

kept out, the presence of people from the Indian subcontinent and the West Indies therefore created these problems, and in turn, were ultimately responsible for the rise in racism, exemplified by the violence of the riots. Consequently, racism became exacerbated, not only because of the prejudice of extremists, but also by the ignorance and misguided fears of ordinary, well-intentioned people. (Allen, 1971:44)

The press also became wise to a previously untapped source of sensationalism in the shape of racial hostility. After the 1958 riots the media conducted several polls with the result that an overwhelming majority of the general public were in favour of immigration controls. (Layton-Henry, 1984:36-8; Miles & Phizacklea, 1984: 40) Some authors (e.g. Dummett & Dummett, 1987; Foot, 1965) argue that the press, together with politicians, whipped up racial contempt among the population and subsequently used manifestations of the public's concern to justify the introduction of controls. In contrast to this, Donley T. Studlar (1986) suggests that race, unlike many political problems in Britain, was "forced on" leading politicians by the vehemence of public demands. This theory amounts to an explanation of the tightening up of entry restrictions in terms of policy-makers reluctantly conceding to popular racist feeling for fear of losing

valuable votes and at the expense of their traditional lofty ideals of Empire and Commonwealth. James Walvin also argues that the politicization of race was never the result of the actions or words of the politicians. Constituency pressures being too strong to be ignored, the Conservative Party had no choice but to acquiesce to the increasingly racist demands of its electorate if it wished to remain in power. (Walvin,1984:133)

A third explanation, which combines both the previous theories, may come closer to reality. Racist assumptions about blacks, which thrived during the period of imperial expansion, had lain dormant for years. Overt racism submerged from time to time, triggered by momentous events such as the 1857 Mutiny in India or the Morant Bay revolt in Jamaica. During the post World War II period, when the Indians and Jamaicans were making their presence felt in Britain and, what was more difficult to tolerate, demanding equal rights as fellow British citizens instead of imperial subjects, what James Walvin calls "the hidden springs of English racialism" gushed forth. (1987:70) They were inevitably blamed for Britain's loss of world power, the stagnation of her industry and the encroaching economic decline of the country. The immigrants became a human reminder to ordinary British citizens of the unexpected demise of Britain's once enormous global and

imperial power. (Dean, 1992:193; Walvin, 1984:135-7) It cannot be denied that there was a great deal of 'elite racism' among high-ranking civil servants and politicians too, who were not reconciled to the prospect of a multiracial Britain. Former Minister without portfolio, William Deedes, confesses that

"The [1962] Bill's real purpose was to restrict the influx of coloured immigrants. We were reluctant to say as much openly. So the restrictions were applied to coloured and white citizens in all Commonwealth countries - though everybody recognised that immigration from Canada, Australia and New Zealand formed no part of the problem." (Quoted in Solomos, 1990:50)

However, it does appear contradictory that the Establishment should wish to cut off a virtually unlimited supply of cheap labour at this early stage when the country still lacked manpower.

Extreme right-wing MPs kept themselves busy rallying support for controls in their constituencies and thirty-nine resolutions were sent in from constituency associations, such as the Birmingham Immigration Control Association, for debate at the annual Conservative Party conference in 1960. (Rich, 1986:47) Probably the event that converted both imperial and liberal members of the Conservative Party to the 'little England' policy of Cyril Osborne and his followers was the Suez crisis of 1956 and Britain's gradual withdrawal from Empire and loss of world power. (Layton-Henry, 1984: 38-40) New Commonwealth

countries were not responding to the Commonwealth ideal as Britain had hoped and expected them to. The governments of both Jamaica and India were no longer willing to curb emigration to Britain by refusing to issue passports to their citizens.<sup>26</sup> This meant that any controls would have to be implemented by the British Government, which in turn involved denying British citizens the essential rights enshrined in the 1948 British Nationality Act.

The decision to legislate in favour of entry restrictions was taken, not only because of the diminishing importance of Commonwealth ties and the new European-oriented vision of the country, but also in response to the growing pressure from the grass-roots organizations inside the party. Thus the Tories, yielding to local pressure groups and their own backbenchers, drafted the Commonwealth Immigrants Bill in 1961.

The terms of the Bill stated that British citizens living in the Commonwealth could only enter Britain if they were issued with a Ministry of Labour employment voucher, or if they were a dependant of a person already

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<sup>26</sup> India and Pakistan had initially agreed to restrict the number of passports issued and even demanded financial deposits from prospective migrants. However, in 1960 the Indian Supreme Court ruled that such restrictions were unconstitutional. (Hiro, 1991; Bulpitt, 1986)

resident in Britain, or a student. Initially there were to be three kinds of vouchers:

Table 4.1. Vouchers Introduced by the 1962 Act.

- CATEGORY A: Commonwealth citizens who had a specific job to come to in Britain.
- CATEGORY B: Applicants who had a recognized skill or qualification which was in short supply in Britain.
- CATEGORY C: All other applicants, priority treatment being given to those who had served in the British forces during the war.

The Act was to be a temporary measure and contained the provision that it should be renewed annually. The idea behind the system of vouchers, which would continue to be issued until 1972, was to relate the rate of migration to the availability of jobs in Britain. Miles and Phizacklea stress the fact that nobody, neither employers nor Trade Unions, had complained about the number of black workers entering the country. (1984:41) On the contrary, in the early sixties the West Midlands and the south-east still suffered from acute labour shortages. Employment became the main criterion of control but 95% of the immigrants obtained jobs within a few weeks of arrival and were in no

way a strain on the social services in this respect.  
(Foot, 1965:140)

There was no question at all of the Commonwealth migrants stealing jobs from native British workers. In the first place, a glance at the statistics proves that in 1961, taking into account all the residents born outside the United Kingdom, there were 541,000 people from the New Commonwealth, compared to 709,000 from the Irish Republic and 845,000 from the European Economic Community or elsewhere. (Castles, et al., 1984:43) Secondly, a fact which is often ignored, in spite of these figures, between 1953 and 1964 emigration from the United Kingdom exceeded immigration into the country, (Allen, 1971; Dummett & Dummett, 1987) which made the presence of migrant workers a real necessity to the British economy. Nevertheless, the public was encouraged to believe that the 1962 Act had been reluctantly devised to keep the population figures down, as if these prospective settlers literally would not fit on such a crowded little island.

The Bill was a rushed affair, which is itself surprising, considering the fact that a Bill to restrict immigration had been suggested in 1955 during Winston Churchill's term of office. (Dean, 1992:183; Layton-Henry, 1984:32 & 40; Rich, 1990:188) Moreover, immigration was fast becoming a controversial matter and the fact that it

was rumoured that the Government would soon legislate to restrict the rights of entry of Commonwealth citizens, caused a sharp increase in immigration from the Caribbean and the Indian subcontinent in 1960 and 1961 as shown in table 4.2.

Table 4.2. Net Immigration from the New Commonwealth 1948-1962.

