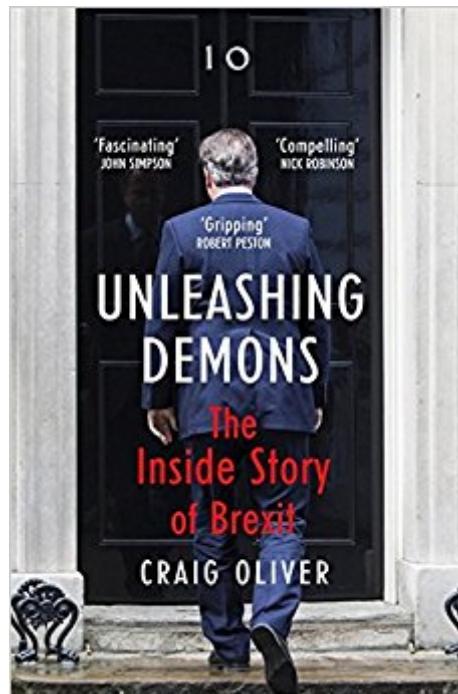


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Unleashing Demons: The Inside Story Of Brexit



Synopsis

MAIL ON SUNDAY BOOK OF THE YEAR'ESSENTIAL' Sunday Times'HIS SOLDIER'S DISPATCH IS EASY TO READ AND VIVIDLY ILLUSTRATES A SENSE OF RISING PANIC AND EMBATTLEMENT. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE THERE AT THE TIME, IN THE EYE OF A FRENZIED STORM, THEN [UNLEASHING DEMONS] SHOULD BE BOUGHT...' Andrew Marr, Sunday Times'VIVID AND IMMEDIATE... IT PAINTS A BRUTALLY HONEST PORTRAIT OF THE BRITISH POLITICAL CLASS' Mail on SundayOBSERVER BOOK OF THE WEEK'A MUST-READ ACCOUNT OF HISTORY AS IT HAPPENED' Matt D'Ancona'JAUNTILY WRITTEN...NAUGHTY FUN' Quentin Letts'UNLEASHING DEMONS...HAS THE VIVIDNESS AND PACE OF A POLITICAL THRILLER. EXTRAORDINARILY CANDID...' Financial Times'A FASCINATING BOOK' Robert Elms, BBC'THE BOOK THAT WILL SET WESTMINSTER ABLAZE' Mail on Sunday'Gripping reading' New Statesman'Utterly fascinating...indispensable to appreciating this extraordinary phase in our history.' JOHN SIMPSON'The compelling insider's account' NICK ROBINSON'This is one of the most vivid, frank and exciting inside accounts to have been written for years.' ANTHONY SELDON'A gripping fly-on-the-wall account.' ROBERT PESTON As David Cameron's director of Politics and communications, Craig Oliver was in the room at every key moment during the EU referendum - the biggest political event in the UK since World War 2.Craig Oliver worked with all the players, including David Cameron, George Osborne, Barack Obama, Angela Merkel, Jeremy Corbyn, Boris Johnson, Michael Gove, Theresa May and Peter Mandelson.Unleashing Demons is based on his extensive notes, detailing everything from the decision to call a referendum, to the subsequent civil war in the Conservative Party and the aftermath of the shocking result.This is raw history at its very best, packed with enthralling detail and colourful anecdotes from behind the closed doors of the campaign that changed British history.

Book Information

Hardcover: 432 pages

Publisher: Hodder & Stoughton (February 14, 2017)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 1473652456

ISBN-13: 978-1473652453

Product Dimensions: 6.2 x 1.5 x 9.5 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.6 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars 5 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #347,171 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #52 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Public Affairs & Policy > Intergovernmental Organizations #491 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Elections & Political Process > Elections #987 in Books > Politics & Social Sciences > Politics & Government > Ideologies & Doctrines > Conservatism & Liberalism

Customer Reviews

UNLEASHING DEMONS...HAS THE VIVIDNESS AND PACE OF A POLITICAL THRILLER. EXTRAORDINARILY CANDID...•Financial Times This is contemporary history at its best...It has pace, insider info and a bit of chutzpah. •Iain Dale THE BOOK THAT WILL SET WESTMINSTER ABLAZE •Mail on Sunday Part memoir, part diary, this is one of the most vivid, frank and exciting inside accounts to have been written for years. It points its forensic beam into the inner sanctums of power during one of the most crucial episodes in British history since the war. Stunning and highly readable. It will make uncomfortable reading for a few, but hugely enlightening and enjoyable reading for the many. •Anthony Seldon HIS SOLDIER'S DISPATCH IS EASY TO READ AND VIVIDLY ILLUSTRATES A SENSE OF RISING PANIC AND EMBATTLEMENT. IF YOU WANT TO KNOW WHAT IT WAS LIKE TO BE THERE AT THE TIME, IN THE EYE OF A FRENZIED STORM, THEN [UNLEASHING DEMONS] SHOULD BE BOUGHT...•Sunday Times Craig Oliver's account of his time as David Cameron's Director of Communications in Downing Street during the EU referendum will almost certainly prove to be the most important document for understanding what happened and why it all ended as it did. Oliver has managed the difficult trick of being frank as well as loyal, and his words have a remarkable immediacy. I found his book utterly fascinating, and I suspect that every historian of the period will regard it as indispensable to appreciating this extraordinary phase in our history. •John Simpson A gripping fly-on-the-wall account of the frenzy in Downing Street during the EU campaign. •Robert Peston Wish you could have been a fly on the wall of Number 10 during the EU referendum campaign? No need. This is the compelling insider's account of the man who was at the centre of the Downing Street web as David Cameron took the decisions which led to Britain voting to leave the EU. •Nick Robinson VIVID AND IMMEDIATE... IT PAINTS A BRUTALLY HONEST PORTRAIT OF THE BRITISH POLITICAL CLASS •Mail on Sunday

