

PROLOGUE

“We can win this, we can win this.” The words went excitedly through my mind as Hannes Swoboda, the Austrian candidate, told me he was withdrawing from the contest. The 6th July, 2004, would be the penultimate hurdle to get over before becoming President of the European Parliament. The Slovenian, Borut Pahor, would pull out too, which left a straight vote between Borrell and me. It was going to be a clear choice between North and South and we could do it. The French, Spanish, Portuguese and Greeks versus the rest; the French and Spanish may be the biggest delegations but the new member states and Northern Europe would vote for me.

Swoboda had said in his hustings speech that the President can't be from Iberia since the Portuguese were getting the President of the Commission and the Spanish with Solana would get the Foreign Minister's job. He could have added that there have been two Spanish Presidents of the Parliament in the past three mandates and this would be the third in 15 years if Borrell won. And now Swoboda was withdrawing so his supporters would vote for me.

The hustings had taken place the afternoon before, with Borrell exceeding his allotted ten minutes to speak for fifteen. I thought he was good, especially for someone who hadn't been in the Parliament before. He was a former Spanish Cabinet Minister, quite a big cheese in his own country and was now leader of their delegation in the Socialist group which we were addressing and which was going to vote to decide who would be the Socialist candidate for the President of Parliament.

An agreement had been reached between the Socialists and the centre-right PPE group to deliver the votes for the socialist candidate for President now in July 2004 and then in two and a half years time, when a new President was voted for, the PPE candidate would be elected and the Socialists would then support him or her, a kind of you scratch our backs and we'll scratch yours. So, whilst the vote in the plenary was the final hurdle, this was what counted. Win

this and I would be the next President of the European Parliament. The first British Labour Member ever to be so.

When Borrell had finished his speech, next came the Slovenian, the only Socialist elected in his country, a former speaker of their Parliament and not to be taken seriously for this contest. Next came Swoboda. I looked at his notes as he sat next to me; they were non-existent. A few jotted lines, three main points and a plea to vote for him because he came from Austria and would represent the small countries. He was awful. Come the likely event that I went out on the first ballot along with the Slovenian and it was a run-off between Borrell and Swoboda then my vote would be going to the Spaniard.

Then it was my turn. The speech had been well worked on. I'd done the basic outline in Tuscany the week before on holiday then polished it up with Maggie Coulthard's help on the Monday morning. A lot of prayer had gone into this—"Let me not let you down, Lord, if this is what you want me to do, If I don't get it, then let me know how I can serve you." What I was really trying to say was, "Lord, I'm desperate to get this, it's what I really, really want. You've got me this far, over several hurdles already, now get me over this one. This is how I can really serve you, at a time of massive Euro-scepticism especially in the UK, with the success of the UKIP getting 12 seats, I can take them on to help unite the people of Europe." I did add the rider "Of course Lord, if it's not to be, then show me how I can serve you," hoping that this was the thing to say but would be ignored by God.

Whilst Swoboda was speaking, I suddenly became totally relaxed. I was singing to myself a catchy chorus we'd had the day before in church, "I have decided to follow Jesus." It's very repetitive and it kept going on and on. I thought any moment now I'm going to jump on the bench and burst out in song—that really would blow my chances. Then a little silent prayer, to be with me Lord, let me say the right things etc. Then it was my turn.

Wasn't that just brilliant? (The word hubris springs to mind at this point). The bit where I said, "Some in here say they can't vote for me because I'm a Brit ("Yeah!" shouted someone). Now I don't mind people voting against me because they don't like me, or because they think I'm incompetent but when this Group begins to vote against someone because of their nationality then the solidarity which holds this group together will soon begin to disintegrate," brought spontaneous applause; none of the other three had had that in their speeches. I stressed my passion for Europe and outlined the vision I had. It was

good stuff. I ended by saying, “With your support and trust, I guarantee that passion and vision will never diminish.” Wow, that was V-E-R-Y good. I felt like taking a bow.