Period	West Indies	India	Pakistan*
1948-1953	14,000	2,500	1,500
1954	11,000	800	500
1955	27,550	5,800	1,850
1956	29,800	5,600	2,050
1957	23,000	6,600	5,200
1958	15,000	6,200	4,700
1959	16,400	2,950	850
1960	49,650	5,900	2,500
1961	66,300	23,750	25,100
1962**	27,040	19,245	23,840

\* includes Bangladesh

\*\* first six months until the 1962 Act became law on 1st July.

Source: Hiro, 1991 (adapted)

In a sense the Act defeated itself even before it became law, as people, afraid that they would not be allowed into Britain, rushed to 'beat the ban'. However, anti-immigration extremists used these figures to demonstrate the grave danger of continuing without any form of restrictions.

The Labour Party, and in particular its leader Hugh Gaitskell, ferociously attacked the Bill in Parliament. The issue of immigration restrictions for Commonwealth citizens was a great moral principle of which Gaitskell took advantage in order to unite a divided Opposition. The Labour stance was to criticise the lack of consultation with Commonwealth Prime Ministers and the mismanagement of the Irish provisions. The Irish, in spite of not being members of the Commonwealth,<sup>27</sup> were welcome workers in Britain because they spoke the same language and were not regarded as 'aliens'. Furthermore, the cost of patrolling the Irish border to prevent the southern Irish from crossing into Northern Ireland was considered unworkable. Labour claimed that this proved the racial nature of the Bill and protested vigorously on this point. However, during the second and third readings of the Bill the Opposition onslaught subsided and many Labour MPs, presumably under pressure from their constituencies, refrained from voting. (Foot, 1965: 139-140; Layton-Henry, 1984:40-2 & 52-5) Hugh Gaitskell's death in January 1963 heralded the change in direction that his party would take on the immigration issue as, had he lived, the Labour Party might not have retreated from their principles so

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<sup>27</sup> The Irish Free State left the Commonwealth in 1948 and became the Republic of Ireland in 1949.



suddenly and with so little internal dissent. (Dean, 1992:193-4; Foot, 1965:175) Harold Wilson, the new Labour leader, did not feel the same moral obligation to the Commonwealth that his predecessor had felt and quietly drifted towards a more electorally expedient stance. One of the first measures undertaken by the newly elected Labour Government in 1964 was to renew the 1962 Act, which, ironically, was a self-imposed embarrassment as one of the amendments proposed by the Labour Opposition had been the annual reconsideration and renewal of the racially-inspired act. (Layton-Henry, 1984)

The convergence of Labour and Conservative race policy brought with it two decades of official restrictions on the presence of black people in Britain, which in turn provided a framework for the build-up of popular racism. If the blacks were formally being relegated to the status of alien contract labourers, besides being portrayed in the media as a threat and a problem (Gordon & Rosenberg, 1989; Van Dijk, 1991), public opinion could hardly be expected to respond affirmatively to the growing numbers of migrants from the New Commonwealth. Whereas in the late fifties and early sixties many people were trying hard to reconcile the racist assumptions learned from textbooks and popular literature (see chapter 5) and their lack of knowledge

about Asian and Caribbean countries with traditional notions of British fair play and tolerance, by the late sixties what the Dummetts call a "tragic blunting of sensibilities" had become widespread. (1987:114) Ill-treatment of migrants by the Immigration Authorities<sup>28</sup> failed to arouse a public outcry, invariably because such occurrences were systematically stifled by the media. However, the press did latch onto any story which could prove that Britain's lax immigration controls were allowing hundreds of blacks to 'sneak in'. (Gordon & Rosenberg, 1989) Owing to the fact that immigration, and not deep-seated prejudice, was identified as the 'problem', many liberally-minded people, who felt uneasy about overt manifestations of racial antipathy, were able to disguise their acquired beliefs of racial superiority with concern over the increasing numbers of people entering the country. As mentioned earlier, there were more people emigrating than immigrating, a fact which was conveniently played down during the debates on controls in the early sixties, although the numbers of people entering

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<sup>28</sup> Amrit Wilson describes how 'suspicious' immigrants, that is, people claiming to be dependants, were taken to detention centres and treated worse than criminals by Immigration Officers. She also denounces the so-called virginity tests carried out during the seventies "apparently ...at the whim of the officials" in order to determine whether a girl was too old to qualify as a dependant. (1978: 72-4)

the country was outlined as the key problem in the 1962 Act. Thus this Act was a watershed in the history of immigration into Britain and also "provided a revealing insight into the nature of the host society". (Walvin, 1984:113) The state played a vital role in shaping people's attitudes towards the New Commonwealth migrants, on one hand by failing to provide adequate social services for them in the same way that the Attlee Administration had done for the Poles, and on the other hand by failing to prepare the host population for the arrival of former subject people, now fellow British citizens. Traditions of imperialism and diehard racial myths, still very much alive among many sectors of the population, were activated. Whether this was done consciously or unconsciously is still a matter of speculation.

#### 4.2.2. Sinking into a Xenophobic Bog.

By the 1964 General Election not only was immigration a much debated electoral issue, but the equation **immigration = race** had become firmly established in the minds of both politicians and electorate alike. Unlike previous elections, in the 1964 campaign race featured in a dominant position on the agenda, as opposition to uncontrolled Commonwealth immigration had become respectable and desirable. Conservative MPs, who had previously been discreet about their views on unrestricted immigration, came out into the open and played on the fears of many traditional Labour voters, who, as working-class people, were most affected by the influx of migrants into their areas. The most notorious case of racist propaganda occurred in the Birmingham constituency of Smethwick, which was won by the Tory candidate Peter Griffiths. Not only had Griffiths been voted in by a urban, working-class electorate, but he had defeated Patrick Gordon-Walker, the Shadow Foreign Secretary. Although it was hotly denied, the slogan that is said to have contributed to Griffiths' victory was "If you want a Nigger for a neighbour, vote Labour". (Gilroy, 1987:82-3) Labour had been highly ambiguous during the campaign about its immigration policy and in spite of Harold Wilson's

attack on Griffiths on the first day of the new Parliament<sup>29</sup>, once Labour had regained office, the debate between the two parties was no longer on whether controls should be introduced but on how these controls should be implemented.

