

Contents

Foreword	5
GB – Earliest times and the Middle Ages.....	7
1: From the Earliest Times to the Second Nordic Invasion.....	7
2: The Second Nordic Invasion and the Norman Conquest	12
3: Life in Medieval Britain.....	19
GB – The Tudors and the Stuarts	23
1: The Tudors, the Reformation, the Renaissance and the Sea Power	23
2: The Stuart Era	28
3: The Restoration and the First British Empire	34
GB – The 19th century	41
1: The Napoleonic Wars, the Industrial Revolution and the Beginning of the Second British Empire.....	41
2: The Second British Empire and Social Reforms	47
3: The Victorian Era and the Great War	51
USA – The settlement and the American Revolution	55
1: The Colonial Period	55
2: The War of Independence.....	61
3: Forming of the New Nation; Westward Expansion and Regional Differences	68
USA – The 19th century	73
1: The Civil War	73
2: Reconstruction, the Closing of the Frontier, and the Industrial Revolution	78
3: The American Empire, Progressivism and Word War I.....	84
The 20th Century in Great Britain and the USA.....	91
1: The Depression and the Rise of Totalitarianism	91
2: World War II and Great Britain in the second half of the 20 th century.....	98
3: The USA in the second half of the 20 th century	104
Bibliography	111

Foreword

An Outline of British and American History is an attempt to provide a concise overview of the major currents in the development of the two English speaking nations. This study focuses on social, economic and intellectual processes that through many centuries shaped life in Great Britain and the United States of America. The overview starts with prehistoric times and traces the growth of England, her transition into Great Britain and later the Empire (Modules 1–3). Subsequently it describes the birth and creation of the American nation and its triumphant progress towards becoming the world's leading Superpower (Modules 4–5). The last 6th Module continues the history of the two nations through the 20th century, highlighting the most important events that have defined contemporary reality in both countries. Due to its limited scope this outline is by no means comprehensive – what it hopes to achieve is to present and interpret the most basic facts of British and American history and thereby establish a solid foundation for the reader's further studies into the subjects.

GB – Earliest times and the Middle Ages

1: From the Earliest Times to the Second Nordic Invasion

History is governed by geography, and Britain is no exception to this rule. From the early ages the British Isles, especially the flat low-lying south and east coastlines, were a temptation to different wandering tribes because of the mild climate and fertile soils that offer perfect agricultural conditions. Apart from its lavish greenery, the island was also famous for its natural resources – there was gold, tin and iron in the ground, big and small game in the forests; the rivers swarmed with fish and provided excellent navigable inlets into the hinterland.

The 1st settlers came to the island about 3000 or 2500 BC. They were dark-haired Iberians from the Iberian Peninsula (Spain) or maybe even the North African coast. **The Iberians** were hunters, and later they became primitive farmers. They were the men of the Bronze Age who raised Stonehenge – a center of religious worship, which was probably built over a period of a thousand years. It was also a capital whose authority extended all over the British Isles, where similar but smaller ‘hengés’ were constructed. Historians know very little about those remote times, and what they know is only through archaeological revelations.

From around 700 BC to 500 BC or 300 BC another group of people began to arrive on the island. These were **the Celts** who had come from the territory of today’s North-western Germany and the Netherlands. The Celts were men of Iron who could make better weapons and who were more technically advanced than the Iberians. They came in waves, kindred but mutually hostile, and each with a dialect of its own. Erse, Gaelic and Welsh, the languages that they and the Iberians evolved, are still spoken in Great Britain.

The Celts imposed themselves as aristocracy on the conquered Iberian tribes in Britain and in Ireland. Eventually the races mixed but not in the same proportions throughout the island.

The physical formation of the island is in fact the key to understanding the racial make-up of its population and the history of its early settlement. The mountain ranges of Wales, North-west England and Scotland provided a natural obstacle for the early invaders preventing them from overrunning the whole island in just one go. This is why the inhabitants of the so-called **Celtic Britain** (Cornwall, Wales, The Scottish Highlands) are the descendants of the oldest people. They are often called '**the Celtic Fringe**', but, as a matter of fact, most of them are of pre-Celtic origin – their forefathers were not the fair-haired or red-haired Celts but the dark-haired Iberians.

The Celts, like the Iberians, were tribesmen or clansmen. The basis of their society were family ties. The Celtic people did not develop any territorial organization. The bonds of the tribesmen were not with the land but with other clan members. The clans were perpetually at war with one another.

Thanks to their use of iron technology, the Celts were better farmers than the Iberians. They grew wheat and oats, and they knew how to make mead (grain fermented with honey). They bred pigs for food, sheep for clothing and oxen to pull the plough. They also bred horses, which were the chief means of barter and sources of wealth. The Celts traded not only with one another but also with other tribes on the island and in Europe. Hunting, fishing, herding, beekeeping, weaving, carpentry and metal work were the chief occupations of the Celtic population.

Trade with the continent was important for political and social reasons. The Celts in the South of the island were in close intercourse with their kin in Europe. From them they learnt to use coins instead of iron bars for money.¹ When the Britons² (the Celts on the island) found out that Julius Caesar was marching to subdue their relatives on the continent, they sent over ships and warriors to help their relatives in defense, which was one of the reasons why Caesar decided to invade the island as well. The other reason was the island's reputation as an important provider of food, and since **the Romans** needed supplies for their own army fighting the Gauls (the tribes occupying the territory of today's France), the conquest of the island was inevitable.

Therefore the Romans did not come with a view to settling; they came to exploit and to govern by right of the superior civilization. In order to achieve their goals, they put a lot of effort to induce their Celtic subjects to assimilate the Latin language and lifestyle. Every possible encouragement was offered to the Celtic chief to make him Roman at heart and to Latinize him, and on that condition he could remain chief of his tribe. This policy had already been very successful in Spain and France where the Romans were long enough to effectively change the languages and the customs of the people. In Britain this method would have been equally effective had the Romans stayed longer. The 1st Roman expedition came in 55 BC, but it was not until one century later that permanent occupation began (AD 43). In AD 409 Rome pulled its last troops out of Britain, and what was

¹ Already 150 years BC British tribes in the South of the island had their own gold coinage.

² The name Britain comes from Greco-Roman word 'Pretani' designating inhabitants of Britain. The Romans mispronounced the word and called the island 'Britannia'.

left behind them were three things of enduring value: Welsh Christianity, good roads and a few cities.

Initially the Romans intended to conquer the whole island. This seemed to be pretty easy because of their superior, highly disciplined army and because the Celtic tribes were continually at one another's throats. The Romans established a permanent occupation across the Southern half of Britain where they developed the Romano-Celtic culture. From there they retained control over the upland areas, which were never developed. The Roman method of conquest was to build military roads, strategically planned for the whole region. Along them the Romans planned forts garrisoned with regular troops. With the use of forts and roads they could keep oversight in some trouble areas like Wales. Unlike other conquerors of the island, they did not usher in a host of immigrant farmers to replace the native population; they also rarely resorted to indiscriminate slaughter and wholesale destruction.

Their chief difficulty was the problem with the northern frontier. The Romans attempted to conquer Scotland (which they called 'Caledonia') for over a century but they failed. The Caledonians, the Pictish, and other partly Celtic tribes residing in the inaccessible mountains put up a stiff resistance. There were also frequent rebellions of the Brigantes in the Roman rear, which made the conquest even more difficult. The final limit to the northern frontier was marked by the wall designed by Emperor **Hadrian** and erected between 122 and 127 AD. No attempt was made to annex Ireland to the Roman territory, and thus the area of Roman occupation corresponds roughly to the territory of modern England and Wales.

In the occupied territories the Roman civilization flourished – the villas were plentiful, the cities were becoming larger, the commerce developed (London was the greatest center of trade). North of Hadrian's Wall, in Dover and Cornwall, tribalism survived in its more primitive form. Again the topography of the island determined the course of history. Owing to the geographical and cultural distinction between the occupied lowlands and unoccupied highlands, when the Roman Empire began to collapse and Roman soldiers started to withdraw, the regions destined to be destroyed by Germanic invaders were the Latin districts, while elsewhere Celtic culture was destined to survive.

The fall of the Roman Empire began in the 2nd half of the 4th century. In Britain it was precipitated by the Celtic revival – Celtic raids on Roman territories, both from Ireland and from Scotland, became more frequent and bolder. In the 1st half of the 5th century the defunct Roman Empire was no longer capable of providing security for most of its citizens, especially in such remote outposts of civilization as Britain. The situation was significantly exacerbated by the renewed Anglo-Saxon raids, which between 350 and 400 were particularly severe.

The pagan people who invaded the island after the Roman troops had left were the Nordic people: **Anglo-Saxon, German and Scandinavian**. They spoke allied languages, had the same religion, the same epic poetry celebrating their gods and heroes (such as Beowulf). They also had common art, different from Greco Roman or Celtic, and they observed the same customs in war and agriculture. Most of them were farmers searching for better lands to plough, but there were also fishermen, seal hunters, whalers, and pirates among them. Their form of government was superior to the Celts – they were not organized in tribes but in almost feudal societies. The kinship, the natural bond among the members of a clan who supported one another, gave way in the Anglo-Saxon commu-

nities to the personal relation of a warrior to his chief, whose personal virtues as well as his noble descent made him the leader. Contrary to the Celts, the Anglo-Saxons had both kingship and aristocracy – their form of government was **autocratic kingship**, which is a transitional stage between tribalism and fully-fledged feudalism. The military organization of the Anglo-Saxons was also based not on kinship but on personal attachment and loyalty of all the warriors to the chief who organized the expedition. The bones of these nameless chiefs are still dug up in the so-called early Anglo-Saxon graveyards.

There are no chronicles of Anglo-Saxon conquest because, unlike the Romanized Celts, they were illiterate. We owe our knowledge of that period to an English monk **Bede** who 300 years later described those remote events in his *Ecclesiastical History of the English People*. The Saxons, Angles and the Jutes certainly wreaked havoc in the orderly Romano-Celtic world. The Latinized Britons were slaughtered or pushed away to the mountainous areas where the primitive Celtic or pre-Celtic tribes had so far resided. The Anglo-Saxons penetrated into the interior of the country through the rivers and the Roman roads, which only hastened the pace of conquest and destruction. **King Arthur**³ is a half mythical figure that is believed to have led the Celts into battle with the heathen Anglo-Saxons, but in spite of his bravery and impregnable forts and stonewalled cities, the Celts were doomed to be defeated. The reason for that was that the Britons were civilized citizens, not warriors, and once they could no longer depend on the army for protection they were practically helpless when confronted by the fierce Anglo-Saxon warriors.

The early Anglo-Saxons differed from the Britons in many respects. For example, they were not city dwellers like the Britons. They lived in large rural townships in log houses, and they tilled the soil in one common field. They could have taken the Roman villas or they could have settled in the Roman towns as soon as they buried the bodies of their previous inhabitants. Instead they left Roman buildings and towns empty and went on with their way of life. Chester, Bath and Canterbury were re-peopled in the course of time. London,⁴ due to its location at the junction of Roman roads, also managed to survive, thus the good work of Rome was not completely wiped out by the Anglo-Saxon savages.

In the course of the 6th century the Anglo-Saxons established a number of kingdoms in the South and East of England whose names still exist in modern names of certain shires (Essex, Sussex, Wessex). These kingdoms were not allies – they were always on the warpath. By the middle of the 7th century three large and powerful kingdoms emerged: Northumbria, Mercia and Wessex.

The Anglo Saxons were wild people whose destructiveness completely obliterated the Christian religion and the Romano-Celtic language. The Britons, forced to seek refuge among the ‘uncultured’ Celtic tribes in Wales, Cornwall or the Western part of the Northern uplands, in a span of a few generations, forgot why they had despised the illiterate

³ King Arthur is the hero of a popular legend about how he proved his title to the kingship by withdrawing the Sword **Excalibur** from the rock in which it had been fixed by **Merlin**, the magician who later became his counselor. Arthur’s court was called **Camelot** and was famous for its **Round Table**. Other legends connected with Arthur tell about his wife’s **Guinevere**’s unfaithfulness (with **Lancelot**) and about the quests to find the **Holy Grail**.

⁴ London dates back to Roman times even though its name is of Celtic origin. After the Roman conquest it started to play a crucial role as a port and center of commerce. Roman walls enclosed the area corresponding roughly to the city walls in medieval times.

Anglo-Saxon brutes. Yet because the Anglo-Saxons took possession of the richest farming lands in the South and East of England, in the course of time they evolved a civilization which was in many respects superior to the Welsh mountaineers or inhabitants of barren Cornish moors.

The Anglo-Saxon conquest repeated the scheme known from the previous invasions of the island – the race of warriors from the continent settled in the rich lowland area of southern and eastern England decimating its former inhabitants and pushing the survivors into the Cornish peninsula or into the Western or Northern mountains. The Anglo-Saxon conquest proceeded according to the same pattern once again proving that geography can reverse the course of history. The geographical features of the island made the Celts barbarous and the Anglo-Saxon civilized.

The Celts hated the Anglo-Saxons so much that they did not try to convert the conquerors into **Christianity**. The conversion of the island was the accomplishment of foreign missionaries of whom **St. Augustine of Rome**, sent in 597 by Pope Gregory the Great, was the most famous. St. Augustine established his quarters in **Canterbury** in Kent, and in 601 he became **the 1st Archbishop of Canterbury**. From there with the aid of his monks, he successfully converted one by one the ruling families of the English Kingdoms.

The Christian Conquest of the island was, as G.M. Trevelyan puts it, ‘the return of the Mediterranean Civilization in a new form.’ The Church hierarchy was modeled on the Roman Empire and therefore its forms and policies were particularly suitable for state building. In other words, the political and legal system of the church could be easily transplanted into the secular sphere in order to create the whole machinery of state. The return of the Mediterranean Civilization in Christian guise also meant the return of literacy and learning to the island. The lore that the missionaries and monks brought from Rome also had its roots in Latin Civilization.

Christianity was very popular among the Anglo-Saxon people. Conversions to the new faith were frequent and spontaneous. The main reason was that Christian missionaries gave the Anglo-Saxons a religion that was more sustaining than their own pagan faith. The worship of pagan gods among the Anglo-Saxons before the advent of Christianity had been a warrior’s religion whose mythology reflected the most cherished national traits: courage, generosity, honesty, and loyalty to the king and to friends. These are virtues that British schools still try to inculcate in their wards. The Nordic religion had taught people not to be afraid of death, to be bold and heroic by giving them the example of their gods who were also perishable to the forces of chaos. Christianity helped the Anglo-Saxon to make sense of that chaos by giving them a clear cosmology and definite doctrines. So even though Christianity spoke of matters alien to the Nordic mind: charity, humility and submission of the layman to the priest, its allure was irresistible. By AD 660 only Sussex and the Isle of Wight had not accepted the new faith. In the next twenty years English missionaries were instrumental in bringing Christianity to the land of their forebears – Germany.

St. Augustine was primarily interested in establishing the authority of the Church among the ruling families and nobles. He devoted his energies to converting Anglo-Saxon kings and queens. The pattern of conversion was similar in every kingdom: first the king’s wife adopted the new faith, and then became an agent to convince her husband whose court followed the king’s suit. The ordinary people remained pagan for generations to come.

The Celtic Church did more than the Roman Church to win the hearts of humble people. The Celtic Church had been established by **St. Patrick** who was probably a Romanised Briton who lived in Wales. At the onset of the 5th Century, he must have been captured by the Scots⁵ whereby he converted Ireland to Christianity. Afterwards, the Irish monks went to Scotland and Northern England to continue St. Patrick's work. This Church, as a result of the downfall of the Roman Empire and the conquest of France and Italy by barbarous tribes, was cut off from Roman Civilization and developed its own distinctive Celtic spirit based on Celtic tribalism. Contrary to the Roman church, it did not have any hierarchy or organization, and therefore it was 'democratic:' each tribe had its own monastery, which did not recognize any authority. The monks were hermits, scholars, artists, warriors and missionaries. In the times when it seemed that the dark ages in Europe had set in for good, they cherished the knowledge of classical secular literature that had practically vanished in Western Europe, thus saving it for posterity.

The Celtic missionaries started to convert the Anglo-Saxons from the North, going from village to village to bring Christ's teaching to the common folk. Until the middle of the 7th century, the monks of the Celtic church did as much as those from Canterbury to convert the Anglo-Saxon race. They reconverted Northumbria (which used to be under the jurisdiction of the Roman Church); they evangelized Essex and Mercia.

It should therefore come as no surprise that the two churches remained in a state of dispute. The main cause for the mutual antagonism was the rivalry in the territory of Anglo-Saxon England as well as differences in organization. The dissent between the two churches reached a crescendo when the two churches clashed about the date of Easter. In 663 the King of Northumbria chose the Roman Church, and his rejection of the Celtic Church caused the retreat of the Celtic missionaries from England. In the following decades Scotland, Wales and Ireland came under the control of the Church of Rome, proving that a good organization could prevail over periodic lapses of faith.

The decision to choose the Roman Church proved to be very judicious. It may have been partially prompted by the Anglo-Saxon admiration for the superior organization of Frankish kingdoms where the Roman municipal system had not been eradicated by savage invaders. The hierarchy of the Roman Church was an imitation of Roman bureaucracy and municipal life that the Anglo-Saxons had so recklessly obliterated in their earlier days; however, they presently started to regret their destructiveness as a kind of a cultural throwback.

The early adhesion of all Anglo-Saxon kingdoms to the Roman Church gave an impetuous towards unity. The Church supported the royal power and taught the kings lessons in administration, legislation and taxation. The centralization and unity of the Church became a model for the structuring of infant states and paved the way towards political unity under one single king. The administration of the Church became a prototype of the administration of the state. Additionally, churchmen, the most educated people of the times, became the chief advisers of the Crown and its secretariat. In this way, Roman ideas, perpetuated by the Roman Church, were passed across different historical periods; from the secular to the religious realm and back to the secular again. The alliance with the Papacy provided the island with the best that the Mediterranean Civilization still had

⁵ The Scots were the Celtic tribes from Ireland – they were the last newcomers to Scotland and they gave their name to the whole land.

to offer. Numerous churches were built on the ruins of Roman villas. Although most of them were eventually pulled down it should be remembered that stone churches were built in England at the time when laity still lived in houses made of wood.

In 669 the Pope sent to Britain **Theodore of Tarsus** who made Canterbury an important center of Latin and Greek culture. He strengthened Roman supremacy over the island, and, after his death, the parish system mushroomed everywhere. The parish, the church and the graveyard become the centre of every village.

The Church was on the one hand modern and spiritual, but, on the other, it was aristocratic and feudal. To build **the Medieval Church** with its magnificent architecture, art and scholarship, the peasants had to pay ecclesiastical dues that quickly reduced them to serfage. The Church held the rulers and average people in awe – the clergymen were formidable people – the only ones who could read or write or make sense of administrative, ecclesiastical and secular laws. Anglo-Saxon kings and lords willingly gave their lands to the Church; some of the kings abandoned their thrones to finish their lives as pilgrims or monks. In return for the land and the dues enforced by the king and his sheriffs, the Church taught nobles jurisdiction that enriched the nobles and the Church itself. In this way the Church promoted feudalism based on an increasingly unequal division of wealth and liberty. The richer and more influential the Church was becoming, the more impoverished and subjugated the peasantry was.

In Anglo-Saxon times the line separating the Church and the State was very thin and blurred. The Bishops were kings' civil servants, priests sat next to Sheriffs in the benches of Shire courts, where both secular and spiritual cases of malpractice came for verdict. The men of the Church were the first people to write down the laws of Anglo-Saxon kings from the oral tradition. They also helped the kings to make new laws on a large number of important matters. In this way they helped to consolidate royal authority and to centralize the power in each state.

The Anglo-Saxon, even though respectful of the clergy and dedicated to the new religion, remained pagan in pure human emotions. Such poems as *Beowulf*, *The Wanderer*, and *Deor's Lament* bear witness to the popularity of older pagan ethos. Even though all early Anglo-Saxon poetry came through Christian censorship, there is an overwhelming abundance of pagan ideals and values in it. *Beowulf*, for example, praises the faithfulness of the warrior to his lord and his readiness to die in battle. The typical heroes of such poems are roving spirits and reckless buccaneers unrestrained by any religious dogmas.

Important dates:

2500 BC – 1300 BC The Iberians

700 BC – 300 BC The Celts

55 BC The 1st Roman expedition of Julius Caesar

AD 122–126 Hadrian's Wall

AD 407–410 Roman withdrawal

AD 350–1066 The Anglo-Saxon Period

AD 601–800 The return of Christianity

AD 800–975 The 2nd Nordic Invasion

2: The Second Nordic Invasion and the Norman Conquest

Near the end of the 8th century the heathen **Danes and Norsemen (the Vikings⁶)** were restless again and started to launch attacks on Britain, tempted by the island's wealth. The Vikings were pirates as well as farmers. At first they only raided the coasts of England, Scotland, Wales and Ireland, but gradually they started to realize that the Anglo-Saxon kings did not have any fleet to protect their realms, and that the whole island was easy prey. War and plunder on the island became the chief business of the Viking nation. The first successful warriors came home with such transfixing news of the island's riches that the Vikings soon started to perfect plans for permanent occupation.

The Saxons considered the Vikings brutes, and the truth was they were barbarians in comparison with the Danes and Norsemen. In the 9th century the Vikings visited various parts of the world (Venice, Constantinople, Spain, Normandy or even North America). Their voyages gave them knowledge of the world and made them skillful tradesmen. When the 9th century was drawing to a close and it was absolutely clear that the Anglo-Saxons could not keep them out, the Vikings started to take over the best farming lands in England.

The largest host of Viking immigrants came in the days of **Alfred of Wessex**. This group was just a small fraction of a large population movement which changed the political map of the whole of Europe. One of the Viking bands established Normandy in Northern France; other bands settled across the Channel in England. By 875 only King Alfred of Wessex held out against the invaders for one sole reason – Wessex was furthest removed from the Vikings' landing areas.

The Vikings warriors were pioneers in a new type of warfare. They used body-armor, which made them immune to the spears of Saxon peasants. They could move in their boats on rivers and sea, launching surprise attacks in distant parts in the country. Furthermore after their conquest of Normandy they learnt from the French how to mount horses, and on horseback they were as fast and formidable as in their boats.

The twelve years in which the Viking invasion continued gave Alfred the Great (of Wessex) the time to learn to beat the Viking at their game. He reformed his army, organized a mounted infantry made of his vassals, and built permanent garrisons and a fleet. Step by step, he recovered the territories conquered by the invaders where the Vikings, once they settled, started numerous feuds among one another. After he re-captured London, he was strong enough to force the Vikings to accept a treaty.

Alfred the Great was a truly great leader. He brought to Wessex learned men and gave refuge to many scholars. He founded the first school for laymen – the sons of noblemen, his future civil servants, thus breaking the Church's monopoly for learning. After his

⁶ Viking means 'warrior'.

death, the Crown of Wessex went into the hands of his equally gifted and enlightened successors, who merged the Viking population with the indigenous Anglo-Saxon people. A hundred years after the invasion the memory of the atrocities and interracial wrongs grew very dim and common ethnic roots and customs prevailed. When the Vikings received baptism almost all differences between them and the Anglo-Saxons were removed. At first the Viking authority was recognized in the east and north of England (between the Thames and the Tees) but gradually the Vikings accepted the rule of the house of Wessex, provided that they could live under their own traditional Danish laws and their earls. Therefore the territories, which they inhabited, were often referred to as ‘**Danelaw**’. The term was used in the 11th century to indicate an area in which customary law was influenced by Danish practice.

In fact, the coming of the Danes gave a powerful stimulus to the development of **English Common Law**.⁷ The very word ‘law’ is of Danish origin. The Vikings were very appreciative of law and had men especially trained in legal arguments and procedures. The Anglo Saxons took over from the Danes their zeal for legal disputes.

During the war with the Vikings, the Anglo-Saxons built walled settlements called **burghs**. In the post-war years these military garrisons and trading centers became also sites of legal proceedings. Soon burghs or **boroughs**, as they are called today, situated in restored Roman cities or in new strategic points (Lincoln, Derby, Northampton, Cambridge among others) became the basic units of municipal (town) administration. In this way England was covered with a network of garrisons and organs of administration similar to contemporary ones.

Contrary to the Anglo Saxons who were pioneer farmers making clearings in the forest to plough the land, the Vikings were city-dwellers and indefatigable traders who made boroughs bustling centers of commerce. Apart from that both Danish and Anglo Saxon farmers continued the strenuous work of deforestation and colonization of new areas. The people of those remote times were still very primitive agriculturists for whom hunting was the main source of food. The state, in the modern sense of the word, did not exist, and work was carried under the leadership of a feudal lord, who provided military protection, economic help and justice. But the lord’s assistance had a very extortionate price – in return for the lord’s protection the peasant had to labor for the lord. Therefore **feudalism**⁸ which was the outcome of differentiating the functions of warrior and husbandman (farmer) entailed putting limits to individual freedom. On the other hand, the protection of the community and the advancement of agriculture would not have been possible without stratifying medieval society. After the end of tribalism and before the beginning of the state, it was the feudal lord who organized the life of each community.

⁷ In the course of time Common Law came to designate the law administered by the king’s judges, which was the same regardless of the region. Before Henry II evolved the Common Law in the 12th century, the law differed from one region to another. From the 12th century onwards the king’s judges always used the same law. They were specially trained in the Common Law that was based on Anglo-Saxon and later Norman customs, cases and decisions. It was different from the Civil Law of the Roman Empire or the Common Law of the Church.

⁸ The word feudalism comes from the French word *feu* (land held by a lord in return for his service to the sovereign); the tenure of the land that belonged to the king but was used by his vassals was the cornerstone of feudalism. The vassals and the lord were mutually bound – the king had to give his vassals land without which the vassal would not fight for the king. Vassals in turn gave a portion of this land to the knights who were their vassals and owed them military service.

The next step on the way towards fully developed feudalism was the decision taken by king **Ethelred the Unready**.⁹ Ethelred, being unable to control the Vikings in the Danelaw, who, near the end of the 10th century renewed their attacks, started direct taxation of freeholders (independent farmers) to collect ransom for the Danes. His move hastened the decline of husbandmen into serfs. Under **Canute**, the next ruler of England, the taxation was upheld, but its purpose changed. Canute, who was an outstanding leader (he was also the king of Denmark and Norway), used taxes to defend his Empire. From those days onwards taxation was always an important source of royal revenue. In the course of time the task of collecting taxes was assigned to the local lords who, for the Crown, gradually became identified as owners of both the land and the people who lived on that land.

