

Worse than fiction

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Will there always be an England? Keir Starmer's Labour Party has put the answer to that question very much in doubt. The prime minister's strategy seems to be to look around for dystopian novels and then try out their plots in real life. We've had occasion in recent months to discuss how Britain's politicians and police force seem to have seized upon George Orwell's *Animal Farm* and *Nineteen Eighty-Four* and taken them as how-to manuals to suppress free speech in order to further the goals of various woke nostrums. Thus was a woman in Newcastle arrested recently for standing quietly on the street while holding a sign that read "Fight The Government Not Each Other."

You have to be awfully careful about what you say or write in Starmer's Britain. The latest development is the possibility of instituting blasphemy laws. Speaking in the House of Commons recently, the Labour MP Tahir Ali asked: "Will the prime minister commit to introducing measures to prohibit the desecration of all religious texts and the prophets of the Abrahamic religions?" Starmer indicated that he would consider it.

Such developments, along with the untrammelled Muslim immigration, give weight to Vice President-elect J. D. Vance's speculation that "the first truly Islamist country" to get a nuclear weapon might not be Iran or Pakistan but Britain under the Labour leadership of Starmer. James Murray, a Treasury minister, responded that "in Britain, we're very proud of our diversity." Noted.

Following the violent anti-immigration riots in Southport last summer, a House of Commons committee on science and technology announced that it wanted to call Elon Musk, who owns X (formerly Twitter), to account for "social media, misinformation and harmful algorithms." (Musk responded that the committee members "will be summoned to the United States of America to explain their censorship and threats to American citizens.")

At the end of November, Starmer gave an extraordinary speech in which he admitted that Britain's immigration policies were an "open- borders experiment." He blamed the Tories, even though the floodgates were opened under Tony Blair when he, Starmer, was beavering away on the legal front to make it all happen.

The truth is, Britain's recent immigration policy has resembled something out of Jean Raspail's *Camp of the Saints* (1973). That novel imagines a world in which Western civilization is overrun and destroyed by unfettered third-world immigration. It describes an instance of wholesale cultural suicide in which demography is weaponized and deployed as an instrument of retribution. Conspicuous in that apocalypse is the feckless collusion of Europeans in their own supersession. They faced an existential crossroads. "To let them in would destroy us," Raspail wrote. "To reject them would destroy them." The Europeans choose extinction, laced with the emotion of higher virtue, rather than survival.

Preserving that emotion of virtue is paramount to the Labour Party, which is why Britain under Starmer has upped the ante on wokeness and censorship, viciously suppressing the expression of any opinions that contradict the regime narrative.

What if you are old, or sick, or just plain inconvenient? Starmer's government has a plan for you, too. It's called euthanasia. Lawmakers in the House of Commons voted 330 to 275 to support a bill legalizing it. Did they consult Evelyn Waugh's *Love Among the Ruins: A Romance of the Near Future* for the idea? The book was published in 1953, so it has taken only about seventy years for fact to mimic fiction. "In the New Britain which we are Building," one of Waugh's characters says, "there are no criminals. There are only victims of inadequate social services."

Waugh's protagonist is Miles Plastic, a sort of porter at one of the scores of euthanasia centers dotting the country. Although not part of the original 1945 Health Service, Waugh explains, such facilities had by degrees become "key" departments, "designed to attract votes from the aged and mortally sick. Under the Bevan-Eden Coalition the Service came into general use and won instant popularity. The Union of Teachers was pressing for its application to difficult children."

Of course, Waugh was a satirist. Children would never be eligible for this "service." Or maybe they would. We note that a Canadian judge just cleared the way for a twenty-seven-year-old woman to end her life with the help of her doctors. Perhaps this was the sort of thing that Nigel Farage, the leader of the Reform UK party, had in mind when he wrote, "I voted against the assisted dying bill, not out of a lack of compassion but because I fear that the law will widen in scope. If that happens, the right to die may become the obligation to die." Welfare and palliative care are so expensive. A pill or an injection, though, is quick, painless—and cheap.

It is that sort of thought that prompted one wise academic to observe that

Assisted suicide bills are always sold to the public as increasing autonomy and preserving dignity when we all know they do the opposite: they prey on the weakest and most vulnerable among us, precisely by denying their inviolable dignity and seeing them as better off dead.

Right on cue, a news report tells us that "terminally ill pensioners could end their lives earlier to spare loved ones six-figure tax bills under assisted-dying legislation." Check out before seventy-five years of age and your pension is passed on free of income tax.

How long will the PM last? His approval rating has collapsed from eleven points favorable immediately following his election last summer to thirty-eight points unfavorable in the middle of October. More than 2.8 million people have signed a petition calling for a new general election. One satirist captured the national mood with the observation that "Keir Starmer reiterates that England is a democratic nation and will arrest all those who signed the petition for new elections." That was fiction. But in today's Britain, fiction has a way of anticipating reality.