Powell's Predecessors: The British Radical Right and Opposition to Commonwealth Immigration in Britain, 1954-1967

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Introduction

On 20 April 1968, Conservative MP and Shadow Defence Secretary Enoch Powell rose before a meeting at the Conservative Political Centre in Birmingham and delivered his now infamous 'Rivers of Blood' speech. In the speech, Powell expressed vociferous opposition to immigration from Britain's former colonies. Though it does not mention the Empire, the speech also represented the crystallisation of Powell's growing pessimism regarding British colonialism.[1] Once a loyal imperialist and aspiring Viceroy of India, in a series of speeches and articles from 1964, Powell denounced the Empire as a 'myth' detrimental to Britain's future.[2] Deprived of imperial power, Powell called on Britain to reject its responsibilities to its former imperial subjects. He prophesied disastrous consequences if Britain continued accepting Commonwealth immigrants, warning that one day the 'black man will have the whip hand over the white man'.[3] Numerous scholars have interpreted the speech as the expression of a nightmare vision of the colonial order inverted.[4] This chapter draws inspiration from their efforts to analyse Powell's politics through a postcolonial lens. It looks through that same lens at those on Powell's right beyond Parliament – the 'Radical Right' – who had been campaigning against immigration in strikingly similar terms since the late 1950s.

This chapter deals with several Radical Right groups that merged in 1967 to form the National Front. These include the League of Empire Loyalists, the British National Party (itself a merger of the White Defence League and the National Labour Party), and the Greater Britain Movement. Examining their publications, it argues that they too grew disillusioned with the Empire, leading them to conclusions very similar to those expressed by Powell in April 1968. The activists and ideologues of these groups experienced decolonisation and Commonwealth immigration as interlinked civilizational crises. Closely following events on the rapidly decolonising African continent, the members of these Radical Right groups came to see themselves as a 'species of white settler' and, using antisemitic conspiracy theory, portrayed Britain itself as akin to a besieged white settler colony.[5] This culminated in calls for Britain to withdraw from or dissolve the 'coloured' Commonwealth and align itself with the 'white' Dominions and those nations, like South Africa and Rhodesia, who broke with the Empire in the name of white minority rule.

Alan Sykes has charted the history of the British 'Radical Right' across the twentieth century. He defines the Radical Right as a political tendency whose adherents were fervently imperialist, elitist, authoritarian, and obsessed with the preservation of racial "purity" and national sovereignty.[6] Among the ranks of the British Radical Right were fascists as well as dissident Conservatives. Throughout the twentieth century, the Radical Right conceived of the British Empire in utopian terms; the Empire represented Britain's past greatness but also the means of its future salvation. However, Radical Right activists' conception of the Empire was also dystopian as they were perpetually convinced that Britain was on the brink of colonial collapse.[7]

When it comes to studies of the metropolitan reverberations of the end of Empire, the Radical Right have regularly been left out. This is perhaps understandable, if not

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excusable, given the Radical Right's marginality. The groups examined in this chapter were prone to splits and possessed few members. In addition, they were either largely electorally unsuccessful or did not contest elections at all. However, they were early articulators of racist opposition to Commonwealth immigration and their rhetoric, trimmed of some of its more extreme themes, found its way into the mouths of mainstream Parliamentary critics of immigration, such as the MP Cyril Osborne.[8] Indeed, during the infamous 1964 Smethwick by-election campaign, Radical Right activists claimed to have originated (and, if not, almost certainly popularised) the slogan 'If you want a nigger for your neighbour, vote Liberal or Labour'.[9]

Despite his interest in 'the political right outside (or largely outside) the bounds of the Conservative Party', Bill Schwarz's work on decolonisation and whiteness in modern Britain has so far only dealt with Powell and the Monday Club.[10] Camilla Schofield, author of a recent biography of Powell, argues that Powell represents something 'quite different' to the Radical Right groups discussed herein.[11] However, this ignores the fact that, much like Powell, those on the British Radical Right were deeply 'touched by the lessons of empire's end'.[12]

