

1. Britain in Late Middle Ages. (Part I)

The Lancaster Kings continued campaigns in France in the Hundred Years' War.

Henry V (1413 – 1422) was successful in his expedition in France, Henry VI though having been crowned to Britain and France, lost those French lands and probably Saint Joan of Arc helped the French. Henry VI's reign ended in confusion, disposition and a cruel war – the Wars of Roses (1455 – 1485), a term coined by Sir Walter Scott.

During the Wars of Roses, great men attached lesser men to their service by *lip indentures*; the Duke of Lancaster *had pointed the way* in the late fourteenth century. When he indentured a large number of knights and esquires, most of them were retained for life in his service and in war and peace. Such bastard feudalism as this has been called, was quite different from feudalism. The retainer was not a vassal, who owed loyalty to his lord and was linked to him through ties of mutual obligations. The retainer's lord was his patron, and he was his follower, wearing his livery and being maintained by him.

The Wars of Roses began when in 1399 barons of the North supported the Lancaster who had a red rose in their *crest*. The Barons of South supported the Yorks whose crest was decorated by a white rose. The bloody struggle for the crown and rule practically lasted for about 30 years (1455 – 1485) with some breaks, it was merciless annihilation of the old aristocracy with rights and claims to become rulers, and its romantic name the Wars of Roses only emphasizes the ruthlessness by a degree of contrast.

Finally, the two dynasties had been destroyed, and a distant relative of the Lancaster family – Henry Tudor married Elisabeth of York in 1485 (the two roses united) and Henry Tudor was crowned Henry VII of England (1485 – 1509).

The 15th century with its baronial wars though putting brakes on the development of the economy could not stop the progress of the productive forces released by the disintegration of dependent feudal relations in agriculture. The 15th century saw a development of woollen textile manufacture, steel making development (South Wales, Birmingham and Sheffield), and trade development facilitated the growth of the Navy and shipbuilding.

The end of the Wars of Roses, the victory of Henry Tudor at Bosworth Field and his marriage with Princess Elizabeth, heiress of the House of York (1485) were the events that symbolized the end of the Middle Ages in Britain. The year of 1485 is traditionally considered *the watershed* and the beginning of the Tudor Age. In historical development the rule of the Tudors (1485 – 1603) with their absolute power in long run contributed to the strengthening of its role in international affairs.

The 16th century was the age of a growing absolutism of monarchy and centralization of the state; these phenomena facilitated the development and foundation of new capitalist

the complexities of European politics. His eldest son was married to the Spanish princess Catherine of Aragon, and his daughter Margaret to King James IV of Scotland.

His son **Henry VIII** (1509 – 1547) whose court was glamorous with royal games, balls and entertainments, development of culture, was among other thing – a wasteful monarch, on his death his treasury was practically empty. Henry VIII's despotism was fatal for the country's progressive minds and terrible for his family. The king invited to court outstanding people – humanists of the Renaissance period: i. e. Thomas More who was invited and appointed Chancellor. But Thomas More dared to contradict the King and was beheaded. That was the destiny of many Chancellors which made the post the most dangerous in the country.

Henry VIII had a powerful adviser and a skilful minister Cardinal Thomas Woolsey, who was very rich and ambitious. But for all his efforts he failed to get the King a divorce from his first wife Catherine of Aragon as the Pope didn't want to anger Spain and France, two Catholic powers. Henry was outraged with his minister and the Pope. The Power of the Catholic Church was out of his authority and he wanted to control it for material and personal reasons. Though at the initial stages of the Reformation in Europe Henry VIII had not approved of the ideas of Martin Luther and was awarded by the Pope with the title *Fidei Defensor*, – Defender of the Faith. The letters "F. D." are still to be found on every British coin.

The opposition to the Pope as a political prince but not the religious leader was growing in England and Henry VIII started his own Reformation. Tomas Cromwell was his faithful reformer. In 1531 Henry was elected the Head of the Church of England by the English bishops and in 1534 the Parliament passed the Act of Supremacy declaring him the Supreme Head of the Church of England. His Chancellor Sir Thomas More refused to recognize the Act and that cost him his life – he was executed in the Tower. With the help of his new Chancellor Tomas Cromwell Henry VIII ordered to suppress the monasteries, he captured the wealth of the monasteries that had been dissolved and destroyed. The lands of the monasteries were either sold or given to new supporters who turned out to be enthusiastic Protestants all of a sudden. Withing a few years an enormous wealth went into the empty treasury of the King.

In 1536 he managed to unite Wales with England, as the Welsh nobility were showing interest in the support of their representative on the English throne. It was the first Act of Union in the history of Britain. His beloved wife Jane Seymour left him the long-awaited-for heir Prince Edward. He wanted to achieve a *betrothal* of his son with the future Mary Queen of Scots who was born when Edward was 5 years old. The Scots refused the wooing of the English King as they could see through his far-reaching plans and sent Mary to France. On her return she became Queen of Scots (1561 – 1567).

Roman Catholic. She failed to understand the English hostility to Catholic Spain, and her marriage to Philip of Spain, son of the Emperor Charles V, was her own idea, celebrated in July 1554 despite the pleas of the Parliament. The Parliament had to accept Philip as King of England for Mary's lifetime; moreover, his rights in England were to expire if Mary died childless. Her marriage was very unpopular and caused several uprisings simultaneously. She rushed the rebels and pursued an aggressive policy against Protestants: more than 300 people were executed in the worst tradition of the Inquisition – burned them. That is why she earned the nickname Bloody Mary. During the reign of Bloody Mary France was the traditional enemy and England was little better than a province of Spain. Being the wife of Philip II she got England to be drawn into a war with France and Calais, the last English possession on the continent, was lost in 1558. Her reign and life were a political and a personal disaster. When Mary died in November 1558, deserted, unhappy and hated by many, people in the streets of London danced and drank to the health of the new queen.