Then came the question and answer session and it was obvious that Borrell and I were the only two serious candidates. Once again it went splendidly well. As it finished I went to Borrell and said, “You were very good,” thinking, “but not as good as me.”

I left the platform with lots of congratulations but also with a contented feeling that whatever the result I knew I had done my best, given a good performance and gained respect, especially from the many new members. It wasn’t a feeling of triumph but one that recognised that events were now out of my hands; I couldn’t do any more and if I lost then, then...at least God had been with me when I wanted him to be.

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It had all started earlier in the year when I was trying to figure out where I wanted my career to go. I’d been an MEP for 15 years and had been remarkably successful in the roles that I had had. For the past five years I’d been chairman of the Budgets Committee; there aren’t many better positions and to do something with more clout was pretty limited. After 15 years I was ready to look for something else, not to stand in the June 2004 elections and go out on a high. Trouble was, I had no plan or idea of what I wanted to do. Mike Hindley, a former colleague who had left the Parliament five years earlier said he’d spent his last year networking so he could make the right contacts to establish his consultancy when he left. When have I had time to network? The chairman’s job is so demanding and also so fulfilling but it gives no time for, what was it—networking?

Then Gary, the Leader of the European Parliamentary Labour Party (EPLP) said that the Socialists would get the Presidency for the first two and a half years of the next Parliament and that’s what I should go for. What a good idea.

First thing was to convince the EPLP that it was a good idea; second thing was to beat David, the existing British Labour Vice-President, an MEP for 20 years, a talented guy but as much as I genuinely liked David as a person, he hadn’t really done much in the Parliament for years, except that he chaired the plenary well. The European Parliamentary Labour Party consisted of 28 MEPs, several

of whom would be leaving after the June elections. But they decided we should make our minds up what positions we were going to go for in the new mandate then they could be reconfirmed by the new EPLP after the elections. At the first discussion I made it clear that I was aiming for the President's job, so did David. At least we had both brought it out into the open.

Before the next meeting, when a vote would be taken, David's estranged wife Margaret had made allegations about his Parliamentary expenses and an investigation began. So come the meeting there were those who said the contest shouldn't take place since David had indicated he wouldn't stand with this investigation still ongoing. The EPLP decided it should go ahead and I made another speech that kicked modesty out of the window. Lots of prayer had gone into it, "If it be your will", etc. and I got the nomination by 20 votes to four with two abstentions and two not present. How humble did I feel. More than that I felt that I was being pushed into the role, like divine guidance. (Who said "Give me a bucket?")

Next task was to let all the heads of the other 14 delegations, from the other 14 countries in the Socialist Group, know and say I was willing to speak to them. The feedback was excellent. The only other serious contender was Renzo Imbeni, an Italian who I got on with very well. But then as the Italians were drawing up their lists of candidates for the elections, Renzo was omitted. He wasn't on, this was going to be a clear run. Go to number 10, tell the politicians there and the civil servants and the Europe Minister, Dennis McShane. It was going to happen, the group has never had a vote on these things, they were carved up by the delegations and we had made the running. I'd spoken to Enrique Baron, the President of the Socialist Group and to Martin Schultz, the German leader who was hoping to be (and eventually would be) the next President of the Group. Knowing that the Germans or the British were always the largest delegations, if we supported him then they would support us, i.e. me. His words to me were, "As far as I am concerned, Terry, you are the next President of Parliament." Don't forget Hans Gert Poettering, the leader of the PPE group. All we needed was the elections out of the way.

June 10th, 2004, was the day of the European elections in the UK with the count on the Sunday the 13th when the rest of Europe had voted. Our objective was to hold our four seats in the North West, which we should just about do. I'll do two and a half years as President, resign and Theresa would take my place, she being number five on the list and an automatic successor should any of the other four stop being MEPs.

