

Britain is the country with a long tradition of immigration. Over many years it witnessed the arrival of immigrants and refugees from the whole world. Nevertheless the unprecedented extent of immigration from the Commonwealth countries of the former British Empire after the Second World War was unexpected. It caused profound and irreversible change in the British society as a whole.

This thesis deals with a description and interpretation of a series of key issues related to immigration from New Commonwealth (especially from Indian subcontinent) in 1945-1971. Main reasons for “coloured immigration” were an increasing demand for low skilled and unskilled labour in United Kingdom and the 1948 British Nationality Act, which gave Commonwealth citizens right to enter, work and settle in the British Isles. I am concerned with issues of immigrants’ employment, housing, education as well as with the attitudes and responses of indigenous whites. Even though the British consider themselves to be “tolerant people” immigrants faced up to prejudices, discrimination, racism, verbal abuse and physical attacks in Britain. White hostility toward coloured immigrants manifested itself in the form of the Notting Hill Riots in 1958. Racial attacks were explained in terms of the enormous number of “coloured” people and the proposed solution for these problems was to restrict the coloured migration. In 1962 the British government “laissez-faire policy” towards immigration ended with the passage of the Commonwealth Immigration Act. In the course of 1960s the various immigration acts passed to control immigrants from Commonwealth.