Before entering 10 Downing Street as Director of Politics and Communications, Craig Oliver was an award-winning journalist. His roles included editing the BBC's News at Six and Ten, Controller of the

World Service and Executive Editor of ITV's flagship news programmes. He has three daughters and lives in London.

Very revealing & insightful story of the remain vs leave campaigns leading up to the referendum. Eerie parallels with the Trump presidential campaign in US.

Fascination

Subtitled, "The Inside Story of Brexit," this is the first in what will, undoubtedly, be many books about the referendum. It does, however, have a very interesting author " both in terms of his level of involvement and his access to the major players and in his obvious commitment to the Remain campaign. Craig Oliver was David Cameron's Director of Politics and Communications and this book takes us through January, 2016, with Cameron renegotiating a deal with Europe, up until the aftermath of the referendum. The beginning of the book opens on the 23rd of June, 2016, with early suggestions that Leave has lost and Remain has won. Oliver is feeling that it will be close, but he is confident and, indeed, Nigel Farage concedes defeat. However, in politics, as we know, anything can change and, as the results begin to come in, optimism turns to pessimism. The Prime Minister texts, "How worried should we be?" Of course, we now know the result and this book then asks what went wrong and why. The referendum was a central promise in the Conservative 2015 election manifesto. It is clear, from this work, that Oliver believed that the electorate would not vote against their own pockets and that the economy would trump immigration as the primary concern. It was also assumed that the three million voters who had not voted in the recent general election would not turn out to vote in the referendum, when, many disaffected voters did, in fact, turn out to vote Leave. History is usually written by the winner " this is the story of the referendum from the losing side. This book begins with cries for the Remain Campaign to be more proactive and this is a theme which follows through the book. Another theme which resonates through the book is the disunity within the Conservative Party. So, within these pages, you read of the difficulty of getting the Labour party involved with the Remain campaign, and you can really sense Oliver's sense of frustration with Jeremy Corbyn and the members of the Labour Shadow Cabinet, of his dislike of Michael Gove (which deepens as the book progresses), of Boris Johnson and his late decision to campaign for Leave and of Theresa May's attempts to sit on both sides of the fence " a "submarine" strategy of not being dragged into any particular side which worked very well for her. This was a

campaign which many people, including myself, followed avidly. Through it all, though, you cannot help feeling that Oliver is often aware of what, "the man on the street" thought, but just did not know how to answer their concerns. The Remain Campaign threw everything they had into the argument for the economy, but never really addressed the issue of immigration in a way that made much of a difference against those campaigning for Leave. Also, although Nigel Farage is mentioned, he is often mentioned disparagingly, or not taken seriously; despite the fact that he was seen, and heard, everywhere in the campaign. Whatever Oliver thought of him, it was obvious that he was ignored at Remains peril. Lastly, he often seemed to misjudge how things were seen by those undecided voters. For example, he applauds Obama's visit to the UK, in which he warned the country that they would be, "at the back of the queue." He is keen to say what a useful visit it was, how Obama would change minds and how positive his message was for Remain. Yet, many people at the time commented to me how disgruntled they were at Obama's "interference" and I felt that was one thing which really backfired in the Remain campaign. Overall, though, this is a really fascinating view of the campaign from the inside. Oliver comes across as incredibly hard working, focused and dedicated. He obviously thinks highly of Cameron and is keen to promote him as both an excellent Prime Minister and a down to Earth guy (when he calls Cameron he is invariably with his children or mowing the lawn). Although there is lots of insider gossip, Oliver is never really unpleasant about anyone. You sense he quite likes Boris for instance, although the one person he really criticises for being disloyal is Michael Gove. I found this a really interesting account of one of the major political events of my lifetime. I was, literally, glued to the news reports and newspapers throughout this period. As Oliver himself admitted though, the most listened to news report is the 8am bulletin on Radio 2 and he seemed to be pitching his message elsewhere. With the politicians obsessed with broadsheets and in-fighting, they really failed to capture the imagination of the average person, which cost them dearly.