As the votes came in, I was convinced we had the four seats, that is up to ten minutes before the final votes were in and I realised we only had three. Brian had lost his seat. What an unmitigated disaster and what a loss, my mate Brian. He'd been there 15 years like me, we watched Wigan rugby together, we'd formed the Rugby League Intergroup together, he was a Wiganer through and through like me and he wasn't elected.

The Liberals and UKIP had each taken a seat from Labour and the Tories, this was a bad night. Ralf Walter telephoned me from Germany, the SPD had taken a drubbing. When the dust settled the EPLP had gone from 28 members to 19 and the Germans down from 35 to 23. Five years before there had been 60 (originally 62) Labour members. Thanks to the Labour government's introduction of Proportional Representation for the European elections we had gone from ten out of ten Labour members in the North West in 1999 to three out of nine now.

The elections had thrown up some strange results; the French were now the largest delegation in the group with 31 members, next came the Spanish. This was a whole new ball game; normally the Anglo-German axis dominated, now we had France and Spain in pole positions.

Come the Tuesday after the results, the EPLP reconfirmed my candidature. David stood this time, even though the enquiry was still ongoing, but it was now or never for him. The vote was twelve for me, six for David with Glenys off to Uganda. "Thanks Lord, if it be your will, I feel like I'm being pushed, but hey, that's another hurdle over."

Come the Wednesday I was off to Tuscany with my family to have a well earned rest after months of campaigning. Gary, as leader of the EPLP, was off to Brussels for the heads of delegations meetings of the Socialist Group.

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The President of the European Parliament has a private Cabinet of 32 people, which includes advisors, secretarial staff and even the President's driver. I'd asked Michael Shackleton if he would be the Chef de Cabinet, one of the brightest brains in the place, and also a genuinely nice guy. We set about drawing up the list of other members of the team and informally asking people if they would be interested. Others approached me direct, asking if they could work for me—word was getting round fast. The drivers in the car pool were

telling everyone it was me and Ronnie had already asked if he could be my driver. There was a lot to ponder during the holiday.

Tuscany, was, as ever, beautiful. La Colombaia, the place we always stayed was welcoming, set in the perfect location to watch the sun set behind San Gimignano, and the pool was just for us.

The greatest joy I have is spending time with my family and they would all be here for my birthday. Having time with your children, your adult children, is one thing, but having a full week with my two-year-old grandson, James, is something else.

I don't have enough love for the amount I want to give to my family. One of my favourite verses was in a book, *When Iron Gates Yield*, and it's the words of a persecuted Christian written on the wall of a Chinese prison cell:

“Could I with ink the oceans fill,
And were the skies of parchment made,
Were every stalk on earth a quill
And every man a scribe by trade,
To write my love of you my God,
Would drain the oceans dry.
Nor could the scroll contain the whole,
Though stretched from sky to sky.”

Substitute the word ‘God’ for ‘family’ and that's it exactly. It's what politicians need more than anything—when everyone may seem to be against you, what matters is the love and trust of your family. So it couldn't have been better.

The first warning signals were when Gary said the French may ask Swoboda to stand for President. I did a bit of ringing round to various people I know to get a feel of things. Joan Colom, a former colleague, now the head of the Catalan Court of Auditors, gave some good information. Borrell would be looking for something and he thought it would be Chairman of Budgets, my existing, soon to be old, job. One thing's for sure, the Spanish, with a lot of new members, would be reluctant to vote for a Brit. They didn't like Mr Blair's relationship with Aznar, the former Prime Minister. “Yeah, but it's me, Joan, not my Prime Minister who is standing.” “I know, Terry, I'm sorry to be the one to tell you, but it's my assessment.” He's a wily bird, Joan (pronounced Jo-An, it's Catalan you see).

OK, so that's the French and Spanish against. More phone calls, Gary doing the business. Things beginning to happen.

