

arrival of the women, mingled with the indigenous population and many married or cohabited with Indian women. The so-called Eurasians (half-castes) arose mainly as a result of these early contacts. Once the memsahibs (European ladies) arrived, all open interaction with the natives, especially the women, automatically ceased. Prior to the arrival of their wives, the British men in India, who were familiar with the customs and language of the Indians, had established a friendly form of rapport with them.

The newly arrived British women, more often than not, knew no words of Hindi or Urdu and could not converse with anyone except the other members of the British community. The memsahib soon learnt enough words to survive and make herself understood, but the little she did learn was generally only the half a dozen commands required for the smooth running of her household. In fact in many cases she did not need to be able to converse in fluent Hindi or Urdu because she would have had no contact with the native population outside her house.⁴¹ In all fairness, right up until Independence, it was extremely difficult for the

⁴¹ In this respect Joanna Savage in John Masters' Nightrunners of Bengal, which will be discussed in 5.3.2., is a typical memsahib:

"After six years in India, Rodney's wife Joanna knew twenty words, and could use her verbs only in the imperative mood." (1980:12)

English memsahib to become acquainted with Indian women apart from her servants owing to the system of *pardah* (curtain). Indian women, especially Muslims, were not encouraged, and in the case of high class women, not allowed, to mix freely with unrelated men, which made meeting Indian women on a social level virtually out of the question.

The memsahibs have been traditionally blamed for the lack of real understanding between the British and the Indians during the Raj, (Cawasjee, 1989:68; Gifford, 1990:24) and while it is true that their presence put an end to all previous social intercourse, they were merely the victims of a male-oriented society. They were not free to break the conventions and forget the role that they, as female representatives of the Empire, were expected to perform.⁴² Thus, English women living in India during the imperial period had to toe the line and not become too familiar with the natives because distances had to be maintained. They practically lived a life of seclusion, being discreetly screened from viewing and being viewed by Indians, that is, Indians who might have different ideas about the Raj than the sycophantic

⁴² Olivia Rivers in Ruth Praver Jhabvala's Heat and Dust (Abacus, 1975), who has an affair with the Nawab of Khatm, is a clear example of what a memsahib should not do.

domestics. The only Indians many British ever came into contact with were the servants and the sepoy, which is why they could never quite understand the "Quit India" campaign and why they continued to regard any non-whites as inherently inferior beings to the themselves. The racial theories which were in vogue at the time, especially after the 1857 Uprising, merely gave a scientific stamp of approval to 'common-sense' thinking (see 2.2.2). The isolation of the memsahibs, who were forever alert for any signs that the alien culture might contaminate the "little England" they tried hard to recreate in the Punjab, could be seen as a kind of Western-style purdah, designed to protect the integrity of English womenfolk.

When Asian women started to arrive in Britain in the sixties (in the case of the Indians) and seventies (in the case of the Pakistanis and Bangladeshis), their presence acted as a reminder to the men of their Asian cultural values, about which some had become lax. The men gave up their white girl-friends, ceased to frequent the pub, and, in the case of the Sikhs, took to wearing their turbans again. (Ballard & Ballard, 1977:36) They looked inwardly to their families instead of outwardly to the native population, so the women caused a rupture of relations, whenever they had been established, between the male

Asians and the white population at large. Apart from the distinctive turbans worn by the Sikhs, Asian men did not dress very differently from British men. On the other hand, the women stood out because of their traditional form of dress, sarees for the Indians, and *salwar kamiz* (trousers and tunic) for the Pakistanis and Bangladeshis. By continuing to wear Asian clothes, in many ways so impractical in British weather, the women were seen as oddities who were refusing to conform to the British way of life. Of course, neither did the memsahibs take to wearing sarees or *salwar kamiz* when in India, but instead followed the English fashions "as far as the climate allowed". (Allen, 1992:111) Naturally, as members of the ruling class they could not have adopted native attire as this would have meant rejecting their own, superior, form of dress.

In their reluctance to discard their own culture, the Asians and the British are very much alike. Both communities have a strong sense of their own identity. When they migrate both seek to recreate their own familiar environment, however distant and distinct their country of adoption may be. Their customs and habits are strictly maintained regardless of any climatic, linguistic, social, environmental or religious pressures from the host community. Thus the British dined out in the jungle in

tails and preferred goods specially brought from Britain, however expensive they were, to the cheaper stuff made in India. Likewise, many Asian women in Britain still wear open sandals in the middle of November and patronize ethnic shops, if only because they are owned by 'their own kind'.

In order to understand the apparent lack of integration of a large number of Asian women into British society, a brief explanation about purdah is called for. The seclusion of women has been practised by all Asian communities, Hindus, Sikhs and Muslims alike, although the Muslim version of purdah has always been, and still is, the strictest form. Purdah is seen as a way of controlling the sexes as human nature is considered to be too weak to resist temptation. A sexual relationship is seen to be the only possible one between a man and a woman. The idea of an unrelated man and woman being alone together and not indulging in sexual activity is beyond the comprehension of many Asians. Consequently, boys and girls are segregated at puberty and women are discouraged from meeting members of the opposite sex who are not relatives. In strict purdah households there are separate male and female sections, and should any (male) strangers call, the women are obliged to retreat to the *zenana* (female quarters), which in a British terrace house may be

just a back room. If a woman had to leave the safety of her home, she was bound to cover herself up with a *dupatta* (long headscarf) to avoid attracting any unwanted attention and to refrain from speaking to any unknown men. Women are regarded as potential temptresses and are invariably blamed if men yield to their baser instincts. Very strict observance of *pardah* is only possible among Asians of a high socio-economic position, where servants can carry out the daily chores, including the shopping. In rural communities, total seclusion is not practical but *pardah*, although much more relaxed than in the cities, is still highly prestigious. (Saifullah Khan, 1976b; Shaw, 1988:171)

Pardah is seen as necessary to prevent a wife or daughter from defiling the pure blood of the family, which she could, and is thought, would, do were she not protected from her own weakness by strict control over her movements and behaviour. Deeply embedded in Islamic and non-Islamic Asian societies is the notion of *izzat* (family, especially male, pride or honour). *Izzat* lies in the hands of the women, who must be taught from a very early age never to jeopardize it. They are taught the virtue of *sharam* (shame or modesty), which, being the antithesis of openness and frankness, clashes very strongly with Western modes of behaviour (Wilson, 1978:

99-100) and is the source of the stereotypical image of the submissive Asian woman.

In Britain the traditional form of purdah is extremely difficult to follow. Families live in nuclear groups so the wife is often isolated from the physical and psychological support of other (older) female relatives, and which obliges her to participate in activities outside the house, such as, shopping, taking the children to the doctor, dealing with tradesmen and catching a bus or train. When the children are old enough, they may take charge of the shopping, but the Asian woman in purdah cannot help coming into some contact, however fleeting, with unknown men. Such restrictive contact with the outside world has not helped her to acquire any degree of fluency in English and her knowledge of the language may well be reduced to the four or five phrases she will need in order to pay her bills and ask for the bare essentials. The fact that first generation Asian women frequently shop in Indian or Pakistani stores is one of the reasons why their linguistic ability has hardly improved at all. Their lifestyle is reminiscent of the English memsahibs in their limited command of the native language and their narrowly defined world.

Purdah among Hindus and Sikhs is a very relaxed affair in Britain and among the Asians who arrived from

East Africa it may be said to have vanished completely. Non-Muslim Asian women move quite freely and come into unrestricted contact with men. In fact in some areas with a high density of ethnic minorities, such as Southall, West London, many Asian women are active in the political and religious affairs of their community and large numbers of Indian women, especially Sikhs, go out to work. (Bhachu, 1985:49;71; Dhanjal, 1976)

Working outside the home as far as women are concerned is considered to be un-Islamic, but in spite of the disapproval of the Muslim community at large, more and more Pakistani and Bangladeshi women are supplementing their husbands' pay packets with wages earned from local factories or from work done in the home. Entry into the labour market was considered inevitable in order to supplement the husbands' meagre wages, and not always totally disagreeable as in the early days Asian women often found themselves in all-female, and all-Asian shifts. Being together with other women recreated the traditional feminine network of support common in rural areas of the subcontinent and which many sorely missed in urban Britain. (CARF,1981:17) The arrival of the women meant that in time a new phenomenon would arise: the birth of Asian children in Britain. The number of births to Asian mothers became a source of worry and scandal to

certain sectors of the white population, who failed to take into account the fact that the majority of women arriving from the subcontinent during the sixties and seventies were of childbearing age, and thus very likely to produce offspring. The New Commonwealth migrants were accused of 'breeding like rabbits' whereas other very fertile ethnic groups, such as the Irish, simply had 'large families'.⁴³ The fears aroused by a spectacular increase in non-white births were doubtlessly kindled by the realization that many, if not all of the migrants were here to stay. Uprooting children born and brought up in Britain would be difficult and might easily be postponed until they had completed their schooling, by which time the parents would have become accustomed to the advantages of living in the West and they themselves would be reluctant to leave. Since 1970 the birth rate in the United Kingdom has fallen among all the ethnic groups, and among the population of New Commonwealth origin less than half (46 percent) have been born in Britain. (Foreign and Commonwealth Office, 1992)

⁴³ Nicolas Deakin observed that if one took the 1966 census into account, "there is nothing very startling about the fertility rates of coloured immigrant women - they are no higher than those of the Irish". (1970:87)

3.5.5. Schooling the Migrants.

Children being born in Britain presented a whole new series of problems as regards integration into the host society or the establishment of a marginal society on the periphery of the mainstream, white culture. Whereas during the Raj the British sent their children home to be brought up by grandparents and educated in British schools to prevent their becoming too 'Indian', the majority of post-war Asian migrants could not afford to emulate their former masters. Although in many cases it would have been desirable, especially for the daughters, for both religious and linguistic reasons, most of the British-born Asian children were sent to the local primary school. For their Pakistan or India-orientated mothers, still not completely at ease with British customs and the English language, these second generation migrants served as links between them and the outside world. The children often did the shopping and the talking for their mothers, who became increasingly dependent on them and their understanding of the bewildering world around them. However, children were taught that this support given by them to their mothers was only what was expected of the members of an intricate Asian family network. Women relied heavily on their children but the children were

indoctrinated with the values and mores of Asian society. (Allen, 1971:80) Thus, although the children were not able to visit their parents' homeland and imbibe the traditions first hand, there was never any danger of their becoming too anglicized.

