the positive. The negative, understandably, made him feel uneasy.

Tories are often keen to remind you that there are ‘moderate Muslims’. But people rarely stop to think about the implication of that phrase. Islam is the *only* religion that anyone feels the need to qualify with the term ‘moderate’, because Islam is the only religion whose core doctrines are immoderate, indeed supremacist. To see this, you only have to look at the human rights records of Muslim majority countries, and the fact that, according to the Democracy Index, none of these countries are ‘full democracies’ (most are ‘authoritarian regimes’). You only have to look at the (as I write) 37,013 deadly attacks carried out by Islamic terrorists worldwide since 9/11, and the fact the Sharia Law stipulates that apostasy from Islam is punishable by death. You only have to look at the Koran itself, with its many exhortations to violence. The people who remind you about ‘moderate Muslims’ are just changing the subject – from a fearful one to a more comforting one. Yes, there are moderate Muslims. I have met and worked with many myself, many of whom have been nice people. (I would say they were my friends, if Muslims were allowed to be friends with non-Muslims.) But the idea that moderate Muslims are at the vanguard of their religion is as misguided as the idea that moderate Nazis were at the vanguard of Nazism. Islamic Fundamentalists tend to set the overall agenda in Islam, not least because moderate Muslims are as frightened of the Fundamentalists as non-Muslims are. In all of this, people forget that moderate Muslims might actually be appreciative if we were more honest about Islam. They might even be appreciative if we debated their religion with them. By turning a blind eye to the immoderation of Islam, we decline to offer them a way out of their submission. Instead of presenting them with a cheerful and confident alternative, we mirror their own fears.

Of course, it doesn’t help that Islam is fiercely defended by today’s fascistic socialists. If the left didn’t keep reacting hysterically to any criticism of Islam, I think more conservatives would speak honestly about Islam, and, in doing so, they would openly object to the prospect of our Western values being gradually replaced by those of a totalitarian cult. You could argue all day long about which is the dominant partner in the alliance between socialism and Islam; each sees itself as a stick with which to beat the West. But conservatives, for their part, are above all terrified of the deafening socialist outcry that ensues whenever anyone in Britain says anything politically incorrect, on any topic, including Islam.

Too many Tories aren’t brave enough. I trust that you understand that I am not saying that all Tories lack bravery. There are many brave Tories and I salute them. Nor am I saying that cowardice is the only reason for the capitulation of conservatives to socialism. There are other reasons for the capitulation, some of which are hardly condemnable at all, and some of which are more condemnable than cowardice.

One of the less condemnable reasons is that Tories tend to be involved in the business world, which makes them wary of upsetting people who could be potential trading partners. If you want to trade with someone, you need to be conciliatory, find a compromise, establish a mutually beneficial arrangement: being confrontational is

liable to put people off. Ever since the Industrial Revolution, philosophers have noted the phenomenon of 'gentle commerce', the idea being that commerce tends to have a civilising effect on people, because trade and negotiation encourage people to be well-mannered and mindful of each other's needs and desires. However, if you are too gentle when you are dealing with someone who wants to dominate you, you are liable to become a pushover. If you are too willing to adopt the perspective of someone who isn't willing to adopt yours, you are liable to let yourself be undermined. I think conservatives have let themselves be dominated by British socialists in the same way that conservatives allowed Hitler to become dominant in the inter-war period. If you don't want to fight someone who is bullying you, you get bullied.

I also think the gentleness of conservatives has predisposed them to become appeasers in another sense: they have turned their attention away from the threat of socialism. For conservatives in Britain, commerce has been a winning strategy as well as a pleasant one; being gentle towards each other has made conservatives wealthy. You can imagine therefore why conservatives didn't want to divert any of their energies into a fruitless confrontation with socialism. Why make war when you can make hay? Unfortunately, while gentle conservatives grew rich together, the socialists grew more and more resentful, and, by encouraging the same emotion in others, more and more powerful. Conservatives were complacent, making hay in the sun while storm clouds brewed on the horizon.