As far as Labour's conversion to the expediency of immigration controls is concerned, the final defeat of Gordon-Walker in the presumably safe seat of Leyton in the by-election of January 1965 awoke Labour rudely from its dream of a multi-racial Britain free from prejudice and resentment. This unexpected result seemed to spell out the public's concern over the growing numbers of non-white migrants and was interpreted as a punishment to Labour for its apparently soft view on racial matters.<sup>30</sup> Consequently, Labour was forced to bow down to popular sentiment and the results of the opinion polls and yield to the electors' pressure, which it did wholeheartedly. (Hiro, 1991:203) Apart from the renewal of the 1962 Act,

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<sup>29</sup> Wilson called the new MP for Smethwick "a parliamentary leper". (Parliamentary Debates, 3 November 1964: 71)

<sup>30</sup> However, Michael and Ann Dummett argue that it was not Gordon-Walker's views on race that lost him the seat but the fact that he had no local connections to Leyton unlike his predecessor, Reg Sorensen, an extremely popular man, who had been removed in order to provide the Foreign Secretary with a chance to return to Parliament. (1987:118)

which must have disappointed liberals who expected them to repeal it, in the 1965 White Paper Immigration from the Commonwealth, the Wilson Administration imposed ceilings on the number of 'A' and 'B' vouchers and announced the discontinuance of the 'C' vouchers. A total of 8,500 vouchers would be issued to Commonwealth citizens, 1,000 of which were to be reserved for Malta. It seems doubtful that an excess of labour motivated the proposals for strengthening the 1962 Act, bearing in mind that no mention was made of the 30,000 Irish migrants who would enter Britain in 1965 alone and who were neither British nor Commonwealth citizens. (Layton-Henry, 1984:63; Miles & Phizacklea, 1984:53)

The White Paper heralded the emergence of Labour's double standard in immigration policy as it also included proposals for a new programme of integration of those black migrants who were already legally settled. On one hand, the White Paper aimed at tightening up the control of primary immigration in order to take no more electoral risks, while on the other hand, it attempted to appease the more liberally-minded citizens by introducing measures to help combat social conflicts resulting from racial prejudice. In the same year the first Race Relations Act was passed, which, because of its limited scope, merely established the necessity of such legislation.

Discrimination on grounds of race was unlawful, but the act only covered places of public resort, omitting areas such as housing and employment where New Commonwealth migrants were frequently unfairly treated. While the establishment of a Race Relations Board, designed to deal with complaints of racial discrimination, was a positive measure, the Labour Government, in accordance with its policy of convergence with the Conservatives on the issue of immigration, did not endow this newly-created body with any real powers of enforcement. The Home Office, as a mainstream Government Department, was able to implement immigration controls effectively, whereas the Race Relations Board was virtually powerless to do anything short of recommending conciliation. (Layton-Henry, 1984:125-131; Miles & Phizacklea, 1984: 53-8)

In order to achieve Tory support for the Race Relations Bill, Labour was obliged to weaken its provisions therefore making it little more than a symbolic declaration of principle. The Conservatives accepted the much amended final draft and Labour, in turn, retreated from its original stance on immigration restrictions. The two parties would cease to differ on the ethics of immigration control, instead of which the debate would centre around figures: how few, as opposed to how many, blacks should be allowed in? The Labour Party has

scrupulously avoided giving an official explanation for its dramatic change in policy over controls. Paul Foot suggests that Labour policy dictates that they are to do their utmost to be less humane than the Tories when in office (1965: 114), and certainly the controls set out in the 1965 White Paper were much tighter than those of the 1962 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, which the Labour Opposition had so virulently attacked. The retreat from principle has to be seen as a pragmatic response to opinion polls and popular sentiment by a party predominantly concerned with remaining in power. Labour allowed the country to sink into "a xenophobic bog" (ibid., 184) by proving to the electorate that Labour was also 'pro-England' and could be as tough as the Tories. (Ben-Tovim & Gabriel, 1987:145; Wilson, 1978:77) Nevertheless, an ingrained belief that alien cultures are somehow threatening may have made a contribution to the changing Labour stance on immigration controls. Roy Hattersley, MP for Birmingham, Sparkbrook, hinted that Labour had made a U-turn in its immigration policy because of the "social problems" caused by the migrants who were not being easily "assimilated into our national life". (Parliamentary Debates, 23 March 1965: 381) This viewpoint is somewhat reminiscent of the change in attitude undergone by the British community in India in



the aftermath of the 1857 Uprising. Before the revolt and while the Indians posed no threat to the British, they were treated with contemptuous paternalism. However, when they constituted a real danger to the continuance of the Raj, this contempt turned into hatred. The Europeans proceeded to keep themselves aloof for fear of unnecessary and undesirable racial mingling. Hattersley was unconsciously reviving former misgivings about the possibility of people of different cultures living harmoniously together in his 'excuse' for his party's concessions to the xenophobic element in the British people. (Foot, 1965:193; Mason, 1965: 146-7)

Alongside this reversal in policy on controls, Labour has consistently shown willingness to help foreign settlers on arrival and to integrate them into British society. The efforts to assist the displaced Poles and the European Voluntary Workers discussed earlier in this chapter were carried out under a Labour Government and the headway made under the Race Relations Act, however weak, should not be underestimated. All the subsequent race relations legislation (1968 and 1976) would be brought in by a Labour Administration, either to compensate for the tightening up of entry controls or in a genuine attempt to prove that the Labour Party was still committed to the principle of an egalitarian society and the brotherhood of

man. In 1966 a reelected Labour Government, which recaptured the seats lost on the race issue in 1964, introduced a Local Government Act, section 11 of which made provision for support to those areas where the "race problem" was most acute because of the large numbers of migrants. Grant aid could be claimed from the central Government by local authorities to employ more staff to meet the demands of ethnic minorities. Thus the Government meant to carry on with the proposals to integrate the Afro-Caribbean and Asian migrants outlined in the 1965 White Paper. (Ben-Tovim & Gabriel, 1987:153)

In April 1968 a new Race Relations Bill was published making it unlawful to discriminate on grounds of colour, race, ethnic or national origins, in employment, housing and the provision of commercial and other services. Although the scope of the new Bill was much larger than the 1965 Act, the emphasis was still on conciliation rather than on legal procedures to enforce its provisions. (Layton-Henry, 1984:133-4) This new Race Relations Bill was defended with an appeal to lofty sentiments of equal opportunities for all citizens regardless of colour by the Home Secretary, James Callahan,<sup>31</sup> which is hard to

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<sup>31</sup> In fact the Bill was the result of the hard work and perseverance of Roy Jenkins, who had been moved from the Home Office to the Treasury a few months earlier.

reconcile with the terms of the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, passed only two months previously.

After 1964 Labour had practically abandoned all its former principles and was putting up little resistance to Tory demands for stricter measures to curb the number of blacks entering Britain. It almost seemed that the more Labour surrendered, the more the Conservatives would clamour for harsher restrictions. However, the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, "steamrolled through Parliament in three days of emergency debate" (Fryer, 1989:383) was a clear example of Labour out-Torying the Tories. It is debatable that, had the Conservatives been in power, they would have dared to introduce such a racist piece of legislation. The Act, which was designed to limit the number of Kenyan Asians with United Kingdom passports entering the country, was blatantly racist as it created two classes of British citizens: blacks, who were subject to immigration controls and whites, who were not. (Layton-Henry, 1984:69) In 1963 the Kenyan Independence Act had included a clause which gave the right to citizens of this country to hold on to their British citizenship, rather than become citizens of the newly independent Kenya. It had been included for the benefit of the Kenyan whites, but matters were complicated by the large number of Asians in Kenya, many of whom were descendants of

indentured workers who had been recruited in the days of the Imperial British East Africa Company to build the railways. (Bhachu,1985:21) These Kenyan Asians began to enter Britain from 1964 onwards but when the Kenyan Government accelerated its 'africanization' policy in 1966, many of the Asians who had originally planned to stay on, were obliged to emigrate to the country of which they were passport holders.

