

Powell to the People: Reaction and Race Relations in the
Aftermath of the “Rivers of Blood” Speech, 1968-1970

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Introduction

The audience at the Annual General Meeting of the West Midlands Area Conservative Political Centre in Birmingham on Saturday, April 20, 1968 was expecting a keynote speech from their chairman, J. Enoch Powell, the Conservative Member of Parliament for Wolverhampton South-West. What they heard at 2:30pm, however, was more than a keynote. Enoch Powell's speech, calling for an end to the "evil" of immigration of people of color, turned out to be the start of a national moment and one of the most infamous speeches in British political history, a speech known by a menacing, open-ended title: "Rivers of Blood."

Powell's speech nominally took aim at the Race Relations Act of 1968, a bill seeking to outlaw racial discrimination in private business that was in the process of passing its way through the House of Commons. However, the larger issue that he sought to take on was the "avoidable evil" of Commonwealth immigration. Powell made this clear early in the speech. After vaguely discussing the politician's duty to fight against evil no matter the cost, Powell cited a conversation he had with a constituent. According to Powell, the man, after a few sentences about the weather, announced that he would leave Britain if he could because of his worry that immigration by people of color would mean that "in 15 or 20 years' time the black man will have the whip hand over the white man." Powell explained that this constituent was not alone in his feelings, alleging that in immigrant-heavy areas of the country "thousands and hundreds of thousands" of Britons were worried about the "transformation" of their country by immigrants of color.¹ Powell's central thesis was that an "alien element" was inexorably changing the country and threatening white British people.

¹ J. Enoch Powell, "Speech by the Rt. Hon. J. Enoch Powell to the Annual General Meeting of the West Midlands Area Political Centre at the Midland Hotel Birmingham," (April 20, 1968).

Powell backed up his depiction of the massive threat of immigration by citing his estimates of the future immigrant-descended population. He warned that by the year 2000 there would be between 5 and 7 million Commonwealth immigrants and their descendants living in Britain, thanks to the annual arrival of around 50,000 immigrants a year.² Without explicitly explaining why a large presence of native-born Britons of color would present a problem, Powell described continued immigration as being “like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre.”³ To avoid Britain’s self-immolation, he advocated for a system of repatriation, alleging that immigrants from within his constituency had asked him repeatedly for help returning to their country of origin. Powell argued that the rising percentage of Commonwealth-born in Britain presented a dangerous problem.

Building on that point, Powell told the audience at the Midland Hotel that people of color were already damaging the livelihoods of the white Britons they lived alongside. Alleging that many white citizens were finding themselves “strangers in their own country,” he decried the Race Relations Act, which he described as establishing a “one-way privilege” that would take opportunities away from “ordinary English people”—a “persecuted minority”—and give them to new immigrants. To represent these citizens who would be hurt by an anti-discrimination law, Powell told the story of an old white woman in Wolverhampton, who owned and rented out a house on a street onto which a number of immigrants had recently moved.⁴ She found that only

² These were Powell’s personal estimates, made using official statistics from various sources. As with any estimate, it did not account for anything but the status quo of immigration. In 2001, there were 4,521,050 non-white residents of Britain, many, but not all, of whom were Commonwealth immigrants or descendants. Of these, 1,782,130 were born outside of the United Kingdom. See “Census 2001 National Report for England and Wales” (London: Office for National Statistics, 2004), 121–24.

³ Powell, “Speech by the Rt. Hon. J. Enoch Powell to the Annual General Meeting of the West Midlands Area Political Centre at the Midland Hotel Birmingham.”

⁴ It should be noted that the anecdotes Powell uses in the speech were completely unsubstantiated. Ann Dummett, a race relations worker, wrote to *The Times* following the speech explaining that vague stories like this one were

black immigrants were interested in renting rooms, but refused to rent to any non-white people. Powell alleged that she had started to be racially abused by these “negroes” and their children, “wide-grinning picanninies,” and was worried that she would soon go to prison for discrimination in the event the Race Relations Act passed into law.⁵ Powell used a story of a racist old Englishwoman who was unable to make ends meet because she refused to rent to black people as an example of how immigration could ruin people’s lives.

In support of this anecdote, and perhaps to explain why the woman should not have been expected to rent to people of color, Powell then articulated his beliefs on cultural integration. He explained that he believed that assimilation was possible only in small numbers, and that the large immigrant population in the United Kingdom at that point had neither the capacity nor the desire to become a part of British culture. Rather than seeing positives in Britain’s emerging multiracialism, Powell instead believed that immigration would lead to “actual domination” by non-white races, and by extension cultures, in areas of immigrant settlement, “first over fellow immigrants and then over the rest of the population.” Issuing a final warning by quoting the Aeneid in the original Latin, Powell, a former classics professor, gave the speech its menacing name, saying, “as I look ahead, I am filled with foreboding. Like the Roman, I seem to see ‘the River Tiber foaming with much blood.’”⁶ Powell warned that immigrants of different races would overpower and damage white British culture.

Enoch Powell would be punished by his party for using rhetoric that bordered on being explicitly racist in his “Rivers of Blood” speech, even though his policy recommendations were

commonplace among opponents of immigration, and were often fabricated or heavily exaggerated. See Paul Foot, *Rise of Enoch Powell* (Harmondsworth: Penguin Books, 1969), 113.

⁵ Powell, “Speech by the Rt. Hon. J. Enoch Powell to the Annual General Meeting of the West Midlands Area Political Centre at the Midland Hotel Birmingham.”

⁶ Powell.

closely linked to the official Conservative party platform. The night of April 21, party leader Edward Heath called Powell to inform him that he believed that his speech was racist and likely to inflame racial tensions, and that he was being sacked from his post as Shadow Minister of Defence.⁷ This decision was unanimously supported by the rest of Powell's colleagues on the shadow cabinet, the parliamentary opposition leadership group.⁸ Powell, who just three years before had come in third in an election to be party leader, now moved from the front bench of the House of Commons to a position much further away from power.

Ironically, Powell's move to the backbenches would actually give him more influence over the Conservative party. As this thesis demonstrates, the publicity of the speech, fueled by its controversial content and his resulting sacking from the shadow cabinet, would raise his profile dramatically, making him one of the most well-known and popular politicians in the country. The three chapters of this work describe the impact that Enoch Powell's words on immigration and integration had in the political sphere and on wider society. On the societal level, the speech inspired more white Britons to speak up in opposition to immigration, leading to protests, violence, and the growth of a more visible far right. This in turn led to a pushback from immigrant and minority communities, which organized counter-protests, launched self-defense groups, and lobbied government for change. On the elite side, Powell's discourse dominated discussions of race and immigration, obscuring efforts being made at the grassroots level and by government organizations to solve problems that had cropped up domestically as a result of Britain becoming more diverse. The speech also had ramifications in the 1970 general election, where, thanks to Powell's prominent position in the campaign, his immigration policies

⁷ Victor Knight, "Sack for Powell in Tory Race Row," *Daily Mirror*, April 22, 1968, British Newspaper Archive; David Wood, "Powell out of Shadow Cabinet," *The Times*, April 22, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

⁸ Randall Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), 186.

convinced immigration-focused voters to back the Conservatives, forming part of a surge that would carry Edward Heath to an upset victory over Prime Minister Harold Wilson and the Labour party. Enoch Powell speaking out on immigration in April 1968 highlighted Britain's uneasy relationship with race, moved multiple groups to action, and fundamentally changed how race and politics interacted.

British Immigration Policy, 1948-1968

Enoch Powell spoke to a Britain that had only recently been forced to confront immigration as a concept, as attempts shortly after the Second World War to maintain influence over a dying global empire led to an open door for many former colonized peoples. The transition to a post-imperial world after the war led Britain to try and hold on to what was left of its colonizing influence. After Canada moved to reduce the Queen's role in 1946, and in the wake of Indian independence and rising nationalist movements around the world, Clement Attlee's Labour government reworked British citizenship to keep the empire's former subjects under the crown's umbrella.⁹ The resultant British Nationality Act (BNA), passed in 1948, categorized British citizenship for the first time, separating Citizens of the United Kingdom and its colonies from members of the Commonwealth. However, despite the divergent grouping of the Empire and Commonwealth, the two populations held essentially identical rights to work and live in Britain.¹⁰ The goal of the legislation was to try to give the empire a life after death. By granting unrestricted free entry to subjects even after they had left the empire—specifically the wealthy, white citizens of “Old Dominion” colonies like Canada or New Zealand, who had little

⁹ Hansen, 40–42.

¹⁰ Hansen, 45–46.

need to emigrate to Britain—British politicians hoped that they would remain close to the mother country.¹¹

However, starting almost immediately after the passage of the act in February 1948, it became clear that the less white, rich, and westernized portions of the empire would actually take advantage of their newfound ability to emigrate to Britain. That June, the *Empire Windrush* ship arrived at the port of Tilbury, south of London, containing 492 Jamaicans who carried dreams of escaping their colony's rampant unemployment by finding a new life in the metropole.¹² They would be the first of millions to migrate to the British Isles over the coming decades. While only around 1,000 Commonwealth immigrants arrived in Britain in 1948, in 1961 the country welcomed 136,000.¹³ The BNA opened the door to impoverished British colonial subjects looking for a better life.

As the rate of multiracial commonwealth immigration increased over the decades following 1948, politicians turned against these new Britons. Through much of the 1950s, immigration remained an insignificant political issue, untreated by the Churchill and Eden governments.¹⁴ That changed in August 1958 when racial tensions broke into rioting in Nottingham and the London borough of Notting Hill, turning public opinion firmly in favor of new restriction. In the wake of the riots, backbench Conservatives began to speak about restricting immigration, and the government seriously considered it for the first time.¹⁵ Home Secretary Rab Butler came out in support of cuts in 1960, and the following year, Prime Minister

¹¹ Hansen, 49–56; Kathleen Paul, *Whitewashing Britain* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1997), 14–24. See these two books for more on the British government's postwar immigration and citizenship policy.

¹² Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, 114.

¹³ Paul, 132.

¹⁴ Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain*, 64–78.

¹⁵ Hansen, 81–83.

Harold Macmillan's Cabinet Commonwealth Migrants Committee, which included Enoch Powell, recommended immigration controls, claiming that rising immigration stood to take jobs from Britons.¹⁶ The 1958 race riots had politicized immigration in a new way, and parliament was quick to take up restrictions.

The first act to control immigration came one year later. The Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 set variable quotas for skilled and unskilled Commonwealth immigrants as well as provided for deportation.¹⁷ This was opposed by Labour, but the party reversed course soon after, supporting immigration controls in its successful 1964 party platform.¹⁸ The Wilson government continued restriction with the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants act, passed in February of that year, which closed a loophole in the 1962 law that had allowed thousands of Kenyan Asians to enter the UK to flee Africanization policies of the new government there.¹⁹ The 1960s saw concerns over the preservation of influence in Old Commonwealth countries fade in favor of immigration controls supported by both parties.

Powell came to his extreme opposition to immigration in the second half of the 1960s. He had been an opponent of the BNA from its passage, holding the opinion that the act and its open door to Commonwealth immigration was the root of all race problems in Britain.²⁰ It would take another decade for immigration to become politically salient for Powell, however. Powell won election to the House of Commons in 1950, but immigration would not form part of his campaign until 1964, and he would not begin speaking extensively about it in public until 1967,

¹⁶ Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, 161–62.

¹⁷ Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain*, 108–11.

¹⁸ Hansen, 131; Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*, 174.

¹⁹ Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain*, 152–61. The Kenyan Asian population was comprised of South Asians who had migrated to Africa to serve as cheap labor for imperial projects and stuck around for generations after.

²⁰ Simon Heffer, *Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell* (London, England: Weidenfeld & Nicolson, 1999), 119–21; Foot, *Rise of Enoch Powell*, 54.

after a trip to the racially-fractured United States convinced him that Britain's policies were setting the nation on a road to ruin.²¹ After that point, he began to advocate more for total restriction, having previously supported partially restrictive government policies. Powell rapidly developed views further to the right of the government, and it was those views that drove him to speak out in Birmingham in April 1968.

Historiography

This period of history is well-trodden, in large part because of the high profile of the “Rivers of Blood” speech, as well as Enoch Powell’s enduring legacy as an influence on Conservative politics. Even so, there are substantial opportunities for research. Between books examining Powell’s substantial, multifaceted career and political influence, works examining the late 1960s in Britain, and articles focusing on specific aspects of Powell or the period, there is a lack of academic work that focuses specifically on Powell’s influence on immigration and race relations discourse in the short-term. In addition, most of the works approaching Powell’s influence over the period position him consistently front and center, barely mentioning the work immigrant groups and activists were doing at the same time, thus presenting an elite-centric version of history. There remains much to do to uncover a wider picture of Powell’s early influence as an anti-immigration figure and look at race relations in the period more widely.

The fullest accounts of Enoch Powell’s Birmingham speech and its aftereffects are contained in popular biographies. These contain valuable research but are often undercut by subjectivity. The widest-ranging Powell biography is the 1999 book by Simon Heffer, *Like the Roman: The Life of Enoch Powell*. *Like the Roman* is the closest to an official biography as

²¹ Andrew Roth, *Enoch Powell: Tory Tribune* (London: McDonald & Co., 1970), 56–61; Foot, *Rise of Enoch Powell*, 81; Heffer, *Like the Roman*, 437.

exists; Heffer, a conservative journalist, was a friend of Powell, and recorded extensive interviews with him for the book, which was written directly after the MP's death. In addition to being his friend, Heffer also shares Powell's politics, and so he chose not to challenge Powell's immigration statistics, his reasons for speaking out, or his attitude on race more generally.²² Similarly, Paul Foot's 1969 partial biography of Powell, *The Rise of Enoch Powell*, is valuable and very subjective. A left-leaning journalist, Foot wrote the book in the immediate aftermath of the "Rivers of Blood" speech, trawling through *Wolverhampton Express and Star* articles and interviewing people involved in and around the immigrant community in Powell's constituency to argue that Powell took up immigration solely to boost his own political fortunes.²³ Foot's mission in the book is clear—he sought to discredit Powell's populist credentials in front of his new, national audience—and as such, is more useful as a collection of interviews and newspaper coverage than a reliable history of the period. There are also some objective popular biographies, such as *Enoch Powell: Tory Tribune*, written by Andrew Roth in 1970. Roth, a journalist specializing in biography, was best known for writing *Parliamentary Profiles*, a series of biographies of Members of Parliament. As a result, in contrast to Foot and Heffer, Roth is driven less by partisan concerns, and more by a desire for accuracy and objectivity. His biography is well-researched and, for the time, up to date, although as a result of the 1970 publication date the sections on the aftermath of the speech are limited.²⁴ Non-academic biographies of Powell are a valuable research tool but need to be cross-examined to account for subjective writing.

In contrast to these traditional biographical works about Enoch Powell, Camilla Schofield's 2013 book, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain*, takes a slightly

²² Heffer, *Like the Roman*.

²³ Foot, *Rise of Enoch Powell*.

²⁴ Roth, *Enoch Powell: Tory Tribune*.

different approach to examine the man behind the moment. Schofield argues that Powell's postcolonial British nationalism was the driving force behind his political beliefs and the political moment he created. In examining the postcolonial aspect of Powell's politics and the reaction they created, she looks more closely at immigrant groups and race relations than his biographers.²⁵ This results in a book that is highly useful for someone trying to look beyond just the facts of Powell's life, and also, in contrast to the biographies, an academic approach to the subject. It lacks the comprehensiveness of the mainstream biographies but shines a light on Powell's relationship with the Commonwealth and its immigrants. This thesis takes a similar tack to Schofield's book, but rather than structuring itself on Powell's life, it looks at Powell's 1968-70 period.

Putting Powell's positions and actions in the broader context of Commonwealth immigration, Kathleen Paul's *Whitewashing Britain* and Randall Hansen's *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain* serve as contrasting examinations of the government's policy from the 1948 British Nationality Act through the Thatcher years. Paul argues that the government's policy was shaped by elite racism, with leaders seeking to keep Britain open to influence the white Old Commonwealth nations, and only restricting once it became evident it was only colonial citizens of color who were interested in coming to the UK. Hansen argues that politicians kept Britain's borders open for the opposite reason; they believed that immigration was beneficial for the domestic and international spheres, and only restricted it once public opinion against the policy threatened their electoral hopes.²⁶ Neither argument is impeccable, but

²⁵ Camilla Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013).

²⁶ Hansen, *Citizenship and Immigration in Post-War Britain*; Paul, *Whitewashing Britain*.

taken together they form a nuanced examination of postwar British immigration policy, one that is extremely useful for contextualizing the events in and after April 1968.

For the general subject of this work, there are many available studies of the relationships between immigrants and whites in cities at the time. The most comprehensive of these is *Colour and Citizenship*, a report on race relations published by the Institute for Race Relations in 1969. Over the course of more than 700 pages, the book examines race relations from almost all angles: historical, sociological, statistical, and more. It describes an immigrant class that, though accepted by many Britons, still faced numerous prejudices and structural barriers to success.²⁷ A later examination of the integration of Britain's immigrants comes in Ira Katznelson's 1976 book *Black Men, White Cities*. Katznelson devotes part of his book to Britain and agrees with Paul's argument from a domestic angle, arguing that British politicians saw no expediency in policing racism in cities, and designed ineffective, reactive race relations bills only when it became vital to do so. Katznelson's work, and other books approaching similar class and race-based topics, provide supplements to *Colour and Citizenship* by taking more specific foci.²⁸

There have also been a few attempts to identify and understand Powell's supporters. The most effective of these is the quantitative analysis of Douglas Schoen in his 1977 book *Enoch Powell and the Powellites*. Using a wealth of polling information—notably David Butler and Donald Stokes' 1976 panel study *Political Change in Britain*—as well as a few ethnographical accounts, Schoen demonstrates the fluctuations of Powell support and analyzes the backgrounds

²⁷ E.J.B. Rose, *Colour and Citizenship: Report on British Race Relations* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969).

²⁸ Ira Katznelson, *Black Men, White Cities* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1976); See also Stephen Castles and Godula Kosack, *Immigrant Workers and Class Structure in Western Europe* (London: Oxford University Press, 1973); and Sally Tomlinson and John Rex, *Colonial Immigrants in a British City: A Class Analysis* (Boston: Routledge & K. Paul, 1979). These works all provide looks at how immigrants meshed with cities and industries at the time.

of his supporters. He demonstrates that Powellites were mostly white, middle class and middle-aged, and located in the Midlands and the North, a useful quantitative description.²⁹ Historical research complements this work, such as Amy Whipple's analysis of correspondence sent to Powell after "Rivers of Blood" or Fred Lindop's close look at the earliest working-class protestors for Powell in April 1968.³⁰ Other writers have looked at the intersection of Powell's support with far right groups.³¹ This work informs this thesis' approach to Powell's support, which attempts to give it a nuanced examination.

Most research on opponents of Powell comes as part of larger works that examine a wider timeframe than this thesis. Radical immigrant activism has been researched in fits and starts, most notably by former head of the Institute for Race Relations Ambalavaner Sivanandan, whose 1982 essay "From Resistance to Rebellion" covers British people of color's history from the late 1940s past the period being covered in this work.³² Historians have since focused on aspects of immigrant activism that worked more to support fellow immigrants, rather than oppose Powell, like worker's associations and education advocacy.³³ The other major center of anti-Powell activism, radical British student groups, is covered only in general works on the

²⁹ Douglas Schoen, *Enoch Powell and the Powellites* (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1977); David Butler and Donald Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, Second College Edition (New York: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1976).

³⁰ Amy Whipple, "Revisiting the 'Rivers of Blood' Controversy: Letters to Enoch Powell," *Journal of British Studies* 48, no. 3 (2009): 717–35; Fred Lindop, "Racism and the Working Class: Strikes in Support of Enoch Powell in 1968," *Labour History Review (Maney Publishing)* 66, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 79–100.

³¹ Harry Taylor, "'Rivers of Blood' and Britain's Far Right," *The Political Quarterly* 89, no. 3 (September 1, 2018): 385–91, <https://doi.org/10.1111/1467-923X.12550>; Ryan Shaffer, "The Fascist Tradition, 1967–1977," in *Music, Youth and International Links in Post-War British Fascism: The Transformation of Extremism*, ed. Ryan Shaffer, Palgrave Studies in the History of Subcultures and Popular Music (Cham: Springer International Publishing, 2017), 17–59, https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-319-59668-6_2.

³² Ambalavaner Sivanandan, "From Resistance to Rebellion," in *A Different Hunger*, Writings on Black Resistance (Pluto Press, 1982), 3–54, <https://doi.org/10.2307/j.ctt18mbd7n.4>.

³³ Talvinder Gill, "The Indian Workers' Association Coventry 1938–1990: Political and Social Action," *South Asian History and Culture* 4, no. 4 (October 1, 2013): 554–73, <https://doi.org/10.1080/19472498.2013.824683>; Jessica Gerrard, "Self Help and Protest: The Emergence of Black Supplementary Schooling in England," *Race Ethnicity and Education* 16, no. 1 (January 1, 2013): 32–58, <https://doi.org/10.1080/13613324.2012.733685>.

student movement in Britain and internationally.³⁴ Generally, academia has worked less to research groups that comprised Powell's opponents and pro-integration activists than it has to research the MP himself.

Political science research, in the form of polls and statistical analyses, is useful for efforts to examine Powell's measurable electoral impact in 1970. The following decade was filled with statistical analyses of Powell and race's impact on the election, by scholars including Donley Studlar and Jenny Bourne.³⁵ The race issue is also treated as part of *The General Election of 1970*, by David Butler, Michael Pinto-Duchinsky, and other contributors, alongside its more general description and analysis of the general election.³⁶ Butler and Stokes' *Political Change in Britain* panel study of voting in the 1960s, cited by Schoen, also contributes to this body of research.³⁷ This quantitative analysis anchors this thesis' conclusion, forming the basis for the argument that Powell did have a long-term effect on the Conservative vote through his speeches on immigration.

The literature on and around Enoch Powell's 1968 Birmingham speech and the movement it spawned is rich but does not rule out avenues for further study. Many of the histories of the period are not written by academics, and those that are focus on specific aspects of Powell's speech and its effects. There are no works that focus specifically on the multiple

³⁴ Ronald Fraser, ed., "West Germany and Britain: 1968-69," in *1968: A Student Generation in Revolt* (New York: Pantheon Books, 1988); A.H. Halsey and Stephen Marks, "British Student Politics," in *Students in Revolt* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1969); Nicholas Thomas, "The British Student Movement 1965-1972" (Ph.D., University of Warwick, 1996), <http://webcat.warwick.ac.uk/record=b1403865~S1>.

³⁵ Donley T. Studlar, "Policy Voting in Britain: The Colored Immigration Issue in the 1964, 1966, and 1970 General Elections," *The American Political Science Review* 72, no. 1 (1978): 46-64, <https://doi.org/10.2307/1953598>; Donley T. Studlar, "British Public Opinion, Colour Issues, and Enoch Powell: A Longitudinal Analysis," *British Journal of Political Science* 4, no. 3 (1974): 371-81; Nicholas Deakin and Jenny Bourne, "Powell, the Minorities, and the 1970 Election," *The Political Quarterly* 41, no. 4 (1970): 399-415, <https://doi.org/10.1111/j.1467-923X.1970.tb01181.x>.

³⁶ David Butler and Michael Pinto-Duchinsky, *The British General Election of 1970* (London: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1971).

³⁷ Butler and Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*.

years following Powell's speech in 1968 that attempt to examine both his subsequent actions and those of his opponents. This thesis attempts to create one, drawing from and building on the work done by academics and biographers.

Methodology and Outline

In addition to the diverse body of secondary research, there is a wealth of available primary sources to structure research around. Of these, this work draws its structure and much of its narrative from the British press, more specifically the conservative-centrist *The Times* of London and the *Birmingham Daily Post*, respected daily papers from the British capital and the Midlands' largest city, respectively. The benefit of relying on multiple press outlets to structure a historical work is that it provides a clear chronology of events and accounts for belated or overlooked stories that go unreported in an individual outlet. Supplementing the two major papers with other regional dailies and weeklies, accessed through the British Newspaper Archive, also allows for consideration of regional interests and events that can often be pushed aside by academics focusing on questions of national politics.

There are also clear dangers in relying too heavily on newspapers for historical research. For one, though they purport to be objective, omnipresent reporters of the country, the press was littered with inherent biases. Though their independence allowed for diverse points of view, the need to sell copies meant that sensational news was printed more often than run-of-the-mill work. The ideological bent of papers also affected coverage, suppressing or criticizing certain groups that the papers' editors viewed negatively, notably radical students. In the same vein, these papers were published by the elites, and with the exception of the tabloids, to which I have had less access, not read by the lowest socioeconomic classes. As such, they focus on issues that appeal to their readership, giving another layer to the press' informal position as a gatekeeper.