You can also imagine why conservatives didn't want to spend much time fighting in the realm of ideas. Being conservatives, most of them were too busy engaging in useful practical activities. It was the socialists who were sitting around theorising and – which is pretty much the same thing if you're a socialist – complaining. Even those conservatives who did become intellectuals were probably influenced by the constructive attitude of their commercial counterparts, treating ideas like goods to be exchanged in a pleasant and conciliatory spirit, not like catchphrases to be recited as badges of group membership. Conservative intellectuals enriched themselves mentally and spiritually while socialist intellectuals griped and plotted, amassing supporters instead of knowledge.

And, so, gradually conservatism has become a philosophy of gentle wealthy people who don't know how to fight because they've never wanted to fight. It has also become a philosophy of comparatively old people, whose age is another understandable reason for them not wanting to fight. While socialists indoctrinated an army of disaffected young people, conservatives largely kept themselves to themselves, happy enough in each other's company, growing old and rich together. Now the army is massing at the gates, and a robust defence of freedom looks unlikelier than ever.

Relatedly, I think too many conservatives have tended to overlook the problems of young people. In particular, too many conservatives have failed to appreciate the devastating impact that the housing crisis has had on the younger generation. Young Britons are now faced with average house prices of above £230,000 and rents that are likewise three times higher than in previous generations: the average first time buyer in the UK pays a colossal £52,900 in rent before buying a house. Bear in mind that the average wage in the UK is around £30,000. For obvious reasons, people in their twenties are likely to earn less than this average. Hence, there are millions of low or

moderate earning young Britons who are looking to gain independence, settle down and start a family, in the prime of their lives, but who are faced with the prospect of spending years and years, if not decades, trying to save tens of thousands of pounds while living in an expensive room in a cramped shared house or while staying in their family home. When so many people have been deprived of the right to a normal life in their own country, I believe the situation deserves to be described as a humanitarian crisis.

You would think that conservatives, of all people, would be outraged by this situation: the housing crisis is, above all, a massive blow to the *freedom* of the younger generation. Moreover, conservatives are supposed to understand that widespread homeownership is the backbone of any capitalist society. Alas, when confronted with the evidence of the housing crisis, too many Tories fall back on their tried-and-trusted ‘pull your socks up’ rhetoric which is completely inappropriate in this context. When I comment on the housing crisis, I often receive responses from Tories who say that I am underestimating how ‘tough’ it was for them when they bought a house. They tell me and younger people that we are too ‘fickle’ to save money. They tell us about the ‘sacrifices’ they had to make when house prices were a third of today’s. They tell us we are ‘lazy’, even though they had to work much less hard than us to buy a house. *Are they for real?* Do they not pause to wonder how they’d have fared if buying a house had been much, much, much tougher for them? I call these people – Tories or otherwise – Housing Crisis Deniers. They display a breathtaking lack of empathy. They might as well be telling someone with no legs how tiring it is to walk around.

‘But’, I hear you say, ‘Many young people *are* fickle and lazy. Many of them did university degrees in subjects like Sociology, Philosophy, and Media Studies, and now they are too arrogant and addled to get proper jobs. And they vote Labour. And they advocate mass immigration. They deserve everything they get’. Yes, yes, I hear you: many young people are their own worst enemies. But note: maybe the reason why so many young people are fixated on graduate-level jobs is because mass immigration has saturated the market for lower paid jobs and pushed wages down even further than usual. Arguably it’s wise to aim high in your career when house prices are astronomically high. And if some young people are fickle and lazy, well, maybe that’s because they’re demoralised. Who wouldn’t be demoralised by the prospect of not being able to live a normal life in your own country? Maybe some young people advocate socialism and mass immigration because they see no other way out: they have been Stockholm Syndromed into supporting a system in which they are already trapped. Maybe, indeed, young people see no way out because so many conservatives have failed to empathise with them, treating them with contempt instead of offering them genuine wisdom and hope. As conservatives, we urgently need to reach out to young people. We need to convince them that conservatism is in their interests – whether conservative values like hard work and responsibility, or genuine conservative governance which would boost the life chances of young Britons by reducing immigration to sensible levels and unleashing the private sector to build more homes. Young people would be more receptive to conservatism if conservatives were more receptive to young people.