Both Schwarz and Schofield present Powellism as a manifestation of a racial or 'ethnic' populism.[13] Long before Powell, 'ethnic populism' was associated with the British Empire, fuelling ideals of trans-imperial white solidarity such as 'Greater Britain'. Powell worked the core of this idea – of white Britons united – into a narrative of victimhood, in which 'ordinary' Britons had been betrayed by treacherous politicians, who gave away their Empire and opened up their country to 'invading' immigrants. While there are important differences between Powell and the British Radical Right, both constitute manifestations of

'ethnic populism' and displayed a preoccupation with the anticipated cataclysmic consequences of the end of empire.

This chapter reconsiders this collection of Radical Right groups as thwarted and extra-parliamentary manifestations of 'ethnic populism' thus illuminating their connections to a broader history of race, empire and decolonisation in modern Britain. Historians and cultural critics interested in racism and the legacy of empire in modern Britain have long been anxious about discussing right-wing extremism. They have been keen to avoid 'othering' British racism by portraying it as 'un-British' and unrelated to the nation's history, more akin to German Nazism than to any indigenous political tradition.[14] As a result, many have failed to appreciate that those on the British Radical Right 'are *British*' and that their ideas 'reflect British history and British political problematics'.[15] Nowhere is the clearer than in its adherents' obsession with the Empire and their fretful fears of decolonisation.

Defending 'White Africa'

The British Radical Right had long been obsessed with the Empire.[16] Britain's first self-identifying fascist group, the British Fascisti, was founded in 1923 and consisted of many die-hard imperialist ex-military men who had served in the colonies.[17] This strain of fervent fascist imperialism continued into the 1930s with Sir Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists (BUF).[18] The imperial enthusiasms of the leading members of these groups remained undimmed and, if anything, intensified as the Second World War accelerated the rise of anti-colonial nationalism throughout the Empire. A. K. Chesterton made his return to politics in 1954 with the founding of the League of Empire Loyalists (LEL). Chesterton had been a key member of the BUF, was a biographer of Mosley, and one of the few prominent BUF activists not be interned under wartime regulations.[19]

From its inception, the LEL championed the cause of white settlers in Africa. Their concern for the survival of white minority rule reflected the background of its founder and leader. Chesterton was the child of British settlers and had been born in South Africa several months before the outbreak of the Anglo-Boer War. A childhood spent playing 'the "little master"' to a cast 'of coloured servants and black mine workers' left him accustomed to an authoritarian, racially stratified social order and convinced of the inferior nature of 'the African'.[20] He had returned to Africa during the Second World War as an officer in the British Army, a move that reignited his white supremacist passions.[21] He returned from military service and secured a position as assistant editor and leader-writer for the semi-respectable Conservative journal *Truth*.[22] He spent the years between 1944 and 1953 excoriating British colonial policy in the pages of *Truth*.

The colonial policies of the 1945-51 Labour government and the 1951-55 Conservative government represented an attempt to preserve the Empire while adjusting to new geopolitical realities.[23] As well as increasing nationalist opposition to colonial rule, Britain faced American pressure to decolonise or significantly reform imperial rule, serious economic problems, and a heavy reliance on American loans.[24] Policymakers thus accelerated the progression of some of Britain's colonies towards dominion status, attempting to keep former colonial possessions within the framework of Empire – now recast as a 'multiracial Commonwealth of nations'.[25] This shift saw India, Pakistan, Ceylon and Burma achieve independence over the course of 1947 and 1948.