The former Conservative Commonwealth Secretary of State, Duncan Sandys, together with Enoch Powell and Cyril Osborne<sup>32</sup>, initiated a campaign in 1967 to halt this new source of unwanted immigration. Osborne voiced fears about the "race suicide" the British people were committing, while Sandys resuscitated the bogey of miscegenation:

"The breeding of millions of half-caste children would merely produce a generation of misfits and create national tensions." (Quoted in Foot, 1969:102)

The campaign achieved the expected result. The Wilson Administration appeared to panic at the thought of the Conservatives exploiting the prejudices of Labour voters to their own advantage in a future election. Labour

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<sup>32</sup> Osborne was "rewarded" for his anti-immigration stance by being knighted in 1962, the year the first Commonwealth Immigrants Act was introduced. Likewise, in the year the Aliens Order became law, its most vigorous supporter, Major Evans-Gordon, was also given a knighthood.

showed itself to be vulnerable in its surrender to the new resurgence of demands for control from certain sectors of the Conservative Party. It was afraid to be thought soft by its voters, many of whom belonged to working-class constituencies and who saw the black immigrants as rivals for jobs and social services. However, Labour also betrayed the Kenyan Asians, who had retained their British citizenship in case they should be forced to leave Africa and so as not to become stateless. 95,000 Asians were entitled to British passports, but not all of them opted to emigrate to Britain. During 1965 - 6,150 entered Britain; in 1966 - 8,850 and in 1967 - 8,450. (Hiro, 1991: 213) After 1st March 1968 these Kenyan Asians could no longer enter the United Kingdom freely. The major provision of the 1968 Act was the introduction of the 'grandfather clause', which meant that any citizen of the United Kingdom or colonies, who was the holder of a passport issued by the United Kingdom Government, was subject to immigration control unless s/he or at least one parent or grandparent was born, adopted, naturalized or registered as a citizen of the United Kingdom and colonies in the UK. Those British citizens who were denied free entry under the new act, the majority, if not all, of whom were black, could apply for one of the 1,500 special vouchers that would be issued annually to heads of

households. (Miles & Phizacklea, 1984: 61; Solomos, 1990:54)

It would have been difficult to deny that the 1968 Act was racist, precisely because the terms of the new legislation curtailed the basic rights of British citizens and devalued the British passport merely in order to keep the Asians out. It is ironic to think that, had the Kenyan Asians been white, they would have been welcomed with open arms. They were middle-class, educated and fluent in English. Many were skilled workers or professional people, who, unlike the Uganda Asians who would arrive in 1972, did not arrive in Britain penniless. The Kenyan Government had paid them compensation for their loss of business and several already had money invested in British banks. However, their presence was resented, whereas the migrants from the Irish Republic, who continued to be allowed free entry into Britain, despite the fact that they did not hold UK passports or even British citizenship, were readily and quietly absorbed into society. (Miles & Phizacklea, 1984:60)

The 1965 White Paper is said to mark the end of the Commonwealth as a determining factor in British politics, both foreign and domestic (Layton-Henry, 1984:64) but it seems to me that the restrictive 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act, which confiscated the right of black UK

passport holders to enter Britain buried the Commonwealth ideal once and for all. The fraud enshrined in the 1968 Act, by which a document issued by the British Government became valueless, surely echoes the forgery carried out by Robert Clive in 1757, which ushered in two centuries of imperial rule. History does not, of course, repeat itself because circumstances change, but, as John Tosh argues, "the drawing of analogies may well throw into relief aspects of the present situation which are not receiving due attention." (Tosh, 1991:17)

In the following chapter misrepresentations or myth-making about the past will be discussed in more detail, but a brief explanation of the deception that would bring Indians under British rule is added because of the similarity between that fraud and the 1968 version, which would cheat British subjects out of their citizenship.

Having recaptured Calcutta, Clive cajoled Siraj-ud-daula, the Nawab, into an alliance under the pretence that their common enemy was the French. At the same time Clive was conspiring with Mir Jafar, a rival claimant to the throne of Bengal, through an intermediary, Omichand, who, realizing the delicacy of the situation, demanded a price for his silence. Should the Nawab discover that the Honourable East India Company was plotting to overthrow him, the possibilities of British trade in Bengal would have been bleak. Clive cleverly outwitted his blackmailer

by drawing up two treaties, a genuine one stating the terms agreed between himself and Mir Jafar, and a forged one which also contained a clause promising to reward Omichand from the Bengal treasury once Siraj-ud-daula was overthrown. The second version was the one shown to Omichand. Following these intrigues, Siraj-ud-daula was defeated at Plassey and Mir Jafar became Nawab, discovering at his leisure that he could do practically nothing without the consent of the British. (Bowe, 1977:134; Davies, 1939: 200-2; Huttenback, 1975:5-6) The ethics of these transactions are surely no less dubious than the morality of the 1968 Act, which was condemned in the House of Lords by the Archbishop of Canterbury, acting chairman of the National Committee for Commonwealth Immigrants, and by churchmen in general. (Jenkins, 1984; Layton-Henry, 1984:69)

It soon became obvious that in spite of the ceiling placed on vouchers for New Commonwealth migrants, these were still entering Britain in relatively large numbers owing to the fact that many Asian men were opting for family reunification in their adopted country. As was discussed in chapter 3, many chose to bring their families to Britain despite the differences in culture to avoid the risk of returning to the Indian subcontinent to visit their wives and children and being refused reentry into



Britain. Table 4.3. shows the immigration figures for the period from 1st July 1962, when the first Commonwealth Immigrants Act became law, until 1968.

Table 4.3. Number of Citizens of New Commonwealth Countries Allowed to Settle between 1st July 1962 and 1968.

Period	West Indies	India	Pakistan*
July-December 1962	7,004	2,855	1,106
1963	7,928	17,498	16,336
1964	14,848	15,513	10,980
1965	14,828	17,086	9,401
1966	10,928	16,708	10,245
1967	12,424	19,067	18,644
1968	7,013	23,147	13,426

\* includes Bangladesh

Source: Hiro, 1991 (adapted)

That most of these people were in fact dependants of legally settled migrants can be seen from Table 4.4 which shows the small numbers of voucher holders admitted into the United Kingdom from 1962 until 1972, when the voucher system was finally abolished.

Table 4.4. Ministry of Labour Voucher Holders Admitted to the UK from 1st July 1962 to December 1972.

Period	West Indies	India	Pakistan*
July-December 1962	1,600	646	391
1963	2,077	8,366	13,526
1964	2,635	3,828	3,296
1965	2,987	3,794	2,520
1966	628	2,433	721
1967	630	2,175	754
1968	240	930	374
1969	304	1,382	511
1970	322	791	381
1971	110	634	296
1972	61	225	62

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 \* Bangladesh was established in December 1971 but is included in the 1972 figures.