Elizabeth I, Queen of England and Ireland, daughter of Henry VIII and Anne Boleyn, succeeded her half-sister to great delight of the people. Princess Elizabeth after her mother's execution was declared illegitimate; she spent her childhood in loneliness, and only sometimes enjoyed the company of her brother Edward, encouraged by her stepmother Catherine Parr. Elizabeth was a well-educated, remarkable woman, who had endured the hardships of her youth and succeeded to a dangerous heritage. The country was surrounded by powerful enemies: Spain possessed the Netherlands and France controlled Scotland, where the French mother of the 16-year-old Mary Queen of Scots was regent. To all the true Catholics Elizabeth still remained illegitimate, but Mary Stuart, the great grand-daughter of Henry VII Tudor by his daughter Margaret was supported in her claim to the English throne as the rightful Queen of England. Yet Elizabeth was equal to the situation. She had the Tudor courage and combined an almost masculine intelligence with altogether feminine intuition, which enabled her to understand her people and select the right advisers.

Her first steps were to restore the moderate Protestantism of her father: The Anglican service was reintroduced and 39 articles, formulating the established doctrine of the Church, the Symbol of the Faith. Specific differences in the development of the Reformation in England and Scotland didn't prevent the Scottish Presbyterians and the Church of England from cooperation in the conflict and struggle against the Catholics, both in England and Scotland.

The Scottish merchants supported their own variant of Calvinism, the Presbyterianism – a cheaper church founded on democratic principles of elected *preachers* and community chiefs. They denied the Right of one man (the Pope, the King, or the bishops) to the Supremacy of the Church. The Presbyterian Church helped to secure the Independence of Scotland in their struggle against catholic France.

abdicate in Scotland in 1567 and having left her baby son James VI of Scotland, had to flee from Scottish Calvinists in 1568 and throw herself on Elizabeth's mercy. The Queen of England had no alternative but *to keep her in close custody*. Mary's presence in England provoked rebellions and *plots* to depose Elizabeth. The Spanish ambassador was involved in a plot to murder Elizabeth and expelled from the country. The Parliament demanded her death; Elizabeth had to agree and in 1587 Mary Queen of Scots was executed. But Elizabeth blamed her death on her officials. The next year was to be fateful for England.

In August 1588 the Armada, the Great Spanish fleet, was in the Channel preparing to launch a full-scale invasion. Elizabeth was at the head of her nation. She went to the Camp of her troops to encourage and inspire them with such words: "Let tyrants fear. I have always so behaved myself that, under God, I have placed my strength and goodwill in the loyal hearts and goodwill of my subjects... I know I have but the body of a weak and feeble woman, but I heart and stomach of a King and of a King of England too." The Spanish attempted invasion began in July, 1588. The heavy galleons of Philip's great Armada were rather awkward against the quick English ships. The "Invincible Armada" was defeated by the English ships and the storm in the English Channel. It was a glorious moment for England, and Elizabeth was the heroine of the hour. But that wasn't the end of the war with Spain. Peace was made only after death of Elizabeth. James VI of Scotland, the son of Mary Stuart, didn't support Spain as he had been given to understand that his right to the English throne would be honored.

Ireland was another battlefield of the struggle against England and Elizabeth. It was only subdued by the time of her death. The best lands were captured by English landowners.

England had economic problems: inflation and unemployment. *Enclosures* of farm lands and wars, it produced armies of beggars and thieves, and they roamed about the country in misery and crime. The government passed the Elizabethan Poor Law in 1601. It aimed at putting an end to beggars of all kinds, the poor were put into workhouses.

In the 16th century **the economic growth** was getting faster, though still limited by feudal relations. Trade and Industry were growing. The Royal Exchange was founded in 1571, East India Company – in 1600. **Education** was further developing. Many Grammar Schools were founded in the 16th century. New foundations like Harrow and Rugby admitted clever boys as well as rich ones, and could rightly be called "public schools". Elizabeth gave her name to the historical period; her reign (1558 – 1603) was described as "the Golden Age of Elizabeth", the most colorful and splendid in English history. She was the embodiment of everything English and the English had found themselves as a nation. The power of Spain was challenged on the seas and finally broken by the defeat of Armada. Elizabeth saw the foundation of the British Empire and the flowering of the Renaissance in

extremists, like *independents* (1581), insisting on complete independence of their communities, and *moderates*, who believed in cooperation with monarchy.

The new forces, the developing bourgeoisie began to actively oppose the absolute monarchy, particularly using the Parliament. In 1601 the Parliament made the first declaration of protest, disapproving of the Queen's sell out and distribution of licenses. Those first seeds of discord were to grow up strong and dangerous during the reign of the Stuarts: **James I** and **Charles I**. James VI King of Scots – born in 1566, crowned King of Scots in 1567, became James I (1603 – 1625) of England. On the death of Queen Elizabeth I in 1603 he became the senior representative of the Tudor dynasty, being the great-grandson of Margaret, the eldest daughter of Henry VII. The Stuart Kings were less successful than the Tudor Monarchs.