Canute died in 1035 and his son five years later. Therefore, **the Witan** (a Council of wise men – bishops, magnates and lords) chose Edward (one of Ethelred's sons) to be the next king. It is interesting that in Anglo-Saxon times England was an **elective monarchy**. The Witan had the power to elect a new king upon the death of the previous one. The new king did not have to be a descendant of the ruling family and he did not need to have any royal blood in him. **The divine right of succession** (only the descendant of the ruling monarch could become the next sovereign and no earthly authority could change that) was not deeply rooted in English tradition and dates back to the 17th century and the reign of James I Stuart. What is more the Witan should not be considered the germ of the British Parliament, which grew out of the marriage of Anglo-Saxon and Norman institutions¹⁰. The basic difference between the Witan and Parliament was that once the king was appointed, the Witan had no power to control him.

Canute, who had imposed himself by force on the English, was also finally elected by the Witan who preferred a foreign ruler to anarchy. Canute turned out to be a Godsend after all. He was a very popular monarch who won the respect and loyalty of his English subjects by putting them on equal terms with his own Danish countrymen. He not only converted himself to Christianity but also did a lot to eradicate heathenism in the Danelaw, Denmark and Norway. He strengthened the alliance with the Church and was a lavish benefactor of abbeys. Unfortunately he died very early and the empire he had created fell apart. This was a watershed in the history of England because it restored Anglo-Saxon monarch. **Edward the Confessor** was not interested in building a Nordic state depending on sea power that became a key factor in shaping the course of English history. Instead England was drawn into the French orbit of influence and broke its bonds with Scandinavia.

Edward the Confessor, while in exile, had been raised among Norman monks. His mother was Norman and he spoke French and was at heart a Norman monk with little interest in the country he was invited to rule. **Normandy**, the country where he had spent his boyhood and a large part of his adult life, was situated in the North of France and was England's closest neighbor on the continent. Normandy was neither French nor Scandinavian. It had been founded by the Vikings, but the ruling class, though Scandinavian in origin, had been Latinized by the adoption of the French language and customs. The combination of the Viking vitality and ferocity with the French drive towards political unity and effective administration gave rise to the mightiest state in Europe. Normandy

⁹ Ethelred was king of England (978–1016) – his name the Unready came from the old English word meaning that he had received bad advice from the wrong people.

¹⁰ The Norman Conquest and its aftermath will be described later in this chapter.

was a redoubtable stronghold from which the practices of French feudalism surged to conquer Europe.

The Norman feudal Barons were landowners and soldiers who were champions in modern warfare (fighting from the saddle with a sword or a spear). Their cavalry was heavily armed and their castles were invincible bastions. These were the fruits of the final phase of feudalism, and they were not known on the other side of the channel before the conquest.

The Norman society consisted of several ranks. The Duke was the highest in the Norman hierarchy, and he had at his service Barons who received their lands directly from him. Then there were knights who owed military service to the Barons by the same military tenure. The Barons had a remarkably effective administration with their own officers who collected taxes, held courts and commanded troops. The Duke kept Barons in line by issuing licenses to build castles. He also was the only prince to mint money. Norman finance was the best in Europe. The Duke's revenue was collected in hard money, which was something that no other ruler in Europe could boast about. The Norman Church wholeheartedly supported the Ducal Power, in the sphere of administration and legislation, not to mention the fact that some of the Churchmen were at the same time Barons fighting for the Duke. Others were monks living a peaceful and busy life in monasteries – the centers of scholarship.

Edward the Confessor paved the way for **the Norman Conquest** of the island by introducing Normans in high church positions and by leaving after his death a disputed succession (he was very dedicated to the ideal of monkish chastity and did not leave any heirs). The Witan chose **Harold Godwinson** a son of a powerful magnate from Wessex to be the next king and their choice was endorsed by the dying Edward the Confessor. This fact, however, did not put an end to disputes over Harold's weak title to the throne. Harold did not come from any royal family and even though his election to the throne was legitimate, it was challenged by both the Normans in the South and the Danish Vikings in the North.

There were two almost simultaneous invasions of the island, which, from the vantage point of history can be seen as a tragic climax of a long rivalry for the spheres of influence between Scandinavia and Europe. Harold succumbed under this double attack and gradually **William of Normandy** rose as the sole winner. William defeated Harold in the famous **battle of Hastings in 1066** and on Christmas Day was crowned as the next king of England.

The battle gave the English a profound shock because of the military superiority and ruthlessness displayed by the Normans. The brilliance of their strategy and their awesome cavalry threw England on her knees. After the battle the nobles and churchmen alike hurried to make their own separate peace with the Conqueror, hoping that what they were in for was not much worse than what had happened fifty years earlier under the foreign rule of Canute and his Danes. But they were in the dark as to the real intentions of the Conqueror who soon deceived them. William did not plan to keep the Anglo-Saxon aristocracy, and his style of wielding power had nothing to do with the light yoke of the Danish king. On the grounds that everybody who had supported Harold forfeited their possession, he started the confiscation of English estates. He used every possible pretext or excuse to rob the English of their lands and to degrade them. These lands were distributed among the Norman Barons as a reward for their services. The confiscation

proceeded in tandem with the conquest (it lasted 5 years), which accounts for one peculiarity of the feudal system that evolved on the island. The Barons owed estates in many different parts of the country, and that fact had several important ramifications. First of all, no Baron possessed more land within a shire than the king. Secondly since the Barons' possessions were scattered far and wide, the Barons were always busy on their way from one estate to another, which made it impossible for them to consolidate their power, to amass an army and to threaten the king.

Although the Normans were the most advanced people of their times on the battlefield, they were as cruel as the wildest savages. Some of the villages whose inhabitants were massacred during the conquest remained deserted for forty years to come. William's army was relatively small and therefore it ravaged the regions it had no power to hold. The survivors were forced to raise for the victors impregnable citadels from which armed horsemen issued forth to exploit or to slaughter. This large-scale extermination of the Anglo-Saxon population, especially the gentry, settled the question whether a few thousand armed-to-the-teeth knights could conquer whole England and coerce her native population to a new way of life.

William established in England the **Norman system of land tenure**. He divided bigger districts into smaller shires and kept the Anglo-Saxon system of sheriffs to counterbalance the power of his Barons. In other words, each shire had its own sheriff, a man of baronial rank to whom William entrusted collecting his taxes and administering his laws. The King did his utmost to tighten his grip of the island, to centralize and secure his power, thus saving England from falling into the chasm of feudal anarchy, prevalent on the continent, where powerful magnates continually conducted a hit-and-run warfare against their rulers and other nobles in order to multiply their riches and enhance their influence.

In order to ensure his security, William built numerous castles which were garrisons used to subdue the mutinies of his Barons and the uprisings of the Anglo-Saxons. But the church proved to be a far better instrument in upholding the royal authority. People were used to obeying priests, priests to obeying bishops, who in turn obeyed the Archbishop of Canterbury, the King's right hand. The Archbishop was in practice the head of the king's government, whereas his tenants-in-chief, the Barons who made his court, were his council. The king consulted them individually or collectively on the issue of the moment, whatever that issue might be.

One of William's greatest reforms was **the division of spiritual and secular courts**. From then onwards, the Bishops had their own courts, which dealt with clergy's felonies, wills, marriages and cases of heresy, whereas secular affairs were tackled in royal courts in which English Common Law was observed. This reform set limits to the authority of the church, a friendly but rival power.

Without the king's control over the Church hierarchy, the king could reign but he would not be able to rule. William the Conqueror commanded the country with the help of **Archbishop Lanfranc**. The King was generous to the church but ever mindful of its power. All his secretaries, judges and most of his civil servants were churchmen rendering services to the Crown. But the cooperation between the Crown and the Church was not always carried out without friction. **William Rufus** (Rufus means red – the king had red hair and face) was not very pious, and **Henry**, his younger brother who took the crown after William's tragic death during a hunting expedition, was the first monarch to get involved in an overt struggle with the Church. The reason of his dispute was the question

of who should elect the Bishops. After several years of disagreement it was decided that bishops would be chosen by the Church, but instead of paying homage to the Pope they would recognize the authority of the king, on the grounds that they were first of all the king's vassals who had their lands from the king. This compromise prevented the Church, which was powerful, wealthy and well organized, from wielding complete control over the society.

Henry I was a powerful ruler not only of England but also of Normandy. After his death, his daughter Matilda was married to a French aristocrat **Geoffrey Plantagenet** who ruled another considerable province of France. Their son **Henry II** took the throne of England in 1154, after 19 years of anarchy, and united under his rule England and western France. He was so powerful that the English Barons accepted him without demur.

For Henry II England was another province of the same cultural realm. The Barons still spoke French and cultivated French culture and customs. However, after Henry II became king of England some of these customs were radically changed. The Barons were no longer allowed to wage private wars against one another (war was the Barons' favorite pastime) and they had to pull down unlicensed castles. Gradually the Barons moved into unfortified manor houses where they had to take up more peaceful hobbies such as hunting, agriculture, politics or art. With each decade they were turning more and more into regular country gentlemen.

Henry II is also credited with laying the foundations for **the jury system**¹¹ by making the famous bench of royal judges. After almost two decades of misrule that made every cog in the Norman machinery of state rusted with disuse, he sent these royal judges to every nook of the country to enforce English Common Law. He also stopped some barbarous procedures as trial by 'ordeal'¹² or trial by battle.¹³ He put the royal shield over all, even the most humble subjects, protecting them from the abuse of the church or the lord alike.

Henry II was an autocrat but he was just, therefore his subjects did not mind that they were subjected to the will of one man. His reign was associated with the restoration of law and order, which were preferable to general state of chaos which had preceded it.

Richard I, Henry II's son, won the nickname **Coeur de Lion (Lionheart)**. He was a very popular king, maybe because for most his life he was away, taking part in **the Crusades**.¹⁴ The Crusades were not an affair of the state but of the knight errand who could in this way prove his piety and satisfy his greed. Richard was the most famous English knight errand, but he found very few followers in 'backwater' England. But indirectly the influence of the Crusades on England (and Europe in general) was great. The Crusades not only made England richer in luxurious goods but also familiar with scientific and philosophical ideas, some of which surpassed the art and learning of Europe.

¹¹ The idea of a Jury goes back to the Viking in the Danelaw. Henry II used the jury in the second part of the 12 century. Initially a jury was 12 people chosen by the accused to prove he was innocent. Gradually the role of the jury changed; the members did not testify but judged the evidence given by witnesses.

¹² For example a hot iron rod was put on the suspect's tongue, if he was burned by it he was considered guilty.

¹³ Men fighting with each other with archaic weapon – the one who won is the one who is right.

¹⁴ The Crusades took place in the 12th and 13th century. They were a series of military expeditions undertaken by the countries of Western Europe to restore the Holy Land to Christian rule.

During the King's absence England was ruled by **Archbishop Hubert Walter** who promoted the new middle class – craftsmen and merchants who grew rich on trade with different parts of the world. The Archbishop granted charters to various towns under royal jurisdiction, which meant that the towns received the right to be self-governing.

Richard did not have a son, and after his death, his tyrannical brother **John** ascended the throne. The antipathy for John cut across class lines – nobles, merchants and churchmen alike disliked him. Under John – notorious for his greediness – everybody had to pay higher taxes. He was also in a state of dispute with the Church because the Pope appointed the Archbishop without his consent. Finally he lost control over Normandy, where some English nobles still had possessions, which further compromised his reputation. When in 1215 he made an effort to recover Normandy and asked his nobles to fight for him, they turned against him and marched to London where they were joined by angry merchants. Outside London John was forced to sign **Magna Carta, the Great Chart of English Freedom**¹⁵ – an agreement regulating the relations between the Crown and the upper and middle classes that later came to be regarded as the cornerstone of English civil liberties. The two most important matters covered by this agreement were these: firstly no free man could be arrested and imprisoned except by the law of the land, and when arrested, he had the right to a fair and legal trial; secondly, no taxation could be made without the approval of the council. Although these statements may seem progressive for those times, the Chart gave more freedom to few people in the country (serfs, who were not freemen, did not benefit from it at all and they were the largest class in medieval society). Magna Carta was merely an attempt to exert a degree of control over the king's actions to prevent him from being a ruthless tyrant. Still it was a turning point in English history because it marked the beginning of the decline of feudalism. In forcing the king to sign this document the nobles for the first time acted not as the king's vassals but as a self-conscious class, and the organization of society into classes was typical of modern, not feudal, times. Another extraordinary thing about this mutiny was the unprecedented cooperation between upper and middle classes. For the first time in history people sided with the Barons and against the Crown. The Londoners opened the gates of the city for rebels while the clergy gave them their moral support. Magna Carta therefore showed the potential strength of the middle class and set England on the course to **constitutional monarchy**, in which the power of the crown is put in the hands of the community at large.

John's son, **Henry III**, tried to get rid of Magna Carta. The rebellion which ensued under the leadership of **Simon de Montfort** was even more popular than the previous one, and it also included middle classes of town and country. In 1265 Simon de Montfort summoned a council that he called parliament (from the French word *parlement*, meaning talking shop or discussion meeting) and took over the treasury forcing the king to yield. Even though Simon de Montfort was eventually defeated and killed, the gains of Magna Carta were left intact.

Edward I, Henry's son, learnt the lesson from the two rebellions and tried to strike a happy medium between his father's adversaries and his own vision of England's constitution. He summoned the first real **parliament**, based on the idea of representation by not only nobles but also the middle class, which now produced more than fifty percent of the wealth of the country. In 1275 Edward commanded that each shire should send two commoners as representatives. At first this service was grudgingly borne by them – the journey

¹⁵ The author of Magna Carta was Stephen Langton, the Archbishop of Canterbury.

to **Westminster**, where the king's government was situated, was very long and the matter the king wanted to discuss was most often an increase in taxes. Still the Parliament grew and its functions expanded – in the reign of the first three Edwards it acquired much of its present form. What is more, the constant shuttling of representatives between Westminster and the shires did a lot to bring about the unity of the nation.

Another factor which reinforced the sense of nationhood among the English was **the Hundred Years' War (1337–1453)**, which started during the reign of Edward I. In many respects this war was national, not feudal, in its character. Owing to her insular position and long succession of strong Norman kings, England in the 14th century was a powerful state whose centralization and organization outstripped European monarchies. The corollary of this was England's expansionist policy that was aimed at creating a continental Empire. The armies that were sent to France were very small but successful because France at that time was still an inefficient feudal giant. The war bred a powerful hatred of the French, which was stronger among the common people than among the upper class. This is a remarkable fact because in those times the typical hostility was local, not national in character – it was leveled at neighboring towns, villages or districts, rather than neighboring countries. The anti-French sentiment consolidated the nation and gave rise to national pride and patriotism.

Another positive outcome of the war was the **nobilitation of the English language**¹⁶ and the consequent liberation of English culture from French influence. After the Norman conquest, English was a peasants' dialect, the speech of ignorant serfs. It is not surprising that it was despised and almost ceased to be written. The nobles spoke French and the clergy had Latin. It was during those times that English lost inflections and genders and acquired its present simplicity. At the same time it was enriched by French words relating to different aspects of life such as arts, learning, cooking and courting. During the Hundred Years War numerous French aristocrats were held captive on the island while their families in France were collecting money for ransoms. The captives were treated as guests – they taught Englishmen continental manners and made love to the English ladies, which also left its trace on the English language. But still the common feeling of patriotism made French an enemy's tongue and the Barons, who by then spoke only a caricature of French, finally started to accept English as the language of nobility.

The English effort to build an Empire in Europe had also some negative consequences. The poor bore the brunt of **the Poll Tax** (the tax for war), which led to the **peasants' uprising in 1381**. Eventually, in an ironic about-face, the war strengthened France, which goaded beyond endurance, became conscious of her own national identity. **Joan of Arc**, among others, became a symbol of this new brave and patriotic resistance. Finally, the war in France was one of the reasons of the civil war that broke out in England two years after the last English armies were driven out of France.

Thus in 1453 there were many private armies in England. They were not disbanded by the Barons, who cleverly plotted against one another and used their soldiers in private wars, skirmishes and sieges. The war in France made the Crown very weak because in the time of war the kings were more dependent on the nobles. The Kings did not have

¹⁶ William Caxton must be remembered as the first English printer who helped to elevate the position of the English language. He not only established the first printing press in England but also translated books into English and published in English thus popularizing English as the language of the learned.

their own army and used their vassals' military resources – armies enlisted and paid by the Barons. Therefore for the monarchs to act against the nobles was to act against their own interests. The unrest in the country finally took the form of a civil war, called **the War of Roses (1455–1487)** between the House of Lancaster (a red rose in its flag) and the House of York (a white rose in its flag) both of which descended from Edward III and now wanted to take possession of the Crown. The war had in a sense a limited scope – the combatants were the noblemen who were claimants of the throne, their relatives and supporters. Therefore the war did not affect the middle class or ordinary people who passively watched the events, totally unconcerned about which party would win the throne. The most famous incident in the war was the murder of **Edward IV's** two sons imprisoned in the Tower of London. Their alleged murderer was their uncle, Richard of Gloucester, who crowned himself as **Richard II**. But he had many enemies who eventually proposed their own candidate to the throne – **Henry Tudor**, Earl of Richmond from Wales. He had a very weak title to the throne but was an excellent leader and he managed to defeat Richard in **the battle of Bosworth (1485)**, and after marrying the sister of the killed boys, as Henry VII he established the greatest of all English royal lines – the House of Tudors.

3: Life in Medieval Britain

In the early Middle Ages, the civilization of Europe was Christian, feudal and cosmopolitan. In the late Middle Ages, however, Europe witnessed **the emergence of nationhood**. England was a champion in this long and complex process, and already in the 14th century she was no longer an amalgamation of the French upper class and Anglo-Saxon peasants but a homogenous social and cultural unit. English was generally accepted and understood by all the citizens regardless of their social rank, and English culture and literature, even though still derivative of French and Italian models, started to tackle English themes and develop its own styles, as it was the case with Chaucer's *Canterbury Tales*.

English national identity was forged through numerous wars, not only with the French but also with their closest neighbors: the Irish, The Scottish and the Welsh. **The Normans annexed Ireland**¹⁷ but like Wales it was repeatedly trying to throw off English rule. **Scotland** due to her geographical formation (mountain ranges and islands), even though it was weaker than England, was a country difficult to conquer and to rule. The Scottish kings successfully defended themselves from the English attempts to subdue them but finally started to seek allies to increase their security. The most obvious ally was France, also on a warpath with England since 1337. In 1346 bound by the alliance with France, the

¹⁷ Henry II conquered Ireland in 1169 but the control over the island was very tentative.

Scottish King raided England but was defeated, captured and bought off by the French. This incident temporarily put an end to the unrest on the northern frontier and fortified English national pride. The Border War (the feuds and cattle raiding in the territories bordering with Scotland) did not end for good until 1603 when the Union of the English and the Scottish Crown took place.

The break-up of the feudal system was an important step on the path towards full national self-awareness. In the late Middle Ages, England started to develop new social classes and a modern social system. There were still serfs, but they more and more emphatically demanded that all men should be free. Those who had already enjoyed freedom were constantly on strike for higher wages. The strikes were no longer directed against feudal landowners but independent farmers, manufactures and merchants, that is, the new middle-classes of the town and the country.

The 'natural economy', characteristic for a feudal system, was giving way to a 'money economy.' In **the country** the system of monetary payment gradually replaced customary service – money wages and farm leases substituted for the system of servile tenure, which forced the serfs to labor on the lord's field, not their own soil. Both the lords and independent farmers noticed that hired men working on the field all year around, whose wages were paid from tenants' rents, were far more efficient than reluctant serfs. In some parts of England, the lords' customary rights were given up as early as the 12th century, but then the process was frequently reversed in the 13th century when the rapid increase in population made it possible for the lord to drive harder bargains with the peasants, who competed with one another for the lease of the lord's fields necessary for their own sustenance. Therefore for some time field-service was again more vigorously reinforced by the lords who put it as a prerequisite for the tenure of other lands.

But then the tide turned once more due to **the Black Death (1348–1349)** a terrible plague that decimated the population of the island. One third or maybe even a half of the inhabitants of the island died in just two years. It was not until the 17th century that the population reached the number of four million inhabitants from before the plague. The plague on the land speeded the transition from a society of semi-bondsmen into a society in which all, at least legally, were free. The shortage of men to cultivate the land reduced the value of land and increased the value of labor and put the surviving peasants in a much stronger position. The lord not only found it difficult to find people to work on his land but also was saddled with the land which had been previously in lease and which went back to him because of the death of the families who had farmed it. The peasants, who before had been bound to the soil and could not even leave their village without their lord's consent, when pressed to fulfill their duties to the lord, started to flee to derelict villages in some remote part of the shire where jobs were in abundance and nobody asked any questions. In this way the new class of independent yeomen farmers was born. They used the money they earned from the lord to buy their own farms or lease the land from the lord, getting rich on it very fast. Gradually they started to step in the place of the lords, employing landless laborers to cultivate their lands. In this way the gap between the lord and the peasant that characterized the society in the feudal time disappeared, but a new division surfaced: between the yeomen farmers who were employers and wage laborers who were the employed.

Of course the abolition of serfdom did not always go unchallenged. In the areas where the lords were particularly recalcitrant in exacting field dues there were occasional acts of

violence. The peasants were supported by bands of outlaws (like Robin Hood) hiding in still vast forests. **The uprisings** were supported by the small clergy, often of peasant origin, and were directed against wealthy churchmen and the upper class alike. The biggest of these rebellions happened in 1381, triggered by the increase of the Poll Tax to three times the previous amount. At first different bands of rebels raided manors and monasteries in East England and in Kent, driving nobles, prelates and abbots to the woods from which the outlaws had just emerged. Then a precedent took place – the bands united and marched to London, where, with the aid of the poor of the city, they murdered some of the most unpopular nobles. The force of the uprising shocked the middle class, and Richard II promised to meet their demands, but after the rebels peacefully went home, the king and the nobles plucked up their courage and took a terrible revenge. The memory of the nightmarish four-week revolt lingered with the nobles, making them a bit more responsive to the plight of the poor. After the revolt the movement for the emancipation of the serf continued until the village became a modern community with a squire, who frequently did not have his own farm and lived on lease money, wealthy farmers and craftsmen, and finally farmhands, who were free but landless. When the old feudal system of Sheriffs was replaced with the institution of the Justices of the Peace, local nobles appointed by the king to rule the county¹⁸ in his name, the change from feudal to modern society was complete.

In the 14th century **the town** was still an agricultural community very similar to that of the village. The city-dwellers were craftsmen, manufacturers, and merchants who during harvest lay their work aside to work on the fields and meadows which were beyond the city walls. The number of inhabitants of an average town varied from 2.000 to 3.000 people – the number could change dramatically due to not infrequent plagues resulting from the unsanitary conditions. But life in the town was not unpleasant; there were the poor but there were no slums.

In towns, like in villages, people were engaged in numerous mutual antagonisms. Wage earners were against merchants and manufacturers, but they could rally, guided by civic patriotism, against all newcomers threatening their common interests, against other towns competing in trade, or against the greatest enemies of all: the lords, bishops and monks who always tried to impinge of the towns' privilege of self-government.

London was the biggest city of all, practically a state within a state. **Westminster** was two miles away from London and was considered to be the center of royal administration and law. The king, who borrowed money from Londoners, put the richest citizens on par with nobles and protected their monopoly for trade. In 1290 Edward I expelled **Jews** from England to make it possible for the English middle class to grow. This is probably one of the reasons why anti-Semitism in England was not as strong as in other countries, whose middle classes could not compete with the gifted Jews on equal terms.

The main source of wealth, both in the village and in the town, was the production of **wool and cloth**, which had a tradition reaching back to the times of ancient Britons. England was a power in wool production – the greatest sheep stocks were counted in thousands and every farm had a stock. Initially England exported only wool and produced cloth only for her own market. Gradually, however, cloth became England's main export. In the reign of Edward II and Edward III the government took control over the nation's

¹⁸ The county is the smallest unit of administration.

main industry (second only to agriculture) – the importation of cloth from abroad was prohibited and foreign weavers were encouraged to settle in England under special privileges. In the late Middle Ages the production of cloth trebled and England became the main supplier to the world's cloth market. The development of the cloth trade had many corollaries for England's economy and social life. It gave rise to the middle class in the town and the village; it alleviated the poverty of the landless proletariat; finally it contributed to the growth of the commercial fleet, which went into different corners of the world to sell English cloth.

Initially the cloth industry was organized by **guilds**, associations of merchants, who wanted to protect their interest against other workers and to guard the monopoly of their trade against other towns. Gradually it became clear that guilds could not cope with the organization of production and exportation. The manufacture in fact required more than one craft – spinning, weaving or dyeing. From these days the English became rich in metaphors connected with the work of Webster. 'Thread of discourse', 'spin a yarn', 'unravel a mystery', 'web of life', 'homespun' and 'spinster' are just a few phrases whose etymology goes back to weaving.

Thus in the late Middle Ages potent forces were reshaping English society and English institutions. **Parliament** was modernized and the power of commoners representing the new middle class was growing, and the only institution that remained intact outside the reforms was **the Church**. The Church was as conservative as ever and resented all changes, as all of them were aimed at reducing its power. The ever increasing wealth of the Church and its untouchable privileges grated on the nerves of many people – the commoners, who criticized the corruption of the Church, and noblemen, who were now as well educated as the clergymen and eager to take over the church's position in the state government. Bishops were 'ministers' of state, whereas clergymen of lower rank did all the secretarial work.

The Church itself was prey to many inner antagonisms most notably between parishioners and high churchmen who were interested more in politics than in the deplorable condition of the Church.

The main reason why people hated the Church was the greediness of churchmen. Absolution was given for money and the Spiritual Courts that dealt with wills, marriages and sexual irregularities often commuted penance for money, thus practically blackmailing sinners. Parishioners often employed substitutes to run the parish for them, while they indulged in a luxurious life in London, Oxford, or an aristocrat's house. Ordinary people therefore often turned to traveling Pardoners, selling relics from Rome or to heretical missionaries. Many of them were **Lollards** and represented the first English religious movement called '**premature reformation**' because of its resemblance to Protestantism.

Lollardy was founded by **John Wycliffe**, a scholar from Oxford who at the end of the 14th century denied the doctrine of transubstantiation¹⁹ and was driven out of Oxford. Wycliffe was the first to translate the Bible to English because he thought that everyone, not only clergy, should be able to know it and live by the word of God. He was never allowed to publish his Bible and his followers were persecuted, but the popular movement they initiated was never completely wiped out, and in Lutheran times Lollards joined the ranks of the Lutheran movement. Another evangelical force in the nation were friars

¹⁹ The belief that during the mass the bread and wine turn into the body and blood of Jesus Christ.

who were also very outspoken about the sloth of bishops, monks and clergy. In their work there are to be found early traits of English Puritanism such as asceticism, stirring sermons, all-out war on sin, and renunciation of Church hierarchy.

