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Enoch Powell and the Sovereignty of Parliament Transcript

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Ladies and gentlemen, thank you for braving the bad weather to come to this lecture, which is the fourth in a series on post-War politicians who have “made the weather”, that is, set the political agenda, even though none of them became Prime Minister. The first three lectures were on: Aneurin Bevan, who was founder of the National Health Service; Iain Macleod, the apostle of rapid decolonisation in Africa; and Roy Jenkins, the pioneer of liberal legislation on personal liberties and race relations in the 1960s, and the apostle also of party realignment. Today’s lecture, the fourth, is on Enoch Powell, and he pronounced his surname, incidentally, “Pow-ell” and not “Pole” as people sometimes do.

Enoch Powell was a very popular politician and there is a possibility that if we had had a presidential system of direct election, that he might have become leader of the country, though I think the probability is not, but there is a possibility he would have been. But, unlike the first three people I have talked about, Bevan, Macleod and Jenkins, he had no major legislative achievements to his credit, and part of the reason for that, he was in Government only for a very short time, a much shorter time than perhaps most people imagine. He was a member of the Cabinet for just fifteen months, and he held junior posts in Government for a further four years, so he was not a man of Government or of any legislative achievement.

One reason for his short period in Government is that he was a very difficult colleague, who did not hide his dislike, and indeed contempt, for at least two of the Conservative Party leaders whom he served under – Harold Macmillan and Edward Heath. His antipathy to Edward Heath is notorious, but he was also very hostile to Harold Macmillan, and, if I can tell a personal anecdote, I met Enoch Powell as a student, and I was shocked by his very direct manner when he said of Harold Macmillan, “I could not stand the sight of him,” but he then added, with a smile, “I am sure he felt the same way about me!” and I think he did. Macmillan put him at the side of the Cabinet table. When he was sitting in the chair in the middle, Powell was at the side of the Cabinet table, Macmillan said so he did not have to look at those “staring, obsessive, fanatical eyes”. Incidentally, that is also the position in which Edward Heath put Margaret Thatcher when he was Prime Minister.

Enoch Powell was a difficult colleague. In 1958, he resigned from Harold Macmillan’s Government, and was brought back in 1960. In 1963, he refused to serve Harold Macmillan’s successor, Sir Alec Douglas-Home. He was brought back to the Shadow Cabinet by Alec Home after the Conservative defeat in 1964, and he was retained there by Edward Heath, Home’s successor. But in 1968, for reasons that I will describe later, he was sacked from the Shadow Cabinet by Edward Heath, and he was never in the Cabinet or Shadow Cabinet again, but his period in the political wilderness coincided with his great popularity in the country. He was widely distrusted by his colleagues, but greatly admired by the general public.

Powell’s significance came not from what he achieved in Parliament or in Government but what he stood for and for what he taught. He was, for better or worse, a teacher rather than a legislator, like my next two subjects, Tony Benn and Keith Joseph, none of whom are particularly distinguished for legislative achievements but who made a great impact on public opinion. Powell himself said that was the job of the politician. He said, “The task of the politician is to provide people with words and ideas which will fit their predicament better than the words and ideas they are using at the present.” I think Powell altered, for better or worse, the nature of political discussion on four issues. They are: firstly, the role of the free market; secondly, immigration; thirdly, the European Union; and fourthly, the dangers of Scottish Devolution, which he said would lead to separation. I am sure you will all have noticed that these issues are at the very forefront at current political debate, particularly the last three: immigration, the European Union, and Scottish Independence. So, whether you agree or not with Enoch Powell’s views, it would be difficult to deny his contemporary relevance. Some would say that he predicted with uncanny accuracy the future problems in British politics; others would say that he aroused irrational fears and appealed to the worst instincts of voters, and that, of course, is for you to decide, but my task in this talk is to outline his career as fairly as I can.

Enoch Powell, or Jack Enoch Powell as he was actually christened, was born in Birmingham, oddly enough in Stechford, which was Roy Jenkins’ constituency, though he had nothing in common with Roy Jenkins – they were polar opposites I think, politically. He was born in June 1912, and, perhaps symbolically, a violent thunderstorm accompanied his birth. He was an only child, and both of his parents were teachers. His father became headmaster of an elementary school, but his mother had to give up her position upon marriage, as was the rule in those days, but she compensated by teaching her son, who was to be her star pupil. She taught him the alphabet at the age of three, and he picked it up very quickly and was already reading books then, and he had the habit, even at the age of three, of lecturing other people on subjects that interested him, and as early as the age of three, he was nicknamed “the Professor”.

His natural conservatism, with a small “c”, came out very early in life. As a young boy, he was taken, by his

parents, to Caernarfon Castle and on entering one of the rooms in the Castle, he removed his cap, and when asked why, he said because it was in that room that the Prince of Wales had been born.

Powell's mother had taught herself Greek from the New Testament, and when Powell was twelve, she taught him Greek, and he proved an outstanding scholar at school in the classics. He was single-minded and won all the Classics' prizes and said that he would become an academic in Classics. But he found, to his horror, when working on the Greek historian, Thucydides, that one of the commentators on him was called John U Powell, and he said you cannot have two great Greek scholars called John Powell, so from then on, he began to call himself J. Enoch Powell, and then simply Enoch Powell – that is how he became Enoch Powell.

In December 1929, he went up to Cambridge to take the scholarship exam in Classics at Trinity College Cambridge. The examinations lasted three hours, but Powell walked out of every one after one and a half hours. He later said that, in his Greek prose composition, he had given two versions: one in the style of Thucydides and one in the style of Herodotus. The examiners wrote to his headmaster that, in the translation paper, he had offered two translations: one in the style of Plato and one in the style of Herodotus. In addition, they said Powell had annotated the translations. Not surprisingly, he won the scholarship.