In person King James was not a figure of great majesty; he was, in fact, small and awkward. Possessed of a high opinion of his own *wisdom* he finally believed that Kings were divinely ordained to rule, and that their royal prerogative was unquestionable. So it was hardly surprising that he quarreled violently and often with his Parliament; the Commons were disappointed, and the Puritans were more so, for James would have none of them, he preferred the Catholics, but the latter *ruined their cause* in their famous *Gunpowder Plot*. On November 5th in the year 1605 the Gunpowder Plot *was perpetrated* as a protest against the sharp enforcement of anti-Catholic laws of King James I.

The anniversary of this *cabal* is celebrated each year in England and is called Guy Fawkes Day in memory of the chief character in the drama. This fellow Fawkes took a house adjoining the House of Parliament in London, tunneled through the cellar, and concealed a nice fat charge of gunpowder in the *coal bin*. Unfortunately for the leader, one of the conspirators warned a certain Lord by letter to stay away from a meeting at the House on the day of explosion. This led to the discovery of the plot and Guy Fawkes was tortured and hanged. On this day it is customary in England to dress up like the Americans do on Halloween, and to carry an effigy of Fawkes through the streets and then to burn it.

The King was noted for persecuting witches and writing books, principally about the divine rights of Kings. James was closely connected with the international catholic reactionary powers. The first Stuarts had faced the alternative: either to give up absolute power and cooperate with new gentlemen and bourgeoisie or to support reactionary noblemen. They preferred to struggle against the puritans, representatives of new revolutionary ideology. James I, and later his son Charles I were extravagant and wasteful.

Charles I Stuart (1625 – 1649) was in constant conflict with the Parliament. The Parliament, when *convened*, refused to give the King financial support, and Charles I ruled for 11 years without Parliament (1629 – 1640). That period of Personal Government, during

which went on to take possession of London and install their commander Sir Thomas Fairfax as Governor of the Tower. His second-in-command was **Oliver Cromwell**, a farmer in the past and a great military leader who had organized the New Model Army. Charles I was captured by the Scots who handed him over to the Parliamentarians. He escaped and made agreements with Scots who were later defeated by the Parliamentary Army (1648). The English Army demanded the death of the King.

Charles I was brought to trial for *High Treason*, his supporters were not allowed to be present. He was sentenced to death, “and in a *hushed* silence on a cold January morning the King of England met his death with a courage and dignity that commanded respect.” He was beheaded in Whitehall on the **30 of January 1649**. The House of Lords was abolished, some famous Royalists were captured and beheaded.

A Council of State was created to govern the country, which consisted of forty one members. The House of Commons reshuffled its members, and expelled those who had opposed the King’s death. But the troubles were not easy to stop. There was mutiny in the Army, a rebellion in Ireland, the Scots declared the son of the executed King – their King (1651) Charles II. **Oliver Cromwell** ruthlessly crushed the Irish, checked the Scots, and established his authority in the Army and in the country. Admiral Blake defeated the Dutch and made England again the mistress of the seas. In 1653 Oliver Cromwell together with the New Model officers expelled the Parliament and established a military dictatorship. On December 16th Oliver Cromwell publicly accepted the Title of **Lord Protector of a United Commonwealth of England, Scotland, Ireland and the colonies**. He didn’t dare to take up the title of the King, as there was opposition to that in the Army.

All in all, in four years of struggle, around 100 000 Englishmen were killed. Feelings ran high and extraordinary radical opinions were expressed both during and after the Civil War. There was a confrontation of political and religious views in the country. Presbyterians had become conservative and royalists. Independents, which were represented in the New Model Army, were split. The more extreme republicans in the New Model Army, *the Levelers*, as they were called, had a Manifest of their own, called the Agreement of the People, and they rallied together to defend the right of common people, they demanded the abolition of titles and legal, political, etc. equality. *The Diggers*, a far smaller and still more radical group, opposed the private ownership of Property altogether and struggled “to set the land free.” The language of radicalism which burst out between 1640 and 1645 alarmed conservatives of all kinds. However, it was the Nobility and Gentry who profited the most from the Civil War. The Diggers failed in their ventures and the Levelers were suppressed in 1649 after they rebelled against Cromwell and other army leaders. *The Commonwealth*, with Cromwell as Lord Protector, the period when England was a republic, is also described as

Richard lacked his qualities and was deposed 6 months after the beginning of his rule. The generals began to fight for power, **General G. Monk's** influence brought about the dissolution of the Long Parliament and the new convention Parliament voted to recall Charles II and restore the Monarchy in Britain.

Charles II landed in England in May 1660 and was enthusiastically greeted by the people. He declared a "liberty of conscience" and demanded the punishment of his father's murderers. He was crowned in 1661; his ministers were mainly old Royalists who had served him during his exile. The Puritan Republic had been a joyless country, and the Restoration of Monarchy brought back the gaiety of life: theatres were reopened; new dramatists wrote cynical plays to entertain the corrupt court. It was also the restoration of Parliament, House of Lords, Anglican Church and Cavalier gentry (noblemen) with their old privileges and intolerance. But the Commonwealth was dissolved, Charles II was the King of England and Ireland but all these countries now had their own Parliament again. Charles II was more French than English. He did his best to secure toleration for Catholics in England and also to escape the control of Parliament. The Parliament and the Protestants wanted to keep their leading position.

The first years of the Restoration saw action of *revenge* on Cromwell's dead body, Acts against Puritans passed by the Parliament of Cavaliers and the appearance of Milton's "Paradise Lost" in which the author tried "to justify the ways of God to men"; **New Amsterdam** was captured from the Dutch and renamed **New York**, after the King's brother, James, Duke of York (later James II). The **Great Plague of 1665** and the **Great Fire of London in 1666** were the *calamities* that brought a lot of suffering to the English people.