One-third of the wealth of the entire country was in the hands of the Church, and much of it was invested in monasteries where monks lived a very comfortable life. The monasteries were no longer centers of learning, and the chronicles that the monks produced were no longer capable of grasping the importance of the times. The monks did not take part in the political life of the country and generally lived the life of an average nobleman – they had armies of servants in the monasteries, which they often left, and, dressed smartly as laymen, they wandered, hunted or played field sports. Needless to say they were unchaste.

The sins of the Church's pride and luxury were nowhere more visible than in the ever enlarged and perfected monasteries or beautiful late medieval churches, which contrary to small and dark Norman churches, delighted the congregation with their spaciousness and breathtaking stain-glass windows. **The medieval ecclesiastical architecture** was a great heirloom to the English nation.

Another positive aspect of the medieval Church activity was its **educational activity**. Grammar schools run by the Church were still the only possibility of a career for ambitious boys from the lower classes. Many of them became later clerks, half-clergy who did secretarial work and were expected not to marry. The clerks were particularly undisciplined and were often the source of amorous or criminal scandals, which also contributed to tarnishing the Church's reputation.

Besides grammar schools there were no attempts to teach the population. **Oxford and Cambridge**, the two ancient universities in England, already existed (Cambridge rose to national importance a little bit later in the 15th and 16th century). The University community consisted of two mutually hostile parties: clerks and regular clergy. They were all, however, rallied against the town's people, and skirmishes between students and inhabitants were not a rarity. In 1355 the goaded inhabitants of Oxford virtually slaughtered both students and scholars. The king intervened to avenge them, but the truth was that the lifestyle of students, who did not abstain from taverns and brothels, made them hardly bearable neighbors. The excesses in the universities stopped after the **college system** had been introduced. Colleges were academic homes where young people were supervised (before they had rented apartments all over the town). The colleges put an end to scandalous incidents and improved the morals and discipline among students. The only learned men who were taught outside universities were lawyers, who were educated in **the Inns of Court in Westminster**.

GB – The Tudors and the Stuarts

1: The Tudors, the Reformation, the Renaissance and the Sea Power

The year 1485 is usually considered **the end of the Middle Ages** and the beginning of the English Renaissance, the most lustrous period in the history of the English nation, which coincided with a century of **Tudor rule (1485–1603)**. The three most remarkable monarchs of the House of Tudor were Henry VII, who laid the foundations of a powerful state; Henry VIII, who established the national church and built the Royal Navy; and Elizabeth I, who kept England on the course to becoming a heretical sea power.

Henry VII wanted to make the Crown financially independent and strong. He encouraged business and benefited from taxes; he also built a fleet of merchant ships to help merchants to regain overseas markets which they had lost during the War of Roses. His efforts to bring back prosperity to the country set him in alliance with the middle class whose richest representatives were frequently knighted to become the kings' advisors and statesmen.

The cloth trade further developed in the 16th century and was England's chief source of wealth. The wealth was evenly distributed in both villages and towns where cloth was manufactured. With a few exceptions, the business of weaving still had its domestic character – the weaver worked at home with his whole family. He was supplied by middlemen (called journeymen) who also distributed the finished goods. In those days their work was very strenuous – they used packhorses whose long trains linked distant regions. All classes, high and low, were engaged in the manufacture of cloth, and as merchants, weavers and sheep farmers grew richer and could pay higher taxes their political leverage grew as well. They bought land, intermarried with needy squires and founded new country families. Their sons were trained for public service or the Royal Navy. Gradually they started to oust churchmen and nobles from their public offices. In the course of the 16th century many of them became Protestants and Reformation men.

The Middle Ages have a somewhat unfair opinion as an intellectually barren epoch. Yet it is true that obscurantism in Medieval England reached its apogee when Wycliffe was driven out of Oxford. A hundred years later, in the last two decades of the 15th century, new ideas came to England from Italy, which was the cradle of the **Renaissance**, based on the studies of ancient culture, literature and science. In England, the Renaissance started with the humanist movement – the ‘**New Learning**’ of classical Latin, Greek and Hebrew, but it became more than that. Whereas classical studies in Italy were pagan and artistic in character, in England they were combined with Christian piety and civic virtues. The overall aim of the English humanists was not only to reform education, by grounding it in respect for human reason, but to reform the Church herself. The most important representatives of the movement were **Sir Thomas More** (the author of *Utopia*), the Dutchman **Erasmus of Rotterdam**, and **John Colet**.¹ All of them launched bitter attacks at obscurantism and Church abuses in a manner not heard in public since subduing Wycliffe and his priests.

Henry VIII was a friend of Colet and More. He was as orthodox as his father Henry VII (he had Lollards burnt as heretics) but, on the other hand, like his advanced friends he disliked monks, disapproved of image and relic worship and accepted the possibility of religious speculation if it was based on the careful study of the Bible. He was a generous patron of men of the Renaissance, and it was said that his court had a better store of learned men than any university. Initially Henry was content to rule the country through **Cardinal Wolsey**, so his progressive ideas did not interfere with the running of the state. Wolsey was a very skillful statesman and diplomat in whose hands the foreign policy of **the Balance of Power**² was for the first time clearly defined. But soon it became clear that Cardinal Wolsey was to be the last churchman to rule over England.

Besides the Renaissance, another important development in the reign of the Tudors was the discovery of **the New World** and opening new ocean routes. Within a span of just a few decades England ceased to be a backwater somewhere on the margins of Europe, and as the new map of the world unfolded, she found herself near its strategic center. In the era of ocean discovery and commerce, the English proved themselves to be not only a sea-going population accustomed to sailing the stormy waters of northern seas, but also skillful tradesmen, who had something to offer to the peoples of the newly discovered lands. While Spain had nothing to send except conquistadors, missionaries and colonists, England had cloth, which was creating new markets in different nooks and corners of the world.

Still initially it did not seem that England would be a chief winner at this new game. In the 15th century, Spain and Portugal led the way in **ocean discovery**: the Portuguese founded an Empire on the coast of Africa, and Spain sent soldiers to subjugate and colonize Mexico and Peru. The Pope divided all newly discovered territories between those two European powers by drawing a line from pole to pole, west of the Azores, and stating that all lands to the West of the line belonged to Spain while those to the East belonged

¹ Erasmus and Colet taught in Oxford, thus they were often called **Oxford reformers**.

² The main aim of this policy, which became the cornerstone of the school of English diplomacy in the following centuries, was maintaining a balance between great European powers such as France or Spain because if any of these great continental states defeated others, England’s position would be threatened. Therefore what the policy boiled down to was playing one great monarchy against another, so that none of them could gain complete supremacy.

to Portugal. In this way the Pope barred England's gate to the New World and doomed her to insular second-rate existence.

In this situation Henry VIII decided to build a **fleet of fighting ships** capable of challenging the mighty Spanish fleet. The Spanish fleet was still made of slave-rowed galleys, similar to those that had sailed the Mediterranean Sea. What is more important, those galleys were not warships, and they were easy prey to pirates. The frequent assaults by pirates intercepting the cargo of gold sailing from America to Spanish ports brought it home to the Spanish that it was imperative to build a fighting fleet. But the English had started to build such a fleet much earlier, and additionally they were pioneers in a new type of sea warfare. The English warships had a completely new purpose and design. They were sailing vessels, not rowed galleys; they were sturdy and agile and had canons. While the Spanish warships were moving platforms on which soldiers were carried to battle, not different from the battles on land, the English warship was a mobile battery of canons ready to give a shattering '**broadside**' (a simultaneous discharge of canons) which, in the words of E. M. Travelyan, was the operation of war to which British maritime and colonial power owed their existence. The Royal Navy not only was the chief instrument in founding and maintaining the Empire, but first and foremost it saved England from the backlash of Catholic European Powers when she embarked on the course to become a Protestant country.

England's way to **Protestantism** was long and rather winding. It started with the popular anti-clerical sentiment already very vivid in the late Middle Ages. The powers and privileges enjoyed by the priesthood gave offence to the laymen; the wealth of the Church induced in many greedy and ambitious young men a desire to rob the Church of her riches. Among them was the young profligate king Henry VIII, who in his first years of reign managed to squander a sizeable fortune amassed by his thrifty father (£ 2,000,000 – fifteen years' worth of income). What is more, the king was inspired by the New Learning of Colet and More, who inculcated in him the idea that the monasteries were redundant, and he was supported by public opinion, very vocal about the corruption of monks. Finally, the king was rather unsuccessful in trying to pursue the principles of the Balance of Power and his position in European politics was rather weak. That increased his dislike for the Church and the Pope whom he had no power to control.

The prelude to Henry's breach with the Pope was the German **Reformation** under **Martin Luther** and **John Calvin**, which practically stripped the Pope of all religious authority. To make matters worse for the Pope, Rome was besieged by Charles V, the Emperor of the Holy Roman Empire (Germany) and at the same time the king of Spain. There could have been no better moment for Henry VIII to break with the Papacy.

Luther's and Calvin's doctrines, once they were proclaimed, immediately became popular in England where they absorbed Lollards into the Protestant movement. The men of the New Learning, however, were not unanimous about the new religious dogmas. Oxford held back, but Cambridge joined the movement. The Cambridge students met in a tavern **The White Horse** where they discussed Luther's proposals. These men were nicknamed **Germans**, but they were genuine patriots who later became **the founders of the Anglican Church**.

Initially the king was opposed to Luther's ideas and even wrote a book in the defense of the Catholic faith, for which he was rewarded by the Pope with the title the **Defender of the Faith**, a decision the Pope must have later regretted. However gradually the King

started to regard The Reformation and religious upheaval as a solution to many domestic problems. The immediate cause of the break with Rome was the question of divorce with **Catherine of Aragon**, from whom Henry could not expect any more children. Their only child was princess Mary, and the king wanted a son to secure for England an undisputed succession. There had never been a queen on the throne of England (except Matilda), and he feared a civil war or the rule of a foreign prince consort.

It was Cardinal Wolsey's task to persuade the Pope to give the king the divorce, and the task seemed fairly easy because the Pope had already divorced Henry's sister Margaret Queen of Scotland, thus proving he was not given to scruples. But the Pope was at Charles V's mercy and Charles V was Catherine's nephew and protector. Wolsey's mission to obtain a divorce fell through, and the king started to ask himself pretty obvious questions: why should he look abroad for consent to do what he wanted? Why not ask the English Churchmen and the Parliament? **Thomas Cranmer**, one of the 'Germans' from Cambridge replaced Wolsey as Archbishop of Canterbury, while **Thomas Cromwell** became the head of the anti-clerical revolution. In 1531 Henry persuaded the bishops to make him the head of the Church in England, and Parliament put the Royal Reformation into effect, and in just seven years **the breach with Rome** was complete. Parliament passed the legislation (**The Act of Supremacy – 1534**) that destroyed all monasteries. Thomas Cromwell prepared a survey of Church property which was the first organized survey since the **Doomsday Book**.³ Between 1536 and 1539, five hundred and sixty monasteries were closed and their land was sold among the local gentry. This decision proved to be very judicious because when the Catholic reaction⁴ started on the continent, those who benefited from the dissolution of the monasteries did not want to see abbots, monks or nuns ever again.

In the Universities there was a temporary decline of students (half of them had been monks) but soon the campuses were swelled with gentlemen's sons.

Average people approved of the Revolution even though they sympathized with blameless Catherine and disliked **Ann Boleyn** – a flirt whom the King made his next bride. Those who refused to back up the king and repudiate Papal authority through the **Oath of Supremacy** went to the scaffold, like Sir Thomas More.

After the attack on the Church propriety and Abbey lands, Henry VIII as the Supreme Head of the Church proceeded to reform the religion of the English. Relic worship, image-worship, giving pardons for money and some popular superstitions were eradicated. What is more important, however, English was introduced as the language of worship. The priests had to recite the mass in English; the Lord's Prayer, the Articles of Faith and the Commandments were taught in English, and common people finally got to know the Bible. These changes gave impetus to the English Reformation, and when Catholic Queen Mary tried to undo the Reformation, ordinary people sacrificed their lives for the New Church and the new positive atmosphere it created among believers.

But the new Anglican Church was still not protestant. The king passed **the Act of Six Articles** decreeing death against anyone who denied **Transubstantiation**,⁵ the necessity

³ Domesday Book – a written record of the ownership and value of land made in 1086 for William the Conqueror in order to assess the size and value of the King's property and tax the property of others.

⁴ The Catholic reaction is most frequently described as Counter – Reformation. The Jesuits, whose order was founded in 1534, were instrumental in the Counter – Reformation.

⁵ The belief that during the mass the wine and bread turn into the blood and body of Christ.

of confession and clerical celibacy. Protestants continued to be burned at the stake. The next to the scaffolds were the enemies of the anti-clerical revolution. The majority of the English were neither Catholic nor Protestant but no one believed in toleration. After Henry VIII's death, it was still not clear whether the country would choose reunion with Rome or further advance to Protestantism.

Queen Mary, who took the throne after Henry VIII's only son died at the age of sixteen, was the daughter of Henry and Catherine of Aragon. Like her mother, she was Catholic, and like her, she preferred Spain to the country she came to rule. Things went from bad to worse when she fell in love with **Philip II of Spain** and insisted on marrying him in blatant disregard of her subjects' wishes. To please him she wanted Papal jurisdiction restored. And when finally she burned three hundred Protestants in just one year, the hatred of the Church of Rome among the English became rampant.⁶

Philip of Spain treated England as a mere extension of his Spanish Empire and continued to deny the English access to America. He was accepted as king of England only for Mary's lifetime, and when she died childless and slighted by her husband in 1558, the whole country was relieved. **Elizabeth**, the daughter of Ann Boleyn and Mary's half sister, was the last of Henry VIII's children. She survived the reign of Mary only because she was very cautious and did not give Mary an excuse to kill her, and because Philip had taken a liking to her even before his wife died. With the help of the House of Commons, she reestablished the supremacy of state over the national church, and for the rest of her life she made sure that the Church remained under royal authority as the honorable servant of the state.

When she became Queen, she was only twenty five years old. She considered herself 'mere English' because her mother Ann Boleyn was not a foreign princess. Yet she spoke Greek, Latin and Italian. In the age of religious wars, she was exceptionally tolerant and eager to strike a balance between the wishes of her Catholic and Protestant subjects. During her childhood she had been imprisoned and in constant danger; as Queen she was threatened by internal agitators and external aggressors.

To avoid the immediate invasion of the island, Elizabeth promised to marry Philip or a person of his choice even though she had no such intention. Then she tried to buy some time by sending some money to the enemies of Spain, to prolong a religious war in France in which Spain was engaged. The danger was temporarily averted, but fiercely Catholic Spain continued to pose a threat to Elizabeth's throne. The struggle between Catholics and Protestants at home was still severe, and plot after plot was laid to put the Scottish Queen Mary (Elizabeth's Catholic cousin) on the English throne.

Mary 'Queen of Scots' was Elizabeth's closest relative; therefore, when she found herself in trouble with her own Scottish people, she fled to England to Elizabeth whose throne she endangered. For Catholics she was a godsend. The Pope and Spain in league with Catholic extremists in England started scheming to kill Elizabeth and to put Mary on the throne. For twenty years Mary was Elizabeth's prisoner, and every time a new plot was discovered, the Commoners of England petitioned for Mary's execution. But that would mean a war with powerful Spain, a scenario that Elizabeth wanted at all costs to avoid. When finally Mary promised Philip of Spain that he would be the heir to the throne of England and, thus encouraged him to invade the country, Elizabeth yielded to her Ministers and Parliament

⁶ Mary's cruelty earned her the nickname **Bloody Mary**.

and in 1587 agreed to Mary's execution. The nation rejoiced and welcomed her decision. Mary was associated with Catholic plots and a constant threat of Catholic invasion, and therefore was very unpopular among the majority of English people. The hostility against the Pope and Spain intensified patriotic feelings that were focused on the queen and bred active hatred of everything Catholic. The Queen became the embodiment of the complete independence of the nation and the omnipotence of the state, and the Queen's worship reached a culmination in those years. When, after Mary's execution, Philip claimed the throne for himself, even those who were in two minds about the righteousness of Mary's execution rallied with Elizabeth's supporters against one common enemy.

The antagonism between Spain and England by then had had a very long history. Elizabeth helped the Protestant Netherlands to get rid of Catholic Spanish rule. The Dutch, with the Queen's assent, used British harbors to attack Spanish ships that were taking Spanish soldiers to suppress rebellions of the Dutch Protestants. Elizabeth also sent the rebels some money and soldiers. Moreover she supported pirates who attacked and looted Spanish ships coming from America and shared in their spoils; American gold and silver fed the Queen's treasury. Even though officially the Queen disowned the pirates, it was a well-known fact, even to Philip of Spain, that the plundered treasure was a considerable part of England's revenue. Some of the clashes with the Spanish were over the right to trade in the territories assigned to the Spanish by the Pope. The Spanish and also the Portuguese did everything they could to exclude foreigners from trading with the regions under their control. The Elizabethan merchants established trade with Russia, Constantinople and India⁷ and took a leading part in the slave trade. Negroes were kidnapped in Africa and sold in American ports, officially closed to English trade. The maritime conflict with Spain reached its climax when **Francis Drake**, the most famous of Elizabeth's buccaneers, sailed around the world, robbing on his way the Spanish colony on the coast of Chile famous for its fabulous wealth, whereby he was knighted by the Queen upon his return.

In 1587 Philip made up his mind to launch an invasion of the island. He started to consider the conquest of England as necessary in dispatching his enemies in the Netherlands. He built a great fleet of ships, the **Armada**, to carry his soldiers from the Netherlands to England. The invasion took place on **29 July 1588**, and it was a total disaster. Adverse weather conditions combined with English sea power obliterated the magnificent Spanish fleet. The failure of the Armada did not finish the war with Spain which continued until 1609 as a joint effort of the English and the Dutch, but it clearly showed that mighty Spain could not conquer England even while putting out her full power. This victory saved the Protestant Dutch Republic and Germany and diminished Spanish influence in France.

Generally the year 1588 is considered to be one of the turning points in the history of the world – a point at which the English started to take over the lead in the overseas discoveries and commerce. Naturally the whole process was very gradual – it took the 17th and 18th centuries to found the British Empire. Elizabethan England was not populous and strong enough to oust the Spanish from their American colonies, but still a few important steps were made on the route to England's own colonial empire. In **1607 Sir Walter Raleigh** started in North America the colony of **Virginia** named after the Virgin (unmar-

⁷ **East India Company** was founded in 1599 to trade with India. Gradually it brought under its control the empty territories and in the Stuart times it became monopolist, controlling almost the entire Indian subcontinent.

ried) Queen Elizabeth. The **East India Company** started to fight for trade with India. Voyages of discovery resulted in establishing colonies in various parts of the world.

Thus Elizabeth, continuing her father and grandfather's policy, gave a new direction to the expansive energy of the English people. The Tudors not only laid the foundations for the Empire but also mapped out Great Britain. Under Henry VIII, **Wales** was annexed to England on terms of absolute equality – local Welshmen became JPs (Justices of Peace) and Welsh gentry sent their representatives to parliament. Gradually the Welsh upper classes were becoming English in speech and custom, while the peasants living in mountainous regions still spoke the Celtic language, discouraged in the administration and worship (Henry nonetheless allowed the printing of the Bible in Celtic which is why the language managed to survive).

However, Henry VIII was not so successful in **Ireland** where he tried to implement the same policy. Henry first got rid of some powerful Anglo-Irish families that ruled the country and forced the Irish parliament to take him as king. Had he been content with such a status quo, he might have been victorious, but Henry doggedly insisted on subjugating Ireland to the religious revolution. Ireland in Tudor times was a Catholic stronghold; her insular position made her oblivious of the Renaissance or the New Learning, thus Henry's attempts to take monastic lands gave bitter offence to Irish nationalists. The Jesuits and Spanish started to interfere, seeing in Ireland a foothold from which they could attack England. Thus Elizabeth was forced to re-conquer Ireland, and she did that with extreme cruelty since her army was not big enough to occupy the island and keep it under control. It slaughtered the Irish tribes and killed the survivors with famine. Protestant colonists were ushered into Ulster, the Northeastern part of the island where the Irish held out the longest. Edmund Spenser, an English poet who took part in suppressing the Irish rebellion so described those who did not perish in massacres: 'Out of every corner of the woods ...[The Irish] came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs would not bear them. They looked like...death. They spoke like ghosts crying out of their graves. They did eat the dead...happy where they could find them'. This did not, however, make any impression on most of the conquerors, who saw in Ireland a prospective English colony, where cheap land could be acquired and fortunes could be made. Many of them were not that mercenary, seeing the conquest of Ireland as a holy task, whereby the only true religion could be upheld and their patriotism and adoration for the Queen displayed. The overall corollary of the conquest was the Irish identification of the Catholic religion with Irish nationalism and genuine hatred of the English and Protestantism. Since the Irish upper class was abolished, Irish priests became the leaders.

While Irish nationalism was closely connected with Catholicism, **English nationalism** was increasingly associated with the new Protestant faith. When Elizabeth ascended the throne, the majority of the nation were anti-clericals, some of whom were Catholics while others were Protestants. The Catholic reaction, which culminated in the invasion of the Spanish Armada, did a lot to convert some of the anti-clericals to the Protestant religion. When the Queen died in 1603 the majority of English considered themselves ardent Protestants, and they led highly religious lives based on the study of the Bible.

The Bible together with the study of classics made England an important center of the Renaissance, famous for Shakespeare, Sidney, Spenser and Milton. The **English Renaissance** flourished beyond the Tudor epoch, through Stuart times and Cromwell's republic until the restoration of the monarchy in 1660, that is much longer than in Europe where it withered quickly under the Jesuits and Spaniards.

2: The Stuart Era

In the course of the 16th century the medieval system passed away. Cosmopolitan feudalism and Christian idealism⁸ gave way to the new idea of a national state. The royal administration, Common Law, and the national parliament had a unifying effect on the country. The power in the parliament moved from the House of Lords to the House of Commons, representing the richer and more influential middle class. Cloth manufacture spread to all parts of the country and made many towns, especially those with harbors, very important for the economy of the country. Regulation of the trade was no longer an affair of a chartered town or a guild but of the Crown and Parliament. The transition from the medieval to the modern world was completed by the feeling of common patriotism and national pride that cut across social classes and was always associated with the monarch. The Tudors, especially Henry VIII and Elizabeth I, had a metaphysical power over their subjects. They trusted their subjects and were worshipped by them. And they had every reason to do so. The ordinary people were sheltered by the State against all malpractices of clergy and aristocracy. The state provided for the poor. In 1601 Parliament passed the **First Poor Law** making people in each shire responsible for the poor. The JPs had to raise money for the poor and organize housing and work for them. This law was in operation until 1834.

Under Elizabeth the future **union of Scotland and England** was prepared. In the 16th century Scotland officially became a protestant country. The Protestant Church in Scotland was called '**Kirk**', and it was far more democratic than the Anglican Church because it was ruled not by monarchs and bishops but a General Assembly. Such was the situation when **Mary 'Queen of Scots'** returned as a widow from France to rule Scotland. Mary probably would have become the next queen of England if she had not antagonized her Scottish subjects. She married Lord Darnley, then had him murdered and, to everybody's chagrin, married her husband's murderer, Bothwell, whereby she was driven out of the country by her Scottish enemies. Elizabeth, who killed Mary, secured before her own death that the crown of England would go to Mary's son from her second marriage (with Lord Darnley), James VI who in **1603** became **James I** of England.

James I was accepted by the English without much ado. Everybody was happy that the death of the Virgin Queen did not lead to a Civil war or an invasion. Public opinion was unanimous that the union with Scotland was a good thing. Both countries had been Protestant for some time, which made them natural allies. But the Scots, especially those in James's court, were disliked, and it soon became clear that the king himself was not to the English liking.

When James became king of England at the age of seventy, he had been the king of Scotland for thirty-six years, and he was successful. He had the Kirk under his control as well as the Catholic nobles. But his experience as ruler of Scotland was of no use in deciphering the political map of England. His mind boggled at the House of Commons – the lawyers and squires perpetually imposing their advice on him and lecturing him on

⁸ The idea of Christendom as one Common European Civilization.

the realm's laws, while flatly refusing to pay more taxes. In Scotland the only people to oppose the king were the nobles or the preachers who acted through the Kirk, not the middle classes. Soon it became clear that the relationship between the monarchy and Parliament would have to be reconsidered. In the 16th century the powers of Parliament were not clearly defined, but owing to the political and diplomatic talents of the Tudor monarchs there had been no overt conflicts. But James I had neither their knowledge nor their diplomatic skills and he was bound to make a mistake.

James I was a good-natured but conceited man, who never allowed himself to be convinced that he knew too little of England and her laws to be a successful ruler. The first serious blunder was his reinforcement of the fines for 'recusancy' (for refusal to obey official religious dogmas). This unfortunate decision inspired some extreme Catholics to form the so-called **Gunpowder plot** whose aim was to blow up the buildings of Parliament with the king and MPs in it. At the last moment the plot was revealed and the government was not toppled, but since that day (**November 5, 1605⁹**) Roman Catholics were forbidden to enter public services and were pushed to the margins of political life.

Moreover James I, who was a pacifist, utterly neglected the Navy. The peace that ended the war with Spain was obtained at a very low price. The English merchants still could not officially trade with Spanish or Portuguese colonies, and in the absence of any royal support they started to wage private wars. Such illegal wars were nothing new in English history; a scuffle with foreign merchants or pirates was an incident that happened in the life of every honest tradesman. But in Stuart times the royal control over such enterprises was nonexistent, and therefore the English seamen quickly degenerated from the tradition of Drake and Raleigh and became black-flag pirates. To make matters worse for the English merchants, the Dutch started to compete with them with success, reducing considerably the volume of English trade. Pirates raided the English Channel, and the king held Sir Walter Raleigh accountable for the situation and had him beheaded. All that led to a deep resentment against all Stuart monarchs, cherished by mariners and merchants alike.

When the second wave of Catholic reaction started with the onset of **The Thirty Years' War (1618)** James's peaceful instincts led him to propose to marry his son Charles to the Spanish infanta, and that idea unnerved nine Englishmen out of ten. Fortunately this Spanish match did not go off, but a marriage a degree less fatal was carried out – Charles was married to **Henrietta Maria of France**, a zealous Catholic, who became an active agent in converting the English court into her religion and who had disastrous influence on her husband's policies.