On the contrary, the children of migrants, or rather their parents, were accused of not being British enough. Sikh parents often had to fight for permission for their sons to wear turbans at school. Muslim parents insist on their daughters' wearing salwar kamiz instead of the regulation uniform. According to the Koran, women and girls must always keep their arms and legs covered. In schools where the majority of pupils are Muslim, this custom is respected, but where there is a white majority, Muslim girls often resort to changing into their school uniforms when they arrive every morning and changing back into their Asian dress in the evening. Nor are Muslim parents very enthusiastic about physical education or swimming. Many Muslim girls are simply not allowed to participate in these lessons, which does not make their parents very popular with members of staff, who believe that the girls are being cheated out of a complete education. Some parents are clamouring for single-sex Islamic schools, where their daughters would be brought up

properly and not exposed to the bad influence of the brazen English girls.

On one hand, the creation of Islamic schools appears to be a satisfactory solution to culture clashes in schools with a large number of Asian children. During the weeks when a Muslim festival is held attendance may be so poor that the school may see fit to suspend lessons for all the pupils, white or black. Compulsory daily assembly, during which Christian prayers are said, is often found objectionable by Muslim or Hindu parents. As far as white parents are concerned, many express fears that their children's education will suffer because of the presence of children of 'an alien culture'. While knowledge of another language and its culture is regarded by most, if not all, whites as highly advantageous for a child, it ceases to be so desirable if the language and culture concerned are not European. Many parents are not likely to object to their children picking up notions of French or German 'free of charge', but they seem to draw the line at Punjabi or Bengali. In fact it is unlikely that the white children in a class with Asians would learn very much as many Asian children themselves speak their parents' language with difficulty.

In June 1965, following a controversy surrounding the complaints of several white parents in Southall made to

the Minister of Education, Sir Edward Boyle, the Department of Education and Science introduced a dispersal policy which was designed to avoid large concentrations of migrant children in any one school. The white parents were afraid that their children would be held back by the large numbers of migrant children, many of whom were still having problems with the language.⁴⁴ A decision was reached to limit the number of non-white immigrant children in a school to a maximum of thirty percent of the total number of pupils. (Cashmore & Troyna, 1983:149; Dummett & Dummett, 1987:120) The children who did not enter the quota were 'bussed out' to schools in surrounding areas. The measure, which was intended to promote the integration of minority group children into the mainstream culture through enforced contact with white pupils, calmed the white parents but was seen as discriminatory because skin colour was the sole criterion for dispersal as opposed to, for example, linguistic difficulties.

By 1967 approximately one thousand, mostly Asian, children were being bussed out of Southall to schools up to six miles away from their homes, but, paradoxically,

⁴⁴ In 1966 6% of immigrant schoolchildren spoke no English; 19% spoke some English; 26% spoke good English but had weak written English; the remaining 49% had no problems with their English at all. (Allen, 1971:127)

this did not mean that schools in Southall were more balanced, colour-wise. An absurd situation was reached when places in schools in Southall were left vacant because white parents were still reluctant to send their children to a school in an area which was fast becoming predominantly Asian. Neither were any white children bussed into Southall to occupy the vacant places. (CARF, 1981:31-2) The case of Southall was not unique as several Local Education Authorities implemented the dispersal policy. It was not until 1975 after much lobbying and signing of petitions by Asian and West Indian parents that the Race Relations Board conducted an investigation into the policy. It reached the conclusion that bussing "may be discriminatory for those who have no educational need for it" (ibid., 33) In other words, the removal of Asian or Afro-Caribbean children to schools outside their catchment area merely to avoid a concentration of black pupils was seen to be unfair and pedagogically unsound.

Thus, white parents gradually grew accustomed to seeing black children in the school playground, but Asian and West Indian parents refused to accept the second class position that their children were being forced into by the education authorities. Large numbers of blacks were sent to schools for the educationally subnormal (ESN); Asian children were frequently picked on while waiting at bus

stops on their way to school⁴⁵ and these second generation migrants felt that their cultures were not being represented in the curriculum, or if they were represented, they were inevitably shown to be backward, primitive and little short of savage. Hanif Kureishi recalls a teacher showing him pictures of Indian peasants in mud huts and announcing to the class that "Hanif comes from India". Kureishi, who was born in South London, remembers having trouble trying to imagine his wealthy Pakistani uncles riding on camels in their expensive suits. (Kureishi, 1986:9)

The realization that black youngsters were not succeeding in British schools because of a lack of identification with the content of the syllabi encouraged the emergence of multicultural education in the early seventies. In spite of good intentions, the introduction of 'black studies' or non-ethnocentric curricula was not a total success, mainly because of the opposition by some Local Education Authorities or head teachers to implement them. (Dhondy, et al., 1985:32) They seemed to think that knowledge of other cultures would undermine pupils' Britishness or love of Britain. It is also true that anti-

⁴⁵ On October 2nd 1974 a fifteen-year-old Asian boy, who was bussed to school every day, was killed in a fight between two gangs of youths, one black, one white, in Ealing, West London. (Dhondy, et al., 1985:32)

racist zealots have hindered rather than helped this process. Instead of introducing more 'ethnic' schoolbooks and thus counterbalancing the white viewpoint in a constructive way, traditional and much loved children's fiction was banned for being racist.⁴⁶ These drastic measures have only added fuel to the flames of the multicultural debate, and alienated many educationalists who found them bordering on the ridiculous.⁴⁷

Possibly the smouldering volcano surrounding the multicultural debate finally erupted during the Honeyford affair in 1985. Ray Honeyford, who was headmaster of Drummond Middle School in Bradford before his early enforced retirement, published a series of articles in which he argued that white children would suffer from multiculturalism and was unwilling to adapt to the Local Education Authority's new multicultural and anti-racist educational policy. The affair lasted well over a year

⁴⁶ Among the books considered racist are Little Black Sambo; Enid Blyton's Noddy and the Famous Five series; Hugh Lofting's Dr. Doolittle; W.E. Johns' Biggles books and Roald Dahl's Charlie and the Chocolate Factory and The Witches. (Van Dijk, 1991; Searle, 1987)

⁴⁷ The campaign to eliminate racist language from schools was trivialised when the media created an uproar over the suggestion that the nursery rhyme "Baa-Baa Black Sheep" and gollywogs (the trademark of Robertson's jam) could be offensive to Britain's black community. (See the Daily Star 1 May 1984 & the Daily Mail 2 May 1984 & the Sun 25 July 1985)

and was given ample media coverage. ⁴⁸ Honeyford was obviously not the most suitable choice of headmaster for Drummond for the simple reason that ninety percent of the pupils were Asian and thus felt entitled to demand a revision of the school's policies. The growing number of second generation migrants could not be treated as second class citizens like their parents had been in many cases. Neither would the 'Brown Britons' or British Asians feel any need to justify their presence in Britain. They were in Britain because they had been born there and therefore could demand the same privileges as the whites. The second generation Asian is

"free from his parents' deep-seated feeling of inferiority and insecurity in his dealings with the native British, and feels much less inhibited in standing up for his rights." (Parekh, 1978:42)

⁴⁸ For a very complete and objective account of the Honeyford affair see Murphy, 1987, chapter 6.

3.5.6. Culture Conflict or Compromise?

It is a fairly widespread belief among the white British that the second generation migrants, having had a taste of 'freedom' at school, will reject their Asian culture, seen as inferior by western standards. Liberal Britons raise their hands in horror at the apparent lack of individual freedom that young Asians have in comparison with their white contemporaries. It may be said that there is one particular Asian tradition that repels the average, essentially romantic English mind, this being the whole system of arranged marriages. As is the case whenever an alien tradition is dismissed as being 'barbaric', little or no attempt is ever made to understand why such a custom should have survived for so long.

Few white Britons realise the importance of the family in Asian cultures. Likewise, few white Britons are aware that many Asians are horrified by the lack of family feeling and loyalty shown in European nuclear families in comparison to the support and security of the traditional Asian extended family. The term 'extended family' does not necessarily mean relatives living under the same roof or owning communal property. Owing to the housing

situation, most Asian families in Britain live in nuclear households. Therefore an extended family refers to kin "who are bound by mutual rights and obligations and subscribe, at least nominally, to a hierarchy of authority among its members." (Brah, 1978:197)

Needless to say, the males of the family have greater authority over the females within the same age category,⁴⁹ although older females do have power over younger males. As most people are expected to marry, a girl in this community is under some authority all her life, first as a daughter, then as a wife. Only when she herself becomes a mother-in-law, does she see her own authority increased, especially if the newly wedded couple live under her roof.

In 3.5.2. the strong family and kinship links have already been discussed. Asian children are not brought up to consider themselves individuals, entitled to take their own decisions, but, rather, as members of a group, which reaches decisions all together. Relationships are not on a one-to-one basis as they are in Britain and in many western cultures, but rather between family units. Every

⁴⁹ Dervla Murphy describes how this automatic deference to males, regardless of their ability, irritated her. A nineteen-year-old fluent English-speaking Pakistani girl refused to take a verbal message from Murphy only because her younger brother, a boy of nine with faulty English, was present in the house at the time. (1987:23)

Asian knows s/he is part of a *biradari*, an extended kinship group or clan. On one hand, this gives them a feeling of strength and security. They know that they are never alone, they are confident in having the support of a large number of people behind them. On the other hand, they only have the advantages of this network of support provided that they keep the rules. The rules of the *biradari* stipulate that its members must not disgrace it and must comply with the decisions taken by the elders. Marriages among Asians are not seen as a contract between two individuals, as they usually are in the West, but as a union of two families. The suitability of the prospective husband or wife as regards his/her character, caste or income has far more importance than whether the couple actually like each other. Asians would say that love comes after marriage. A similar background is essential, whereas physical attraction may not last.