In 1650s outstanding scientists gathered at Oxford and founded the first great learned society in England, "the Royal Society", who's Patron was the King. They were dedicated to the advance of knowledge in every subject and their society attracted many talented minds: **Christopher Wren**, the great designer, known later as the rebuilder of London after the Great Fire, **John Locke**, the political philosopher, the father of the Modern science of chemistry. One more name stands out about others – that of Isaac **Newton**. His greatest discoveries include the spectrum and the basic law of the universe – the law of gravity.

Charles II governed the country through *the inner Council*, or *Cabal*, which consisted of five men, two of them were Catholics and the other three were supporters of religious toleration. As a result Charles issued a Declaration of Indulgence granting toleration to all – including Catholics. In their *rejection* of that Declaration the Parliament adopted the Test Act (1673) forbidding all Catholics to hold office for the Crown. It was also directed against James the Duke of York, the heir to the throne. The Opposition to the King became organized into a party with a majority in the newly elected Parliament. The monarch to

Protestant. When the Catholic second wife of James II gave birth to a baby son, the English Parliament and the Protestant bourgeoisie were alarmed by the prospect of Catholic succession of Monarchs. Tories, Whigs and Anglicans began to look for a Protestant rescue. They invited William of Orange to invade Britain. The forces of William landed in England and that decided the issue: James and his family fled away from the country. The Parliament decided that James had lost his rights to the Crown. Mary and William began to reign jointly; moreover, the Parliament decided that William would rule on in the event of Mary's prior death.

The political events of 1688 were called "the Glorious Revolution" as they had realized the bourgeois theories of the nature of government (John Locke) and the demands that the powers of the Kings should be restricted and that the Parliament should be overall power in the state. Though some historians insist on calling it a *coup d' état* of the ruling classes, the changes are recognized as a historic turning point in the conception and practice of government. In point of fact it can be justly regarded as a "glorious compromise" between the new bourgeoisie and the old feudal institutions like the Monarchy, the House of Lords, etc, but also in imposing new bourgeois parliamentary privileges and relations. The Parliament secured its superiority by adopting the Bill of Rights in 1689 and the Monarchs – William III and Mary II accepted the conditions advanced by the Parliament: the legislative and the executive power of the Monarchs was limited – the Bills passed by Parliament were to be subjected to *the Royal Assent*, but the Monarch couldn't refuse to sign them; the Monarch couldn't impose taxes; the Army could be kept only with the Parliament's permission.

Praising the "Glorious Revolution" as "great and bloodless", historians have to admit however, that it was bloodless only in Britain. In Ireland there was a blood bath of war between the Protestants and the Catholic Irish Parliament. King William III landed in Ireland with the British, Dutch, Danish and Huguenot troops and defeated the Irish and French army of James II in the Battle of the River Boyne (1691). James left Ireland for France and never returned to any of his kingdoms. The defeat in this Battle crushed the Irish hopes for independence; the Irish Catholics lost all the rights.

3. The 18th century – of Wealth, Technological Revolution and Power

The end of the 17th century and the start of the new century were the periods of wars in Europe. Britain was involved into the Nine Years War (1688 – 1697) and the War for Spanish Succession (1702 – 1713). France had become a permanent enemy, and the grand strategy of Britain was to stop the French expansionist's policies: to struggle against the French competition in trade, and also to interfere in the affairs of the Spanish Empire.

with the British Parliament adopted the Act of the Union with Scotland. The new British flag united the flags of England and Scotland combining the crosses of St. George and St. Andrew. Scotland retained its legal system and the established Church and also gained free trade with England. England, Scotland and Wales were united and became Great Britain. The Tories opposed the military actions of their successful opponents, the Whigs.

The Duchess of Marlborough, who had been very friendly and close to Queen Anne, was replaced by a lady, supporting the Tories. They came to power in 1712 and began negotiating peace with France. The treaty of Utrecht was signed in 1713 according to which the Crowns of France and Spain were never to be united, Britain gained many advantages – new territories, such as Gibraltar, Minorca, Newfoundland, and the right to sell slaves to the Spanish colonies. Great Britain became a great European power.

Queen Anne was the last Stuart monarch, she died in 1714; according to the Act of Settlement, she was succeeded by Protestants of **Hanoverian Dynasty**. **George I** (1714 – 1727) was an elderly and *unprepossessing* German who could speak no English. The consequences were that the Whigs surrounding the King were handed over many of the royal prerogatives and their leader became the Chairman of the King's Council. That was the beginning of the Cabinet system of Government in Great Britain, with a Prime Minister presiding over the Cabinet. The Whig domination lasted for half a century. It was troubled by the Jacobite Rebellion in 1715 and by the growing *National Debt*. It had been created to help to pay for war, and by 1713 it had risen to £ 54 million.

In 1717 one of the Whig ministers **Robert Walpole** (later known as the first Prime Minister) introduced “the sinking fund” to be used to paying off the Debt from the taxes. The South Sea Company, founded in 1711 to trade in slaves, offered *to take over* a large part of the Debt which was followed by a great rise of the value of its *shares*. “The South sea *bubble*” burst up in 1720, collapsed like a bubble and ruined many investors. Robert Walpole was called to remedy the financial situation in the country. In 1721 he became the first Prime Minister and an outstanding statesman. The main objectives of his policy were peace and prosperity. His motto was “let the sleeping dogs lie”. He had been in office for twenty years and stabilized the financial situation with the help of taxes imposed on goods sold within the country. The taxes on tea and coffee were a success, but taxes on wine and tobacco aroused protests of his opponents and people in the country.