At Cambridge, he did nothing but work. He played no part whatever in politics or indeed in anything else, and later in life, he said of himself: "I saw my life when I went to Cambridge far too much, I realise in retrospect, as a simple continuation of the prize/scholarship winning, knowledge-eating process of the working side of my school life. I literally worked from half-past five in the morning until half-past nine at night, behind a sported oak, except when I went out to lectures. That was not because I disliked my fellows; it was that I did not know there was anything else to do." When a school-friend called on him to ask him out for tea, Powell replied, "Thank you very much, but I came here to work."

He declined an invitation from the Master of the College, the only example in living memory, to the Freshmen's Dinner, giving as his reason "pressure of work".

As an undergraduate, he contributed an article to a learned journal in Greek history. Not surprisingly, he won all the Classics' prizes, achieved a double-first, and was offered a fellowship by his College. But he was more ambitious than that: he wanted to become the youngest professor in the Commonwealth, and he succeeded. In 1937, he became Professor of Classics at the University of Sydney in Australia, at the age of 25. Then, two years later, in 1939, he was appointed Professor of Greek & Classical Literature at Durham, and that was a post to be taken up in January 1940.

But, before that, the War intervened and Powell joined the Army, but not before he had published a lexicon of Herodotus, and that is a book detailing every word used by Herodotus and its origins, and he said he hoped that book would secure him immortality because anyone studying Greek would have to read it, and it would preserve his name, even if, as he expected, he was to be killed in the War, because, he said, he had no hesitation in joining up, but he remembered the First World War, when the average period of survival in the trenches was about six weeks, and he thought he probably would not survive, and he was therefore determined there should be some memorial to his name.

Incidentally, a recent novel of alternative history has been published by a man called C.J. Sansom called "Dominion", and it was about what Britain would have been like in 1952 if we had made peace with Germany in 1940. There was a quisling government at that time, headed by Lord Beaverbrook, in which Powell is the Secretary of State for India. I think, whatever you think of Enoch Powell, that seems to me very unfair, that he had no sympathy at all with Nazi Germany. Indeed, he helped some Jewish academics in Classics from Germany to leave the country, and he says he realised from a very early stage that there would be a war with Germany and that he would have to fight in it, and he actually welcomed the coming of war. I mean, this novel by Sansom, "Dominion", is actually quite a good novel, but unfair to Powell I think.

As well as his lexicon of Herodotus before the War, he wrote volumes of poetry which he published, including a poem describing his own feelings when war broke out, feelings which were, to say the least, rather unusual. He said, "I wrote a poem in which I describe people joining-up at the outbreak of the War, like bridegrooms going to meet their bride. That is how joining-up was for me. The thing expected for so many years, the thing which one feared would not happen but would instead be replaced by disgrace and humiliation, it had happened. The chance had come at last. As I once described it, I felt I could hear the German divisions marching across Europe and I could hear the drumming coming through the Earth and coming up again in Australia, where no one else could hear it."

He loved the Army. He said later, "I took to the Army like a duck to water. It seemed to me such a congenial environment. The whole institution of the Army, the framework of discipline, the exactitude of rank, the precision of duty, this was something almost restful and attractive to me, and I took great pride in smartness at drill. There are always, I suppose, some absurd compliments one remembers. One that I shall remember all my days was my platoon sergeant saying to the company commander that I was the smartest soldier in the company." He said, "I take that as a very great compliment."

He once said, later in life, whether sincerely or not, that his great regret was not to have been killed in the War, like many of his friends. Whether that was sincere or not, we do not know. But what we do know was

that he was as successful in the Army as he had been in academic life. He entered the Army as a private and ended as a brigadier, one of the youngest brigadiers in the Army.

But, during the War, something very important happened to him, that he was working in the intelligence section of the Indian Army, and he says he fell in love with India. He said, "I fell head over heels in love with it." He said, "If I'd have gone there a hundred years earlier, I would have left my bones there." He learnt Urdu to familiarise himself with Indian civilisation and was later to talk to his Indian-born constituents in Urdu in Wolverhampton, which could not have been very usual. India aroused his political interests, the importance of India of Britain, preserving the Empire, and he described this in fairly laconic terms. He said, "One day, when the monsoon broke in Delhi, in June 1944, I suddenly said to myself "You are going to survive - there will be a time when you will not be in uniform. Painful though it may be, you have got to face it. There will be a lifetime for you and a lifetime not as a soldier." This was the opening of the door from one mental room to another, and there was the answer of course: you will go into politics in England." And he went into politics to preserve the Indian Empire, so you will not be surprised to know that he joined the Conservative Party, and he obtained a post in the Conservative Research Department.

But he found, to his surprise - he was rather innocent I think - that the Conservatives were not interested in India. They were interested in matters like housing and education and the economy and so on.

In any case, the Labour Party were in power, and they were committed to Indian independence. Powell remembered spending one evening in 1947, after the separation of India had become a political fact, walking about the streets all night trying to digest it - one's whole world had been altered. He did not want to accept Indian Independence, and he, by all accounts, sent a memorandum to Churchill objecting to it, and Churchill asked, rang up the Research Department to ask, "Who was that young madman who has been telling me how many divisions I will need to reconquer India?"