However, I researched with full understanding of these drawbacks, and when possible, I take time to highlight and explain bias and supplement the truth with a mix of different types of primary sources and secondary work by academics. This works in the thesis' favor, too, since the way that the press articulated events played an important role in the politicization, or lack thereof, of immigration and race relations topics, which is a central focus of my work.

Writing about the subject of race requires a level of intentionality with language that many of the sources lack. This piece uses the word 'immigrant' heavily, fittingly for a thesis built around anti-immigration rhetoric. When I describe people solely by this word, I use it in a general sense, encompassing first-generation immigrants and their second-generation children. In no circumstances is it meant to refer to skin color or specific ethnic origin—due to the makeup of the post-Windrush immigrant generation, most of these immigrants were people of color, but the term specifically describes people who immigrated to Britain and often set up families there, and not anything else. In the same way, when I refer to someone as 'Indian' or 'West Indian,' I refer specifically to first-generation immigrants—I identify second-generation immigrants as British, explaining their familial ethnic origin when needed. With this topic, it is also necessary to deal with language that was used in the late 1960s and is no longer acceptable. I have used some explicit and racist words in quotation in certain spots to drive home the rhetoric used by certain groups. I have avoided it otherwise, and with the exception of discussions of the 'paki-bashing' phenomenon, it does not appear unquoted.

The three chapters of this thesis look at the two-year period following Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech on April 20, 1968. The first chapter examines the period of the speech's immediate aftermath up to his first major post-Birmingham speech on immigration in Eastbourne in November. It covers three groups: the white Britons, predominantly from the working class,

who wrote and protested in support of Powell; the immigrant groups who worked with the black power movement to publicly oppose the speech and its supporters; and the student groups, working as part of 1968's international student movement, that vehemently protested on and off-campus. This chapter seeks to show how the speech mobilized groups that had previously been on the fringes of society, creating a public response to Powell's words that helped increase the stakes of immigration and draw clear lines of support and opposition between the political left and right.

The second chapter begins at Powell's next major speech on immigration, given at a conference in the South Coast town of Eastbourne in November 1968, and proceed through the end of 1969. It focuses on the diminished influence of Powell as time wore on, and the ways in which discourse and action on immigration and race began to focus more on domestic issues and the question of formal and informal discrimination in Britain, paying particular attention to debates over education, policing, and employment. In doing so, it shows how non-Powell actors approached race and immigration at the same time that Powell was seizing headlines.

The final chapter tackles the first half of 1970, culminating in the general election of 1970, which was held on June 18. It juxtaposes the domestic problem of racially-infused violence that struck immigrant-heavy communities at the start of the year with the approach to race by politicians during the general election campaign, which made no reference to domestic issues. The chapter also explores Enoch Powell's return to preeminence in immigration during the campaign and analyzes the ultimate effect Powell had on the electoral fate of his party. By taking a thin slice of contemporary British history, starting with the "Rivers of Blood" speech, it is possible to isolate the impact of Enoch Powell's emergence as the period's definitive anti-

immigration politician and see how his influence meshed with other groups working on race issues at the time.

Protests and Publicity: Reaction to “Rivers of Blood,” April- November 1968

Enoch Powell’s decision to go public with the “Rivers of Blood” speech produced immediate and wide-ranging effects beyond the doors of Downing Street. Though its policy proposals of an immediate immigration freeze and optional repatriation program only veered slightly from the party line, his use of racist anecdotes and dramatic statistics hit home among a large swath of the British population. The speech and Powell’s sacking from the shadow cabinet were printed in the Monday papers, and soon most of the nation had learned about rivers of blood and the immigrant problem.³⁸ Over the course of the weekend, Enoch Powell had gone from a central part of Tory opposition to being the most divisive political figure in Britain.

Powell started a political moment with his Birmingham speech, but he was not the leader of the organizing, demonstrating, and occasional fighting that took place over the following weeks and months. By bringing extreme anti-immigration rhetoric into the political sphere, Powell normalized what had been a taboo subject in public discourse, both emboldening a latent far-right presence and encouraging more centrist citizens to speak up and write in about their views on immigrants. This in turn changed the dynamic in immigrant communities, prompting public action and supporting the infant British black power movement. The speech also created a new domestic cause for the Vietnam War-minded British student movement to rally around. Powell’s emergence as a public voice redefined British discourse and brought a number of fringe

³⁸ Victor Knight, “Sack for Powell in Tory Race Row,” *Daily Mirror*, April 22, 1968, British Newspaper Archive, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000560/19680422/002/0001?browse=true>.

groups, as well as a portion of the general public, into conflict on the issue of commonwealth immigration.

From speech to streets: Powellite support

For many Britons, the “Rivers of Blood” speech said exactly what they had been saying for years. For others, Powell said something they believed but had never been willing to express for fear of social backlash. It is unclear how many people fell behind Powell starting in April 1968, or whether their views on race relations were shared by a majority of Britons, as claimed. However, it is irrefutable that the emergence of “Powellites” disrupted British society in a large way, pausing work, causing violence, and intensifying the already-vitriolic discussion about race relations in the country.

Powell received a local show of support immediately after his speech. On the streets of Birmingham and Wolverhampton, an unofficial poll given by the *Birmingham Post* to 100 people found that 85 disagreed with Heath’s decision to sack Powell, and 81 agreed with the speech’s content.³⁹ On April 21, just a day after the speech, North Wolverhampton Working Men’s Club member Bill Fry, speaking to *The Times* about the club’s unanimous decision to maintain its color bar, said that Enoch Powell would have the safest parliamentary seat in Britain because of “Rivers of Blood.”⁴⁰ This sentiment was echoed by a plasterer, Sidney Miller, who said he believed that Powell spoke for most of the people in Wolverhampton.⁴¹ One of those polled by the *Post* made a larger claim, saying that Powell represented the views of a frightened,

³⁹ “Most Back Powell in survey: ‘It Should Have Been Said Before,’” *Birmingham Daily Post*, April 23, 1968, British Newspaper Archive. Though this poll is methodologically flawed and not nationally representative, it still provides voices of regular citizens, along the lines of a straw poll, and is a useful historical source.

⁴⁰ “Club Reaffirms Colour Bar,” *The Times*, April 22, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

⁴¹ “These Things Just Had to Be Said,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, April 22, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

silent national majority.⁴² In the speech's immediate aftermath Powell supporters in the Midlands were keen to stress the universality of his anti-immigration message.

The initial words of support would be joined by demonstrations as the workweek started on April 22. Shortly after newspapers covering the speech appeared in newsstands, fifty steel workers went on a half-day strike within Powell's constituency. Elsewhere, shop stewards at an engineering plant in Staffordshire and workers at a Birmingham factory decided to create petitions supporting the sacked frontbencher and his calls to freeze immigration.⁴³ The next day 400 workers would walk out of a motor parts factory in Coventry.⁴⁴ On the whole, between the 23rd and 27th of April, industry around the Midlands would play host to around 20 strikes in support of Powell, representing between 10,000 and 12,000 workers.⁴⁵ Pro-Powell testimony in the press was complemented by pro-Powell action at the factory gates.

In the days after the Midlands mobilized, Whitehall faced down thousands of members of the London working class. On April 23, 1,000 dockworkers met at the West India docks in East London before marching on the Houses of Parliament to petition against Powell's sacking. In the afternoon, almost 1,000 workers from the London and St. Katharine's docks committed to a 24-hour strike in support of the MP, which would leave all but 13 ships in those docks idle.⁴⁶ The next day it was meat porters from the London borough of Smithfield who struck. 600 of them marched and presented a 92-page petition to officials that was signed by 2,000 Powell supporters.⁴⁷ April 26 saw another docker strike, with 4,400 men staying home from work,

⁴² "Most Back Powell in survey: 'It Should Have Been Said Before.'"

⁴³ "50 Stop Work To Back Powell," *The Times*, April 23, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

⁴⁴ "Coventry Walk-out to Support Powell," *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, April 24, 1968.

⁴⁵ Fred Lindop, "Racism and the Working Class: Strikes in Support of Enoch Powell in 1968," *Labour History Review (Maney Publishing)* 66, no. 1 (Spring 2001): 79–100.

⁴⁶ "Dockers March for Powell," *The Times*, April 24, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

⁴⁷ "Dockers March for Powell"; "40,000 Powell Postbag," *The Times*, April 25, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

causing another standstill at the London docks, with 74 ships unable to be loaded and unloaded.⁴⁸ On the whole, about a third of the British labor force within the striking industries were involved in some sort of action during the week.⁴⁹ Powell's speech turned London from a metropolis to a meeting place as the working class mobilized en masse to protest his sacking from the shadow cabinet.

Instead of framing their protesting as support of Powell's views, which remained publicly unacceptable, powellites presented their actions as protecting free speech, opposing Heath's decision to sack Powell for his incendiary words. A spokesman for the strikers in Coventry on April 23 explained that they were not "protesting against colored people but in support of freedom of speech," while a striker in Wolverhampton on April 22 said, "we do not necessarily agree with [Powell's] views but we do support his right to express them."⁵⁰ The docker protests on the 23rd also rallied around the cause of Powell's right to free speech, with *The Times* reporting an almost total absence of racist slogans on signs or in chants.⁵¹ That is not to say that the protesters disagreed with Powell's opinions on race; some did, such as a West Indian who only marched out of solidarity with co-workers in Reading, but the overwhelming majority of those who struck, signed petitions, and marched in the week after the speech unequivocally backed Powell's race views.⁵²

A letter to the editor in the *Birmingham Post* on April 25, written on behalf of the office staff of the British Motor Company Home and Export Sales Division, demonstrated how

⁴⁸ Roger Carroll, "Angry Commons Clash," *Aberdeen Press and Journal*, April 27, 1968, British Newspaper Archive; "Marching Dockers May Stop 74 Ships," *Birmingham Daily Post*, April 26, 1968, British Newspaper Archive; "Mikardo Clash with Marching Dockers," *The Times*, April 27, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

⁴⁹ Lindop, "Racism and the Working Class," 82.

⁵⁰ "Coventry Walk-out to Support Powell"; "50 Stop Work To Back Powell."

⁵¹ "Dockers March for Powell."

⁵² "40,000 Powell Postbag"; Lindop, "Racism and the Working Class," 83.

powellites used free speech as a way of hiding potential racist reasoning for an immigration freeze. The letter, presenting a pro-Powell petition signed by the office staff, opened with the exhortation that “the right of free speech must be heard in this country.” The authors saw Powell’s sacking as an egregious offense, ignoring Powell’s position of respect in government and the popularity of his expressed opinions. “A man respected and honored in the Midlands, makes a statement with which the majority of people agree, and is immediately kicked out of his job,” the authors, Mrs. A.E. Guy and Mrs. A. York, wrote. The letter concluded harshly. “Free speech! Who is kidding who? A communist state would have been more subtle than Mr. Heath in his treatment of Mr. Powell.”⁵³

This letter, as many of Powell’s supporters attempted to do in the aftermath of the Birmingham speech, explicitly criticizes the prime minister and his decision to sack Powell while implicitly supporting Powell’s immigration views. Guy and York’s argument was framed to make Powell the victim of elite interference with the public will. By explaining that the MP spoke for “the majority of people,” they placed Powell into a position of tribune for the British people that he did not necessarily hold. At the same time, by skimming over Powell’s policy views, the authors avoided having to justify the ramifications and motivations of Powell’s actions. Rather, they supported two ideals—free speech and public will—that lacked the social cost of actively supporting racial discrimination. Just as Enoch Powell had used constituent’s words and numbers to try and avoid explicit racism in his Birmingham speech, in powellite defenses of the MP, Britons used free speech as a means to obfuscate their true beliefs.

⁵³ A.E. Guy and A. York, letter to the editor, *Birmingham Daily Post*, April 25, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

The letters that were sent directly to Powell after his speech also danced around explicit racism. Within a week after “Rivers of Blood,” Powell had received 40,000 pieces of mail.⁵⁴ Of these, only a minority were explicitly racist, but many more featured the type of implicitly racist statements and stories that Powell had used in his speech. These ranged from conflation of English nationality and white race to blanket stereotyping of immigrants as lazy, uneducated, and dirty. Despite the letter writers’ different approaches to the ‘problem’ of immigration, a common link was a support for Powell’s views and an opposition to the politicians and other elites who they believed had let immigration of color take place.⁵⁵ The attempts to obscure racism in the marchers’ public statements were also present in letters sent to Powell at the time.

Despite their signs and spokesmen’s messages, the petitions submitted by strikers that week make it clear that the focus of the collective action following Powell’s trip to Birmingham was on restricting immigration, not supporting the British right to free speech. This became more evident as the week wore on. In the first day of strikes in the Midlands on April 22, the strikers at the Birmingham factory voted to send a petition to Powell in favor of a curb on immigration.⁵⁶ The petition submitted by the marching dockers on April 23 focused on immigration policy rather than free speech, asking Prime Minister Wilson “to seriously consider the threat to our living standards by this blind policy of unlimited immigrants being imposed on us.”⁵⁷ There were some attempts to hide this from the press. As reported by the *Coventry Evening Telegraph* that day, even though strikers at a Motor Panel factory there explained to the reporter that their protest was in support of Powell’s policy, their spokesman was quoted saying that they are

⁵⁴ “40,000 Powell Postbag.”

⁵⁵ Whipple, “Revisiting the ‘Rivers of Blood’ Controversy.”

⁵⁶ “50 Stop Work To Back Powell.”

⁵⁷ “Dockers March for Powell.”

instead protesting for his right to freedom of speech.⁵⁸ Yet as the week progressed, the freedom of speech claims fell away while the petitions remained immigration restriction-centric. The Smithfield porters presented their anti-immigration petition on April 25 with little pretense of free speech defense. The same day, in the announcement of their decision to strike, the organizer of the strike in the Royal Group of Docks, Harry Pearman, described its goals, saying “this isn’t a dock issue. We want to stop all immigration, whether they be colored or from the Commonwealth.”⁵⁹ Worker strikes became more openly racist as the week wore on.

This intensification of marches culminated in the Royal Group docker’s march on Friday, April 26, which was marred by an overt, aggressive, and violent anti-immigrant message. The strike was smaller than the work stoppage made it seem; only about 800 of 4,400 strikers arrived at the docks to march, and of those about half made it to the House of Commons.⁶⁰ The small party of dockers, carrying a petition signed by over 1,000 colleagues, ignored outside attempts to stop the march made by a Protestant clergyman, Catholic priest, and a union official. Upon arrival at the House of Commons, around 50 dockers were allowed in to meet with the Labour MP representing their docks, Ian Mikardo.⁶¹ The meeting was doomed from the start; Mikardo alleged that as the dockers entered the meeting, shouting profanity, one of the organizers said “you’ll get nothing out of him. He’s a—Jew.”⁶² Mikardo, in response, expressed his opposition to their demands for immigration restrictions and explained that he would do nothing to help

⁵⁸ “Coventry Walk-out to Support Powell.”

⁵⁹ “Mr. Brown ‘Horried’ By Powell: Dockers To March,” *The Times*, April 26, 1968, The Times Digital Archive. It is extremely important to note here that Pearman makes a racially-charged distinction between “coloured” people and the Commonwealth, painting the latter group as white. In reality, the Commonwealth was and is a collection of a diverse group of postcolonial British states, including “old” countries like Canada and Australia, which are majority white, but also “new” countries like Jamaica or Ghana. Not only is Pearman incorrect, but his racial segregation of the Commonwealth hints at racist motivations for the march.

⁶⁰ “Mikardo Clash with Marching Dockers.”

⁶¹ Carroll, “Angry Commons Clash.”

⁶² Carroll.

them and then called the anti-Semitic organizer a fascist.⁶³ The dockers left his office and rejoined their cohort outside, where they were treated to sympathetic words from Conservative MP Gerald Nabarro, an opponent of immigration and the Race Relations act, and later racially abused the Kenyan High Commissioner as he left parliament.⁶⁴

The ugly scenes of the April 26 Royal Docks march revealed the racist underbelly that lay beneath the entire week's protesting. As Pearman, the organizer of that march, alluded to when he claimed the strike was not "a docks issue," Commonwealth immigration of color had very little effect on the dockers themselves; the London docks were 99.9% white, and although a few were slated to close, this was unrelated to immigration.⁶⁵ There was also a strong far right presence among those who coordinated the strikes and marches. As he led the Royal Dock strike, Pearman hid his membership in the far-right anti-communist Christian fundamentalist group Moral Rearmament. The organizer of the Smithfield porters' strike, Dennis "Big Dan" Harmston, was a former parliamentary candidate for the Union Movement, the British neo-fascist party run by Oswald Mosley, a Nazi sympathizer who had been interned by the government during WWII.⁶⁶ Harmston would later explain that Powell gave legitimacy to his extreme politics; though he had trouble convincing his colleagues to support Mosley, it was easy getting them to support Powell after the MP cited the same policies.⁶⁷ Another Royal Docks strike leader, Harry Pennington, who unlike Pearman had no known ties to far-right organizations, explained in racist terms his belief that the docks and the neighborhoods around it

⁶³ Carroll; "Mikardo Clash with Marching Dockers."

⁶⁴ Carroll, "Angry Commons Clash"; "Mr. Powell's Worker Friends," *The Economist*, April 27, 1968, The Economist Historical Archive, 1843-2012; "Enoch Powell," *Frost on Friday*, January 3, 1969, <http://archive.org/details/EnochPowellFrostOnFriday1969>.

⁶⁵ Lindop, "Racism and the Working Class," 88.

⁶⁶ Lindop, 88; Taylor, "'Rivers of Blood' and Britain's Far Right," 385-87.

⁶⁷ Taylor, "'Rivers of Blood' and Britain's Far Right," 387.

had too many immigrants, saying, “you have every colour in God’s earth down there. We’ve got as many Chinese as Mao and we’re getting browned off.”⁶⁸ Those in charge of the pro-Powell strikes in London were often racist and affiliated with the far-right.

On May Day, traditionally a celebration of the working class, a combined strike by dockers and meat porters went further than any of its antecedents. The march was much larger than the ones in April, with between 4,000 and 5,000 marching in opposition to immigrants, shouting slogans like “keep Britain white” and “go back to the Congo.”⁶⁹ These racist words gave way to violent actions when the march ran into a counter-protest organized by students and anti-Powell leftist workers, who, in addition to yelling “fascist” at the dockers, held up a sign depicting Powell as a member of the SS. This set off the Powellite marchers, who broke through the police barrier and began chasing and beating the counter-protesters until the police could restore order.⁷⁰ The attempts to stay above racism and violence in powellite collective action had, by May 1, fallen completely by the wayside.

The start of May was the closest that Powell’s speech came to inciting race riots on the scale of Notting Hill or Nottingham. On April 29, two days before the clashes at the march in London, the secretary of the workingmen’s club in Wolverhampton that had voted to sustain its color bar received a death threat.⁷¹ The same day, Enoch Powell also received one, sent to his home in London.⁷² Scotland Yard dispatched police to protect Powell around the clock, and preemptively created a similar watch for Edward Heath.⁷³ The next day, April 30, a West Indian

⁶⁸ Lindop, “Racism and the Working Class,” 84.

⁶⁹ “Dockers Break up Police Cordon to Battle with Students,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, May 2, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

⁷⁰ “Dockers and Students in Angry Scenes,” *The Times*, May 2, 1968, The Times Digital Archive; “Dockers Break up Police Cordon to Battle with Students.”

⁷¹ “Callaghan Puzzles MPs,” *Daily Mirror*, April 30, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

⁷² “Powell Gets Death Threat,” *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, April 30, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

⁷³ “Special Branch Watch Ordered,” *The Times*, May 1, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

christening in Wolverhampton was attacked by a group of youths chanting Powell's name. Two men were hospitalized, one of whom had been slashed on his face by a knife.⁷⁴ Then, on May 2, the day after the student-marcher clashes in London, Mikardo, who established himself as an enemy of powellites after the previous march, received his own death threat, posted from Birmingham.⁷⁵ The vocal racism espoused by a section of Powell support showed itself to be violent as well in the days surrounding the May Day march.

Immediately after Powell was sacked for his words in Birmingham, members of the British working class left work and took to the streets to support a man they felt was speaking for them. Thousands more wrote to Powell, supporting his calls to end immigration. At first, the powellites tried to separate race relations from the idea of free speech, but as time went on, they made their racism more explicit and, occasionally, violent. The more extreme element among Powell's support freed itself from demonstrations at the beginning of May, resulting in an attack on a West Indian christening and a death threat sent to Ian Mikardo. The reaction to the "Rivers of Blood" speech, punctuated by striking workers, bulging mailbags, and outbreaks of violence, alerted Britain to the existence of a sizeable portion of the population firmly supportive of Enoch Powell's extreme views on immigration.

Black Britons push back: Immigrant protest of Powell

Even though protestors claimed that Powell had spoken for all of England when he delivered his "Rivers of Blood" speech, it was fairly certain he did not speak for the nation's immigrant citizen population. Demonstrating that, immigrant leaders condemned Powell in the aftermath of the speech, trying to redefine a narrative of widespread anti-immigration feelings

⁷⁴ "Coloured Family Attacked," *The Times*, May 1, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

⁷⁵ "Mikardo Receives Murder Threat," *Birmingham Daily Post*, May 2, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

that was being supported by a white government, press, and people. The individual and collective action of immigrants was driven by black Britons who had been long-term residents in the country and supported by more recent arrivals. While it failed to change the minds of powellites, their advocacy created solidarity between different immigrant groups, even as the groups' memberships themselves were not completely united.

During this period, British ideas of blackness were not strictly rooted in African heritage and post-slavery communities as they were in the United States. Rather, they were defined by the colonial past, where all non-white residents of the colonies shared a similar structure of oppression. Thus, black British were not just members of the African diaspora like African and West Indian immigrants, but also comprised South Asian and Oceanic immigrants who had similar experiences with British rule. Black British leaders tried to broaden black identity to represent and help all people of color in Britain, while bolstering their movement with a larger coalition in doing so. This notion of a multi-ethnic black coalition is known in the field of race relations as “political blackness,” and, while fading out of fashion after the 1970s, was a crucial part of black British thought before then.⁷⁶

Beginning a few years before Powell's speech, civil rights leaders in Britain spun their own politically black groups out of American Pan-African movements. The start of the Civil Rights movement in the United States spawned ideologically similar groups in the UK, notably the Committee Against Racial Discrimination (CARD), which adopted King's ideas of civil disobedience.⁷⁷ The most successful black movements were offsprings of the later American

⁷⁶ Tariq Modood, “The Rise and Fall of an Anti-Racism: From Political Blackness to Ethnic Pluralism,” in *New Left, New Right and Beyond: Taking the Sixties Seriously*, ed. Geoff Andrews et al. (London: Palgrave Macmillan UK, 1999), 168–81, https://doi.org/10.1057/9780333981726_11.

⁷⁷ Obi Egbuna, *Destroy This Temple* (New York: William and Morrow Company, 1971); Rosalind Wild, “‘Black Was the Color of Our Fight.’ Black Power in Britain, 1956-1977” (University of Sheffield, 2008).

groups like the Nation of Islam and the Black Panthers. Malcolm X came to speak in England in 1965, inspiring attendee Michael de Freitas to change his name to Michael X and create the first British black power group, the Racial Awareness Action Society (RAAS).⁷⁸ Other movements grew on the back of RAAS and black power thanks to two major events in 1967—Michael X becoming the first person imprisoned for inciting racial hatred in a speech, and American activist Stokely Carmichael speaking about black power in London.⁷⁹ One, the Universal Coloured People's Association adopted the tenets of black power, rejecting King's approach, and soon spawned multiple other organizations, among them the militant British Black Panthers, led by Nigerian-born playwright Obi Egbuna.⁸⁰ Rising racial tensions in the 1960s saw Britain develop its own black freedom and black power movements.

At the same time, more traditional immigrant support groups pushed a political agenda of immigrant welfare from a more local and less extreme perspective. Immigrants entering Britain with different levels of preparation had to take advantage of the pre-existing community. Some of these community ties were informal, such as the way recent arrivals from the Caribbean would receive loans from other members of the community in London until they were able to achieve financial independence in their new home.⁸¹ Others were nationally organized, the first and best example being the Indian Workers Associations (IWA). Born in Coventry in 1953 and becoming national in 1958, the IWA served needs of South Asians in Britain, assisting them with negotiating welfare and taxes or providing social and cultural events to nurture the immigrant community.⁸² They also functioned as workers' rights associations, fighting against color bars in

⁷⁸ Wild, "'Black Was the Color of Our Fight.' Black Power in Britain, 1956-1977," 31–33.

⁷⁹ Sivanandan, "From Resistance to Rebellion."

⁸⁰ Egbuna, *Destroy This Temple*, 18–21; Sivanandan, "From Resistance to Rebellion," 20–22.

⁸¹ Rae Sherwood, *The Psychodynamics of Race* (Brighton: The Harvester Press Limited, 1980), 40.

