

that with McSweeney gone and a real stink developing around Labour Together, all of the careerists in the cabinet that looked possible a few months ago now look really dodgy because they are either Labour Together too or have been up Mandelson's arse since they were first elected. So that brings us to Al Carns. He's a bit like the political version of Andy Windsor being 8th in line to the throne, without the child rape allegations. Come to think of it, Al is starting to look like the guy in that movie (King Ralph I think?) where the Royals all get electrocuted by a photographer and he gets to be the King of England!

On the face of it he has everything you would expect. He looks a bit like Action Man. He loves talking up war with Russia and makes creepy comments about developing plans to "prepare the entire nation for an existential crisis". The rumour going round is that he even has that most Churchill-like of qualifications; a previous military career involving a massive fuck-up and large numbers of dead soldiers. The story goes that he was in charge of the Krynky Operation in Ukraine from late 2023 to early 2024. They say it was pitched by the military brass as an "amphibious charge of the light brigade", building a beachhead to move out towards Crimea. Did anyone check if the Ukrainian soldiers could swim? Nah, that would require reading the brief and applying some common sense. The upshot was that the Ukrainians got into difficulties and couldn't be re-supplied, were beyond friendly air cover and over 1,000 of them died in complete failure. So naturally our mate Al was given a DSO and offered the choice of a promotion or a medal.

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The Conservatives have tried this sort of thing before with military officers and it doesn't seem to work very well for them. Iain Duncan-Smith actually became party leader, but he was so dull that Michael Howard looked exciting in comparison. Penny Mordaunt looked good for a while, and she can hold a sword for a long time without dropping it, but it's too hard to hide the fact that she belongs in the Liberal Democrats. Then you have the school rugby captain types who are all ego, self-promotion and shit for brains like Tom Tugendhat and Johnny Mercer. Rory Stewart is another one, but he probably wouldn't have made the school rugby team at all. Weedy guys like him would have been made do cross-country instead, when he would really have been happier in the chess club or something. Put someone like him through the military and you get this curious mix of a guy who tries to prove his physical prowess by walking across Asia or some nonsense, followed by a steady stream of faux-intellectual utterances and occasional attention-seeking behaviour. Totally unsuitable as a Tory leader, of course. The Lib Dems should take him and Penny as a job lot. They could do with the headlines and photo ops.

We weren't planning to make the mistake in the Labour Party of having an actual leadership contest with any uncertainty involved, but with Labour Together going down the toilet there is a real fear that someone with left wing views might actually get on the ballot, which would be a disaster because they'd get elected if it went to the members. So Carns is now looking like our main option, even though he hasn't actually said much to give us a clue about his politics. Apart from loyalty to Israel (tick), obsession with Russia (tick) and a belief in more military spending (tick), nobody seems to know what he thinks. He worked as an advisor for three Conservative cabinet ministers and had no known links to the Labour party before he popped up as an MP, so probably it's just as well that we don't hear much from him until we get him installed as PM and he is surrounded by people who can tell him what to say. When I say about Labour Together going to shit, I don't actually mean we intend to go away. We'll just probably fade into the shadows for a while and then pop up later with a new name.

The media softening up process has been steadily going on in the background. Dan Hodges did a taster spread on him in the Mail in the autumn. There was no backlash so weâ??ve been â??encouragingâ?? (aka â??plantingâ??) a bunch of stories since then in various compliant outlets with the general aim of creating a candidate that looks really great in comparison to Starmer (no smart remarks, please). Mostly the stories were OK, except the Evening Standard took the brief a bit literally and quoted Rory Stewart saying that â??even soldiers are a bit scared of how brave he isâ??. Ewww! Weâ??ve had some people who manage the comments boards of the newspapers reporting that theyâ??ve had to scrub comments that this is a deep state operation, but nothing we canâ??t handle so far. I take issue with this term â??deep stateâ?? anyway. Iâ??ve known loads of people in politics that are former military, I know all the Labour Together people and the various bods around here that are obviously connected to MI5 or MI6 or whatever, and the one thing I can say with certainty is that to a man and to a woman, they are all really effing shallow. I include myself in that, of course!

Best,

Tony

By [Tony Gordstein](#)

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