When it came to British Africa, however, colonial policymakers favoured a more 'gradual, smooth and efficiently controlled' process of 'political advancement' towards greater self-government 'within a Commonwealth framework'.[26] Especially after 1947, Britain relied even more intensely on the natural resources of its African colonies in the

struggle to rebuild the war-torn metropole. The British government's approach was one of '[l]imited local concessions and the cultivation of amenable working relationships with "moderate" (pro-Western) Africans'.[27] Through this approach, they hoped to marginalise 'extremists', allow for 'measured political development along British-approved lines', and, fundamentally, preserve British rule.[28]

While British colonial policy during the late forties and early fifties represented neither 'whole "decolonization"' nor the '"dismantling [of] the empire"', Chesterton interpreted it as outright surrender.[29] He attributed the reforming tendency and quasi-liberal aspirations of post-war colonial policy to a Jewish plot to establish a 'World Government'.[30] Chesterton's views were heavily inspired by a 'materialist' reading of the infamous *Protocols of the Elders of Zion* and the work of antisemitic writers like Arthur Kitson, Nesta Webster and A. N. Field.[31] Wall Street-based Jewish financiers, he argued, were directing 'the great new world imperialisms' of the USA and the USSR in a deliberate attempt to liquidate European colonial possessions.[32] Chesterton claimed that, to this end, they were sponsoring nationalist movements throughout the Empire, first in Asia and then in Africa.

After *Truth* changed owners in 1953, Chesterton's vociferous imperialist antisemitism resulted in the heavy editing of his articles. In protest at this and the magazine's change of political 'line', he noisily resigned.[33] Chesterton then worked briefly for the pro-white settler lobbying organisation, the London Committee of the United Central Africa Association, and then for a time as Lord Beaverbrook's 'literary adviser and personal assistant'.[34] In the same year, after securing the financial support of R. K. Jeffrey, an eccentric British expatriate living in Chile, Chesterton was able to found his own journal, *Candour*. A year later, he founded the League of Empire Loyalists, envisioned as a pressure

group which would work to influence public opinion in the direction of 'policies favourable to national and imperial survival'.[35]

LEL activists initially busied themselves with carrying out publicity stunts to harangue Tory politicians for having 'abandoned' the Empire. Its activists achieved minor fame for stage invasions during Conservative Party meetings and rallies, particularly for the series of interruptions they carried out at the 1958 Blackpool party conference.[36] League activists' experiments in political theatre could be incredibly bizarre. In 1958, the LEL's Rosine de Bounevialle infiltrated the Conservative Women's National Rally at the Albert Hall, disguised in a silk sari and blackface as a 'mysterious "Indian" woman', and castigated Prime Minister Harold Macmillan for his 'anti-Empire policies'.[37] The League also sent hecklers and counter-protestors to the demonstrations of anti-imperialist groups like the Movement for Colonial Freedom, where they would perform readings from grisly accounts of the violence perpetrated by nationalist insurgents in Kenya during the Mau Mau Emergency.[38]

The LEL hoped not only to influence the British public but also to energise their 'kinsmen overseas'. Chesterton established an LEL-affiliated 'Commonwealth-wide network of sympathisers', particularly in southern Africa.[39] He was in regular contact with this network and *Candour* often featured contributions from members and supporters based in the Dominions. On a number of occasions during the late fifties and early sixties, Chesterton and leading LEL activists also visited east and southern Africa conducting speaking tours and meeting with far-flung members.[40]

'The Coloured Invasion'

The LEL's focus on the overseas situation meant that they came late to the issue of Commonwealth immigration. The late 1940s saw a new wave of migration to Britain from

the Caribbean, India and Pakistan, prompted by the promise of employment and the extension of British citizenship under the 1948 Nationality Act. While its members had long opposed the so-called 'Black Invasion', the LEL did not begin organising an official campaign against 'coloured immigration' until 1958.[41] From early 1958, W. J. Harrison, the LEL's new Director of Organisation, recommended that the group's activists use 'the "Black Invasion"… as our main line to introducing people to the wider issues of our Imperial betrayal'.[42]