Despite this, Powell became a candidate in a by-election in 1947, in a Labour seat which he could not hope to win, and he was then adopted for Wolverhampton South-West, despite the Chairman of the Constituency Association warning the Selection Committee before he came in: "Now, I just want to say to you, before the next candidate comes in, do not be put off by appearances." He became the candidate for Wolverhampton South-West, which he represented in Parliament till February 1974.

He entered the Commons in 1950 as a devotee, as a strong supporter, of the free market. He was given junior office by Anthony Eden and Harold Macmillan, and became a junior minister at the Treasury. But, in 1958, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, Peter Thorneycroft, resigned because he thought the Conservatives were not sufficiently committed to cutting public expenditure, and Powell resigned with him.

He was brought back by Harold Macmillan in 1960 as Minister of Health, a position then outside the Cabinet, but he entered the Cabinet in 1962, and he established, it is fair to say, a reputation as a humane Minister, who was particularly concerned over issues which were not then fashionable: TB patients, long-stay young patients, matters of social welfare in general. He extended visiting hours in hospitals, and he introduced new uniforms for staff in mental hospitals. He paid particular concern, showed particular concern with mental hospitals, and he once said, "Only the best is good enough for Broadmoor," which was not a popular thing to say.

In 1963, he resigned again, for the second time, or rather refused to serve under Macmillan's successor, Sir Alec Douglas-Home, who was chosen in very controversial circumstances. It was not wholly clear why Powell refused to serve. It is true he had supported Home's competitor, R.A. Butler, but Butler was willing to join the Government. Powell said this was a matter of honour, that he had said he would not serve under Home if Home was chosen, and he had to stick to that, even if others did not. Home called him in to try and get him to change his mind, and Powell replied, typically, "Well, I don't expect, Alec, you expect me to give you a different answer on Saturday from the one I gave you on Friday. I would have to go home and turn all the mirrors round." So, he was in the wilderness again.

Home lost the 1964 Election narrowly and resigned the Conservative leadership in 1965, and there was then a contest for the leadership between Edward Heath and Reginald Maudling. But Powell thought he would put his hat in the ring to test his free market views, a platform for those views, and it showed he had very little support at that time, because Heath had 150 votes and won, Maudling had 133, but Powell only had fifteen. Nevertheless, Heath was magnanimous and put Powell in the Shadow Cabinet as Defence Spokesman, where he thought perhaps he could not do too much harm.

After 1966, Powell began to take up the issue of immigration, and on the 23^d of April 1968, he made a speech in Birmingham, which I will talk about in some detail, which has a claim to be the most explosive speech ever made in Britain since the War, and which led to him being expelled from the Shadow Cabinet.

Firstly, I want to put that speech in context of the immigration issue, which was a consequence of the end of Empire. By the 1960s, Powell had come to accept, as you had to perhaps, that the Empire had ended, that you were not going to re-conquer India, but very characteristically, he said, "If the Empire's come to an end, it must be finished with completely. You must not bother with all the leftovers of Empire, like the Commonwealth, free immigration, all these other things - Britain must stand for Britain, forget about all the

historic ties.” It was a characteristic, logical shift, if you like.

However, because of the Empire, Britain did not have, until 1981 – it may seem odd now, but Britain had no definition of British citizenship. Citizenship until 1948 was imperial – that is, everyone living in the British Empire owed allegiance to the King and therefore could freely move from any country in the Empire to another. Of course, in those times, not many people did move. Transport costs were expensive, and there was very little travel.

This position was undermined by two developments, fundamental developments I think, occurring in the late-1940s. The first was the independence of India, which Powell had argued against, because, before the independence of India, all the countries which had become independent had been countries of white settlers: Australia, Canada, New Zealand and South Africa. They looked, or at least the white people there looked, to Britain as the mother country, so they were happy to recognise the King as King of Australia, Canada, South Africa and so on. But of course, India was not a country of white settlement, it was an indigenous country, if you like, a mother country of its own, and they did not see the King as a symbol of allegiance but as a symbol of British domination over India. The Indians said that when we become independent, we do not want to remain a monarchy, we want to become a republic, but we want to remain in the Commonwealth as a republic – could it be done? That was a problem for British policy-makers. They had two alternatives.

The first is that they could have said, no, you cannot – the Empire involves allegiance to the King, and it is going to be a tightly-knit Empire. If you said that, you could say the Empire would be almost entirely a white Empire. But people said, after all, there is no difference in principle between India, or Africa for that matter, and Australia and Canada, because the whole purpose of the Empire is to prepare countries for self-government and independence. Canada had been the first, in 1867, then Australia and New Zealand. India was the first non-white country. Policymakers in Britain, both Labour and Conservative, said the Empire is not based on colour and an independent country is free to choose its own form of government. The Indians choose to have a republic. We therefore want India to remain in the Commonwealth. This means we have to find a new formula, so the test is no longer allegiance to the King, but the test is the King, and now the Queen, should be recognised as Head of the Commonwealth, a symbolic title with no powers.

I say that advisedly. There is a letter in the Times today, which is mistaken about this Commonwealth Charter, saying that the Queen is acting on advice in signing it. She is not. It is a purely symbolic position, with no powers of any kind attached to it. It is like the position of Supreme Governor of the Church of England. It is not accountable to anyone. It is a pure symbolic position that holds the Commonwealth together and it is the basis for the multi-racial Empire.

The Asian and African members have entirely followed the Indian lead: they do not want to be monarchies – they are all republics.

It is often forgotten that the Queen’s Christmas and Commonwealth Day broadcasts are not made as Queen of Britain or Queen of anywhere else, but as Head of the Commonwealth, and therefore not made on the advice of Ministers. British Ministers have no constitutional role to advise her as Head of the Commonwealth.