When **George II** became king (1727 – 1760), he continued his father's policy and relied upon R. Walpole as Prime Minister. But the opponents from the Tories were attacking Walpole, especially the young talented politician W. Pitt (the Elder), – and much against his will, the Prime Minister was forced to start a war against Spain. But he didn't direct it properly in the opinion of his Parliamentary critics, and had to resign. But he continued to have an influence on George II. Sir Robert Walpole, the first man who had a right

families left the country. The Highlanders were brought under control of the central Government.

The most important opponent of Sir R. Walpole was William Pitt “the Elder”, later Lord Chatham who was determined to strengthen the economic power of Britain and to defeat France in the trade competition *overseas*. He agreed with Daniel Defoe the author of Robinson Crusoe, who had written in 1728: “Trade is the wealth of the world; trade makes the difference between rich and poor, between one nation and another”.

When Lord Chatham became the secretary of state he directed his efforts at destroying French trade and driving the French from the North America; that policy culminated in the capture of Quebec, Montreal and other triumphs of the “Year of Victory” (1759). In India the British became the masters of Bengal. India became the “jewel of the Crown” of Britain’s foreign possessions. In 1760 George II was succeeded by his grandson **George III**. He declared himself Patriot King and was determined to take a more active part in the government of the country. His Government, his Cabinet included the Tories who were described as King’s Friends. William Pitt, the Elder, had resigned as his new military plans did not find an understanding of the young King, who wanted to make peace with France (1763) and other countries.

There were military conflicts near Lexington and *Concord* near Boston. The Congress of the United Colonies at Philadelphia elected **George Washington**, of Virginia commander of their armed forces (1775). A year later, on the 4 of July, 1776, the Congress adopted the Declaration of Independence. The English army was defeated in the battle of Saratoga and was forced *to surrender*. The war of Independence was won by the American forces supported by the French and when the Peace treaty was signed in 1782 in Paris, thirteen North American colonies transformed themselves into the United States of America with George Washington as their first President.

The defeat of Britain in North America ended the period of George III’s personal rule. The new Tories were his only hope, and in 1783 the King invited William Pitt, the younger, Lord Chatham’s twenty-four year old son to form a Cabinet.

The Technological Revolution was a new breakthrough in the economic and social development of Great Britain. It was a British way of bourgeois development, in contrast to the French Revolution. Chronologically its beginning is referred to the middle of the 18th century; and the first achievements were in the production of agricultural products due to the new farming techniques. Mechanical inventions facilitated the unprecedented growth of iron and coal production. By 1800 Britain were producing four times as much coal as it had done in 1700 and eight times as much iron. **John Wilkinson** was making iron bridges, an iron chapel, iron boats. **James Watt** made a steam engine in 1769. In 1764 *a spinning*

The end of 18th century was the period of social disintegration – the wealth of the few was growing while the misery and poverty of the majority of people were increasing equally rapidly. Deprived of the means of production workers had lived in slums and worked long hours for very low wages in factories and mines. The country was splitting into two nations – the rich and the poor. There were many reasons for discontent in Britain, but the Revolution in France in 1789 was first welcomed in England by liberals, but as it was becoming ferocious and bloody, the British ruling classes were frightened that similar events might happen in Britain. The book by E. Burke “Reflections on the Revolution in France” was a serious warning of the dangers of radicalism. The Government took tough measures against the working class movement and organizations that were appearing: mass meetings were forbidden, associations of workers were declared illegal.

Pitt had been Prime Minister after 1784 almost all his life. But the King (George III) was an old sick man, who was not always in his right mind, so the position of the Prime Minister was extremely important. Pitt was determined to maintain peace, but Revolutionary France declared war in 1793. The British troops were defeated in the Netherlands and the French West India, and the situation became more dangerous when a new French general appeared on the political scene – Napoleon.

The British were rescued by their Navy. The commander of the British fleet, Admiral **Horatio Nelson** won brilliant victories over the French navy, near the coast of Egypt, at Copenhagen and near Spain. At the Battle of Trafalgar in 1805 Nelson destroyed the French-Spanish fleet, but was killed by a sniper. He became one of the greatest national heroes. His words to the English fleet before the Battle of Trafalgar “England expects that every man will do his duty” are preserved in the memory of the nation as a historic example of patriotic duty in the time of danger. The greatest general of the British army against Napoleon became the Duke of Wellington (Sir Arthur Wellesley 1769 – 1852). After the disastrous invasion of Russia (1812) Napoleon was defeated by the European coalition in the Battle of Nations at Leipzig (1813), was imprisoned on the isle of Elba and escaped from it to reappear in Paris again. The last battle was fought in Belgium at a small place called **Waterloo** (1815). The British army led by Wellington and the Prussian army under Marshal Blucher defeated Napoleon, he had to abdicate and was sent to St. Helena in the South Atlantic and died there. The Congress of the European Powers held at Vienna made peace and Britain emerged from the “Napoleonic Wars” a great empire: to Canada, Australia and most of India she added *Cape Colony* (South Africa), Ceylon and Guinea as well as a number of small provinces.

But this newly enlarged great power was suffering from internal problems: political and economic reforms had been long overdue, the years of the war had been a period of

adventures of young lovers in the English country houses. Painting was equal to the achievements of poetry. Landscape painting produced two great but very different geniuses – **Turner** and **Constable**.

The old King (George III, 1760 – 1820), blind, insane, died in 1820 and was succeeded by little respected **George IV** (1820 – 1830) who had been Prince Regent for the last nine years of his father's life (1811 – 1820).

