

EUROMILLIONS

By Alexandra Belias
Political Correspondent

Did you ever hear on the news about those illegal immigrants in Morocco who were gunned down by border guards when they attempted to cross into Spanish territory?

Or about the Chinese in France working in the black market? Or even in Cardiff, about the Albanian women obliged to prostitute themselves?

Though it is difficult to establish an exact figure, it is believed that between 500,000 and 700,000 people are trafficked each year, earning criminals £8-15 billion. People smuggling has become the third most prosperous criminal activity behind drugs and arms dealing.

But most worrying are the conditions in which the smuggling occurs. For many immigrants seeking to escape poverty and unemployment, Europe has become the only viable option for economic salvation. National borders seem

families in Africa who invested all their money in hope of a better future.

Illegal immigration is no longer a domestic issue but a European one. Since the Schengen Agreement, which implemented the free circulation of persons, it is obvious that European states need to cooperate in order to curb illegal immigration.

But such cooperation is easier said than done. Italy's extreme right-wing Northern League leader Umberto Bossi's suggestion that the Italian navy should use cannons to prevent African migrants from reaching Italian shores shows that the political leaders don't really know how to deal with immigration.

The EU's efforts to counter illegal immigration has so far focused largely on strengthening border controls and procedures for expelling illegal migrants; but putting up barbed wire is not a solution. Deporting illegal immigrants to transit camps outside Europe is not a long-term answer either.



SO CLOSE, YET SO FAR: A Moroccan-Spanish border checkpoint

unable to stop undocumented migrants who are ready to risk their lives in order to have a happier future.

After walking for weeks across the Sahara, after destroying their papers in order not to be recognized, after being hidden in lorries for days without food or water, only a few African immigrants actually reach the Mediterranean Sea alive. To cross the Straits of Gibraltar is another challenge. The corpses of those who dare to cross are collected daily by the Coastguard.

Illegal immigration is no longer just a domestic issue

Those lucky enough to arrive in Europe face a daily struggle to find lodging, gain employment, and most of all, to avoid expulsion. We often hear about illegal Chinese or African immigrants found drowned or asphyxiated after one of these highly dangerous trips, but we should also think about their ruined

In fact, to find a solution, Europe needs to look seriously into the reasons - poverty, underdevelopment, armed conflict and political instability - that force Africans to leave their homeland for greener pastures.

Whilst European leaders' first thought was to end aid to countries that wouldn't help them tackle illegal immigration, they further decided that promoting the development of the continent is the only way to really end the problem.

Besides, in the enlarged Europe, the new frontiers are even more difficult to protect. Since their entry into the EU Eastern Europe, Cyprus and Malta have seen their numbers of illegal immigrants soar.

Many migrants were told that Cyprus was the secret passage to enter the European fortress; but they are now obliged to stay in Cyprus, which has not yet joined the Schengen area.

This is a problem that needs dealing with now. What would happen if Turkey eventually joined the EU? Europe would then border Syria, Iran, Iraq, Georgia, Armenia and Azerbaijan.

Political leaders face a simple choice: deal with immigration now, or pay the price later.

Voting In vogue

By Andy Rennison
Deputy Political Editor

Over the past decade, Westminster has given us few political certainties. From Labour's principles to Kilroy's career, recent times have offered up a sea of changeability, in which only a handful of reassuring constants remain. Boris Johnson's hair, for example.

But one rock of consistency that had survived this culture of transformation was the position of Tory party leader. Major, Hague, Duncan-Smith and Howard, all of them had unswervingly produced the same reaction: intense public dislike.

The reasons behind this varied, but that wasn't the point. The last couple of Tory chiefs seemed doomed to fall into the pigeon-hole of national disdain forged by their predecessors. Duncan-Smith, though inoffensive, was painfully dull and you couldn't help but be transfixed by the way his head seemed to rise to a fine point. Howard did scarcely any better, coming across like Dracula but without the charm.

But this wasn't such a bad thing. It was comforting to know that the Conservatives could be relied upon to regularly produce a leader totally unfit for popularity. But then, late last year, something went awry.

Just when it looked like normal service would be resumed with David Davis - another icon of crushing banality, he lost his footing and David Cameron poked his nose in front to assume control of the opposition.

This man represented many odd things for a new Tory leader, such as youth, full-bodied hair, and even charisma. But what really caught my eye was the *New Woman* 2006 poll of the world's 100 sexiest men.