A further problem is that too many Tories aren't willing to talk honestly about immigration. By leaving the task to fringe parties like UKIP, or historical bogeymen like Enoch Powell, too many Tories have given socialists free reign to exclude this important topic from the mainstream, thus depriving young people of opportunities to understand the reality of their economic situation. All Tories ought to be aghast when people who defend the life chances of British youngsters are labelled racist. All Tories ought to point out that Britishness is a civic concept, not a racial concept. All Tories ought to condemn the nasty concept of 'white privilege' in the strongest possible terms. Unfortunately, there are generational factors in play here too, I suspect. Many Tories grew up in the post-war period when socialists began disseminating the false narrative that National Socialism was a 'far right' phenomenon. According to this narrative, any right winger who attempts to talk honestly about immigration immediately becomes 'far right' and gets lumped in with the Nazis. Understandably, Tories have been keen to avoid this fate; hence many of them have kept their mouths shut about immigration. For similar reasons, many Tories have shied away from criticising Islam, as though singling out a religion is always tantamount to Nazism. The socialists created a minefield, which many Tories were afraid to venture into.

This is why a proper understanding of National Socialism is so important in the current climate. Hitler was a racist socialist. He was no sort of right winger at all, never mind an extreme one. He was very much in favour of mass migration, so long as it involved Germans (or their allies) migrating into other people's countries. Hitler, like other totalitarian leaders, moved millions of migrants around the globe with reckless abandon, with no concern whatsoever for the rights of the usurped native populations. He was also very much in favour of Islam. He thought it was a bold fighting religion, far preferable to Christianity, which he accused of 'meekness and flabbiness'. And, as for his antisemitism, well, you may be surprised to learn that Hitler did not criticise the religious doctrines of Judaism. He hated Jews because he believed they were a capitalistic race. He wanted to strip Jews of their wealth and privilege. As he made abundantly clear, he was an antisemite because he was a socialist. In short, Hitler's racist socialism couldn't be further from the agenda that I have urged conservatives to adopt today, namely, to condemn racist socialism, to reject the anti-capitalist notion of 'white privilege', to oppose mass immigration into the UK, and to criticise the religious doctrines of Islam, including Islam's own antisemitism. The Tories who have accepted the ludicrous notion that National Socialism is an extreme form of conservatism have allowed a brazen lie to control their thinking, and as a result they have neglected to discuss some of the most important topics of our time.

There is a colossal irony here. By pandering to racist socialists so as to avoid the charge of being called 'far right', today's cowardly Tories have behaved exactly as many conservatives did under actual Nazism, namely, pandering to racist socialists! Moreover, in both cases, the pandering conservatives were motivated not only by fear; they hoped to benefit from supporting their enemies. There are many ways in which today's conservatives stand to benefit from supporting socialist policies. For a start, there is the fact that many Tories, as homeowners, have benefitted from the housing crisis. Having seen their properties increase threefold in value without lifting a finger,

maybe that's another reason why so many Tories have stayed quiet about mass immigration.

Tories have also generally stayed quiet about the Town and Country Planning Act, a restrictive piece of socialist legislation that has kept house prices high by preventing public and private builders from fulfilling Britain's housing demand. One of the most restrictive aspects of the Town and Country Planning Act was the creation of Green Belts – protected areas of countryside on the edges of expanding cities. Existing homeowners have supported Green Belts not only for financial reasons, but because most people would prefer to live near green fields rather than 'soulless' new housing estates. In my opinion, these people are somewhat hypocritical: all homes in Britain were originally built in the countryside. However, to be fair, there's also a laudable reason why many homeowners, including many Tories, have supported Green Belt legislation: they want to protect the natural world. Contrary to popular belief, there is a longstanding green tradition within conservatism. The natural world is among the many things that conservatives seek to conserve, especially the fabled 'green and pleasant land' of Britain. For this reason, many Tories are generally supportive of the modern environmentalist movement, despite its domination by socialists who are hell bent on seizing control of the economy. Some Tories have even benefited financially from environmentalism; many landowners have been paid by the government to erect windfarms on their land, and many businesses have received subsidies for diversifying into green products and services. Sadly, the green credentials of modern environmentalism are not entirely robust, as the wind farm example illustrates: wind turbines are ugly and woefully inefficient, and they kill bats and birds in great numbers. And many other 'green' technologies, likewise, have negative environmental impacts. In his excellent book *Watermelons* James Delingpole has argued convincingly that, on the whole, environmentalism has been more of a friend to socialism than to nature, the socialists, as ever, standing to gain by extracting wealth from the economy in the name of the so-called greater good. Modern environmentalism increasingly resembles the control-obsessed eco-fascism of the Nazis. But many Tories have jumped onboard anyway.