Asian tradition says that parents have more experience than children and are therefore more likely to choose the right person. Children accept this because

"Obedience is an extremely important foundation of Asian family relationships and agreement [is] frequently reached on the basis of acceptance of the parents' authority." (Stopes-Roe & Cochrane, 1990:32)

Moreover, the whole family must be considered suitable, not just the young man or woman, which explains why

parental knowledge of life has more weight than a biased adolescent view of a girl- or boy-friend. It is argued that arranged marriages are more successful than love marriages because there are more divorces in love matches. Asian parents who wield statistics to prove this point fail to take into account the lack of figures for failed arranged marriages. According to tradition, a love marriage means that you are putting yourself first, before your culture, your community and even your parents. If anything went wrong and the union ended in divorce, the parents would be disgraced and the divorced partner would be rejected by the community at large. If an arranged marriage fails, the whole family unites behind the husband or wife and thus, as it were, shoulders the blame. (Brah, 1978:200)

It must be said, nevertheless, that arranged marriage is not the tyrannical system it is made out to be by the media. (Ballard, 1978:181) The publicity it receives is always in terms of girls being forced and parents being cruel. In reality, it is much less traumatic, much more 'semi-arranged'. Amrit Wilson states that

"The widely-publicised arranged marriages forced on girls brought up in Britain to boys from India or Pakistan are in fact a dwindling minority." (Wilson, 1978:106)

That may indeed be true, but the fact remains that Asian parents do prefer their children to marry inside their own

community, even if this means a British Asian like their own children.

Nowadays there seems to exist a liberal version of the arranged marriage. The parents look for a suitable match through a network of relatives and friends. When they are satisfied with the boy's background, financial standing and education and the girl's character, family background and ability to manage a home, photographs are exchanged. If the couple feel attracted to each other, a chaperoned meeting is arranged. If this encounter does not dampen the initial interest, the marriage can be said to be on. Should the couple not feel suited, another round of enquiries ensues. The final decision rests with the boy and girl and not with the parents, as used to be the case. (Hiro,1991:159) It is doubtful whether this means a kind of progress towards liberation as, underneath it all, the system is surely the same. Girls are not allowed to object to the principles of it and certainly cannot go on refusing for ever. An important reason why parents are loath to leave this decision entirely in their daughter's hands is their fear of her choosing someone outside her religion or caste, but not so much because of divine disapproval but rather because of the reproof of society. Asian society is an extremely

conservative one and stepping out of one's place is deeply frowned upon.

Asian boys are, perhaps surprisingly, compliant as far as arranged marriages are concerned. Only a minority refuse to conform. Among the Hindus and Sikhs a new wife brings a large dowry with her, which nowadays is usually the payment of a mortgage, so it is easy to see why it would be against their interests to rebel against apparent parental tyranny when they are assured a rent-free future. From a privileged male standpoint, arranged marriages can be seen to have numerous advantages.

What do Asian girls feel about this institution? Amrit Wilson quotes one young Sikh girl as saying that she did not really believe in it but "I'll go through with it for my culture." (Wilson, 1978:105) This feeling may have been fairly widespread in the seventies but have things changed in the eighties and nineties? In 1981 New Society carried a disturbing article about a shelter for Asian girls who had run away from home. These girls were fleeing from an undesired arranged marriage, in many cases brought about because the girl had inadvertently fallen in love with "the wrong sort of Asian". The hostel was founded to provide these girls literally with a roof over their heads as those who had not taken the decision to leave home had been thrown out to save their parents'

izzat. The fact that such a place can operate proves that second or third generation migrants are finding it increasingly more difficult to accept the traditional role of Asian women. As the chairman of this project disclosed, "[In Britain, Asian] women want the same rights as English women". (Waing, 1981:419) This article suggests that the majority of Asian girls are refusing to conform to parental guidance in this matter, but another article published in the same year reaches the conclusion that,

"whilst some girls are unhappy about the idea of arranged marriages, most are not." (Edmonds, 1981:12; emphasis in original)

Indeed, according to a detailed survey by social anthropologist Alison Shaw, the institution of arranged marriage is alive and well among Asian communities in Britain. Among the young men and women she interviewed, ninety percent had had or were going to have an arranged marriage and, what perhaps might appear more surprising, none of them felt they were being cheated out of the basic liberty of deciding their own future. (Shaw, 1988:156-180)

Some girls have had to accept an arranged marriage in exchange for being allowed to continue on to higher education. Many Asian parents regard further education as a real threat to their daughters' acceptance of their traditional roles as girls may be "led astray into

liaisons with boys that will jeopardize their marriages," (ibid., 164) There is a kind of contradiction in attitudes here for Asian parents are often pleased and proud that their daughters are educated and can occupy positions of prestige in British society, but in many cases they are afraid that the price they will have to pay for having another family member with a respectable income is too high should the girl reject her religion or become 'too' westernized.

In Indian or Pakistani villages, if marriages were not arranged by the family, it stands to reason that many women would remain single. Owing to the tradition of purdah, there are few opportunities for girls to meet boys after puberty. Asian girls growing up in the West are in close contact with boys right from an early age and continuously through their school years. They should be able to store up enough reflexes to rely on their own judgement. In spite of this, the idea behind one's parents and close relatives weighing up the good and bad points of a prospective husband does not seem to clash with any notions they may have of their own common sense. Journalist Sadhana Ghose puts arranged marriages on a par with computer dating, which of course is not disapproved of in the West,

"You take all your good points and bad points and compare them with someone else's." (Gifford, 1990:143)

The Western emphasis placed upon individual choice may seem to suggest that only marriages chosen by the couples themselves can bring happiness, but the Eastern belief in family wisdom creates a confidence and trust in arranged marriages. The careful matching of backgrounds and associated customs and values is a key quality of arranged marriages which remains relevant even as relations between the sexes change. Author Bapsi Sidhwa believes that

"perhaps arranged marriages stand a better chance of lasting, the parents have at least checked him out. His family have not just given him a set of genes, but a whole background of how to look at life." (ibid., 145)

Considered in this way, it stands to reason that marriage seen as a watertight, carefully prepared, permanent contract as opposed to the risky, often short-lived gamble which it is in most Western cultures, is more likely to prove lasting and successful in the former case. It cannot be ignored, however, that even in so-called 'free choice' marriages, partners are frequently selected from similar personal, social and cultural backgrounds. (Ballard, 1978:183; Gifford, 1990:147) Thus, the philosophy behind the search for a suitable marriage partner may not be so different among Asians and whites. In many ways the media have done little to bridge the gap between the two cultures. On the contrary, by

concentrating on the more sordid cases, the press has alienated public opinion even more instead of presenting these situations in their proper context and as deviations from the norm. When reading about the "Scandal of the brides for sale" (Daily Mail, 5 August 1985) or the case of the two Birmingham schoolgirls sold into marriage by their father while on holiday in his native North Yemen, (December 1987) the white British feel outraged about such barbarian practices being carried out on their very shores.

White Britons fail to understand how young Asians, educated in the United Kingdom, can still identify with their Asianness after contact with what the former see as a superior, more advanced culture. Mihur Bose quotes a white female divorce lawyer who practises in Hounslow and has had vast experience with Asians as saying that

"when they have agreed to an arranged marriage .. [Asian girls have] gone back a thousand years." (Bose, 1989:36)

This woman is not alone in adopting this rather condescending attitude towards Asian customs. Conflicts between parents and teenage children exist among all cultures, but when such problems arise in Asian families in Britain it is often assumed that the parents are being excessively authoritarian and the adolescents are desperately trying to shake off their Asian 'yoke'.

Leaving home may be a satisfactory solution for many teenagers in Britain when the home atmosphere becomes too tense, but among Asians the feeling of loyalty and obligation to the family makes taking such a step virtually impossible for the majority. (Ballard & Ballard, 1977:45; Shaw, 1988:165)

First generation migrants often openly encouraged their children to have white friends and fit into British society, but at the same time, expected them to dissociate themselves from what they saw as negative white cultural values. When teenagers appeared to become too anglicized and, what boils down to the same thing, too individualistic, parents would respond by becoming stricter and more conservative. (See Husband, 1987:202-4)

The second generation of Asian migrants have had to find a compromise between the two cultures. On one hand they have had to succeed in a predominantly white, Christian country, while, on the other hand, their families have wanted them to retain their Asian identity. The third generation, that is the grandchildren of the people who came in the fifties and sixties, some of whom are now approaching adolescence, have the advantage of, at least, **their** parents' understanding of the difficulties of being a Brown Briton.

The cliché that children of migrants are "torn between two cultures", as advocated by many social anthropologists in the seventies (e.g. Watson, 1977; Thompson, 1974; Brah, 1978) wears thin in the eighties and nineties. As Beatrice Drury points out

"it is a descriptive term which implies that young people are simply caught up in a vacuum, in some sort of no-man's cultural desert. (Drury, 1991:388)

On the contrary, the second generation, and certainly the third generation to a much larger extent, have access, as it were, to two cultural resources, which they can use in a flexible and accomplished way, depending on the situation. Thus, they can move confidently in both the Asian and the British worlds, although most scholars would claim that "their roots lie in the resources of Asian culture" (Ballard, 1979:128) because

"they may intellectually subscribe to Western values but their emotional being is almost utterly un-Western". (Parekh, 1978: 44-5)

The tendency to retain an essential Asianness, in spite of the fact that for the majority of second generation migrants Indian or Pakistani culture seems somewhat bizarre to them, may be a reflex action in retaliation to a familiar culture that continues to reject non-white citizens as unwanted aliens. Amid talk of 'repatriation' and lurking hostility towards blacks, it makes little

sense to try to hide one's ethnic origin when it is plainly there for all to see. Instead, many British born Asians choose to make a public statement of their ethnic origin by deliberately wearing turbans, sarees or salwar kamiz.