When **Charles** came to the throne in 1625 he had yet another terrible advisor, George Villiers, **Duke of Buckingham**, who had been the architect of English foreign policy already during the reign of Charles's father.

James' death liberated Buckingham from the previous king's peaceful policies, and he started to envisage himself as a great protestant leader. He induced Charles to launch several disastrous war expeditions against France and Spain, which infuriated the House of Commons. The House of Commons had no influence on the king's foreign policy but indirectly it could be a very effective cog in the conduct of the war because it could refuse to pay higher taxes. The king's bankruptcy was the reason why the war in France did not

⁹ Today the day is celebrated as **Guy Fawkes Day**. Guy Fawkes was the man who was found in the cellars with the gunpowder.

go well, but on the other hand, the recalcitrance of Parliament saved the prosperity of the country.

When the unpopular Buckingham was assassinated by a Puritan¹⁰ fanatic, the country and Parliament welcomed the news with shameless joy. The King estranged and offended by the public reaction decided not to summon again any Parliament. Charles, like his father, thought that kings should be autocrats, free from any constitutional check upon their actions. Both James I and Charles I believed in the doctrine of the **divine hereditary right**, according to which monarchs derived their authority from God and only God could hold them accountable. Therefore neither James nor Charles could suffer any limitations on their authority, but whereas James I was more flexible, Charles I considered himself God in his own right who was completely above the law. The King's opponents, on the other hand, believed that the king was not above the law and, what was even more important, that the king and his council could not make any new laws, because law making was the prerogative of Parliament. Therefore the king's attempt to rule without Parliament was considered a violation of English Common Law, established in medieval times and modernized in the times of the Tudors. It was clear that England must become an absolute monarchy or a constitutional monarchy because she could not be both at the same time.

The conflict between the king and the middle classes became more acute when, following his wife's advice, Charles put Catholics in high government places and appointed **William Laud** as Archbishop of Canterbury. Laud was known for his Catholic sympathies and, moreover, he was an avowed enemy of Puritans. His frantic efforts to root out Puritanism from English soil finally incited a civil war in which he perished.

As Archbishop he introduced serious devotional changes in **the Church of England**: the ritual side of worship, typical of the Roman Catholic Church, was increased while evangelical practice – preaching and lecturing on the basis of the Bible, a distinctive feature of Protestant worship – were prohibited within the Church. Puritans as non-conformists were severely persecuted, which induced many of them to immigrate to America. This was happening at a time when English Puritanism was producing statesmen of a great caliber, many of whom were MPs and very affluent and powerful people. Laud's ill judgment eventually prompted him to summon some of the important laymen to answer before him in public about their presumed sins. That happened when everybody, even the humblest citizens, believed that the Reformation once and for all freed them from clerical control. Laud's imagination was dazzled by his desire to restore the medieval power of the Church, but the English had him quickly undeceived. Puritans and Protestants made a natural alliance and bid their time.

Finally one of the mistakes that Laud made turned out to be fraught with serious consequences. Laud wanted **the Scottish Kirk** to accept the same organization as the Church of England. After the Reformation, the Church of England kept the outline of its medieval organization with bishops who had taken the King instead of Pope as their master. In Scotland, however, the Reformation took a different course – it was a popular movement of active-minded laity who played an important role in the Church government. In England the Crown and Parliament controlled the Church; the Scottish Church, which

¹⁰ **Puritans** were the most radical Protestants who believed in simple forms of church ceremony and strict moral behavior. They were also against church hierarchy and were naturally the staunchest opponents of Roman Catholic Church.

represented the Scottish people, aspired to control the Crown. Charles, who spent only a few years of his childhood in Scotland and who was therefore ignorant of her social system, supported Laud in his endeavors to bring the Kirk under his royal command. In this way he antagonized both nations and each at the point where they were most susceptible. The English, attached to their Parliament, and the Scots attached to their novel Church, wished to reestablish their previous relation to the Crown.

The Scots, still organized in feudal fighting clans, quickly united their private armies against the Crown. The Covenant¹¹ with God was renewed in every parish and Scottish sons who served in the armies of Protestant champions on the continent came swarming home. In the spring of 1638 this highly spirited Scottish army crossed the border with England. The King, still trying to suppress rebellion without summoning Parliament, raised some regiments of Catholic Irish to subdue Scotland. When this did not work, in 1640 the King finally summoned the so called **Long Parliament** which quickly asserted its independence that culminated in the passing of the **Great Remonstrance (1641)**, a fierce denunciation of the King's authoritarian practices and the undue influence of the bishops. Charles rejected this denunciation and Parliament flatly refused to help. In 1642 the King resorted to violence trying to arrest the most bellicose Parliament leaders. This move frightened Parliament and its supporters to such an extent that they decided to take up arms in their own defense. London locked its gates against the King and a four-year **Civil War (1642–1651)** ensued, whereby the House of Commons successfully organized military operations against the king. This was a development unprecedented in English history because the rebellion had broken out on the initiative of the plebeian Lower House whose leaders were not afraid to seize and wield the power of the state.

At first the Parliament was unanimous. All members agreed to dispatch the King's most hated advisors such as Laud. At the same time, however, religious matters started to overshadow political issues. The Puritans and Anglicans started to look at each other with a growing mutual suspicion, each party thinking about using the conflict to impose their religion in the whole country.

Most of the ordinary people wanted to keep out of the war as much as possible. The Navy, merchant seamen, and the richest part of the county, Southeast England and London, supported the Parliament, and they were called **Roundheads** (because their hair was short). The Royalists '**Cavaliers**' controlled the Northwest of the country; the king's headquarters were in Oxford. In 1648 the Cavaliers were defeated and the king fled to the Scottish highlands where he made his last unsuccessful attempt to launch an offensive against the rebels. He was defeated, captured and put before an illegal tribunal that had him executed on **31 January 1649**. Paradoxically, the execution made the king popular again; he acted with bravery and dignity and it dawned on the English that they really did not bargain for an experiment in republicanism.

The king lost the war for several reasons, the main of which was the lack of money. Whereas he could depend only on gifts from his supporters, Parliament reformed the tax system to raise the money it needed (that system is still in operation today). Parliament controlled the sea and the harbors and also could depend on loans from the City's bankers. Secondly, Parliament quite unexpectedly found a military genius in the person of **Oliver Cromwell**, a Puritan farmer from East England, who built a **new model army**

¹¹ The term **covenant** designates a contract or an agreement between God and individual Puritan churches.

highly disciplined and devoted to their commander, who was at the same time their spiritual leader.

Cromwell turned out to be not only a military genius but also a brilliant politician. When the King was taken prisoner, the MPs began to quarrel bitterly with one another. Cromwell's army marched to London and took control over the Parliament. The army removed by force from the Parliament those MPs who did not wish to have the king beheaded while the remaining Puritan MPs unscrupulously sentenced him to death.

In 1649 Britain became a republic called a **Commonwealth**, and in 1653 it was transformed into a **Protectorate** with Oliver Cromwell as its **Lord Protector**. His army first subdued the Scots who stood up for the king after his execution. Then Cromwell marched against the Irish to punish them for the support they gave to the king in 1641. It is estimated that the English killed about 6,000 Irish people¹² and these events became an heirloom of hatred for the Irish nation. Europe and English colonies as well as Cavaliers and Presbyterians (the Anglican Church) would not accept Cromwell's authority. But in just four years the English Navy under **Admiral Blake** defeated the French, the Spaniards and the Dutch and forced the colonies to give in to Cromwell. Scotland and Ireland were joined to England in legislative and economic union. These successes made England feared and respected abroad.

Yet Cromwell's republic was not entirely successful. Cromwell's military and imperial achievements simply cost too much. People were fed up with heavy taxes, and in spite of the sale of Crown and Episcopal lands, of the confiscation of half the land of Ireland and high fines put on his opponents, Cromwell was hopelessly indebted. **The Protectorate** was very unpopular and Cromwell feared to disband his costly army. Cromwellian rule of the sword incensed the country, and in truth it was an impossible situation. Cromwell, contrary to what might be expected of him, wholeheartedly believed in constitutional monarchy. He gave ample evidence of that, trying, soon before his death, to come to terms with Parliament that had never been able to agree with him earlier. He also managed to weed out the most radical elements in his army that had continually been working for another revolution.¹³ Gradually he started to give in to those of his advisors who wanted to revive the monarchy, and who saw in Cromwell the progenitor of a new dynasty. But Cromwell died and his son Richard turned out to be a failure as a leader. After 18 months following Cromwell's death in 1658 one of the moderate army commanders **General Monk** took initiative into his hands and called **Charles II** from exile. The acts and laws of Cromwell's government were repealed; the monarchy and the House of Stuart were restored.

Even though the Republic was abolished, Cromwell left an indelible mark on English religion and culture. Religious persecution was put down and different religious sects multiplied. Puritan work ethics and their all-out war on sin captured the imagination of the English people. But still Puritan rigor and strictness, which entailed closing of theaters, inns or putting an end to the celebration of Easter and Christmas, made the Puritans hated not less than the Laudian clergy that had oppressed the people two decades earlier.

In spite of all that political turmoil, **the Stuart era** was an important phase in England's progress towards the modern system of Parliamentary government, freedom of person

¹² The worst civilian massacres took place at Drogheda and Wexford.

¹³ The radicals in the army were called „Levellers’; they held very advanced opinions – they wanted the Parliament to be elective body with all men aged over twenty eligible for vote and they demanded religious freedom.

and speech, and good local administration. The House of Commons, bolstered by squires, lawyers and merchants, and presided over by eminent statesmen grew into the major governing body of a modern nation. Whereas the majority of the peoples on the continent were subjected to regal absolutism, the English were already free of feudalism. Contemporary French or German peasants were still serfs owing service to their lord and dues to their priest. Many of their contemporaries in England were freeholders who enjoyed parliamentary franchise in shire elections.

The social system that evolved in the 17th century laid the foundations for the institutions of the **British Empire** and the polity of the USA. The first English who immigrated to America came from the richest parts of England in the southeast, where the spirit of Common Law and the principle of self-government had been shaping the social reality for centuries. It is not surprising then, that upon arriving in the New World they wanted to transplant on the new soil those institutions and customs that had served them so well. They usually settled in compact communities called townships, which were self-governing and almost entirely self-sufficient.

The first waves of immigrants (under James I and Charles I) went to the Bermudas, the Caribbean (called West India) and to the colony of Virginia where the climate offered better conditions for agriculture. In **1620** the first group of Puritans who were later nicknamed **Pilgrim Fathers** established the **Plymouth Colony** on the north-eastern coast of America. They were small gentry and yeomen farmers driven away from their homes by the Laudian persecution. Their colony was destined to become the germ of **New England**, as all Puritan colonies were later collectively called. New England imposed in the course of time the law and language on the whole north-American continent.

In the North the climate was severe and the soil was thin and stony. Moreover it was covered with dense forests in which dangerous Indians prowled. Every acre of land to plough had to be wrested from nature and guarded against the Redskins. Half of the Pilgrim Fathers died during the first harsh winter; those who survived learnt how to build better houses and how to grow corn (they were aided by friendly Indians). Although they received help from wealthy Puritan lords, squires and London merchants, their life was extremely difficult, full of hardship and danger. But they were very sturdy and brave people whose perseverance was strengthened by their firm religious devotion and belief that their errand to the New World was a God-appointed mission.

Puritan colonies were large homogeneous communities thoroughly dedicated to a zealous religious life. There was no pretence at toleration and those who did not agree with Puritan ideas had to leave. Still Puritan colonies were far more democratic than those in the south, where the old aristocratic system compounded by slavery prevailed. Northern communities were free of slavery and consisted of free landowners most of whom – the **full church members** – had full political rights. In order to become a full member of the church, which was a prerequisite to receiving franchise, a person had to undergo the so-called **conversion**, that is a public confession of faith. It was believed that a false confession would lead to damnation, therefore few people found the courage to do it. Still the fully enfranchised members made a considerable part of New England's population, especially in comparison with other non-Puritan colonies.

When another host of Puritans, much more affluent, established another colony in **Massachusetts (1630)** the pace of colonization was significantly hastened. Massachusetts eventually became so big and strong that it swallowed the colony of Plymouth. **Boston**

was the capital of Massachusetts; it was a seaport with fine inlets and fishing areas. In a span of a century it became one of the most important centers of shipbuilding, thanks to the wood found in plenty in New England.

American colonies were dependent on their motherland because of some goods that the colonists could not produce themselves. But in political terms the colonies were self-reliant and the possibility that they would break away from England was strong from the start. The English colonies, contrary to similar enterprises by other nations, did not originate in acts of state, but of wealthy individuals or companies that wanted to make a profit by trading with far away lands. The relation of the colonies to the Crown was very tenuous, to English Parliament non-existent. The political unrest in 17th century England – the Civil War and the Cromwellian republic – annihilated for some years the authority of the Crown and gave the colonists time to nurse their independence. Cromwell, who was Puritan himself, established a good rapport with the colonies and respected their autonomy. Charles II brought the colonies under his control, but since the restoration entailed subjugation of Puritanism to the Anglican Church, naturally the intercourse between England and New England took a turn for the worse.

Charles II continued Cromwell's imperialist policy. In 1664 England captured from the Dutch **New Amsterdam**, which became **New York** and annexed the so-called **Middle Colonies** (to the south of New England) where a very miscellaneous population lived: the English, Dutch, Swedish, French and Scottish. All these nationalities, representing different brands of Christian religion (Anglican, Puritan, Calvinist, Roman Catholic, Quaker, Presbyterian), were united under the British flag on terms of absolute equality and with due respect for their customs and beliefs. Thus the incorporation of the Middle Colonies resulted in greater tolerance and religious freedom for all and Puritanism lost a lot of its early militancy.

The spirit of self-independence, the Puritan legacy, was fostered by the existence of **the frontier**, the part of the wilderness where pioneers had just penetrated. The frontiersmen were a hardy and robust population – resourceful, self-reliant and fiercely untrammelled. They were distrustful of any forms of training and authority, and totally ignorant of the manners of Europe. For them aristocratic Europe was just a remote abstraction.

The frontiersmen as well as Puritans were natural enemies of England, whereas the more civilized and conservative population living on the coast was more likely to identify with their European ancestors. But most of them also gradually came in line with the Puritans and frontiersmen as it was becoming perfectly clear that England considered the colonies' interests as secondary to her own. The colonies were valued as markets where raw materials could be obtained and finished goods sold. The colonies were expected to remain subservient and not to compete with the mother country in industry or trade. Such mercantile considerations impinged on the liberties of American colonists, who were very unpatriotic and did not want to pay to England either duties or taxes.

3: The Restoration and the First British Empire

The Restoration of the House of Stuart, that is the reestablishment of the monarchy with the return of Charles II, was put into effect by two people: **General Monk** who took control of the army and made it possible for the Parliament to be elected, and **Edward Hyde**, who later became **Earl of Clarendon** and Lord Chancellor. His moderation combined with the King's shrewdness prevented the Cavaliers from taking revenge on the Puritans. Only those Puritan leaders who signed the order to execute Charles I were sentenced to death; all others got away with impunity owing to the **Act of Indemnity and Oblivion**, cynically deciphered by the Cavaliers as an act of indemnity for the king's enemies and oblivion for the king's friends. The reason why the Cavaliers bore a grudge against the King was that in their opinion they were not properly rewarded for their loyalty to the House of Stuart. Many of them had lost their lands in the revolution, and whereas those lands that had been confiscated were returned to them, those which they had to sell in order to provide Charles I with money were irrevocably lost. Frequently these lands had been purchased by the Roundheads who could now become squires at the easy price of attending the restored Anglican Church.

Therefore, the Cavaliers resented the Roundheads who now sat with them in the benches of Parliament and even though the Roundheads were in the minority, their very presence in Parliament prompted in the Cavaliers the memory of personal wrongs and lost lands. The Cavaliers formed a party later named '**Tory**' (an Irish name for thief), which was strongly Anglican and which started the persecution of Puritan sects. The persecution of nonconformists (mostly Puritans but also Catholics) was more severe than the King and the Earl of Clarendon had intended. But the Tory Parliament was indefatigable in harassing free puritan churches through the acts which were collectively called the '**Clarendon Code**', even though Clarendon had nothing to do with them. The '**Clarendon Code**' was the revenge of the Cavaliers, now Tories, who wanted in this way to limit the influence of the Roundhead party. When the number of Roundheads in Parliament increased (they were elected in by-elections held whenever a member of Parliament died) they transformed into the '**Whig**' party (a pejorative name for cattle drivers), which consisted of Puritans and the men of the Age of Reason.

Therefore the restoration was associated with the suppression of the Puritan political system and the **Puritan way of life**. Charles II was the embodiment of quite new ideas – he was a pleasure-loving, carefree person whose court was an antithesis to Puritan customs and ideals. But even though Puritanism lost its political and social power, some of the habits it inculcated in the English people, such as family prayer, the study of the Bible, strict observance of Sunday as a holy day, remained unimpaired in the centuries to come. **The Church of England (Anglican Church)** and **the Free Church** (various non-conformist puritan sects) followed their own lines of development and were supported by MPs whose religious beliefs maneuvered them into one of the two major political parties. The Tories were '**High Churchmen**' and they consisted of Anglican clergy and their ardent lay supporters who inclined toward Laud's religion with its links with Roman Catholic worship. The Whigs were the '**Low Churchmen**' giving less importance to religious ceremonies and the authority of bishops and more importance to faith and the study of the

Bible. They had very liberal views and were tolerant, which made it possible for them to be friends of Puritan dissenters.¹⁴ The two parties, the Whigs and the Tories, became the basis of the contemporary two-party system in Great Britain.

The monarchy remedied many of the evils of the Cromwellian Republic. Cromwell's army was disbanded and those few units that remained, like **the Life Guards**, constitute the oldest regimental traditions of the British Army. However, Cromwell's military fleet was maintained and treated with special care by both the Crown and Parliament.

This was very wise because soon a new war broke with Holland, which had been competing with the English in mercantile enterprises all over the world. It was then that the British captured **New Amsterdam** turning it into **New York**. But they were not entirely successful as in recourse the Dutch managed to attack and destroy London. This catastrophe was compounded by **the Great Fire** which in 1666 obliterated a large part of London (later so impressively rebuilt by **Sir Christopher Wren**).¹⁵ In the general distress, public opinion rose against the king, allegedly more interested in his numerous love-affairs than in dealing with the plight of his people, so the king cynically made a scapegoat of his main advisor Earl of Clarendon who had to flee from the country for fear of his life.

Once freed of the Earl of Clarendon's influence, Charles proceeded to act with extreme folly. Charles was half-French on his mother side, and he had been brought up in France where he had been in exile. He was a great admirer of **Louis XIV**, the absolute ruler of France, and his brilliant statesmen and soldiers. Louis XIV was a great threat to both Catholic and Protestant Europe – Spain was very weak; Germany and Italy were divided; Austria fought with the Turks. There was no other country that could challenge France but Holland – a small Calvinist Republic.

Thus **Holland** became the target of French aggression, and Charles was in league with the French monarch. By going to war with the French against the Dutch, he hoped to achieve several objectives. First of all the King, who upon his restoration was put on short allowance by Parliament, desired to obtain more money and to be independent from the mercy of MPs. Secondly, he wanted to restore the Dutch monarchy in the person of his nephew **William of Orange** as vassal of France. Thirdly, he expected that Louis XIV would reward his help by providing him with money and soldiers to convert Britain back to the Catholic religion. The parliament, unaware of the king's last intention, initially gave its consent to the war, presuming that it was a continuation of the old contest for maritime supremacy between England and Holland. But when it became clear that the main objective of the war was depriving Holland of its independence, which was clearly at variance with the policy of the balance of power, Parliament withdrew its support, leaving the King without the money necessary for the successful conduct of the war.

James II, Charles's brother, who took the throne after his death, was a fanatical Romanist notorious for his dislike of Protestants whom he had persecuted as Charles's governor of Scotland. As king of England he fulfilled the people's worst fears on the score of religion. The Parliament's reaction to his ascent was panic – the fear of Catholic revival virtually turned Parliament into a Whig assembly. Catholics were again persecuted while

¹⁴ Latitudinarianism or latitudinarian movement is the term that is often used to describe this new drive towards religious toleration after the Restoration.

¹⁵ Another calamity that befell London was **the Plague (1665)** whose death toll was estimated at around 17,000 people.

Protestants and Puritans were plotting to remove James II from the throne. This sudden Protestant upheaval reminded the people of the hated Cromwellian republic, and once more the tables turned. After the dissolution of the Whig Parliament, the persecution of Puritans resumed with redoubled zeal. When the Whig plot against James II was discovered, the fact sealed the doom of the Whig leaders. Many of them were executed and even innocent people perished under the weight of false accusations.

In **June 1685** the Whigs organized an uprising under **the Duke of Monmouth**, Charles II's illegitimate son, who was a Protestant. The rebellion was cruelly quelled by **George Jeffreys**. He helped to uphold royal authority by harassing defendants and intimidating juries. He hanged and burned three hundred people and sent thousands more as slaves to America. James II's endorsement for Jeffreys's vicious actions and the king's efforts to rule the country by sword (he did not disband the army raised against the rebels) disgusted even the Tories who were in favor of the king's absolute power but not the king's tyranny. They were also against James's efforts to Romanize the country. In 1688 the majority of the nation were united in their wish that James would shortly die and his daughter **Mary**, married to William of Orange, would deliver the country from the dreadful situation. These hopes were shattered in June when James's son, the legitimate heir to the throne, was born. There was no chance of a peaceful solution of the problem, therefore a new plot was organized.

An invitation signed by Whig and Tory Chiefs was sent to **William of Orange and his wife Mary** to invade Britain and take the Crown. William of Orange, who had already proved himself to be a courageous commander and successful diplomat, and who victoriously resisted the French and the English army in the recent war in Holland, decided to take a chance in England. He used the army and navy of Holland to invade the island and chase James II out to France.¹⁶ This '**glorious revolution**' (1688–1689) as it was later named, was bloodless and had the popular support of the common people. Still there was something sinister about the fact that foreign intervention was necessary to liberate the English from James II's regime.

The glorious revolution was in fact nothing less than *coup d'état* which put Parliament above the King. It laid down the principle that the Crown derived its authority not from divine hereditary right but from the consent of Parliament. By making William king by choice not inheritance, Parliament created a precedent that made it clear that the king's authority was grounded in a contract with his subjects represented through the House of Commons. After the Revolution no monarch endeavored to govern contrary to the House of Commons and the long contest between the Crown and Parliament was ended. In 1689 **The Bill of Rights (Acts declaring the rights and liberties of subjects)** made Britain a **constitutional monarchy** in which the overall power over the state lies with Parliament, not with the monarch. Another act (1701) also prevented a Roman Catholic from becoming king or queen. It specified that after Mary's death, the Crown would pass to her sister **Ann** and if she also died childless it would go to a granddaughter of James I married into **the German House of Hanover**. These agreements were carried out, and they closed the period of civil wars and revolutions and opened an era of toleration and greater liberty

¹⁶ From then on the supporters of the deposed king James II and his descendants were called **Jacobites**. After the death of James II there were two **Jacobite rebellions** against the Hanoverian Monarchy, both of which failed. In 1715 James's son James Edward Stewart – **the Old Pretender** mounted an invasion of Scotland; in 1745 **Bonnie Prince Charlie – the Young Pretender** did likewise.

for the individual. In 1695 censorship of the press was repealed. When the Clarendon Code was also abolished, a thousand years of religious wars finally came to an end.

But France continued to threaten England. Louis XIV wanted to put James I back on the English throne and therefore war was inevitable. For the English the war had one more aim – to limit French power and curb French expansion. This aim was realized by the strategic genius of **John Churchill, Duke of Marlborough** (the antecedent of Winston Churchill) who won several important victories over the French. **The Treaty of Utrecht (1713)** ended the war and secured English maritime and commercial supremacy. By general consent, the year 1713 marks the beginning of English overseas expansion, of a long period of stability and prosperity for England which now was considered a leading European power.

When in 1714 Queen Ann died without an heir, the crown of England passed to **George I** (great grandson of James I) from **the House of Hanover**. George I was totally ignorant of English customs and could not even speak English. Since he received his political support from the Whigs (Tories wanted to put James II's son on the throne) he entrusted his prerogatives to the Whig leaders. The appointment of ministers, the patronage of the Crown in Church and state went from the King to the Whig oligarchs. Among them was **Sir Robert Walpole**, considered **Britain's first Prime Minister**. Walpole is credited with the development of **the Cabinet** form of government. The cabinet was (and still is) a group of ministers presided over by the Prime Minister. He is the chief of the party that won the election and the leading man in the House of Commons. For the twenty-one years of his ministry, Walpole worked out some of the basic principles underlying the work of government, like for example the principle of **collective responsibility** according to which the Cabinet acts unanimously, and even if some ministers do not agree with adopted policies, they can not admit that in public. Walpole drove out of his Cabinet all those colleagues who could not agree with him and thus created an efficient government, whose members were at the same time members of Parliament. They served as a link between the executive and the legislative power, which is still one of the most essential principles of modern British polity. Because of that close connection between the Cabinet and Parliament, and due to the fact that the Cabinet was dependent on the majority in the House of Commons, the Power of Commoners increased enormously. England was the only monarchy in Europe whose kings were not absolute rulers and whose citizens enjoyed the freedoms of speech, press and person.

These changes in political life would not have been possible without the revolution in thought which had taken place in the Stuart times. In the 17th century the independent study of the Bible led to the **proliferation of new non-conformist Churches**, such as **the Baptists** or **the Quakers**. At the same time a revolution in scientific thinking was taking place.¹⁷ **Francis Bacon** laid the foundations for experimental science by arguing that every scientific theory must be tested by means of experiment. **Experimentalism** developed in tandem with **rationalistic philosophy**, putting emphasis on the power of human reason in explaining the laws of the universe. **Isaac Newton** was a paragon of the new scientific approach, and his study of **gravity** made him the 'founding father' of modern physics. **David Hume** in the 18th century introduced the idea that people cannot be certain about anything that is not directly taken by their senses. The success of the Glorious Revolution

¹⁷ Britain's oldest and most prestigious scientific society – the **Royal Society** was founded in 1660 and was granted a royal charter two years later.

also resulted in a cluster of **new political ideas** about the nature and workings of government. Near the end of the 17th century **John Locke**, a Whig philosopher, preached that government should be based on the ‘**consent of the people**’ and that a Parliament that represents those people should have more power than the Crown. All these new ideas paved the way for the Enlightenment in the English literary and intellectual world.