Now, this meant a less tightly-knit Commonwealth, but a multi-racial Commonwealth, and a much larger one, which now covers one-third of the world, and in that Commonwealth, non-whites outnumber whites by six to one. This was a decision made by the Labour Government, post-War, but strongly supported by the Conservative opposition. It was not a matter of party opposition.

But Powell did not support it. He said this was a sham. He said, “It substitutes symbolism for real allegiance.”

So, that is the first change that occurred in the ‘40s.

The second change was the Canadians said we want our own local definition of citizenship, of what it means to be a Canadian citizen, and other member states of the Commonwealth would follow, so we had to make some decision as to what to do, and we did in the British Nationality Act of 1948, which Powell again was opposed to. What we said was this: that citizens of the various self-governing Commonwealth countries, like Canada and Australia, and citizens of the United Kingdom and the non-self-governing colonies, were all Commonwealth citizens, with free right of entry into Britain. Again, that was before mass migration was thought about. Some people say that altered the position, but it did not. It just rationalised the previous position of the Empire or Commonwealth being a single unit. In theory, it meant that 800 million people could have the right to settle in Britain.

At the time, it is fair to say, most policymakers were thinking about Australia and Canada, and they had been thinking about the War and kith and kin and all that, and they were saying you cannot stop Australians and Canadians coming to Britain. They probably did not believe that many people from the West Indies or India would come to Britain, with very high transport costs, and it was not clear that Britain would have full employment for a long period, that there would be jobs and so on. But I hasten to add this: that even if they had thought that, they would have made the same decision, the reason being that they could only distinguish between Australia/Canada on the one hand and India/West Indies on the other by putting a colour

bar in a statute, and no British politician was prepared to do that – they said it went against the whole idea of Empire to discriminate on grounds of colour, so they did not take that decision. And they did not take the decision only British people are British citizens because that meant denying entry to Australians, Canadians and so on.

The Labour Government put forward that Act but it was, again, supported strongly by Conservatives.

Many would argue, and this was Powell's argument, this was backward-looking legislation. It assumed a cohesive Empire which was disappearing, that Britain was the mother country which had to set an example, and the motto that people used was "Civis Britannicus sum", like "Civis Romanus sum", that just as any Roman citizen, citizen of the Empire, was a citizen of Rome, so anyone in the Commonwealth was a citizen of Britain, whatever the colour. All had the same status and allegiance.

There is a paradox later on because most of those who favoured unlimited immigration were on the left in politics and bitter critics of Empire, but the free entry policy derived its justification from Empire, so it should have been the wrong way round! The Conservatives should have supported it, the imperialist party, and the left should oppose it, but, as things worked, it was the other way around.

We did not begin to restrict immigration from the Commonwealth until 1962, but by that time, almost all the primary immigration from the Commonwealth had already occurred.

Governments in the 1950s thought about restricting immigration, but did not do so, and they have been accused of weakness for not doing so. These were Conservative Governments. But that is unfair: they were not weak. They thought it would be wrong in principle.

If you take the Conservative Home Secretary in the 1950s, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, who was not generally thought to be a liberal-minded person, he said this in a Cabinet memorandum: "Even to contemplate restricting immigration from the colonies would be a step forward towards breaking up the Empire, and in other quarters, it would be regarded as evidence that the Government are in favour of a colour bar."

The Colonial Secretary, Alan Lennox-Boyd, who again is not generally thought of as a liberal, said he would only accept control if it was applied to the old Commonwealth as well as the new. He said: "To me, it would be a tragedy to bring to an end the traditional right of unrestricted entry into the mother country of Her Majesty's subjects and quite unthinkable to do so on grounds of colour." He said that in 1958 and he threatened to resign if governments persisted with that, which they did not.

It was a matter of principle that they were not going to do it. You may think they were right, you may think they were wrong, but the main, primary immigration to Britain came between 1948 and 1962, and by the time that Governments started to restrict immigration, it was too late, if you wanted to restrict it.

In the 1950s, there were about half a million so-called primary migrants into Britain from the old Commonwealth. As a matter of comparison, from 2004, there were one and a half million people from Poland and other Central European countries who came to Britain, about three-quarters of a million, are staying permanently, so it is many more than the Commonwealth immigrants from the '50s.

With family reunification, the number of half a million would at least double after 1962, but there was now no way of preventing the growth of immigration because you could not stop dependents coming in – it would be inhumane to do so, to stop spouses and children and parents and the like coming in. You could only alter it by forcible repatriation, which not even Enoch Powell ever suggested.

But after 1962, with two important exceptions, which I shall discuss, primary immigration came almost completely to an end. In 1962, an Act was passed limiting immigration, but Britain was already in the process of being transformed from a homogenous nation at the head of a multiracial empire to a multicultural country with no empire. It was a great change, and critics of the policy said we were never asked, we were never consulted about that.

In 1962, the Conservative Government of Harold Macmillan now distinguished between citizens who were allowed to enter the country and citizens who were not. The administration of it is quite complex and I will not go into it – it is probably too complicated already. But, broadly speaking, people from the new Commonwealth lost their right of unrestricted entry. They had to get an employment voucher, a work voucher, to enter, and the numbers were strictly regulated. But there were still no controls over dependents, so the main immigration was dependents, and primary immigration was over. Dependents still had an unconditional right of entry.

