

Liz Truss was in Maryland with an explanation for her historically-short, 50-day tenure as UK Prime Minister.

Scott Lucas

Truss — whose stay in 10 Downing Street was infamously shorter than the shelf life of a lettuce — did not mention the impending economic catastrophe which she wrought in only a few weeks. She did not reflect on how she presented Britons with soaring mortgages and energy costs, or how she lost the confidence of businesses and financial markets as well as that of many Conservative Party colleagues.

Instead, she told the [Conservative Political Action Conference](#) that she was undone by the nefarious “deep state”.

What I did face was a huge establishment backlash and a lot of it actually came from the state itself.

What has happened in Britain over the past 30 years is power that used to be in the hands of politicians has been moved to quangos and bureaucrats and lawyers so what you find is a democratically elected government actually unable to enact policies.

Asked what “quango” means, Truss drove home the language of her conspiracy theory.

A quango is a quasi non-governmental organisation. In America, you call it the administrative state or the deep state. But we have more than 500 of these quangos in Britain and they run everything.

Among Truss’s villains were the Environment Agency — “environmental extremists” — the Office for Budget Responsibility, the Bank of England, and the Judicial Appointments Commission.

There’s a whole bunch of people – and I describe them as the economic establishment – who fundamentally don’t want the status quo to change because they’re doing quite fine out of it,” she maintained. “They don’t really care about the prospects of the average person in Britain, and they didn’t want things to change and they didn’t want that power taken away.”

But it wasn’t just the ex-Prime Minister’s words that portended her import of the politics of destruction. It was the company she was keeping.

Alongside her on a panel was Nigel Farage — former head of the UK Independence/Brexit/Reform Party and hanger-on with Donald Trump’s camp since summer 2016 — desperately seeking a path back into political relevance.

Hosting her the next day was [Steve Bannon](#), the self-proclaimed architect of destruction and the spectre of the “deep state” as CEO of the attack site Breitbart and then Trump’s chief strategist in 2016-2017.

He egged her on: “Was it The Economist that got you? Was it The Financial Times? The City of London?” He welcomed her: “Are you a conspiracy theory person? You’re MAGA [Trump’s Make America Great Again].”

He promoted her book, “10 Years to Save the West: Leading the Revolution Against The Globalists” — a factually-empty but politically-loaded label favored by Bannon — “The Socialists and The Liberal Establishment.”

Then Bannon brought out his long-time spectral menace, aided by Nigel Farage: “He said yesterday that you’re going to have a radical Islamic party have seats in Commons in the next election. Is that true?”

Truss took the bait: “You have a by-election next week [in Rochdale], and it could be a radical Islamic party winning.”

Bannon pressed ahead, “Rochdale is the one with the rape situation, the grooming situation? You may have a radical jihadist party?”

He praised a white supremacist with a lengthy criminal record: “Tommy Robinson, all these heroes fought it.”

Truss said simply, “That is correct. That is correct.”

The US Far Right’s Second Coming?

Despite the puffing by Bannon — and a column for Fox in which she railed about “wokeism”, “extreme identity politics”, “zealous degrowth environmentalism”, and “so-called trans ideology” — Truss is unlikely to be the standard-bearer for the politics of destruction.

For some at CPAC, the [former Liberal Democrat](#) didn’t pass the loyalty test. Bannon’s ally Raheem Kassam trashed her as too leftist to be on stage. Joe Proenza, the political director of the “American Principles Project”, sniffed:

Why are you here? There’s literally nothing you share with conservatives in America, besides some vague tax policy agreements we might have. What are you doing here?

He chided that she was likely at the conference longer than she was in 10 Downing Street.

But Truss could be the stalking horse for the diehard far-right politician that follows. After all, this isn’t Bannon’s first attempt to tear down the system in Europe and the UK as well as in the US.

In summer 2018, Bannon and other Trumpists launched The Movement to gain influence across the European continent. They courted the Bosnian Serb leader Željka Cvijanović and far-right politicians such as Hungary’s Viktor Orbán, Italy’s Matteo Salvini, France’s Marine Le Pen, Geert Wilders of the Netherlands, and Farage.

The effort fizzled on the continent. After years of court battles, Bannon was blocked from establishing the “Academy for the Judaeo-Christian West”. Leader after leader in the far right — Alexander Gauland of Germany’s AfD; the Freedom Party of Austria’s Harald Vilimsky; Le Pen — rejected The Movement as an “American conception”. Even the UK Independence Party, with Farage on political hiatus, said Bannon’s approach “doesn’t fit”.

But there was success in Britain. For months, Bannon and the Trump camp promoted Boris Johnson — who had resigned as Foreign Secretary — as a prospective “great Prime Minister” to replace Theresa May, derided as too soft in Brexit negotiations with the European Union. Bannon set up a headquarters in London; Donald Trump Sr. sneered at May in high-profile interviews with the UK press; and Donald Trump Jr. even chipped in with an editorial in The Daily Telegraph.

Once in 10 Downing Street, Johnson adopted Trumpian tactics to bluster and bully his way through the system. He derided agencies, tried to overrun Parliament by proroguing it, and then

whipped up a tabloid frenzy against the judiciary when the High Court blocked his effort. He maintained a loose connection with reality, to the point of being “economical with the truth” in the House of Commons, until his abuse of Coronavirus regulations caught up with him and forced his resignation in summer 2022.

So it was more than a blast from the past to discover that [Johnson, also seeking his way back from political disgrace](#), He did not seek the stage like Truss, but he was telling The Sun, with no hint of a tongue in his cheek:

When you look back at Trump’s last term in office there is little doubt that the world felt safer and calmer and more stable....

A lot of nice well-meaning people are quivering like smacked blancmanges at the idea of a new Trump presidency, I am not quite sure why they are so alarmed.

Will the UK’s Ramparts Hold?

For now, the British ramparts against the politics of destruction still stand — just.

Truss’s stunt in the States already seems to have gone the way of her oxymoronic “Popular Conservatives” show earlier this month with wannabe 17th-century aristocrat Jacob Rees-Moggs and Lee Anderson, the disgraced former deputy chairman of the Conservative Party.

Anderson’s subsequent plea for attention, declaring that “Islamists” control London Mayor Sadiq Khan, has finally been condemned by Prime Minister Rishi Sunak after many in the Conservative Party expressed their disdain.

But what happens if a more capable politician fires the next volley against the ramparts? What if Suella Braverman — dismissed as Home Secretary last November for claiming that the Metropolitan Police was biased in favour of protesters supporting Palestine — took up the Bannanite rhetoric? Or Priti Patel? Or Kemi Badenoch? Or Johnson?

In February 2017, Bannon invoked, “Lenin wanted to destroy the state and that’s my goal too. I want to bring everything crashing down and destroy all of today’s establishment.”

Having escaped prison through a pre-emptive pardon by Donald Trump, he nodded with encouragement as Liz Truss — who may or may not have heard of Vladimir Ilyich Lenin — railed about “extreme leftists” in the UK system.

Then he asked the audience, “Do we think Liz is tough enough to turn England around? Can we hear it for her?”

They whooped. She beamed.