⁸² Sivanandan, "From Resistance to Rebellion," 6; Gill, "The Indian Workers' Association Coventry 1938–1990."

local factories and supporting strikes that included members of the group.⁸³ For the IWA, the central tenets of anti-discrimination advocacy and working class solidarity led to a surge of communist and anti-racist leaders among affiliate groups—a few branches printed an anti-immigration control pamphlet in 1965, while the Coventry branch teamed up with the city’s Communist party to create the Coventry Against Racism activism group.⁸⁴ Group leaders were often well-known Marxist thinkers, which led to extreme political rhetoric in publications as well as a number of organizations splintering along ideological lines, with some focusing more on advocacy and others on community relations.⁸⁵ Community progress groups grew out of Commonwealth immigration and developed a political philosophy that facilitated their partnership with black power leaders.

After the speech, criticism of Powell by these immigrant and black activist groups was fast and forceful. The day after the speech, CARD issued a statement, criticizing politicians for falling back to political racism time and again.⁸⁶ Rajmal Singh, head of the Coventry Indian Worker’s Association, wrote to Heath, praising his “courage and conviction” in quickly sacking Powell from the shadow cabinet.⁸⁷ Mr. Judy Ferguson, Secretary of the West Indian Standing Conference, an organization dedicated to eliminating racial discrimination and violence in the UK, called for Powell to be prosecuted for fomenting racial violence.⁸⁸ The Wolverhampton Council for Racial Harmony also praised Heath and called for Powell’s prosecution.⁸⁹ Immigrant

⁸³ Gill, “The Indian Workers’ Association Coventry 1938–1990.”

⁸⁴ Gill.

⁸⁵ Gill, 10; DeWitt John, *Indian Workers’ Associations in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1969), 126–29.

⁸⁶ Egbuna, *Destroy This Temple*, 17; “These Things Just Had to Be Said.”

⁸⁷ “Coventry Indians Praise Singh,” *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, April 22, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

⁸⁸ “These Things Just Had to Be Said”; “West Indian Standing Conference - Home,” accessed November 14, 2018, <http://www.wisc.btck.co.uk/>.

⁸⁹ “Mr. Powell ‘is a Threat to Smooth Race Relations,’” *Birmingham Daily Post*, April 24, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

and race relations associations came out in staunch opposition to Powell in the days after the speech.

Aaron Haynes, the West Indian secretary-liaison officer of the Wolverhampton Council for Racial Harmony, provided a more detailed criticism of Powell in an address to schoolchildren from within the MP's constituency. Haynes claimed Powell had "done more to inflame the feelings of coloured immigrants in this country than a whole generation of Englishmen," and explained that this was because Powell, in contrast to neo-fascists like Mosley, existed within the political mainstream.⁹⁰ Stressing that Wolverhampton was not as racist or divided as Powell's speech made it seem, Haynes questioned the truthfulness of the speech's anecdote about the old woman and openly wondered whether Powell had made the speech as a political power play.⁹¹ Haynes, given the platform of a speech instead of a press release, issued a firm denunciation of Powell for encouraging racism.

Spurred on by Powell, some immigrant leaders took advantage of the preexisting overlap of community groups and black power groups to form an umbrella organization for people of color. On April 22, the national IWA, the National Federation of Pakistani Associations, the West Indian Standing Conference, and members of the Black Power movement announced plans to hold a meeting at Leamington Spa, a town outside of Coventry, in the Midlands, in hopes of forming a national militant immigrant body.⁹² The six hour meeting was held that Sunday, April 29, with its over fifty attendees representing twenty different immigrant organizations. At the

⁹⁰ "Mr. Powell 'is a Threat to Smooth Race Relations.'"

⁹¹ "Mr. Powell 'is a Threat to Smooth Race Relations.'"

⁹² "'A Militant Alliance,'" *Birmingham Daily Post*, April 22, 1968, British Newspaper Archive; William Daniels and Brian McConnell, "Immigrants Join Forces to Fight Racism," *Daily Mirror*, April 29, 1968, British Newspaper Archive. The meeting was held in Leamington Spa for symbolic reasons; the parties met at a house that had been the subject of a Ku Klux Klan cross burning four years prior.

end of the meeting, the delegation declared the founding of the “Black People’s Alliance,” a militant organization dedicated to the unity of British black people.⁹³ Where white workers created solidarity by marching in support of Powell, immigrant leaders did so by forming a coalition association for purposes of self-defense.

The Black People’s Alliance took this wide coalition of immigrant groups and attempted to mobilize it by issuing a threat of action. In a press conference following the Leamington meeting, Jagmohan Joshi, the national secretary of the IWA of Great Britain and leader of the BPA, explained that the goal of the alliance was to avoid the creation of a society rooted in racism, saying that “the time has come when [black people] must defend themselves in every possible way.”⁹⁴ Despite describing the organization as militant and using rhetoric that opened the door to violence, Joshi alleged that the organization would not be using arms as part of their protests.⁹⁵ To support the group’s legitimacy, it claimed a much bigger constituency than the one million black British workers who comprised the alliance’s member groups; Joshi claimed that the alliance’s representatives “were speaking for all coloured people in the country.”⁹⁶ The BPA announced their presence at the end of April 1968 with a vague threat of action, backed, according to the groups’ founders, by all the people of color in Britain.

This claim to universal black British support would be quickly undermined by the IWA. The Coventry branch of the national group said that Joshi was falsely claiming to represent the association at the BPA meeting because he had been replaced as secretary at its November 1967

⁹³ Daniels and McConnell, “Immigrants Join Forces to Fight Racism”; “Threat Issued by Black Alliance,” *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, April 29, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

⁹⁴ “Threat Issued by Black Alliance.”

⁹⁵ Daniels and McConnell, “Immigrants Join Forces to Fight Racism.”

⁹⁶ “Threat Issued by Black Alliance.”

conference.⁹⁷ The branch levelled wider criticism against the BPA, too; Sardara Singh, the Coventry branch's president, claimed that the alliance was promoting an approach of using racism to combat racism that would only divide the nation further. This was disputed by some in Joshi's camp, including Maurice Ludmer, who had co-founded the anti-racist Co-ordinating Committee Against Racial Discrimination with Joshi in the early 1960s.⁹⁸ Responding to criticism, Ludmer said that he believed there had been controversy over Joshi's reelection, but that he had ultimately been retained as national secretary.⁹⁹ Regardless of the reality of Joshi's position in the IWA of Great Britain at the time of his formation of the BPA, it is hard to find truth in claims that it spoke for all Britons of color.

In reality, despite claims of universal representation, Joshi and the BPA were acting for a specific subgroup of immigrants and pursuing a far-left, class-based goal. The BPA prohibited any organizations with white members from joining, as well as any that had cooperated with the government by contributing to policy or using welfare—the BPA saw the entire British party system as complicit alongside Powell in fomenting racism.¹⁰⁰ Most of these organizations which had worked directly with the government were part of a middle class that the group actively scorned for taking a soft line that diverged from the interests of working class blacks.¹⁰¹ The BPA essentially saw itself as an ethno-communist organization, functioning to unite the working class of color in Britain in a struggle against an elite, white establishment. The universality it preached was necessary for its political goals but misleading.

⁹⁷ "Joshi Not Our Secretary Say Indian Workers," *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, April 30, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

⁹⁸ Sivanandan, "From Resistance to Rebellion," 11.

⁹⁹ "Coloured Militants Planning Strikes?," *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, May 1, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁰⁰ Sivanandan, "From Resistance to Rebellion," 25.

¹⁰¹ Wild, "'Black Was the Color of Our Fight.' Black Power in Britain, 1956-1977," 133.

For all of its initial bluster, the threat of action by the BPA failed to materialize over the rest of 1968. In part due to the heterogeneity of their membership's views, the group mostly served as an umbrella organization, petitioning and coordinating actions by smaller British black power groups.¹⁰² They would remain quiet for the rest of 1968, but anti-Powellism would not.

Anti-Powellism by black power often focused on fighting racism with violent rhetoric. On May 12 the Camden branch of CARD hosted Roy Sawh, the founder of the United Coloured People and Arab Association and one of the leaders of the BPA, at a meeting in London. There, Sawh told attendees to arm themselves and form patrols to combat violence and theft committed against immigrants. The assistant general secretary of CARD said that he wanted the entire organization to become militant, and a CARD council member said that black Britons were "in rebellion against the people that oppressed [them]."¹⁰³ In October, the British Black Panthers wrote in their circular that, barring political change to limit racism, violence would be necessary, and that scenes like deadly American race riots in Detroit and Newark "will inevitably become part of the British scene and the Thames foam with blood sooner than Enoch Powell envisaged."¹⁰⁴ Under the oversight of the BPA the black civil rights movement moved toward full militancy to fight ingrained racism and Powellism.

At the same time, other immigrants opposed Powell in less violent ways. The same day that Sawh called for immigrant black power patrols, a group of Sikhs peacefully marched on the House of Commons, delivering a petition in opposition to immigration.¹⁰⁵ The IWA continued its campaign against discrimination, eschewing action on the streets to lobby politicians in the UK

¹⁰² Wild, 133.

¹⁰³ "'Immigrants to Plan Patrols,'" *The Times*, May 13, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁰⁴ Sivanandan, "From Resistance to Rebellion," 26.

¹⁰⁵ "'Immigrants to Plan Patrols.'"

and in South Asia.¹⁰⁶ At the Labour Party conference in October, Ealing Councillor Sardul Singh Gill used a speaking slot to oppose Powell, arguing that Britain was not defined by its most prejudiced citizens and promoting a resolution in favor of stricter race relations legislation that passed later that night.¹⁰⁷ Plenty of immigrants rejected violence in favor of peaceful, political approaches.

Within Powell's constituency, the biggest protest of Powell was carried out by one immigrant, Mohinder Loomba. In August, Loomba, an Indian immigrant who owned three knitwear stalls in the Wolverhampton market, announced his decision to contest Powell as an independent in the next election.¹⁰⁸ Loomba gained immediate notice from the more extreme corners of Powellite support; a few days after declaring his intention to run, he received an anonymous death threat stating that he "did not have the right" to run against Powell.¹⁰⁹ He also received notice from the immigrant community. A friend donated campaign headquarters and local leaders considered him serious enough to hold a private meeting with him even without a general election having been announced.¹¹⁰ The campaign would eventually come to naught, as Loomba withdrew after the 1968 Labour and Conservative party conferences, content at the change in their race relations policies, but in his brief foray into politics he demonstrated a potential for immigrants to protest at the polls as well as on the streets.¹¹¹

¹⁰⁶ Gill, "The Indian Workers' Association Coventry 1938–1990," 563.

¹⁰⁷ John Lewis, "A Lecture about Pushing Things under the Carpet," *Birmingham Daily Post*, October 4, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁰⁸ "Immigrant Will Oppose Powell in next Election," *Birmingham Daily Post*, August 23, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁰⁹ "'Death Threat' to Powell's Election Rival," *Birmingham Daily Post*, August 27, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹¹⁰ "Mr. Powell's Rival Means Business...," *Birmingham Daily Post*, September 2, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹¹¹ "Indian Quits Enoch Fight," *Daily Mirror*, October 17, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

Like the working class, the immigrant community in Britain was moved to action by Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech. The most noticeable action in the wake of the speech came from the rapidly developing British civil rights movement, specifically from its more extreme militant Marxist wing. Led by IWA national secretary Jagmohan Joshi, British black power and immigrant community groups united to form the Black People's Alliance, a militant umbrella organization that failed to follow through on its promises of action and universal representation of black Britons. At the same time, quieter advocacy within the political structure by immigrant organizations and individuals worked to influence things away from the front pages. Powell inspired many white Britons in the wake of his Birmingham speech to come out against continued immigration, but he also motivated much of the heavily divided immigrant population to come together in opposition to him.

A cause of its own: British student anti-Powellism

Powell's words, and the subsequent support he received among the working class, made him a symbol for British racism, and, for the extremely active British student movement, a target. The movement had already had him in its crosshairs before "Rivers of Blood"—in February, a car he was riding in was attacked and damaged by students of Essex University after he had delivered a speech there—but now they ramped up their protesting and their rhetoric.¹¹² British student opposition to Powell was driven by leftist, working class students, who sought to incorporate Powell alongside their anti-Vietnam war message to grow a movement on the scale of France or Germany, and supported by more moderate students who were opposed to his message and his presence on campus. Even as protests made headlines, however, the protesters

¹¹² "Militants and Moderates in the Universities," *Minerva* 7, no. 1 (September 1, 1968): 290, <https://doi.org/10.1007/BF01096825>.

were only a vocal minority among the British student body; a large number of students remained either uninvolved or in support of Powell.

In the years leading up to 1968, a post-war expansion of British higher education added some ideological and socioeconomic diversity to campuses. Between 1953 and 1965, as new schools were founded and more students pursued degrees, the population of British universities more than doubled, increasing from 80,000 to 138,000 students.¹¹³ Of the 138,000-plus students who were in school by 1968, around 30% of these students came from the working class, while 70% hailed from the middle and upper-classes. Despite the overwhelming strength of the Young Conservative organization across the nation, which dwarfed similar groups from other parties, on-campus political ideology was balanced. Labour and Conservative voters were equally represented, and only a small minority supported far-left groups like the Communists or Socialists.¹¹⁴ In the postwar years, the British university system had moved away from being a Conservative old boys club to being politically and economically diverse, at least when looking beyond Oxbridge at all the nation's schools.

In the wake of Powell's speech, Conservative university students stood behind the deposed Shadow Defense Secretary. The day after Powell spoke in Birmingham, the London Young Conservatives came out against his sacking. The York University branch made a similar statement and sent a telegraph to Heath, saying that Powell's ideas were "realistic of view of majority of British people."¹¹⁵ In mid-May, John Davnall, the treasurer of the Keele University Conservative Association brought a vote to have Powell dismissed as a patron of the association because of his "irresponsible" words on race relations. The members rejected Davnall's motion,

¹¹³ Halsey and Marks, "British Student Politics," 47.

¹¹⁴ Thomas, "The British Student Movement 1965-1972," 99–103.

¹¹⁵ "Young Tories Deplore Sacking," *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, April 22, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

signaling their support for Powell. Davnall would resign his post in protest.¹¹⁶ While the Conservative party formally opposed Powell's race relations views, many university Conservative organizations sided against the party and with Powell.

While Conservative student groups stood behind Enoch Powell, many of their peers registered their opposition to the man and his views. The early center of opposition was the London School of Economics (LSE), where Powell had been scheduled to speak to Conservative students on April 25. On the night of the 24th, the Student Union council sent the MP a letter, writing that students of color at the LSE had been insulted by his words, and that it believed he should not give the speech.¹¹⁷ Powell cancelled his planned appearance, even as the Conservative Society rejected the Student Union council decision as a blatantly political act.¹¹⁸ A few days later, on April 26, the same day dockers and porters clashed with Ian Mikardo in Whitehall, about 300 LSE students marched from the school to Powell's London residence. Positioning themselves as a counteraction against that workers' march, the students handed out pamphlets and held banners positioning Powell as an enemy of the working class.¹¹⁹ At the London School of Economics, a planned Powell engagement shortly after his Birmingham speech presented an opportunity to demonstrate student opposition.

May Day saw large-scale student anti-racism demonstrations alongside the working class pro-Powell march. At the April 26 LSE march, one participant announced a May Day march to combat "Powellite fascism," and the student body later voted to boycott class on May 1 to

¹¹⁶ "Immigrants To Plan Patrols."

¹¹⁷ "Widespread Split Over Powell's Race Speech," *The Times*, April 25, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹¹⁸ "Widespread Split Over Powell's Race Speech"; Richard Osband et al., "Letter to the Editor," *The Times*, April 27, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹¹⁹ "Mikardo Clash with Marching Dockers."

demonstrate against racialism.¹²⁰ On that day, a large group of students and a sprinkling of trade unionists marched from a free-speech area at Tower Hill, in Central London, along the Thames, and to Labour Party headquarters, close to the Houses of Parliament, where dockers and porters were marching to in support of Powell. The students protested Powell fiercely, against some of the working-class participants' wishes—*The Times* reported their shouts of “Enoch, we want you—dead” drowning out pro-working-class chants from the unionist section of the march.¹²¹ Some carried a broadsheet pre-issue of the radical left *Black Dwarf* newspaper, which printed a picture of Powell dressed as an SS officer and compared him to Oswald Mosley and Adolf Hitler—one of the first instances of what would become a common, controversial comparison.¹²² Traditionally a day for celebrating the working class, the student element of the May Day 1968 march made the holiday explicitly about Enoch Powell and anti-racialism.

Though the pro- and anti-Powell May Day marches were planned to not overlap, the two clashed repeatedly. First, the students were late to leave Tower Hill, resulting in their presence overlapping with the start of the dockers' march. The two groups exchanged angry shouts, but remained separate, and with the help of the police the student march started on its way.¹²³ Words would give way to violence after the formal anti-Powell march, when a number of student marchers crossed paths with the Powellite marchers outside Parliament. According to *The Times*' account, three students chanted anti-Powell slogans and held up a picture of a “uniformed Nazi”—potentially the Powell-as-SS *Black Dwarf* spread—in the direction of dockers waiting at

¹²⁰ “Mikardo Clash with Marching Dockers”; “Militants and Moderates in the Universities,” 289.

¹²¹ “Dockers and Students in Angry Scenes.”

¹²² “Who Is Enoch Powell?,” *Black Dwarf*, May 1, 1968; Tariq Ali, *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties* (New York: Citadel Press, 1987), 192.

¹²³ “Dockers Break up Police Cordon to Battle with Students.”

an entrance to the House of Commons.¹²⁴ About 300 of those dockers turned and rushed down from the entrance, across the street, and broke through a police cordon to fight or chase students.¹²⁵ May Day showed that student activism against Powell could be a significant activist force.

The extreme rhetoric and violence of the May Day London march was not characteristic of all anti-Powell student protest. At the same time as Nazi comparisons and fists were being thrown around in the capital, students at Oxford participated in a peaceful, silent anti-racism march alongside immigrant and working-class groups.¹²⁶ A few days later, on May 4, 80 students from schools in Wolverhampton led a march alongside members of the local immigrant community to present Powell with a petition denouncing his stance on immigration while the MP held a monthly “surgery” for his constituents.¹²⁷ Despite—or because of—the success and peaceful nature of these demonstrations, they went largely uncovered in the press, with reporting of the Oxford march only coming in the form of a critical letter to the editor from the Principal of Ruskin College, Oxford, complaining about the lack of coverage.¹²⁸ The days around May Day saw peaceful anti-Powell protest alongside the violent one in London.

The vast majority of attention was paid to the London march, however, which made front-page news in most major British newspapers the following day thanks to the violence and extreme language used by both sides. In covering the May Day march, newspapers ignored peaceful and respectful student action in the march and elsewhere, focusing instead on extreme

¹²⁴ “Dockers and Students in Angry Scenes.”

¹²⁵ “Dockers Break up Police Cordon to Battle with Students”; “Dockers and Students in Angry Scenes.”

¹²⁶ H.D. Hughes, “Oxford Demonstration,” *The Times*, May 8, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹²⁷ “Students March on Powell’s Headquarters,” *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, May 4, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹²⁸ Hughes, “Oxford Demonstration.”

elements. *The Times* placed the blame for the violence outside parliament on the “three long-haired youths” who “baited” the powellites, putting forward a portrayal of the students that put them at fault rather than the dockers who crossed police lines and used force.¹²⁹ The *Daily Mirror* published a limited account of the events that failed to supply a timeline and singled out left-wing elements among the students but not the right-wing presence among the dockers, creating an unbalanced article that could have tilted a reader against the students.¹³⁰ In the Principal of Ruskin College’s letter to *The Times*, he reported a phone call he had with a representative from a “national press agency,” who explained that the lack of trouble in the Oxford march was to blame for its lack of coverage.¹³¹ The national press seized on the extreme aspects of the London May Day speech and blew them out of proportion, giving more publicity to Powell’s support while delegitimizing his opposition.

Publications were also keen to highlight the presence of the radical left at the head of the London march. The march was largely organized by leftists, notably Tariq Ali, the editor of *Black Dwarf* and radical Marxist leader of the British anti-Vietnam War movement, who gave a speech at Labour headquarters calling for Powell’s arrest for fomenting racial violence.¹³² The presence of the pre-release *Black Dwarf* among the marchers, which promoted revolutionary Marxist ideas in attacks on the press and governing classes only served to bolster the idea that the radical left was a large and active presence among British students.¹³³ Ali had become a public figure following a March anti-war demonstration against Vietnam at the American embassy, and the mention of his presence linked the anti-Powell May Day march with him, his

¹²⁹ “Dockers and Students in Angry Scenes.”

¹³⁰ “Dockers Clash with Students,” *Daily Mirror*, May 2, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹³¹ Hughes, “Oxford Demonstration.”

¹³² Ali, *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties*, 192–93; “Dockers and Students in Angry Scenes.”

¹³³ “Birth of a Small Dark Stranger,” *Black Dwarf*, May 1, 1968.

anti-war actions, and, by extension, the international student movement in France and Germany that would lead Paris to a state of national emergency in May 1968, with which he was associated.¹³⁴ The student protesters challenging Powell in London were implicitly linked to leftist student protests elsewhere in Europe, connecting them to a non-British movement that for many was very divisive.

However, the notion that most protesting British students were leftists was far from accurate. Radicals like Ali made up a miniscule portion of the British student population—a survey at Manchester University found only 6% of students self-identified as “extreme left.”¹³⁵ Discussing the failure of the Revolutionary Students Socialist Federation, founded in June 1968, Michael Thomas, one of the group’s organizers, explained that it failed “because the majority of students didn’t support it.” Thomas was fully aware that radical students would never be the dominant campus force, saying that “we socialist students were a happy, colorful carnival, but nevertheless a very clear minority.”¹³⁶ Despite that clear minority, these students gained a disproportionate amount of headlines thanks to extreme forms of protest, like a February 21 incident at the University of Sussex, where two students threw paint on an American Embassy official, or fearmongering media coverage, like an article in *The Times* alleging that foreign revolutionaries planned to enter Britain and start a revolution at an anti-Vietnam protest.¹³⁷ Radical students were on the fringes of British universities, but their role leading occasionally violent protests made authorities see them as a major threat.

¹³⁴ Howard L. Malchow, *Special Relations: The Americanization of Britain?* (Stanford, California: Stanford University Press, 2011); Ali, *Street Fighting Years: An Autobiography of the Sixties*, 175–200; Fraser, “West Germany and Britain: 1968-69,” 278.

¹³⁵ Thomas, “The British Student Movement 1965-1972,” 102.

¹³⁶ Quoted in Fraser, “West Germany and Britain: 1968-69,” 297–98.

¹³⁷ “Militants and Moderates in the Universities,” 289; Nicholas Thomas, “Challenging Myths of the 1960s: The Case of Student Protest in Britain,” *Twentieth Century British History* 13, no. 3 (January 1, 2002): 280, <https://doi.org/10.1093/tcbh/13.3.277>.

This overblown fear of radical student action affected Enoch Powell's speaking engagements at college campuses well after his planned LSE speech in April and the May Day march in London. Powell had been scheduled to speak at a Birmingham University conference on June 19.¹³⁸ On May 30, citing the recent shooting of American presidential candidate Bobby Kennedy, Professor Henry Ferns, chair of the Political Science department, cancelled the engagement, officially for fear of Powell's assassination by an outside actor.¹³⁹ Later, playing up demonization of the massive student protests that had brought Paris to a standstill in May 1968, Ferns expressed worry over foreign student terrorism, explaining that there was no certainty that Powell "cannot become a casualty in...a war on the banks of the Seine."¹⁴⁰ Despite this outward rhetoric of clear and present danger to Powell, it remains more likely that Ferns cancelled Powell's appearance to appease opposition from leftist students who had threatened protests. His discussion of violence flew in face of an earlier letter to Powell by the conference organizer, who asked the MP if he would be willing to sit down with extreme students "to meet the understandable desire of radical opinion within this university to challenge you on [immigration]."¹⁴¹ With clear internal concerns about Birmingham University student opposition to Powell before the cancellation and no firm threats of violence, it seemed likely that Ferns obscured the real reason for cancelling Powell's appearance.

Powell successfully fought against Ferns' dubious rationale for cancelling the engagement. He attacked the professor for his decision to cancel, accusing him of stifling free speech at the university because of the concerns of a small group of students.¹⁴² His criticism

¹³⁸ "Powell Speech Is on after All," *The Times*, June 18, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹³⁹ "Death Fear: Lecture Cancelled," *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 14, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁴⁰ "Powell Visit Goes Calmly," *The Times*, June 20, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁴¹ David Wilsworth, "Mr Powell at Centre of a New Storm," *The Times*, June 15, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁴² Wilsworth.

was amplified by Labour MP Christopher Mayhew, who cancelled his own scheduled talk at the university.¹⁴³ Worried by the optics of politicians criticizing their institution and department, Ferns re-invited Powell to speak, issuing a statement to the university newspaper that explained that he hoped to avoid any questions over the support of free speech at the school. Despite bowing to the accusations of free speech restriction, in his letter to Powell, released to the press, Ferns nevertheless maintained potential violence as his reason for the invitation being rescinded.¹⁴⁴ The controversy resulting from the cancellation of Powell's speaking engagement led to a hasty reversal.