The issue was becoming politically explosive in parts of the West Midlands, and I think this is what influenced Powell. In the 1964 General Election, the Labour Party won the Election with a 3.5% swing, but in one seat in Smethwick, where there was a large immigrant population, there was a 7.2% swing to the Conservatives, and the seat was lost by Labour to a Conservative alderman called Peter Griffiths, who it was said, I think rightly, ran a racist campaign. That was very much noticed because the person who Griffiths defeated was the Labour Foreign Secretary, or proposed Foreign Secretary, Patrick Gordon Walker, so it was a very high-

profile constituency.

There were two other constituencies, another in Birmingham, and Slough, Eaton & Slough, where the Conservatives won the seats from Labour against the national swing.

When Alderman Griffiths won this seat, Harold Wilson, the Labour Prime Minister, sent a telegram to Gordon Walker and said, "The whole country knows why you lost and all honour to you." When Peter Griffiths took his seat in Parliament, Wilson said this constituted a "lasting brand of shame" on the Conservative Party and that Griffiths would be a parliamentary leper in the House of Commons.

One of Wilson's allies, Richard Crossman, wrote in his diaries: "Ever since the Smethwick Election, it has been quite clear that immigration can be the greatest potential vote-loser for the Labour Party if we are seen to be permitting a flood of immigrants to come in and blight the central areas in all our cities."

Many Conservatives were unaware of this - they represented rural constituencies - but Powell, in a constituency in the West Midlands, would have been aware of it and would have noticed what was happening.

The Labour Party in 1962 had opposed the Commonwealth Immigration Act and argued for free entry, but, in 1965, actually tightened the working of the Act, with a White Paper which reduced the numbers of work vouchers available for Commonwealth immigrants, a much more stringent application of legislation. Again, Crossman wrote in his diary: "Politically, fear of immigration is the most powerful undertow today. We felt we had to out-trump the Tories by doing what they would have done, and so transforming their policy into a bi-partisan policy." Both parties accepted the argument, which I think is accepted now, as a consensus, that if you want to create good race relations in Britain, you have to have restrictions on immigration so that it is of manageable proportions, and they said the argument for immigration restrictions is not racist for integration is possible if people do not feel that it is unlimited and never-ending. Now, some people on the left disagreed with that and said we still want free entry, and some people on the right, of whom Powell was the leader, said that did not go far enough.

As ill-luck would have it, another crisis arose, an unexpected crisis, which was going to increase the number of primary immigrants into Britain because of the position of the Kenyan Asians. When Kenya had become independent in 1963, the Asians in Kenya were given the option of retaining their traditional Commonwealth citizenship or becoming Kenyan citizens. There were 200,000 Kenyan Asians, of whom only 20,000 applied for Kenyan citizenship, the reason being that they feared, I think rightly feared, discrimination by the Kenyan authorities, and many of those who applied for Kenyan citizenship did not get it because of bureaucratic delays and so on. The discrimination against Asians in Kenya intensified with independence, and many sought to leave the country. There were about 200,000 who had passports issued by the British Government which gave them the right of entry.

The Labour Government, some would say, panicked, but anyway, they acted very rapidly. They pushed through a Commonwealth Immigration Bill restricting the right of holders of British passports in Kenya to enter the country and this went through in just a few days. It was pushed through in a great hurry. Some Conservatives voted against it, including Iain Macleod who I spoke of in my second lecture, and also a very young MP who became quite distinguished later on, Michael Heseltine, and some Labour people voted against it as well, Michael Foot and Shirley Williams, because the effect of this legislation was to leave those Kenyan Asians in effect stateless, with no rights.

But polls showed the vast majority in the country were in favour of this legislation, and again, Crossman wrote in his diary. He said: "A few years ago, everyone here would have regarded the denial of entry to British nationals with British passports as the most appalling violation of our deepest principles. Now, they are quite happily reading aloud their departmental briefs in favour of doing just that."

In the Shadow Cabinet, the Conservatives, under Edward Heath's leadership, were very unhappy about supporting this legislation, and two members of the Shadow Cabinet said they would only support it if the Conservatives did not oppose the Race Relations Bill which Roy Jenkins was pursuing through Parliament.

What Roy Jenkins was doing, as a kind of counterpart to limiting the rights of the Kenyan Asians, was to have a Race Relations Act extending the prohibition against discrimination to employment and housing. There was already an Act about public places - pubs, restaurants and theatres. This extended it to employment and housing.

Some Conservatives, again, Iain Macleod and Michael Heseltine, voted for the Race Relations legislation, but the Conservative Shadow Cabinet, of which Enoch Powell was a member, decided not to support it, but not to oppose it either, but to produce a reasoned amendment opposing certain elements in the Race Relations legislation, particularly the elements involving Race Relations Courts, rights to damages, and they said you must make a distinction between a company systematically discriminating and a private individual, and they said, if you do not, it will exacerbate racial feeling, and they said that was important. They said we must be very clear of the fact we are not supporting this Bill, we must give no countenance to any suggestion that we are supporting racist policies, and therefore we must be very sensitive in what we say about it so that we

are not misled.

This is the context of the Birmingham speech of Enoch Powell on the 20th of April. He began in this way – you may say this is a strange way of showing sensitivity to racial problems. He said: “A week or two ago, I fell into conversation with a constituent, a middle-aged, quite ordinary working man, employed in one of our nationalised industries. After a sentence or two about the weather, he suddenly said, “If I had the money to go, I would not stay in this country.” I made some deprecatory reply, to the effect that even this Government could not last forever, but he took no notice and continued: “I have three children, all of them been through grammar school, two of them married now with family, and I shall not be satisfied until I have seen them all settled overseas. In this country, in fifteen or twenty years’ time, the black man will have the whip hand over the white man.””