Source: Miles & Solomos, 1987 (adapted)

The massive influx of dependants, notwithstanding the restrictive measures introduced to keep non-white Commonwealth citizens out, presented a hitherto subdued politician with an ideal strategy with which to take over the Tory leadership. Paul Foot, in his exhaustive study of the career of Enoch Powell and the so-called 'Powell phenomenon', shows that Powell's demands for more immigration control and repatriation had no connection at all with the numbers of migrants. They depended solely on the political atmosphere and the likelihood of his seizing the reins of the Tory party from Edward Heath. (Foot, 1969) However, judging by the 3,437 letters analyzed by Diana Spearman out of the total of 100,000 that Powell

received in the wake of his infamous "Rivers of Blood" speech (see Appendix 2), the general public did not see him as a political opportunist, which he undoubtedly was, but as a courageous individual, public-spirited enough to speak out on behalf of the people. (Spearman, 1968) Powell was sacked from the Shadow Cabinet and, in official circles, took over from Peter Griffiths, becoming the new 'parliamentary leper'. However, thanks to the media, he was transformed almost overnight into Britain's leading expert on race and immigration and his rising popularity was considered a significant factor in the swing to the Conservative Party in the elections of 1970.

Some authors argue that Powell himself did not stir up racial antagonism among the British population as the stage had been set by preceding Governments, both Tory and Labour. Indeed, his speeches contained little that was not either Conservative Party policy or had not been written between the lines of the Labour Party's 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act. Thus it would be more accurate to see Powell as the mouthpiece of racist sentiment, rather than its instigator. (Ben-Tovim & Gabriel, 1987; Dummett & Dummett, 1987; Scott, 1969) Neither is it true to say that Powell "virtually invented the 'numbers game' " (Barker, 1981: 38) That dubious honour must fall to Major Evans Gordon, when in 1902 he

warned against the dangers of allowing too many aliens into the country. (see 3.3).

If Evans Gordon and, in the fifties, Cyril Osborne, laid the charges of racial antipathy, Powell's April speech lit the fuse, but the real explosion of intolerance would come in his November speech, in which he would call for the establishment of a Ministry of Repatriation to facilitate the return of black migrants 'to where they belong'. Powell argued that

"The West Indian or Indian does not, by being born in England, become an Englishman. In law he becomes a United Kingdom citizen by birth; in fact he is a West Indian or Asian still." 16 November 1968 (Quoted in Layton-Henry, 1984:76)

In other words, official recognition of British citizenship does not alter one's essential 'nationality'. If a person is black-skinned, even if s/he is living in Britain and his/her children and possibly grandchildren are living in Britain, s/he can never really be British, that is, one of 'our kith and kin', as opposed to the Falklanders, who, despite the physical distance of eight thousand miles, are definitely 'of our stock'. Powell's statement adroitly disguised the old racial discourse under a new notion: that of Britishness, which could neither be defined nor guaranteed with the possession of a passport. (Gilroy, 1987:51-9)

Enoch Powell had identified dependants as the real threat to the image of a homogeneous nation, as British-born blacks would challenge the accepted truth of blackness and Britishness being mutually exclusive categories. Before the uproar caused by Powell's words had died down, there were further concessions to racist pressures in the shape of the Immigration Appeals Act, which, despite its name, institutionalized legal obstacles in order to delay, if not, seriously restrict, the right of entry of dependants of legally settled migrants. Theoretically, the 1969 Appeals Act was a positive and humane measure to ensure that immigration restrictions were applied fairly. However, it introduced a new requirement: all Commonwealth citizens, including dependants, had to obtain an entry certificate from the British High Commission before leaving for Britain. This certificate was only issued after a personal interview with the prospective migrant at the nearest High Commission, often hundreds of miles away from his/her home. Shortage of staff meant that applicants often had to wait more than a year for an interview, which was no guarantee of the certificate being obtained, because any discrepancy between the information given by the applicant abroad and that supplied by the sponsor in Britain would mean automatic refusal. While there were numerous cases

of Asian wives and children, with the legal right to enter Britain, being forced to wait for years to be reunited with their husbands or fathers, white immigrants from the Irish Republic could continue to take up residence in Britain freely without any bureaucratic hindrances. (Jenkins, 1984:16-28; Miles & Phizacklea, 1984:67; Wilson, 1978:77-8)

#### 4.2.3. Back to the Tribe.

Enoch Powell's forebodings on the self-destruction of the British 'race' were not only due to the flow of dependants into the country. The Labour Government had published a new Race Relations Bill on April 9th 1968, under the provisions of which it was unlawful to discriminate in areas such as housing and employment and the publication or display of discriminatory notices or advertisements was also banned. (Layton-Henry, 1984:133) Powell seized on this new legislation to warn "ordinary, decent, sensible people" of the inherent dangers of this "one-way privilege". (The Times, 22 April 1968) His much-

quoted case of the elderly woman in Wolverhampton<sup>33</sup>, who was never identified nor ever found to exist, was exploited by Powell to stir up resentment against the Bill. The image of the frail, vulnerable old white woman, too frightened to even leave her house for fear of being physically and verbally abused, reinforced the idea of the nation, that is the white community, being threatened by an undesired close contact with equally undesirable black immigrants, who neither understood nor respected the British way of life. (Ware, 1992:4-5) David Edgar goes even further by arguing that Powell's delay in speaking out about the immigration issue (his 'rivers of blood' speech was delivered six years after the Commonwealth Immigrants Act of 1962) merely suggests that he had no real objection to black migrants, provided they knew their place. The new Race Relations Bill, on the other hand, represented

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<sup>33</sup> "Eight years ago in a respectable street in Wolverhampton a house was sold to a Negro. Now only one white, a woman old-age pensioner, lives there. ... With growing fear, she saw one house after another taken over. The quiet street became a place of noise and confusion. Regretfully, her white tenants moved out. ... Immigrant families have tried to rent rooms in her house, but she always refused. ... She is becoming afraid to go out. Windows are broken. She finds excreta pushed through her letter box. ... When the new Race Relations Bill is passed this woman is convinced she will go to prison. And is she wrong? I begin to wonder." (The Times 22 April 1968)

"the sub-proletariat resisting their status, demanding equal treatment in housing, education and jobs" (Edgar, 1977:127)

The disintegration of the Empire had been accepted with resignation but the thought of being obliged by law to treat former imperial subjects as equals was intolerable.