Powell's speech would take place more smoothly than the events that built up to it. Compared to the rest of the conference, which was open to the general public, access to Powell's lecture was restricted, at the MP's request. Press were banned and all attendees, including students, were vetted by the university.¹⁴⁵ On the day of the speech, uniformed security staff were scattered around the building where Powell was to speak, carefully restricting entrance to the audience of 200 people. Around 500 people peacefully protested the appearance, carrying signs, passing out anti-racist literature, and wearing black and white "racial harmony" armbands. Some faculty attending the speech also wore armbands while standing onstage with Powell.¹⁴⁶ After all the discussions of assassination, there was no hint of any violence at Powell's lecture. This can in part be attributed to the drama—socialist leaders called threats of violence "hysterical" and sought to minimize the disruption of the protests to make a point.¹⁴⁷ Ferns'

¹⁴³ "Militants and Moderates in the Universities," 298.

¹⁴⁴ "Powell Speech Is on after All."

¹⁴⁵ "Powell Visit: Press Ban," *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 19, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁴⁶ "Powell Visit Goes Calmly."

¹⁴⁷ "Powell Visit Goes Calmly."

attempts to avoid scenes of large-scale protest actually succeeded, but his attempt to cancel Powell's speech caused an unnecessarily large controversy to fall over the university.

Colleges continued to witness debates over free speech and Enoch Powell's immigration views, often more disruptively than in Birmingham. These speaking engagements were almost all organized by schools' Young Conservatives groups and pitted the College Conservatives who had largely stuck by the politician against small leftist activist populations. University officials were loath to intervene and cancel protests, due to the events in Birmingham and similar negative responses from politicians at other disrupted speeches.¹⁴⁸ The new wave of Powell speech protests began over the summer. On July 22, Powell faced protests before he spoke at the Greater London Area Young Conservatives summer school at Oxford. Thirty anti-powellites surrounded him in a corridor and confronted him before they were removed by a number of Young Conservative attendees, some of whom got into "scuffles" with protestors.¹⁴⁹ On October 22, a speech to 2,000 Exeter University students hosted by the school's Young Conservatives had to be called off shortly after it began, when 30 or 40 protestors unfurled banners carrying slogans like "disembowel Powell" and shouted and sang loud enough to make an amplified Powell's words unintelligible.¹⁵⁰ Two days later, Powell finished a talk for Reading University's Conservative Association, speaking through some booing from the crowd of 500.¹⁵¹ Powell's university speeches became continually larger grounds for protestors.

¹⁴⁸ "Militants and Moderates in the Universities," 289; "Mr Powell Holds His Ground at Meeting," *The Times*, October 26, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁴⁹ "Enoch Powell Is Mobbed by Oxford Students," *Birmingham Daily Post*, July 22, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁵⁰ "Enoch Powell Howled down by Students," *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, October 23, 1968, British Newspaper Archive; "Student Uproar Forces Powell off Platform," *Birmingham Daily Post*, October 24, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁵¹ "Mr Powell Holds His Ground at Meeting."

Responding to these disruptions, Powell's appearances became more secure and his entrances more secretive. On October 26, at Cambridge, he outmaneuvered an attempted blockade by hundreds of demonstrators carrying banners and shouting accusations of fascism to speak with the Conservative Association there. The Association borrowed from Birmingham University's approach to Powell's speech, banning press at Powell's request and hiring security so restrictive that some official guests from outside the University were not allowed entry.¹⁵² Powell once again avoided protestors outside a speaking venue on November 8, when he entered the Cardiff University student union by a back door, thereby dodging 500 protestors chanting his name. The Cardiff organizers were less stringent in their security than their Cambridge counterparts, however, and Powell's speech opened with 80 students walking out, one of whom shouted that Powell was a "fascist and nazi."¹⁵³ British Conservative students were keen to hear Enoch Powell speak, but many of their peers were vocally against the controversial politician's presence on campus.

Among the wider British student protest movement of 1968 that advocated for university reform and an end to the war in Vietnam, Enoch Powell and his April words on immigration became a domestic political cause to campaign against. Initially, far-left students helped organize and carry out large-scale demonstrations, one of which turned violent. After this initial burst of proactive protesting, student action would turn reactive, as leftist students led demonstrations in opposition to university Young Conservative Associations' continued support for Powell, which manifested itself in repeated invitations to speak at meetings on campus. These minority-led protests featured extremist rhetoric from protestors, drew calls for free speech by their

¹⁵² Philip Howard, "'Houdini' Powell Beats Cambridge Hostility," *The Times*, October 28, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁵³ "80 Walk out as Powell Speaks," *Birmingham Daily Post*, November 9, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

opponents, and contributed to society's demonization of the entire British student class. The "Rivers of Blood" speech gave the British student movement another politician to oppose and in doing so made Powell a more sympathetic figure, turning the focus from his views on race relations to anti-democratic actions by a far-left student minority who many believed sought to restrict the fundamental right to free speech.

Conclusion

In the weeks and months after Enoch Powell warned of rivers of blood in Birmingham, groups on both sides of opinion on his immigration ban mobilized to publicize their positions. In London and the Midlands, working class white Britons who agreed with Powell held strikes and public marches, compiling thousands-strong petitions in support of the MP's policy goals. Working class immigrants, threatened by the hostility demonstrated in the speech and the resulting protests, formed militant defense groups and called for change in front of voters and politicians. On college campuses, the generally upper-class Young Conservatives firmly stood by Powell regardless of their views on immigration, while their more left-leaning colleagues protested his views and his presence on British university campuses. Enoch Powell became a hero for many Britons in 1968; for others, he became a villain.

While the British press made these protests front page news, implicitly representative of a large portion of the population's views, most of the groups that took to the streets to protest about Powell were from the fringes of society. The working-class powellites, for all their numbers on the streets and on petitions, were led by members of Britain's nascent far right, and their numbers were often buoyed more by working-class solidarity than ideological unification. Immigrant protest was led by a group of militant Marxist activists allied with the American Black Power movement, and for all the universality espoused by groups like the Black People's

Alliance, they were a niche part of the immigrant community. The same was true of the anti-Powell protestors on university campuses; while they brought in a wider coalition of students, including Labour voters in the student body and faculty, they were led by an extreme minority of far-left students, many of whom protested Powell's speeches in more disruptive ways than the average protestor. For these groups on the fringes of British politics, Powell's speech provided an opportunity to act on an issue but also expand their legitimacy and support base, bringing in the larger class of British who felt strongly about either side of the immigration issue. This mission found mixed success, but also helped buttress the importance of Enoch Powell as a political figure and race relations as a key issue for the British voting public. While Powell's bulging mailbag indicated that he had national support for his views, the protests in support and opposition of his views showed the nation that people cared deeply about his cause. The reaction to the "Rivers of Blood" speech demonstrated the high stakes of immigration and race in Britain.

Looking in: Powell and Race Relations, 1969

Seven months after “Rivers of Blood” and three days after being howled down at Cardiff University, on Saturday November 16, 1968, Enoch Powell addressed the annual conference of the London Rotary Club in the South Coast seaside town of Eastbourne. Rather than focusing on small business concerns like the economy or common market, Powell elected to return to the subject of immigration for the first time since he had prophesied rivers of blood in April. Powell began by defending his original words, arguing that they straddled the Conservative party line. Adding to this, he introduced the concept of a “gulf” between the people and the governing elites, using it to criticize Heath for firing him from the shadow cabinet and to position himself as the people’s politician.¹⁵⁴ Having said very little amidst the backlash and support of the previous seven months, Powell opened his Eastbourne speech firmly in self-defense.

After reasserting the perils of continued entrance of immigrants to Britain, Powell then introduced a new anti-immigrant concept—the immigrant birth rate. The Wolverhampton MP estimated that, owing to the high reproduction rates of immigrants, there would be at minimum 4.5 million immigrants and their descendants in Britain by the year 2002, 6% of the projected population in that year.¹⁵⁵ The solution he put forward for this large population of “immigrants” that would “dislodge” the native English population was a program of repatriation, subsidized by the government. Powell cited a statistic that 20% of current immigrants in Britain would “contemplate” repatriation.¹⁵⁶ Referring to multiracial Britain as a “danger” and expanding his

¹⁵⁴ “Powell Says It Again: Send Migrants Back,” *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, November 16, 1968, British Newspaper Archive, <https://www.britishnewspaperarchive.co.uk/viewer/BL/0000726/19681116/011/0001?browse=true>; “Powell Again Urges Action on Immigration,” *The Times*, November 18, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁵⁵ Looking at census information, this was eerily accurate—the 2001 total was 4,521,050, although this does not exclude people related to non-commonwealth immigration. See “Census 2001,” 121–24.

¹⁵⁶ “Powell Says It Again: Send Migrants Back”; “Powell Again Urges Action on Immigration.”

warnings about the domestic scourge of immigration, Powell's Eastbourne speech doubled down and expanded on what he had said in Birmingham.

Enoch Powell's Eastbourne speech also marked a second phase of his association with immigration policy. Between November 1968 and the end of 1969, Powell intermittently tried to control the mainstream political discussion of immigration he had helped start in April 1968. But compared to the preceding year, where his ideas had been the center of a political storm, in 1969 discussions of immigration and race relations changed, no longer focusing solely on Powell and entry policy, but also examining domestic British society. Granted, Powell did not slip out of frame entirely; after Eastbourne he would speak intermittently on immigration, repeating his prognostications. Around these remarks, anti-Powell protests by students and immigrant activists continued, albeit in a diminished form, and new critics joined in the chorus against his views, notably from among the Anglican clergy.

However, the focus of the British people was squarely on race relations, the political issues surrounding the coexistence, or lack thereof, of white and black Britons. The new focus emerged with a parliamentary inquiry into the interplay between immigrant children and the British educational system, which would ultimately lead to questions and controversy about handling immigrant-heavy schools. Later in the year, it would also be promoted the public work of the Race Relations Board, a conciliation body that had been expanded in the 1968 Race Relations Act that Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech had so fiercely opposed. The Board's first conciliation cases and a rise in far-right violence and police brutality would lead to new questions about the true degree of and solution for systematic racism and discrimination in Britain. Powell's discussion about immigrant children and birth rates proved anticipatory, as domestic race relations questions dominated political discussions of immigrations in 1969, but

his steadfast focus on long-term impact and large-scale statistics undermined his relevance as the focus turned to fixing Britain's immediate and local problems.

After Eastbourne: Powell protest and reaction, late 1968 to mid-1969

Powell's Eastbourne speech elicited more responses over the following months, but the reaction at the end of 1968 and beginning of 1969 was diminished and marked more by opposition than support, compared to the response to "Rivers of Blood," which was much more pro-Powell. The body of critics remained largely the same, made up of immigrant activists, students, and most establishment politicians, but their ranks would also be bolstered by the clergy, who came out forcefully against Powell's message. There would be one major demonstration against Powell—a Black People's Alliance's march in January—but otherwise Powell was targeted mostly by individuals and small groups of isolated protestors. Without the shock value of Powell's Birmingham speech and the public anti-immigration displays that followed, later anti-Powell demonstrations lacked the punch of those that had come before and failed to get many beyond the leftist community to participate.

Immediately after the Eastbourne speech, Race relations leaders echoed their earlier criticism of Powell's positions. The chair of the Race Relations Board, Mark Bonham Carter, accused Powell of dangerously fanning pre-existing fears over immigration.¹⁵⁷ Indian Workers Association (IWA) national secretary and Black People's Alliance (BPA) organizer Jagmohan Joshi had more extreme words reserved for Powell, saying that "the hysteria and violence in Mr. Powell's speech can only be find a parallel in the anti-Semitism campaign of pre-war Germany."¹⁵⁸ The Coventry IWA called for Powell's prosecution under the Race Relations Act,

¹⁵⁷ "Tory Constituents Pledge Support," *Birmingham Daily Post*, November 20, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁵⁸ "Indians Say Both Parties Racist," *The Times*, November 18, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

an appeal which was quickly denied.¹⁵⁹ Meanwhile, Oscar Hahn, chairman of the Race Relations Board's West Midlands Conciliation Committee, took a different approach to criticizing Powell, dismissing his words as a mere echo of "Rivers of Blood" and calling for the British people to ignore him.¹⁶⁰ The response to the Eastbourne speech was largely dismissive of Powell.

Following the initial wave of comments, late November and December saw opposition that mirrored earlier anti-Powell protests. The most notable of these were carried out by students, once again in the form of public demonstrations and cancellations of speaking engagements. The day after the Eastbourne speech, Bradford and Sheffield Universities' student unions announced that Powell had been banned from speaking to any union-affiliated society, a more extreme punishment than any school had previously taken with him.¹⁶¹ At schools where Powell was still allowed to speak, demonstrators continued to disrupt his appearances. An appearance in front of King's College London theology students was cancelled due to safety concerns, while an appearance at the Wolverhampton College of Technology was cancelled shortly after it began due to protestors shouting, walking out, and even throwing paper airplanes. It was the first time he had ever been shouted down from speaking within his constituency.¹⁶² Students also demonstrated away from campus. A group of Young Communists visited Powell's London home on November 24, representing the fictitious "Ministry of Repatriation of Ideas Alien to the British People," and gave the MP a scroll announcing that his "alien" ideas on immigration had

¹⁵⁹ "Indians Say Prosecute Powell," *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, November 19, 1968, British Newspaper Archive; "Mr Powell Not to Be Prosecuted," *The Times*, November 23, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁶⁰ "These Theories Are Old Hat Now, Says Mr. Hahn," *Birmingham Daily Post*, November 18, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁶¹ "Anglicans Withdraw Powell Invitation," *The Times*, November 21, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁶² "Anglicans Withdraw Powell Invitation"; Arthur Osman, "Powell Walks out on Jeering Students," *The Times*, December 7, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

been “repatriated” to South Africa and Nazi Germany.¹⁶³ From Student Union meetings to on-campus talks to off-campus protests, students continued to make their displeasure with Powell known in the months after Eastbourne.

For the immigrant activist communities, opposition to Powell was initially much less direct, focusing on meetings, resolutions, and extreme rhetoric. A Sikh meeting in London voted for a plan to get the government to suppress publication of future Powell speeches.¹⁶⁴ Jeff Crawford, the secretary of the West Indian Standing Conference (WISC), advocated militancy in response to Powell’s fearmongering, stating his belief that a race war was inevitable because of the ongoing racial tensions in Britain.¹⁶⁵ WISC’s public relations officer later tempered this by explaining that the British community of color did not want a race war, and as such, one was not going to happen.¹⁶⁶ Even with all this discourse, by the turn of the new year there had not been a notable protest by an immigrant-affiliated group. Representatives had preferred to air their words in print and from podiums, taking a firm and formal stance in clear opposition to Enoch Powell’s proposed policies.

Part of the reason for immigrant groups’ arms-length opposition may have been that they had already set their eyes on January 1969’s Commonwealth Prime Ministers Conference in London, which represented an opportunity to demonstrate opposition to the Rhodesian white minority government under Ian Smith.¹⁶⁷ A massive march was planned, led by the Black People’s Alliance, with help from the anti-Rhodesia Zimbabwe Solidarity Action Committee. On

¹⁶³ “Demonstrators Hand Powell Scroll on His ‘evil’ Ideas,” *The Times*, November 25, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁶⁴ “‘Silence Powell’ Call,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, November 25, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁶⁵ “West Indian Tells Police of Race War Peril,” *The Times*, November 28, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁶⁶ “Visit by Powell Cancelled,” *The Times*, December 5, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁶⁷ The white minority population of Rhodesia, modern day Zimbabwe, had unilaterally declared independence from Britain and enacted all-white rule in 1965. Harold Wilson referred to it as an illegal and racist state soon after, and the UN passed a declaration as such.

Monday, January 13, between four and seven thousand demonstrators from immigrant and British backgrounds gathered at Speaker's Corner in Hyde Park and began a march to Rhodesia house, the official diplomatic headquarters of Smith's government, located on the Strand. A heavy police presence helped separate the anti-racist marchers from a small but vocal contingent of National Front supporters, who were running a pro-Rhodesia counter protest.¹⁶⁸ Traveling first to 10 Downing Street, a group of the demonstrators led by Joshi presented Prime Minister Wilson with a memorandum calling on the Labour government to stop "capitulating to racism."¹⁶⁹ The march was initially built around peaceful tactics, focusing more on words of protest, rather than action.

Once the marchers turned off of Downing Street and headed toward Rhodesia house, the peaceful nature of the march broke down. As Joshi's group returned from handing over the memorandum, an effigy of Enoch Powell sprung up from the crowd, as did a coffin with the words "Common" and "Wealth" painted on the side. These were set on fire and passed around above the marchers as they shouted slogans like "disembowel Enoch Powell" and "hang Ian Smith." At the same time, the group yelled at police, accusing them of being fascists who encouraged brutality.¹⁷⁰ On the Strand, as the group moved to Rhodesia House, these violent words turned into violent actions. A group of mostly-white protestors broke free from the group and rushed at Rhodesia House in an attempt to occupy it, using banners and bottles as weapons to break through the police lines. A contingent of 500 policemen held strong and chased back the

¹⁶⁸ Malcolm Totten, "500 Policemen Win the Battle for Rhodesia House," *Birmingham Daily Post*, January 13, 1969, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁶⁹ "Battle of the Strand in South Africa and Rhodesia Protest," *The Times*, January 13, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁷⁰ Terence Blocksidge, "Mr. Powell Effigy Burned in Protest," *Birmingham Daily Post*, January 13, 1969, British Newspaper Archive; "Battle of the Strand in South Africa and Rhodesia Protest."

protestors, some of whom turned to vandalize South Africa house, which had been left unguarded nearby. By the time that the “battle” had ended, 14 protestors and four policemen had been taken to the hospital and 31 people had been arrested.¹⁷¹ Violence redefined a march that had initially been characterized by peaceful protest and a petition.

The Rhodesia House march showed that even though reaction to Powell’s words had been smaller in the wake of Eastbourne, race in Britain remained a topic that was constantly on the verge of blowing up. The turnout for the march was massive—bigger than any of the mass protests of 1968—and the degree of violence and vandalism was unparalleled. The march’s wider political focus also represented an important change in the way the pro-immigrant movement had evolved. While Enoch Powell was singled out as one of the marchers’ perceived villains, he was not the sole target, as he had been the year before. Rather, he was part of a wider problem of ingrained and systemic British racism. The Black People’s Alliance, a group that had been created because of Enoch Powell’s Birmingham speech and the response to it, had widened its aegis beyond the Wolverhampton politician, to advocate for a change of British society and not just the British government’s immigration quota. The fact that the immigrant groups’ response to Powell’s Eastbourne speech was smaller than it had been before was not an indication of lower stakes. It was an indication that Powell was losing the place he had carved out as the embodiment of race and immigration in Britain, as the Rhodesia House protest demonstrated.

Popular public opposition to Powell failed to reach the controversy and size of the Battle for Rhodesia House in the months that followed. An anti-Powell march led by members of

¹⁷¹ “Battle of the Strand in South Africa and Rhodesia Protest”; Totten, “500 Policemen Win the Battle for Rhodesia House”; Blocksidge, “Mr. Powell Effigy Burned in Protest.”

radical left groups that took place on April 28 in Wolverhampton was much smaller than had been expected—police planned for a Rhodesia House-level 5,000 in attendance, but only 1,000 showed up.¹⁷² Powell’s scattered university speeches continued to be met by protests, like his May 10 appearance at Aston University in Birmingham, where the MP had to be shepherded out under the protection of the university rugby team.¹⁷³ The most notable protest against Powell was one of the smallest. On July 8, after Powell spoke to a London Conservative meeting, a man and woman leaped in front of the car that was taking the MP home. The girl was moved out of the way by police and the man was passed over by the car; both were unhurt, though a man in the crowd outside punched the girl in the face as she tried to flee custody.¹⁷⁴ Powell was still at the center of protests over his immigration views in the first half of 1970, but not to the extent he had been in 1969.

While most of the anti-Powell sentiment on the streets came from radical groups on the fringe of British society, in the wake of the Eastbourne speech a new wave of criticism came from a more central part—the church pulpit. Powell’s rise to prominence in 1968 coincided with the emergence of a strand of clergy that placed great importance on social justice issues. These men of the cloth combined Christian teachings with political activism to challenge political systems and crises that they believed to be unjust or unchristian, such as world hunger. Even though secularism was on the rise in the 1960s, the Anglican audience that they preached to remained massive. At the time, around 80% of British infants were baptized, all British schoolchildren received some religious instruction, and two-thirds of the population regularly

¹⁷² “1,000 March in Protest against Racialism,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, April 28, 1969, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁷³ Arthur Osman, “Rugby Players Protect Powell in Uproar,” *The Times*, May 10, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁷⁴ “Girl and Man Leap in Front of Powell’s Car,” *The Times*, July 9, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

listened to Sunday religious broadcasts on the BBC.¹⁷⁵ In sermons and in writings, the radical clergy, most of them Anglican, would use their religion to preach social justice to a large flock.

This clergy began to frame Powell's immigration views around Christian morality, and their negative judgements drew press. Criticism started immediately after the Eastbourne speech, at Sunday services in the St. Hilda Church in the London borough of Lewisham. There, Mervyn Stockwood, the Bishop of Southwark, a diocese covering immigrant-heavy South London, criticized Powell by referencing his citation of William Blake's "Jerusalem" in the Eastbourne speech.¹⁷⁶ The bishop explained that the beginning of the poem refers to Jesus' legendary 'immigration' to the English town of Glastonbury. Speaking of Jesus' middle eastern heritage, Stockwood said, "as Jesus was a dark-coloured Semite, I can only assume that Mr. Powell would have wanted him repatriated to Nazareth."¹⁷⁷ Stockwood used his sermon on the Sunday after the Eastbourne speech to paint Powell's anti-immigrant policies as unchristian.

This clerical opposition to Powell would continue in the days that followed. On November 19, the first weekday following the speech, Powell's scheduled appearance in front of Anglican clergy-in-training at King's College London was cancelled, because of worries about safety as well as a hesitance "to use the church as a political platform."¹⁷⁸ Meanwhile, in Coventry, a multid denominational meeting of clergy had no problem being political, with only two of the 90-plus attendees objecting to a resolution criticizing Powell's views as being not only

¹⁷⁵ Sam Brewitt-Taylor, *Christian Radicalism in the Church of England and the Invention of the British Sixties, 1957-70* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018).

¹⁷⁶ Powell cites the end of Blake's poem, referring to "England's green and pleasant land," while the bishop cites the beginning, which reads, "and did those feet in ancient time walk upon Englands mountain green."

¹⁷⁷ "'Jesus Was Dark,'" *Birmingham Daily Post*, November 18, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁷⁸ "Anglicans Withdraw Powell Invitation."

unchristian, but racist.¹⁷⁹ The clergy was quick to distance itself from Powell, even in strong, political terms.

Powell, himself a fairly devout Christian, responded to this criticism two weeks later during an appearance on the BBC's *Subject for Sunday*. The MP did not hold back against his critics, attempting to portray them as the same out of touch minority that had let the immigrant population in Britain become too big. He used the idea of trans/consubstantiation—Jesus' blood and flesh either becoming or being represented by wine and wafers—as evidence of a wide divide between Christianity and the real world, discrediting the notion that the Christian faith could accurately judge his immigration policy.¹⁸⁰ Rather than expand on his views or provide a counter-argument, Powell doubled down on his populist rhetoric from Eastbourne, talking about a “gap” between clergy and flock just as he had spoken of the “gulf” between government and people. Responding to religious criticism in a media appearance, Powell preferred to discredit his detractors by condemning political religion than expand on his Eastbourne argument.

Powell's appearance on the BBC did not end the clergy's criticism. Close to the turn of 1969, influential Anglican priest Paul Oestreicher wrote an editorial in *The Times* that, in calling for a fight against racialism and hunger, compared the danger of Enoch Powell's view of immigrants to the danger posed by the Nazis before WWII.¹⁸¹ In March 1969, Canon John Collins told his congregation in St. Paul's cathedral that “the majority of the natives of Britain are racist without knowing it,” alleging Powell was fomenting that racism with his

¹⁷⁹ “Powell Protest by Churches in Coventry,” *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, November 21, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁸⁰ “Powell Answers Church Critics,” *The Times*, December 2, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁸¹ Paul Oestreicher, “Hope and a Passion for the Possible,” *The Times*, December 28, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

speeches.¹⁸² He would compare Powell with Hitler in June.¹⁸³ The Anglican church did not in fact shy away from wading into politics, even months after Powell's Eastbourne speech.

