

## EDITOR'S NOTE

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### ENOCH POWELL'S OTHER WARNING

The inaugural issue of *The Occidental Quarterly* contained the first in a regular feature of reprinted speeches, essays, and articles that are either out of print or have been heretofore unpublished, which we named the "Classics Corner." Enoch Powell's celebrated 1968 address on immigration to the West Midlands Area Conservative Political Centre in Birmingham, England, otherwise known as the "Rivers of Blood" speech, stands out as one of the foremost unapologetic statements in defense of Western culture. The importance of Powell's message made it the perfect first selection for this new feature. Although copies of the full text of Powell's speech had been published on the Internet and reprinted in a few edited monographs, its availability had been limited.

Recently, the editors of *TOQ* gained access to a photocopied manuscript of another classic Powell address, his talk before the Stretford Young Conservatives in Manchester, England, on January 21, 1977. In his speech, Powell issued a warning to his fellow countryman about the potential threat of "public violence" and the prospects for a looming racial civil war unless colored immigration levels from the British Commonwealth colonies were drastically reversed. An important point in Powell's speech focused on the draconian measures that were contained in the Race Relations Act of 1976, particularly Section 70, which gave the authorities the power to "criminalize racialism" and to seize advocates of "hate speech" *regardless of intent*. It served as a pretext to ban speeches that were deemed "threatening" and "insulting" and to rein in the activities of nationalist and racist groups such as the National Front. In his study of the British Commission for Racial Equality, Ray Honeyford writes:

This section of the Act not only suppressed the expression of overt racist views. It crucially affected the general climate of opinion surrounding the whole area of race and race relations. Henceforth, perfectly honorable citizens became afraid of expressing *any* opinion about these matters; with the result that important issues connected with the actual state of race relations and the fortunes and progress of the ethnic minorities became taboo subjects.<sup>1</sup>

Powell took the opportunity to criticize the Act, which was to become law in a matter of weeks, and express his outrage over this blatant threat to freedom of speech. In a previous speech to the Monday Club during the first week of October 1976, some four months earlier, Powell, as biographer Simon Heffer points out, “issued as stark a warning about the future than at any time since the Birmingham speech”:

The tag from Virgil’s *Aeneid* about the River Tiber has long passed into a byword, but in words devoid of metaphor I have stated my conviction that physical and violent conflict must sooner or later supervene where an indigenous population sees no end to the progressive occupation of its heartland by aliens with whom they do not identify themselves and who do not identify themselves with them. The catastrophe of widespread violence, entrenched in a divided community, can be averted only in the way that other apprehended catastrophes can be averted: namely, by removing its root cause. That root cause is the existing magnitude of the Asian and African population and the certainty of the continuing future increase in that population, proportionately to the rest, which is inherent in its present magnitude and composition. It follows that there is no escape except by way of such a reduction of that existing population as will be sufficient at least to remove the prospect of future growth; in other words to limit its present dimensions the “alien wedge” (I use a famous judicial phrase) in the cities and urban areas of England.<sup>2</sup>

In his Monday Club address, Powell urged the British government to adopt a voluntary repatriation program and to set aside funds that would typically go to rebuilding inner-city slums. He was roundly attacked for making such blunt claims and the controversy that followed, even within conservative circles, set the stage for his remarks in the Stretford speech some four months later.

The British weekly, *The Economist*, published an editorial in the wake of the latter speech and raised the question whether or not Powell should be prosecuted for his remarks:

Should Mr. Enoch Powell be prosecuted? That, not the future of race relations in Britain, is the issue brought into question by Mr. Powell’s speech to the Stretford Young Conservatives in Manchester on January 21<sup>st</sup> in which he retold his recurrent nightmare. It is a nightmare that seems to recur more often the older he grows and to require more extravagance in each retelling. This time he spoke of the prospect of civil war, of the polarizing effects of color and of the effects of changing race laws.... Predictable, perhaps. But actionable?<sup>3</sup>

The prospect that a Western nation—one of the world’s pre-eminent powers—would seriously consider prosecuting a distinguished statesman for speaking candidly about a serious public concern (at the time Attorney General Sam Silkin weighed the prospect of pursuing an indictment), was only an omen of the rot that infests Britain, and the rest of the West, today. For the past thirty years, Britain’s political elite has alternately promoted or tolerated non-

white immigration, while seeking to silence any opposition, verbal or otherwise, to the transformation of a great and largely homogeneous nation into a multicultural, multiethnic travesty. Yet Powell's warning resonated and continues to resonate with the typical Englishman, who grasped more easily than his rulers the direction in which his nation was spiraling.

ENDNOTES

1. Ray Honeyford, *The Commission for Racial Equality* (London: Transaction, 1998), 41-42.
2. Simon Heffer, *Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell* (London: Weidenfeld & Nicholson, 1998), 778.
3. "Race: Clobber Powell?" *The Economist*, January 29, 1977, 19.