Likewise, while the second generation are not so conscious of subtle differences among Asian communities as their parents were, they are aware of their collective identity as British Asians, which in a few generations' time may have become as neutral a term as Black American is now, at least as far as nationality alone is concerned. Certainly when political action is called for, it makes sense for similarly underprivileged citizens to join forces and leave aside relatively minor discrepancies in order to achieve their aims. Far from their parents' homeland, the second generation identify with Britain and regard it as home.

These British Asians are not disputing with the white British the sole possession of Britain as Enoch Powell claims in the epigraph of this chapter, but rather they are demanding a share in the possession of what is now their native land, in spite of their un-British appearance. Britishness has been confused with whiteness, although this identification of colour with citizenship is being challenged in the last quarter of the twentieth

century. In the following chapter the laws that have established the right of entry to Commonwealth citizens and the changing status of British citizenship, depending on one's skin colour, will be discussed.

4. Keeping Britain White.

"It is a shameful thing that a party which glorified in the sweets of Empire when they were profitable, shows that it is hypocritical when it comes to repaying some of the debt that we owe to those countries we have exploited in the past."

James McCall M.P. 16.11.1961.

4.1. The Sweets of Empire

4.1.1. The Spread of John Company.¹

The motives behind the changes in government legislation on immigration in the post-war period are as diverse as they are debatable. Many sociologists claim that, to a large extent, the shift in policy obeyed the changing requirements of British capitalism, that is, Commonwealth citizens were demoted to the status of alien contract labourers who would carry out the jobs the indigenous work force would not perform and much more cheaply. (see Miles & Phizacklea, 1984; Ben-Tovim & Gabriel, 1979; Rex, 1983) While economic factors doubtlessly played an important part in determining

¹ 'John Company' was the nickname used for the Honourable East India Company, formed in 1599 and which, from 1833 to 1858 was the recognized governing body of British India.

government policy on immigration, the existence of a profound antipathy towards the former colonial subjects cannot be overlooked or underestimated, especially when the conditions of the 1971 Immigration Act actually made it easier for white citizens of these former colonies to enter the country while slamming the door firmly on the blacks. This antipathy seems to be a leading factor behind the immigration restrictions and can be traced back as far as the first serious² legislative attempt to control the entry of aliens into Britain in 1826. (Foot, 1965:83)

It is practically impossible to separate the economic from the ideological and political factors that determined the severity of the entry restrictions, consequently, before the twentieth century immigration laws are discussed in detail,³ some of the laws passed by the British in India, before and after the 1857 Uprising, will be briefly mentioned as an illustration of the power of racial thinking on past and present government policy.

² In fact the first known record of governmental concern about colonial immigration must date back to the reign of Elizabeth I. The Acts of the Privy Council of 11.8.1596 record the Queen's worries about the number of "blackmoores brought into this realme, of which kinde of people there are allready here to manie ... Her Majesty's pleasure therefore ys that those kinde of people should be sent forth of the lande.." (Quoted in Banton, 1976:214)

³ See Appendix 1 for an outline of these laws.

While an overwhelming number of the laws implemented by the Company were designed to keep the natives firmly under British control, the immigration laws passed by the successive post World War II governments of Britain had quite the opposite objective: to keep the Indians out. However, this does not mean that the British underwent a significant change in attitude towards their former colonial subjects. The Indians were invariably viewed as backward peasants by the Company's employers and even by supposedly progressive thinkers of the day.⁴ The arrival of large numbers of Indians during the nineteen fifties and sixties claiming equal rights as fellow British citizens, coinciding as it did with the gradual demise of the once great British Empire, reactivated deep-seated feelings of animosity and notions of racial superiority that had reached their zenith in the mid-nineteenth century.

⁴ Graham Wallas, a correspondent of the *Fabian*, wrote about her impressions of the Indians in 1892: "The real fact is that these men are a different species of animals to ourselves ... their physical constitution is feeble and weedy and often disgustingly sensual. Their character is fawning and grovelling to superiors, bullying to inferiors, mean and deceptive to equals. Their general level of character does not show as much reason as ordinary European children and is much more full of spite and meanness." (Quoted in Rich, 1990:27)

The rule of the East India Company became an acknowledged reality when Clive and a small army of the Company defeated the more numerous but more disorganized troops of the Nawab of Bengal, Siraj-ud-daula, in 1757 at Plassey. In what has been described as "a transaction rather than a battle" (de Schweinitz, 1983:91; and see 4.2.2.) Britain embarked on her imperial venture in India which would last two hundred years. In 1765 the emperor Shah Alam granted the *diwani* (the collection of tax revenues and the administration of justice) in Bengal to the Company. Thus, governmental responsibilities were added to the Company's original commercial functions and with the administration of Bengal firmly in British hands, the influence of the Company would spread all over the country for the following hundred years until it approached its geographical limits.⁵

The early governor-generals of India set themselves the task of westernizing the subcontinent and its people and no-one more enthusiastically than James Ramsay Dalhousie. Lord Dalhousie, who was in office from 1848 to 1856, set out to reform, in other words anglicize, India as far as possible. He waged his own war against some of

⁵ Quetta on the northwestern frontier was occupied in 1876 and Upper Burma was annexed by British India in 1886. (de Schweinitz, 1983:168)

the cruel Indian customs, such as female infanticide and sati (the burning of a Hindu wife on her husband's funeral pyre), the practice of which he tried to eradicate in the princely states as well as in the states directly governed by the Company.⁶ Two of Dalhousie's most important and most controversial reform measures were the Caste Disabilities Act of 1850 (Act XXI), granting Christian converts the right to inherit their ancestral property, which as apostates they would have forfeited under both Muslim and Hindu law, and the Widows Remarriage Act of 1856 (Act XV), which allowed Hindu widows (now saved from the funeral pyre) to remarry. (Metcalf, 1965:27; de Schweinitz, 1983:118 & 129) Dalhousie's interest in spreading the word of God, or what amounted to the same thing - British ideas, to as many Indians as possible was the philosophy behind the Caste Disabilities Act. It was hoped that this would encourage more converts to Christianity, but not only did Dalhousie's plan backfire on that score, it was also seen as "a Christian conspiracy aimed at undermining the very foundations of

⁶ The great Hindu reformer, Rajah Rammohun Roy (see 3.2.1.) was also a campaigner for the suppression of sati. (Watson, 1979:138)

Hindu orthodoxy" (Wolpert, 1982:233) and added another drop to the already brimming glass of Indian discontent.⁷

Lord Dalhousie, fired by utilitarian ideas, improved the roads and built the first railways in the country, but also instigated the doctrine of lapse, whereby the Company took possession of a number of territories in which there was no direct heir to the princely throne, or in which it could be proved that governmental responsibilities were being grossly neglected. (de Schweinitz, 1983:129; Watson, 1979:134-5 & 140) Following this rationale, Dalhousie gained possession of seven states in seven years, as he consistently refused to accept 'deathbed adoptions'.⁸ (Metcalf, 1965:32) In 1856 he made what many historians consider to be John Company's worst blunder by annexing the kingdom of Oudh and thus undermining the Bengal Army's faith in the Raj and creating great hostility among Muslim and Hindu princes alike. (Wolpert, 1982:232; Bayly, 1991) Oudh was taken over by the British on the grounds of

⁷ However, Pratul Chandra Gupta, in his book Nana Sahib and the Rising at Cawnpore, writes that "the abolition of sati rite in 1829 and the passing of the Widow Remarriage Bill in 1856 must have shocked the orthodox school. But the measures were by no means universally unpopular". (Gupta, 1963:33)

⁸ It was a widespread Hindu custom to adopt an heir should the ailing prince have no son, but the Company had a very tightly defined European conception of inheritance. (Spear, 1978:141; Bayly, 1991)

maladministration, which was a convenient excuse, Dalhousie firmly believing that British rule was so superior to the Indian variety that this criterion could easily have been applied to each and every one of the princely states. The annexation of Oudh was another of the many determining factors which triggered off the revolt of 1857, mainly because Oudh was not simply another princely state. The Nawab of Oudh was the vizier or Prime Minister of the Mogul Empire. Any attack on Oudh was an attack on Mogul sovereignty, and by extension, Indianness. (Bayly, 1991)

Lord Charles John Canning, the Company's last governor-general and the crown's first viceroy, enacted a highly unpopular measure: the Enlistment Act of 1856. Under this new regulation Indian soldiers were required to accept service in any part of the fast growing British Empire. The act had been designed to assure the new garrison in Burma with a constant supply of troops. This regulation sounded harmless enough to the British, who had yet again failed to take into account the Hindu caste system and its beliefs. Brahmans and other high-caste Hindus did not travel overseas because it was thought that they would become permanently polluted. A very large number of the sepoys were Brahmans and it was felt that this was another ruse by the British to rob them of their

caste and make them easy targets for conversion to Christianity. (Wolpert, 1982:233)

In the words of Enoch Powell, John Company was determined to heap up his own funeral pyre.⁹ Powell was referring to governmental policy on post-war immigration from the Commonwealth, which he considered to be far too lenient, but the prophecy that the rule of the East India Company would last only one hundred years was about to be fulfilled thanks to the Company's own misguided efforts. The final straw for the Indians was the introduction of the Enfield rifles. These highly efficient guns were viewed with distrust by the sepoys because the British, with incredible lack of foresight, had the cartridges smeared with cow and pig fat. The sepoys were required to bite off the tip of the cartridges before inserting them into the rifles. If the sepoy was a Muslim he would not wish to defile his lips with the fat of a pig, considered unclean by Islam. Neither would a Hindu approve of using a sacred animal in such a base way. The Indians were served with yet more proof of the insidious plot to

⁹ "Those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make mad. We must be mad, literally mad, as a nation to be permitting the annual inflow of some 50,000 dependants, who are for the most part the material of the future growth of the immigrant-descended population. It is like watching a nation busily engaged in heaping up its own funeral pyre." The Times, 22.4.1968.