4. The 19th century – the Victorian Age of the British Empire and ... the new rivals.

In the 19th century the post-Napoleonic wars period of reaction was being gradually reformed and more liberal ministers were included in the Government, more progressive policies and laws were adopted. Under ultra-conservatory Wellington, who became Prime Minister in 1828, some reforms were introduced: R. Peel, the Home Secretary, created an efficient police force, and the police were called *peelers* or *Bobbies*.

The Catholic Emancipation Act was a forced decision that split the Tory party and brought the Whigs to power in 1830. The Whigs were determined to reform the Parliament and the parliamentary franchise, which had not changed since the reign of Elizabeth I. The electoral franchise and distribution of seats in Parliament were in a mess. Different parts of the country were represented in an uneven and unjust way. The county of Cornwall where the population was less than the population of Manchester or Birmingham elected 44 men to the House of Commons, but neither of these big industrial cities elected a single MP. The voting was not secret; the whole system was corrupt and unrepresentative.

The confusion at Westminster reflected the situation in the country. There were outbreaks of machine breaking and riots: people exploited at the factories by factory owners and left unemployed by machines replacing them, were outraged; they smashed machines blaming Ned Ludd for it and bearing his name – Luddities, wearing masks and damaging the factories. The Parliament reform came together with railways. The Manchester and Liverpool Railway was opened by the Duke of Wellington in 1830. George Stephenson built a locomotive – “the Rocket”, which reached a maximum speed of forty eight kilometers per hour. The reformed Parliament passed a number of progressive acts, due to Lord Shaftsbury the first effective Factory Act was passed, limiting the hours worked by children in cotton factories to nine, prohibiting their employment less than nine years of age, and appointing inspectors to see that the decisions were enforced.

The state assumed also some responsibility for the poor. According to the Poor Law all the able bodied poor were to go to the workhouses where the conditions were terrible. It was described by Ch. Dickens in his novel “Oliver Twist”. The working classes were infuriated by the injustice and inhumanity of the Poor Law and demanded more radical

struggle for social rights and a better life, were all developing against the background of *a drastic change* in the Monarchy. The only daughter of the Hanoverian Duke of Kent turned out to be the only heiress to the British throne, and after the death of her uncle William (William IV, 1830 – 1837) 18-year-old Victoria became Queen. Her first Prime Minister, Lord Melbourne, taught the young Queen the duties of the constitutional monarch. The accession of Queen Victoria came at a difficult time: the Whigs lost their popularity and the majority in the House of Commons: the Hungry Thirties passed into the Hungry Forties, and the alternative to the Whigs policies was the new Conservative Party, created by R. Peel. Peel's financial reform brought revival to the country (1844), and legislation to protect factory and mine workers improved their conditions, but the disaster came with the poor harvests in Britain and Ireland. Famine in Ireland (1845) convinced Peel that the Corn Laws *should be repealed* (in 1846). It was the greatest victory of the free traders. But it destroyed Tory Party and R. Peel was forced to resign. The reforms brought cheaper food and exports from "*the workshop of the world*". And the Whigs inherited the benefits of Peel's reforms.

Queen Victoria's Prime Ministers followed one another due to the Political developments in Parliament: Lord Melbourne (1835 – 1841), Sir R. Peel, Lord John Russell, Earl of Derby, Earl of Aberdeen, Viscount Palmerstone, Benjamin Disraeli, W. E. Gladstone, Earl of Rosebery, Marquess of Salisbury. In 1840 Victoria married her cousin of Saxe-Coburg of Gotha. The marriage was happy, and the Royal family became a modal for moral standards in high society as well as for the middle classes.

Prince Albert became deeply interested in the British affairs, both foreign and home. He was the initiator of a great display of Victorian glory and progress in the country – the Great Exhibition of 1851. This international exhibition was quite a new idea, and Albert had to overcome a lot of opposition. The Exhibition building was an enormous glass-and-iron structure – the Crystal Palace in Hyde Park, it had on display machinery and products from Britain, the Empire and other countries. "The Crystal Palace" was the symbol of Technological progress. The new poet-laureate Tennyson wrote an ode to it. All the Victorian writers, poets, painters glorified English culture. **Tennyson** and **Browning** dominated the poetry. **Charles Dickens** in his novels *David Copperfield*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby* exposed the social evils of the time. **Thackeray** exposed the middle class hypocrisy in his "Vanity Fair". It was a great age for novels. Women writers – **the Bronte sisters**, **Mrs. Gaskell** – flourished as never before. **Tomas Hardy** and **Henry James** were "Victorian" novelists too. The English drama was brilliantly represented by Irish talents: **Oscar Wilde** wrote his brilliantly entertaining comedies, **Bernard Shaw's** plays were more serious but extremely witty. Painters of the group called Pre-Raphaelite Brotherhood expressed the great Victorian nostalgia for the Middle Ages.

terrible organization of supplies: a load of army boots sent out from Britain turned out to be for the left foot. The war solved nothing but it brought a glory to the remarkable work of Florence Nightingale, “the lady with the lamp”, who organized hospitals and treatment for the wounded.

In India the British policies aroused a revolt in **1857**, it was known as **the Indian Mutiny**; and it developed into a national movement against foreign rule. There was much violence on both sides. The British brutally punished the defeated rebels, which caused a feeling of animosity that later grew into the Indian Independence movement of the twentieth century.

Queen Victoria suffered a great personal tragedy in 1861 – Prince Consort Albert died of typhoid – and the Queen went into a deep mourning, withdrew from public duties and lived in isolation for a decade. Her last twenty-five years of reign were a period of struggle between the new **Liberal Party** led by **W. E. Gladstone** and **the Conservatives** who were headed after Palmerton by **Benjamin Disraeli**. On the great issues which dominated British politics in the last quarter of the 19th century – the extension of the Parliamentary franchise, the limitation of the Power of the House of Lords, social reform, Home Rule for Ireland and the new aggressive imperialist policy abroad – Queen Victoria strongly sympathized with Conservatives and disapproved of Gladstone and Liberals.