In the 18th century **the upper class** reached its heyday as the generous patron of the arts, sciences and letters. The mansions and houses of the gentry were centers of intellectual life. The upper-class were the first European tourists and their worldliness resulted in bringing to England French literary and philosophic ideas and Italian standards of music and poetry. In the middle of 18th century **the Age of Reason** started to give way to **The Age of Sensibility**, putting stress on emotions rather than reason. Upper class literature continued to be rationalized and academic, but the common people were entertained by gothic stories, ballads and romantic tales. In the last decade of 18th century **Romanticism** was fully in bloom.

The 18th century was also the time when a solid basis was provided for the development of the Industrial Revolution. The **roads** built in Roman times were improved and bridges were reconstructed. The first **canals** were built to connect great rivers – they were used as a cheap method of transport to carry timber, coal and other materials. Better farming kept people well fed. Various churches competed with one another in the sphere of education. They opened free schools to teach reading, writing and religion. The **Methodist Church**, the largest of the Protestant Free Churches, was particularly dedicated to educational work.

The religious toleration of the Hanoverian era and the government’s encouragement for private enterprise made it possible for the English to devote all their energies to business-building. Foreign Protestant refugees (French Huguenots, for example) well trained in different crafts and trading swarmed into England, making it the predestined cradle of the Industrial Revolution.

England’s political leaders were eager to foster the growth of industries and to enlarge the wealth of the trading Empire, which was usually accomplished at the expense of the French. In **India** the French were plotting to oust the powerful East India Company by means of political alliances with local princes, just liberated from the influence of the defunct Mogul Empire. In **America** the French had established the colony of **Quebec** and through the St. Lawrence River, which provided the only way into the interior of the continent, they controlled the territory south of the Lakes: the Ohio Valley and the Mississippi basin. They planted military posts in crucial strategic points to stop the westward expansion of British coastal colonies. Their aim was to appropriate the land to the west of the posts to the French colonial Empire.

The conflict between the French and the English interests frequently led to unofficial wars, which as a rule, were turning to the advantage of Britain. It was otherwise in America where the English had real difficulty in coming to terms with the colonists who were unwilling to take up arms and fight for new lands. The colonies were competing with one another, and were frequently torn apart by interior conflicts between the governor representing the interest of the Crown and local assemblies representing the interests of colonists. French Quebec, which was a transplantation of French peasants under the leadership of priests and feudal lords, was a paragon of a highly disciplined and obedient colony. English settlers, on the other hand, had enjoyed considerable freedom from royal

authority due to the negligence of England's political leaders. What is more, the French had in Quebec fine royal regiments and commanders, and were on good terms with the Indians whom they treated well.

When Robert Walpole's government ran out of steam, **William Pitt 'the Elder'**, later **Lord Chatham**, emerged as the leader of the Whig party. Pitt, often called '**the Great Commoner**,' was known for his sympathies with the Middle Classes and his contempt for the ruling Whig oligarchy, given to corruption. He restored the public faith in Parliament and proved to be a great diplomat and military leader.

The Seven Years' War (1756–1763) with France raged both in Europe¹⁸ and America. Since the French were preoccupied also with their war against Prussia they were in no position to defend their overseas empire. Consequently, the British under the command of **James Wolfe**, took control of much of Canada (**Quebec 1759, Montreal 1760**) and opened the unexplored West to English settlement. Many French possessions in West Africa and West India were seized and the East India Company's grip over the Indian peninsula was tightened. **Robert Clive**, who was the commander of the British army in India, became the first governor of Bengal. In this way a great Empire was founded in the east with India as the '**jewel in the Crown**'.

When **George III** succeeded to the throne, he inherited this so-called **First British Empire**. It was the British heyday – Britain was stronger than ever before or since. The English were excessively proud and blind to the fact that many Britons who went to the colonies to forge fortunes were totally indifferent to the customs and interests of indigenous peoples, who often were treated as second-rate citizens in their own countries. Gradually an anti-British sentiment began to rise in the colonies which eventually turned them against the mother country.

George III is the King responsible for the **disruption of the First British Empire**. Contrary to his predecessors, George I and George II, George III was not content to be merely a figurehead and desired to take a more active part in forming British domestic and foreign policy. The corruption of the Parliament (bribed by the King himself) and the weakness of the Tory party, contemptuously called the 'king's friends', made it possible for George III to reduce the Cabinet to a group of king's servants. The Whig's rules were abhorred by the people, and Pitt's influence was abating due to his illness and his inability to establish a rapport with the King and his own colleagues. The King reciprocated Pitt's resentment, as he habitually hated everybody not fit to be a pensioner of his bounty. He called Pitt 'a trumpet of sedition' (subversion), such was the King's appreciation of the man who created the First British Empire that he himself failed to keep.

But, in fairness to the King, **the loss of the American colonies** was perhaps unavoidable. As soon as the French threat was removed from the American continent, the colonies quickly forgot about their gratitude to the mother country. When Great Britain tried to raise taxes in the colonies to build an army for the colonies' protection, the proposal was encountered with a stiff opposition. Even though the taxes were small and the profits from them were negligible, the colonists objected on principle claiming that the British parliament, in which they were not represented, had no right to tax them. Each of the colonies had their own assembly, and each of them was increasingly more aware of the fact that the Empire represented interests of foreign merchants, not their own.

¹⁸ The Seven Years' War broke out due to Austria's wish to recover Silesia from Prussia.

The main reason of the disruption of the First British Empire was the absence of any coherent **colonial policy**. The successive Whig governments persisted in the disastrous belief that the Empire was a single state, whereas in fact it was a federation of loosely connected states. Robert Walpole, once asked why he did not do more to enforce British laws in the American colonies, said: 'Let the sleeping dogs lie.' He knew how tentative was the British control over the American colonies and he thought it was better to leave them alone. But George III did not share this opinion, and he attempted to rule the colonies autocratically. On one side of the barricade, there was the stubborn, unbending King, on the other, the equally uncompromising Americans for whom the separation from England gradually started to appear as a good in itself.

Additionally there were profound difficulties in communication with the colonies. The emigration from Britain stopped after 1640 and maintaining connections with the mother country was very hard – the journey across the ocean took from six to eight weeks. The British mixed with Americans in the colonies like vinegar with oil – the British society in general as well as the Americans living on the coast especially in the South were still predominantly aristocratic societies characterized by acute disproportions in the distribution of wealth. The pioneers and farmers who lived in the west, near the Frontier, were, on the other hand, independent and democratic – the prerequisite to vote was the possession of land, and since land was in abundance every white male was enfranchised. The pioneers were simple, raw people who cherished their civic liberties and did not care about England.

After the famous **Boston Tea Party**,¹⁹ the relations between Great Britain and the American colonies quickly deteriorated. Great Britain closed the port of Boston, cancelled the charter of Massachusetts and threatened to take American leaders to England to be put on trial as traitors. All thirteen colonies rose to Massachusetts's support and in just two years' time, **the American Revolution** started and ended in the birth of a new nation. It must be remembered, however, that the American Revolution was in fact a civil war because Americans fought on both sides. The '**Sons of Liberty**', led by the American lawyer **Samuel Adams**, were radicals who did not hesitate to use force to sway the unconvinced to support the Revolution. **The Loyalists** were slow to act and eager to seek compromise, but their hopes for a peaceful solution to the conflict were repeatedly dashed by the unbending king who himself favored a military confrontation. The British people supported the king but did not want to enlist to fight in America, and the King had to hire German mercenaries, which further incensed the colonists. Yet the Sons of Liberty would have never defeated the well-trained British army if it had not been for the military genius of **George Washington** who turned the mob given into his command into a relatively disciplined army.

The French joined the war on the American side hoping to take revenge for the British take-over of Quebec. The French accession to the war precipitated the dismemberment of the British Empire, but at the same time cut the ground from under the House of Bourbon. It turned out that the success of the American Revolution, trumpeted in France by those who had taken part in it, inspired the French to start their own struggle against their feudal monarchy. From that historical turmoil two world powers were destined to emerge: Great Britain and her new Empire and **the United States of America**, stretching from the Atlantic to the Pacific Ocean.

¹⁹ Boston Tea Party – on **16 December 1773** in order to protest against the British tax on tea, a group of Americans dressed as Indians went to the Boston Port where they threw 342 large boxes of tea into the water.

GB – The 19th century

1: The Napoleonic Wars, the Industrial Revolution and the Beginning of the Second British Empire

The war in America lasted from 1775 to 1783, and it ended as a war of Britain against half of the world. The British defended their Empire against France, Spain, Russia, Prussia, Holland and Scandinavian powers. Great Britain held on to Canada and India, but the recovery of the 13 colonies that had become the United States of America was impossible.

One good thing that resulted from the disruption of the First British Empire was putting an end to the system of personal government by the King. The House of Commons was unanimous in the belief that the king's influence on politics should be diminished. From those days onwards, England has always been ruled by a Cabinet responsible not to the king, but to the House of Commons.

Another good thing that came out of the American Revolution was people's renewed interest in politics and parliamentary proceedings. The two so-far dormant parties, the Whigs and the Tories, were revived, and each of them seriously intended to reform the country and eradicate rampant corruption. The Whigs found leaders in **Edmund Burke**¹ and **Charles James Fox**; the Tories entrusted their leadership to **William Pitt 'the Younger'**, who was the son of William Pitt 'the Elder', Earl of Chatham. His countrymen also decided to put their trust in him, and he became Prime Minister, who, with general public support, rebuilt the Empire, improved the British colonial policy, and reconstituted the finances of the country.

There is, however, another less sunny side to William Pitt's great ministry which is connected with the repressive spirit of English political life in times following the bloody

¹ Edmund Burke was known as a radical politician who during the American revolution supported the colonists (together with another radical Tom Paine).

French Revolution (1789–1799). Initially the English regarded the news about the massacres in France with studied indifference, and only gradually did they become aware of the fact that the French revolution might imbue the English proletariat with similar subversive ideas. The sense of danger was further intensified when the new French Republic started to spread through Europe promises to give armed assistance to the people of any country willing to topple their old governments. In England there were many impoverished people who, as the ruling classes quickly realized, had many reasons for being discontent with their lot. When some radicals from the Whig party started advocating the implementation of reforms in order to alleviate the plight of the working people, the first victims of the Industrial Revolution, the conservative politicians panicked, fearing that talks of reform were nothing less than the beginning of an English revolution. The Reformers were silenced and those who dared to brandish the provocative phraseology borrowed from France were even persecuted. Pitt's government did its best to crush the working classes by making trade unionism illegal. The fear of '**Jacobinism**' (sympathy with French revolutionaries) almost annihilated all political life in Great Britain. All those who disagreed with Pitt's oppressive policies retired to their country houses, where alone criticism was permitted.

Among them were mostly Whig politicians, those who did not join the ranks of the supporters of Pitt's Tory Ministry. Fox's party remained in isolation for 30 years to come. The party was against the Tory enthusiasm for the war against the French, but at the same time it also cut itself from the lower class radicalism of Tom Paine² and William Cobbet. This decimated Whig party became the nucleus of the liberal party of the 19th century. The Whig party, and Charles James Fox in particular, were the keepers of reformatory traditions. With the help of another progressive politician, **William Wilberforce**, Pitt won the campaign to stop the **slave trade** and make slavery illegal in the British Empire. In 1807 slave trade became illegal; in 1833 slavery was abolished; Parliament paid £ 20 million to buy freedom for all the slaves in the Empire.

William Pitt was also against slavery but his energies were devoted to leading Britain through the war with Napoleon Bonaparte, which was one of the most terrible ordeals in all of British history.³ In 1793 when the French army seized Holland and Belgium, the considerations connected with the Balance of Power, plus the danger that the French army posed for English shores, prompted the British government to make war on France. The British Navy fought with the French at sea while the powers of central Europe fought Napoleon on land. Needless to say, European powers were not very successful; one by one they were defeated and forced into alliance with France.

The Napoleonic wars (1802–1815) were the first wars of the modern type. While in the past the wars were waged to uphold trade routes to wrest from rivals the control of new markets, in the Napoleonic wars commercial struggle itself became the most formidable weapon of war. Both Britain and France tried to put into effect a **blockade** of each other's

² After the French Revolution, Tom Paine wrote a book – *The Rights of Man* – defending the rights and liberties of working classes against monarchs and oligarchs. Charged with treason he had to flee to France to save his life.

³ Five times in history Great Britain fought an all-out war for self-preservation: against Philip of Spain (under Queen Elisabeth); against France of Louis XIV (under William of Orange and Mary); against Napoleon Bonaparte and Jacobins (under George III); against the German regime in 1914 (World War I); and Hitler (World War II).

ports in an effort to starve the adversary to death. This strategy proved to be a very effective war operation, which was repeated during all subsequent European wars. Unfortunately blockades disrupted the economy of the whole world, and the hostilities between nations quickly escalated, turning local conflicts into global wars.

The Napoleonic wars were exceptional for one more reason. The French army was the first one in history to open military and civil careers to people with talent but without the distinction of birth. In other words, even ordinary people who turned out to be brilliant leaders could obtain high positions in the army and the government. Consequently, the French army, based on patriotic zeal and ambition and the commitment of ordinary people, could not be matched by any other military organization in Europe. All other European armies consisted of serfs or mercenaries, marched to war by the nobles.

Therefore in the beginning the news from the war was all bad. Then **Admiral Horatio Nelson** destroyed a part of the French fleet near Egypt and gained control of the Mediterranean Sea, which turned out to be a watershed in the conduct of the war. In 1805 he completed his victory by destroying the rest of the French Navy in the famous **battle of Trafalgar** in which he also died.⁴

The same year as Trafalgar (1805), the British sent an army to Portugal which was attacked by Napoleon. Britain was bound by a treaty to come to Portugal's aid. The task was assigned to **the Duke of Wellington, the Iron Duke**, who had fought in India and proved himself a skillful commander. He fought with Napoleon's army both in Portugal and Spain, which had also been incorporated into Bonaparte's Empire.

At that time Bonaparte and Czar Alexander were the sole rulers of the entire European continent. The warfare of starvation reached its height, which was difficult for Russia and the United States, two countries that so far remained neutral. In 1812 Russia was turning against Napoleon by violating the ban on trade with Great Britain, whereas the US government decided to go to war with Great Britain, whose navy it chiefly blamed for hampering American trade. This was a heavy blow to Great Britain, whose population had already greatly suffered as a result of the blockades. This new adversity also increased the threat of rebellion of the English proletariat, which Napoleon had hoped to incite.

Indeed the working classes were most affected by the war as they paid the biggest part of the war taxes. In Jane Austin's novels portraying the life of the gentry at the time of the Napoleonic wars, the wars were hardly mentioned, and anyway they were secondary to the problems of social life. Thackeray's novels, for example *Vanity Fair*, show, on the other hand, the problems faced by the middle classes, more affected by sudden openings and closings of the world markets, and the rises and falls of war prices. The predicaments of the middle classes and the poverty of the working people did not mean much to the thriving upper classes. The Iron Duke's remarks about the soldiers who won his battles as the scum of the Earth, enlisted for drink, show the scornful attitude of the nobility towards the lower classes. Soldiers and sailors were often flogged, while the workers and their families suffered from starvation and were persecuted.

After several victories in Spain, Wellington invaded France, while Russia, Prussia and Austria attacked Napoleon in central Europe. Weakened by his abortive invasion on Russia,

⁴ Admiral Nelson is remembered as one of the best commanders in British military history. The others are the Duke of Marlborough, who fought with the French under William of Orange and Queen Anne and the Duke of Wellington – the 'Iron Duke' who also fought with the French.

Napoleon surrendered in 1814. He was taken to the island of Elba, off the Italian coast, but the following year he escaped and assembled another army. Finally in 1815 he was defeated in the **battle of Waterloo** (in Belgium) by English and Prussian forces under the command of the Duke of Wellington.

This victory cast Great Britain in the position of a major European power, which together with Czar Alexander, the other chief winner, was able to draw the settlements of the **Treaty of Vienna (1815)**. In France the House of Bourbon was restored, and the new monarchy received back from Great Britain most of its overseas possessions captured by the British during the war. This settlement put an end to the long series of French-English wars that had been waged regularly since the time of the Norman Conquest in 1066. But the Treaty had also some serious faults. The national ambitions of Polish, German and Italian people were crushed to the ground by Russia, Prussia and Austria. Eventually their despotism led to the outbreak of World War I.

When the war with Napoleon was still raging Great Britain had to solve a number of **imperial problems**. The first of these problems was connected with **Ireland**, where the exclusion of Catholics from political life began to breed evil consequences. When in 1690 William of Orange chased James II out of England, Catholics in England, Ireland and Scotland were pushed to the margins of national life. In Ireland they were also excluded from the Parliament that sat in Dublin, and they could not vote in parliamentary elections. The Catholics were not allowed to hold public offices, go to university or join the army or navy – they were completely ostracized. In the country where the majority of people were ardent Catholics, such repressive measures aroused a most virulent hatred. It is not surprising that the Irish Catholics put their hopes on Napoleon, who had promised them to set up a Celtic Republic. In 1798 an uprising broke out under the leadership of the **United Irish Movement**. The rebellion was cruelly put down by the British army and Irish loyalists, organized in the so-called **Orange lodges** (later **Orange Order**).⁵ The next generations of militant Irish nationalists made sure that the memory of 1798 remained alive in every Irish cottage. In this situation, in 1801 William Pitt decided to close the parliament in Dublin and unite Ireland with Britain. The act, however, did not remove the real reason for the Irish rebellion, as Roman Catholics were still forbidden to sit in the United Parliament of Great Britain and Ireland.

Scotland was similarly mistreated by the English. Two **Jacobite revolts**⁶ (attempts to put the Stuarts back on the English throne in 1715 and 1745) were cruelly quelled by the British army. Many Highland chiefs and clansmen who battled for the Stuart cause paid for their loyalty with the loss of life. The survivors lost their property and were sent to America. A law was passed forbidding Scots to wear their kilt (traditional skirt with tartan – a pattern that was different for every clan) and play the bagpipe.

The **Treaty of Paris in 1783** secured the British control of **Canada**. In the aftermath of the American Revolution, loyalist refugees streamed into Canada and settled mostly in the North. In consequence, the tension between the French-speaking and English-speaking population started to surface. The French were distrustful of English institutions and

⁵ The name Orange comes from William of Orange. Orange men march through the streets of Ulster towns every year on July 12 to celebrate the Victory of Protestant king William of Orange over Catholic James II.

⁶ Jacobite – Jacobus in Latin – the Latin name of James (II).

feared English heretics. An open conflict was averted by Pitt, who divided Canada into **Upper Canada** with a British population and institutions and **Lower Canada** containing a French population. In this way the French population reconciled themselves to their place in the British Empire.

Australia was first sighted by Portuguese and Spanish navigators in the 15th century. It was explored in the 17th century by the Dutch. Then in 1770 the land was claimed by **Captain James Cook**. The first settlement there was made not with a view to founding the Empire but as a new place to deport convicts, previously sent to Georgia, now belonging to the US. But gradually wool production started to develop in Australia, and the export of wool provided the cornerstone on which a stable economic system was founded. It created a new class of politically powerful and capitalistic large-landholding **squatters**.

William Pitt 'the Younger' established direct parliamentary control over the **East India Company**, which by that time had acquired a territorial empire in India. Although the governor of India was an autocrat, he was subject to the ultimate control of the Home Government. The plunder, which had not been infrequent in the earlier times, was stopped, and the activities of the company were transformed from those of a merchant to those of a governor. A system of taxation was imposed and administrative work began. Roads, hospitals and reservoirs of water were built.

Therefore in the early part of the 19th century Great Britain was an unquestionable leader in colonization and commerce. The rapid development of the Second British Empire could be only matched by the advance of Americans towards the Pacific Ocean. Pushing the Frontier westward and nation building was for Americans a full-time job, which prevented Americans from competing with the British in other parts of the world.

Nineteenth century Britain was also the champion of the **Industrial Revolution**, which accelerated some of the economic and social changes that had been taking part in Britain for some time. In the reign of George III, the population of Britain doubled, but many lost their land through enclosures⁷ and had to look for new work. Their forefathers, who had lived on the land, had been able to produce almost everything they needed. But this new landless proletariat had to buy food, clothes and everything else. They came flooding into towns in search for a better life, and eventually they became also the recipients of many commodities they themselves manufactured.

Lancashire was the centre of the cotton trade and Liverpool was the port from which cotton was dispatched. In the West Midland shires, called **the Black Country**, were the centers of production of the new fuel – coal, which replaced wood in the iron industry. The Northwestern part of England was where the new industrial districts were situated.

The removal of industries into new urban areas caused profound changes in the life of villagers. The introduction of big industrial machines made it necessary to carry out production in factories, and thus the country became again purely agricultural. During the Napoleonic wars when the blockade made it virtually impossible to import any food, new methods of scientific farming, combined with the great acreage of land under plough (due to enclosures), resulted in a new unprecedented level of productivity that added to the prosperity of landlords and big tenant farmers.

⁷Enclosures – common fields belonging to the whole village, where every villager had his own strip of land, and wastes were brought into cultivation by landlords and farmers.

But the interests of the peasants were totally disregarded. Deprived of their strip of land in the common field and their crafts, the peasants led a miserable life. The two parties, Whigs and Tories, held different opinions on many things but not on the working classes – both parties were aristocratic and represented the interests of their class alone. The Houses of Parliament were closed to anybody who was not a considerable landowner. Even Justices of the Peace were from ‘great landed’ families. Therefore nobody wished to take up the cudgels in defense of the poor. The government could not cope with the situation and started giving allowances to the poor to keep them alive. Establishing a minimal wage would have solved the problem. Instead the poor were kept on a ‘dole’, while the employers kept wages down, and the system killed any initiative among the village proletariat, who made no attempt to alleviate their poverty.

Naturally there were many people who were discontent, and for whom a revolution seemed to be a viable option. The danger was averted largely owing to the new religious movement called **Methodism**, launched by **John Wesley**. In terms of theology, Methodism differed very little from the evangelical wing of the Church of England from which it had emerged. In social terms, however, Methodism brought about a real revolution. The Methodist preachers went from one village to another, preaching in the open air and attracting masses of poor people, who usually did not go to church. Methodism drew ordinary people in closer, more personal contact with God and taught them to be temperate, thrifty and hard working. It persuaded people to accept much social injustice by attracting their attention to religious revival, and therefore some historians have argued that Methodism prevented revolution in Britain during the revolutionary decades 1789–1848.⁸ In the 19th century Methodism grew to be one of the largest non-conformist churches and was frequently criticized for being a kind of muzzle for the working classes and a useful teacher of work-discipline for Victorian employers. It was put down as a religion that encouraged pessimism, repression, guilt feelings, and psychic inhibitions.

As the wealth of the country was increasing, the gap between the standard of living of the rich and the poor was growing ever wider. The middle class built great mansions, whose grandeur sometimes surpassed the residences of the gentry. The landed gentry elaborated their manor houses. Towns and cities grew with astonishing rapidity. London was not only the biggest city in Great Britain but also in the entire world.

Jerry-building was one of the evils of the Industrial Revolution. There was no attempt at city planning, and the housing built for the working classes was down at-heel and ugly. Jerry-building was one of the most tangible consequences of the policy adopted by subsequent governments called **Lesser-Faire**, which was based on a maximum freedom for individuals and businesses. There was no control over business and no regulation of the economy. It was believed that the economy could regulate itself, and the lower the degree of government intervention, the better was the operation of market forces.

The numerous social problems that the Industrial Revolution created made it soon clear that the system of government and state policy must be readjusted. But the Tory government from 1815 to 1822 was unwilling to implement reforms and to adapt to the new social facts created by the Industrial Revolution. The suppression of the proletariat reached its peak in the **Manchester Massacre of 1819** when a mass meeting of cotton operatives

⁸ The Napoleonic wars were also a factor in preventing a revolution – they turned the nation’s thoughts from a revolution to the need of defeating the French.

was cruelly dispersed by the cavalry (11 people were killed, a hundred were wounded). Public opinion, after being solidly Tory since the French Revolution, now began to turn against the Tory government.

Britain's Prime Minister at that time was the victor of Waterloo, the Duke of Wellington, the only general who ever became a Prime Minister of Britain. He was a High Tory who showed the same disregard for the workers as he had shown for his soldiers.

After 1815 when Britain no longer sold clothes, guns and other supplies to the allies, British business declined. There were considerable lay-offs and the situation was aggravated by the return of 300,000 veterans who were looking for jobs. The cost of bread rose quickly because the government introduced **the Corn Law**, making the import of corn unprofitable in order to protect big landowners who grew corn at home. The prices of other commodities doubled, whereas wages remained the same.

What brought the Duke of Wellington down, however, was not the growing unpopularity of his government but his surrender to **the Catholic Emancipation**. **The Test Act** passed in 1673 prevented Roman Catholics and Non-Conformists from holding state or municipal offices, from being a Member of Parliament, from studying at a university, and from joining the military forces. This act was repealed in 1828 in spite of the government's opposition. A year later Catholics scored still a more remarkable victory. The Irish organized **the Catholic Association** led by lawyer **Daniel O'Connell** and wrung from the Iron Duke the right for Catholics to become MPs. At that time the Irish suffered from starvation and posed a danger for the British, whose army had been radically reduced. This explains why the victor of Waterloo was helpless when faced with the determination of the hungry Irish peasants⁹.

In 1830 the time had come when the whole society was sick and tired of living under the constant threat of social uprising, and the talk about reforms became widespread. Even the middle classes believed that the situation in the country was critical and explosive and that social uprising could no longer be avoided only by means of mere repression.

In 1830 the Duke of Wellington fell from power and **Lord Grey**, the leader of the Whig party, became the next Prime Minister. Lord Grey in this youth worked with Fox and helped to transform the Whigs into **the Liberal Party**. Lord Grey represented the middle class, which, owing to the Industrial Revolution, was much more important than the aristocracy. The Liberals placed themselves between the Tories, who believed that Parliament should represent the property owners, and the radicals, who believed that Parliament should represent all people. Lord Grey's cabinet was aristocratic but nevertheless it was made of the most advanced men in Parliament, and the first reforms it implemented were a profound shock to the Tories who expected much milder propositions.

The Reform Act (1832) was almost a political revolution or a 'new constitution,' as the baffled Tories complained. It completely changed the electoral system of Great Britain by giving more votes to new densely populated areas in the country (also Scotland and Ireland). Before the reform, the country had been divided into boroughs, districts from which representatives to Parliament were summoned. This old system did not pay heed to the recent changes in the distribution of population brought about by the Industrial

⁹ The worst ordeal for the Irish was to come. In 1845, 1846 and 1847 there were disastrous potato plagues (potato was the staple food for the poor). One million people had to emigrate to avoid starvation; between 1841 and 1920 another 5 million went (mostly to the USA).

