

Corbyn — misled and misleading

This letter from our Chairman appeared in the *Derby Telegraph* on Friday 2nd March

Sir,

MR CORBYN IS MISLED & MISLEADING

EU documents are rarely an easy read, so very few people bother to read them. Even politicians tend to rely on commentators or journalists, who also don't read them, but who will tell people what they want to hear. Mr. Corbyn appears to be amongst the non-readers. Like many MPs, he seems to believe that the EU Customs Union facilitates swift movement of goods through border controls. It has very little to do with that and is mainly concerned with harmonising tariffs.

Turkey has an agreement with the EU Customs Union yet the crossing point to Bulgaria at Kapikule is notorious for delays. Lorries can be stuck there for days at a time. As studying EU documents is so boring for readers as well as for Mr Corbyn, I refer to another part of his recent speech.

"A Mini will cross the channel three times in a 2000 mile journey before the finished car rolls off the production line. Starting in Oxford, it will be shipped to France to be fitted for key components before being brought back to BMW's Ham's Hall plant in Warwickshire where it is drilled and milled into shape. Once this process is complete, the Mini will be shipped to Munich to be fitted with its engine before ending its journey in the Mini plant in Oxford for its final assembly..."

This statement is pure fantasy. Assembly is carried out at the BMW plant in Oxford. The Swindon plant produces body pressings and sub assemblies and the Ham's Hall plant near Birmingham has made the engines since 2006.

Most of BMW's aluminium block and head castings are made at Landshut near Munich and some of the machining is done at

Steyr in Austria where other components for the Mini are also made. Since 2013 most of the machining and main assembly of the Mini's engines is done at Ham's Hall. The complete engines are mated with front suspension and steering units which are fitted to the cars as sub assemblies in the Oxford plant.

Mr Corbyn's ignorance of the process of motor manufacture with its supply chain of components brought together and cars assembled in one plant is perhaps excusable in a man who has no industrial experience. But where did he get his strange ideas from? The answer is the media. This part of his speech may have been lifted from an Evening Standard article from July 2017 which, in its turn, may have been lifted from a Guardian article of March 2017.

Given his reputation for getting back to the roots of the Labour party, Mr. Corbyn could have consulted an engineer trade unionist who would have put him straight and stopped him making such an ass of himself. Yet the listening media took him seriously and did not realise it was being fed rubbish. So perhaps it doesn't matter. People may draw their own conclusions about the reliability of the rest of his speech.

Yours faithfully,

Edward Spalton

Photo by Chatham House, London 