

## LECTURE № 2

### Some Snapshots of British History

William the Conqueror ruled the country through the feudal contacts with his vassals. After him his successors William 11 and Henry 1 strengthened the feudal system. Henry11's successor was Richard (1189-1199) nicknamed the Lionheart, who spent most of his time out of England on crusades. (novels by Walter Scott).

His brother John was forced to sign the Great Charter (Magna Charta) with the barons in 1215, in which he promised to limit the Crown's power and control over finance. In 1258 the nobles elected a council called the parliament (from French



‘PARLE’“parle”

Historically a



“parler”- to discuss. A very important English King was Henry the VIIIth (the dynasty of the Tudors). Due to the Pope's refusal to allow Henry the VIII to divorce his first wife Catherine of Aragon Henry VIII broke with the Roman Church, “nationalized” the English Church and named himself the Supreme Head of the English Protestant Church (1534). He dissolved the catholic monasteries and seized their wealth. He also came into history as the one who killed or executed his 5-6 wives for their inability to give birth to his male heirs.

His daughter of the second wife Anne Boleyn became the most famous Queen Elizabeth. During her reign (1558-1603) Elizabeth the First strengthened England considerably, stimulated shipbuilding, foreign commerce and art. She strongly fostered the treasury of the country patronizing a group of pirates who caught and robbed the Spanish ships coming back from America with gold and other riches. But when the Spanish Armada of fleet, consisting of 130 ships, tried to invade England in 1588, the faster and lighter English ships defeated the slow and heavy Spanish galleons. A third part of the Spanish ships failed to return to Spain. England turned out to be the first sea country and started its colonial expansion.

During the Tudor period (16th century) the Londoners of the Elizabethan period built the first theatres. Nowadays the theatre land is stretched around Piccadilly Circus.

After Elizabeth the 1 Charles the 1 attempted to reduce the power of Parliament. As a result of this a bloody civil war followed. The king was arrested and executed in 1642 and England became a republic, headed by puritan Oliver Cromwell (1599-1658). However Cromwell behaved like a dictator. He dissolved Parliament and ruled only with the help of his army. That is why after his death the monarchy was restored. Charles II resumed the throne from his father but the king's power was reduced significantly in favour of Parliament. In the 18th century the power of the king continued to decline. After the reign of James II Parliament asked Prince William from the Netherlands and his Stuart wife Mary to reign. Parliament concluded with them a Bill of Rights that strongly limited the monarch's power. At the end of the 18th century as a result of the invention of the steam engine by James Watt in 1769 Britain entered the period known as the Industrial Revolution. London was one of the most important centers of the Industrial Revolution and the centre of the British Empire. The first factories appeared and a movement of population from the countryside into towns began. The dirt caused by London and Manchester smoke used to cause terrible fogs and smogs, described by many English classical writers and shown in old films where

they added mystery and atmosphere to murder stories and thrillers. Now they are things of the past. Since the 1950s, most British cities have introduced clean air zones. Factories and houses cannot burn coal and must use smokeless fuel. Britain's countryside is famous for its deep green color

The 19th century was marked by the reign of Queen Victoria (1837-1901) who ruled the country for 63 years and had 9 children. During her reign Britain passed through industrial, political, cultural, scientific and military change. In 1850 she had as many merchant ships as the rest of the world. That is why the English way of life was seen as superior to that of other nations. Queen Victoria reign was also marked by a great expansion of the British Empire. Britain enlarged her colonies and dominions with India, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, a lot of African lands. "The sun never sets on the British Empire" became a popular saying of that time.

At the same time in big English cities the most characteristic features of life were long working hours, unemployment, terrible poverty, high taxes and children's labour. About 30 per cent of the urban population lived below the poverty level.

As the result of popular discontent the first trade-unions were organized. In 1900 the Labour Party was formed.

It was only in 1918 when after the end of World War 1 all men over 21 got the right to vote. Most women got this right much later in 1928.

During the Second World War Britain acted as a part of Anti-Hitler Coalition. The destruction of property was great but only 60000 people were killed during air-raids( compare with 27 million people in our country).

The postwar period testified the collapse of the British Empire. Starting with India in 1948 all big countries of the former British Empire reached independence. Only Bermuda, the Falklands and Gibraltar were still British. Since the disappearance of her empire and the comparative decline in her power, Britain has adjusted its world view with difficulty. She managed to reconstruct the empire in the form of another unity - the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth is a voluntary association of

members of the former British Empire. There were only 11 members in 1960, which grew to 21 by 1965. Queen Elizabeth the Second is the head of the Commonwealth, even though half the member states are republics.

In her foreign policy Britain believes in a “special relationship” with the USA. This relationship is based upon a shared language, strong Anglo-Saxon culture, and particularly strong relationships between Prime Minister Churchill and Roosevelt during the war and between M. Thatcher and Reagan in the 1980s and between Blair and Clinton at the end of the 20th century.

Britain has encouraged the development of a strong arms industry to supply the armed forces, and during the 1980s she became the second largest arms trader internationally. Britain still spends proportionally more on defense than other NATO members.