Christianize them all. (ibid., 234) The incident of the rifles is generally regarded as the spark that set the 1857 revolt aflame,¹⁰ which itself served as a convenient excuse to abolish the Company, already an anachronism, and transfer the authority to the Crown. (Spear, 1978:145-9; Bowle, 1977:chapter 14)

Regardless of whether one chooses to call the events of 1857 a mutiny or a national revolt, it cannot be denied that there was a rupture in the continuity of British administration in India. From 1858 onwards, there could be no pretence that British rule was anything but imperialist, especially when Queen Victoria was proclaimed Empress of India in 1876. The laws enacted by the East India Company had aimed at modernizing India by introducing western technology and thought. The 1857 Uprising put an end to any belief in the transformation of India and her people.

"The arrogance of a superior, but exportable civilization now gave way to the arrogance of inherent superiority." (de Schweinitz, 1983: 175)

In other words, one of the most pervasive legacies of the events of 1857 was the attitude of the British towards the

¹⁰ Nevertheless, it has been argued that the greased cartridges were merely an excuse for the Uprising. After they had revolted in Meerut on May 10th, the sepoys took their Enfield rifles with them when they set off for Delhi in order to reestablish the Mughal Emperor on the throne. (Mohan, 1991)

Indians. Gone was the early enthusiasm of men such as Warren Hastings and even Dalhousie himself, who had earnestly believed in their civilizing mission. When the Crown took over the government of India, the objective was simply to keep the natives in check and, at a prudential distance, and, above all, to abandon any proselytism. 1857 was therefore a watershed in Anglo-Indian relations and in British policy towards the government of the country. The ideas of Charles Trevelyan with regard to the enlightenment of the Indian people were no longer applicable and sounded sadly ironic in the aftermath of the Mutiny.

"The political education of a nation must be a work of time; and while it is in progress, we shall be safe as it is possible for us to be. The natives shall not rise against us, because we shall stoop to raise them; there will be no reaction, because there will be no pressure; the national energy will be fully and harmlessly employed in acquiring and diffusing European knowledge, and in naturalising European institutions."

(Trevelyan, On the Education of the People of India, 1838. Quoted in Metcalf, 1965:15)

In Britain the events of the Indian Revolt were followed with an almost morbid curiosity and seemed to confirm pre-conceived ideas about the barbarity and savagery of blacks. The few isolated voices that spoke out about the cruel reprisals carried out by the British, such as John Stuart Mill's, or those who ventured to

question Britain's authority in India were generally ignored.¹¹ Likewise, the small, insular British community in India kept the events of the Mutiny alive in popular memory, which resulted in the establishment of an elite community within a caste-ridden society, with the least possible contact with the natives.

During the post-Mutiny years the depth of British racial arrogance was demonstrated with the controversy arising over the Ilbert Bill of 1883. The Viceroy at the time, Lord Ripon, had attempted to remove one of the more racially inspired laws from the Indian statute book. According to the Criminal Procedure Code, Indian magistrates were not allowed to try European British subjects (as opposed to Indian British subjects). However, when Ripon proposed to alter this situation, the very idea of colonial subjects having power over the masters created such an uproar among the white community, in

¹¹ Quarterly Review wrote that the Mutiny was "in reality a struggle between races, a revolt of the best classes of Hindostanees against a foreign invader of their sacred land". (CIII, 1858: 255-6) Benjamin Disraeli also protested against the indiscriminate butchery that was "meeting atrocities by atrocities". (Quoted in Thompson, 1925:53)

particular in Calcutta, the British capital,¹² that Ripon was obliged to settle for a compromise. A European British subject could be brought before an Indian magistrate but was allowed to claim a trial by jury, half of whom had to be Europeans or Americans, in other words, whites. (Spear, 1978:169-70; Metcalf, 1965: 309-10)¹³ Thus the racial haughtiness of the British flourished in India, as it did in all the non-white colonies, and familiarity with the natives bred contempt rather than a deeper understanding and tolerance. The British looked down on the peoples of Africa and Asia because they did not constitute a threat to them. The only times when this security was threatened (for example during the 1857 rebellion and the Jamaica Insurrection of 1865)¹⁴ the British contempt turned into fear and hatred and the white race fought to maintain the upper hand over the 'inferior'

¹² Sir Charles Wood, who had been Secretary of State for India from 1859 to 1866, argued that "it was only reasonable that the ruling race should be exempt from the criminal jurisdiction of the ruled". (Quoted in Metcalf, 1965:309)

¹³ Lord Ripon's liberal attitude was neither forgiven nor forgotten by the European community. His statue, which was erected in Calcutta in 1915, was financed entirely by Indian subscription. (Morris, 1982b:147)

¹⁴ See Lorimer, 1978: chapter 9 "Governor Eyre, the Negro and the Honour of England" and Hall, 1989.

peoples. (Mason, 1965:146-7) At the end of the nineteenth century it was an established 'fact' among the missionary community that "the Hindu is inherently untruthful and lacks moral courage". (Kiernan, 1967:64) Needless to say, in Britain, as was current in the rest of western Europe during the second half of the nineteenth century, racist assumptions, growing out of popular xenophobia and folk myths and merging with a rise in an idealized nation-state (fast becoming a European phenomenon), were becoming more widespread and would prepare the ground for the first anti-immigrant mobilizations. (Lorimer, 1978:206-7)

4.1.2. Early Immigration Controls.

Prior to 1905 immigration control into Britain had not been carried out with any regularity or uniformity. Checks on free entry, such as those initiated during the French Wars of 1793-1815, were based on political and not economic or social reasons. (Kiernan, 1978:52-3) Few Acts of Parliament were passed to either keep out or deport unwanted foreigners and any restrictions that were enforced during periods of war were removed from the Statute Book once peace was restored. For this reason various migrant groups fleeing religious or political

persecution in their countries made their way to Britain. In 1685 Louis XIV withdrew the Edict of Nantes, which had granted the Huguenots a certain degree of religious tolerance, following which approximately 80,000 French Huguenots abandoned their homeland and found refuge in England. During the reign of Queen Anne some 10,000 Palatines were admitted to Britain from the continent. (Foot, 1965:80) During most of the nineteenth century there were few controls on the entry of non-British subjects. Although an Aliens Act was passed in 1826 and an Aliens Registration Act ten years later, these measures, originally designed to stamp out any subversive activities that might still be brewing after the recent war with France, were unpopular with liberals and quickly abandoned. (Kiernan, 1978:53; Miles & Solomos, 1987:78) The relatively late introduction of immigration controls and the emphasis on the British tradition of liberty have combined to forge an image of Britain as a tolerant nation. It has also been argued, however, that a sense of British superiority over other Europeans was an integral part of this toleration, possibly only thinly disguised condescension. (Holmes, 1991:74)

The Aliens Act of 1905, which can be regarded as a radical departure from Britain's traditional 'open-door' policy, laid the foundation stone for subsequent

immigration legislation. Since 1826 aliens had been allowed to enter Britain freely, but under the new act entry was granted at the discretion of the immigration officers posted at the various ports. People could be refused entry if they were suspected of being lunatics, carriers of disease, destitute or guilty of an extraditable offence,¹⁵ except a political crime. (Holmes, 1991:22-3) The Conservative Government had introduced the Aliens Act after a heated debate surrounding Russian Polish immigration and in particular the increasing numbers of Jews settling in East London. Between 1870 and 1914 some 120,000 Jews fled to Britain, either to settle permanently or en route to the United States. While some authors regard them as political refugees (e.g. Miles & Solomos, 1987), the Jewish migration of the second half of the nineteenth century was also triggered by the appalling economic conditions prevalent in Eastern Europe. However, this migration was not stimulated by labour demand in Britain in the way the post World War II migration from the Indian subcontinent and the Caribbean would be, and consequently resulted in

¹⁵ Paul Foot considers the Extradition Act of 1870, which gave the Government powers to deport criminals wanted by other countries with whom Britain had signed an extradition treaty, the real beginning of the end of uncontrolled immigration into Britain. (1965:85)

competition with the indigenous labour force, especially in large urbanized areas such as London and Birmingham. (Kiernan, 1978:53) Major Evans-Gordon, who was one of the leading spokesmen against immigration from Eastern Europe, could be credited with the introduction of the 'numbers game' into immigration policy. His speech in Parliament demanding immediate immigration control (see 3.3) in which he argued that the number and concentration of aliens was the determining factor¹⁶ in the development of hostility among the local population, set the tone for the racial propaganda which would have Enoch Powell as its most energetic spokesman during the sixties and seventies. (see 4.2.2.)

