News Review

MRS CARTLEDGE
Are Trump and Johnson failing?
Three weeks on from the death of George Floyd, peaceful protests have descended into conflict and finally chaos.

On Saturday, more than 100 people were arrested in London after far-right groups took to the city.

Far-right groups hold the view that certain ethnic, racial or religious groups should stay separate and it is based on the belief that the interests of one's own group should be prioritized.

And in the US, fury erupted after police in Atlanta killed yet another black man.
Two popular leaders that once seemed invincible are suddenly looking vulnerable.

• Just six months on from his landslide victory, Boris Johnson’s ratings have plummeted, and recent polls on Trump show that six in ten Americans believe he got his response to the protests wrong.

• Meanwhile, rumours are swirling that both are physically ill. Footage has emerged of Donald Trump struggling to drink a glass of water while Johnson, never normally publicity shy, seems to be avoiding the public as he recovers from covid-19.
Yet now more than ever, there is a huge demand for leadership….

As protestors threw smoke bombs at police, journalist Matthew Syed called for a mature debate about national history. He spoke about his immigrant father’s belief in the paradox that “Britain is a great country that also committed great crimes.”

“The country is suffering from a cabin fever, the outcome of long confinement and inactivity,” said the Mail this weekend. “The Prime Minister must see that it urgently needs the hope of release.”

Despite this, both Trump and Johnson seem to be adding fuel to the fire. Instead of healing, Trump turned to authoritarian language, tweeting: “When the looting starts, the shooting starts.”

In the UK, Boris Johnson resorted to his trademark humour, calling this morning for more statues to fill empty niches in government buildings. “Isn’t that a more cheerful approach?” he asks.
So, are Trump and Johnson failing?....

No, say some.

This is more than just a leadership problem. The protests are the result of centuries of injustice. Trump and Johnson cannot be blamed for the history of racism in the UK and the US, and as individuals they are powerless to prevent themselves from being caught in its tides. Their voices alone would not have been enough to stop the protests from spiralling dangerously out of control.

Yes, say others.

Reality TV star Trump and witty newspaper columnist Johnson have a lot in common. Both are egomaniacs and both desperately need the attention of adoring fans. But their self-love cannot hide the moral vacuum: in the face of a crisis they are crumbling, both mentally and physically. In the void chaos is forming.