However, this new campaign did not come fast enough for some of the LEL's younger, more radical activists. In 1957, Colin Jordan, Midlands organiser and a member of the LEL's National Committee, left to found the White Defence League (WDL).[43] In April 1958, prominent League members John Bean and John Tyndall also broke with the LEL in frustration over Chesterton's unwillingness to contest elections, founding the National Labour Party (NLP) on 24 May (Empire Day) 1958.[44] While these two groups were more openly interested in neo-Nazism than the LEL, the most significant divisions between the three of them were primarily the result of difficult personalities and tactical differences. Ideologically, particularly where the Empire was concerned, they were more or less aligned. The NLP remained 'dedicated to the British and Imperial cause' while the White Defence League's *Black & White News* carried advertisements for both *Candour* and the League of Empire Loyalists.[45]

The NLP and the WDL came to the public's attention as a result of their activities during the summer of 1958. In a series of 'race' riots during late August and early September 1958, crowds of white residents in Nottingham and Notting Hill began attacking West Indians on the street and in their homes.[46] The activists of the NLP and the WDL had begun campaigning in Notting Hill shortly before the riots and afterwards became a regular presence. The NLP even petitioned on behalf of nine white youths arrested for their part in

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instigating the London riots.[47] Contemporaneous accounts blamed the NLP, the WDL, and Mosley's Union Movement (the post-war successor to the BUF) for exacerbating the racial tensions that fuelled the violence.[48]

For those on the Radical Right, what happened in the summer of 1958 in Nottingham and Notting Hill was refracted through the lens of increasing racial tensions in Britain's African colonies. During the late fifties, the priorities of the British government in terms of colonial policy and those of white settler communities increasingly diverged.[49] The former intended to preserve African loyalty to Britain by working with moderate nationalists, guiding their politically 'immature' subjects towards self-government within the Commonwealth. However, white settlers, particularly those in the Central African Federation and South Africa, were keen to preserve their privileges. They were beginning to bristle at the first gentle breezes of what was, several years later, memorably termed the 'wind of change'.

Radical Right activists thus formulated their anti-immigrant stance in an atmosphere of racialised violence at home and challenges to white rule abroad. They began to discuss Britain's so-called 'colour problem' with frequent and direct references to events in southern Africa. Its members were not the only ones to remark on the relevance of the 1958 riots to the broader situation in the Commonwealth. In Southern Rhodesia and South Africa, the press delighted in using the riots to portray Britain as hypocritical for criticising settler racism and apartheid while failing to deal with its own 'colour problem' at home.[50]

Activists from the NLP and LEL declared almost joyously that Britons were now directly embroiled in the same struggle as their 'white kinsmen' overseas. The first issue of the NLP's newspaper *Combat* appeared shortly after the riots and celebrated the new-found affinity between white Britons of the colony and those in the metropole:

> The old party politicians and the hack writers of the Press, who in their vitriolic tirades against our white kinsmen in South Africa and the Southern States of America had repeatedly bragged "it couldn't happen here", were momentarily struck for words.[51]

Chesterton expressed similar sentiments in *Candour*. He saw the riots as a violent reaction against what he believed was a global push for racial integration. 'War', he wrote, was being waged 'on the Whiteman'.[52] In his view, white rioters in Britain were now united in common cause with southern segregationists in America, white settlers opposed to racial '"integration" in East Africa and the Rhodesias', and the antipodean defenders of 'the "White Australia" policy'.[53] While the LEL abjured the 'street fighting' tactics of the NLP and the WDL, their activists were now out campaigning against immigration on the streets of London and beyond.[54]

Having collaborated extensively in their anti-immigration campaigns following the 1958 riots, the WDL and the NLP merged in 1960 to form the British National Party (BNP). The BNP pledged to 'stand against the Black invasion of Britain and the betrayal of our White kinsmen overseas'.[55] Brought together, its activists continued to conflate colony and metropole in their discussions of decolonisation and immigration. For instance, the BNP's *Combat* portrayed the Congo Crisis as emblematic not only of the fate to which Britain was leaving its 'White kinsmen', but also as an illustration of the potential metropolitan consequences of Commonwealth immigration.