The Aliens Order was, in fact, implemented in a fairly liberal and humane manner, mainly because the Conservatives lost the general election of 1906 and the incoming Liberal Government, headed by Sir Henry Campbell-Bannerman, while not actually repealing the act, saw that the controls were not too stringent. (Walvin, 1984; Foot, 1965:100) The outbreak of the First World War caused a

¹⁶ Lord Elton, in his book The Unarmed Invasion, insists that "their numbers are more significant than their colour" and draws an analogy between the arrival of black citizens and archbishops in his home village. He would not object to one or even five archbishops settling near him but he would feel uncomfortable if fifty came. (1965:26-7)

tightening up of controls and the 1914 Aliens Restriction Act went through Parliament with little fuss or delay. The new act required all aliens in the country to register and any who wished to enter Britain were subject to much harsher screening than under the previous act. The wartime legislation, which was passed on the understanding that once the national emergency was over there would be a return to the status quo, was extended for another year in the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act of 1919. Some Members of Parliament were unwilling to revert to the former 'open-door' policy on immigration and Noel Billing, M.P. for Hertford, even suggested 'badging the aliens' as a practical means of avoiding any unnecessary contact with them.¹⁷ (Foot, 1965:105)

The following year (1920) a new Aliens Order was passed, under which entry could be refused to an alien who was considered to be unable to support him or herself. The Home Secretary was also empowered to deport any alien whose presence might not be 'conducive to the public good'. Under the new act any alien who wished to take up employment in Britain could only do so if s/he was issued with a Ministry of Labour permit, which was only supplied

¹⁷ Billing's idea was by no means new. From 1218 and until their expulsion in 1290 by Edward I, Jews were obliged to wear a special badge. (Kiernan, 1978:27)

when it could be proved that no British labour was available. (Miles & Solomos, 1987:81) As a result of these more restrictive measures and the overall slump of the thirties, the numbers of aliens arriving in Britain were relatively small. Between 1921 and 1930 an annual average of 730 aliens entered the country; between 1930 and 1935, 5,000; between 1935 and 1940, the number had risen to 18,000. (Foot, 1965:107)

The Irish have made up the largest group of migrants to Britain and have been arriving steadily ever since the late eighteenth century. The 1841 Census indicated that there were more than 400,000 Irish people living in England, Scotland and Wales. The potato famine that scourged Ireland caused the spectacular increase in the Irish population in Britain as shown by the 1851 Census (727,300 people) and the 1861 Census (806,000 people). These figures fall short of the real numbers as only those people actually born in Ireland were included, the children of Irish parents being classified as British. (Miles & Solomos, 1987:76-8) Despite the size and regularity of the influx of Irish citizens into Britain, there has never been any kind of state intervention to control this settlement. On the contrary, even after the formation of the Irish Free State in 1922, and, with more reason in 1948 when the newly christened Republic of

Ireland left the Commonwealth, Irish citizens withheld the right to enter, settle, work and vote in Britain freely. This does not mean to say that Irish workers were not received with hostility by large sections of the British population, who judged them according to the popular image of what a 'typical' Irishman was supposed to be: lazy,¹⁸ drunk, Catholic and stupid. Much of the resentment felt against the Irish in the nineteenth century was based on religious antagonism, especially in central of Scotland, but as Paul Foot points out

"the terms in which the religious bigots rationalized their resentment were as familiar as those which racial bigots use[d] in the [nineteen] sixties." (1965:81)

Likewise, the Jews who began to migrate to Britain in large numbers at the end of the nineteenth century, were regarded with suspicion by the indigenous population, who continued to see them as either Christ-killers or oppressive money-lenders. (Holmes, 1991:73) By the First World War there were approximately 300,000 Jews in Britain, living mainly in the big cities and involved in small workshop trades. (Miles & Solomos, 1987:79-80) After the 1920 Aliens Order, which prevented large numbers

¹⁸ During 1846 the leader of The Times wrote the following:
"When the Celts once cease to be potatophagi, they must become carnivorous. With the taste of meats will grow an appetite for them; with the appetite, the readiness to earn them." (Quoted in Foot, 1965:82)

of Jews and other refugees fleeing from Germany after the installation of a fascist government from entering Britain, anti-semitism actually increased. (Fisher, 1972: 1296-1308) The crisis in the world economy stimulated the activities of fascist parties in Europe who exploited this growing anti-semitism for their political ends. People who previously had not borne the Jews any grudge began to resent their presence. (Holmes, 1991:81; Foot, 1965:102) It may be said, however, that the attempts to stir up anti-semitism in the East End of London by Oswald Mosley and the British Union of Fascists, founded in 1932 and itself a descendant of the British Brothers League formed in 1902 by Major Evans-Gordon, were largely unsuccessful. The hostility that the arrival of Jewish migrants had initially caused gradually died the same death as the resentment caused by the Irish and other earlier migrant groups. (Layton-Henry, 1984:88 & 110) Thus they all merged with the indigenous population becoming "that heterogeneous thing, an Englishman". (Defoe, 1879)

4.1.3. Raking the Imperial Embers.

On the one hand Britain had seen fit to introduce strict immigration controls in the early part of the twentieth century, on the other hand, the government had openly and systematically encouraged the emigration of British people to other parts of the Empire. By the end of the nineteenth century migration within the Empire formed a solid part of imperial policy as it was thought that this would increase the power and influence of the mother country in the overseas territories. This officially sanctioned migration was really only intended to favour the emigration of British subjects from the United Kingdom to other parts of the Empire and was certainly not aimed at facilitating the entry of large numbers of citizens from the African or Asian colonies into Britain. Nevertheless, Britain did recruit labour from India, mostly the Punjab, to work on the East African railways, and the sugar plantations of Natal in South Africa, Mauritius off the east coast of Africa and Jamaica, Trinidad, Guiana, St. Vincent, St. Lucia, St. Kitts and Grenada in the Caribbean¹⁹. This mid-nineteenth

¹⁹ Between 1834 and 1865 alone approximately 96,580 Indians emigrated to the British West India Colonies. (Green, 1976:284)

century Indian diaspora, both indentured and free labour, sparked off resentment in the areas of white settlement. In Natal the Indian population soon exceeded the European as by 1894 there were already 43,000 Indians compared to 40,000 whites. (Huttenback, 1975: 127-147)

As a result of the large exodus of mainly unskilled workers to the newly independent Dominions, both Canada and Australia became more selective in their demands for migrants, preferring skilled workers to agricultural labourers.²⁰ In a sense Britain would pay the penalty for her own uncontrolled emigration during the slump years, when Canadian and Australian farmers, hard hit by the crisis, vociferously demanded immigration controls. (Foot, 1965:107) In spite of these restrictions, between 1919 and 1930 two million people emigrated from the United Kingdom, the majority to North America, Australia and New Zealand, which created a serious labour shortage²¹, a fact that is

²⁰ Canada was granted Dominion status in 1867; Australia and New Zealand in 1907. In 1901 Australia passed her first Immigration Law; Canada passed the Immigration Act in 1910.

²¹ As late as 1947, Sir Henry Tizard, presented the Cabinet with his Proposal for the Dispersal of Industry and Population throughout the Commonwealth, which advocated a shift of population from the UK to the Commonwealth on social, economic and strategic grounds. (Dean, 1987:306-7)

often overlooked whenever immigration to Britain is discussed. (Layton-Henry, 1984)

In 3.1. a brief mention was made of the early Merchant Shipping Acts (1823 and 1855), which were passed to facilitate the repatriation of Lascars and other Asian sailors that were stranded in Britain. It should not be forgotten that Indian seamen were not aliens in the legal sense of the word as Britain conferred her citizenship on all the subjects of her colonial possessions.²² During the period of imperial expansion, any concept of a citizenship which foreigners could aspire to simply did not arise. Allegiance to the Crown was the link that bound British and colonial peoples together. Thus, when the various acts concerning the admittance of Asian or African seamen are passed, they represent early attempts to curtail the rights of British subjects by establishing distinctions between white and non-white citizens. Even among the non-white citizens categories were set up as the Act of 1823 stipulated that Lascars were not British subjects and thus could be sent back to India, whereas West Indian seamen were indeed subjects of His Majesty. The Merchant Shipping Act of 1894 reinforced the earlier

²² The British Nationality Act of 1948 constituted the first legal definition of British citizenship and nationality. (Deakin, 1969)

legislation by empowering the Secretary of State to repatriate Asian seamen who attempted to become residents in Britain. (Miles & Solomos, 1987:84) However, judging by the growing numbers of Asians as well as West Indians and Africans who lived in the vicinity of the main seaports, this act was not very rigidly implemented. (Fryer, 1989:294-5 & 356)

After the First World War and in keeping with the newly launched theories of eugenics, (Rich, 1990; Stepan, 1982) nativist reactions against these, albeit small, seaport settlements of blacks, gradually grew in strength and fervour. Anti-black riots were staged in 1919, mainly triggered off by the slump in employment in the shipping industry after the war. Many of the black seamen from colonial territories in West Africa, the Caribbean and the Middle East, who had served on British ships during the war, were the first to suffer the crisis, as the National Union of Seamen campaigned to restrict employment to white seamen only. These men could not be expelled from Britain as they were British subjects, but some of them were persuaded to return to their country of origin. (Fryer, 1989: 298-313; Miles & Solomos, 1987:84-85) Some of the worst attacks were provoked by white demobbed servicemen without jobs, who identified the blacks as the cause of their own plight. However, according to one of

the police officers called in to quell the riots, the rise in unemployment was not the real cause of the disturbances. He told the Manchester Guardian that

"The negroes would not have been touched but for their relations with white women. This has caused the entire trouble." 12 June 1919. (Quoted in Fryer, 1989: 302)

Thus, fears of a gradual 'mongrelisation' of the white race and a widespread contempt for the children of 'mixed' parentage sowed the seeds of racial tensions in particular among the white working-class population.