He then said: “What he is saying, thousands and hundreds of thousands are saying and thinking, not throughout Great Britain perhaps, but in the areas that are already undergoing the total transformation to which there is no parallel in a thousand years of English history.”

“Those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad. We must be mad, literally mad as a nation, to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependents, who are, for the most part, the material of the future growth of the immigrant-descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre.”

He then spoke of the Race Relations legislation, which he said was “...risking throwing a match onto gunpowder because it was elevating the immigrant and his descendants into a privileged or special class,” and he said it was establishing a “one-way privilege by Act of Parliament”.

Near the end of his speech, he concluded with a passage that has become most famous. He said: “As I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see the River Tiber foaming with much blood.” The speech is sometimes called the “Rivers of Blood speech”. He did not use that phrase. He used the phrase which came from Virgil, but I do not think any of his audience knew that, the quotation “the River Tiber foaming with much blood”. If you were being charitable, you might say that was metaphorical and he should not have used that particular phrase, but still, there was enough in that speech to cause trouble.

There were already serious differences of opinion on the actual policies between Powell and the rest of the Shadow Cabinet. There was: first, that he said it was really very difficult, if not impossible, for Commonwealth immigrants to integrate; secondly, you should not enforce equal rights for non-white people; thirdly, you should ban dependents, which was not the policy of the Conservative Shadow Cabinet, and therefore you should oppose the Race Relations Bill in principle. It was absurd to say, in my opinion, it was a “one-way privilege” because it could be invoked by whites as well as non-whites. Powell said that he had seen notices for employment saying “Jamaicans only”. That was just as illegal under the Act as saying “No coloureds”, but of course, it would be invoked more by non-whites since they were more likely to be discriminated against. That, oddly enough, went against public opinion because, although most people favoured strong immigration control, they also favoured the legislation against discrimination.

But the most important point I think of the speech was not the precise differences of opinion but the inflammatory language, which particularly annoyed the Shadow Cabinet, having said that the issue must be treated very sensitively.

There were various anecdotes, which I will not repeat, rather unpleasant anecdotes, about bad behaviour by Caribbean landlords, but studies previously had shown that there was no exceptionally high instances of abuses in property for which coloured landlords were responsible and that there was widespread discrimination against non-whites. One organisation sent out a British person, a Hungarian person, and a West Indian to answer job applications and advertisements for rented accommodation and found widespread discrimination, and found that the worst of it was that, often, the immigrant was not aware that he or she was being discriminated against, but there was very widespread discrimination.

Heath said that he thought the speech was racist in tone and liable to exacerbate racial tensions, and he rang up Enoch Powell to say that he was dismissed from the Shadow Cabinet, and those were the last words the two of them ever exchanged.

Public opinion showed – again, an oddity – that 69% disapproved of the dismissal. Perhaps they thought it was unfair he had not been given a hearing. I do not know the true reason why.

He said at the time that he disputed that he was a racist. He was asked, “Is it true you do not like coloured people, Mr Powell?” He said, “I have very little background of the West Indies and West Indians.” “That is regrettable – you talk so much about them.” He said, “Well, I cannot help it. But I have considerable background knowledge of the peoples of India and Pakistan, who form three-fifths of all the immigrants. I fell in love with India when I went there, and I have no sense of superiority because of a white skin, either to an Indian or a West Indian.”

This was at a time when both party leaders were very unpopular: Wilson, in the Labour Government, because

the economy was not doing well; and Heath, the Conservative Opposition Leader, because he did not seem to be able to communicate to the public.

Powell became, immediately, a folk hero. There were marches of Smithfield porters and dockers in his favour, and there was clearly a very strong element, presumably people who did not regularly vote Conservative, a working class element supporting him.

Then, in Eastbourne, in November, he made an even more inflammatory speech saying that integration was not possible without mass repatriation and that, if you did not have mass repatriation, which he said should be voluntary, that civil war was likely.

In 1970, the Conservatives won the General Election and Edward Heath became Prime Minister. Ironically, there are indications that Heath owed his success to Powell, who had associated in voters' minds the idea that the Conservatives were more hostile to immigration than the Labour Party. That seemed to end, ironically, Powell's chances of the Conservative leadership because there was now a Government which believed in the free market, as Powell did, and it was going to adopt a very stringent policy on immigration. Indeed, the Heath Government, in 1971, passed legislation which in effect equated Commonwealth citizens with aliens, with foreigners in general, and had a definition of those who were entitled to free entry called a "patrial", which was someone with a parent or grandparent born in Britain, and you may say that's an implicit colour bar, and there was to be no further large-scale immigration.

Then things began to go into Powell's direction again: firstly, because the Heath Government entered Europe, and I will talk of that in a few moments; secondly, because Heath abandoned, in 1972, his free market policy for a policy of intervention in industry and a statutory incomes policy, which Powell was strongly opposed to; but thirdly, because of what happened in Uganda, which was even worse than what happened in Kenya because, in Uganda, the African dictator, President Amin, expelled 73,000 Ugandan Asians from the country, gave them three months to leave, in 1972. There were 73,000 Asians in Uganda, and around half of them had British passports.

The Heath Government, in contrast to the previous Labour Government, accepted these people coming in, they said this was the last large-scale primary immigration that we had, but again, Powell was opposed to that.

The only non-European Union immigration we now have are dependents, asylum seekers, and those very few who can get work permits, which are rigidly rationed, so we have a strict problem. You will notice I said "non-European Union" because the problem now presents itself in a new form with the European Union, because the free movement of peoples is a basis of the Treaty of Rome, signed in 1957. Again, it was signed when there were just six countries in the European Community: France, Germany, Benelux countries, and Italy. No one thought the ex-Communist countries, which were at a lower level of economic development, would be part of Europe.