They drew comparisons between the rape and murder of white women by 'Black troops' in the Congo and the symbolic and demographic 'wounding and murder of White people' in Britain by the arrival of increasing numbers of 'coloured immigrants'.[56] The BNP wondered how long it would be before this colonial-style violence transitioned from the metaphorical to the physical, with 'Congo antics enacted' on the streets of the metropole.[57]

They called for 'White solidarity' between Britons and whites in 'South Africa, Kenya…

Rhodesia [and] even the Southern States of the U.S.A.'[58]

The LEL's journal *Candour* contained similarly fevered imaginings of the colony impinging upon the metropole. A 1961 article complained that 'the coloured invasion is increasingly bringing barbarism to Britain' with reports of '"tribal war"' on the streets of Brixton.[59] Another article one year later remarked on the resurgence of witchcraft in Nyasaland alongside tales of similar 'Black Magic' practices by West African immigrants in Birmingham and London.[60] Areas with particularly high immigrant populations, the article went on to claim, were allegedly the site of 'voodoo orgies and riots'. The collapse of colonialism, according to the journals of the LEL and the BNP, had resulted in a process of reverse colonisation and the transformation of Britons into the metropolitan equivalent of white settlers.

White against Empire

Alongside their growing identification with white settlers, these Radical Right groups gradually turned away from the existing Commonwealth and towards visions of an alternative alliance of white nations. The NLP was one of the first Radical Right groups to turn its back on the Commonwealth. An article in an early issue of *Combat*, written by one of the NLP's founders, proposed a new alliance to preserve 'that which is best in the old British Empire'; in their view, the 'White Dominions'.[61] When the NLP and WDL merged to form the BNP, opposition to the 'multi-racial' Commonwealth and the promotion of 'white solidarity' formed part of its programme.[62]

While Chesterton harboured a rather fanciful dream of a British 'return' to lost colonies into the 1960s, he soon became similarly disillusioned.[63] Chesterton and his fellow

LEL activists had long been sceptical of the Commonwealth ideal, perceiving the term as little more than 'a camouflage for unconditional surrender'.[64] Despite this, he was eager to keep the Empire intact – even in its Commonwealth form. For instance, his support for apartheid in South Africa was tempered by his longstanding criticism of the Afrikaner nationalism of the ruling National Party.[65]

However, in an article written a few months after South Africa voted to withdraw from the Commonwealth in 1961, Chesterton rejected the British Commonwealth. He condemned it as 'another institution of the enemy' and an 'internationalist agency'.[66] For Chesterton, the Commonwealth had fallen under the sway of the anti-British rulers of newly-independent nations including India's Jawaharlal Nehru and Ghana's Kwame Nkrumah. The time had come, he continued, for its dissolution. In place of the 'liquidated Commonwealth', wrote Chesterton, 'the White Dominions' needed to unite in defence of their national sovereignty and against 'the despotic power of Wall Street'.[67]

A new Radical Right group advancing a similar line emerged in 1964. The Greater Britain Movement (GBM) had splintered from another splinter group. It was formed by John Tyndall after he left Colin Jordan's National Socialist Movement which, in turn, had originally broken away from the BNP in 1962. Pledging to resist the spread of 'the rule of the jungle from Africa to Britain and America', the GBM also promoted a union of 'White kinsmen'.[68] This union was to comprise of the 'Anglo-Saxon' Dominions and South Africa.[69] Such was the GBM's racially-charged opposition to the Commonwealth that one GBM activist, Martin Webster, was imprisoned in August 1964 for assaulting Kenyan Prime Minister Jomo Kenyatta during a diplomatic visit to London.[70]

