

1915

Three trains collide in the Quintinshill rail disaster near Gretna Green, Scotland, killing 227 people and injuring 246.

1926

Chiang Kai-shek replaces the communists in Kuomintang China.



1927

Near Xining, China, an 8.3 magnitude earthquake causes 200,000 deaths in one of the world's most destructive earthquakes.

1939

World War II: Germany and Italy sign the Pact of Steel.

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Australia votes for mild, usually that gives power to the coalition, but even the coalition tests conservative temperament at a time it lost power was in 2007 when it undertook sweeping labour reforms, which amounted to a significant attack on workers' rights and tilted the power balance hugely in favour of employers. Labour's problem this time proved to be that it tried too many big ideas at once



Australia's newly elected Prime Minister Scott Morrison (C) delivers a victory speech



Labor leader Bill Shorten watch the giant screens showing the results of Australia's general election

wars, the Great Depression, the global financial crisis.

In ordinary times, Australia votes for mild, slow change. Usually that gives power to the coalition, but even the coalition tests Australia's conservative temperament at its peril. The last time it lost power was in 2007 when it undertook sweeping labour reforms, which amounted to a significant attack on workers' rights and tilted the power balance hugely in favour of employers. Labour's problem this time proved to be that it tried too many big ideas at once.

Thus did Labour lose significantly in outer suburbs, including among several lower-income electorates. Perhaps the most underappreciated predictor here seems to be debt: Those seats that are experiencing heavy mortgage stress almost entirely swung sharply against Labour. That suggests that even though those voters might be financially stretched, they were spooked by Labour's proposed changes to tax policy, which were subject to a scare campaign warning that they would cause house prices to

collapse.

Perhaps that might have been countered had Labour run a better, more focused campaign. That post-mortem is now underway. Even so, the fact that Labour's narrative of "fairness" failed before the coalition's story of "aspiration" suggests Australia has not called time on neoliberalism in the way that voters elsewhere seem ready to. Certainly there is disillusionment, evidenced by a record vote for minor parties and independents. But ultimately, 27 years of economic growth and only six years of wage stagnation (rather than the decades of it in the United States) mean that while scepticism of the corporate world and trepidation about the economy exists, Australia isn't prepared to experiment with its economic formula just yet. Australians may not be entirely happy with the status quo, but they are clearly still prepared to vote for it.

(Waleed Aly is a columnist, a broadcaster and a politics lecturer at Monash University in Melbourne)



Protesters representing Matteo Salvini as a mafia godfather as they take part in a demonstration by far-right groups to protest against a meeting of nationalist leaders in downtown Milan

cheeky demagogue, but he's won 17 percent in the March, 2018, then formed the Five Star Movement with 33 percent — and used it to transport, public works — to partners, and focused on this involved a lot of barking about immigration, spreading fishing little. Half a million whom he promised to expel. Fewer come now, it's true. Sinking down Italian ports and down at sea doesn't play well — or in the courts. On May

19 a public prosecutor ordered 47 migrants, stranded off the coast on Lampedusa, a tiny island south of Sicily, to be brought ashore, and he confiscated the rescuing boat.

Salvini has campaigned endlessly; this year he has held more than 200 rallies and spent a mere 17 full days in his ministerial office, according to one newspaper's tally. He broadcasts daily on Facebook, tweets with Trump-like ferocity, and posts selfies wearing every type of uniform. Earlier this month, he introduced "Vinci Salvini" (Win Salvini), a campaign in which voters gain points by posting likes on Facebook, Instagram and Twitter. And what do they win? Their photos on their leader's social profiles and, he beams, "for the lucky ones, even a chat on the phone with me!" This frantic activity has helped Matteo — as he is

known among the faithful — gain a consensus on the right, even in the poorer South, where the League was despised until recently.

Meanwhile, Silvio Berlusconi, whom Italians used to call "Cavaliere," is, despite declining health, leading his much weakened Forza Italia party into the election, using the slogans and images from its historic win in 1994. But the aging Berlusconi is no match for the younger, tech-savvy Salvini. According to the latest polls available — Italian law forbids publishing them in the two weeks before elections — Forza Italia is at well under 10 percent, with the League between 30 and 35 percent. Some predict that on May 26 the League could end up being one of Europe's largest parties.

But there are small signs that may point to a different outcome. To start with, Five Star is fighting back, attacking its allies (about corruption, regional autonomy, and expanding Italy's flat tax) and hinting at a possible leftist alliance with the Democratic Party. More important, the current government hasn't delivered. Italy's economic growth is the slowest in the European Union, public debt keeps piling up and international investors are nervous. The patience of business people and entrepreneurs, especially in the wealthy north, is wearing thin. And they represent the core of the League's support.

The European elections are so close now that Salvini is bound to do well. But the mood is changing. It's like with marshmallows: the sweets you can't get enough of, until you are suddenly sick of them. And Matteo's marshmallow moment may be coming sooner than most expect.

Italy's political mood has known big swings in the recent past. Berlusconi was uncer-

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moniously sacked in 2011; Mario Monti was extremely popular in 2012, helped get Italy's public finances in order, and then became — undeservedly — a figure of hate; in 2014, Matteo Renzi, then leader of the Democratic Party, polled a stunning 41 percent in the European election, and was dumped in 2016. His fault? An untimely referendum on constitutional reform and a self-assurance that bordered on arrogance. Even Beppe Grillo, the larger-than-life founder of the Five Star Movement, quickly became a has-been, and was sidelined by his own people.

So never underestimate our operatic tendencies. In Italy we cheer our tenors — until we boo them off the stage. And we chew our delicious marshmallows until, suddenly, we've had enough and spit them out in spectacular fashion. Matteo Salvini, be warned: the Italian political trash can always has room for one more.

(Beppe Severgnini, an editorial writer and editor at Corriere della Sera, writes about Italian and European politics, society and culture)



TOP
4
TWEETS

01



Why is it that we allow charter schools to siphon public money out of public schools — often with worse results — simply to enrich Wall Street executives, Silicon Valley CEOs and billionaires like the DeVos family?

@BernieSanders

02



My father was gentle, loving, kind & affectionate. He taught me to love & respect all beings. To never hate. To forgive. I miss him. On his death anniversary, I remember my father with love & gratitude. #RememberingRajiv-Gandhi

@RahulGandhi

03



COHEN says there's a "difficult internal dynamic" over impeachment within the Democratic caucus. He says his own articles of impeachment are ready to be filed but he's waiting for Mueller to testify.

@kyledcheney

04



On this Cuban Independence Day, we stand by the people of Cuba in their quest for freedom, democracy and prosperity. The Cuban regime must end its repression of Cubans & Venezuelans. The United States will not stand idly by as Cuba continues to subvert democracy in the Americas!

@realDonaldTrump

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