Nevertheless, it now follows that anyone from 26 other countries, 27 from the summer when Croatia joins, have free entry into the United Kingdom and other countries. So, that is like the situation with Commonwealth immigration before 1962, with this difference: that before 1962, we could alter the position by statute - we cannot alter the Treaty of Rome by statute unless 27 other countries agree. There has to be an amendment to the Treaty of Rome, which requires unanimous agreement.

I will give you some idea of the figures of immigration. From 1881 to 1914, around 325,000 Jews came into Britain from Eastern European; from 1933 to 1939, about 50,000 Jews from Germany and countries around Germany; from 1948 to 1962, 250,000 people from the Caribbean; 1972, 30,000 expelled Ugandan Asians; 2004, one and a half million East European, of whom around three-quarters of a million remain; and then free immigration from Rumania and Bulgaria. So, immigration is again a key issue. It takes a different aspect - it has nothing to do with colour, but takes a different aspect with the European Union, and all studies show that one of the main reasons why people are opposed to the European Union is the immigration issue.

This takes me on to the second of Powell's great issues, which is Europe. Powell was opposed to our entry into the European Community, as it then was, precisely because he said it involves restrictions on British sovereignty, and of course, one key restriction is the ability to decide upon your own immigration policy - that is one restriction of sovereignty. The Italians and Greeks are now finding other restrictions on sovereignty.

Powell said, because of our own long and uninterrupted history, Parliament plays a crucial role in Britain which it does not in any of the other Continental countries, and that we define ourselves not as Europeans but as partly in Europe but partly out. He said our folk memories of 1940, and going even further back, to the Napoleonic Wars, are when we stood alone against the Continent, not as being part of Europe. He said the main reason for that is that, unlike the Continental countries, we could not be defeated in a land war because of the English Channel, and he said our similarity is not with the Continental countries but with another half-in/half-out country which is Russia, who could not be defeated because of her immense size, and therefore it is natural that Britain and Russia should have a common interest which we do not have with the Continent, and therefore we can never totally commit ourselves to the Continent the way that, for

example, the French, the Germans, and other people could do, and that because of our long history of institutional continuity, we are more aware of what the sacrifice of sovereignty means than Continental countries are.

He said, "If you look at the original six, four of them only came into existence within the last two centuries." Of course, he would now say that countries of Central and Eastern Europe, many of them only came into existence in 1918, whereas we, of course, have a much longer history, and our historical experience is so profoundly different from that of our Continental neighbours. This, he said, was widened after the War because the Continental six which formed the Community had all been either Fascist countries or occupied by Fascist countries and had to start again with new constitutions, and because they had started with new constitutions, they were quite happy about building new institutions, which we did not like to do. We were evolutionary, and relied on adapting the institutions of the past – the House of Lords, the House of Commons, the monarchy and so on – rather than creating new ones, and therefore Europe was not really appropriate for us.

In making this argument, he faced Edward Heath, who was the most pro-European Prime Minister we have had since the War, arguably the only genuinely European Prime Minister, and he had become Prime Minister in 1970.

In his campaign, Enoch Powell said, in a speech in June 1973, which was prescient as regards his future, the principle of self-government was more important than party allegiance. In an interview afterwards, he said he had be prepared to face Labour rule, the rule of the Labour Party, for the rest of his life if that preserved the sovereignty of Parliament.

Powell had voted with the Labour Party against entry into Europe. The Labour Party's policy in opposition then was rather similar to David Cameron's now. The Labour Party said we want to renegotiate to secure better terms for Britain, and then we will put the issue to the British people in a referendum. Powell said that gave people the one chance to leave Europe.

In February 1974, Heath called an election, not on the issue of Europe, but an issue arising from his statutory incomes policy and the clash with the miners which that led to, because the miners were breaking the policy and going on strike to try and breach it. Heath's policy was: "Who governs - the miners or us?" Powell said that was a bogus issue because, as a result of the oil crisis, the Government would have to pay the miners extra, whoever won the election, that with the rise in the price of oil, we needed the coal, and therefore we had to pay the miners more. He said: "I consider it an act of gross irresponsibility that this General Election has been called in the face of the current and impending situation. The Election will, in any case, be fraudulent, for the object of those who called it is to secure the electorate's approval for a position which the Government itself knows to be untenable, in order to make it easier to abandon that position subsequently. It is unworthy of British politics and government to try to steal success by telling the public one thing during an election and doing the opposite afterwards."

He never explicitly said "Vote Labour". He spoke during the Election campaign for the so-called "Keep Out Movement", keeping Britain out, and three days before the Election, he said, "A vote for Labour is the only way to ensure that Britain stays out of Europe." He said in that speech: "Here is a man who promised his electors, in 1970, that he would do everything in his power to prevent British membership, who voted against it in every division, major or minor, which took place in the ensuing Parliament, who did so even when success would have precipitated a dissolution, who allied himself openly on the subject with his political opponents, who made no secret of his belief that its importance overrode that of all others, and who warned that was one of the issues on which men will put country before party." So he said he would not stand as a Conservative – he said you cannot stand as an individual under the British system – the parliamentary system depends on party. He had to support a party, and he said there was only one way that people could get rid of Edward Heath and keep out of Europe, and the day before the Election, he said he had voted by post for the Labour candidate in his old constituency of Wolverhampton South-West.