The riots occurred in London, Cardiff, Liverpool and South Shields and lasted from April to June causing several casualties and a few deaths. (May & Cohen, 1975) In spite of the localized character of the conflict and the fact that in many cases the blacks only resorted to violence in self-defence, henceforth blacks in Britain were generally regarded as a 'problem'. The 1919 riots are important in the history of British immigration legislation as it may be argued that pressure from local police forces and the lower ranks of the civil service in the areas affected by the disturbances caused a tightening up of controls on black settlement and residence in Britain. (Rich, 1990:121) The Special Restrictions (Coloured Alien Seamen) Order of 1925 came into being in the aftermath of the 1919 riots and can be seen as the first of a series of measures introduced by the state to

solve the newly defined 'black problem' by removing the victims of racial hostility. Under the Order, seamen who did not possess satisfactory documentary evidence of being British subjects were obliged to obtain permission to land from the Immigration Authorities before leaving their ship. By taking advantage of the ignorance of the law of many seamen, the police and the Immigration Officers forced black British seamen to register as aliens, which immediately deprived them of their legal status as British subjects. Once legally classified as aliens, they could be liable to deportation under the Aliens Order of 1920, should they be proved to be unable to support themselves or be simply 'undesirable citizens'. (Fryer, 1989:356-7; Miles & Solomos, 1987:85; Rich, 1990:122-6)

The 1925 Order legitimized the anti-miscegenation campaign which had been sparked off by the 1919 riots. In 1929 the chief constable of Cardiff, doubtlessly inspired by the recently passed Immorality Act of 1927 in South Africa, proposed making miscegenation a criminal offence and during the 1930s the 'moral problem' of the growing numbers of half-caste children, the results of liaisons between the black seamen and white women, was a much discussed subject among social reformers in London and Liverpool. (Dean, 1987:308; Rich, 1990:130-5) The actual numbers of black residents in Britain before World

War II were relatively small, but they were concentrated in the areas where the riots had broken out, and Cardiff alone had an estimated two thousand black seamen by 1935. (Fryer, 1989:356) In an attempt to limit the number of Lascars settling in Britain and becoming peddlers, the police urged a tighter control over the granting of peddlers' certificates to these seamen because the public associated them with criminal activities and prostitutes. Although from 1931 aliens entering Britain as students or visitors were not allowed to take up employment (see 3.4), the government felt that it could not enforce stricter measures to prevent black seamen from settling in Britain as this would undermine the imperial notion of equal British citizenship that since the Imperial Conference of 1911 Britain had taken great pains to keep alive. It was at this conference that Britain stood alone in refusing to exercise the right of control, remaining in favour of the free movement of people within the Empire. As the mother country Britain was morally obliged to defend the open-door policy, but at that stage it was taken for granted that the movement of population would be an outward one, generally from Britain to the Old Dominions. Nobody really expected that the movement of people would ever be from the colonies to the metropolitan centre. (Layton-Henry, 1984:12-4) In the immediate post-war years Europe

supplied the bulk of the migrants to Britain. During the six years after World War II between 70,000 and 100,000 Irish people entered Britain (Jackson, 1963:13-4) free from any kind of restrictions.²³ The Irish were not the only sizable group of migrants to settle in Britain after the war. In 1940 approximately 35,000 Poles, members of the exiled government and armed forces, were given permission to enter Britain. The Polish Second Corps, which joined the British Command in 1942, were taken to Britain two years later and were finally joined by their dependants. When the hostilities ended, many of these Polish ex-servicemen were reluctant to return to their homeland, which had become part of the Soviet zone of influence. The British Government at first urged the Poles to return to their country but as labour was in short supply in Britain they were allowed to stay under the terms of the Polish Resettlement Act of 1947. (Holmes, 1991:45-7; Miles & Solomos, 1987:86; Patterson, 1977)

The difference between the official attitude to this group of aliens and the reception afforded to the subsequent arrival of British citizens from the New Commonwealth is notorious. In the first instance,

²³ During this same period about 460,000 foreigners, most of whom were Europeans, are estimated to have entered Britain, although not all of them settled permanently. (Castles, et al., 1984:41)

relatively large numbers of Polish aliens were allowed to remain in Britain. The 1951 census records 161,020 Polish-born residents, the majority of whom had arrived since 1945. (Holmes, 1991:46) The Poles were given assistance in finding employment and English language classes were provided. The Polish Resettlement Act empowered various Government departments not only to promote the integration of the Poles in British society, but also to help them maintain their distinct ethnic identity. (Dean, 1987:315) Polish hospitals and Polish schools were set up and funded with state money and the various Polish voluntary groups, together with the Catholic Church, received much more than just moral support in the 'resettlement', not 'immigration', process of people who were legally aliens to the British state.

In spite of this state intervention in the settlement process, Polish refugees received their share of antipathy from the local people. However, unlike the groups of Asians and Afro-Caribbeans who would encounter a great deal of overt discrimination, the Poles soon attracted little attention and their British-born children are virtually indistinguishable from the indigenous population. (ibid., 48)

Poles and Ukrainians were among the European Volunteer Workers recruited from camps of displaced

persons or political refugees after the war to resolve the acute labour shortage in Britain. (See 3.5.1.) It would soon be realized that these workers would not suffice to fill all the job vacancies that were available. The Royal Commission's report on the British population, published in 1949, in which the possibility of a shortage of labour in certain sectors of industry was made apparent, expressed its concern about the kind of people who might be recruited to fill these vacancies. The Commission warned that

"Immigration on a large scale into a fully established society like ours would only be welcomed without reserve if the immigrants were of good stock and were not prevented by their religion or race from intermarrying with the host population and becoming merged with it."
(Quoted in Miles & Phizacklea, 1984:24)

What is ironic about this report is that in the previous year (1948) the British Nationality Act had been passed, which confirmed the right of Commonwealth citizens to enter and settle freely in Britain. The 1949 report failed to recognize the West Indies and the Indian subcontinent as sources for Britain's desperately needed labour. The only conclusion that can be reached is that the Royal Commission did not regard the citizens of the New Commonwealth as "of good stock".

Whenever the subject of immigration in British politics is discussed, the British Nationality Act of 1948

is invariably considered to be the root cause of all the trouble (Deakin, 1969:77) and the Labour Party is blamed for politicising the issue in the first place. (Foot, 1969:16) In 1947 when India promised to be the first in a long series of countries that would achieve independence, the Labour Government, fearing the gradual disintegration of the Commonwealth, which had been established in 1931, devised a nationality act in order to keep the former colonies together and embark on a new-style relationship with them. (Deakin, 1969:77) In fact the 1948 Act did not alter the legal situation of British subjects in any way, it merely rationalized it. Under the British Nationality Act, two categories of citizens were established: citizens of independent Commonwealth countries and citizens of the United Kingdom and Colonies. Nationals of independent Commonwealth countries retained the right of free entry into the United Kingdom as they would continue to be citizens of Britain as well as of their own countries. At this stage, it apparently did not occur to anyone that citizenship granted a basic privilege: the right of a British citizen to enter freely and take up permanent residence. Nevertheless, it should be emphasized that the act did not introduce a new privilege, but rather tidied up a somewhat confusing

situation and, above all, sought to maintain a unified Commonwealth within a rapidly changing world.

In June of the same year that the British Parliament was discussing the terms of the nationality act, a ship arrived at Tilbury carrying the 492 Jamaicans on the *Empire Windrush*. The Labour Member for Nottingham East, James Harrison, raised the question of the problems of accommodation and integration that these new migrants might face. His concern was unheeded and no action was thought necessary at this point. (Deakin, 1969:82-3)

Prime Minister Clement Attlee attributed the fledgling immigration process to the restlessness of some black ex-servicemen, who, with memories of the recent war still fresh, hoped to find work with a British shipping company. (Dean, 1987: 310)

Writing seventeen years later, Lord Elton described these West Indians as "these first harbingers of the unforeseen multitudes to come," (1965: 11) because nobody ever imagined that these men would be the tip of the iceberg and that during the next thirteen years some 450,000 people from the New Commonwealth would emigrate to Britain.²⁴

²⁴ This is an approximate figure including the first six months of 1962, before the Commonwealth Immigrants Act came into effect on 1st July. (Layton-Henry, 1984:23; Miles & Solomos, 1987:89)

The lack of response to Harrison's query may give the impression that the period between the passage of the 1948 British Nationality Act and the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962 was, as John Solomos calls it, "an age of innocence and lack of concern about black immigration into the UK", (1990:45) but, as Solomos himself goes on to say, "Throughout this period an increasingly racialised debate about immigration took place, focusing on the supposed social problems of having too many black migrants and the question of how they could be stopped from entering given their legal rights in the 1948 British Nationality Act." (ibid.)

It is ironic that while public debate in the two Houses centred around the proper definition of a British citizen which would include nationals of Commonwealth countries, in the corridors of power there were deep fears about the possibility of a mass exodus of people from these very countries. In the early days of post-war immigration, the West Indies never really posed a threat to the British 'racial character'. Had all the inhabitants of the English-speaking Caribbean islands decided to pack up and emigrate to Britain, some two million people would be involved. This is an enormous figure by any standards, but a mere drop in the ocean when compared to the upwards of seven hundred million Indians who might be tempted to follow suit. In particular, the quarter of a million Indians in South Africa, whose situation in that country

was deteriorating after the electoral victory of Dr. Malan in 1948, were viewed with alarm. (Dean, 1987: 317)

Whether in Opposition or in the Government, the Conservative Party maintained a reasonably coherent policy on race and immigration during the late forties and fifties. The members of what Paul Foot calls the "Traditional Right" were dedicated to the greatness of the Empire and continued to believe in the 'civilizing mission' of Britain. (Foot, 1965:148-7) During the second reading of the Nationality Bill many Conservatives had accused the Government of undermining the unity of the Commonwealth and writing into the Statute Book "the disintegration of the Empire" (Foot, 1969:18). However, the Bill became law but not before the Shadow Home Secretary, Sir David Maxwell Fyfe, had urged that

"we must maintain our great metropolitan tradition of hospitality to everyone, from every part of the Empire." (Parliamentary Debates, 7.7.1948: 405)

Six years later, the Minister of State for the Colonies, Henry Hopkinson, later Lord Colyton, would echo these words:

"In a world in which restrictions on personal movement and immigration have increased, we still take pride in the fact that a man can say *Civis Britannicus Sum* whatever his colour may be and we take pride in the fact that he wants and can come to the Mother Country." (Parliamentary Debates, 5.11.1954: 827)

The "Tory Radicals" were opposed to racial discrimination, saw in the Commonwealth migrants a profitable source of labour, which post-war Britain urgently needed, and therefore favoured some kind of organized activity to help the immigrant workers. However, between 1951 and 1961 the ruling Conservative party did absolutely nothing to promote the welfare of the rising number of Commonwealth migrants. Any social problems that arose, which were inevitable given the different languages, cultures and religions of many of the new arrivals, were left to the local authorities to solve. The absence of any positive provisions for the integration of the migrants contrasts vividly with the efforts made to accommodate the Poles discussed above, and was one of the main causes of the growth of racist feeling, reaped from ten years of governmental neglect. (Ben-Tovim & Gabriel, 1987: 144-5; Foot, 1965: 159)