Sir Craig Oliver's - he was knighted by HM the Queen - "Unleashing Demons: The Inside Story of Brexit" is, in many ways, a fascinating insider's account of the Brexit vote in the United Kingdom in June 2016. For American readers it offers a glimpse into the politics - and indeed the sociology - of our staunchest European ally that is, in many ways, being buffeted by the same populist wave that is impacting American politics. Yet, for all that it offers, in the end, Unleashing Demons suffers from the fact that it is a story told from a very definite perspective - the anti-Brexit view - and therefore in the end it does not give the reader anything close to a balanced discussion of the debate that rocked - and in many ways continues to rock - the United Kingdom. "Unleashing Demons" is the

memoir of Prime Minister David Cameron's media advisor. It covers, often in an almost day-by-day retelling, the events leading up to the Brexit referendum. For those who enjoy retail politics and the nuts and bolts of campaigning, it is a fascinating and fun read. For an American reader with an interest in British politics, it introduces people in the British political arena with whom they may not be familiar, but this really does not detract from the book. Its strengths are not in its portrayal of personalities but rather as a narrative of the pivotal moment of the campaign as seen from the viewpoint of an important participant in the Brexit debate. However, its merits, in the end, highlight its shortcomings. Sir Craig is an ardent Remainer and a Cameron loyalist. There is nothing wrong with that, but it makes him something of an unreliable witness. In his retelling, figures like Boris Johnson are always giving weak speeches and having uncertain debate performances. The "Leave" side is continuously portrayed as incoherent, inconsistent, dishonest and disloyal. There is never any sense that the other side has a valid argument to make. This lack of objectivity would be forgivable if the reader did not already know how the story ends. The reader would be left with the impression that "Leave" has no hope and therefore, when the end comes, the book could be seen as a drama with an unexpected plot twist. Unfortunately, the reader - unless he has been sleeping for the last year - does know how the story ends and therefore Sir Craig comes across as vaguely self-absorbed and unaware. Seemingly convinced of the virtue of his own side past the point of moral conviction, the reader keeps on saying to himself, "Yes, Sir Craig, but how could you have possibly lost to this ignorant and dishonest rabble?" Its a conundrum, and to his credit Sir Craig does seem to take a stab at answering by offering at the end of the book a short - really too short - chapter on "What went wrong." Here again, though, the author offers little more than superficial analysis. Turnout was too low among key groups. (Why is never explained if so much was at stake.) Voters were willing to vote against their own economic interests. (Really?) There was an anti-establishment wave. (A banality. The establishment failed because its arguments did, not the other way around.) To some degree, Sir Craig is a product of his brand of conservatism. Like its counterpart in the United States, conservatism in the United Kingdom is increasingly not conservatism as that has been historically understood, but rather classical liberalism. Classical liberalism places its emphasis on radical individualism and sees man as a creature unto himself, with outside attachments such as a religion, national identity and the like being extraneous add-ons to his fundamental nature. Burke - the first modern conservative - spoke of this brand of liberalism as reducing man to "his naked shivering nature." Yet it is this brand that has been in the ascendant and it left the British Conservative Party without an intellectual well from which to draw when the questions surrounding Brexit began to revolve around immigration and national identity. Faced with

an electorate that sought reassurance in a sense of identity, the Cameron government responded with an appeal to economic self-interest. Yet because man is more than just a cog in the economic machine, that response was destined to fall flat. It could work in a giant cosmopolitan city like London, the capital of a great country that is in many ways utterly unlike the country over which it presides. It could work in Scotland, a country that has not been an independent state since 1701 and therefore is looking for ways to express its separateness. However, in most of Britain, the cry was - ironically - to echo the national motto of Luxembourg, "Mir wÃƒÂ«lle bleiwe wat mir sinn or Mir wÃ¶lle bleiwe wat mir sin." (Luxembourgish for "We want to remain what we are.") For this Cameron conservatives and the Remain campaign could never offer a plausible reply and the singular value of "Unleashing Demons" is that it so effectively exemplifies the mindset that drove the "Remain" campaign. Sir Craig cheerfully announces that he is happily cosmopolitan and an immigration liberal. Therein lay his weakness and the book's flaw. He was so cosmopolitan, so worldly, that he became lost in a world of tidy abstractions. To quote Burke again, he was so consumed with human reason that he lost sight of human nature. Cosmopolitanism and a liberal view of immigration may be legitimate creeds, but Western politics is being rocked by the homogenizing effects of those creeds. Clearly, though, Sir Craig never understood this. In the end, then, for all his media savvy, Sir Craig ended up speaking a language that the other side never understood. In that connection "Unleashing Demons" is a cautionary tale. Too fixated on tactics, too convinced of their own virtue, too unable to understand the mindset and merits of the other side, the Remain campaign was ultimately blindsided by its own philosophical myopia and the price was - at a minimum - David Cameron's tenure in 10 Downing Street. Demons, it is said, exploit our human frailties. They did that in the Brexit debate, just not the frailties of the side that so alarmed Sir Craig.

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