The population of Britain at the moment is 58 million people and currently approximately 35 million are of working age. About 2.5 million people are unemployed. When the oil resources were discovered in the North Sea much of the oil revenue was spent on social security for the unemployed. Like in some other countries there is a gap between the earning of the rich and poor. The salaries of directors (so-called ‘fat cats’) are sometimes 20 times greater than average earnings at the bottoms of the companies.

The centre of economic and political power, and therefore the largest population concentration is in the south of the country - a result of good climate and proximity to the European mainland. Men in the south East earn the most and work the shortest week. The south east accounts for more than one-third of the Gross domestic Product (GDP) of the United Kingdom. The north of England had the lowest average weekly wages, and the second highest regional unemployment level. North Ireland has the highest.

At the same time housing and rents are much more expensive in the south. There are long waiting lists for public sector housing there, that is why only single young people take the risks to move to the south.

Life is changing in Britain but social class division is still important. The combination of class, wealth and privileged education still plays a very important role. The examples can be found in literature (George Bernard Shaw and Somerset Maugham).

Nowhere is this clearer than in the question of speech. The way English is spoken gives away not only regional identity but class status too. Since the days of Shakespeare, the English of South-East has been considered the standard. The emergence of an upper and upper-middle class mode of speech, “received pronunciation” RP is established through private schools for wealthier families. Through radio and television, RP has become a widely spoken accent.

80 per cent of the British people live in towns or cities. So called Greater London remains a magnet and is home to 7 million people. Because of its sprawling suburbs of small houses with gardens, Greater London stretches for 25 miles (40 km) from one side to the other.

At the moment there are a lot of ethnic minority communities in London. A lot of people from former colonies have come to live and work in Britain. With a natural increase they have become over 7 per cent of Britain’s population, concentrating particularly in London, Leicester, Birmingham and Bradford. Muslim community is becoming the most important of these. There are 1.5 million Muslims and over 1000 mosques and prayer centers. Apart from London, there are Muslim communities in Liverpool, Cardiff, Edinburgh and Glasgow. Most are of Pakistani or Bangladeshi origin, but there are also an increasing number of British converts.

At the same time many white British are becoming the minority in London. Life in London and other big cities has become too expensive. Many of them prefer to move out of big cities and move to quiet cheaper small towns, retaining their jobs in cities. They go to work and come back every day and become so-called “commuters”.

The conservative housing policies contributed to the rising number of homeless people especially in big cities. You can see a lot of people sleeping rough in central London each night. They are called “dossers”. Many of them are young school-leavers who come to London to find jobs but failed because it is extremely difficult to get a job without a home address.

Despite a lot of changes, broad stereotypical views concerning British society persist. Take, for example, the classic stereotypes concerning English Homes and Houses.

Do you remember R. Kipling’ famous expression: My home is my castle?

Is an Englishman's home really his castle? Though both the role and the look of the home are changing, an Englishman's home is as much his castle as it was 100 years ago. 82% of British families now prefer to live in their own houses and only 15% live in flats. Here are some typical houses owned by Britons: “Detached” houses, ones that stand on their own, are the most desirable. “Semi-detached” houses, consisting of two equal halves and there are also “terraced” ones, joined in a row of more than two.



Some typical British homes are the smallest in Europe. All of us know the love of Britons for gardening. There are small gardens in front and behind their house

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What should one know on coming to England? First – a typical English breakfast different from the continental one, a lunch (from 12 o'clock to 1 o'clock), five-o'clock tea, dinner or supper (6-7 o'clock). There are some traditional dishes such as roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, Cornish pasty, Welsh and of course pies. What should one know on coming to England? First – a typical English breakfast different from the continental one, a lunch (from 12 o'clock to 1 o'clock), five-o'clock tea, dinner or supper (6-7 o'clock). There are some traditional dishes such as roast beef and Yorkshire pudding, and of course pies.

British people spent less time cooking now than they used to do in the past. Even traditional English breakfast is a bit of a myth today. Many people prefer to have a bowl of cornflakes or a cup of coffee for breakfast. A lot of people unite two meals: breakfast and lunch together (so-called “brunch”). When British people go out for a meal, they very often go to their local Indian or Chinese, Italian or Turkish restaurant or buy a “takeaway” food. Very many still go to the pubs.

Answer the following questions

1. When was the British's power weakened for the first time?
2. When and how was English Parliament formed?
3. Why is King Henry the 8th important historically?
4. What do you know about Queen Elizabeth the First?
5. What is the period of Industrial Revolution in England?
6. When did the saying “The Sun never sets on the British Empire become popular”?
7. How did Britain act during two World Wars?
8. When did the British Empire collapse?

9. Describe British foreign policy now.
10. What is the UK economically now?
11. What is class division in England and how is this reflected in speech?
12. What is a typical British house?
13. Is the expression “My house is my castle” still important for Englishmen?
14. What do you know about British eating habits?
15. Why do so many English people prefer to live in the province?
16. What are “commuters”?
17. Why are pubs so important for Englishmen?