B. Disraeli became Prime Minister in 1868 and first held the office for only nine months, but he managed to establish a very close relationship with the Queen and further developed it during his second term of office (1874 – 1880). B. Disraeli pleased the Queen greatly by persuading Parliament to agree to grant her the title of Empress of India. The contest of Disraeli and Gladstone was *in full swing*, and the two-party system had been already firmly established.

The Empire that Great Britain had gained by the middle of the 19th century was the result of the greatest power that Britain possessed through its command of trade, finance and manufacturing. The colonies were united by English law and by trade, the forms of governing administering varied. The whole population was growing due to the emigration from the British Isles: throughout the 18th, 19th centuries poor and disadvantaged people sought a new and better life in the colonies. In 1850 New Zealand became the responsibility of the Crown. The population of Australia was expanding rapidly. There were four self-governing colonies: New South Wales, South of Australia, Victoria and Queensland.

By the end of the century the Empire was spreading over the continents of Africa, Asia, North America, and South America, Australia. The sun did not set on the Empire. The colonial office became a large and important ministry. Imperialism had become popular with the middle classes. The actions of the imperialists were no less dishonorable: a chain of

and the expansion of the Empire were the jubilees of Queen Victoria (1887 and 1897), celebrated with great pageantry and enthusiasm of the crowds.

The nations of the New World and a strengthened Europe were becoming industrial rivals of Britain. The European countries were partitioning the African continent, and Britain succeeded in adding great African possessions to her Empire: Nigeria, Kenya, Uganda, New Zealand and Rhodesia; the Sudan was jointly administered by Britain and Egypt.

The United States since the end of the Civil War (1862 – 1865) had progressed greatly and rapidly, supplied the free-trade England with its food products and were developed into a great power.

The role of the United Kingdom at the end of the Victorian Era, at the end of the 19th century was highly important, chauvinistic imperialism and the financial strength spread over the world through the export of capital by the banks of the City, strongly influenced the internal development of the country: Anglo-Saxon chauvinism and superiority complex in the upper spheres and the trade unionism, emigration to the colonies, political parties struggle for power were the consequences.

Meanwhile the conflicts and the contradictions among the European countries were bringing the world to the brink of the World War, which was destined to bring about great changes in the British role in the world.

5. The 20th century

Entering the 20th century the United Kingdom was the greatest power in the world. The British Empire covered one quarter of the globe land surface and included a quarter of mankind, its population being scattered all over the world continents. The UK was competing with economic and political potential of the USA and Germany.

The German militarists had become a dangerous challenge and great threat to European security. In 1914, supporting Tsarist Russia and Republican France and committed to protect Belgium, the UK declared war on Germany. The Great War lasted for 4 years. The British Expeditionary Force fighting in France suffered heavy losses. The young people of the European countries fought and died in the trenches at the fronts. Britain lost about a million soldiers, and other two million were wounded. The course of the War and the development of the world history were changed by the Revolution in Russia and the entry of the USA into the European World War. Germany was forced to sign an Armistice. It was a humiliating peace treaty for the Germans as they had lost part of their territory and all their colonies. The heavy reparations imposed on Germany politically bankrupted the country and this developed an atmosphere of social discontent and encouraged nationalist

khaki-uniforms and black belts.

The Government of Lloyd George was forced to agree to a compromise and a partition of Ireland which was ratified by the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921 – 1922. According to it 26 counties in Southern Ireland out of 32 in the whole country became the Irish Free State while the others in Ulster remained under British control and constituted the Province of Northern Ireland. The two parts of the partitioned Ireland had their respective Parliaments – *the Dail* in Dublin and *Stormont* in Belfast. The official name of the UK changed into the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

The economic situation in Britain was extremely complicated as a great depression was spreading all over the industrial world; the unemployment was high, *the housing shortage* was bad, the industrial relations created serious social conflicts. The worst position was that of coal-miners – their employers cut their wages, lengthened their working hours, and the coal-miners went on strike in April 1926. On May 1926, the Trades Union Congress called for the General Strike which lasted nine days. The solidarity of workers was an impressive demonstration of support for the miners cause. But there were strikebreaking actions of the middle class volunteers and university students who kept essential services during the strike. The industrial problems in the country did not disappear but were aggravated by the growth of unemployment during the international economic crisis of 1929 – 1933. The decline in the traditional British industries – coal-mining, steel manufacture, textiles, ship-building increased industrial stagnation and social decay in the country. The social and political developments of the 20th century made a great impact on the changes in the lifestyle, involving women into playing a more active role in society. In 1928, all women over 21 gained the right to vote.

The Great War inspired poets and writers. James Joyce, David Herbert Lawrence was a new branch in literature different from the classics – Thomas Hardy, Rudyard Kipling, and Arnold Bennet. They didn't have much in common with *Bloomsbury school* headed by Virginia Woolf either. English classical traditions in music were revived by Sir Edward Elgar. Entertainment began big business – football matches, the cinema, the radio were increasingly popular and a relief from the dull life.

In 1936 the death of George V, Windsor, the grandson of Queen Victoria, was followed by the abdication of Edward VIII, (previously the Prince of Wales), and George VI, the second son, succeeded his father.