Behind the LEL, BNP and GBM's shared visions of an alternative white alliance lay a growing dissatisfaction with the Commonwealth remnants of the Empire. They felt that the

world had turned against the white supremacist principles that had historically driven and legitimised British imperialism. Indeed, the world and the position of the British Commonwealth within it, was changing. In Africa, 'white rule had been obliterated north of the Zambezi' between 1959 and 1964, with the rapid creation of nearly thirty independent African states.[71] By 1964, little remained of the Empire besides 'a range of small scattered islands, Hong Kong, and Southern Rhodesia'.[72] Beyond the Commonwealth, the end of Empire was also transforming the United Nations. By 1961, with the addition of newly-independent ex-colonial states, African and Asian countries had gained a majority on its General Assembly.[73] Anti-colonial critics now possessed an international forum.

Radical Right groups threw their weight behind those who had clung to their white supremacist convictions and seceded from the Commonwealth. Rhodesia, in particular, became the new great white hope of the British Radical Right. After the dissolution of the Central African Federation (CAF) in 1963 and the subsequent granting of independence to the former CAF territories of Nyasaland (as Malawi) and Northern Rhodesia (as Zambia), Southern Rhodesia came under pressure to extend voting rights beyond its white population.[74] On 11 November 1965, Ian Smith, Prime Minister of the Rhodesian Front government, issued a unilateral declaration of independence (UDI) from the British Commonwealth in protest and the independent state of Rhodesia was born.

The LEL's support for Smith predated the UDI. Its activists cheered him on when he came to Britain for negotiations with Harold Wilson's government in 1964. LEL demonstrators met him at the airport, broadcasting slogans from a loud hailer and saluting Smith as 'a champion of civilisation in Africa'.[75] A 'cavalcade' of cars bearing LEL activists then followed Smith to his hotel where he was greeted by yet more activists bearing banners 'emphasising the League's support for its Rhodesian kinsmen'. Despite his support

for the Rhodesians and their cause, from the pages of *Candour*, Chesterton desperately

urged them to refrain from withdrawing from the Commonwealth.[76] However, after UDI, he

nonetheless continued in his passionate support, praising Rhodesia for daring 'to stand fast,

declare unswerving allegiance to the Crown and defy, not only a British Government but the

entire finance-regimented world'.[77]

The BNP had none of Chesterton's reticence and urged Southern Rhodesia to

withdraw from the Commonwealth back in 1963.[78] *Combat* encouraged its readers to join

the Anglo-Rhodesian Society and BNP members also attended meetings of the similarly pro-

white settler Conservative Monday Club.[79] *Combat* reported that the BNP held pro-Rhodesia

marches in Sheffield, Birmingham, Coventry and Manchester 'among other areas' in the

wake of the UDI.[80] Bean wrote of Ian Smith in messianic terms, referring to him as the

saviour of 'Western man everywhere' and the man who could arrest 'the self-inflicted

decline of Western power'.[81] The GBM's Martin Webster was similarly effusive, dubbing

South Africa and Rhodesia 'the only sparks of sanity… in the whole world'.[82]

Alongside these expressions of solidarity for 'Right, Royal, Heroic Rhodesia', the LEL,

BNP and GBM frequently made comparisons between Britain's world position and that of

separatist settler nations like Rhodesia.[83] And they reinforced their delusions with

antisemitic conspiracy theory. Chesterton elaborated on his belief that decolonisation was a

sinister, Jewish-directed scheme in a book entitled *The New Unhappy Lords* (1965). The

book, and Chesterton's worldview more generally, proved highly influential in Radical Right

circles.[84] The BNP's *Combat* reviewed it positively and, throughout this time, Chesterton

continued to act as an unofficial political adviser to the GBM's leader John Tyndall.[85]