Environmentalism is not the only area where the agendas of conservatives and socialists have overlapped. Conservatives tend to be found in greatest numbers among businesspeople, and many businesses support mass immigration because they want to drive their labour costs down. Established businesses also tend support the existing government bureaucracy insofar as the current regulations discourage competition by discouraging innovation. And this is just the tip of the iceberg of collusion between the public and private sectors. We have already seen that private companies have been tasked with delivering public services. Conversely, the government has handed out perks to selected businesses in exchange for promoting its own socialist agenda. In all of this, businesspeople, including many conservatives, have had to kowtow to socialism to get ahead. The socialists who dominate the public sector are now dominating the private sector. You could say that socialism has colonised the private sector. This may sound paradoxical, but in fact there is nothing unusual about it. No socialist regime in history has operated without the support of at least some businesses, because socialism itself is hopelessly impractical. Socialist regimes designate certain businesses as 'licensed traders', the biggest businesses usually being

favoured, because they are more powerful yet also the easiest to manage. In turn, the more powerful the socialists become, the more businesses are willing to come on board, exchanging their freedom for the continuation of their livelihoods or even their lives. Given enough time to exert its control, socialism masters the private sector as a rider masters a horse, albeit a big fat rider that gradually cripples the horse.

Again, it is illustrative to consider the example of Nazi Germany. Sometimes you hear people say that the political spectrum ‘loops round’ at its extremes, the ‘far right’ meeting the ‘far left’. Supposedly this is the only way to explain how a National Socialist regime that was supported by so many businesspeople, including many conservatives, could have ended up becoming a totalitarian state. But the nonsensical notion of a looping political spectrum becomes unnecessary when we understand that socialists *always* seek the support of businesspeople; the National Socialists were no exception. Indeed, Hitler’s racism made him particularly determined to court the business world. He believed that the Jews had divided Germany against itself. He believed that the Jews had incited class war by promoting both capitalism and communism. He believed that his socialist attack on the Jews would only succeed if he could entice the whole of Germany, including its businesspeople, into the agenda of National Socialism. In his own words, Hitler wanted to ‘convert the German Volk to socialism without simply killing off the old individualists’. Sadly, too many German conservatives went along with him. They succumbed to a combination of browbeating and cajoling.

The political system in which socialists and businesses collude is sometimes called ‘crony capitalism’. Really it should be called ‘crony socialism’ – or just socialism for short. Whatever you call it, the socialists are in charge, which is precisely why their private sector cronies are willing to collude with them. Granted, not every colluding conservative deserves to be described as an outright socialist. Some conservatives are willing to compromise their principles only occasionally, unavoidably and reluctantly. However, some conservatives pander to socialism with such alacrity and consistency that one could reasonably conclude that they have abandoned conservatism entirely.

Why do some conservatives sell their souls to socialism? Are some conservatives predisposed in some way to feel that they deserve unaccountable power? These are awkward questions – with awkward answers. When I was a socialist, I was told that Tories are snobs, cliquey people who believe that they are better than everyone else. I was told that Tories assume that they have an automatic right to govern, to lord it over working people. Of course, now I know how utterly hypocritical these accusations were. Socialism is the most snobbish system of government imaginable. Socialists pretend to care about the poor so as to keep the poor poor while making themselves richer. You could almost define socialism as a superiority complex. But note: just because socialists are hypocrites this doesn’t mean that they are the only snobs in politics. It takes one to know one, after all! Having spent enough time around conservatives to get a sense of who they really are, now I think the socialists were onto something. I am not saying *all* Tories are snobs; I have personally met many humble and unassuming Tories. But I do think *some* Tories are snobs. I am talking about Tories who look down on working people. Tories who, being deliberately aloof, have no insight into the struggles that working people face. Tories who are obsessed

with one-upmanship because deep down, like all snobs, they feel insecure about their status. Tories who are so status-obsessed that they are willing to sacrifice their principles when offered a chance to collude with powerful people. Irony of ironies, I think some Tories are so snobbish they are willing to sell their souls to socialism.