In 1937 **Neville Chamberlain** replaced Stanley Baldwin as Prime Minister and had to face the growing aggressiveness of Hitler's Germany, Italy and Japan which were occupying territories and countries in Europe and Asia. Neville Chamberlain failed to achieve any positive results in the negotiations with Hitler in Munich and returned to Britain in a humiliating position.

The Luftwaffe *launched waves* of blitz attacks on London, Coventry, Plymouth, Hull, Swansea, Liverpool, but the British pilots with the help of the Poles, Czech, Belgian and French, who flew for Britain, won the Battle of Britain. The World War II acquired a really world character when Hitler invaded the USSR, and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor made the USA declare war on the aggressors. The Russian triumph at Stalingrad and the British victory at El Alamein in 1942 were the turning points in World War II. On 6 June (the D-day) 1944 the Allied forces landed in Normandy, France, thus opening the Second Front in Europe. On 8 May, 1945 Germany unconditionally surrendered, though the war with Japan was not yet over. The Americans dropped two atom bombs on Hiroshima and Nagasaki and Japan capitulated.

The Potsdam Conference of the victorious Allied Powers leaders solved the future of the defeated Germany. But Winston Churchill was not present at the Conference as his political party (the Conservatives) had been defeated in the General Election in June 1945: the Labor Prime Minister **C. Attlee** represented the United Kingdom in Potsdam. Winston Churchill had enjoyed the admiration and respect of the nation, but the popular desire for social and economic reforms brought the Labor Party into government. Their Programme of Welfare State was put into action. The national Health Service gave free of charge medical assistance **to all**; the Bank of England, railways, civil aviation, gas, electric, steel and coal mining industries were nationalized. The period was one of austerity; shortages and food rationing lasted till 1954.

The public opinion shifted in favor of the Conservatives in 1951. Winston Churchill, Anthony Eden, Harold Macmillan, Alec Douglas-Home – the Prime Ministers during the Tory rule from 1951 to 1964 maintained the policy of national unity; they accepted the major reforms of the Labor Party – the Welfare State, the National Health Service, but the steel industry was denationalized and returned to private enterprise. The post-war period saw great changes in the status of the British Empire, its disintegration was accompanied by the changes in the status of the former colonies into dominions and then into independent republics and national monarchies. “The winds of change” stripped Britain of its imperial supremacy, and in the second half of the 20th century Britain had to get adjusted to the new position in the world.

The relations with Europe and the USA became Britain’s first priorities in its foreign policy; important contacts and cooperation were to be further developed through the Commonwealth – a voluntary association of members of the former British Empire and Colonies. The British Monarch was recognized “titular head of the Commonwealth” though a great number of member states were becoming republics (e. g. India).

The post-World War II period brought the “culture of austerity” into the life of the

the National Theatre Company got finally established in its own building. Its first director was Laurence Olivier, one of the Britain's best known actors.

Generally speaking, the post-World War II historical period can be viewed as three stages – 1) 1945 – 1979; 2) 1979 – 1997; 3) the period since 1997. **In the first period** the Conservative Party respected and observed the post-war consensus concerning fundamental economic and social issues and the reforms initiated by the Labor Government of 1945. The British economy was doing comparatively well, though the manufacturing industries were in decline. **The 60th** showed that the European countries enjoyed economic benefits as a result of their membership in the European Economic Community. The first British attempt to join the EEC in 1963 was rejected by President Charles de Gaulle of France. But Britain managed to enter EEC in 1973. The entrance was confirmed by the National Referendum, and the Anti-Europeanism in British society was diminishing. Since 1975 economic difficulties were growing worse and worse, and the number of the unemployed exceeded one million. The trade unions refused to give support to the Labor Government in 1978 – 1979, thus destroying the “Social Contract”. The 1979 Election was the worst defeat for the Labor Party since 1931, as the conflict in the Party ranks had weakened the ability of the party to govern itself, to say nothing about governing the whole country.

The victorious Conservative Party headed by the first lady leader and the first woman Prime Minister **Margaret Thatcher** offered a new policy for Britain. The government saw the way out of the economic decline in privatization, and the state enterprises like the gas industry and the British Airways were sold off into private ownership. To conquer unemployment and inflation the Conservatives restricted money spending which reduced the role played by the state in the economy. Due to the North Sea oil exploration Britain became self-sufficient in its energy base. The political prestige of the Thatcher Government and the Prime Minister personally rose immensely due to the successful outcome of the Falklands War in which Britain displayed great power status and the military, naval and technological superiority over the fascist government of the Argentine Republic (1982).

The social and economic picture of Britain **in the 80th** combined elements of dissolution and stability. The troubles in Northern Ireland, in the industrial world (the miner's strike), in the inner areas of the cities (in the black ghettos) were going parallel to a fundamental social divide between a prosperous South and declining North. The split in the Labor Party resulting in the appearance of the Social Democratic Party weakened the opposition. The domineering Thatcherism of the government with its privatization, monetarism, European policy and special relationship with the USA, the Prime Minister's authoritarian style of leadership was facing severe difficulties. Mrs. Thatcher herself became increasingly unpopular. She was forced to resign in November 1990.

contributed to the ideas of national identity and historical cultural values being the public symbol of national unity. Elizabeth II describes her reign as a lifetime job in the service of the nation; assuring the continuity of Monarchy, the most ancient institution in the UK, and confirming rather a controversial idea that monarchy can be a successful integral part of democracy.

Great Britain of the 21st century is a multicultural and multiracial country. The British is a collective name for the citizens of the UK who benefit from the great advantages of the country's cultural and historical values and traditions, technological achievements and social freedoms. The international role of English as a global language is the greatest contribution of the British people to the treasury of the world cultural heritage.