In April earlier in the year the Party of European Socialists elected a new President. Paoul Nyrup Rasmussen, a former Prime Minister of Denmark, had narrowly beaten Amato, the Italian candidate. I thought Rasmussen the right decision and couldn't understand why the British delegation had supported Amato. I hadn't been a delegate so didn't know what went on, but well done Paoul. My close friend Freddy Blak, a larger than life character who everyone in Denmark knew (normally no-one can name an MEP in the UK, but Freddy is known by all the Danes), had said he would speak to his former Prime Minister to ensure the Danish delegation supported me. I phoned Freddy a couple of times and left that in his capable hands. Others I contacted were supportive but the emergence of Swoboda was giving the small countries a chance to vote for one of their own.

There was also the complication that probably 50% of the Group would be new members and not know me or my track record. The eight Greek socialists were all new, in the old Parliament George Katiforis, their leader, had been very supportive. The five Danes, including Rasmussen, were new and goodness knows how many of the French were new.

Gary's latest stop-press, Borrell is in the running. Hang on a minute, this guy is brand new to the place, does he have the French on his side or are they pushing Swoboda? In the meantime the Constitutional Treaty has been agreed by the heads of government. Tony Blair has done a great job; it's a British Constitution according to the French. "What about the lack of references to Social Europe?" they say. Tony then vetoes the Belgian Prime Minister as the new President of the Commission, because he is too federalist. Chirac then vetoes Chris Patten. The Portuguese PPE Prime Minister, José Durao Barroso, is the chosen one for the Commission top job, with the support of the British government. This hasn't pleased the Portuguese socialists and a lot of the others view him as "too close to Bush and Blair" and too much of a Blairite.

Pasqualina Napolitano publicly states she would support Michel Rocard for President of Parliament. Where the hell has his name come from and does it mean all the Italians will support him? Dennis McShane, the UK Europe Minister, says in a PES meeting he can't understand why the French are not putting Rocard forward. This sows total confusion, especially with Martin Schultz, the leader of the German delegation. "Does the UK government

support Terry or not?” I get Dorianio to contact Gianni Pittella, my Italian mate (Dorianio speaks better Italian than me—well, he is Italian—and Gianni only has broken English).

I speak to Max van den Burg, leader of the seven Dutch members; “Terry, Jan Marinus and I will certainly be voting for you. I can’t say what the rest will do.” Zita Gurmai, of the Hungarian delegation, who were 100% behind me, “Swoboda has given our delegation a problem. Our leader says since he is a neighbour we should vote for him, but a lot of us are still with you.”

Get Goran Farm to keep the Swedes on side. He says there isn’t a problem.

Reino Paasilinna says he and his Finnish colleagues will put in a good word for me when the Baltic delegations meet together to decide who to vote for.

The heads of delegations can’t do a deal; what are you playing at Gary? Alan Donnelly would have had it sorted by now. But Alan, the biggest wheeler dealer of them all, left four and a half years ago to wheel and deal elsewhere. There’s going to be hustings. Never before has the Group done this to decide who its candidate will be. But that’s ok, it may scare the Spanish guy off, he’s never been in the Parliament before, and I can perform when I have to. Reino had said that it may come down to who performs best on the day. Well, perform I can. “Be with me Lord, let me give my best, if it be your will. Oh, and if its not your will, then let me know what you want me to do to serve you (concentrate on the former if you would Lord).”

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Sixth of July, 9 am, Martin Schultz announced that Swoboda and the Slovenian had withdrawn. Swoboda makes a speech and in translation I lose the bit where he mentions Borrell. What’s he doing giving his support to him? Surely not, he said yesterday we can’t have a Spaniard. Surely not.

Cast your votes. I do. I have a coffee, chat to one or two and when they ask for a prediction, I reply, “We can win this on the assumption that we can pick up Swoboda’s votes.” We resume for the result. Martin Schultz says he has the result. “Lord, let me handle this, let me do it well, be with me.”

