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Britain

Gary Lineker and the tweet that made the BBC tremble

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On 7 March, Gary Lineker, English football star in the 1980s, wrote in a tweet: “There is no huge influx. We take far fewer refugees than other major European countries. This is just an immeasurably cruel policy directed at the most vulnerable people in language that is not dissimilar to that used by Germany in the 30s, [...]”.

Judging that its “impartiality rules” had been breached, the BBC decided to “withdraw” the former sportsman who had become the star host of “Match of the Day”, its Saturday night football programme.

A violently anti-migrant policy

In the face of the outcry and the refusal of other sports presenters to take part in the programme in solidarity with Lineker, the BBC management quickly changed its mind, but did not spare itself a terrible humiliation. Lineker was pointing to the bigoted rhetoric and anti-refugee measures of the Sunak government’s current Home Secretary, Suella Braverman. In order to attack the right to asylum, justify her challenge to the European Convention on Human Rights and “push the boundaries of international law”, Braverman has not hesitated to claim that “100 million” asylum seekers could converge on the UK if her measures are not adopted.

Lineker is not the first to be concerned about this racist euphoria: in early January, 83-year-old Joan Salter, a survivor of the Holocaust, and one of Braverman’s constituents, publicly challenged the minister that her language reminded her of the language used by the Nazis to justify the murder of her family. Braverman felt she had nothing to apologise for.

Braverman’s plans follow on from ten years of a legislative onslaught on migration issues: the Hostile Environment Act from 2012 under then Home Secretary Theresa May, the 2014, 2016, 2021 Acts, and the 2022 Migration and Economic Development Partnership with Rwanda, which is intended to be a land of permanent deportation for migrants risking their lives attempting to cross the Channel. And incidentally, it is in the light of this policy that the cooperation agreement signed between Darmanin and Braverman, and the embrace of Macron and Sunak on the steps of the Élysée in March 2023, should be read.

“Independence” of the BBC?

This little story is also an opportunity to revise the laughable fairy tale of the “independence” and “impartiality” of the BBC, run since 2012 by a former Tory elected official and chairman of a Tory association, Tim Davie, and chaired by a multi-millionaire, Richard Sharp (fortune estimated at £100 million), Sunak’s former boss at Goldman Sachs, an adviser to the same during the pandemic, and appointed by Johnson, whose collaborator he was in the London Town Hall. An “independence” that respects the tradition: if you think of the zeal with which the BBC’s first Director General, John Reith, helped to break the General Strike of May 1926, and also of his undisguised admiration for Hitler and the Nazis, you will understand that at the BBC, “the 1930s” is a subject best avoided.

Finally, Lineker managed to say in one tweet what Labour’s leaders will never say in a hundred. It is true that for Starmer, Reeves or Cooper, it is urgent to explain that the problem with the government is that it does not deport

enough, not fast enough. Dark times.

Translated by **International Viewpoint** from [l'Anticapitaliste](#).

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