

Opinion

Cameron must end Tories' far-right fling

UK party must not be associated with eastern groups' revisionist views on the Holocaust, writes DOVID KATZ

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IF EVER we saw a British Tory steal the liberal-tolerant limelight, not only from the political centre but even from that rarefied humanist just slightly left of centre, it was the stellar performance of Baroness Sayeeda Warsi of Dewsbury on the recent *Question Time* programme on BBC that included Nick Griffin, leader of the British National Party on the panel. With some eight million viewers, it was the biggest viewer turnout in the programme's history, thanks to the inclusion of Griffin.

True, Baroness Warsi, who is the Tories' shadow minister for community, cohesion and social action, had an easier time of it than UK justice minister Jack Straw, who had to defend the mishaps of a long period in power (and was visibly shaken early on by Griffin's untoward attack on his late father).

And it didn't hurt that the baroness, of Pakistani heritage, is one of those rare politicians who can make a point with brevity, wisely citing what she has heard on everyday people's doorsteps. But she also stole this show for history. One of her comments relates to a major European issue. In a word: genocide. When the slightly-reformed and repackaged neo-fascist Griffin spoke of the "genocide" now being perpetrated, allegedly, against the English people, Sayeeda let him have it: "How appalling that you use that word in that way."

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Good on her! But let's be straight: she cannot and must not get the Tories off the hook for their dalliances with some of the worst racists and Holocaust perverters in eastern Europe, who have turned obfuscation and distortion of history into foreign policy and for whom the watering down of the notion of genocide is a prime principle.

It's one thing for these states to have their own "version" of history domestically. But that doesn't satiate their appetite. There has been a fully-fledged campaign to get the EU to rewrite history. They have duped many centrists from "Old Europe", including Britain. There is but one honourable option, one that politicians innately hate. It is, simply, to say: "I made a mistake."

As the dauntless Holocaust historian and justice seeker Dr Efraim Zuroff of the Wiesenthal Centre put it in a recent comment piece: "I can't believe [the Conservative Party chairman] Eric Pickles supports Latvia's For Fatherland and Freedom party which wants to rewrite a murderous history."

The murderous history refers to the enthusiastic volunteering of many thousands of Latvians in the region to do the Nazis' killing for them. In addition to more than 270,000 unarmed local Jewish civilians being slaughtered in the three Baltic states (amounting to around 95 per cent of these countries' Jewish population), the "excellence" at killing led the Nazis to deport to Latvia Jews from other countries; and also, to send these killers to "help out" in other countries.

That the chairman of the newly "centred" Conservative Party could support a far-right party that pays homage to these mass murderers is untenable. Pickles should resign. Naturally, it suits the ultranationalists in the east of the EU to come up with a new "double genocide" model that insists that Nazism and Communism equally committed genocide and everyone is even.

In January 2008, the far-right cabal made its first big bang in the European Parliament with a conference in Tallinn, Estonia, called *United Europe, United History*. Translation: the rest of Europe had better agree with us on a single state-sponsored version of history. The local ultranationalists there complained bitterly that Holocaust survivors were monopolising the phrase "Never again" and demanded "an equal evaluation" of Nazism and Communism. This bogus equality of all things bad fits well with a certain murkiness of postmodernist mush and crushed thinking.

Guess who moderated the discredited conference? Christopher Beazley, then a British Tory MEP. Last March, in discussing which right-wing groups to join in

the European Parliament, he said: “Who would we join with? Some sort of mish-mash of mavericks who have no power at home domestically?”

Translation: the domestic allure of the far right in the east of the EU is perversely sexy for these guys. So to the devil with what anybody happens to stand for.

And that brings us to the verdict. First, personal disclosure: I’m an unreconstructed fiftysomething New York Jewish liberal who settled in Britain and works in Vilnius. Among the things one finds so attractive in Britain is moderation.

The major parties dance around the centre and extremists are not welcome. From Beazley to Pickles, David Cameron now faces a real challenge, exacerbated by his party’s flirtation with Poland’s bigoted Michal Kaminski.

Cameron could foolishly decide to do nothing as his party is dragged to a far-right abyss.

Alternatively, he could make this go away tomorrow by issuing an unequivocal denunciation of their pride and joy: the malignant Prague Declaration of June 2008 that would dictate that textbooks throughout Europe teach children about the “equality” of Nazism and Communism. Also, that a Europe-wide day be imposed on EU states, equally commemorating victims of both, among other red-equals-brown nonsense. David, it’s time to speak up.

Dovid Katz is professor of judaic studies at Vilnius University and research director of the Vilnius Yiddish Institute. His website is www.holocaustinthebaltics.com

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