Revolution. Britain at the beginning of the 19th century was no longer a purely agricultural nation. Most of the population lived in big cities: Birmingham, Sheffield, Manchester, Glasgow, Leeds or London. Northwest England, the north Midlands, the area around Glasgow and south Wales were the new industrial districts with the biggest concentration of population. The representation in the House of Commons had not recognized that recent population movement, and therefore, for example, a city like Manchester had no representatives in the House of Commons, whereas a small county from the southeast of England could have 44 representatives.¹⁰ The Reform Act gave votes to the big industrial cities and to Ireland and Scotland, but it did not introduce representation in proportion to population and it did not enfranchise the working class. However, in spite of its shortcomings, it was an important step on Britain's way to full democracy and an acknowledgement of the fact that Britain had become predominantly an urban society.

The Act was fiercely resisted by the House of Lords, and it was only after Lord Grey handed in his resignation and the big towns started to prepare for revolution in a stern belief that Wellington was coming back, that Grey was brought back in triumph and the Bill was passed.

The Reform Act was followed by the **Municipal Corporation Act (1835)**, which reformed the local government and gave the ratepayer the right to vote for new Municipalities (the country districts were still ruled by JPs until the establishment of the **County Councils in 1888**). The Municipal Corporation Act put local authorities under public control, but at the same time it equipped them with many powers that were expanded in the course of time. Now local authorities in Great Britain were in charge of education, public transport, the supplies of electricity and water; they were employers of labor. In 1833, two important acts were passed. The **Factory Act** fixed limits for the working hours of children and young people and introduced factory inspection to enforce the Act; the **Slavery Abolition Act** made all slaves in the Empire free.

In 1834 Grey resigned because his party had no further program for relief of the still acute economic crisis. The next ministry was formed by the Tories whose leader **Sir Robert Peel** had a better understanding of commerce and finance. Peel revived the income tax, and with the revenue he obtained, he was able to reduce duties and thus prices on many articles. This improved a little the situation of the impoverished people in the country. However, still more radical measures were required. The stumbling block was the Corn Law, which made the prices of food still too high. In 1846 the **Corn Law** was repealed to save the Irish from dying from starvation by the tens of thousands. The repeal broke the conservative party and caused Peel's downfall. Sir Robert Peel is still remembered as a great politician who sacrificed his own career for the sake of ordinary people. He is also commemorated as the father of the **Police** (civilian Police were established in 1829¹¹), and this is why policemen were often called 'Bobby' or 'Peel'.

¹⁰ **Rotten boroughs** were the name given to those constituencies where very few people were entitled to vote.

¹¹ In 1829 Peel was Home Secretary.

2: The Second British Empire and Social Reforms

When the Napoleonic wars came to an end, Britain and her new Empire flourished. The defeat of Napoleon gave Britain a strong position in European politics, whereas the Industrial Revolution, of which Britain was unquestionable champion, secured British mercantile supremacy in the world. **The Second British Empire** grew from strength to strength through the acquisition of new territories and new resources, both human and natural, and owing to the development of commerce. By the end of the century Britain produced more than any other country of the world, becoming the manufacturing center for the less developed countries (**'the workshop of the world'**). The British Navy, whose ships were scattered all over the world, protected the overseas trade.

Therefore, in **foreign politics** Britain sought to achieve two related objectives. The first one as always was the Balance of Power; the second was **Free Trade Policy**. The adoption of a Free Trade policy entailed the abolition of all custom duties and establishment of a free market. Another corollary of this policy was breaking down the monopoly of the British in trade with all their colonies, whose governments from then on could decide which countries to trade with and on what terms. In this way other countries in the world were not shut out from trading with such a large part of the world that came to be included in the Second British Empire. This improved the relations between Britain and her colonies, whose interests were no longer treated as secondary to Great Britain's, and helped to avoid crises with other countries, which were given a fair chance of competing with Britain. The British, with their industrial and mercantile superiority, were none the worse in this competition. It was an era of good feeling for the British, who used their Empire and their superior trading position to control a large part of the world.¹²

Thus even though after the loss of the American colonies the idea of founding new colonies was rather unpopular, new British colonies sprung up here and there, spawned by political rather than commercial considerations. Finally, there was yet another reason for the interest in establishing new colonies. In the 19th century Britain was overpopulated – there was an increase in the population whose large part was unemployed because scientific agriculture reduced the demand for farm workers. There were many people in the country who were unemployed, and the young industries were not ready to take them. Thus the conditions at home favored emigration and many politicians saw in the colonies the most obvious solution to the problem of overpopulation and unemployment. A constant stream of emigrants poured out of the British Isles to Canada, Australia and New Zealand.

After 1815 Scots and Irish flocked to **Canada**. In the 1830s and 1840s tens of thousands of immigrants arrived. These huge influxes of population exacerbated the tensions be-

¹² To maintain this control, to protect her routes and her areas of interests Britain occasionally waged wars with her rivals and took more land to stop their advance. From 1839 to 1842 the British engaged in a **war in Afghanistan** to stop Russian southward expansion. In 1854 Britain supported Turkey against Russia (**Crimean war**) fearing that Russia might overtake Turkish Balkan territories, reach Mediterranean and threaten the routes to India. In 1839 the British fought in the so-called **Opium Wars** in order to sell in China opium brought from India.

tween the French-speaking and English-speaking populations of Canada and gave rise to **two rebellions** in 1837 and 1838. Consequently **Lord Durham**, who was sent to Canada as Governor-General advocated one self-government for Canada, so-far divided into the Lower Province and the Upper Province. In the Lower Province the French were in the majority; however, in the whole colony the British, not the French, were the majority and therefore setting up one assembly in practice meant putting executive power in British hands. This plan of swamping the French-speaking population to force it to assimilate was not altogether successful, as **Quebec** separatism remained a strong factor in Canadian political life.¹³

Australia, like Canada, was a federation of a number of separate colonies. In the mid 19th century these colonies were self-governing entities, and it was not until the end of the 19th century that they were linked into one economic unit by a railway system. Political union came soon after. Following a series of meetings in the 1890s, six Australian colonies decided to become a federation called **the Commonwealth of Australia** inaugurated on January 1, 1901. Australia adopted a written constitution, based on that of the USA. One of the Commonwealth government's first acts was the introduction of the so-called '**White Australia policy**', which excluded all colored nations from the continent with the exception of a few Aboriginal survivors living in the central desert areas of the continent.

New Zealand, on the other hand, has always been more open to other races. **The Maoris**, the indigenous people of the two islands of New Zealand, suffered the same fate as Indians of North America and Aborigines. Before the coming of Europeans, they had lived in mutually hostile tribes, their lifespan had been little more than 30 years, and they had practiced cannibalism. The contact with whites¹⁴ brought disease to which the Maoris were extremely vulnerable, and the acquisition of guns made it possible for them to exterminate one another. The decline in the native population went in tandem with an increase of the influx of Europeans, who, unable to solve by themselves their conflicts over the land, demanded British protection. In 1841 the colony was established, and it followed the same path of development as Australia (1852 – a federal constitution, 1856 – representative government).

The history of **South Africa** was in some respects similar to that of Canada and Australia. Like Australia, South Africa was a federation of large and isolated communities, gradually connected by an expanding railway system. As in Canada, the process of colonization and establishment of self-government suffered several setbacks due to the presence of another European nation (the Dutch settlers) that had settled there before the coming of the English. However, there were also some considerable differences between Canada and Australia on one hand and South Africa on the other. In Canada the white population was a majority into which the Indians assimilated. In Australia, the government's policy closed the continent to the immigration of colored populations, thus also making the whites the majority. But in South Africa, the white population was in the minority.

The first stage of British South African history dates back to the Napoleonic wars when the British seized from the Dutch the Cape of Good Hope to protect Britain's trade routes to the Far East. **The Boers**, that is the Dutch settlers, were not enthusiastic about British rule, and the influx of the British population into the colony increased the tensions be-

¹³ In a 1995 referendum, Quebec still voted for separation.

¹⁴ The first Christian mission was founded in 1814.

tween the Dutch and the English populations, raising questions concerning language, law and customs. Many Boers migrated eastward and northward to found the self-governing republics of **Transvaal** and the **Orange Free State**. In 1868 diamonds were discovered in the Cape Colony, and in the 1880s gold was found in Transvaal. But the exploitation of resources was heavily dependent on outside capital, which gave the British an excuse to intervene, and which finally led to two wars (1880–1881, 1899–1902).¹⁵

At the same time, **Cecil Rhodes**, the owner of a chartered company **Rhodes's British South Africa Company**, was developing a new colony 'modestly' called **Rhodesia**. Rhodes was a visionary imperialist, who indefatigably worked towards one single goal – he wanted the British possessions in Africa to stretch from the Cape Colony to Egypt¹⁶ in the north of the continent, with a railway going from Cape Town to Cairo. Rhodes's dedication to expanding the British Empire infuriated the Boers and significantly prolonged the South African War.

The Boers lost the war but they taught the British a good lesson. First of all, the Dutch taught the British humility – the war gave a clear picture of the inefficiency of the British army especially when faced with guerilla warfare. The difficulties that the British had to grapple with put an end to the boastful type of imperialism, which made the British think that Britain had been specially chosen by God, whereas all other countries and nations were 'God's mistake'.¹⁷ On a more practical level, the Boer wars gave an impetus to army reform, which came just in the nick of time, before the World War of 1914–1918. Had the English won the South African War more easily, they might have never won the Great War. The hero of the Boers war **Robert Baden-Powell**, who used his experiences in these wars to found the **Boy Scouts** movement.

After the war all Southern colonies, except Rhodesia, were federated in the **South African Union**. The Boers were restored to their former position; English and Dutch became the two languages of the union. The fair treatment of the Dutch paid off a hundredfold because in World War I, the Dutch remained loyal to the Commonwealth and fought against the Germans in Africa hand in hand with the British.

But the British policy in **India** was not so wise. In 1857 there was a national revolt against British rule precipitated by a military mutiny. This so-called **Indian Mutiny** (by no means the first Indian mutiny in history) was caused by the British attempts to impose British-style army discipline onto Indian warrior traditions – the famous problem of greasing cartridges with animal fat being symptomatic of more serious and contentious issues.¹⁸

The mutineers were defeated by the British and faithful Indian troops, but the hostility between the British rulers and the Indian population never completely died out. Even though the British did a lot of good work in India, building railways, roads, hospitals, water-supplies and telegraphs, and fighting famine and plague with scientific methods, their

¹⁵ The main cause of the **South African War** for the Dutch was the fact that British businessmen wanted to exploit gold and diamond mines to their advantage.

¹⁶ **Egypt** was invaded by the British in 1882. The British feared that a nationalist uprising in Egypt would put an end to British control of the Suez Canal, the main route to India. The occupation lasted to 1954.

¹⁷ An opinion expressed by Mr. Podsnap, a character in Charles Dickens's novel.

¹⁸ The British gave Indians cartridges greased with the fat of the sacred cow and the abhorred pig.

autocratic bureaucracy bred a lot of hatred. One of the main reasons of that ill feeling was educating young Indians in English universities, which traditionally laid stress on the political philosophy of freedom as ‘the crown of life’. Thus, as some observed, what the British attempted to do in India ‘was to rear a race of administrators on the literature of revolt’. Thus the contact with Western learning and thought resulted in the Indian desire for independence.

In the 19th century India was Britain’s most important colony (**‘the jewel in the crown’**). But after the war of 1914 its status began to decline and a mass nationalist movement emerged under the leadership of **Mahatma Gandhi**. In the 1920s the British started to give in to the campaign of civil disobedience organized by Gandhi, and they began to clear the way for Indian self-government. World War II cut short this program of **devolution**¹⁹ and prompted a very fast retreat. British India was divided into separate states of Pakistan (Muslim population in majority) and India (Hindu population in majority).

Near the end of the 19th century the British government hoped to bring all the colonies into a closer union by creating an **Imperial Federation of Colonial Parliaments**. This hope was never fulfilled. Most of the colonies had already turned into self-governing **dominions**²⁰ and started to develop into separate nations. The Second British Empire was in fact an English-speaking league of nations united by the Crown (the British monarch was the head of state in the dominions).

It may seem that running Imperial affairs was for the British government of paramount importance, but it was not. The government and the political parties, the Conservatives and the Liberals, were going through another period of internal reforms and in the words of **Benjamin Disraeli**²¹ ‘the wretched colonies’ were only ‘a millstone around [the] neck’. The initiative during this 2nd phase of social reforms was in the hands of the Liberal party, and its new belligerent leader **William Gladstone**. But the mastermind behind the reforms was **John Stuart Mill**, the founding father of liberal thought. Mill was a staunch supporter of democracy, advocating women suffrage, and propagating the philosophical doctrine of **Utilitarianism** that stated that governments should try to produce ‘the greatest happiness for the greatest number of people’. In his best-known work *On Liberty* (1859) Mill argued that people should be free to do what they want if this does not harm others. In *Subjection of Women* (1869), Mill defended the rights of women.²² The year 1859 witnessed the publication of another important book, **Darwin’s** *The Origins of Species* that launched a long war between faith and reason. Bishops angrily resisted the suggestion that they are descended from monkeys, and scientists responded that they would rather be descended from monkeys than Bishops; a new movement was gathering momentum whose aim was to modernize the Church. This so-called ‘**Christian Socialism**’ sought to reconcile theology with knowledge and democracy and to make the society more open-minded. It paved the way for social reforms and reduced conservative resistance.

¹⁹ Devolution – transfer of political power from central to local government.

²⁰ A self-governed colony leaves the defense and foreign policy to the mother country, a dominion is a completely free nation that owes loyalty to the crown alone.

²¹ A premier from 1874–1880 known for saying ‘There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics.’ He was a conservative politician who nevertheless convinced his colleagues to accept some liberal reforms.

²² Another important pioneer in the history of feminism is Florence Nightingale, a nurse in the Crimean War, who gave rise to modern nursing and a new concept of women’s place in society.

For over 30 years Gladstone (the Liberal Party) and Disraeli (the Conservative party) dominated the political scene in Great Britain. Gladstone was Prime Minister four times, and he can be credited with many improvements in British life. During his first ministry (1868–1874) **universities** were opened to the people of all ranks and opinions and a **national system of primary education** was established. Also **the Ballot Act** that made voting secret was introduced.

Disraeli was Prime minister twice in 1868 and 1874. He introduced improvements in the housing for the poor people in the cities. He waged a war on slums and unsanitary living conditions. He supported worker's rights in times of strike. He was the leader of the Conservative party since 1846. His leadership was crucial for the upper classes, who in the 19th century were rapidly losing their privileged position for the sake of the rising middle class. He created the modern centralized organization for the party and taught it how the acceptance of inevitable democratic changes could actually strengthen it.

The principal achievement of Gladstone's second ministry was **enfranchising agricultural laborers and miners**. The parliamentary enfranchisement of the rural laborers soon led to the establishment of elective local self-government for the country districts so far ruled by the JPs.²³

One of Gladstone's most radical ideas was that **Ireland** should have **Home Rule**,²⁴ but the growing imperialist sentiment of the fin-de-siècle did not consider the implementation of Home Rule necessary. But still the demand for Home Rule among the Irish was unabated and continued well into the 20th century.

3: The Victorian Era and the Great War

The 19th century in England was the time of social and administrative progress. The governments, whether liberal or conservative, relentlessly toiled towards so-called **municipal socialism**. Baths, museums, public libraries, parks and houses for the working people were raised and maintained from taxes. Town halls in many cities and towns overtook control of public transportation and the supply of gas, electricity and water. In the new industrial cities 'red- brick universities'²⁵ opened. All children up to the age of 13 were provided

²³ In 1888 the Conservative government set up Country Councils, in 1894 **Urban District Councils** and **Parish Councils** were set up by the Liberal Government.

²⁴ The government of Ireland by the Irish.

²⁵ Red-bricked universities were new as opposed to stone-built old universities like Oxford or Cambridge.

with free compulsory education. Thus the rise in the standard of living went hand in hand with the increase of literacy and learning. The working class more and more often organized itself in Trade Unions, the most effective means of resistance to exploitation.

Queen Victoria, who ascended the throne in 1837 and reigned until her death in 1901 was a witness to this long period of transition. When Victoria came to the throne the Crown had already been stripped of many of its jewels. Power was passing from the hands of the aristocracy to the new bourgeoisie, and the Queen and her advisors could do nothing about it. Victoria was perhaps the first monarch to understand that fighting with the tide of change was simply counter-productive. She followed the actions of her ministers never attempting to reverse or alter the policies of subsequent cabinets. Since the idea of consolidating the Empire through a federation of parliaments fell through, the Crown was left as the sole official bond of the whole Empire. Thus the Queen, who lost virtually all power at home, could enjoy instead her position of Empress and head of the Commonwealth.

Queen Victoria was a very simple person depending on her husband **Prince Albert** to instruct her in the intellectual and artistic currents of the age. After his death she almost completely lost all her interest in public life and public issues. This impinged on her popularity, so in order to save the faltering position of the monarchy in Britain, she was persuaded by her advisers to take a more active part in public life, which she did. The image she started to project was extremely appealing to ordinary people. She was a simple widow dedicated to her family and indifferent to the amusements of the aristocracy and their imitators. As one historian put it – she would have been at home in any cottage parlor. In the era of development of democracy, the Queen seemed to be in touch with the humblest of her subjects, who felt more affinity with her than with articulate and pompous politicians.

The Queen was also an example of rigorous moral conduct often disapprovingly described today as **Victorian morality**. Many Victorians were smug and conceited, regarding pleasure as sin and poverty as punishment for being lazy. For Victorians the worst sin of all was individualism, which was suppressed by means of strict discipline. Children were reminded that their greatest virtue was obedience; women were confined by conventions. Legally, women were men's property until almost the end of the century.

The situation of women began to change after the spectacular success of **Florence Nightingale in the Crimean War**. The war was a joint effort of the French and English to stop Russian southward expansion. The newspapers, which for the last time were allowed to report from a war without censorship, were very vocal about the inefficiency of army hospitals where soldiers died more due to unsanitary conditions and poor treatment than actual wounds incurred during battles. Florence Nightingale persuaded her friends in high places to put her in charge of the hospital in Istanbul, and soon she showed what she was capable of doing. Her spectacular achievements made nursing a profession indispensable in both military and civil hospitals and opened a way to a career for young women wishing for self-independence. Gradually universities began to open for female students and the society became more permissive – women were allowed to ride bicycles (a new invention) or play games.

The newspapers were instrumental in promoting social reforms. *The Times* and *Daily Telegraph* reported about the army hospitals during the Crimean war. *Punch*, in its drawings and articles, incessantly poked fun at the improprieties of the Victorian age. Some **writers** were also severe critics, and their books had a powerful influence on social reforms in that age. Charles Dickens peopled his books with the poor, thus drawing the attention

of the middle class to the plight of the most needy. Such books as *Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *The Old Curiosity Shop*, *David Copperfield* or *Great Expectations* show the fate of homeless children and orphans, poor people rotting in prisons for debts or toiling all their life in factories. Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* is a children's book, which nevertheless illustrates the routine violence leveled at children in Victorian times. It describes the story of a little boy who was forced by his cruel employer to climb inside dark and dangerous chimneys to clean them just because men were too lazy to use long brushes. Such books were instrumental in arousing social conscience of the public and the politicians, who more eagerly strove to push social reforms through Parliament.

In the 19th century wealth was spreading fast among commercial classes and industrialists in the country. The towns and cities grew and the conditions of life were becoming more and more agreeable. The society was gradually transforming into the modern society of today. The power in the country moved from shires to towns, from aristocracy to the middle class, which through its enterprises generated the wealth in the country. The Victorian age was a time of prosperity, peace and security in Britain's most important foreign relations. The death of Queen Victoria closed that glorious epoch, but as the 20th century commenced, people did not realize that.

The beginning of the 20th century brought in many respects the continuation of the 19th century reformatory zeal. From 1907 free school meals were provided to improve the health of poor children. In 1908 the Old Age Pension scheme was launched, which was a reform on a scale beyond precedent. For the first time in history government took responsibility for the old, saving them from homelessness and starvation. Two years later Unemployment and Health Insurance were introduced, and the burden of taxation was shifted on the wealthy. Thus free capitalism of the 19th century was transformed into the welfare state. Both the Conservative and Liberal parties supported this 'socialist' orientation in domestic politics, even though liberals were more progressive. They were becoming more and more dependent on labor, and it was becoming increasingly clear that in the new century the working people would become a major factor in politics. In the 1906 elections the Labor Party sprung into existence. For its members social reforms were more important than Imperialism. The party was supported by Trade Unions (of miners, railway and transport workers and other groups) that at the turn of the century were practically 'a state within a state'.

Another important change on the domestic political scene was limiting the powers of the House of Lords. In 1908, in order to force a liberal government to resign, the conservative majority in the House of Lords refused to accept the budget of 1909. The Peers turned down the budget also because it intended to increase taxes for the rich landowners. The Lords' veto brought it home to the liberal politicians that the House of Lords could force a general election whenever lords could not agree with the implemented policies. The crisis was averted by George V who threatened to appoint so many liberal peers as to outnumber the conservative peers in the House of Lords. The immediate result of this crisis was the Parliament Act of 1911 changing the Peers' right to veto from absolute veto to suspensory veto for 2 years. On financial matters the Lords could not veto at all. In this way the Lords can no longer defeat parliamentary acts; they can only delay them and for not more than 2 years.

It might have been a good moment to pass Home Rule for Ireland to solve one of the most contentious issues in British foreign policy. Ireland demanded immediate attention,

as it was getting ready for a civil war. The hotbed was Ulster, where pro-Irish **Sinn Fein** was trying to cut the ground from under the Orange Lodges. The only reason why the island did not flare into open warfare was the terrible danger that confronted Great Britain from abroad.

At the beginning of the 20th century the Balance of Power in Europe began to crumble. **Germany** was now united and began to build a military empire based on foundations that could not be shaken. Germany had a bigger population than GB and was the unquestionable leader in scientific and technical education. German industries were far more efficient than English factories – they were a model of administration. Germany produced more steel than GB and it used that steel to build a strong modern navy, which the British started to regard with a certain awe.

The Boer wars made the British diplomats realize the importance of **European alliances**, as almost all countries supported the Boers against the British. This realization brought an alliance with France whose interests were also threatened by the growing power and expansionism of the German Empire. Similar considerations prompted the British to make an alliance with Russia. Thus by 1914 a very dangerous situation had developed. Germany and Austria-Hungary made a military alliance (they were called **Central Powers**) to protect themselves against GB, France and Russia, which seemed to ‘encircle’ them. This was in fact a false impression because in the face of German and Austro-Hungarian restlessness and growing militancy, most European countries including GB were ready to make far-going concessions. There was no attempt at ‘encircling’ or alienating Germany and Austro-Hungary politically. It was precisely those two countries central geopolitical position that made them ‘encircled.’ What is more Germans enjoyed brandishing their military power, and fear was the chief instrument in German diplomacy.

In the years preceding World War I there was one diplomatic crisis after another. The chief storm center was **the Balkans**, partially incorporated into the Austro-Hungarian Empire of Hapsburgs. **Bosnia** was a part of the Empire, whereas **Serbia** was a free, independent country. Serbia wished to take over Bosnia and unite all Yugoslavs under the flag of Serbia. The hostility between the two countries – Serbia and Austro-Hungary – was aggravated by the Russian support for Serbia and the German support for Austro-Hungary. Serbia was a small but militarily strong country that had won Europe’s respect after her victory over the Turks. Austro-Hungary, not without reason, considered Serbia a threat and was biding its time to crush it under any possible pretext.

On 28 June 1914 the Serbians supplied Austro-Hungary with the desired excuse – the **Archduke Francis Ferdinand** was murdered in Sarajevo. Russia bound by treaty to defend Serbia, declared war on Austro-Hungary and found itself in a state of war with the chief Austro-Hungarian ally – Germany. The Germans sent ultimatums to Russia and her ally France, which had already been preparing for war.

In **August 1914** the German armies rolled against France through innocent Belgium that happened to be on the way, and the violation of Belgium’s neutrality swayed the British to go to war. Britain was bound to go to Belgium’s aid by a treaty, but the main reason why Britain decided to fight in this continental war was the fear that war would end in the subjugation of all Europe to the Central Powers.

The war quickly escalated into a global conflict. The Turks and Bulgarians rallied with the Central Powers. The Italians sided with the allies and forced a considerable part of the

Austro Hungarian army to get engaged in the trench warfare similar to that which had already been taking place in France.

Then in **April 1917**, the Germans conceived and implemented a new tactics depending on **the submarine campaign**. Their objective was to intercept the supplies that were coming to the British Isles from America, Australia and other parts of the world. The Free Trade Policy had made agriculture unprofitable and turned Great Britain into a completely urbanized country. People had left for cities, and the fields had been turning back into a jungle, but the German submarine warfare put a check on that process and taught the British anew how to use the plough. Great Britain did not starve to death in this blockade chiefly because the US, on whose shipments the submarine campaign impinged, entered the war on the side of the Allies. That gave impetus to Allied efforts to overthrow the German military government. The American adhesion to the war helped to offset the withdrawal of Russia caused by the **Bolshevik revolution (1917)**. The arrival of American troops in France and the offensive in the **spring 1918** broke German resistance. Turkey and Bulgaria were defeated, whereas Austro-Hungary disintegrated in a series of revolutions into her component national parts. In **November 1918 an Armistice** was concluded.

World War I was yet another European conflict in which economical blockade (first effected during the Napoleonic wars) turned out to be the most effective strategy. The new feature of the war was **trench warfare**, which took part mostly in France and consumed millions of lives. The death toll was also increased by the use of chemical gases and tanks. The submarines also proved a formidable weapon.

The war exploded the Second British Empire. **Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa** had contributed to the war effort, but when the war ended, each of them pressed for the full recognition of their independence. In **Ireland**, where the introduction of Home Rule was delayed because of the fear of Protestant uprising and because of the outbreak of the Great War, tension was already mounting. Finally at **Easter in 1916** the tension erupted into open violence when Sinn Fein organized an uprising in Dublin. This '**Easter Rising**' was quelled and its leaders executed, which turned them in the eyes of public opinion everywhere into martyrs. Now the Irish no longer demanded Home Rule. They would not accept anything less than an independent Republic. The guerilla warfare against the British that lasted until 1921 ended with the establishment of **the Irish Free State** in the South whereas **Ulster** in the north under Home Rule remained united with Great Britain. The Irish Free State was initially a British dominion, but in 1937 the Irish government declared southern Ireland a republic.