“And the result is Josep Borrell 117 votes, Terry Wynn 66 votes, therefore I

pronounce Josep Borrell the next President of the European Parliament.”

I applaud of course, he makes a thank you speech, then comes to embrace me and I smile and say “Good luck, do it well,” and that’s it.

Quick prayer, “Lord help me to handle this”; but then I think, “Why have you brought me so far, why did you let me stand in the elections, so much was banked on this, so many people have been praying for me, so many people knew and were supportive, so much emotional energy has been ploughed into this? But I’ve learned not to ask why. Accept it, there’s no turning back, it’s done. Phone Doris, tell the kids, tell Michael and Alfredo, shake hands, take the commiserations gracefully and keep smiling; whatever you do don’t show disappointment. “It was the wrong result,” says Barbara Weiler, a German member, “How can we have someone as President who has never been in the Parliament before?” I feel like a Dennis Healey figure—the best President the Parliament never had. Gordon Adam, who is about to leave after twenty five years as an MEP, goes back to his office and says to Stuart his assistant, “If in the future you begin to see the EU starting to unravel, then put it down to this date.”

One thing I know for sure, I won’t be staying in the Parliament; what I need now is an exit strategy. “Guide me as to what you want me to do, Lord.” I’d often said, “God puts you where he wants you to be.” Well, he didn’t want me to be President of the European Parliament, that’s for sure. But I did.

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The analysis of the result was quite revealing. The large margin had shown a big anti-British vote because of Iraq, the Constitution, Social Europe and the Commission President. Hardly Gary’s fault, even Alan Donnelly wouldn’t have stopped this. Colom’s assessment had been correct but it had gone much further than the Spanish. On my reckoning, the Swedes, the Finns, virtually all the new members states, two Danes, three Dutch and only half the Germans voted for me; the rest voted resoundingly against. In elections back home I often say no-one voted for me because my name is Terry Wynn; they voted for me because it said Labour Party candidate after my name. The same theory applied in reverse here.

How had the ball started rolling? Rasmussen owed the Brits no favours

according to Helle, one of the outgoing Danes, because of their vote for Amato. He wanted to prove that as President of the Party of European Socialists that he had influence and could fix things. So he did. Not only did he get Borrell to stand but also Swoboda to split my vote, then persuaded Swoboda to stand down and support Borrell. That's politics.

Freddy Black had left 20 messages with Rasmussen; not one was returned, so he went to see him to get him to support me. But it was too late. Even before the elections Rasmussen knew what he was going to do.

In the words of Kenneth Williams in Carry on Cleo: "Infamy infamy, they've all got it in for me."

To be honest, yes I was disappointed, but not devastated. I do genuinely believe God puts you where he wants you to be, so its no use moping about it; it's a matter of accepting it and getting on with things. At least I still had a job, unlike Brian and many other colleagues who weren't re-elected.

In 1994 after the then elections I stood to be leader of the EPLP and was defeated by Wayne David. I walked back to the flat from that meeting absolutely devastated. I was so used to winning I couldn't accept I had been rejected. Yet that defeat was probably the best thing that happened to me. Not being leader let me be general budget rapporteur for a second time; the only person ever to do so and also I became the socialist co-ordinator on Budgets; in American terms that reads Majority Leader on Budgetary Matters. That laid the foundation for being the Chairman of the Budgets Committee. Had I been elected leader none of that would have happened. And what did Wayne get but 61 whinging politicians complaining to him continuously about anything and everything.

Also, when I had finished the hustings that feeling of contentment was real and I knew it was no longer in my hands.

But more than anything I was quickly able to put things in perspective. The time with my family whilst I was doing all the telephoning confirmed my belief of what the important things are in life. As long as I have them, what does it matter what position I hold? But one thing kept continually running through my mind and when people asked how I felt, I gave this reply: "There is a young woman at our church back home called Suzanne, happily married, young family, good job, girl-guide leader. She had been diagnosed with an