

The Winds of Change from Africa to Perestroika

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On Wednesday Virginia and I shall have helped launch Lord Popat's book *A British Subject: How to Make It as an Immigrant in the Best Country in the World*. He left Uganda aged 17 a year before Idi Amin expelled tens of thousands of Ugandan Asians with little more than the clothes on their backs.

In the debate that celebrated the contributions made in this country by those who came to settle in the United Kingdom, Lord Parekh kindly mentioned that we had been amongst the 2,000 families who first offered to share our home with the refugees. It was not to the credit of Enoch Powell that he supported a critical motion at the Conservative Conference; it is to the credit of the Young Conservatives and the Federation of Conservative Students that the motion was lost.

That humane decision was probably one reason why I chose the Conservative party when I decided to try to make contributions in public and political service. David Steel was similar to me. He was at Entebbe airport where watches and jewellery was stripped from those being expelled. His father had been a preacher in east Africa.

This week I have been thinking seriously about the Abrahamic faiths. The Jews, Muslims and Christians share much. This week I have recorded a message for the month confronting Islamophobia. The retiring House of Commons Sergeant of Arms Kamal El Hajji has Moroccan heritage. I was the first backbencher to join the tributes. When first appointed Kamal said that with the help of Allah (the same God that the Jews and the Christians acknowledge) he would do all he could. I wished him well with the hope that with the help of Allah he will enjoy his time in retirement.

This week I have been concerned to adjust government plans for an effective National Holocaust Memorial and Learning Centre. Sadly, the present plans to squash both into the smallest London Royal Park, the Victoria Tower Gardens, fail to meet any of the specified criteria set out in September 2015.

While I was doing some research, I came across information about the founding of the Campaign for Soviet Jewry. It preceded perestroika that led to the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the dissolution of the USSR. I had helped the Women's 35 campaign. When I come to the constituency with a mixed group of students, I want them to meet the varied faith groups who locally recognise that standing together is right.

Readers may have enjoyed the Wednesday BBC Radio 4 programme *Soul Music*. It featured the power ballad *Winds of Change* by The Scorpions, the German rock band. It became the anthem for the end of the Soviet Union and the fall of the wall. It celebrated glasnost and spoke of hope. The opening lines refer to Moscow landmarks: 'I follow the Mokva/ Down to Gorky Park/ Listening to the wind of change.' The expression *Winds of Change* had been Prime Minister Harold Macmillan's way of recognising that colonialism in Africa had had its time.

On Tuesday I was listening to a woman Church of England Archdeacon. Her husband had been tutored by my clerical cousin who had used him to help smuggle bibles in Russian into Russia. Imagine that less than 50 years ago, a world empire was frightened of the Good News in a local language? Familiar? Remember William Tyndale.

As a change of subject, I want to recognise Tim Loughton MP's initiative this week. With my help and after a moving meeting with Worthing and district sufferers, he has founded the all-party group on lipoedema. We need awareness, diagnosis, treatment and research.