Foot's third category of Conservatives included people recruited from the lower echelons of former colonial and civil servants, whose 'Britishness' was of supreme importance to them. An extremely vociferous member of this latter group was Cyril Osborne, who started demanding immigration figures from the Labour Government in 1950, almost a decade before immigration controls became an election issue. In 1952 Osborne embarked on his

long, and finally fruitful, campaign against the more liberal members of his party to legislate control of immigration from the New Commonwealth. He did his utmost to have Commonwealth citizens subject to Aliens Acts and, failing to achieve that, demanded strict health checks on immigrants. (Layton-Henry, 1984:31-2) While, officially, the Conservative Party did not approve of Osborne's racial stance, behind the scenes many Cabinet members clearly did sympathize with his ultrachauvinist theories. Sir Winston Churchill is reported to have said that

"Immigration is the most important subject facing this country but I cannot get any of my ministers to take any notice." (Bradley, 1978)

Harold Macmillan, Prime Minister from 1957 to 1963, wrote in his memoirs, At the End of the Day, that the Cabinet was already discussing the 'problem' of coloured immigration in 1954 and he records Churchill observing that 'Keep Britain White'

"might be a good slogan for the election which we should soon have to fight without the benefit of his leadership." (Quoted in Layton-Henry, 1984:32)

Before their term of office in 1964 under the leadership of Harold Wilson, the Labour Party set itself up as the champion of the New Commonwealth migrants. It has always been the Labour Party's policy to represent the interests of the workers and the underprivileged classes

in general. Therefore, it was only natural that Labour would side with the citizens of the former colonies that had been exploited by British capitalism. Likewise, the Asian and Afro-Caribbean migrants identified more with the Party of Clement Attlee, who had been responsible for the final transfer of power to Indian hands and who were committed to a rapidly evolving egalitarianism. (Dean, 1987:312; Huttenback, 1975:196; Layton-Henry, 1984:44-5) However, the Labour Party had its priorities and the interests of the **British** working classes and the necessity to poll enough votes in order to achieve a parliamentary majority soon eclipsed socialist beliefs in the essential equality and solidarity of man.

The Labour Party's volte-face over Commonwealth immigration is not easily and satisfactorily explained. The party that started its post-war administration determined to end the colour bar wherever it existed in colonial territories and to transform all imperial territories into fully independent states, returned to power in 1964 and began its new term of office by renewing instead of repealing the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962. During the Conservative Governments of 1951 to 1964 the Opposition Party presented a contradictory policy as far as immigration was concerned. In 1958, Arthur Bottomley, member of the Labour Front bench, stated that

his party was "categorically against" restricted immigration and that

"...the central principle on which our status in the Commonwealth is largely dependent is the 'open door' to all Commonwealth citizens. If we believe in the importance of our great Commonwealth, we should do nothing in the slightest degree to undermine that principle." (Quoted in Foot, 1965:170)

Despite this declaration of opposition to controls on principle, six years later, when Labour was once more in power, Sir Frank Soskice, the Home Secretary, said with reference to the renewal of the Commonwealth Immigrants Act:

"... there can be no doubt about the government's view. The government are firmly convinced that an effective control is indispensable. That we accept, and have always accepted ... We must have an effective control whatever we have." (Parliamentary Debates, 17.11.1964: 290)

As if that were not contradictory enough, the following year, Soskice appeared on television assuring Labour voters that "we have always been in favour of control." (Foot, 1965:170)

Some Labour members did remain firmly rooted in their principles of the brotherhood of man. One such untiring human rights fighter was Fenner Brockway, who compensated to a certain extent for the continuous badgering by Cyril Osborne for restrictions on Commonwealth immigration. Brockway, who had supported the Commonwealth of India League, of which Krishna Menon was secretary (see 3.3),

began to ask for legislation to outlaw racial discrimination in 1953, when the number of black migrants entering Britain was still relatively small. Every year he would present a Private Member's Bill but he failed to arouse enough support from his party to have his Bills transformed into legislation. (Layton-Henry, 1984:47) The first Race Relations Act would not come into being until 1965, brought in by a Labour Government. Until the 1958 riots in Nottingham and Notting Hill in London, and despite the fact that both Labour and Conservative governments had covertly discouraged black immigration to Britain (Carter, Harris & Joshi, 1987), the mainstream politicians of both major parties were not overconcerned with numbers, colour or much else related to the New Commonwealth workers (Dean, 1992:182), who were making an enormous, but unacknowledged, contribution to British industry and services. Thus, the voice of Fenner Brockway remained a voice in the wilderness until the disturbances of 1958 shook the political establishment out of their complacency.

4.2. Repaying the Debt.

4.2.1. Elite or Popular Racism?

The riots of August and September 1958 in Nottingham and Notting Hill may be said to have brought the immigrant issue to the fore. These disturbances were by no means the first black/white confrontation in Britain²⁵ but, owing to the duration of the riots and the numbers involved, they were given wide media coverage. In Nottingham on 23rd August six British-born people were said to have been stabbed by West Indians in a fight over the alleged assault of a white woman by a West Indian, following which large gangs of whites attacked West Indians and their property indiscriminately. In London, larger crowds were involved and the incidents consisted of similar attacks by white residents on West Indians or their property. 177 people, mostly British-born, were arrested and the West Indians were seen to have been goaded into violence by the verbal abuse hurled at them by

²⁵ In Birmingham in May 1948 between 100 and 250 white men stoned a hostel where Indian workers were living. In August of the same year there were racial attacks in Liverpool and in July 1949 in Deptford. Furthermore, during the 50s the phenomenon known as 'Paki-bashing' became increasingly more common. (Layton-Henry, 1984: 35)

the whites. In spite of the obvious provocation, the disturbances were immediately labelled 'race riots' by the media and politicians and helped to permeate the belief in the inherent violence and criminality of blacks. (Miles & Phizacklea, 1984:33-7; Layton-Henry, 1984: 35-8)

Politicians and public figures condemned the violence but the unofficial reaction was to justify it in some way. The blacks were seen to be taking over whole areas of British cities and the age-old horror of racial 'contamination' surfaced once again. If the alleged cause for the fights in Nottingham is to be believed, that the white men were defending the honour of 'their' women, Lord Elton was quite wrong when he stated that

"I do not believe that miscegenation bulks large in the minds of those who have most to say against mass immigration." (1965: 87)

Abhorrence of racial interbreeding clearly was the key issue and the 1958 riots proved that the Marquis of Salisbury's fears that the 'racial character of the English people' was endangered were in fact widespread among the political elite of the day. After the incidences of 1958 Cyril Osborne found he had many more devotees to his cause. During the debate on immigration control that Osborne initiated in December 1958, Martin Lindsay, Conservative Member for Solihull, stated in Parliament that

"We all know perfectly well that the whole core of the problem of immigration is coloured immigration. ... We must ask ourselves to what extent we want Great Britain to become a multi-racial community. ... A matter which affects the future of our race and breed is not one that we should leave merely to chance." (Quoted in Miles & Phizacklea, 1984:37)

It is probably no exaggeration to say that the terms 'race' and 'immigration' became inextricably linked in the minds of most people during the period of analysis of the riots. Racialised politics developed in the aftermath of the disturbances, and although the General Election of 1959 was not won on the immigration control ticket, the campaign for restrictions was gaining support from both sides of the House and at the constituency level. Even before the two decades of bipartisan immigration policy, during which the whole question of 'race' was depoliticized (Messina, 1985), not all Labour MPs and local councillors were against controls. Moreover, those MPs who were committed to achieving harmonious race relations, such as Marcus Lipton (MP for Brixton), were often pressurized by their white, working-class constituents into joining the campaign for stricter controls. (Layton-Henry, 1984:35-43) Nevertheless, in spite of the obvious risk of losing votes in areas where black immigration was most concentrated, such as South and West London and the West Midlands, the Labour Party as a whole stood firm in its traditional support of the

underdog and a multiracial Commonwealth. The disturbances of 1958 and the resulting racial antagonism drove the Labour Party into a position of total rejection of any kind of immigration control for British citizens from overseas. (Deakin, 1970:97) It must be remembered, however, that during the period in question Labour was the Opposition Party and, judging by its historical record, this violent opposition to any kind of control was merely to be expected. In 1905 and again in 1919 when the Aliens Order and the Aliens Restriction (Amendment) Act were being debated, the Labour Party bitterly opposed immigration controls as a remedy for the troubles of the time. Nevertheless, when in power, in 1924, 1929 and again in 1948 these controls were not repealed, and in many cases, they were even more ruthlessly implemented. (Foot, 1965: 186)

In the early days of New Commonwealth immigration and when jobs were still plentiful, resentment towards black migrants was usually associated with housing problems. The blacks were settling in declining inner-city areas, whose white residents were moving out to the suburbs. There was a severe housing shortage in the mid-fifties, owing to the slump in the building trade and the destruction of houses, both occasioned by the war, but it became very convenient to blame the new arrivals for the

lack of houses and for the falling standards in the areas where they settled. As Carter, Harris and Joshi (1987:339-40) point out, the black migrants could hardly be accused of taking over houses that belonged by right to white residents. People are not eligible for council housing unless they fulfil the minimum residence requirements, which meant that only 6 per cent of the overseas-born black population were accommodated in public sector housing by the mid-sixties in comparison with 28 per cent of Irish migrants and 33 per cent of the English-born population. (Smith, 1989:52) Moreover, the fact that Afro-Caribbeans and Asians were moving into houses in deprived urban areas proves that these houses had previously been vacated by a more prosperous indigenous population who no longer found them attractive or who could now aspire to a more luxurious type of dwelling in a more select area.

These common sense arguments fell on stony ground and the black settlers were all too conspicuous scapegoats for the frustrations and fears of their white neighbours. The overcrowding, poverty and low professional status of many of the early migrants were factors which the indigenous population interpreted as being racial in origin. It was a logical step to assume that because the housing situation would immediately be solved if the blacks were