In spite of Powell's demagogy, the Bill became law in October of the same year amid fears that a 'white backlash' might punish the Labour Party for excessive partiality towards the black settlers. However, in order to counterbalance the stringency of the 1969 Appeals Act, and following the Local Government Act of 1966, the Government set up the Urban Programme in 1969 to support those areas where migrants had concentrated in large numbers. The Local Government Grants (Social Needs) Act was passed in the same year, by which Government funds would be used to alleviate acute housing, educational, health and welfare needs, but areas, as opposed to groups, were to be the targets of this aid. Again, while these initiatives were theoretically positive, they also served to forge a link between urban decline and race, thus adding another negative connotation to the equation: race = immigration. (Miles & Solomos, 1987:98; Smith, 1989:



67-77) The physical degeneration of the inner cities was attributed to the presence of the morally degenerate Afro-Caribbeans and Asians, who would soon be associated with criminal activities. (Benyon, 1986; Keith & Murji, 1990; Solomos, 1990)

Labour's attempts to integrate the increasing numbers of migrants and their children into mainstream British society were carried out in a somewhat half-hearted fashion so as not to alienate their white, working-class electorate, a large number of whom applauded the racialist views of Powell and other right-wingers.<sup>34</sup> However, it was not only the moderate left that was in danger of losing votes. From 1967 until 1979, extreme right-wing fringe groups posed a serious threat to the Conservative Party and only ceased to represent a valid electoral alternative to the mainstream parties after Margaret Thatcher, then Leader of the Opposition, announced in January 1978 the official end of immigration and race as a politically untouchable subject. The Conservative leadership was afraid of losing electoral support to the

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<sup>34</sup> 600 Smithfield porters marched to the House of Commons to protest against the dismissal of Enoch Powell from the Shadow Cabinet. 40 Wolverhampton brewery workers, representing 400 of their colleagues, marched to their Town Hall and 537 London dockers failed to report for work, all out of support for Powell. (The Times, 25 April 1968)

National Front, in particular in the Midlands, and thus ended some fifteen years of bipartisan consensus on immigration by espousing much of the Front's electoral issues. (Messina, 1985:425 & 433)

The National Front was formed in 1967 as a result of the union of the League of Empire Loyalists and the British National Party, under the chairmanship of A.K. Chesterton. These two movements were themselves offshoots of Oswald Mosley's British Union of Fascists and Arnold Leese's Imperial Fascist League, both of which had been active in the interwar period. (Hanna, 1974; Troyna, 1987) Immediately after World War II fascist groups failed to generate much support from the public, who tended to view their ideology with distaste, if not revulsion. However, following the tradition of the British Brothers League, formed in 1901 by the Conservative MP for Tower Hamlets, Major Evans Gordon, to oppose the settlement of Jews in Britain, immigration was successfully used as the fundamental issue with which to rally support for extreme right-wing groups. The fact that the demise of the Front as a parliamentary option in 1979 coincided with the recovery of race as an electoral issue on the part of the Conservatives, indicates that the anti-immigrant stance may have been the only really attractive feature of the

National Front's programme. (Layton-Henry, 1984: chapter 7)

In the immediate post-war years, Britain's extreme right-wing groups were "in a right old mess" (Edgar, 1977:121), fragmenting and re-forming only to split again for the umpteenth time. The riots of Nottingham and Notting Hill in 1958 presented the fascists with an explosive issue they could use to their own advantage, especially as the major parties refused to include immigration in their 1959 election campaigns. However, until 1968, when Enoch Powell voiced much of what the ultra-right had been saying for years, they demonstrated their incapacity to capture popular support for their programme of English chauvinism and nationalism. Despite the uproar caused by the 'Powell phenomenon', membership of the newly-formed National Front did not increase as might have been expected. David Edgar suggests that it was unnecessary as "the foundations of the racist state were being laid" (ibid.,122) with successive legislation being passed to keep out the blacks. Consequently, in the 1970 General Election the National Front only polled an average of 3,5 percent of the vote in the ten constituencies they fought. This lack of success owed much to Enoch Powell himself, who urged his supporters to vote Conservative, although the question of the

repatriation of non-whites, one of the National Front's most urgent demands, had been legitimized by the Right Honourable Member for Wolverhampton, South-West.

Although the National Front was openly recruiting disillusioned Conservatives from 1968 onwards, and attracting members from both major parties, support invariably came from those sectors of the community who were most hostile to black migrants. This explains why the Ugandan Asian crisis of 1972, which received enormous coverage in the media, gave the National Front a new lease on life. The Conservative Government agreed to allow the British passport holders from Uganda into Britain, which became a decisive factor for rabid anti-Asians, who were forced to look elsewhere for a party who would represent their wishes. The National Front attacked the Asian community more viciously than the West Indian, seeing the former as a more serious menace to the British way of life both for demographic and cultural reasons. It was precisely the way the Asians clung to their distinct traditions in dress, food, family life and language that most infuriated the National Front followers, who saw this as a direct challenge to the white British life-style. (Hiro, 1991:254; Walvin, 1984:158)

The National Front only threatened to become a valid electoral option in the two 1974 elections, in which 54

candidates were fielded in February and 90 in October,<sup>35</sup> but in spite of gaining up to 7.8 percent of the votes (in West Bromwich West) all the deposits were lost. It also seemed that many people were voting for the National Front as a way of expressing their resentment against the policies of the two major parties, and not because of shared ideology. In those constituencies with a Liberal and a National Front candidate, the former appeared to gain the protest vote at the expense of the less 'respectable' choice. (Husbands, 1975)

In order to maintain what its supporters interpreted as its budding popularity, the National Front organized a series of marches, which were systematically obstructed by left-wing demonstrators, who, no doubt unintentionally, supplied the ultra-right group with a great deal of welcome publicity. The Front gained popularity in local and by-elections in the London area and the Midlands, but not one of the record number of 303 candidates fielded in the 1979 election would recover their deposit. After such disastrous results the National Front virtually disintegrated. The threat to blacks from fringe fascist

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<sup>35</sup> Two General Elections were held in 1974. In February Labour was returned as the largest single party but without a satisfactory majority. In October it merely achieved a majority of three seats, which would soon disappear after a series of by-election defeats.

groups subsided, but only because of the promise of a return to a tough immigration and 'race' policy by the newly elected Conservative Government. A mainstream party could recuperate votes previously lost to the National Front and thus make it obsolete by allowing

"the old tribal warpaint [to] show through the thin veneer of modernity." Paul Rose, Labour MP for Manchester, Blackley, (Quoted in The Times, 22 April 1968)

An ideal of national homogeneity, implicit in Margaret Thatcher's famous 'swamping speech'<sup>36</sup> delivered a year before the Conservatives returned to power in 1979, had already been enshrined in the 1971 Immigration Act, which replaced all the previous immigration legislation, including the Aliens Restrictions Act of 1914. Immigration control was now based on a single distinction: that of 'patrials' and 'non-patrials'. From 1st January 1973, when the Act came into force, there would be no legal distinction between aliens and Commonwealth citizens as far as entry and settlement in Britain was concerned. (Miles & Phizacklea, 1984:69) The concept of patriality, which referred to persons born, adopted, naturalized or

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<sup>36</sup> "...I think [the present rate of immigration] means that people are really rather afraid that this country might be swamped by people of a different culture. The British character has done so much for democracy, for law, and done so much throughout the world that if there is any fear that it might be swamped, then people are going to be rather hostile to those coming in."  
(The Guardian, 31 January 1978)

registered in the United Kingdom, or born of parents or grandparents, at least one of whom had UK citizenship, had already been craftily introduced in the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act as a means to prevent large numbers of East African Asians with UK passports from entering Britain. The 1971 Act merely rationalized a pre-existing concept, ended the voucher system for black Commonwealth citizens, and greatly simplified the possible return to the mother country of white nationals of Canada, Australia, New Zealand and parts of Africa, who would be free from all controls. Thus, from 1973 onwards non-patrial Commonwealth citizens, who were almost certainly black, required annual work permits, which might not be renewed. They became, what Enoch Powell doubtlessly had hoped for, short-term contract workers rather than permanent settlers. (Castles & Kosack, 1973: 98-101 & 125; Miles & Solomos, 1987:95-6)