In the February 1974 Election, the Labour Party won a narrow victory. There was a Hung Parliament. Labour had four seats more than the Conservatives and formed a Minority Government, and Edward Heath never held office again. In such a narrow Election, you can say a host of factors could have been important, but I do not think anyone could doubt that Powell's intervention made a difference, and the swing against the Conservatives in the West Midlands, which was Powell's area, was larger than elsewhere, and in my opinion, there was no doubt that Powell made an important difference.

There had to be another election, with a Minority Government which was unstable, in October 1974, and in that Election, Powell stood again for Parliament, but not as a Conservative, but as an Ulster Unionist, for the Ulster constituency of South Down, which is a seat he held until 1987. He then took up his hostility to devolution.

He said Northern Ireland should not have devolved institutions, it should be integrated into the rest of the United Kingdom, and governed just like London or Cornwall or any other part of the United Kingdom, to show the Nationalist population that they could not detach Ulster from the United Kingdom, either by force or any other way.

He was also opposed to Scottish devolution. He said asymmetrical devolution was not possible. It raised the famous "West Lothian question", of which he is the real originator: that you cannot have Scottish MPs voting for English laws when English MPs do not vote for Scottish laws. He was the main opponent of the devolution legislation in the 1970s, though Tam Dalyell is often thought of as the hero of defeat, and he said the strains would inevitably lead to separation.

Enoch Powell lost his seat in South Down in 1987 because the Nationalist vote, which had hitherto been split, united round one candidate, and he lived on until 1998. When he was buried, he was buried in the uniform of a brigadier of his regiment.

Shortly before he died in 1997, the Blair Government won the Election, and Powell's comment was: "They have voted to break up the United Kingdom," because he thought the Blair Government's policies on devolution would have that effect.

Let me conclude with talking about his legacy. You can say, on the one hand, he was a very clever man, perhaps one of the cleverest who has been in British politics since the War, who achieved very little in legislative or any other terms. He was not a team player.

Some people say he was a great parliamentarian, but none of his important speeches after 1964 were made in Parliament. They were made in the country, where he could not be criticised and you could not debate with him, and he was much less popular in Parliament than in the country. His colleagues either disliked or distrusted him, and they had no confidence in him.

He did not try, as Aneurin Bevan had done, and Tony Benn was to do, and Jenkins was to do, to build up a faction supporting him. It would have been difficult to do because, on some issues, he was surprising liberal. For example, he was opposed to capital punishment and he supported homosexual law reform, which perhaps one would not think of.

But his strength lay in the country and not in Parliament, and it is a very difficult thing, in our system, to impose, as it were, populist strength in the country in Parliament, and the very actions that made him a celebrity in the country made him distrusted by his parliamentary colleagues. I suspect that he altered public opinion - he could fill a hall. He said, "Politicians do not alter public opinion but articulate and express it." He arguably mobilised supporters in two General Elections in opposite directions: 1970 for the Conservatives, 1974 for Labour, this was a remarkable feat.

On the free market, he was precursor of Margaret Thatcher's views. More generally, he channelled the alienation and disillusionment of the 1960s, which some people thought would lead to a swing to the left - the student revolt, the permissive society, and all that - but its real consequences were a swing to the right, to Margaret Thatcher and Keith Joseph and the reaction against the 1960s.

On immigration, you may say that he legitimised hostility to non-white people. Certainly, his predictions of ethnic conflict have not come true, and despite various blemishes, I think it can reasonably be said that ethnic relations in Britain are a success story and that we are, on the whole, a peaceful and tolerant multicultural society. You may say that is partly due to restrictions on immigration, but these owe little to Powell, and the multicultural society was begun before he started his speeches on the subject. Now, as I say, immigration is now a key problem in a different way, in regard to Rumania and Bulgaria, in a way which Powell would have understood as a restriction of sovereignty.

On the European Union and on devolution, the jury are still out. David Cameron has accepted that a renewal of British concept for Europe is needed, that full-hearted consent to the abandonment of sovereignty has not been given. Devolution, it could lead to Scottish independence, we do not know - at the moment, the odds are against it.

But what unites all Powell's thinking is the logical consequences of the end of Empire and return to a sense of British-ness. He is the prime representative in post-War politics of British nationalism, or perhaps better to say "English nationalism", and English nationalism defines itself partly in opposition to Scottish devolution, but more importantly, with Euro-scepticism. Powell once said, "Nationhood, with all that word implies, is what the Tory Party is ultimately about," and he saw it as an absolute. So the consequence of the end of Empire should be return to Britishness, or to Englishness, which is represented itself in Parliament, in a sovereign Parliament - do not diminish that sovereign Parliament by subordinating Westminster to the European Union or by creating competing Parliaments in Scotland and Wales, which is a symbol that Westminster can no longer represent the interests of people in Scotland and Wales. So, for him, that represented the watershed, the parting of the ways, for saying that a separate nation has been admitted to be there in Scotland and Wales.

Above all, Powell expressed a huge gap, which perhaps still exists, between the political class and the people. In a poll in the Financial Times, on the 18th of February, a couple of weeks ago, 50% said they want to leave the European Union, 37% said they wanted to remain in, but people who take that view of leaving may say they are not properly represented in Parliament, which is why UKIP gained support. People who were opposed to immigration said their views were not properly represented in Parliament. People who

favour an English Parliament or English nationalism will say the Scots and Welsh are getting away too much and they say they are not properly represented in Parliament.

On all these issues, the elite, some say, were agreed: there was a consensus we should enter the European Union; there was a consensus on prime immigration; a broad consensus on Scottish devolution. But the people were opposed to it. Now, Powell articulated that opposition and was kept out by the elite consensus and the parliamentary system. Was that a good thing or a bad thing? I leave that for you to decide.

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