These criticisms did not go unanswered by Powell or his one vocal clerical ally, the Reverend Joseph McCullough, rector of St. Mary-le-Bow parish in central London. McCullough hosted Powell on January 22, 1969. He introduced the MP as a "kind and remarkable man," and allowed him to present his views on immigration and the incompatibility of politics and Christian faith without any challenge.¹⁸⁴ In March, McCullough turned from defense to offense, attacking fellow clergy for speaking out against Powell and thus worsening race relations in Britain. He preached the idea of a dispassionate approach to race relations, like the statistics-centered idea that Powell claimed to spread, as the only way to heal racial tensions.¹⁸⁵ As clergy continued to criticize Enoch Powell's statements on immigration, Reverend McCullough tried to provide a sympathetic voice.

The peak of the Powell-clergy back and forth came in the second half of 1969, when the Bishop of Stepney challenged the MP to a televised debate. The Bishop, Trevor Huddleston, spoke about an immigration speech Powell gave in Wolverhampton on June 11, arguing in moral terms that the speech's words were evil and would lower human dignity.¹⁸⁶ Powell responded in writing, dismissing the criticism, and Huddleston in turn countered by challenging him to a public debate on immigration. Unlike previous attempts to debate Powell, the MP acquiesced to Huddleston's challenge, and after scheduling and lining up *London Weekend Television* to

¹⁸² "Most Britons Are 'Racialists without Knowing,'" *Newcastle Journal*, March 31, 1969, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁸³ Frank Johnson, "Powell Takes a Calculated Gamble," *Liverpool Echo*, June 10, 1969, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁸⁴ "Powell Remarkable and Kind, Rector Says," *The Times*, January 22, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁸⁵ "Churchmen's Abuse of Powell Criticized," *The Times*, March 10, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁸⁶ "Powell Speech on Immigration Was Evil, Bishop Says," *The Times*, June 12, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

broadcast it, the pair debated in studio. In many ways, the debate was a repeat of every other clergy-Powell showdown, except that it was face-to-face. Huddleston accused Powell of promoting a racialist policy and fueling the deterioration of British race relations, and Powell fell back on his arguments that his policies were not explicitly racist and that the clergy had no reason or standing to weigh in on political issues.¹⁸⁷ Neither side budged from their position, and very little came of the debate. Like most of the interactions between Powell and the clergy, his debate with Bishop Huddleston was less an attempt to find common ground than an attempt for him and his opponents to push their framing of immigration issues.

Opposition specific to Powell in the year after Eastbourne failed to reach the level that had followed his Birmingham speech. Radical organizations on and off campuses kept up Powell-specific protests, but the biggest demonstrations were reserved for causes that combined opposition to the MP with other topics, such as the combination of domestic and international race relations that brought together the violent protest at Rhodesia House. At the same time, the clergy waded into race relations issues, criticizing Powell with arguments rooted in and outside of the Christian faith. For all these efforts, Powell's opponents failed to make the MP budge. Powell stayed firm in his beliefs and repelled their arguments well enough to hold onto his legitimacy and British audience.

Multiracial schools: Education and the domestic side of immigration

Amidst the extended backlash to Powell's continued comments on immigration, the British people began to look at the issue more domestically in 1969, moving away from the outside threat of numbers that formed the basis of his concerns over immigration. Instead, their

¹⁸⁷ Peter Evans, "Huddleston and Powell Discuss 'evil' Speech," *The Times*, October 13, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

focus turned to approaching the problems within the United Kingdom and the way a more multiracial Britain was coping with its new identity. The first major look inward at the state of British society came from a public school system that was struggling with large numbers of students from non-British backgrounds. A new parliamentary inquest on the state of students of color and some high-profile local educational policy caused conversations among native British and immigrant parents alike, highlighting a part of British society that was struggling to adapt to the changing face of the nation and adding a new, non-Powell side to the issues of immigration and race relations.

By the end of 1968, commonwealth immigration had been occurring on a large scale for well over a decade, and a large group of second-generation children of immigrants was being born and growing up on British soil. An estimate by *The Times* claimed that there were 250,000 second-generation immigrants in Britain in 1968, comprising one-fifth of the immigrant population. A majority of these children were of elementary school-age.¹⁸⁸ The second generation of Britain's commonwealth immigrants was diverse and very different to Powell's "Rivers of Blood" vision of "charming, wide-grinning piccaninnies," who only knew their parent's native language and the word "racialist."¹⁸⁹ Some came from South Asia, some from the West Indies, and their ability to speak English ranged from fluent to nonexistent.

Ever since immigrant children had started to fill seats in public schools government and parents alike had believed that it was vital to "disperse" immigrant students of color so they could learn British cultural values from white peers in the classroom. The government came out with an official dispersal policy in a 1965 white paper that set a target of no school having over

¹⁸⁸ "Black English Children in Search of a Future," *The Times*, December 6, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁸⁹ J. Enoch Powell, "Speech to the Annual General Meeting of the West Midlands Area Conservative Political Centre" (April 20, 1968).

30% immigrant students and providing all immigrant students with low language skills access to English as Second Language (ESL) programs.¹⁹⁰ This was more of a pipe dream than a cohesive policy, however. It ignored the fundamental reality that residents were moving around, and that white residents living in areas with large immigrant populations would continue to exit.¹⁹¹ The 30% quota was unrelated to geographical realities of residents and more connected to an idea of preserving the “ideal” nature of a British school. As for ESL, there was little in the way of mandates for training or hiring teachers who could teach classes for immigrant students.¹⁹² Despite some attempts at reform, by 1969 educating the youngest members of the immigrant population remained an unaddressed problem, and the newly heightened focus on race relations in the wake of Enoch Powell’s continued speeches on the subject would help cause it to bubble up into a pressing issue.

The initial center of the storm was in Enoch Powell’s constituency, which had tried to solve a lack of places at its schools by constructing a new school, The Grove Junior School, in advance of the 1968-1969 school year. The Education Committee filled the school with a mix of students on the public school waiting list and students who had been sent to schools out of district where there were open places. 90% of these children were either children of immigrants or immigrants themselves, leading the Labour government to call on Wolverhampton to shuffle the school population, which did not happen.¹⁹³ In December, far-left groups distributed pamphlets to parents dropping their children off at the school, calling for them to boycott the school’s official opening later that month, in protest of Enoch Powell’s scheduled appearance

¹⁹⁰ Rose, *Colour and Citizenship: Report on British Race Relations*, 263–69.

¹⁹¹ Rose, 269–71.

¹⁹² Rose, 289–90.

¹⁹³ “‘Disperse Pupils’ Labour Demands,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, September 10, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

and the idea that the school's heavily immigrant makeup was in fact racial discrimination meant to maximize the white student body in the district's other schools.¹⁹⁴ The Grove Junior School's extremely immigrant-heavy student body caused concern among activists and politicians alike.

The high number of immigrants in the Wolverhampton school system also worried white parents who believed that their children's education would be worsened by each new student of color. Their fears were stoked by the composition of the Grove school, as well as by comments Minister of Education Edward Short made at its opening in December 1968. Short told the press that schools fully occupied by students of color were likely to become a reality in future, signaling an uncertainty among education officials about how best to accommodate the large numbers of non-white students in schools. Some parents took matters into their own hands. A group of white Wolverhampton parents called a whites-only meeting in February 1969 to advocate for a segregated central school that immigrant children would initially attend before being placed into different district schools based on their academic ability—an attempt to ensure that their kids would not be slowed down by the assumed subnormal academics of immigrant children.¹⁹⁵ In April, the same group, having been rebuffed by the Wolverhampton Education Committee, reached out to the committee's chair to inquire about the feasibility of home-schooling their children.¹⁹⁶ A group of angry white parents in Wolverhampton, concerned by a belief that immigrant children would slow their own children's development, tried to advocate for segregated schools, but to no avail.

In Haringey, a London borough that was home to similarly high levels of immigrant students, the push for school reform came from not from parents, but policymakers themselves.

¹⁹⁴ “‘Don’t Send Children’ Demand,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, December 7, 1968, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁹⁵ “‘Whites Only’ Meeting Is Boycotted,” *The Times*, February 10, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

¹⁹⁶ “Home Schooling Sought for White Children,” *The Times*, April 7, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

In April of 1969, the Haringey borough Education Committee announced its plan to use a testing-based student dispersal program to avoid the growth of immigrant-heavy “ghetto schools.”¹⁹⁷ The borough had one of the biggest overall populations of immigrants in the UK, with 5.6% residents of color, and one of the bigger school-age populations of color, with 27% of children coming from immigrant families. The so-called “banding” policy would give every student the same test, stratify them based on the results, grouping them as “bright,” “average,” or “slow,” and then split the groups equally across the district schools so no school would be brought down by having too many “slow” students.¹⁹⁸ Haringey’s policy would theoretically balance the district by intellect.

However, the policy was really designed to keep white students from being a minority in the classroom. A leaked internal document about the policy was steeped in racist language, with one subheading entitled “Immigrants as a Social Problem” and the document as a whole littered with references to the common assumption that having enough immigrants in classes with white students would slow classrooms and the intellectual development of white children.¹⁹⁹ The Vice-Chairman of the Education Committee, A.J.F. Doulton, expressed his racist views in a statement in which he said that he assumed West Indian children to have lower IQs than British ones. Undistributed statistics also called into question the legitimacy of the committee’s concerns over declining student quality and the problematic influence of immigrant children.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁷ Robert Titman, “A Race Row over ‘Ghetto Schools,’” *Daily Mirror*, April 2, 1969, British Newspaper Archive.

¹⁹⁸ Rose, *Colour and Citizenship: Report on British Race Relations*, 102–3; Titman, “A Race Row over ‘Ghetto Schools.’”

¹⁹⁹ Gerrard, “Self Help and Protest,” 41.

²⁰⁰ Brian MacArthur, “Panic School Measure, Objectors Say,” *The Times*, April 18, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

The Haringey policy's thinly-veiled racism drew immediate rebukes from multiple groups. The North London West Indian Association immediately came out in opposition to the policy, and the committee was reported to the Race Relations Board for discrimination by the Haringey Commonwealth Citizens' Committee.²⁰¹ The Board would reject the group's complaint on the grounds that the objection lay out of its jurisdiction.²⁰² Minister Short, in a letter read at an April 22 meeting of Labour member Haringey parents, explained that he was very skeptical of the plan and had received no statistics to back up the education committee's reasoning. The same night, the Haringey Council for Educational Advance overwhelmingly approved a resolution to call for a total rejection of the scheme before it could be put into place.²⁰³ A wide range of parents and immigrant advocates expressed their discontent with the banding policy.

Despite the outpouring of opposition, the banding program would remain in the Borough Council's policy pipeline. A reading comprehension test given to students in June 1969 to prepare for the process of banding singled out three schools for being substandard, although, importantly, the test did not reveal an outsize population of "slow" immigrant students at any of the three.²⁰⁴ In the second half of the year, white parents and parents of color alike criticized the plan not only for its racism but also for its erasure of school choice and potential forced relocation of children.²⁰⁵ On January 26, 1970, the Haringey Council approved the plan by a vote of 29-16 with 10 abstentions, in a meeting filled with protestors and shouts of "racialist."²⁰⁶

²⁰¹ Titman, "A Race Row over 'Ghetto Schools'"; "'Ghetto Schools': No Probe," *Daily Mirror*, April 22, 1969, British Newspaper Archive.

²⁰² "'Ghetto Schools': No Probe."

²⁰³ "Fights at Protest Meeting against Schools Plan," *The Times*, April 23, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

²⁰⁴ "Haringey May Keep 'Banding,'" *The Times*, September 25, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

²⁰⁵ Brian MacArthur, "Parents Opt for Choice of Schools," *The Times*, December 10, 1969, The Times Digital Archive; "Parents to Undermine School Plan," *The Times*, January 17, 1970, The Times Digital Archive.

²⁰⁶ "Haringey to Report Immigrant Group," *The Times*, January 27, 1970, The Times Digital Archive.

Concerns of parents, immigrant groups, and Labour politicians were not enough to put the local government off an educational policy that was clearly built on racism.

Haringey and Wolverhampton were not the only areas of Britain where racist ideas about immigrant children's IQs affected the educational system. Dismissal of students of color's abilities was endemic, and only really began to be challenged in 1969. These challenges to long-held racist beliefs would come from two very different groups over the course of the year: on the local level, immigrant groups around Britain challenged their children's mistreatment in activism and in night classes, while on the national one a parliamentary committee's inquest into "coloured school-leavers" sought to publicly diagnose and heal underdiscussed race relations wounds. Their work came in different forms and had different levels of success, but together tried to make immigration and race relations issues less about who was coming into Britain and more about the legal citizens who were already there.

There were two main types of first- and second-generation immigrant schoolchildren, each with their own challenges: those who were fluent in English and those who were not. A lack of understanding and resources for teaching ESL courses meant that by 1969, even though the government had set ESL access as a goal in 1965, most children who needed to learn English were unable to get the linguistic training that they needed. Dispersal programs like Haringey's, though alleging to improve the educational lot of immigrant children, would actually worsen conditions for non-speakers—teachers were less likely to give students the attention they needed when they represented only a small fraction of a class, leaving children unable to understand lessons, let alone profit from their education.²⁰⁷ The school system was unsympathetic to students who needed ESL education.

²⁰⁷ Rose, *Colour and Citizenship: Report on British Race Relations*, 273–89.

Students who could speak English, mostly coming from the West Indies, faced their own challenges in negotiating a different classroom culture. Cultural and linguistic difference caused first-generation West Indian children to struggle. The cultural value placed on respect for teachers led to situations where students would not speak up or ask questions when they did not understand a concept. Others struggled with the jump to a more advanced school system, and had trouble keeping up with the pace. There were also language difficulties. While some children were fully fluent, others were only able to speak English in a native dialect that teachers often could not understand. Class also played a role in differentiating students of West Indian origin from their British peers—most of the students of color came from working-class families, whereas many of their white peers and teachers were middle class and accustomed to children with the same level of privilege and acculturation.²⁰⁸ Many teachers who saw West Indian students who were frustrated because of these various difficulties branded them as “problem students,” lost causes that were not worth paying attention to in the classroom.²⁰⁹ Cultural differences made adapting to British schools a difficult task for West Indian schoolchildren.

The difficulties that West Indian schoolchildren faced often led them to be labeled as “educationally sub-normal,” (ESN) and sent to special schools for remedial teaching. ESN schools had been created in 1921, and were operated to support students who, with IQs between 50 and 80, were “limited” in their educational capacities. Placement was initiated by teachers, who would write a report to recommend a child for transfer. The child would then take an IQ test and a panel from the school would review the results and decide whether to place him or her in

²⁰⁸ Rose, 280–89; Bernard Coard, *How the West Indian Child Is Made Educationally Sub-Normal in the British School System* (London: New Beacon Books, 1971), 14.

²⁰⁹ Rose, *Colour and Citizenship: Report on British Race Relations*, 282–83.

an ESN program.²¹⁰ The fact that the process started on discretion of the teacher meant that biases like those that West Indian students faced made it more likely for them to be recommended for placement. Furthermore, the use of an IQ test presented other problems, since it failed to account for factors that affected the students and their understanding of cultural mores that may not have been practiced in their homes, regardless of whether they were first- or second-generation. The problems that made it difficult for West Indian students in the classroom made them more likely than white students to be recommended for ESN programs.

ESN programs became disproportionately filled by immigrant children. Data from an Inner London Education Authority report from 1968 found that five ESN secondary schools had more than 30% immigrant students, and one had more than 60%. On the whole, almost 30% of ESN pupils were from immigrant backgrounds, compared to in the general school population, where immigrants comprised only 15% of students. Across all London schools, West Indian children comprised 50% of immigrant students, but in ESN programs they made up 75% of the immigrant contingent. Compounding the problem, administrators who educated these ESN children suspected immigrant children to be wrongly consigned to the program four times as much as the white students, and nine of nineteen schools believed that 20% or more of their immigrant ESN students had been wrongly placed. Even so, very few of these misplaced students made it back into the general school population—only 7% of ESN immigrants ever returned.²¹¹ There was a major problem of immigrant children, especially West Indians, being wrongly placed into ESN programs and having their education permanently held back as a result.

²¹⁰ Coard, *How the West Indian Child Is Made Educationally Sub-Normal in the British School System*, 7, 13–15.

²¹¹ Coard, 4–7.

Parents and community members attempted to counter both the negative effects of wrongful ESN placement and the lack of cultural recognition in classrooms by establishing black supplementary schools. Located in living rooms and churches and storefronts, these schools would hold evening classes led by university students and parents to teach immigrant children math and English alongside black history and black power thought. These same groups led advocacy, notably the pushback against Haringey's banding program, in hopes of publicizing and overcoming the disadvantages students of color faced in the classroom.²¹² The immigrant community stepped up to challenge and make up for systemic failings in the British educational system.

Even so, lackluster education and ESL instruction in the school system created an environment where immigrant children came out of school at a fundamental disadvantage. This unfair system would be the subject of a major parliamentary inquest in the first half of 1969, creating headlines and publications about immigration and race relations without any references to Enoch Powell. On January 6, the recently-formed House of Commons Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration announced that its first study would be on "coloured school-leavers"—the immigrants who left school in search of jobs, often with little success—due to the belief that the transition from school to workforce represented a central problem within domestic race relations.²¹³ The committee requested statistics on students of color entering the workforce and set up a tour around Britain in order to produce its report.

Despite the focus on employment, the committee soon began focusing more on education than job discrimination. This adjustment came after early testimony was submitted to the MPs by

²¹² Gerrard, "Self Help and Protest," 34–35, 42–43.

²¹³ "Race Study on School Leavers," *The Times*, January 2, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

various racial harmony groups from the West Midlands, alleging that racial discrimination in employment was less of a scourge than it was made out to be.²¹⁴ Community relations leaders instead pointed politicians to the difficulties immigrant schoolchildren faced in the classroom, and explained that being held back in school led to being held back in the professional world. When the committee traveled to Wolverhampton in March, Denis Grayson, the city's director of education, said that immigrants of color, especially first-generation children, were hamstrung by language problems and a lack of understanding of how to find appropriate jobs.²¹⁵ The struggle for school-leavers of color was the educational system, not racial discrimination during the application process.

This notion was reinforced by the submission of evidence to the committee by Edward Short's Department of Education. The department pointed to failures to integrate immigrant students in the classroom as a pathway to difficulties finding jobs in the future. However, rather than criticizing its schools, the department placed all the blame for these integration struggles on immigrant families and children, criticizing them for being insular and, in some cases, refusing to even try to assimilate.²¹⁶ This was a heavily biased portrayal of the classroom dynamics of the time, a result of the department preferring to shift the blame to their students in order than tell the truth and worsen its reputation. That being said, it still called attention to the questions of language and classroom dynamics in the future success of immigrant children, which would ultimately help influence the committee's findings.

²¹⁴ "Immigrant Teenagers 'Face Little Prejudice,'" *Birmingham Daily Post*, January 11, 1969, British Newspaper Archive.

²¹⁵ "MPs' Committee Finds Guarded Hope over Race," *Birmingham Daily Post*, March 6, 1969, British Newspaper Archive.

²¹⁶ "Immigrant Children 'Handicapped by Traditions,'" *The Times*, February 14, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

The committee concluded its research at the end of the spring of 1969, promising a report focusing on how education, not discrimination, was the root of the school-leaver of color's problem. Their initial findings included important evidence that students of color performed just as well academically as their white counterparts. Again, they pointed to language and culture shock as influences that were consistently slowing down the education of immigrant children, particularly first-generation students who entered British schools in their teens.²¹⁷ This would remain their central point when their report was released in September. It proposed increased government funding for employment training programs and language education, while also calling more widely for British society and business to look past stereotypes and employ more young immigrants in skilled positions when they had the qualifications. It also called for the school-leavers themselves to be more patient with the job hunt, responding to testimonial criticism levied against immigrant youths for having unreasonable expectations of getting a job immediately.²¹⁸ The Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration's report discussed various forms of inequality and difficulties that immigrants living in Britain faced in education.

The select committee's report was not perfect; it relied heavily on testimonies from white officials and failed to consider individual voices of the school-leavers of color that it was writing about. Yet despite its shortcomings, the drafting of the report was still an important event. It added an elite side to the education debate that was going on in Britain, complementing discussions over Haringey and Wolverhampton's policy. It also demonstrated that the

²¹⁷ Pat Healy, "Education, Not Discrimination, Is Major Race Problem," *The Times*, April 3, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

²¹⁸ Pat Healy, "Jobs or Strife Warning on Coloured Youth," *The Times*, September 26, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

government was beginning to think more critically about race relations, moving past outlawing discrimination and instead trying to make society more equal.

In 1969, education was one of the major problem areas of the domestic side of immigration and race relations. As more children of immigrants occupied desks in British classrooms, white parents and local authorities, believing that their children's development would be slowed down by children of color, attempted to ensure that schools remained majority white. On the other side, immigrant parents and community groups fought against the implicit racial biases and inequalities that limited their children's ability to succeed. These struggles would be recognized with the help of a government report, but not in a way that guaranteed any immediate progress. Importantly, all of this discourse and advocacy came about without the influence of Enoch Powell. Powell had inveighed against overcrowded classrooms full of immigrant children in his Eastbourne speech, but the discussions about race relations in education in 1969 did not rise out of that passing reference.²¹⁹ The monopoly on race relations and immigration discourse that Powell had held for much of 1968 had faded away, and the British people were reckoning with the influence of new cultural groups in a different, broader way.

Challenging domestic racism: The rise of Race Relations

The debates over race and education fit into a larger current in Britain in 1969: the emergence of race relations as a center of political discourse, and an ever-present conversation about the nature and degree of systemic racism in the United Kingdom. Despite the positive response to Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech, which defended Britons' right to

²¹⁹ Bill Smithies and Peter Fiddick, *Enoch Powell on Immigration* (Bungay: Sphere Books, 1969).

discriminate, parliament still passed the Race Relations Act of 1968 into law in October of that year. The law extended prohibition of racial discrimination to housing, employment, and business, compared to the 1965 iteration of the act, which had focused mainly on places of “public resort” like restaurants and bars.²²⁰ This expansion meant that the government acknowledged the existence and problem of racism in British society and opened the door for a more thorough examination and punishment of it. Over the course of 1969, the domestic problems caused by Britain’s growing multiracialism were examined by the government’s Race Relations Board (RRB). It found some success challenging local government policy, but its limited purview did not allow it to take on many of the most important areas of racial tension at the time, notably the actions of the police, leaving those causes to activists and their organizations. The RRB’s work and the civilian crusading around the causes that it was unable to address continued to pull focus away from Enoch Powell’s immigration numbers game and in toward the question of how Britain was dealing with its tensions at home.

The governmental body in charge of taking up parliament’s challenge to Britain’s ingrained discrimination was the Race Relations Board, chaired by Bonham Carter, a publisher and former Liberal MP. The RRB had been active since the passage of the 1965 act, and had been instrumental in challenging discrimination in pubs, but its impact had been limited by the scope of the act.²²¹ The 1968 version gave it an expanded responsibility that would thrust it into the spotlight. The most public function of the Board was the work of its conciliation committees. There were nine in total, each covering a different portion of Great Britain, and each comprised of volunteering local politicians, businessmen, teachers, and doctors, usually with at least one

²²⁰ “Report of the Race Relations Board for 1968-1969” (London: The House of Commons, May 19, 1969), 5–6.

²²¹ “Report of the Race Relations Board for 1968-1969,” 6.

member of commonwealth heritage.²²² The committees existed to supplement the RRB's job of processing discrimination complaints submitted to the organization—they essentially functioned as an appellate body for people or groups with racial grievances, with government backing but no power to prosecute.

Some of the complaints processed by the Board and its committees showed clear evidence of British racism. At the end of December 1968, the West Midlands Caribbean Association filed a complaint alleging discrimination at the Bradmore Working Men's Club. The club had refused entry to its Christmas party to a West Indian telephonist, Peggy Apparicio, and her husband explicitly because it was operating a color bar.²²³ After an investigation and series of hearings over the following months, the West Midlands Conciliation Committee announced in April 1969 that it had confirmed discrimination and sought a settlement between the two sides and a written assurance from the Bradmore club that no color bar would be practiced in future.²²⁴ For the case of Apparicio, the RRB found clear evidence of discrimination.

However, clear cases like this were outliers. While evidence of segregated clubs was easy to demonstrate, proving discrimination in other areas was harder. In the case of employment, a discriminatory employer could defend itself by citing potentially salient reasons other than race for rejecting the application of a person of color. The studies of conciliation cases in the 1968-9 Race Relations Board Report demonstrate this flaw. In one study, three people asked to apply for a position at a Midlands company. Two were given applications, and a third, an Indian man, was instead told that there were no vacancies. The Indian man complained of discrimination to the

²²² "Report of the Race Relations Board for 1968-1969," 26-31.

²²³ "Coloured Girl Barred from Party," *The Times*, December 23, 1968, The Times Digital Archive; "Club's Ban on Woman Sent to Race Board," *The Times*, December 24, 1968, The Times Digital Archive.