Not only did the 1971 Act put Commonwealth citizens on a par with aliens, in that they could not bring their dependants with them and were not entitled to claim unemployment benefit in the event of losing their jobs, but it also institutionalized deportation on grounds of general undesirability. (Hiro, 1991: 250; Wilson, 1978:77) Section 24 of the Act vastly increased the powers of constables and immigration officers, who may

"arrest without warrant anyone who has, or whom he, with reasonable cause, suspects to have, committed or attempted to commit an offence under this section." (Immigration Act 1971)

In other words, regardless of the length of time Asian or Afro-Caribbean citizens had been resident in Britain, they were liable to be arrested as illegal immigrants, as these were invariably black and therefore suspicious, unless they had taken the precaution to carry their passports with them. One cannot help being reminded of the notorious Rowlatt Acts, introduced in British India in 1919, which deprived Indians of their most basic rights in an attempt to quell any seditious movements. (See 3.2.3)

Under the terms of the 1971 Act Commonwealth citizens who had entered the United Kingdom illegally or by deception after 1973, when the Act came into effect, could be expelled. Between 1973 and 1983 4,582 people were deported. The number sounds considerable, but it should be remembered that the concept of "deception" included many alleged illegal immigrants who had not deliberately lied in order to gain entry into Britain, but who had been simply unaware of certain facts, such as the illegal status of a future husband in the case of girls arriving from the Indian subcontinent for an arranged marriage. (Jenkins, 1984:30-8)



Primary immigration practically ended with the passing of the 1971 Immigration Act, but the promise made by the Conservative Government that there would be "no further large-scale immigration" was made rather too soon. On 4 August 1972, the new strong man of Uganda, General Idi Amin, announced that all Asians had to quit his country within three months. These people were part of the Asian diaspora, promoted by the British during the heyday of the Empire, that had reached several countries in East Africa and the Caribbean. The case of the Uganda Asians was somewhat different as they were not given the choice to take up Uganda citizenship and remain in Africa, as the Kenyan Asians had been. Amin saw them as enemies of the state and was ruthlessly determined to expel them. Most of the 50,000 Asians in Uganda were British passport holders, which made the United Kingdom ultimately responsible for them. The Heath Administration decided to accept them and established a Ugandan Resettlement Board to assist their reception, dispersal and integration. Efforts were made to persuade other countries, especially India and Canada, to admit some of these Asians and in fact only just over half (27,000) finally arrived in Britain. (Hiro, 1991:215; Layton-Henry, 1984:81)

What is revealing about prevailing attitudes towards black UK citizens is the fact that these Uganda Asians

were never regarded as political refugees, which they doubtlessly were. They were seen as another group of 'coloured immigrants', who would lower the standards of 'our cities'. Like the Kenyan Asians, the Uganda Asians were English-speaking, mainly middle-class, professional people, but unlike the former, the majority arrived virtually penniless in Britain as Amin had confiscated all their assets before throwing them out.<sup>37</sup> The Uganda Asian crisis gave a boost to the National Front, who wasted no time in exploiting the fears and ignorance of the white British in pamphlets like the following:

"While you are asleep the immigrants are pouring in by the thousand and breeding at an incredible rate. If you - and thousands like you - do not organise and take action now, then by the time you do decide to wake up you will find yourself a second class citizen in your own country, dispossessed of your birthright by teeming millions of coloured aliens."

"The Fight for Survival is On" (Quoted in Miles & Phizacklea, 1984:82)

One expects extremist groups to exaggerate but at least retain a shred of truth. As Salman Rushdie points out,

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<sup>37</sup> The Uganda Asians have proved to be highly enterprising in spite of such an inauspicious beginning. Nazmi Virani arrived in Britain with \$20 in his pocket. He built up Control Securities and made a fortune of £60m. (The Guardian, 18 October 1991) Asian entrepreneurs, especially those from Uganda, have transformed Leicester's economic climate by reviving the dying knitwear and hosiery industries and creating 30,000 new jobs. (The Daily Telegraph, 3 April 1991)

the birthright of every British man, woman and child has in fact been stolen, not by "teeming millions of coloured aliens", but by the Conservative Government itself. The 1981 British Nationality Act deprived the children of Afro-Caribbean and Asian Britons of the right of automatic British citizenship, but this meant that a nine hundred year-old right, the *ius soli*, or right of the soil, had been abolished, and with hardly any protest. (Rushdie, 1982b:419-420) In a country where ancient traditions are defended tooth and nail, the calm with which the new Nationality Act was received can only have one explanation: traditions must be upheld when they affect 'us', but after all, Afro-Caribbeans and Asians are not 'us', even if they have settled and are living and working in Britain and, above all, regardless of the fact that they might possess a UK passport.

The Labour Party, once more in opposition from 1970 to 1974, returned to the more radical position it traditionally adopts when not in power. However, the blatant similarities between the 1968 Commonwealth Immigrants Act with its 'grandfather clause' and the 1971 Immigration Act with its patriality clauses prevented Labour from delivering too harsh an attack. Likewise, the Opposition Party was somewhat politically embarrassed by the Tory handling of the Uganda Asian crisis. With regard

to the Kenyan Asians in 1968, Labour had responded negatively with restrictive measures. In contrast, the Tories had honoured their obligations towards the Uganda Asians by allowing them in, despite popular manifestations of shock and horror.

Labour was returned to power in 1974 and set about implementing a series of liberal reforms. In September 1975 the White Paper Racial Discrimination was published, in which the Government considered strengthening the terms of the Race Relations Act 1968 and setting up the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE). The new Race Relations Act was passed in 1976 and came into force, together with the CRE, in 1977. Under the 1976 Act, indirect as well as intentional discrimination was covered; discrimination in employment was to be dealt with by an industrial tribunal and the newly created agency, the CRE, was established to work towards the elimination of discrimination and the promotion of good relations between persons of different ethnic groups. (Layton-Henry, 1984:137-8 & 153; Miles & Solomos, 1987: 99)

The CRE did not have a very auspicious start as there were internal power struggles and disagreements over priorities and resources (Layton-Henry, 1984:139) The CRE was never popular with the Conservatives, who tended

to view the merger of the two major functions, promotion and enforcement, in one organization with misgivings. One of the early moves carried out by the Thatcher Administration in 1979 was to slash £1,000,000 from the CRE's proposed budget. Relations have since been strained as a result of arbitrary dismissal by the Home Secretary of a number of black Commissioners and a discrepancy over its legal power to investigate the state's immigration procedures. In 1980 some Tory backbenchers even called for the abolition of the CRE, and two years later this was fast becoming a generalized feeling. (Bulpitt, 1986:37; Layton-Henry, 1986:82; Messina, 1985:428) Unlike Labour, the Conservative Party have not prioritized good race relations, but instead have tightened up the already existing restrictions arguing that racial harmony is totally dependent on effective entry controls. (Layton-Henry, 1986:77) Thus their 1979 election manifesto included the promise to introduce a new British Nationality Act, which would further restrict entry. There was a need to bring the law up to date as the status of 'citizen of the United Kingdom and Colonies' no longer implied the right of entry and residence in the country. Consequently a Bill was drawn up in January 1981 and set out three major categories of citizenship: British citizenship, citizenship of the British Dependent