The **Treaty of Versailles of 1919** established a German Democratic Republic, which was treated with a vindictiveness that flew in the face of common sense. The war consumed the wealth of the past century, and public opinion in Britain, fed on the war propaganda picturing Germans as subhuman creatures, wanted Germans to pay. Germany was disarmed while her neighbors were armed-to-the-teeth. German colonies were overtaken by the Allies or by the Dominions. The reparations demanded from Germany reached fantastic and totally unrealistic levels – their aim was to leave Germany weak and impoverished for decades to come.

The Liberal party that appealed for moderation in dealings with Germany perished under public attack and never fully regained its importance. **The Labor party** gradually filled the void left by the liberals.

The League of Nations, a new international organization that was expected to smooth out differences between countries, remained an empty, unearned promise, especially that the Americans, the most powerful country in the world, chose to stay out of it. Europe plunged into total anarchy exacerbated by the spread of communism after the success of the Bolshevik Revolution in Russia. Thus, the end of the war was not a glorious event, the recovery seemed to be almost impossible, all former combatants (with the exception of the USA) were hard hit by depression, and the despair of the people prepared the ground for the rise of fascist, communist and Nazi regimes.

USA – The settlement and the American Revolution

1: The Colonial Period

In 1492 an Italian adventurer named **Christopher Columbus** first sailed to America. His aim was to find a new shorter route for trade with India. He set sail from Spain westwards and landed in the islands of the Caribbean. He made four voyages in all, and on the last two (1498, 1502) he discovered the mainland of **the New World**. However, he refused to acknowledge the fact that what he discovered was not the Far East, which turned him, in his own eyes, into a man of failure, disappointed by the discovery that did not match his expectations.

But history estimated his exploit differently and still continues to reevaluate its importance. An article entitled ‘The Columbian Exposition and American Civilization’ published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in May 1893 points to Columbus’s discovery as one of the turning points in the history of mankind and presents him in an entirely positive light¹. One hundred years later in September 1992, the editorial of the same magazine entitled tellingly ‘Was America a Mistake?’ calls for penitence and remorse on the occasion of the 500th anniversary of Columbus’s landing in the New World. In the article Columbus is perceived not as a great European hero but as an agent of evil – Columbus ‘the great hero of the 19th century seems well on the way to becoming a great villain of the twenty first’.² He is the man who opened the world for European colonization and exploitation. Columbus, who was probably a converted Italian Jew in the service of Isabella the Cath-

¹ These turning points, according to the article were: the age of Pericles, the Italian Cinquecento, the defection of Luther and the court of Queen Elizabeth.

² Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., “Was America a Mistake?” *The Atlantic Monthly*, vol. 142, no. 9, September 1994, p. 573.

olic Queen of Spain, can be seen as an ethnically confused man who introduced ethnic confusion to the entire world.

Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris, two contemporary Native American writers, so commented on the significance of Columbus's historical act:

Columbus only discovered that he was in some new place. He didn't discover America. There were incredibly complex indigenous cultures [in America] – Europe compared to the rest of the world was a very homogenous place. Almost anybody spoke Indo-European related languages and shared the same cosmological worldview and the same general political system. Indians on the other hand, were used to enormous plurality – five hundred cultures, seven hundred languages spoken and many different religions.³ Within a day's walk of any place, you would encounter another group of people who looked differently, spoke differently and had a different view of men and women. When Europeans came to Indians at first, it was no big deal, you read an account after account of Indians saying 'Oh yeah, and they came to – and they [Europeans] don't bathe'. Whereas for Europeans it changed everything. Whose child were Indians in the Adam and Eve scheme? Were they human beings or not? These questions were argued in Spanish universities for 80 years until the Pope said Indians had souls. It changed the European worldview.⁴

The cultures that **Indians** evolved were varied and fascinating. None of them advanced to the use of iron or literacy and while their achievements in many respects were striking, generally the Old World outstripped the New World in culture, political and military organization. Indians still lived in tribes – some of them were hunters, some gatherers of food, and some farmers. **The Pueblo people** (territories of to-day's New Mexico and Arizona) were the best-organized communities. They lived in terraced buildings made of bricks (mud and straw dried in the sun). Some of these buildings contained up to eight hundred rooms. The Pueblo people were skillful agriculturists – they grew maize and beans and built irrigation – a network of canals that turned the desert into fields. **The Iroquois** in the Northeast part of America were also good agriculturalists, but they also hunted and caught fish; they used birch canoes to sail the rivers and lakes. Like the Pueblo Indians, they had a sedentary lifestyle – they lived in permanent villages, in huts made of wooden logs. The Indians in Northwest America also lived in houses, which they built of planks. Their houses were decorated with **totem poles** made of tree trunks on which there were carvings illustrating the history of the family who lived in the house. They were also good fishermen, depending on rivers and the Pacific Ocean for food. However, such tribes as **the Sioux** became the symbol of the Indian way of life. The Sioux lived on the grass plains stretching from the Mississippi River to the Rocky Mountains. They did not build any houses but lived in **tepees** – tents made of buffalo skins. They hunted for buffalos, which provided them with everything they needed – food and material for clothing and shelter. They followed the great herds of those magnificent animals, packing and unpacking as often as it was necessary. Indeed most Indians were nomads. Their lifestyle was based on constant moving from one place to another.

All lifestyles developed by Indians suited the natural environments in which they lived, but the arrival of Europeans obliterated them all. Even though Indians were formidable

³ The historians still cannot agree on the size of the Indian population: estimates vary from 2 million to 18 million inhabitants.

⁴ Allan Chavkin and Nancy Feyl Chavkin, eds. *Conversations with Louise Erdrich and Michael Dorris*, Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 1994, p. 43.

warriors, they were no match for the whites who were coming in increasingly large numbers with guns, diseases and hunger for land. Luckily for the white intruders the Indians were perpetually on the warpath against their neighbors, and war was their major occupation. Bravery in battle was the source of individual prestige for the warrior and of glory for the whole tribe. But constant feuds among the Indian tribes, which did not cease after the arrival of Europeans, made the European conquest plain sailing.

The first Europeans to reach the American continent were **the Vikings** who briefly settled in the territory of later Newfoundland and New England around **AD 1000**. But the Vikings were not able to stay there because the natives were hostile, and the Vikings were not numerous enough to protect themselves. The Spanish were the first Europeans who managed to establish a permanent occupation of the territories in central and Southern America: **Hernán Cortes** conquered **the Aztecs** in **1520s**; **Francisco Pizzaro** killed **the Empire of Incas** in the **1530s**. The conquistadors were the first to explore the southern part of North America. **Ponce De León** claimed Florida for Spain. In **1565** the Spanish founded **St. Augustine** – the first permanent settlement in North America. **Hernando de Soto** travelled through Texas and Oklahoma to the Mississippi River, whereas **Francisco Coronado** was the first European who saw the Great Canyon of the Colorado River.

As the looted gold started to sail to Spain making it a major European power, other countries, including England, tried to join the Spanish in this colonial enterprise. In **1498** **Henry VII** sent another Italian sailor **John Cabot** who landed in today's Newfoundland and discovered great cod-fisheries. England laid claim to Newfoundland but at that time was too weak to keep it. The French employed **Giovanni Verrazano**, also an Italian, who landed on Manhattan Island and discovered the estuary of the Hudson River,⁵ and **Jacque Cartier** discovered the St. Lawrence River for the French. Those who followed him founded **Quebec** in **1608** and **Montreal** in **1642**.

While the entire 16th century was devoted to exploration, the 17th century witnessed the beginning of the greatest population movement in the entire history of the mankind.⁶ The **first English immigrants** came long after the Spanish, and they attempted to colonize **Roanoke Island** off the coast of what is now North Carolina in **1585**. The first contingent of settlers did not like the island so much that the following year, at their own request, they were carried back home. The next attempt in **1587** was even less successful. England was engaged in a war with Spain (the attack of the Spanish Armada) and forgot about the colonists, and when **Sir Walter Raleigh** visited the island again, he found that all the colonists had vanished. In **1607** the first successful settlement took place. Raleigh established the **colony of Virginia** in honour of Elisabeth, the Virgin Queen. The first settlers came to Jamestown – first an outpost and later the capital of Virginia – as gold prospectors, but soon they realized that there was no gold in Virginia so they became farmers getting rich on the tobacco crop, which found a good market in England. The colony owed its success to **Captain John Smith**. He persuaded the colonists to work in order to survive. He had a knack of handling Indians and one of the most famous episodes of the early settlement has an Indian princess Pocahontas cast in the main role. When during one of his expeditions into the wilderness Smith was captured by the Indians, the chief's daughter, **Pocahontas**, saved his life by persuading her father to let him go. Pocahontas married a

⁵ The Verrazano Narrows Bridge commemorates this event.

⁶ Seventy five percent of people who left Europe settled in the American Continent.

tobacco planter and was even presented at the court of James I, but she contracted smallpox while she was waiting for the ship to take her back to Virginia and died.

By the 1620s great plantations had already risen along the James River and the population had increased to one thousand settlers. But founding great plantation dynasties, typical of the southern colonies, would not have been possible without women and therefore a peculiar business developed in Virginia. Women were recruited in England to come to Virginia as brides for sale. The would-be-husbands had to pay 120 pounds of tobacco to marry them and to make homes.

Coming to America was not an easy decision to make – the ships taking immigrants to America were small and overcrowded. The journey took from 6 to 12 weeks during which immigrants had to subsist on meager rations. Many of them died during the voyage due to diseases, inadequate food supplies and unsanitary conditions. Many ships were battered by storms; some were lost at sea.

Yet maintaining connection with the mother country was essential for the colonists' survival. From Europe they imported articles that they could not produce. The eastern coastline of North America had many inlets and harbours; great rivers connected the shore with the interior of the country. Only one river – the St. Lawrence – provided entrance into the interior of the continent, others offered access only to the coastal plains. There, on the coastal plains, with the Atlantic Ocean on one side and formidable Appalachian and Allegheny Mountains on the other, the colonist stayed for a hundred years. Only trappers and traders dared to cross the mountain ranges and reach the territories that lay beyond.

Although the colonists depended on trade with Europe, in many respects they were self-sufficient. The distinctive feature of the English colonies was that they were self-governing. Each colony was a separate entity with its own authorities; almost each had also a supervisor, a chartered company or a nobleman; most colonies had also governors. The British colonies in the 17th century were created not on the initiative of the Crown or Parliament but by private investors, whose chief aim was profit. And thus two colonies, **Virginia** and **Massachusetts**, were founded by two chartered companies, the Virginia Company and the Massachusetts Bay Company respectively. **New Haven** (later a part of **Connecticut**) was established by rich immigrants, who financed their passage themselves. **New Hampshire, Maine, Maryland, the Carolinas, New Jersey and Pennsylvania** originally belonged to the king who gave these lands to the English gentry. **Georgia** was a penal colony to which convicts and outlaws were sent; it served as a bulwark against the Spanish in Florida. Several colonies were simply off-springs of the old colonies. **Rhode Island and Connecticut** for example were established by Puritans who were ostracized in Massachusetts, or who had left Massachusetts in search of better lands. **New York** was at first a Dutch colony called **New Amsterdam** (founded in 1625) but it was captured by the English in 1664.

The chief objectives of colonizing America were dreams of quick profit – if not from gold mines then from agriculture and natural resources. America was covered with dense woods, abounding in food, fuel, raw materials for houses, furniture and ships and profitable cargo to export. Additionally, the New World was a God-given solution to the problem of the large vagrant population in England adrift due to enclosures, rises in prices and other economic difficulties, and to the problem of 'second' sons,⁷ prisoners and oth-

⁷ According to English Common Law only the oldest son could inherit property, other sons had to fend for themselves.

er reckless spirits whose energies could be released in America to the general advantage. Such were the considerations of the English upper-classes who saw in America a good place to plant all the undesirable elements uprooted from the native soil. 'In Virginia land free and labor scarce; In England land scarce and labor plenty', said one of the slogans whose aim was to persuade the poor, landless proletariat to leave overcrowded England and settle in America. A vast literature of propaganda and persuasion was issued to sway the mass opinion in favor of emigration. Gradually, as political and economic difficulties swept across England in the Stuart times, more and more people were compelled to go to America.

But not all European emigrants came in search for land and prosperity. Among the newcomers were **Puritans** for whom the main incentive was yearning for religious freedom combined with the desire to flee persecution. Puritans were the most orthodox Protestants. They followed the teaching of **John Calvin** and were against the Church hierarchy, which they believed to be the work of the Anti Christ. They worshipped God in small congregations, which had their own separate covenant⁸ with God. It is not surprising why in England they were perceived as a threat to the unity of the state, the church and the royal authority and why they were severely persecuted.

During the reign of **James I** a small group of Protestant dissenters set sail to Holland and later to America. *Mayflower*, the ship that carried them, had one hundred and five persons aboard. Only thirty-five of them were Puritans; the others were 'strangers' (that is non-Puritans). They all became known as **the Pilgrims**. In the middle of winter in **1620** they landed in North America and established the first Puritan colony called **the Plymouth Plantation**. The name of the ship was used as the title for the first important document in the history of American nation, *The Mayflower Compact*, which was an agreement to work together and for the good of all to increase the colonists' chances of survival. Still before spring came, half of the colonists died from scurvy and similar complaints. But the Pilgrims were a hardy population, and when in 1622 a ship came to their harbor offering to take them back to England they refused.

Charles I's despotism and **William Laud's** efforts to eradicate all Puritan sects, combined with an economic depression, resulted in **the Great Migration**⁹ of thousands of **Puritans to New England**.¹⁰ This second wave of Puritan emigration founded in **1630 the Massachusetts Bay Colony**. Unlike the Pilgrims, this second group of Puritan separatists consisted of people of considerable wealth and position. The most prominent man among them was **John Winthrop**, a Justice of the Peace, whose estate had been hard hit by the decline of the cloth trade. Winthrop, as the leader of the Puritans, can be credited with the invention of the New World mythology, presenting the voyage to America as a divine work or a sacred pilgrimage whose aim was to build a new Christian society. 'We must consider that we shall be a city upon a hill', said Winthrop aboard *Arabella*, the ship that took him and his followers to Massachusetts, 'the eyes of all people are upon us'. In other words, Winthrop envisaged the isolated outpost of civilization in the New World as a great experiment scrutinized by the whole of Europe. This assertion of course was

⁸ Covenant – agreement, pact.

⁹ During "Eleven Years tyranny" 20.000 Puritans sailed cross the Atlantic and settled in Massachusetts.

¹⁰ New England is a name given to all Puritan colonies.

a sheer exaggeration, but nevertheless Winthrop, as governor of Massachusetts, built his 'city upon hill' that put a Puritan stamp upon six colonies of New England.

Other non-conformists and other nations followed the Puritan's suit: **Quakers** settled in Pennsylvania, **Catholics** in Maryland. **The German** and **the Irish** poured into Pennsylvania and **North Carolina**.¹¹ Their motives were always the same – the quest for political and religious freedom as well as economic opportunity. Few people were actually able to pay for the passage; therefore, many of them came as so-called '**indentured servants**' – the cost of the voyage was covered by a company, but in return the newcomers had to work for a set period of time as servants or tenants before they could buy their own farms or estates. It is estimated that a half of the settlers in Virginia and New England started their new life in such semi-bondage.

In **Massachusetts** there was no pretence of religious toleration. Heresy and sedition were treated as civil offences and were punished by the civil court. Though in theory the state and church were separate, in practice the stiff enforcement of church laws by the civil administration made Massachusetts a **theocracy** – a colony run by preachers and orthodox laymen. Right liberty, explained Winthrop, was to do God's will. All other forms of liberty were sinful.

But the authorities of the colony were not absolutely successful in maintaining conformity and binding people's minds. The first serious challenge came from **Roger Williams**, who argued for complete separation between the institutions of the church and the state. He was banished for sedition and settled in **Rhode Island** where he founded a new colony based on religious toleration where everyone could worship God as they pleased, and no church interfered in secular affairs.

Roger Williams was one of many Puritans to leave Massachusetts. Not all of them were banished – some left to look for better farming lands. Wherever they went they mixed with the non-Puritan colonists, and consequently their militant Puritanism gradually lost its edge. Contrary to Massachusetts run autocratically by Winthrop, known for his dislike for democracy, other Puritan colonies were far more democratic. In Massachusetts only the full members the Church '**the saints**' were eligible to vote, and therefore the number of enfranchised people was relatively small. But in other Puritan colonies public conversion and church membership were eliminated as a prerequisite to vote.

But still Massachusetts was the most powerful colony, which within a few decades from its establishment grew into a fully self-governing little republic, far outside the power of Whitehall.¹² **Boston** became one of the biggest ports in America – soon it was to challenge the British in shipbuilding.¹³

Fishing proved to be as lucrative as shipbuilding. New Englanders continually improved the construction of their ships to sail further into the sea. The result was that in 1641 300.000 of barrels of fish were exported to Europe. The fishermen from New England sold their catches also to the farmers of the American backcountry and the West Indian

¹¹ Most of the settlers who came to America in the 17th century were English; 10% were the Dutch, Swedes, Germans, Spaniards, Italians and Portuguese.

¹² Whitehall – a street in London where British government offices are situated.

¹³ By the end of colonial period 1/3 of all ships under the British flag were built in America.

plantations, where the fish were used to feed the slaves. New England's ships sailed to ports all over the world and the trade flourished, bringing prosperity to all Puritans.

Geography played an important role in shaping the character of each colony. **New England** was situated in the northeast of the country, where winters were very harsh and soil thin and stony. The land was covered with thick forests and the work of deforestation was slow and strenuous. Under such circumstances the colonists had to find other means of sustenance than agriculture and they found it in shipbuilding, cod fishing, and trade.

They settled in compact townships that imitated the traditional English manor-village – the village was a nucleus around which there were fields formed in strips. The compactness of their settlement made possible the village school,¹⁴ church, town hall, and in the course of time made New England an urbanized and industrial area.

South of New England, where the climate was warm and the soil fertile, a predominantly agrarian society developed. **The middle colonies** were the second great division. They were more cosmopolitan and more tolerant than New England. **Pennsylvania** had a large population of Quakers who had a talent for business comparable to that of the Puritans'. They also had equally gifted leaders such as **William Penn** who established the principle of fair dealings with all religions and nationalities, including Indians. Philadelphia was the heart of the colony. New York had a very large Dutch population, which, even through it was under English rule, continued to exert social and economic influence. This colony owed its success to the British governor **Richard Nichols**, who effected the transfer from Dutch to the English authority. Nichols respected Dutch customs and laws and put the Dutch on par with the English colonists. In New York, as in Pennsylvania, agriculture and trade were the chief business of the people.

The third division consisted of five **southern colonies**: Virginia, Maryland, two Carolinas and Georgia. **Virginia**, as it was mentioned earlier, made money on tobacco crops, but the cultivation of tobacco quickly exhausted the soil and forced the settlers to move into the backcountry. **Maryland** had a predominantly Catholic population but was not adverse of the settlement of non-Catholic colonists. Both Virginia and Maryland had aristocracy made of plantation owners, whose estates were taken care of by slaves. These planters had the best land and most of the political power and were opposed to establishing elective governments or respecting personal liberties established by Common Law. The slave labor on which their power was based made competition impossible for small farmers. Therefore small farmers frequently moved into the wilderness to set up farms there. Finally the exodus to the West became such a commonplace phenomenon that the authorities had to yield to the democratic impulses of the people for fear that hardly anybody would stay. Thus the existence of **the Frontier** – the wilderness into which the white man had just penetrated – made the authorities more liberal.

South Carolina and **North Carolina** specialized in the production and export of rice and indigo. The main port was **Charleston**, which was also a center of shipbuilding. It is interesting that none of the southern colonies had a trading class, as the planters themselves sold and dispatched their products.

Therefore from the very beginning of colonization there were profound differences between various parts of the country. The North was growing urban; the South was agricul-

¹⁴ Harvard was the first university in America, established in 1636 – just 6 years after the arrival of Puritans to Massachusetts. It was modeled on Cambridge.

tural and profoundly affected by slavery. Additionally, there was an antagonism between the new communities forming on the Frontier and old, more conservative and prosperous Easterners contemptuously called city slickers. The frontiersmen were self-reliant and independent people, a truly democratic force in this nation just shaping itself. Even though the majority of them spoke English and lived under English laws and customs, the culture they finally evolved was unique. It was an amalgamation of different cultures, modified by the environment and the conditions of the New World.

Whereas the frontiersmen were illiterate, uncultured and uncouth, the Easterners did their utmost to uphold their cultural refinement. All New England colonies except Rhode Island provided for compulsory elementary education. Quakers in Pennsylvania offered education to the poor. Besides **Harvard University**, established in Massachusetts in 1636, two other schools of higher education were established in the colonial period; these were **The College of William and Mary** (Virginia) and **Yale** (Connecticut). Other colleges: **The College of New Jersey at Princeton**, **Columbia University** (NY) and **Rutgers** (New Brunswick, New Jersey) were established in the middle of the 18th century.

The colonies' first world citizen was **Benjamin Franklin**, who lived in Pennsylvania. Franklin was a very versatile and talented person who inspired Americans with his from-rags-to-riches success. He started his career as a printer in Philadelphia, but soon he became an important authority in politics and science. He did not finish any school and was a self-educated man, who said, 'I do not remember when I could not read'. He mastered French, Italian, Spanish and Latin and carried out many scientific experiments, for example on heat, electricity or lightening. He invented many practical things: a lightening rod, a more efficient stove, bi-focal glasses, the harmonica and many others. He was the only American colonist besides Cotton Mather¹⁵ to be honored by a membership in the Prestigious Royal Society of England. In America his reputation was founded on his journalism – his yearly contributions to *Poor Richard's Almanac*.¹⁶ Finally Franklin established an academy, which soon grew into **the College of Philadelphia** and later on the **University of Pennsylvania**. Therefore it is unjust to see Franklin as a benevolent materialist encouraging his compatriots to work hard and get rich, as first and foremost, he was a person devoted to doing public good.

Besides Pennsylvania several regions had printing presses producing large numbers of books¹⁷ and magazines. Even in the colonial period the authors and editors enjoyed freedom of the press, far greater than that the English were permitted.

Such liberty was only possible due to the negligence with which the British government treated the American colonies. As it has already been said, the English government did not take part in founding the American colonies (except Georgia), and only gradually did it assume an authority over these overseas possessions. The colonies were not represented in the British Parliament, but they had their own assemblies, which had to cooperate with governors appointed by the crown. These legislative bodies gradually acquired more and more power in financial matters – no taxes could be levied without their consent,

¹⁵ A Puritan minister and writer whose forefathers were founders of New England's State and Church. With his writing he contributed to sentencing to death women accused of witchcraft in **Salem trials of 1692**.

¹⁶ Almanac – a calendar containing both frivolous and serious information, curiosities, recipes, etc.

¹⁷ Books of English authors were published without paying royalties – therefore they were very cheap.

no revenue could be spent without their approval. Therefore clashes between Governors, whose salaries depended on these councils, and the colonists were not infrequent. The Governors' interference was grudgingly born by the colonists, for whom the governors represented interests of foreign manufactures and tradesmen. Very few Americans wholeheartedly identified with the Empire; the process of forging a distinctive American identity had already begun. The British were unaware of the danger that the situation posed. They did not formulate any consistent colonial policy, except that the colonies should supply GB with raw materials and buy from 'the mother country' finished goods. But even that principle was poorly enforced. Therefore political independence and self-government resulted in the colonies becoming increasingly American rather than English.

2: The War of Independence

In 1782 J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur published in England his sketches about America, entitled *Letters from an American Farmer*. In the book, which became very popular upon its publication, Crèvecoeur enumerates many characteristics of the American people. In one of the most famous letters he poses the question: 'what is then the American, this new man?' to which he answers:

He is either a European or a descendant of a European, hence so strange mixture of blood you will find in no other country [...] I could point to you a family whose grandfather was an English man, whose wife was Dutch, whose son married a French woman, and whose present four sons have now four wives of different nations. He is an American, who leaving behind his ancient prejudices and manners, receives new ones from the new mode of life he has embraced, the new governments he obeys, and the new rank he holds.¹⁸

In many respects Crèvecoeur was more perceptive than the colonists who frequently were very conservative people attached to the laws and customs they had imported from the Old World. Yet all their old practices, such as representative government or Common Law with all their guarantees of personal liberty, were becoming increasingly American rather than English. It was the result of the influx of other nations with their laws, customs and traditions, which started the process of the colonies growing away from Britain.

This process was speeded up by **the Seven Years' War (1756–1763)** (known in America as **the French and Indian War**) that brought about sweeping changes not only in America but also in the entire world. The French were expelled from India and North America,

¹⁸ Crèvecoeur, 'Letter III, What is an American?' *Anthology of American Literature, Third Edition*, ed. by George McMichael, Macmillan Publishing Company, New York and London, 1985. p. 394–395.

Prussia's power in Europe was confirmed, and Russia emerged next to Great Britain as a major European power. The war had also serious economic consequences as all former belligerents had to grapple with monstrous deficits left by the struggle.

England as well bore the brunt of the war which she waged all over the world. When the French were ousted from the American continent the colonies were less eager than ever to cooperate with the English government, which wanted to reform the administration of the colonies and to put into effect a new system of defense. For the British it was clear that the colonies must contribute money and manpower for their own defense. But for the American colonists, the government's attempt to raise some money was a blatant violation of their civic liberties. First of all, the colonists did not wish to see any British army on their territories. They were aware of the fact that such an army might be used not only to quiet an Indian uprising¹⁹ but also to deter squatters on the Indian land,²⁰ to put down smuggling, or to keep the colonies in check. Secondly they objected to being burdened with the cost of maintenance of the army, which clearly posed a threat to their own interests.

When Great Britain started to implement a new financial policy and new modest **duties** were levied on certain articles (luxury items such as wine, silk, coffee, etc.), this was an entirely new development in the relations of England and her American colonies. The colonists, after decades of indulgence, were deeply shocked that such 'radical' measures were taken against them. But the worst was still to come. A colonial stamp duty was introduced in all thirteen American colonies. Legal documents but also commercial documents and transactions (liquor licenses, mortgages, insurance policies, custom clearances, almanacs, newspapers and other things) had to carry a stamp in order to be valid. On 22 March 1765, the **Stamp Act** became a law and the **American Revolution** virtually started.