Seen through the warped looking glass of Chesterton's antisemitic conspiracies, as

laid out in *The New Unhappy Lords*, Britain appeared to Radical Right activists as a victim of

a decolonising world. Chesterton portrayed Britain similarly to South Africa and Rhodesia, as a white nation whose national sovereignty and racial integrity was menaced by international interference. Chesterton and the BNP's John Bean even speculated that Britain itself might be 'abandoned' to 'black rule' as they argued 'White Africa' had been betrayed.[86] In the fevered imaginations of these white supremacists, Britain faced a Commonwealth run by anti-British 'coloured leaders' and a United Nations dominated by newly-independent former colonies, both of which they believed were mere puppets of a near-omnipotent Jewish enclave.[87] In addition to this, they also believed that the Jews were importing Commonwealth immigrants and that these would soon form a black majority in Britain comparable to the 'native hordes' of Africa.[88] Viewed in this way, the Radical Right recast Britain as the metropolitan equivalent of a beleaguered settler colony.

The LEL, BNP and GBM were by no means alone in resorting to conspiracy theory in their attempts to explain the seemingly inexplicable and rapid collapse of British colonial rule. The aforementioned Monday Club, founded in 1961 in order to organise the opponents of Macmillan's colonial policy within the Conservative Party, was similarly conspiracy-minded.[89] The conspiracy theories of Chesterton and his acolytes also found an echo in the paranoid regimes of separatist settler states in southern Africa. In 1964, the Rhodesian government employed South African journalist Ivor Benson as an adviser and charged him with reorganising the state-run broadcasting network into a government propaganda arm.[90] Benson was an antisemitic conspiracy theorist and a prominent activist in the Candour League, one of a series of LEL-affiliated groups throughout the Commonwealth.[91] Throughout his work in Rhodesia, he heavily influenced the worldview of the Rhodesian Front government and even the rhetoric of its Prime Minister.[92] Chesterton was also engaged in a long-running correspondence with Hendrik van den Burgh, the Head

of the South African Republic's Intelligence Department and later founder of the country's secret police force. Van den Burgh was a subscriber to *Candour* and a fan of *The New Unhappy Lords*.[93] Their relationship went beyond ideological influence, however, as he and Chesterton passed each other information regarding anti-colonial and anti-apartheid activists throughout the sixties.

However, back in Britain, beyond the circle of his devotees in the LEL, BNP and GBM, Chesterton's ideas proved far less influential. Throughout their existence, these groups remained small and largely unsuccessful organisations. At its height in 1958 as a repository for die-hard Tory imperialists, the LEL had 3,000 members and many more supporters.[94] By 1961, however, this had dropped to an estimated 300. After the death of Chesterton's wealthy benefactor, R.K. Jeffrey, in the same year and the subsequent legal wrangling over his estate, the LEL also struggled to find funding. The BNP was even smaller with an estimated membership of around 500, while estimates for the GBM range from between 100 to 150 members.[95] Their attempts to electorally exploit opposition to immigration also met with failure. The LEL's 'Independent Loyalist' candidates performed dismally in 1957 and 1964.[96] John Bean stood in Southall during the 1964 election, achieving only nine per cent of the vote.[97] Outside of their own efforts, the BNP also sent members to assist the campaign of the Conservative candidate Peter Griffiths during the notorious 1964 Smethwick by-election.[98]

Given their small size and largely similar ideas, the leading figures in these organisations began to consider merging during 1966. Later that year, the BNP and the LEL agreed on the terms of a merger and, the following February, formed the National Front (NF). Tyndall and his followers were initially excluded from the NF on account of their overt

neo-Nazism but were later admitted after further negotiations and the dissolution of the GBM in September 1967.[99]

The NF's programme reflected the ideas of its constituent organisations. It contained promises to terminate 'non-white immigration', and to repatriate all 'non-white immigrants' and their dependents that had entered Britain since the passing of the 1948 Nationality Act.[100] Alongside this went plans for the replacement of the Commonwealth with 'a modern British world system' composed of sovereign but co-operating nations, including Australia, New Zealand, Canada, Rhodesia, and, if they desired it, South Africa and Ireland.[101] Their manifesto also contained audacious proposals to admit 'Afro-Asian countries' if they wished to join and would agree to do so on subordinate terms.