Territories, and British Overseas citizenship. The first category referred to citizens of the UK and colonies whose parents or grandparents were born, adopted, naturalized, or registered as citizens of the UK. Citizenship of British Dependent Territories would be acquired by those citizens of the UK and colonies who had that citizenship because their parents or grandparents were born, naturalized or registered in an existing dependency. The third category, British Overseas citizenship, had been devised mainly for the benefit of citizens of the UK and colonies who did not qualify for either of the other two categories, in other words, who were black.<sup>38</sup> It was to all intents and purposes an empty category because it could not be passed on to descendants. (Layton-Henry, 1984:157-160; 1986:83-87) The Tories evidently felt that their overseas imperial commitments had been fulfilled, or, in the words of James McCall, the debt for the sweets of Empire had been repaid.

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<sup>38</sup> Citizens of Malaysia and East African Asian UK passport holders, many of whom were resident in India but waiting for permission to enter Britain on the quota system, are the main examples of this residual category of citizenship.

The opposition parties attacked the Bill on the grounds that it was racist and sexist<sup>39</sup>, but while the Liberals had promised even tougher anti-discrimination laws in their 1979 election manifesto, the Labour Party had outlined many of the Conservatives' proposals in their 1977 Green Paper. (Fitzgerald & Layton-Henry, 1986) The aim of the Bill was to construct the question of nationality along racial lines. Full citizenship was taken away from Commonwealth citizens, who had already been demoted to second class by previous legislation. On the other hand, after the war with Argentina in 1982, the Falkland Islanders, who before the crisis had been citizens of British Dependent Territories, by definition a second class category, were promoted and given special access to British citizenship, like the Gibraltarians. Tony Marlow, MP for north Northampton, justified the Nationality Act as a means of restoring the coherence of the British nation:

"People have criticised these measures because they say they are racialist, as if racialist is a word of abuse. What does racialist mean? It means tribal. After all, man is a tribal animal. We have a feeling of kith and kin for

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<sup>39</sup> Children born in Britain of foreign parents or whose parents were illegal immigrants (which includes those who have overstayed their period of residence) were not entitled to citizenship. The right of entry to husbands or fiancés was only allowed when the wife or fiancée was born or had one parent born in the UK.

people like ourselves, with our own background and culture." (Quoted in Miles & Phizacklea, 1984: 108)

The new racial discourse evolves around a shared ideal of a homogeneous cultural unit with its own distinctive history. The language of 'inferior races' has disappeared although the problematic and meaningless term 'race' continues to be used, especially in matters of 'race relations'. However, by simply replacing the word 'race' for 'nation', the essence of the discourse can be seen to remain unaltered. (Miles, 1989:120-1) That in contemporary Britain the languages of 'race' and 'nation' have become inextricable was proved during the 1982 Falklands crisis.<sup>40</sup> All the historic symbols were present: an island people, Anglo-Saxon democracy challenged by a dictator, even battles at sea. The Government and the media worked together to revive flagging feelings of patriotism by conjuring up two anachronistic images of the country: that it is, and must continue to be, a major world power and that the British nation is made up of one 'race' of people who share the same culture, language, customs, and, what is most important, history. Therefore, it was a foregone

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<sup>40</sup> One of the most objective accounts of the Falklands crisis is Anthony Barnett's Iron Britannia, Allison & Busby, 1982.



conclusion that the British nation/'race' should defend its kith and kin in the South Atlantic, despite the geographical distance. National frontiers had little to do with the concept of nation/'race'. Nobody could deny the essential Britishness of the Falkland Islanders, in contrast to the ambiguous position of the black Britons. The new racism is articulated around who can or cannot be classified as a genuine 'Brit'. Salman Rushdie points out the overt exclusion of the black community from the concept of a British nation. In Margaret Thatcher's victory speech at Cheltenham on 3 July 1982 she "evoked the spirit of imperialism" (Rushdie, 1982b:418) and addressed her words exclusively to the white Britons, the majority of the electorate.

"...we fought for our own people and for our own sovereign territory. ...we have learned something about ourselves - a lesson which we desperately need to learn. When we started out, there were the waverers and the fainthearts. ... The people who thought we could no longer do the great things which we once did. ... There were those who would not admit it - even perhaps some here today - people who would have strenuously denied the suggestion but - in their heart of hearts - they too had their secret fears that it was true: that Britain was no longer the nation that had built an Empire and ruled a quarter of the world". (Quoted in Barnett, 1982:149-150)

Thatcher's use of the word 'we', which automatically excludes the two and a half million black Britons, recalls her previous 'swamping speech' of 1978, which was

itself a more respectable version of Enoch Powell's 1968 apocalyptic warnings about the threat of alien cultures to the nation.

The argument supporting the new racism is that

"Human nature is such that it is natural to form a bounded community, a nation, aware of its differences from other nations. They are not better or worse. But feelings of antagonism will be aroused if outsiders are admitted. And there grows up a special form of connection between a nation and the place where it lives." (Barker, 1981:21)

In other words, given the choice, people prefer to live with their own kind and not become a multi-racial society. If they are forced to live with 'outsiders' it is only natural that feelings of hostility or resentment should arise. Thus, people of a different cultural and racial background cannot and should not belong to the same nation, unless one group is willing to shed its differences and assimilate the culture of the dominant ethnic group.<sup>41</sup>

The myth of a homogeneous culture has been perpetuated by the Education Reform Act of 1988, enforced in April 1990. With a fixed national curriculum every

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<sup>41</sup> The case of Rodney and Gail Pereira is an example of what white Britons would consider to be assimilation. They had been told to quit Britain, but after a successful campaign by their white neighbours, the Home Office allowed them to remain in Britain legally. The Pereiras were English speaking, Roman Catholic, middle-class Indians living in a Hampshire village. (Gilroy, 1987:63; The Times, 31 May 1984)

schoolchild will be taught the same material and, consequently will absorb the same hidden curriculum

"the covert messages about knowledge and power which are embedded in what is taught." (Cohen, 1991:44)

If all children are to learn from the same textbook, regardless of what part of the United Kingdom they may live in, it stands to reason that there will be even less chance of their being taught from a non-European perspective. It seems unlikely, therefore, that representations of historical events will gain in objectivity from the implementation of a national curriculum and, on the contrary, imperial myths will continue to be handed down as facts. The following chapter will analyze some of these myths and will show how they have conditioned British people, children and adults, to respond negatively to the arrival and settlement of citizens from the former colonies.



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TRANSLATED PEOPLE:  
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ASIANS IN GREAT BRITAIN AND A  
STUDY OF BRITISH RESPONSES TO  
POST-WAR MIGRANTS FROM THE  
INDIAN SUBCONTINENT.

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