²²⁴ "Club Warned on Colour Bar," *The Times*, April 3, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

board, and after investigation, it was revealed that there were in fact no vacancies, and while the firm was asked to give applications to everyone, it was not punished for the incident.²²⁵

A case like this demonstrates the gray area that plagued the work of the RRB and its conciliation committees. The committee's final decision said that no discrimination had occurred, even though it was entirely possible that the Indian man had not received a job application as a direct result of his race, since both the white applicants both received one even without a vacancy. Yet under the constraints of the Race Relations Act of 1968, this potential discrimination by an employee was outside of the scope of the complaint and unprovable, and so could not affect its verdict. When evaluating cases, the board's high burden of proof and narrow boundaries meant that only very specific discrimination could be punished.

The need to file a discrimination complaint also created natural selection bias. As noted in the RRB's annual report, many immigrants sought to avoid situations where discrimination took place, while others experienced it without knowing that they were being discriminated against. The method of filing complaint also pushed away some victims of discrimination who did not want to confront what could have been a traumatic experience.²²⁶ While some victims of discrimination did not file complaints, some people who had not been discriminated against filed complaints anyway, driving up the percentage of cases that found no discrimination.²²⁷ Others used complaints as political statements even when the board had no power to adjudicate them, such as the complaint the North London West Indian Association filed over the Haringey

²²⁵ "Report of the Race Relations Board for 1968-1969," 46.

²²⁶ "Report of the Race Relations Board for 1968-1969," 12, 22.

²²⁷ One man deflated discrimination findings in employment cases by submitting a complaint for every employer who did not offer him a job—18 complaints in total. See "Report of the Race Relations Board for 1968-1969," 12.

banding policy despite the policy clearly being outside the scope of the board's work.²²⁸ The board was therefore hamstrung by complaints that were and were not filed.

In part due to the flawed system in place, the statistics released by the RRB after six months under the 1968 Act did not show major success in combatting discrimination in Britain. Over that time, 760 complaints were brought before the board, of which about 400 came from Greater London and around 100 from the West Midlands. Of the 366 of those that involved alleged employment discrimination only 18 led to the Board or committees finding evidence of discrimination. 80 complaints were made regarding housing, and only two wound up finding discrimination. On the whole, the board found fewer than 100 cases of confirmed discrimination, piling in comparison to the over 150 complaints outside the scope of the act.²²⁹ Early statistics seemed to show that the RRB was failing to identify the widespread discrimination that had been the motivation for the Race Relations Act of 1968.

Many of the discrimination cases that the RRB did prove were important, often challenging government. In June 1969 the board received a complaint that the 20,000 Pakistani residents of Bradford were not being listed as eligible to sit on a jury, regardless of whether they fit the criteria to do so. As part of the board's investigation, a Bradford council official explained that this was because many Pakistani residents lacked language skills and were generally harder to track down. The RRB, which could not adequately deal with the magnitude of the case, quickly referred it to the Home Office, along with their evidence and a statement.²³⁰ In response, the Bradford City Clerk reversed course almost immediately, ending the policy of barring the

²²⁸ “‘Ghetto Schools’: No Probe.”

²²⁹ “Race Board Gets 760 Complaints,” *The Times*, July 2, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

²³⁰ Norman Fowler and Tim Jones, “City Bars Pakistanis as Jurors,” *The Times*, June 14, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

thousands of eligible Pakistanis and apologizing for the council's actions.²³¹ Similarly, at the end of 1969 Wolverhampton came under fire when a two-month probe by the RRB found that the council was implementing a discriminatory affordable housing policy where foreign-born residents would have to wait two years to join the council house waiting list while British-born residents only had to wait one year.²³² In response to the board's finding, the Conservative Alderman and Housing Chairman Peter Farmer announced an intention to keep the rule in place but reword it to be outside the scope of the act, citing the presence of majority support within Wolverhampton's majority-white population for the policy.²³³ The RRB did have some major findings that revealed discriminatory policies by high-level decisionmakers.

The government-affiliated Institute of Race Relations' five-year report, *Colour and Citizenship*, led by researcher E.J.B. Rose and published in 1969, reinforced the work of the RRB by statistically and qualitatively demonstrating the discrimination that was widespread in the UK. The report, which examined almost all aspects of race relations in British society, specifically identified widespread evidence of informal discrimination in employment that the board was unable to prove—it described bars on promotion and union representation for workers of color and informal quotas for hiring workers of color.²³⁴ It also statistically demonstrated white Britons' heavy implicit bias against immigrants. While the report found that only around 30% of British people were prejudiced or prejudice-inclined, it also discovered that around 60% believed British people to be superior to people from Africa or Asia, a higher total than people from America or elsewhere in Europe. When prompted to describe immigrants

²³¹ Fowler Norman, "Pakistanis Win Right to Jury Service," *The Times*, June 16, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

²³² "Council 'guilty' in Race Probe," *Daily Mirror*, December 31, 1969, British Newspaper Archive; Arthur Osman, "Wolverhampton Homes Policy Called Racial," *The Times*, December 31, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

²³³ "Wolverhampton to Defy Race Board," *The Times*, February 4, 1970, The Times Digital Archive.

²³⁴ Rose, *Colour and Citizenship: Report on British Race Relations*, 296–301.

socioeconomically, 90% of respondents placed them in the working class and two thirds specified that they were unskilled laborers. Separately, a heavy majority agreed that immigrants “took more out of the country than they put into it.”²³⁵ While the number of successful RRB complaints may not have indicated widespread discrimination, Rose and the IRR’s work made its existence abundantly clear.

This evidence and case-backed reality of discrimination was ignored by the British media in favor of stories that made the Race Relations Act look like an overreach rather than an important legislative action. One of the best examples of this was a story run in *The Times* on January 14, 1970. It described a businessman hoping to learn Finnish from a native speaker being unable to advertise in a local newspaper for a Finnish tutor because the editors were afraid that this would qualify as discrimination under the Race Relations Act and get them fined.²³⁶ Another story described a Scottish man who was cited for discrimination for advertising for a Scottish cook to make him porridge in the morning.²³⁷ Even as some of this coverage expanded to discuss the successes of the Race Relations Act, it took away from the RRB’s internal attempts to explain its work and erase widespread confusion over it that existed among the public. The tendency of coverage to mislead was also true in *The Times*’ July 2, 1969 article about the board’s quarterly report six months after the enactment of the 1968 Act, which presented statistics of discrimination complaints in a profoundly unclear way, making it impossible to tell how much evidence of discrimination had actually been found.²³⁸ The Race

²³⁵ Rose, 553, 567–72.

²³⁶ “Linguist Is Speechless,” *The Times*, January 14, 1970, The Times Digital Archive.

²³⁷ Peter Evans, “How Race Act Is Misunderstood,” *The Times*, November 21, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

²³⁸ “Race Board Gets 760 Complaints.”

Relation Board was often covered in a way that was unclear or misleading, and clouded the nature of the work it was doing.

One of the RRB's biggest failures to address discrimination was in policing, which began to become a bigger and bigger flashpoint as 1969 wore on. Complaints about police bias were almost impossible to successfully address to the board—general criticisms of policemen were outside of its scope, and even if a complaint was within its purview, the likelihood of finding any evidence was extremely small. Groups would make complaints as part of their advocacy work, but they were never met with any progress; in the first four months under the Race Relations Act of 1968, the RRB received 22 complaints about policing and rejected all 22 for being outside of the scope of the Act.²³⁹ Whereas in employment and housing there was at least limited success in discovering discrimination and larger conversations about fixing problems, in policing it was practically impossible to do any of that.

By early 1969, criticizing the police, which had previously been the domain of extreme groups like the British Black Panthers, became part of the activity of mainstream immigrant organizations, and, in light of the inability of the RRB to act, a feasible way to fight against discrimination. The Ealing International Friendship Council took up the approach in March during the Commons Select Committee on Race Relations and Immigration's visit to West London. The group's community relations officer delivered the committee a report on everyday discrimination faced by youths, which placed a heavy emphasis on the problem of police harassment.²⁴⁰ This was directly countered the following day by a Police Superintendent from Southall, who explained that the crime rate among people of color was extremely low and

²³⁹ "Report of the Race Relations Board for 1968-1969," 15.

²⁴⁰ Norman Fowler, "Police Accused of Bias against Immigrants," *The Times*, March 13, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

claimed that there had been no serious incidents between youths of color and the police since immigrants arrived.²⁴¹ The committee's stop in Wolverhampton also produced some controversy over policing, after the private testimony of a Chief Constable from the West Midlands force that described the presence of a gang in the city was leaked to the public. Aaron Haynes, the liaison officer for the Wolverhampton Council for Community Relations, criticized the leak for creating an environment of heightened suspicion for youths of color.²⁴² By the start of 1969 there was clear concern of police bias among mainstream race relations advocacy groups.

There was little hard evidence of police bias, but multiple signs point to its existence. The British police force was overwhelmingly white at the time—in 1969, there were only seven policemen of color in the entire country. Many of the policemen did not live within their jurisdiction and so lacked a common ground between them and the residents they kept safe. While the department recognized potential friction between white policemen and non-white populations, the steps it took were not comprehensive enough to solve the problem. There was a liaison officer program, but since it was small, voluntary, and lacking in central guidance, its effectiveness was far from guaranteed. While it was true that the crime rate among minorities was low at the time, the existence of an upward trend in complaints and increasingly public criticism from groups like the Ealing International Friendship Council make it unlikely that the problem of widespread police bias toward people of color was nonexistent, as some claimed.²⁴³

While evidence for implicit bias by police was rare, there was clear evidence of racist police brutality in 1969 in the case of David Oluwale. Oluwale, a Nigerian who stowed away to the United Kingdom in 1949, was arrested in 1953 for disorderly conduct and assault on a police

²⁴¹ "Police 'Not Unfair to Coloureds,'" *The Times*, March 14, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

²⁴² "Race Officer Complains of Leak," *The Times*, April 30, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

²⁴³ Rose, *Colour and Citizenship: Report on British Race Relations*, 349–66.

officer, but was quickly found to be mentally disabled and transferred to a mental hospital, where his condition worsened thanks to solitude and electroshock therapy. After spending eight years institutionalized, and periods of the next decade in other mental hospitals, Oluwale wound up homeless in his on-again, off-again home city of Leeds, prevented from staying in hostels because of unofficial color bars and running afoul of the police, in particular Sergeant Ken Kitching and Inspector Geoff Ellerker, who would abuse him when they picked him up. On April 17, Oluwale was reported for sleeping rough in a doorway. Ellerker and Kitching found him and beat him, then chased him toward the River Aire, where the Nigerian drowned.²⁴⁴ David Oluwale was the first person of color to die from British police brutality, and an example of the racism that was present among the force at the time.²⁴⁵

Immigrants also had to contend with racism from the everyday population, which occasionally gave way to violence. Right-wing activity had been on the rise in the early part of the year, notably with Colin Jordan's neo-fascist British movement, which had been attempting to hold rallies, preparing to contest elections, and loudly crashing anti-racist meetings.²⁴⁶ This was all done under the auspices of free speech, but in the middle of the year others turned to violence. On the evening of July 26, a few young Indian laborers were approached by a group of white youths, who started racially abusing them. A fight ensued, during which one of the Indians, 21-year old Buphinder Singh, stabbed one of the white youths, 19-year old Kenneth Horsfall, killing him.²⁴⁷ This plunged Leeds into two days of race rioting. On the first day, 23

²⁴⁴ Harmit Athwal, "The Hounding of David Oluwale | Institute of Race Relations," Institute of Race Relations, accessed March 3, 2019, <http://www.irr.org.uk/news/the-hounding-of-david-oluwale/>.

²⁴⁵ Kitching and Ellerker would later be acquitted of manslaughter and found guilty of two counts of assault from earlier abuses of Oluwale.

²⁴⁶ Brian Vertigen, "Jordan's Town Hall Meeting Banned by Six-Vote Margin," *Birmingham Daily Post*, January 8, 1969, British Newspaper Archive; "Police Throw out 100 over Race Rumpus," *Daily Mirror*, May 22, 1969, British Newspaper Archive.

²⁴⁷ "3 Remanded after Leeds Stabbing," *The Times*, August 7, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

people were arrested as an angry crowd of 1,000 tore through the city. The next day, a Pakistani café was vandalized by a mob chanting “wogs out,” that had to be dispersed by police with dogs.²⁴⁸ Racist elements in the population were making life more dangerous for Britons of color.

This marked intensification of Britain’s domestic race relations struggles detracted from Enoch Powell’s position as the leader of all things immigrant-related. Powell’s view of immigration rejected the notion of domestic fixes, and was instead based on looking beyond Britain’s borders, with the idea that stopping the flow of immigrants entirely and helping send some back would have trickle down effects that would end race riots and discrimination entirely. The emergence of race relations as a field challenged his position, and he would strike back against it over the course of 1969. His first major statement to that end came at a June 9 constituency meeting in Wolverhampton, where he presented a £300 million program of repatriation to pair with an immigration freeze as the only way to solve the Britain’s racial problems.²⁴⁹ This led to an immediate response from the RRB through Bonham Carter, who critiqued Powell’s vision of repatriation in two ways: first, he criticized the flawed assumption that immigrants would want to leave Britain and its greater socioeconomic opportunities, and then claimed that the smaller British immigrant population desired by Powell would lead to more extreme segregation.²⁵⁰ Powell’s principle of lowering immigrant numbers clashed with the Race Relations Board’s belief in integration.

Powell would directly criticize race relations policy leaders after a speech in Bradford later that summer. Powell’s July 18 speech was essentially a rehash of his Wolverhampton

²⁴⁸ “Second Night of Race Violence in Leeds,” *The Times*, July 29, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

²⁴⁹ “Powell Produces New Figures to Support His Warning of Immigration ‘disaster’ and Renews His Plea for Repatriation,” *The Times*, June 10, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

²⁵⁰ “The Big If in Powell’s Plan—Race Board Chief,” *Newcastle Evening Chronicle*, June 14, 1969, British Newspaper Archive.

speech, and like that one, relied on a claim that the immigrant birth rate in Wolverhampton had risen from 5% in 1958 to 20% in 1968 to illustrate why Britons should be concerned about lowering immigrant numbers. In the wake of the speech E.J.B. Rose, the *Colour and Citizenship* director, appeared on the BBC show *The World This Weekend* and criticized Powell for misleading the public by failing to point out that the immigrant birth rate—a statistic describing the percentage of immigrants having children each year that had helped Powell estimate the future population of Britons of color—had actually peaked in 1963 and had declined every year after, to 20% in 1968. Powell appeared on the show a week later to respond to this criticism. However, instead of responding to the claim that he was “cooking the books” in his statistics, he railed against the field of race relations, describing its domestic focus as distracting from the “alien wedge” of arriving immigrants that he believed to be the root cause of the problem.²⁵¹ Powell was clearly concerned by the rise of race relations, and spoke out against it.

Powell’s message of the importance of immigration and birth statistics would be further undercut by the release of 1969’s immigration numbers at the end of the year. Compiled by the independent non-profit Runnymede Trust, the numbers found that over the first eight months of the year, immigration had declined by 16% compared to the 1968 statistics thanks to the enactment of new restrictions in the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1968.²⁵² While he would stick to his message of immigration freezes and repatriation going forward, notably in his first ever immigration address to parliament on November 11, statistics and qualitative evidence were undermining his claim that the only way to fix problems at home was foreign policy.

²⁵¹ “Powell Says It Is Wrong to Separate British Race Policy,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, July 28, 1969, British Newspaper Archive.

²⁵² “16% Drop in Number of Immigrants,” *The Times*, November 7, 1969, The Times Digital Archive.

1969 saw nuance added to the politics of immigration that Enoch Powell had blown up the year before. In 1968 the MP had built on a tradition of discussing exterior solutions to domestic racial issues, but in 1969 the work of the Race Relations Board and Institute for Race Relations, as well as activism against and evidence of police bias and brutality against people of color brought attention to the importance of a domestic, integrationist approach to solving racial problems. Despite Powell's best efforts to undercut it, race relations became separated from immigration and challenged his narrative.

Conclusion

As 1968 turned to 1969, British debates on immigration and its sister topic of race relations moved away from Enoch Powell as the focus became more about integration than immigration and more about individuals than statistics. There was immediate coverage of Powell following his return to the topic of immigration freezes in his November 1968 speech at Eastbourne, but it faded quickly into the new year as immigrant activist instead focused their activity on other causes. While left-leaning Anglican clergy began pestering Powell and would continue throughout the year, in other circles action looked more at questions of how immigrants in Britain could fit into a society that was unaccustomed and often hostile to them.

Discussions about integration were facilitated by the British government. The Race Relations Board, created by the Race Relations Act of 1968, allowed groups and individuals a place to report discrimination and expose wrongdoing from decisionmakers around Britain. The parliamentary Special Committee on Race Relations and Immigration toured Britain to allow parties to speak out about issues like educational inequality and police bias. Their work was helped by the fact that a large number of groups were willing to speak out and share their members' struggles with integrating into British society. Despite being publicly criticized, many

discriminating Britons resisted change. Municipalities continued to enforce discriminatory policies, like Wolverhampton's council housing policy that made immigrants wait a year more than British-born citizens to join a waitlist, or Haringey's educational banding policy that was explicitly based on the notion that children of color were less intelligent than their white classmates. In addition, the RRB found that many problems were out of their jurisdiction, and even more discrimination that they could rule on was informal or unprovable. The presence of the far right and violence against people of color placed an asterisk on any progress made in discourse. Even with these challenges, however, in 1969 the government and many citizens were recognizing domestic race problems with newfound seriousness.

The rise of race relations during the year threatened the position Enoch Powell had carved out for himself at Birmingham the year prior. As Britain looked more and more inward, and the immigration statistics that Powell relied upon started to support his argument to a lesser extent, conversations about the nation's immigrant present no longer circled around the Wolverhampton MP. He remained a hugely prominent politician and continued to weigh in on immigration in speeches much as he had before, but without any more extreme language or controversy, the bite of his prognostications had lessened, and heading into 1970 with the expectation of a general election, any path back to the front bench or Downing Street that he may have seen in 1968 seemed very unlikely.

On the Streets and at the Polls: Racial Violence and the General Election, 1970

While 1969 was defined by Powell falling out of the center of discussions over race and immigration, the first half of 1970 would reverse that trend thanks to the general election, which was held on June 18. Even though race relations problems continued domestically—most evident in the emergence of violence between far-right skinheads and immigrants, which received sensational coverage nationally and stoked plenty of fear—when the election was called the discussions were less about problems in British communities than the idea of continued immigrant entry. At the root of this was Enoch Powell and the outsize role he carved for himself during the campaign. His rhetoric, more extreme than in previous speeches, was initially dismissed by all but Labour frontbencher Tony Benn, who compared Powell and his supporters to the Nazi forces behind the Holocaust. This attack would benefit Powell, putting him back in the position of national focal point.

To capitalize on this position of importance, Powell sought to differentiate himself from Heath even while running as a conservative, perhaps in hopes of taking party leadership after an assumed Labour reelection victory. That Labour victory never came, as Heath's Conservative party pulled off what is still discussed as one of Britain's least likely election victories. Enoch Powell's campaign for Conservative leader had two effects—it helped Edward Heath win an improbable election victory, and it limited the conversation about race in the election to immigration controls, rather than race relations, even though the latter was more relevant to the daily life of many Britons. Powell would end the election with his party in power, but, thanks in part to his campaigning, no chance of becoming party leader. His power to influence the party's base had grown but, thanks to Heath's victory, his political power remained the same.

Violence and fear: Neofascism and “Paki-bashing”

The far right had grown in visibility in 1969, with the strengthening of political neofascism in the form of Colin Jordan’s National Socialist Movement, formed in 1960, and John Bean’s National Front, formed in 1967. Both had profited from Powell’s “Rivers of Blood” rhetoric, with the National Front in particular fully aligning itself with the MP’s immigration policy and growing from 4,000 to 17,500 members between 1968 and 1972 and fielding 10 candidates in the 1970 election.²⁵³ The rising visibility of neo-fascist parties spread the influence of extremism within Britain, leading to trickle-down effects which would affect the everyday lives of much of the population.

For immigrants, the continued rise of neofascism meant rising fear, especially for those living in working-class pockets of London and the Midlands. Starting at the end of 1969 and continuing through the first half of 1970, members of the extreme right carried out routine violent attacks against South Asian immigrants. The emergence of this ‘paki-bashing’ and its feverish coverage by the British media scared immigrant communities, inflamed racial tensions, and once again underlined the political importance of race relations.²⁵⁴ Race relations in 1969 had mostly been defined by debate and policy, but in 1970 violence dominated national attention.

The group largely culpable for the new violence was not a neo-fascist organization with paramilitary beliefs like Jordan’s National Socialist Movement. Instead, it was mostly groups of white British working-class youths who belonged to a new ‘skinhead’ subculture. Skinhead culture—the name refers to the members’ aesthetic, which paired Doc Martens boots, cuffed jeans, button-down shirts, and suspenders with an instantly recognizable shaved head—got its

²⁵³ Taylor, “‘Rivers of Blood’ and Britain’s Far Right,” 388; Shaffer, “The Fascist Tradition, 1967–1977,” 26–34.

²⁵⁴ Paki-bashing is a colloquialism building on “Paki,” a derogatory term for South Asians derived from a shortening of Pakistani.

start with violent soccer hooligans in London, before being adopted by working class youths more widely in the summer of 1969. They first became associated with simple hooliganism, whether fighting before soccer matches or running loudly through crowded high streets and jostling shoppers.²⁵⁵ As a result press initially portrayed them as little more than harmless, disillusioned working-class youths.²⁵⁶ This first impression would quickly change.

The racist tendencies of skinheads began to reveal themselves at the end of 1969. In November, Prime Minister Wilson publicly associated the subculture with the far right, criticizing “skinheads” from Surbiton for attempting to recall Conservative MP Nigel Fisher and replace him with a politician with Powellite immigration policies.²⁵⁷ The action of these young conservative skinheads formed part of a developing tie between the subculture and extreme prejudice toward first- and second-generation South Asians. Skinheads were often from the least privileged parts of the country, and in hoping for employment and fortune, developed hard feelings toward immigrants that they thought were taking their opportunities or threatening their world.²⁵⁸ A teenage skinhead profiled in Rae Sherwood’s psychology study *The Psychodynamics of Race* described his experience at school by criticizing South Asian students at every opportunity, alleging the existence of a double standard that favored students of color.²⁵⁹ Many were also supported by adults, who encouraged racism and violence at home or at work.²⁶⁰ Class

²⁵⁵ Gloria Emerson, “British Youth’s Latest Turn: The Skinhead,” *New York Times*, December 9, 1969; Alfred Horobin, “‘Paki-Bashing’ in Coventry,” *The Police Journal* 45, no. 3 (July 1, 1972): 185–86, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0032258X7204500303>.

²⁵⁶ Emerson, “British Youth’s Latest Turn.”

²⁵⁷ “MP Routs the Tory ‘Skinheads,’” *Daily Mirror*, November 8, 1969, British Newspaper Archive.

²⁵⁸ Emerson, “British Youth’s Latest Turn”; Sherwood, *The Psychodynamics of Race*, 170–71; Horobin, “‘Paki-Bashing’ in Coventry,” 194–95.

²⁵⁹ Sherwood, *The Psychodynamics of Race*, 170–71. It should be noted that the subject feels no prejudice toward West Indians and South Asians who are “European-like”—his prejudice is rooted in cultural difference and perceived refusal to integrate into British society.

²⁶⁰ Horobin, “‘Paki-Bashing’ in Coventry,” 194–95; Sherwood, *The Psychodynamics of Race*, 131–33.

and racial resentment among white Britons made South Asian Britons suitable targets for violence.

These attitudes toward British South Asians were extreme and turned violent. The skinhead interviewed by Sherwood explained, “I wouldn’t feel anything if I killed a Pakistani but I wouldn’t kill anyone else if I could help it.”²⁶¹ He graphically described multiple fights he and his fellow skinheads engaged in with local people of color, usually alleging that his opponents were better armed and were the ones to start the fight.²⁶² While his accounts cannot be verified, there was evidence that some British youth of color actively fought back against white youths accosting them, such as the incident in Leeds in July 1969 in which Indian youth Buphinder Singh stabbed a white youth who had attacked him and his friends, killing the assailant.²⁶³

Yet cases where British South Asians turned to violence as well were only part of a wider trend of violence against the ethnic minority. There were many instances of skinhead violence against unsuspecting victims of color. An April 1970 survey by the Pakistani Student Federation found that a quarter of its members had been physically assaulted over the past twelve months. Between February and April 1970 in the borough of Tower Hamlets in East London, where at the time 8,000 South Asians lived, 4,300 of whom were from Pakistan, there were at least twenty reported racial attacks, and widespread acknowledgment that “pakibaiting” by white youths was becoming the area’s biggest tension. The rising violence peaked on April 6, when Tosir Ali, a

²⁶¹ Sherwood, *The Psychodynamics of Race*, 165.