Perhaps, indeed, there are some snobbish Tories who never had to sell their souls, because they were socialists all along. In his masterful work, *The Lost Literature of Socialism*, George Watson notes that there have always been conservatives who wholeheartedly supported socialism. Socialism predates Marx by a century, going back to the Industrial Revolution when capitalism was in its infancy. In those days, capitalism was considered radical, a forward-looking system that shook up established hierarchies and traditions. It was socialism that was considered reactionary, a nostalgic system designed to return people to a state of harmony, both with nature and with each other. For this reason, socialism held an appeal to many aristocrats who wanted to preserve their old ways and privileges. Even after Marx, with his rallying call to the proletariat, socialism remained an elitist doctrine. Marx and Engels understood, as Lenin did, that a socialist economy based on collectivised farms couldn't function without an educated elite who were capable of making plans and decisions on behalf of the majority. Amazingly, 22 per cent of the Russian gentry supported the Bolshevik revolution, while, conversely, many Marxists in the UK went as far as calling themselves Tories. George Bernard Shaw, for instance, explained that 'all socialists are Tory' because 'the Tory is a man who believes that those who are qualified by nature and training for public work, and who are naturally a minority, have to govern the mass of the people'. Another notable fact is that many of history's most extreme socialist regimes spawned hereditary castes. In practice socialism repeatedly became a hive of nepotism as well as cronyism. As Watson concludes: 'Socialism was from its origins a hierarchical doctrine, and it habitually venerated aristocracy and leadership'.

Watson's fascinating book is a reminder that the Conservative Party likely contains some wholehearted conservative socialists who believe that the role of a proper conservative is to govern as a socialist. When these people call themselves 'conservatives' what they mean is that they are socialists. They are not exactly being duplicitous so much as disagreeing with other Tories about the meaning of the term conservatism. Having said that, I also suspect that there are some duplicitous socialists in the Conservative Party. I defy anybody to look at the record of Britain's recent conservative governments and not wonder if the Conservative Party was, to some extent, being deliberately subverted by fifth columnists whose role was to pretend to be conservative while steering Britain ever closer to communism. If I am right, then amongst all these hidden communists, conservative socialists, and soul-selling conservatives, the Conservative Party is in a sorry state indeed.

Still, I don't want to get carried away with this idea. The Conservative Party, on the whole, remains a party of individualists, I believe. But here's yet another irony: even the individualism of conservatives may dispose them, in a limited sense, to capitulate to socialism. The problem is that some individualists may not be inclined to make sacrifices for the common good, and, in the current climate, a willingness to confront socialism is one such sacrifice. Granted, when I say the 'common good' I am aware that some conservatives may reject the phrase altogether, believing that it has

been completely tarnished by socialism. I sympathise with their point: socialists are con artists, and when they use the phrase the ‘common good’ they have no such thing in mind. But I do think we should retain the term because the whole point of conservatism is that there can be no common good without freedom. We are all better off as individuals when we grant each other the right to be free. In other words, a proper understanding of the common good reveals that the term is, by definition, self-limiting; whatever is in our best interests collectively – for instance, an impartial legal system, or a strong military – the domain of our collective interest must never undermine our freedom, otherwise the common good has itself been undermined. Most conservatives understand this. I believe they should continue to speak about the common good. In turn, I believe that more conservatives should make a greater personal commitment to the common good. As well as being proud of Britain’s tradition of freedom, more conservatives should make a personal effort to defend and promote that tradition. More conservatives should stick their head above the parapet and declare themselves supporters of freedom. More conservatives should argue with socialists, painstakingly explaining why socialism is unworkable and unreasonable. Yes, socialists often become aggressive, irrational and abusive when you challenge them; they can be incredibly frustrating to argue with. But that’s my point. More Tories should be brave enough to make the case for conservatism and take the flak. And if the socialists themselves won’t see sense, then perhaps a few neutral bystanders will. Freedom doesn’t come for free. People who love freedom have to accept that the responsibility for supporting and propagating freedom is theirs. More conservatives need to ask themselves not what freedom can do for them, but what they can do for freedom.