Conclusion

By the time of Powell's speech, the NF was a little over a year old. In the wake of the speech, *The Times* reported that the Radical Right were 'rejoicing'.[102] They interviewed Chesterton, now chairman of the NF, who boasted that '[w]hat Mr. Powell has said does not vary at all from our views'.[103] The article also noted that the NF claimed to be attracting new members of all ages and classes in branches throughout the country. In the end, though Powell's anti-immigrant intervention had 'supplied… the National Front… with the oxygen it needed', they singularly failed to take advantage of the post-Powell furore.[104] In the subsequent 1970 general election, the NF fielded ten candidates all of which lost their deposits.

NF activists had reached largely similar conclusions as those of Powell in his 'Rivers of Blood' speech, only via a different route. While Powell responded to his loss of imperial faith by retreating into visions of a pastoral and white 'old England', the NF moved in the direction of visions of neo-colonial world order.[105] With its transformation into the

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Commonwealth, the NF had become thoroughly disillusioned with the Empire. For the Radical Right, the white supremacist principles that had historically undergirded British imperial rule had come uncoupled from the British Commonwealth. They found the last concentrated vestiges of these values in places like Rhodesia and South Africa, nations that had spat defiantly into the 'wind of change'. Britain's new and proper place, they believed, was alongside them.

Notes

[1] A Conservative [anonymously authored by Powell], 'Patriotism Based on Reality Not on Dreams', *The Times* (2 April 1964), p. 13; 'Speech to the Royal Society of St. George, 22 April 1964', in *A Nation Not Afraid: The Thinking of Enoch Powell*, ed. John Wood (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1965), pp. 143-146; 'Speech at Trinity College, Dublin, 13 November 1964', in *A Nation Not Afraid: The Thinking of Enoch Powell*, ed. John Wood (London: B. T. Batsford Ltd., 1965), pp. 136-143.

[2] Camilla Schofield, *Enoch Powell and the Making of Postcolonial Britain* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), p. 67.

[3] 'Text of Speech by Enoch Powell, 20th April 1968', in *Enoch Powell: The Man and his Thinking*, ed. T. E. Utley (London: William Kimber, 1968), pp. 179-180.

[4] Paul Gilroy, *Postcolonial Melancholia* (New York: Colombia University Press, 2004), p. 101; Wendy Webster, *Englishness and Empire 1939-1965* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), pp. 180-181; Daniel McNeil, ''The rivers of Zimbabwe will run red with blood': Enoch Powell and the Post-Imperial Nostalgia of the Monday Club', *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 37: 4 (2011), pp. 736-738; Schofield, *Enoch Powell*, pp. 7-8.; Bill Schwarz, *Memories of Empire, Volume 1 – The White Man's World* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), pp. 19, 29.

[5] Schwarz, *White Man's World*, p. 12.

[6] Alan Sykes, *The Radical Right in Britain: Social Imperialism to the BNP* (Basingstoke; New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2005), pp. 1-2, 9.

[7] Ibid., p. 3.

[8] Paul Foot, *Immigration and Race in British Politics* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1965), pp. 128-141, 151.

[9] Graham Macklin, 'Modernising the Past for the Future', in *British National Party: Contemporary Perspectives*, eds Nigel Copsey & Graham Macklin (London; New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 30.

[10] Bill Schwarz, 'Forgetfulness: England's Discontinuous Histories', in *Embers of Empire in Brexit Britain*, eds Stuart Ward & Astrid Rasch (London; New York: Bloomsbury, 2019), p. 56.

[11] Schofield, *Enoch Powell*, p. 3.

[12] Ibid., p. 3.

[13] Schwarz, *White Man's World*, pp. 53-106; Schofield, *Enoch Powell*, p. 20.

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