²⁶² Sherwood, 165–67.

²⁶³ “Second Night of Race Violence in Leeds.”

50-year-old kitchen worker and father, was stabbed multiple times on his walk home from work and died from his wounds soon after.²⁶⁴ Ali died a victim of racial violence.

A few days later, three skinheads' appearance on television would give the violence that was plaguing areas like Tower Hamlets national attention. On the April 10 edition of the *Today* show, three self-described skinheads spoke about how they had recently gone "paki-bashing," finding an immigrant and jostling him to the ground before "putting in the boot." The publicity provided by the skinheads' appearance put paki-bashing in the vocabulary of the nation as well as politicians and policemen, who ordered local law enforcement to pay more attention to potential hate crimes.²⁶⁵ Nevertheless, Tower Hamlets soon played host to another round of paki-bashing, as a crowd of skinheads made their way through a market, vandalizing shop windows and leaving three Pakistani youths hospitalized. Two Pakistani and two white youths were arrested; one Pakistani youth was charged for possession of a weapon.²⁶⁶ The phenomenon sprung up elsewhere, too. In Gravesend, Kent, a heavily white town, a Sikh teacher was forced to move his family back to immigrant-heavy London after his children were stoned by white youths on the way home from school and his car was vandalized.²⁶⁷ Paki-bashing problems continued without difficulty even after gaining national recognition.

Immigrant groups, police, and politicians responded to the outbreak of violence in different ways. Home Secretary James Callaghan, the cabinet member in charge of police, became the focal point of elite calls for action against paki-bashers. Peter Shore, the MP for

²⁶⁴ Stephen Ashe, Satnam Virdee, and Laurence Brown, "Striking Back against Racist Violence in the East End of London, 1968–1970," *Race & Class* 58, no. 1 (July 1, 2016): 38–39, 43, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0306396816642997>.

²⁶⁵ "Yard Hunt 3 'Paki-Bashers,'" *Daily Mirror*, April 10, 1970, British Newspaper Archive.

²⁶⁶ Ashe, Virdee, and Brown, "Striking Back against Racist Violence in the East End of London, 1968–1970," 44.

²⁶⁷ Peter Evans, "Sikh Moves to Avoid Stonings," *The Times*, April 13, 1970, The Times Digital Archive.

Tower Hamlets, wrote to Callaghan, calling for more police resources to combat racial violence. The High Commissioner of Pakistan, Salman Ali, also got involved, meeting with the secretary in person to discuss the paki-bashing problem. Callaghan responded diplomatically, explaining that efforts were being made, but also cautioning against exaggerating the effects of specific cases like Ali's murder.²⁶⁸ Callaghan was triaging domestic problems, and ranked paki-bashing low; the violence, while widely discussed, was still isolated to East London and often mixed up as part of gang or hooligan violence. The actual size of the threat was also prone to exaggeration, as was demonstrated when the three skinheads from television were revealed to have lied about going paki-bashing.²⁶⁹ Callaghan treated paki-bashing as a legitimate threat to immigrant safety, but one that had been inflated by media coverage and overlapped with other types of crime the police were already working to stop.

Unsurprisingly, the Home Office's conservative reaction to the emergence of paki-bashing did not satisfy immigrant communities, which decided to address the problem themselves. In Tower Hamlets, a group of immigrant associations—including the National Federation of Pakistani Associations, the Pakistani Workers Union, and the Black People's Alliance—promoted safety, co-sponsoring martial arts classes and calling for locals of color to no longer travel alone.²⁷⁰ On April 19, they hosted a public meeting, attended by around 1,000 people. Those present unanimously voted to create vigilante patrols to stop the violence, and over the rest of the month 200 people patrolled East London.²⁷¹ They also voted to hold a public

²⁶⁸ Ashe, Virdee, and Brown, "Striking Back against Racist Violence in the East End of London, 1968–1970," 43.

²⁶⁹ "How to Stop the Paki-Bashers," *The Economist*, April 25, 1970, The Economist Historical Archive.

²⁷⁰ "Don't Go out Alone," *Daily Mirror*, April 13, 1970, British Newspaper Archive; Ashe, Virdee, and Brown, "Striking Back against Racist Violence in the East End of London, 1968–1970," 46.

²⁷¹ Ashe, Virdee, and Brown, "Striking Back against Racist Violence in the East End of London, 1968–1970," 47; "Protection Groups to Be Formed by Pakistanis," *The Times*, April 20, 1970, The Times Digital Archive.

demonstration. This took place on May 4. That day, 800 people marched from Speaker's Corner to 10 Downing Street, chanting the slogans like "disembowel Enoch Powell" and "all unite—black and white." On arrival, the group handed a document to officials explaining that Pakistanis had been driven to self-defense by a lack of confidence in the Metropolitan Police.²⁷² More than the document, the march itself showed the threat toward Britons of color by racists. The march had to be rerouted to avoid activities by the far-right Conservative-allied organization the Monday Club, and even with this change marchers were still exposed to shouts of "go home."²⁷³ Still feeling unsafe after the government responded to paki-bashing, immigrant organizations pushed collective action and self-defense.

Even with these precautions, violence continued, spreading to Coventry in late May. Initial incidents involving lone Coventry residents of color being attacked by large groups of white youths were handled quietly by the police, who assigned more men to the streets. As in London, however, immigrant organizations were unhappy with the response, and some promoted self-defense. This led to two incidents on May 30 that elevated Coventry paki-bashing from local to national news. In the widely reported one, a group of white youths harassed three Indian Britons before hopping on a bus. The Indians, having armed themselves, caught up with the white youths at the bus' next stop and started a fight, which led to three of the white youths being stabbed. The other incident involved a pub fight between British Asians and whites. The brawl broke down and the Asians who were involved left the area, and, still carrying their weapons, walked around Coventry as an armed mob, seemingly on patrol. The *Coventry Evening Telegraph* covered these incidents with the headlines "Weekend of Skinhead Violence," a

²⁷² Peter Evans, "Pakistanis Protest at No 10," *The Times*, May 4, 1970, The Times Digital Archive.

²⁷³ Ashe, Virdee, and Brown, "Striking Back against Racist Violence in the East End of London, 1968–1970," 47.

sensationalist headline that pigeonholed the conflict within the national neo-fascist wave and gave the youths publicity in the process.²⁷⁴

The *Evening Telegraph* could have repeated its headline the following two weekends, as violence continued. British South Asians and skinheads traded attacks the Saturday following the incidents, Coventry's annual carnival. The final blow of the day was struck by three British Indians, who stabbed a 14-year-old white schoolboy in the arm on his walk home. Retaliation took place the following weekend, June 9, at the Mercer's Arms pub. A disco devolved into an all-out brawl between skinheads and Asian youth, with 17 total people arrested and convicted, two unaffiliated Asian men hospitalized, and police working hard to de-escalate mob violence that had caused mass damage to the pub.²⁷⁵ It was the bloody peak of skinhead violence in Coventry, and the final battle of the seven-week skinhead-Asian youth war in the city.

The full impact of skinhead violence in London, Coventry, and elsewhere during the spring and early summer of 1970 is hard to quantify. There are no firm totals on racial violence during the time period, and many of the details of reported incidents are unverifiable, the only witnesses being those involved. The press and public's conflation of all racial violence with the skinhead subculture also clouds the reality of the violence; it is unclear exactly who the perpetrators were and how many were formally linked with the far right and how many were just teenaged hooligans. Disorganized, sometimes unreported, and perpetrated mostly by youth, the realities of racial violence in 1970 are difficult to understand beyond the facts of the cases that were documented.

²⁷⁴ Horobin, "Paki-Bashing' in Coventry," 185–87.

²⁷⁵ Horobin, 188–91, 196.

The effects of the national coverage paki-bashing received are clearer. For Britons of color, publicized cases of racial violence led to fear and solidarity, undermining many communities' efforts to integrate. For the South Asian man from Gravesend, racial violence led his children to pull back socially and stop speaking English entirely, while for people in Tower Hamlets it meant learning martial arts and going out of the house much less.²⁷⁶ Regardless of the true degree of the violence, tales of paki-bashing created a culture of fear in British immigrant communities and built up resentment of police, elected officials, and neighboring white Britons.

More widely, reports of racial violence provided more fodder for political opponents of commonwealth immigration. Enoch Powell had warned against urban racial violence in remarks on immigration in parliament in November 1969, and the reports from London and Coventry provided examples he could use to back up those arguments.²⁷⁷ Conservative and National Front supporters could also point to the fact that the violence was occurring under the aegis of Labour and the Wilson government as a reason to vote the government out in the June election. In Coventry, there was some suspicion to this end—the Community Relations Officer and some immigrant leaders publicly discussed their beliefs that some of the violence was perpetrated by outsiders attempting to influence the election. While unsubstantiated, their claim that the election had some relation to the attacks was bolstered by the fact that press coverage of paki-bashing in Coventry disappeared after election day.²⁷⁸ Violence on the streets had wider political effects.

The emerging threat of skinheads and paki-bashing in 1970 broke the fragile peace that existed in immigrant-heavy communities. The threat of being beaten by a group of white youths

²⁷⁶ Evans, "Sikh Moves to Avoid Stonings"; Ashe, Virdee, and Brown, "Striking Back against Racist Violence in the East End of London, 1968–1970," 47.

²⁷⁷ "Powell Warns: We Are Facing Internecine Violence in Cities," *Birmingham Daily Post*, November 12, 1969, British Newspaper Archive.

²⁷⁸ Horobin, "Paki-Bashing' in Coventry," 187–88.

terrified Britons of color and drove them to lobby politicians and even attempt to defend themselves or counterattack. As sensational press coverage of paki-bashing blew up, the United Kingdom learned of a skinhead menace creeping in cities, casting doubt on the strength of the Wilson government's domestic policy and ability to keep the country safe. In this way, the paki-bashing phenomenon at the start of 1970 once again demonstrated the ability of a small group to make national news. Just as a minority of the white working class' very public reaction to Enoch Powell's rivers of blood speech in 1968 had brought attention to immigration as a political issue, the violence of a small portion of white youth brought further national attention to race relations in Britain. Paki-bashing escalated racial tensions, seemingly setting up domestic racial tensions to become a talked about issue in the general election.

The general election campaign: Re-enter Powell

As racial violence popped up in cities around the nation during the spring of 1970, Harold Wilson and Labour were riding high. Wilson was six years into his tenure as Prime Minister, having won an unprecedentedly large reelection victory in 1966. By the end of the decade his position had weakened a little, poll numbers being deflated by economic worries like rising inflation and unemployment. But even so, Labour seemed to remain in control—in April the party took back leads in the polls, and on May 9 the municipal elections around the country delivered results which forecast a swing of 50 more seats to the party in a general election. Feeling bullish about his chances, Wilson moved to dissolve parliament on May 18, setting a general election date for June 18.²⁷⁹ The country leaped into campaign season with polls indicating a third term of Labour government.

²⁷⁹ Butler and Pinto-Duchinsky, *The British General Election of 1970*, 21–23, 134, 138.

For an election that was being fought between three main parties—the Labour party under Wilson, the Conservative party under Heath, and, to a lesser extent, the Liberal party under Jeremy Thorpe—the campaign was notable for the outsize role Enoch Powell and his views on immigration occupied, even though he had no cabinet position or direct influence on Conservative campaign.²⁸⁰ Powell and immigration would be the subject of one-fifth of all election coverage by the British broadcast media, and he would be, alongside immigration, the most-covered aspect of the campaign in the press.²⁸¹ Over two years after he first made himself a spokesperson against commonwealth immigration, Enoch Powell reclaimed the immigration narrative during the 1970 general election campaign because of his own words and those of other politicians. A series of controversial speeches gained Powell attention and listeners, and a hotly-debated comment by Labour Minister of Technology Tony Benn pushed him to the center of the general election debate. There, almost on level terms with Heath and Wilson, he was able to wage an unofficial campaign for Conservative leadership.

The two major parties took different approaches to British immigration in their campaign manifestos, published at the end of May. Labour's, *Now Britain's Strong—Let's Make Her Great to Live In*, claimed that the party's policies had brought the rate of immigration under firm control. As a result, it prioritized race relations by stating an intention to increase the powers of the Race Relations Board and pass laws to support immigrant-heavy urban areas.²⁸² The Conservative manifesto, *A Better Tomorrow*, disagreed with Labour's evaluation, calling for

²⁸⁰ Minimal attention will be paid to Thorpe and the Liberals, seeing as they finish a distant third and are rarely relevant in the story of the campaign.

²⁸¹ Martin Harrison, "Broadcasting," in *The British General Election of 1970* (London: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1971), 208; Colin Seymour-Ure, "Fleet Street," in *The British General Election of 1970* (London: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1971), 250.

²⁸² "Now Britain's Strong—Let's Make Her Great To Live In" (Labour Party, 1970).

further restrictions on immigration through the creation of a centrally-controlled immigration system operated the Home Secretary that would both eliminate “large scale permanent immigration,” as well as facilitate repatriation for immigrants who wanted to leave Britain. It also promised funding for municipalities “under great strain” as a result of large immigrant populations.²⁸³ The Conservatives took a much harder line on immigration than Labour, hewing fairly close to Powell’s belief in a full freeze and formalized repatriation.

The Conservative and Labour manifestos were released on May 26 and 27, respectively, three days before Enoch Powell used his election address to weigh in on immigration. Powell changed little in terms of policy for his speech, but he did change the tone of his warnings about multiracial Britain. Building on his forecast of “internecine violence” from November, he compared Britain’s future without changed immigration policy to the United States’ present, anticipating assassinations, race riots, and general unrest, and also implying that revolutionary anarchists could see fit to use this to promote their activities.²⁸⁴ Powell was quickly and fiercely criticized by backbenchers on the left for the speech, including by his Labour opponent, who called it “unconstructive nonsense.”²⁸⁵ Harold Wilson and the Labour party gave no official statement, however, and Heath dismissed Powell’s words instead of condemning them, saying that “it does not seem to me that Mr. Powell is saying anything that he has not said before.”²⁸⁶ Powell grabbed some headlines with his election address, and repeated his already-controversial stance, but party leadership on both sides refused to engage with his plea for a harsher line on immigration.

²⁸³ “A Better Tomorrow” (Conservative Party, 1970).

²⁸⁴ “Powell in Election Storm,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 1, 1970, British Newspaper Archive.

²⁸⁵ “Complaint on Powell Goes to Law Chiefs,” *The Times*, June 1, 1970, The Times Digital Archive.

²⁸⁶ Butler and Pinto-Duchinsky, *The British General Election of 1970*, 159.

The leaders' initial decision to avoid weighing in on Powell would ultimately benefit the Conservatives, thanks to Tony Benn's comments at a June 3 electoral meeting in London organized by the group Students for Labour Victory. Benn's remarks, written without oversight from the Prime Minister minutes after Wilson had left for the day's campaigning, drew a direct line from the Holocaust to Enoch Powell.²⁸⁷ Critiquing Powell's immigration policies as doing little more than inciting hatred throughout Britain, Benn said that "the flag of racialism which has been hoisted in Wolverhampton is beginning to look like the one that fluttered 25 years ago over Dachau and Belsen."²⁸⁸ Powell quickly responded, defending himself by citing his wartime experience fighting Nazis.²⁸⁹ Heath followed by bringing the party behind the wildcard Powell, a move that, while not an endorsement, represented the closest thing to official support for the MP's immigration stances since before "Rivers of Blood." The same night, in a BBC appearance, the Heath accepted Powell's assertion that he did not propose any racial discrimination, and then turned to criticize Labour, firmly censuring Benn and calling for Wilson to definitively distance himself from the remarks by dropping Benn from the cabinet just as Heath had dropped Powell in 1968.²⁹⁰ He later went further in his criticism, calling the speech a "Nazi smear" that dragged British politics to their lowest ever point.²⁹¹ Tony Benn's extreme rhetoric backfired and created a media storm with which Heath swiftly dealt.

²⁸⁷ Tony Benn, *Office Without Power: Diaries 1968-72* (London: Arrow, 1988), 287.

²⁸⁸ Denis Taylor, "Onslaught on Powell by Wedgewood Benn," *The Times*, June 4, 1970, The Times Digital Archive. Dachau and Belsen refer to two death camps used by the Nazis to exterminate millions of people, including Jews, homosexuals, and gypsies, during World War Two. Belsen specifically refers to Bergen Belsen.

²⁸⁹ Taylor.

²⁹⁰ David Wood, "Heath Challenges Wilson to Condemn Benn Speech," *The Times*, June 5, 1970, The Times Digital Archive.

²⁹¹ "'Smear' Will Cost Labour Votes, Says Heath," *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 6, 1970, British Newspaper Archive.

Heath's quick decision to back Powell put the onus on Wilson to deal with Benn, and he chose to stand firm. The Prime Minister did not mention the speech when he next saw Benn, at most hinting at it in asking Benn to incorporate industrial relations more into speeches going forward. This reaction, Benn claimed, was because Wilson was hesitant to bring race into the election, seeing it as a potential Labour weakness.²⁹² Benn was left to defend himself, and he did so, admitting that his language was strong but doubling down on the message of his speech—that Powell was inciting hatred—on an appearance on the BBC show *Any Questions*.²⁹³ Later, the Labour MP accused Heath of being a hypocrite for using a double standard to respond to his and Powell's election comments.²⁹⁴ He also began receiving copious amounts of mail about the speech, with two in opposition to his words for each one in support, although the opposition total included a disproportionate amount of blatantly racist and anti-Semitic content.²⁹⁵ Benn stood firm through the waves of criticism from the media and the Conservatives, and, with the exception of his heightened profile, continued campaigning as he had before.

Powell, on the other hand, was catapulted to a new level of relevancy and legitimacy by the Dachau speech. Heath's tactical decision to fully back Powell brought him out of the cold, reversing Heath's effective dismissal of the MP after his election address. With the leader's support, Powell was tied to the party more than he had been in years and brought heavy attention to it for the rest of the campaign. This attention, as with all immediate reaction to Powell speeches, manifested itself in protests at his campaign stops. On June 7, four days after Benn's initial comments, Powell was disrupted at two meetings in his constituency. Protestors outside

²⁹² Benn, *Office Without Power: Diaries 1968-72*, 288–89.

²⁹³ “‘Smear’ Will Cost Labour Votes, Says Heath.”

²⁹⁴ “Heath Has Funked Race Issue—Benn,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 8, 1970, British Newspaper Archive.

²⁹⁵ Benn, *Office Without Power: Diaries 1968-72*, 289.

carried a banner featuring a swastika replacing the 'E' in 'Enoch,' while others, including some inside the meeting, yelled phrases like "Heil Hitler" or "racialist" at Powell and his supporters.²⁹⁶

In a less disruptive act of protest, a Kenyan Asian lawyer from London, Dharam Dass, was chosen to run against Powell in his constituency as the Human Rights Coalition candidate, a late selection meant to register protest against Powell's recent actions.²⁹⁷ The heightened attention paid to Powell after the Benn speech was evidenced by increasing protests of the MPs speeches by activists.

Perhaps sensing that more eyes were on him, and feeling more comfortable having been backed by Heath, Powell ratcheted up his rhetoric in subsequent speeches. Between protests in his June 7 appearances, Powell claimed that immigration was hurting the British economy by diluting the labor force with unskilled workers, a new idea for his old argument.²⁹⁸ More extreme than this were his comments about the protesters, which adopted language from Benn's comments. Powell described the protestors as being part of a movement "to destroy the wishes of the majority." He continued, asking his supporters to "recognize in its early stages the beginnings of something which could threaten all that we love and desire to keep as surely as they were threatened by Fascism in the 1930s."²⁹⁹ Powell criticized protestors by incorporating his own Nazi analogy into a speech, only a week after Benn's.

Here, Powell invoked memories of British opposition to Nazism, coopting Benn's trope for his own nationalist argument. In truth, it is almost impossible to describe the exact meaning of this statement without speculation, due to its extreme ambiguity. In his statement he never

²⁹⁶ "Furious Scenes at Powell Meeting," June 9, 1970, British Newspaper Archive; John Winder, "Protests Chanted at Powell," *The Times*, June 9, 1970, The Times Digital Archive.

²⁹⁷ "Immigrants and the Economy—Mr. Powell," *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 9, 1970, British Newspaper Archive.

²⁹⁸ "Immigrants and the Economy—Mr. Powell."

²⁹⁹ Winder, "Protests Chanted at Powell."

defined what he meant by “all that we love and desire to keep.” This worked in Powell’s favor, allowing his supporters, who entered the rally with a negative view of the protestors, to supply their own value that is being threatened by those who criticize Powell for being racist. Powell also described the protestors as the “extreme tip” of the movement against him, another open-ended statement that allowed listeners to fill in the blanks.³⁰⁰ Again choosing not to identify who his and Britain’s alleged enemies are, Powell created an us-versus-them dynamic that minimized the legitimacy of anyone who criticized him—potentially including the Labour party, many Conservatives, and even Heath. Powell’s callout of protestors at his Wolverhampton speech bordered on demagoguery, implying that his opponents formed part of an anti-British force that, unchallenged, could do massive damage.

This formed a preface of sorts to Powell’s next campaign move, which took larger aim at the issues he believed to be facing Britain. Powell announced to the media that he was planning to make a series of major speeches to end the campaign, nominally to challenge Wilson and Labour.³⁰¹ This outcome would be much-needed for the Conservative party; by the time of Powell’s first speech, on June 11, Labour had a huge lead in the polls of around 5-7 points.³⁰² Rather than attack the Labour government and its policies, however, Powell’s speeches, until a belated endorsement of Heath and the Conservative party in the fourth, criticized the entire political establishment, making unsubstantiated prognostications of doom that only pushed Powell further to the front of the campaign.

Powell’s first speech, delivered on June 11 at an election meeting at Wolverhampton’s Woodfield Avenue school, focused on the danger of commonwealth immigration and immigrant

³⁰⁰ Winder.

³⁰¹ Butler and Pinto-Duchinsky, *The British General Election of 1970*, 159–62.

³⁰² Butler and Pinto-Duchinsky, 178.

birth rates. Repeating the themes of every major speech he had made since Rivers of Blood, Powell accused the government of misleading Britons on the true size of immigration, citing immigration statistics that had been released in March demonstrating much higher immigrant birth rates than the government had previously estimated.³⁰³ On this, Powell said, “the people of this country have been misled, cruelly and persistently, till one begins to wonder if the foreign office was the only department of state into which enemies of this country were infiltrated.”³⁰⁴ He continued, referencing other statistics in order to argue that his predictions from the Rivers of Blood speech had been proven and that the immigration ‘problem’ had remained addressed by the Labour government. Beyond the controversial line stating that the Foreign Office had been infiltrated by unnamed enemies of the state, the speech essentially rehashed his past words on immigration, providing updated statistics when they confirmed his points.

If Powell’s accusation that the Foreign Office had been infiltrated seemed to build on his earlier criticism of protesters as part of an evil, anti-British force, the second of his major speeches, delivered two days after the first at an election meeting at Birmingham’s Turves Green Girls School, fully expanded on both of those points. The speech, informally entitled “Enemy Within,” told an almost conspiratorial story of immigration, evil, and the future of Britain. From the opening line—“Britain is at this moment under attack”—Powell described a threat that he said was as large as those that put the nation into the two world wars. According to Powell, this enemy was the same that “destroyed” American universities, terrorized European schools, and bullied the British government. He explained that the common tool of this enemy was “the

³⁰³ Peter Evans, “Powell Challenges Colour Estimates,” *The Times*, March 10, 1970, The Times Digital Archive; Peter Evans, “Support for Powell on Births,” *The Times*, March 11, 1970, The Times Digital Archive.

³⁰⁴ J. Enoch Powell, “Speech by the Rt. Hon. J. Enoch Powell at an Election Meeting at Woodfield Avenue School, Wolverhampton,” (June 11, 1970).

exploitation of ‘race.’” By this he meant that the “enemy” had gained a position of moral superiority where they made conversations about the problems facing Britain—namely, immigration of people of color—a taboo topic. The British “are told that they must not feel alarm nor objection to a West Indian, African and Asian population which will rise to several millions,” Powell said, continuing by decrying the fact that “if they do, they are ‘prejudiced,’ ‘racialist,’ and ‘failing to show an example to the rest of the world.’” He also noted that this “brainwashing” had made it so “it is even heresy to assert the plain fact that the English are a white nation.” Powell continued in this way, railing against everything from Irish civil rights to British clerical activism, before concluding with an exhortation to his audience to “elect men who will dare to speak with what they themselves know to be the truth.”³⁰⁵ Powell’s address on the “enemy within” was a long, conspiratorial speech that identified an enemy working to destroy Britain without explicitly naming it.