When I think back to the muted reception that my work as a writer has received from conservatives, now I think I understand the reason. In general, I do not write for conservatives. I write for socialists. I campaign. I do the very thing that makes Shy Tories uncomfortable: engage with socialists. For me, this has been a natural development. Almost everyone I’ve ever known, whether family, friends or colleagues, has been a socialist – which is why, when I write, I feel as though I am still addressing socialists. I used to talk shop with them. Now I try to change their minds. One of my old friends told me that reading my work felt like being ‘hugged and beaten up at the same time’. I was secretly proud of that comment because I believe that socialists themselves will ultimately benefit from abandoning their dismal ideology, even if they have to accept a few hard truths along the way. I just wish that more conservatives were willing, like me, to engage with socialists, to practice the ‘tough love’ that you hear so much about in conservatism.

Conservatives need to regain their confidence. They need to stop pandering to socialism and start standing up to it, arguing against it, and rejecting it. They need to embrace the task of promoting and defending conservatism. They need to explain why conservatism is in everyone’s interests. In doing so, conservatives need to work together to counter the mobbishness of socialists. For all their talk of togetherness, socialists end up atomising society. The more that socialists denounce other people (and each other), the less anyone trusts each other. Collective responsibility turns people into mutual spies, not fellow citizens. In contrast, there is a long tradition of benign communitarianism within conservatism. The conservative philosopher

Edmund Burke spoke of ‘little platoons’, that is, local community organisations in which real people support each other, work together on shared projects, and create a harmonious social atmosphere. Little platoons promote freedom by taking power away from socialist bureaucrats and putting it back in the hands of the people to whom it belongs. David Cameron knew this, which is why he came up with his Big Society proposal. Oddly, his proposal received a lukewarm reception from many conservatives. Perhaps this was another instance of conservatives being reluctant to contribute to the common good. Or, more likely, they were just wallowing in the atomisation caused by socialism. Either way, conservatives need to rediscover their tradition of communitarianism. At a time when we are being told that venturing within two metres of each other is a threat to civilisation, we need to remember that, in fact, civilisations are built on social capital and trust. The Swedes always understood this, which is why they kept their country relatively open during the coronapanic. Their legendary communitarianism (not their ‘socialism’) gave them the strength and the desire to protect their freedom. As lovers of freedom, we conservatives need to take note. To protect our freedom, we need to form communities which embody our principles. We need to form communities which actively campaign for our principles.

These days, I consider myself a Radical Moderate. Any proper conservative is a moderate, because anyone who cherishes freedom realises that freedom comes from mutual tolerance and trust: if we want to be free, we have to allow each other to be free. But now I believe that too many conservatives are not being robust enough in their defence of freedom. They need to be more radical in their moderation. They need to argue and mobilise in support of conservatism. Their country needs them. The coronapanic debacle has seen the entire UK population placed under house arrest on the basis of a few nebulous slogans the likes of which any communist propagandist would be proud. Great swathes of the economy have been wantonly trashed, yet our cronyistic government has allowed many big businesses to continue trading on the pretence that they are helping us all ‘pull together’. Socialists throughout the public sector have idled at home, luxuriating in their fears, living off taxpayer-funded salaries, while angrily demanding more of the same. Young people, many of whom have no idea anyway what independence is like, have numbly acquiesced in the madness. And many Tories have supported the government’s draconian measures, as though health totalitarianism were a standard conservative policy. What’s next? Goodness knows. The coronapanic is like a lava lamp; it goes on and on, evolving, shifting, bulging; you never know what shape it will take next. And even if we do manage to extract ourselves from this particular debacle, further struggles await us. We need to defend freedom in the face of the housing crisis, mass immigration, the expansionism of the EU, the growth of Islam, and the ongoing racist nonsense of today’s fascistic socialists. We need to engage with people on all these topics, speak out confidently on behalf of freedom, support each other, and do what is right. The days which lie ahead of us are bitter ones. Let us not blink.

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