Popping up at number 92, ahead of effeminate crooner James Blunt and violent beefcake Russell Crowe, was David Cameron.

When women think a politician is sexy, it's amusing. When women think a political leader is sexy, it's significant. But when women think the political leader of the Conservatives is sexy, it's historic.

Cameron may just be the last piece of the Tory jigsaw.

Really, most of the voting public have no issue with Conservatism. We Brits like a few tax cuts, smaller government, and just a dash of nationalism. All these principles are shared by Tories. Of course, not every voter is the same. But I would still hazard a guess that a healthy majority of the nation are willing to get onboard the Conservative ship. It's the captain

that's been the problem.

Now, sexier than Russell Crowe, younger than Gordon Brown, and with even a newborn son to provide Kodak moments, David Cameron is a serious contender for the leadership of this country. But that's what everyone, everywhere, has been saying.

The media circus, so absorbed by Cameron's flowing locks and baby-kissing, have failed to grasp any bigger picture as to what the future holds. His ascension may signal the beginning of a cycle more debilitating to British politics than George Galloway in a leotard could ever be.

Nine years ago, New Labour produced the most electable form of socialism since the fifties. Beyond simply left or right wing, Blair gave Britain a political agenda that appeared caring yet convincing, and which rightly took him into office.

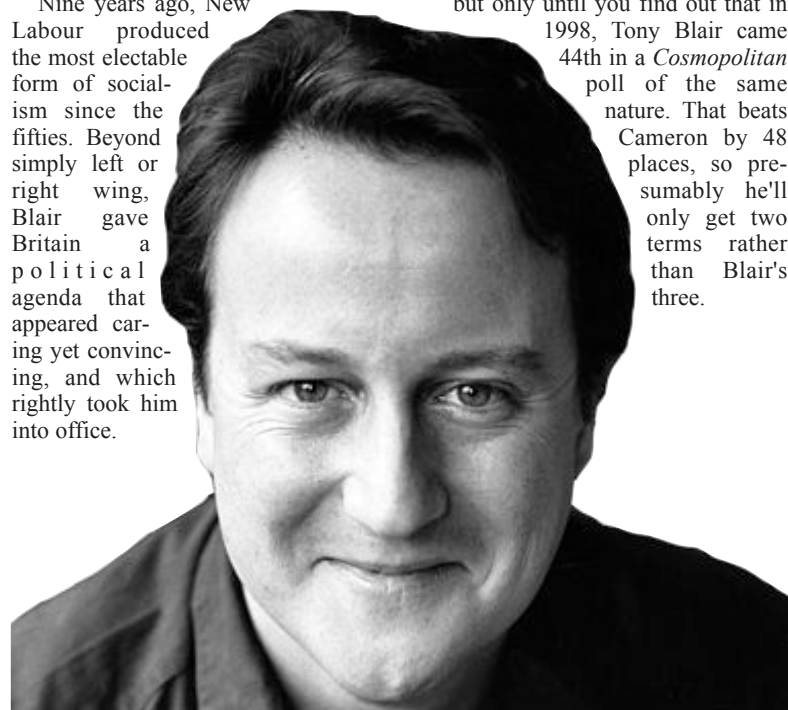
Since attaining power, Labour have slid to the right towards a more authoritarian stance, leaving a void of compassionate, socially-g geared politics that the Tories are now seeking to fill.

There is no reason why this back and forth exchange of political positioning won't repeat itself indefinitely. Having power breeds complacency, and all care goes out the window. Conversely, those out of power will eventually adapt to the populist model that New Labour employed and that Cameron is now, more or less, emulating.

Sounds perhaps a little Orwellian, but only until you find out that in

1998, Tony Blair came 44th in a *Cosmopolitan* poll of the same

nature. That beats Cameron by 48 places, so presumably he'll only get two terms rather than Blair's three.



CAMERON: Voted the 92nd sexiest man in the world. Apparently.

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Corrections & Clarifications

Last weeks *Politics* page featured a picture of voting at this years AGM, as well as a caption describing one of the votes taken by the student body that day.

The caption incorrectly stated that the student body were voting against Steffan Thomas, when in fact they were voting against the motion he was speaking about at the time.

We apologise to Steffan for misrepresenting him in this manner.