Powell’s speech effectively took aim at everyone who had criticized him over the previous two years. By refusing to define the “enemy” he raged against, he allowed multiple groups that fit the template of policing prejudice to be able to take up that mantra. That included Edward Heath and the other establishment politicians, who dropped Powell from the cabinet and censured him widely after the Rivers of Blood speech. It also included immigrant activist groups who demonstrated against him in Whitehall, or students who broke up his speaking engagements on campuses around Britain. The group who could not be the enemy was Powell’s supporters—the white Britons who had marched for him or wrote to him with stories of the ‘immigrant problem’ or fears of their children being held back by children of color in class with them. In that

³⁰⁵ J. Enoch Powell, “Speech by the Rt. Hon. J. Enoch Powell at an Election Meeting at the Turves Green Girls School, Northfield, Birmingham” (June 13, 1970).

way, the speech was explicitly racist. Though Powell may have denied it at other opportunities, his statement that “the English are a white nation,” and the attempt to dismiss all complaints of racism as the work of an enemy trying to destroy Britain are both fundamentally racist ideas, built on a basis of white English nationalism. The “enemy within” that Powell raged against was the people who got in his way of keeping Britain a fundamentally white and English nation.

Unsurprisingly, given the extreme nature of this speech, and accusations of evil infiltration of civil service and government, the response to Powell’s first two speeches was resoundingly negative. Jeremy Thorpe, leader of the Liberals, said that Powell was “stark staring bonkers.”³⁰⁶ Home Secretary James Callaghan described the speech as a baseless smear campaign against the Labour government, and urged people to ignore it.³⁰⁷ Heath responded more diplomatically, refusing to single out Powell or withdraw his candidacy, instead issuing a statement that said that the “Conservative Party is the party of one nation,” and “never has and never will divide class from class or one community from another.”³⁰⁸ In addition to criticisms of Powell, the speeches also brought conversations over racial policy into the campaign on a larger scale, something that Wilson had sought to avoid. In Coventry, candidates from both parties clarified their stances after Powell’s first speech, to indicate where they differed.³⁰⁹ After he spoke, Powell popped up in most candidates’ election speeches, either in support, or, largely, in opposition.³¹⁰ Powell had used his most extreme rhetoric, and it had made him the epicenter of the campaign.

³⁰⁶ Butler and Pinto-Duchinsky, *The British General Election of 1970*, 162.

³⁰⁷ “A Smear without Proof-Callaghan,” *The Times*, June 15, 1970, The Times Digital Archive.

³⁰⁸ “Powell Speeches Damage Interests of Nation—Heath,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 15, 1970, British Newspaper Archive. This headline is misleading—while attributing this quote to Heath, he never actually says anything of the thing, or references Powell specifically. The *Daily Post* editorialized heavily.

³⁰⁹ ...“...And Tory Candidates Regret,” *Coventry Evening Telegraph*, June 12, 1970, British Newspaper Archive.

³¹⁰ “Give Evidence of ‘enemies’ Charge, Powell Is Told,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 13, 1970, British Newspaper Archive.

Building off this attention, Powell's third major campaign speech was on the subject of Britain's application into the European Economic Community (EEC), to which he was heavily opposed. Potential British entry into the EEC, the predecessor of the modern-day European Union, had been a minimal subject of debate during the campaign up to that point. Only around 30% of candidates from all parties had mentioned it in their election addresses, and of those even fewer explicitly stated whether they wanted to enter or stay out of it. Wilson and Heath had each been non-committal on the possibility, saying that they would join given the right terms, without specifying what those were.³¹¹ Powell explained his stance clearly, explaining his belief that Britain would be better off without joining the common market and switching to a common currency, and calling for more politicians to discuss the EEC in the campaign for the people to be able to be more informed.³¹² Powell's third speech was free of discussions of race the controversy that had underlined the previous two.

The different approach Powell took to the third part of his campaign speech series was informed by the four speeches' overall goal—setting him up to win leadership of the Conservative Party in the event of a general election defeat. Powell's desire to lead the party was clear, given his failed run for leadership in 1965, and it seemed like the position was about to reopen. Heath's hold on the Tories was shaky by mid-June, with the increasingly probable outcome of a third successive Labour election victory standing as a major indictment of his party leadership. Powell's four speeches, outlining opposition to immigration and European integration and underlining his economic and nationalist beliefs, served as an extended election address of

³¹¹ David Robertson, "The Content of Election Addresses and Leaders' Speeches," in *The General Election of 1970* (London: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1971), 438–40.

³¹² J. Enoch Powell, "Speech by the Rt. Hon. J. Enoch Powell at an Election Meeting at the Tamworth College of Further Education," (June 15, 1970).

sorts, outlining what would make him stand apart from Heath as a party leader. The public nature of the speeches and Powell's refusal to consult the party or toe its line also made it clear that he was thinking about more than just challenging Wilson. According to party insiders, he was working to challenge Heath, and was drawing headlines to that end.³¹³ Enoch Powell was not only trying to win his seat in the 1970 campaign; he was also trying to win party leadership.

With this meta-campaign in mind, Powell's fourth speech, two days before the election, which called for his supporters to vote Tory, was a final assertion of his partisan credentials. Powell acknowledged his large audience, and, after explaining that he had nothing to gain from a Conservative victory—Heath had declared that Powell would not be in his cabinet—except that which the country has to gain, told Britain to “vote, and vote Tory.” Here Powell went on to warn that another term of “socialist” government under Labour would undermine fundamental parts of British life and hurt British families. Positioning the election as a choice between a Labour party that would restrict British freedoms and a Conservative party that would allow it to prosper, Powell explained that “on Thursday your vote decides whether that freedom shall survive or not. You dare not entrust it to any government but a Conservative government.” In a way, his closing speech was an audition for a leaders' speech. Powell backed the party and explained why to vote for it, much as Heath had done the entire campaign. The only difference was that Powell was not the leader of the party and was hoping for the Conservative loss and personal gain that would be his only way back to the parliamentary frontbench.

Enoch Powell surged back to the center of debates over race and immigration during the 1970 general election campaign, and in doing so became one of the race's focal points, on level

³¹³ David Wood and Hugh Noyes, “Conservative Anger with Powell over Rift on Immigrants,” *The Times*, June 15, 1970, The Times Digital Archive; “Powell Speeches Damage Interests of Nation—Heath.”

terms with the men actually in a position to become Prime Minister. This development was spurred by his own extreme rhetoric and that of Tony Benn. Benn's decision to compare Powell's race policy to the Holocaust led to more condemnation than support and resulted directly in Edward Heath defending Powell more formally than he had since he had dropped him from the shadow cabinet in April 1968. Brought back into the party fold and the public eye, Powell tried to take advantage of the moment and the Conservatives' poor position in the polls to unofficially campaign for the party leadership. Staking his future on extreme nationalism, racism, and opposition to immigration and the common market, Powell positioned himself as the leader-in-waiting, putting him on the verge of completing a populist political power play that he had started two years prior. All that was left for him was for the Conservatives to live up to their two-to-seven-point deficit in the election day polls and lose the General Election.³¹⁴

The general election results: Tory victory and Powell defeat

Britain went to the polls on election day, June 18, 1970, with little expectation of change. At 11pm, however, Labour's expectation of another victory changed. A survey from Gravesend, a town heavily representative of the British population, and a series of initial results from around the country showed evidence of a movement toward the Conservatives of multiple percentage points. In a late-night television appearance, Wilson withheld a concession speech, but by morning it was evident that he and his party had lost, with 430 constituencies registering a Labour loss of 42 seats. Heath's victory was announced in the early afternoon on June 19. In the final results, the Conservative Party won 330 seats, giving it a majority of 30 and an overall gain

³¹⁴ Richard Rose, David Wood, and Chris Moncrieff, "Three Polls Show Labour Ahead," *The Times*, June 18, 1970, The Times Digital Archive.

of 66.³¹⁵ In a major reversal of the polls, Edward Heath had become the next British Prime Minister.

Wolverhampton was home to one of the biggest Conservative swings, in a way that seemed to indicate an Enoch Powell effect. Powell won a massive victory in his constituency on election day, doubling his previous majority as he received 14,469 more votes than his Labour challenger—the biggest parliamentary majority in the constituency for 20 years. In neighboring Wolverhampton North-East, Renée Short, a Labour MP, barely held on to her seat, her majority dropping from 8,102 to 1,893. All told, Wolverhampton swung by 8% toward the Conservatives.³¹⁶ The swing to the right was extreme in Enoch Powell's part of England.

Despite this large personal margin of victory and the triumph of his party at the polls, Powell seemed disappointed with the result. He remained stoic as his seat's results were read out, but once he got home, he fell into a deep depression for multiple days.³¹⁷ This most likely was due to the fact that none of his work during the campaign to present himself as an alternative to Heath mattered in terms of his future in parliamentary leadership. It may have also been due to the fear that, in making his case for party leadership, Powell had inadvertently brought enough supporters to Heath to carry him to win the election, an extreme pyrrhic victory. At the very least, the first of these potential reasons for dejection was true. The Conservative upset in the 1970 General Election doomed Enoch Powell's hopes of becoming leader of the party, in large part thanks to Edward Heath's decision to back Powell through his continued controversy and open challenge for leadership during the campaign. Heath held his party together, and as

³¹⁵ Butler and Pinto-Duchinsky, *The British General Election of 1970*, 337–38.

³¹⁶ “Mr. Powell More than Doubles His Majority,” *Birmingham Daily Post*, June 19, 1970, British Newspaper Archive.

³¹⁷ Heffer, *Like the Roman*, 566.

Powell's position was subsumed under the electoral umbrella of the Conservatives, his short-term impact on electoral results was minimal, but his long-term effect was significant. Heath benefited from Powell's two years of anti-immigrant speeches and used that gain to become Prime Minister and end his rival's campaign for leadership.

Powell firmly believed that he controlled the vote of a significant portion of the electorate. In his June 16 "Vote Tory" speech, Powell described voters writing to him with the message that they would not vote Conservative because of the treatment Powell had received from Heath or the fact that he would not form part of the government. He believed his influence was large enough that he addressed his speech not only to his constituency, or his national supporters, but the entire electorate.³¹⁸ Powell's belief that he controlled a sizeable swath of voters was almost definitely correct, but the degree to which he influenced individual votes was less clear.

Whatever he thought about his control of voters, Powell's actual campaigning had minimal influence on the results. Conservatives who ran on powellite platforms received the same swing as their less-hardline party colleagues.³¹⁹ In areas where Powell campaigned in the Midlands, the swing was actually lower than average.³²⁰ There was also evidence of voters being driven away from the Conservatives because of his influence, as constituencies with the highest population of immigrants returned lower swings away from Labour than the national average, although since most of these constituencies were already safe Labour seats, this had little effect

³¹⁸ J. Enoch Powell, "Speech by the Rt. Hon. J. Enoch Powell at an Election Meeting at the Grammar School Compton Road, Wolverhampton," (June 16, 1970).

³¹⁹ Deakin and Bourne, "Powell, the Minorities, and the 1970 Election"; Michael Steed, "An Analysis of the Results," in *The British General Election of 1970* (London: St. Martin's Press, Inc., 1971), 406.

³²⁰ Deakin and Bourne, "Powell, the Minorities, and the 1970 Election," 409.

on parliament.³²¹ As for his support of other issues, polls showed that Powell's supporters shared few of his other positions, including on the economy and the common market, so his appeal was wholly immigration-centric.³²² There was little evidence to show that Powell's divisive campaigning in June 1970 had helped the Conservatives.

However, there were indications that Powell's consistent words on immigration in the long-term had a wider effect on support for his party, tying opposition to immigration to the Conservatives as a political issue. To see this, it is necessary to look back to when Powell emerged as a national anti-immigration advocate. By 1968, immigration was already an important part of British politics, evidenced by the feverish response supporting Powell after the "Rivers of Blood" speech. In addition to the high-profile marches, the MP received around 40,000 pieces of mail echoing his views in the five days following the speech, and a poll from Gallup at the end of April showed that 74% of Britain agreed with him.³²³ In the panel study of voters who voted throughout the 1960s carried out by David Butler and Donald Stokes, 80% of those surveyed said they felt at least "fairly strongly" that immigration should be closed, of which 50% believed it "very strongly."³²⁴ Immigration restriction was a widely supported policy among British voters even before Powell made his initial speeches.

Yet for most of the 1960s, while immigration restriction was clearly supported by white Britons, it was not an important issue on election day. Granted, there were some exceptions, notably the 1964 Smethwick election, in which overtly racist campaigning resulted in a surprise

³²¹ Steed, "An Analysis of the Results," 407.

³²² Schoen, *Enoch Powell and the Powellites*, 41.

³²³ "40,000 Powell Postbag,"; Heffer, *Like the Roman*, 467.

³²⁴ Butler and Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, 207. Support for immigration restriction increased as age increased, and it was most common among voters in the least skilled occupations.

Conservative victory, but generally immigration did not influence people politically.³²⁵ In 1966, Britons were generally unclear on the major parties' stance on immigration control, largely being unsure of their positions or believing that there would be no difference between the two. However, by the end of 1968, 50% believed that the Conservatives would be more effective at "keeping immigrants out," an increase of 31% over the course of a year that has largely been attributed to Powell's speaking out in a highly public way. By the election of 1970, the percentage believing the Conservatives would be the best choice to close Britain off to immigrants was 57%, compared to only 4% for Labour (33% believed there would be no difference, and the remaining 6% were unsure).³²⁶ From the period before Powell made his stance on immigration known through the general election, the British electorate became more aware of the parties' positions on immigration.

The transformation of immigration control into an issue affiliated with the Conservatives allowed policies like Powell's to be salient topics in the general election for the first time. The result of the electorate's heightened understanding of immigration was an ability to consider it as a motivation for voting for a specific party. In some cases, this resulted in a move away from a voter's traditional party identification, fueling the voter swing that carried Heath and the Conservatives into 10 Downing Street. To this end, voters who backed Wilson in 1964 and believed that the Conservatives were tougher on immigration were twice as likely to switch to voting Conservative in 1970 than those who did not.³²⁷ There were voters who rated immigration as their most important issue, and they were willing to follow the Conservatives, who they

³²⁵ Clayton Goodwin, "If You Want a Nigger for a Neighbour Vote Liberal or Labour," *New African*, October 2004, Academic OneFile.

³²⁶ Butler and Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, 210.

³²⁷ Butler and Stokes, 211.

largely saw as the more restrictive party.³²⁸ By helping to identify the Conservatives as the party of immigration restriction, Powell probably did lead people to vote for the party, although not directly through his efforts in the campaign.

Credit for immigration-fueled Conservative votes should go to Heath as well as Powell, however, since his handling of the MP during the campaign made sure that loyal Powell voters did not desert the party. Heath demonstrated early on that he was not willing to withdraw the Conservative label from Powell and lose the supporters and fellow politicians who backed the Wolverhampton MP unequivocally. His fiery response to Tony Benn's speech on Powell, turning the words back to Labour, legitimized Powell as a part of the Conservative campaign in a new way. It was a clearly political move—Heath had never spoken out about Powell-Hitler comparisons before, even when it came from a member of the Anglican clergy.³²⁹ Even when this allowed Powell enough room to maneuver to start running a national campaign of his own, Heath remained tight-lipped, refusing to criticize Powell by name even in his direct response to the "Enemy Within" speech.³³⁰ Heath allowed Powell's leadership challenge to take place, and that challenge, culminating in an endorsement of the Conservative party, ensured that there was no rebellion by Powell voters.

The long-term Powell bump was part of a few factors that pushed Heath to victory. Conservative vote totals also benefitted from underlying dissatisfaction with the Labour party that was hidden by their advantage in the campaign polls. Wilson's government was only a year removed from having a disapproval rate of 20%.³³¹ It was also not very far from some economic

³²⁸ Butler and Stokes, 207–12; Studlar, "Policy Voting in Britain."

³²⁹ Johnson, "Powell Takes a Calculated Gamble."

³³⁰ "Powell Speeches Damage Interests of Nation—Heath."

³³¹ Schoen, *Enoch Powell and the Powellites*, 233.

wobbles in 1967, where the country's economy seemed unstable, with high unemployment and poor balance of payments leading to a devaluation of the pound.³³² Bad memories of Labour economic policy reared their head again late in the campaign. On Monday, June 15, the monthly trade figures, after 9 months in the black, took a turn, showing a £3.1 million deficit. The following day, a leak from the Conservatives showed that their internal analyses warned of another run on the pound and devaluation under continued Labour policy.³³³ The effect of these signals were bolstered by the press, which discussed the economy more than any other type of policy, and had consistently debated whether a downturn was imminent.³³⁴ The Conservative electoral effort was bolstered by some negative economic signals and general dissatisfaction with the Labour government.

Enoch Powell part of the reason for Conservative victory in 1970, based on the long-term impact he had on the party since 1968, identifying it as the party of immigration restriction. There were other factors, too, and at the center of all of them stood Edward Heath, his campaign strategy, and an ability to successfully appeal to voters and hold his party together. Even though Powell challenged fairly nakedly for the party leadership, Heath decided not to punish him, and in doing so, avoided a potentially catastrophic wedge being driven through the party that could wound it at the polls. Powell's work over the past two years had, ironically, strengthened his main political rival. By tying the Conservatives to restrictive immigration policy, Powell gave up sole control of the topic, and strengthened the party he hoped to lead to the point that Heath was able to pull out a seemingly unlikely electoral victory. Powell was running for parliament, not for prime minister; because the party was more important than the person in the system he was in, he

³³² Butler and Stokes, *Political Change in Britain*, 21–23.

³³³ Butler and Pinto-Duchinsky, *The British General Election of 1970*, 166–68.

³³⁴ Seymour-Ure, "Fleet Street," 250.

was unable to have full ownership of his political work, and, as a result, was resigned to helping his direct rival win a post that he craved.

Conclusion

When it came to the general election of 1970, the domestic malaise resulting from Britain's slow adjustment to immigration was almost completely ignored. Despite a spring marred by racial violence in areas with high immigrant settlement, a loudly resurgent neo-fascist presence, and extensive proof from the Race Relations Board's activities over the previous year that Britain was struggling to open up to people of color who had come to live their legally as equal citizens, neither party engaged with domestic race problems in any meaningful way. As many candidates' election addresses mentioned topics like strengthening the police and further restricting immigration, only 8% of Labour and Conservative candidates referenced the ideal of a multi-racial society.³³⁵ Labour wanted to avoid the race issue entirely, since Wilson believed it would hurt them at the polls.³³⁶ The silence on anything but immigration totals and restrictions meant that Enoch Powell was able to once again shape the narrative on the subject during the campaign, even though countless others were interested in and working on the topic.

Powell's immigration takes during the campaign were initially dismissed as old hat, but that changed when Tony Benn attacked him. Benn, the technology minister, blindsided his party and compared Powell of stoking the sentiments that led to the Holocaust. Heath backed Powell in order to strengthen his personal position, and Powell gained the legitimacy needed to embark on a shadow campaign for Conservative leader, working on the assumption that the Conservatives would lose. Despite Powell and almost everyone else's belief that Wilson would walk into a third

³³⁵ Robertson, "The Content of Election Addresses and Leaders' Speeches," 438.

³³⁶ Benn, *Office Without Power: Diaries 1968-72*, 288-89.

term in office, Edward Heath pulled out a victory, fueled by the voters that Powell's continued anti-immigration rhetoric had brought into the party over the previous two years. The election wound up being fought on many of Powell's terms, but the fact that he was not the leader of a party of his own resigned him to a defeat in the form of electoral victory.

Conclusion

From 1968 through the general election of 1970, Enoch Powell was the definitive political figure associated with immigration and race relations. Like the man, a former classics professor turned Member of Parliament, the way he occupied that position at the forefront of British politics was unconventional. He did not attempt to lead any type of populist movement, remaining faithful to the Conservative party, eventually to a fault. He only spoke on the immigration periodically, and usually restrained his speeches to dry discussions of statistics, rather than the emotional appeals that had led him to success. And while the immigration restrictions he championed ceased to become the focal point of immigration and race relations discussions, Powell refused to bend his message to sustain his popularity. Powell was and was not a populist; he had mass appeal, but he never stopped being fiercely devoted to the partisan mores of parliament and his personal, top-down view of Britain's race 'problem.'

Even as Powell rejected total control of the issue of immigration by functioning half as a renegade Tory backbencher and half as his own populist figure, the response he received every time he spoke meant that he remained in the middle of things. The massive impact he made with the "Rivers of Blood" speech established Powell's premier status on immigration. The combination of thousands of marchers and letter writers demonstrated that he had a clear, large constituency, and the fact that he was sacked from the shadow cabinet for it raised the stakes from a controversial yet minor conference talk to a national debate. The resulting furor it created only helped to boost his position in the public eye, too. Violence at marches in April and May gave way to student protests in the late summer and autumn, fueling continued debates over Powell's views and his right to free speech, which occupied front pages and news broadcasts and generally solidified Powell's unique backbench spotlight. Powell was treated like a threat, a

savior, and a rebel across different circles, and that gave more and more legitimacy and reach to the message he was putting out.

This level of notoriety and publicity meant that even though Powell restricted his speaking on immigration and focused only on specific parts of the issue, his view was the one that was politically salient. Speaking on restricting immigration as a Conservative, Powell linked his views to his party, showing the public that it was the Tories, not Labour, which were more likely to restrict Commonwealth immigration further, even though Heath's stance was much less extreme than Powell's. As later demonstrated by quantitative research, this allowed voters to consider immigration in a new way—people whose opinion on restricting immigration formed an electoral priority could vote Conservative or Labour knowing which party aligned with their view. Powell was able to use this to his advantage as 1968 gave way to the 1970 general election campaign.

By 1970, Powell knew that his endorsement controlled a significant number of votes of the most passionate immigration opponents, and Heath knew that too. The publicity Powell had received in 1968 and intermittently harnessed ever since gave him leverage to do and say whatever he wanted during the general election, from the position of his safe Wolverhampton seat. This led his rhetoric to surpass anything that had come before, first with a series of comments alluding to an international conspiracy against him and the British people by supporters of immigration. Then, after ill-advised comments by Tony Benn comparing Powell and the powellites to the Nazis gave Powell even more media attention, he began to informally campaign to replace Heath, and espouse white nationalist and conspiratorial ideas, most of all in his "Enemy Within" speech. His campaign failed with Heath's upset election win, but all of the

race discourse during the election centered on Powell—he set the agenda on the issue that he had come to own.

The emergence of Enoch Powell as a so-called tribune on immigration and race served to muffle the other work on the subject that was being done around the country at the time. Powell's immigration and race views focused on freezes and repatriation, the two big topics he saw as the cause of Britain's racial 'problem.' However, there was a lot of other work being done at the grassroots level by politicians and activists alike to treat the teething problems of integrating immigrants into what had been an overwhelmingly white society. As the response to Powell showed, there was a considerable part of the population that was not interested in welcoming people of color into society and made life hard for new arrivals through outward discrimination, violence, and implicit bias. The government was working to eliminate these issues, through the strengthening of the Race Relations Board in 1968 and its continued actions to investigate reported discrimination complaints. Although, as the board's struggle to effectively prove and prosecute violators of the act showed, there was much work left to be done. This left space for immigrant activist groups, and over the following years they campaigned against Enoch Powell, racist education policies, racist policing, and racially-motivated attacks. This work, built on action where Powell's was built on rhetoric, attracted some attention, mostly when extreme politics and violence were involved, but failed to make even a fraction of the impact on the national conversation that Powell received when he spoke.

The principally grassroots nature of integration work meant that in 1970, when Wilson dissolved parliament in advance of the general election, race relations was no more than a footnote in the campaign. Even the phenomenon of paki-bashing, the racially-based violence that had terrified many residents of color in London and Coventry, received next to no time during

the campaign, as politicians focused on the economy and Enoch Powell and pushed the domestic tensions created by immigration to the side. Race relations groups lacked the political saliency that Enoch Powell had secured for his policies; because they worked directly on specific topics, there was no wide-ranging message like Powell's, and because no mainstream candidate was going to say that he or she supported racism, there was no firm party division on the issue that voters could identify. While promoting good race relations was very important for the well-being of the country, for campaigning politicians it was an afterthought.

Through a combination of controversy, notability, and simplicity, Enoch Powell's "Rivers of Blood" speech made him the informal gatekeeper on all things immigration and race for years after. Thanks to his position in the public eye and his clearly demarcated stance, his words received more play in the press and had a bigger influence on Britain's electoral policy than the other actors with interest in the topic. Formal and informal British history in the years since has remembered Powell for this exact reason—his use of public speeches and rhetoric bordering on and crossing into racism captured the attention of press, politicians, and people, and created almost mythic versions of him as a tribune to those on the right and a demon to those on the left. In the aftermath of the "Rivers of Blood" speech, Enoch Powell demonstrated the political power of populism and unapologetic nativism and the way that one person can define parts of a country's political agenda. Powell may have never succeeded in his quest to become Prime Minister, but he did demonstrate the power of a narrative-stealing style of emotional, hyper-partisan, populist politicking that has since influenced British politicians like Margaret Thatcher and Nigel Farage, as well as countless others around the world.

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