The new duties were small and evenly distributed among the population, but since the Stamp Act bore equally on all sections of the society, the hostility it aroused cut across all classes. 'No taxation without representation' was a popular outcry in all thirteen colonies, a catchword that rallied many people against England and in fact inspired organized resistance. **Samuel Adams**, an American lawyer who was the leader of the discontent, organized the agitators into '**the Sons of Liberty**', whose political activities fanned the colonies into overt rebellion. Virginia's assembly denounced taxation and on Massachusetts's initiative the first **inter-colonial Congress** was summoned with a view to solving the conflict. But soon it became clear that the real problem was not how taxes should be levied and in what amount, but whether they should be levied at all. Whereas most British officials believed that Parliament was an imperial body that could legislate for Great Britain and all her colonies, American colonies held a contrary opinion – they argued that there was no imperial Parliament and that they were beyond the British Parliament's jurisdiction. The colonists regarded themselves as still retaining and enjoying the rights secured by the Glorious Revolution (1688) according to which the right to be taxed only with the consent of themselves or their representatives was the most fundamental one. The colo-

¹⁹ In May 1763 the North Western Indians went on the warpath under the leadership of Chief Pontiac, the whole Frontier was in flames. From 1759 to 61 there was a war with the Cherokees.

²⁰ The Crown attempted to put a limit to the westward expansion to protect the rights of Indians and some western territories were proclaimed Indian. The Royal Proclamation of 1763 drew a line from North to South, and stated that thus far may the colonist go and no further.

nies did not have their MPs in Westminster, so they believed Parliament could not lawfully tax them. Only their own assemblies could represent them and tax them and these legislative bodies had not been consulted. It was obvious that the Stamp Act encroached on their powers. The colonies accepted, at least in theory, the power of Westminster Parliament to tax colonial commodities to regulate trade, but The Stamp Act introduced direct taxation whose aim was to improve the revenue of the British Empire. The colonist feared that it was the first step on the way to transferring the tax burden of the Empire from British shoulders to their own, and such an assumption was a heavy blow to American confidence in British wisdom, and it undermined the loyalty of many moderate citizens.

The opposition to the Stamp Act made Parliament repeal it (1766). This was an obvious humiliation for Parliament, and the discovery, on the colonists' part, that an organized resistance could prevent enforcement of any act gave the colonists a heady sense of their own strength. The colonies thus rejoiced, and the trade with GB so far boycotted was resumed. Peace seemed at hand, but it was only a respite. The year 1767 brought another attempt to tax American colonists; some new measures were taken to enforce the new and the old laws in order to tighten the control over American trade. This challenge to the colonists' liberties stirred a new discord that affected all thirteen colonies.

Massachusetts, as might be expected, led the way. Samuel Adams was again the leader of the discontent, brandishing all formidable ramifications of the new so-called **Townshend Acts**. Here was another case of taxation without representation; here was a plot to make governors independent of assemblies.²¹ He did not have any scruples to frighten Americans with the consequences of having a standing army or even with a prospect of having a bishop to supervise the New England congregations. That was added to commonplace fears that new regulations would put an end to profitable smuggling, which in the long run would result in the rise of prices. Such speculations swayed some of the unconvinced to the banner of the Sons of Liberty. The boycott of English imports began anew; there were occasional acts of violence directed at the commissioners. To bolster the commissioners the British government sent two regiments of regular soldiers to Boston, where most of the mobbing took place. This move had a very bad impact on public opinion in America. Samuel Adams used it to argue that the standing army had been sent not for the purpose of defense but to force Massachusetts to obedience to the British Parliament. It was, to his mind, a clear sign of impending British tyranny.

The British troops did not have an easy life in Boston. They were harassed regularly by the mob, usually made of young boys who considered the work their patriotic duty. Then on **5 March 1770** a tragedy took place. Goaded beyond endurance, the soldiers fired in self-defense killing five Bostonians. The dead became martyrs; the event was elevated into a legend and dramatically called '**The Boston Massacre**'. It was used by Samuel Adams as evidence that the standing army was a threat to civil liberties. All colonies expressed their deepest sympathies for Massachusetts after the grossly exaggerated accounts of the incident reached them.

The British Parliament retreated again, repealing the hateful acts and moving the regiments to different headquarters outside Boston. George III only insisted on keeping on

²¹ Part of the money raised through the new taxes was to be the governors' salary, which was a novelty because so far the governors received their pay from the assemblies and thus were dependent on these elective bodies.

principle the tea tax. Therefore an embargo on British tea continued, but for a while the emotions in the colonies subsided. Only Samuel Adams relentlessly strove to keep up the hostilities, using every possible pretext to bully English authorities. He made speeches and published numerous articulate pamphlets and articles, and finally in 1773 he induced the authorities of Massachusetts to establish a **Committee of Correspondence to State the Rights and Grievances** and to 'communicate with other states on the grievances'. Quickly these inter-colonial committees mushroomed, and by 1774 three hundred towns had been drawn into the network. Each committee reported to the Boston Committee that provided connection with all the other colonies. These committees became the basis of revolutionary organizations which eventually usurped the power in all colonies.

In 1773 Britain supplied Samuel Adams with another pretext for carrying out the anti-British agitation. The powerful East India Company had found itself in a state of bankruptcy and the government had to intervene. To save the company the government not only granted it a monopoly on all tea exported to the colonies, but also removed the tax on it to make the price of the company's tea well under the customary one. In this way the company's tea could compete effectively with the smuggled tea. The colonies drank enormous quantities of contraband tea, whose import now became much less profitable. To make matters worse the East India Company could sell their tea directly to consumers – without any middlemen – and thus many small colonial merchants could be put out of business. The tradesmen joined **the patriots**, as Samuel Adams' adherents were now called, and together they did their best to intimidate the agents who were to sell the Company's tea. The shipments were warehoused or returned, and only in Boston the agents refused to give up. On the night of December 16, 1773 Adams organized a new outrage. A band of men roughly disguised as Indians dumped the cargo of three British tea-ships into the murky waters of the Boston harbor nearly choking them. 'The Indians' were doubtlessly Adams's followers summoned from different Massachusetts's towns through his committees of correspondence. The event was dubbed '**The Boston Tea Party**' and it inspired in some colonies an organized resistance to shipments of the East India Company's Tea.

The news of the Tea Party and similar incidents elsewhere made British public opinion and Parliament unanimous. The Party was condemned as an act of vandalism and everybody expected Parliament to chastise Massachusetts – the unquestionable leader of the revolt. To bring that unruly province to heel Parliament passed the so-called **Coercive Acts**, whose aim was to crush Boston. The first closed the port of Boston until the tea was paid for. The other act passed certain powers of the assemblies to the governor and empowered the governor to quarter troops wherever he saw fit. Finally the king also signed **the Quebec Act**, which extended the authority of Quebec into Ohio and Illinois regions. Through the last act was not intended as a punitive measure; the colonists considered it an obstacle to their westward expansion. This act and four other acts that preceded it became known as '**Five Intolerable Acts**'. General Gage, an advocate of firm measures towards the colonies, was appointed a new governor; his task was to enforce the Intolerable Acts.

In the meantime, other colonies fearing the same repercussions turned against Britain and supported Massachusetts. Farmers from the colonies sent provisions to Boston to help Bostonians to survive without their harbor. In all colonies governors and assemblies clashed and there was more and more talk about the necessity of organizing a general inter-colonial congress to discuss the crisis. Finally on September 5, 1774, among vast en-

thusiasm, the delegates met in Philadelphia defying Gage and his soldiers. Only Georgia did not send her delegates, other colonies sent their brightest politicians. The delegates from Massachusetts were the most radical ones and they were regarded with certain distrust, as not all delegates held such advanced views. What this so-called **First Continental Congress** boiled down to was the question of Parliamentary Supremacy – the delegates repudiated the authority of the British Parliament and the Five Intolerable Acts, once again stating that their union was with the Crown not with the British Parliament, that it had no more rights to pass laws for Massachusetts or any other colony, and that colonial assemblies had to pass laws for Great Britain. The Congress decided also to set up a **Continental Association** to enforce the policy of embargo on British goods. The Association finished off the work of the Committees of Correspondence in putting an end to what remained of royal authority in the colonies. Indeed one might say that the Committees where the first step towards political union, whereas the Association was the second.

The British Parliament's answer was **the Restraining Act** also banning all trade between America and other British colonies. By that time Gage was virtually besieged in Boston. As Lord Camden, who tried to warn his fellow MPs against such a radical anti-American course of action, remarked 'the 10.000 men sent to Boston could only save general Gage from the disgrace (...) of being sacked in his entrenchments'. It was beyond the general's power to subdue the countryside, where American militia had already been drilling, and stores of munitions had been piling up. Gage did not even dare to arrest the most radical leaders, who aired their revolutionary opinions with impunity and went about their business right under his nose. Soon most of the governors fled from the colonies and the loyalists, appalled by these overt preparations for war, tried as best as they could to prepare for self-defense. It was clear that they would have to fend for themselves after George III had poured scorn on a petition sent to him by Philadelphia Quakers begging the King to embark on a conciliatory course of action. The King's answer was 'the die is now cast, the colonies must either submit or triumph'. From then on things drifted from bad to worse.

On the night of **18 April 1775**, spurred by the British Government, Gage reluctantly set out to seize and destroy a military store at Concord. This expedition was to be secret, but miles away people warned by the nightriders knew that 'the British are coming'. Seventy-five volunteers made an attempt to stop the British at **Lexington**. The attempt failed, eight Americans were killed, ten wounded. Then the British pushed on to Concord but their mission was also abortive – the stores of munitions had been removed or hidden. The long march back to Boston was a nightmare. The bright red coats of the British Infantry were a good target for American marksmen, and British casualties were heavy. The first blood of the war was shed and so began **the American Revolution (1775–1783)**.

At that time the **Second Continental Congress** met in Philadelphia. It had hardly opened when it was faced with the news of the open warfare with the British. The Congress passed a declaration entitled '**Causes and Necessity of Taking up Arms**' in which it stated that the British were the enemy against which the American colonies presently would arm to preserve their liberties 'resolved to die free men rather than live slaves'. The Congress proceeded swiftly to organize the war effort and entrusted the command of the army to a Southerner – **George Washington** from Virginia. It was important that all colonies should have a stake in the conflict, so, to offset the leadership of Massachusetts, the representative of the largest southern colony was appointed the commander-in-chief. He himself saw his choice as injudicious. He confessed to his friend: 'From the day I enter upon the

command of the American armies, I date my fall, and the ruin of my reputation'.²² Of course he was wrong. In retrospect he was one of the greatest American leaders, next to Abraham Lincoln, who led Americans through another ordeal – the Civil War almost a century later. Both the American Revolution and the Civil War were two last chapters in the history of the birth of a new nation that had been started by the settlers of Jamestown, Plymouth and Massachusetts.

Still at that time, at the beginning of the Revolution, there were many people who doubted the wisdom of complete separation with England. But even to them it was obvious that the colonies must make their choice, that they could no longer stay half in and half out of the British Empire. Now that it was for Americans an all-out war, it was either victory or total submission. Nobody made it clearer than **Thomas Paine** the author of the little fifty-page pamphlet *Common Sense*. He persuasively presented two alternatives – the continued submission to a tyrannical king and his anachronistic government or a free, happy and self-sufficient republic based on the new Enlightenment ideas of Montesquieu and Locke. This pamphlet was immensely popular (120.000 copies sold) and did more than anything else to rally colonists to the cause of American independence.

It was Thomas Paine's suggestion to draft a declaration of independence. Even though officially a committee was summoned to produce such a document, in practice **the Declaration of Independence** was the work of one person – **Thomas Jefferson** from Virginia, the most populous and important state. Jefferson was a child of the European Enlightenment, and his political talents were matched with an equally great gift for writing lucid and convincing prose. On the 4th of July 1776 Congress voted the approval of the Declaration and the 4th of July became a great American holiday – **Independence Day**.

The most famous passage of the document embraces the most important tenets of the political philosophy of the Age of Reason:

We hold these truths to be self-evident that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of happiness. That to secure these rights, Governments are instituted among Men deriving their just powers from the consent of the governed, that whenever any Form of Government becomes destructive of these ends; it is the right of the people to alter or abolish it, and to institute a new government, laying its foundations on such principles, and organizing its power in such form, as to them shall seem more likely to effect their safety and Happiness...²³

Thus, as it can be seen from the above fragment, the declaration not only rested upon particular grievances, which were later enumerated. First and foremost, it appealed to the common people, explaining to them in clear and logical language what they were fighting for – which was a dignified place in a democratic society, whose governments would be responsive to that society's problems and needs.

The revolutionary war, which was in fact, a civil war because Americans fought on both sides, lasted for six years. General Howe, now in command of the British army, drove the American rebels out of New York City, but then at Christmas 1776 Washington struck

²² Quoted in Hugh Brogan, *The Penguin History of the USA*, Second Edition, Penguin Books, London, 2001. p. 166.

²³ Ibid. p. 175–176.

back and saved Pennsylvania from falling into British hands. The next year 1777 saw the greatest American victory of the war at **Saratoga** (northern NY) (**17 October 1777**), where Americans penned in six thousand British soldiers who had marched from Canada to subdue them.

This change of luck was used by Benjamin Franklin, now an American ambassador in France, to convince Louis XVI that the American Revolution was a war at which GB could indeed be beaten. The French, eager for reprisal against England ever since the loss of Quebec, had been covertly sending munitions to the rebels almost from the first day of the rebellion. Now the French declared war on the British, and soon the Spanish, the French ally, did the same. In this way the whole British Empire became vulnerable – its extent gave the initiative to the French who could attack at any time and any place they wished. But George III was willing to go on fighting forever, firmly believing that the British would outlast the French and once the French were beaten, Washington's army could be caught and dispatched.

These hopes were dashed by another incompetent British General, **General Cornwallis**, who let himself and his soldiers be lured out of the South, where from 1778 most of the fighting took place. Cornwallis set out North losing men and supplies on the way until he realized that he could neither go forward nor retreat because the resistance he encountered was beyond his means. He bogged down in **Yorktown** in Virginia and waited to be rescued by the Royal Navy. The Navy did not come in time and on **17 October 1781** he had to surrender to Washington leading the combined American and French forces.

Yorktown was a decisive victory, which settled the question of American independence. Lord North, the British Prime Minister, was convinced that it was 'all over' and the House of Commons shared his views.

In the **Treaty of Paris (September 3, 1783)** the British recognized American independence, made concessions to American fishermen in Canadian waters, agreed to most generous boundaries of the new republic – the territory west of the Mississippi was the United States' greatest gain. The American Empire was how Americans liked to call their new state.

But on the other hand, Spain acquired Florida and Louisiana with the port of New Orleans, thus becoming the major obstacle in American westward expansion. A full-scale war broke out on the frontier where the Spanish were able to stir up powerful southern Indian tribes. It seemed at that time that the king of Spain had more authority there than the new American state or Congress, helpless in the face of these adverse developments. The new republic was very weak and dependent on French protection.

The internal situation in America was as bad as her international position. It seemed that once the British were defeated all reasons to stay in the Union ceased to exist. Each state had its own government, its own constitution, its own policies and interests clearly divergent from the interests of the others. The war was followed by an economic crisis compounded by a great national debt. Each state had its own currency that was quickly losing its value. Higher taxes were indispensable to pay old debts and to create a national government, but Americans were allergic to taxes, and besides there were many people who could not pay higher taxes – American farmers and tradesmen lost their markets in the West Indies with the effect that they could not even sell their produce.

All these problems could not be solved by **the Articles of Confederation**, the document that had loosely bound the colonies. It was felt that only a strong central government

could address properly all those issues. Under the Articles of Confederation the American government secured American possession between the Appalachians and the Mississippi, between the Great Lakes and the borders of Florida,²⁴ which was no mean political feat. What is more the same government managed to induce the States to adopt a new territorial policy, according to which the new territory was the common possession of all States that was to be divided into new States with their own government and representation in Congress. The West was thus not treated as a colony but as an extension of the nation to be incorporated to the federation on terms of absolute equality. This wise policy made it possible for the United States to expand easily from thirteen to fifty States. But still in spite of all these successes, the central government could not cope with the States' dogged quasi-independence. It did not have the power to regulate trade, and the States frequently set tax-barriers against one another, which led some politicians to believe that an interstate war would take place in the nearest future.

In May 1787 the representatives of all States, except Rhode Island, met at **the Constitutional Convention in Philadelphia** and among them were the brightest people in the new nation (called by Jefferson demigods). They were summoned to re-draft the Articles of Confederation, but the delegates threw them away and proceeded to build a new form of government in a new document called **the Constitution of the US**. Their major task was to reconcile two different powers, the power of local authorities in the States that had already been in operation with the power of the central government that was to be framed according to Montesquieu's proposals, dividing government into three coordinate and equal branches: legislative, executive and judiciary. The delegates agreed that the legislative branch would consist of two houses: the Senate and the House of Representatives, but they could not agree on the principles of election. The small States objected to basing representation on population because they feared that their representatives would be outnumbered and out argued. Large States like Virginia felt that representation in which each State would have an equal vote regardless of its population was unfair. Finally a compromise was reached – the lower house was to be elected on a population basis (with at least one representative from a State) whereas senators were to be elected by the local assemblies – two from each State. This was an essential decision without which the conference would have ended in fiasco. The delegates also agreed that the Constitution was the supreme law of the land, and they introduced the procedure of **impeachment** of the government members accused of crimes and misdemeanors. The President, an elected national leader, was to submit the most important of his decisions (appointments and treaties) to the Senate for confirmation. He might be impeached and removed by Congress. Congress made the laws for the country while the Supreme Court judges interpreted the laws. They were appointed by the President and confirmed by the Senate; they could also be impeached by Congress. Finally the decision was made that the government should not act upon the States' governments but upon all American citizens. That meant that the laws made by the legislative branch were binding in every State. The system of national courts was added to State courts where citizens could sue those decisions of local governments' that they considered illegal or unconstitutional. From then on the State identity became secondary to the national identity.

Before this new system could operate the Constitution had to be ratified by at least 9 States. In 1788 the assembly of the State of New Hampshire was the 9th State to do so. But in each State there had been hot debates prior to the ratification, which brought into

²⁴ The document regulating westward expansion was called **The North West Ordinance**.

existence two political parties **Federalists** and **Anti-federalists**, that is respectively supporters and opponents of the new form of government.

The constitution was not perfect but it was flexible and worked well. One of the earliest additions was **the Bill of Rights**, which was later incorporated to the supreme law. The Bill protects citizens against encroachments of the federal government on their personal liberties, guarantees all Americans the freedom of religion, press and speech; the right to carry arms and to a fair trial by jury; protection against ‘cruel and unusual punishments’.

3: Forming of the New Nation; Westward Expansion and Regional Differences

After the American Revolution the United States entered a long lasting economic boom. When **George Washington** became the first president of the United States, many of the problems that Americans had to tackle after the Revolution had already been on their way to solution. The population and the volume of trade increased, as well as the price of farm products, which was a very satisfactory development for a country whose main source of revenue was agriculture. The industries, though second to agriculture, also grew steadily. Massachusetts and Rhode Island were beginning to lay foundations for textile manufacture; Connecticut was starting to produce tin ware and clocks; New York, New Jersey and Pennsylvania were producing paper, glass and iron. All these achievements led **Thomas Jefferson**, the Secretary of State in President Washington’s cabinet, to exult that ‘[American] affairs [were] proceeding in a train of unparalleled prosperity’, and ‘that the there [was] not a nation under the sun enjoying more present prosperity, nor with more in prospect’.²⁵

Jefferson was of course right, but still there were some problems that pressed for solution. Even though the Constitution provided a safe compass for the future it seemed to have settled some of these problems only in theory. A whole machinery of state had to be created, and this task was conferred on George Washington. Under Washington’s leadership Congress created the **Department of State** (presided over by Jefferson) and of the **Treasury** (presided over by **Alexander Hamilton**). At the same time the Supreme Court was set up to enforce the Constitution.

Between Jefferson and Hamilton there existed a deep personal and ideological antipathy. Hamilton understood the economic forces at work in America and in the world, and he used that understanding to build the polity of the United States. He believed in a close

²⁵ Quoted in *The Penguin History of the USA*, p. 247.

union and a strong national government because only such a government could efficiently encourage trade and industry. Jefferson, on the other hand, was an idealist who preferred the United States to remain a loose federation of self-governing states because he feared tyranny and the loss of individual liberty. Jefferson believed that the development of industries and cities would lead to the concentration of wealth and power that would put an end to personal liberty and to the idea of republicanism. Hamilton wanted to create a class of rich men – merchants, financiers, manufacturers – linked to the government through the national bank and national debt because he knew that they would cooperate with the government to make it strong. For Jefferson such a system was undemocratic and inegalitarian, which was true, but Hamilton, who was a pragmatist, did not care. For him human ‘ambition and avarice’ were the most reliable pillars of the state and the art of government was to curb and guide men’s appetites for the benefit of the public. Jefferson was a staunch democrat, whereas Hamilton was a zealous capitalist believing that capitalism would in the end produce the greatest happiness for all. Jeffersonian and Hamiltonian views of life were two antagonistic forces that many later American statesmen tried to reconcile. One of the clashes between Hamilton and Jefferson and their divergent views on American future resulted in a new interpretation of the Constitution.

In 1790 Hamilton conceived a plan that proposed that the federal government should pay the debts incurred by individual states in furthering the Revolution. This decision was extremely unpopular. By then the actual holders of national bonds were only speculators who were to be, with no exception, the main beneficiaries of Hamilton’s decision. The reason why he refused to make any concessions (even for the veterans who were paid for their service not with money but certificates sold quickly to speculators) was his belief that to secure national credit and to convince the public of the government’s financial reliability there must be no exception to the rules of the game. A year later Hamilton proposed to establish a **Bank of the United States**. By then Hamilton’s uncompromising doggedness had made him many formidable enemies, as he had managed to alienate many political leaders, among whom Jefferson provided the strongest opposition. Hamilton’s supporters (Washington, among others) began to call themselves **Federalists**, whereas Jefferson’s followers, who called themselves **Republicans**, claimed that the national bank was illegal because the Constitution explicitly enumerated all the powers belonging to the federal government and setting up a bank was not among them. Hamilton answered that Congress had the power ‘to make all laws which shall be necessary and proper’ for carrying out other powers that had been specifically granted. Those included levying taxes, paying debts, borrowing money, and to perform these functions and all other financial operations a national bank was indispensable. Both Congress and Washington created a precedent by agreeing with Hamilton’s arguments about the explicit and implied powers of the federal government, and founding of the Bank of the United States was one of Hamilton’s greatest achievements.

In **foreign policy** the cornerstone of Washington’s administration was to preserve peace to give the country the time it needed to recover and to build its vital institutions. This pacifist policy was quickly challenged by the French Revolution and the Anglo-French war. Everyone favored neutrality, but neutrality was very difficult to preserve and the American people wondered which side of the conflict to take. The relations with the new revolutionary government in France were strained, the relations with the British government were even worse. The British still had their troops on American soil, in Fort Detroit and some other posts in the North West, and the markets of the British Empire were offi-

cially closed to American trade. Hamilton thought that siding with the British could help to settle these issues. Jefferson argued that France was a great sister-republic to whom Americans owed their loyalty. Finally the American grievances were partially amended by negotiations with the British, who withdrew from the forts, but other matters were left unsettled.

When Washington retired after eight years of office his vice-president **John Adams**, also a staunch Federalist, was elected president, whereas Jefferson became the Vice President. Naturally the two of them were not getting along too well, and by 1800 the President and the Vice President were no longer on speaking terms. In 1800 the tables turned, and **Jefferson** became the third President of the United States. By then most Americans were fed up with Hamiltonian influence on domestic policies. Under Washington and Adams those policies alienated large groups of people who now wished to see some change. The strong federal government was not dismantled, but new democratic procedures were introduced by Jefferson. Jefferson was an idealist and a very successful politician who, unlike the cynical Hamilton, believed in Americans, flattered them and was careful not to trample on people's toes. Therefore he enjoyed extraordinary favor among his countrymen, who preferred Jefferson's sincere complements to Hamilton's sharp truths about the depravity of human nature. Jefferson introduced more liberal naturalization laws and more humane laws for debtors and criminals.

Jefferson thought that the main business of the American people should be agriculture, and therefore he encouraged **westward expansion**. Shortly after Jefferson came into office, with just one act, he doubled the territory of the United States. The purchase of **Louisiana** in 1803 was possible after Napoleon had forced the Spanish to cede to him this territory, whereby he sold it to the United States to feed his Exchequer and to put Louisiana out of the British reach. Napoleon had known that French Louisiana had posed a danger to the young American Republic, and in the face of an impending war with Great Britain he had predicted that Americans would rally with Great Britain for the sole purpose – to oust him from Louisiana. Therefore in a pre-emptive move, he sold Louisiana for 15 million dollars. Jefferson who bought it thus secured his reelection for the second term of office (1804).²⁶

During his second term in office Jefferson mainly had to strive to maintain neutrality in **the war of Great Britain and France (1803–1815)**. But his successor **James Madison**, who in 1809 succeeded the retired Jefferson, found it difficult to tolerate some of the anti-American hostilities. Both French and English warships tried to effect a blockade on the enemy's harbors, and in this way they interfered with the American trade. American ships were often intercepted, and their cargo was seized. Then in 1810 Napoleon announced that he was going to lift the embargo, and Madison's administration took his words at their face value. In fact the embargo against the American shipments continued, but gradually the conflict with Great Britain came to the foreground. In 1812 the United States declared war on Great Britain.

In spite of some early successes the war turned to be for Americans a total disaster. An American attempt to invade British-ruled Canada ended in a fiasco, and the American embarrassment was compounded by a very successful British raid against the new capi-

²⁶ The purchase was possible only by obtaining foreign loans which would not have been available if Hamilton had not established the National Bank and the credit of the US government.

tal city Washington where all public buildings were burned down. Finally in **December 1814** the United States and Great Britain signed a treaty in Europe that ended that pointless and unnecessary war that could have been easily avoided had the British made timely concessions. For Americans the war had been inevitable. The Royal Navy had kidnapped several thousand American sailors and forced them into service on British ships. Moreover, Americans blamed the English for the Indian restlessness, which, in their opinion, was encouraged by British agents in Canada. The war was not very satisfactory for either side and the peace treaty was little more than an agreement not to fight²⁷ and neither side made any explicit concessions. But the war also had some positive consequences. It strengthened American unity and patriotism. It also brought it home to the American statesmen how dangerous was the Jeffersonian doctrine favoring agriculture over the new rising industries. The British blockade of the American ports brought about the realization how hopelessly dependent on imports was the young American Republic. Therefore finally it was understood that full political independence was not possible without a complete self-sufficiency in which both agriculture and industries were equally important.

Finally during the next administration of President James Monroe a warning was sent to all European powers, which later was labeled as the famous **Monroe Doctrine**. It announced that the American continents should not henceforth be considered 'as subjects for future colonization by any European power.' This doctrine was an effective deterrent for Great Britain not to try to extend her possessions in America. It also foreshadowed the American desire to acquire hegemony over the New World. There was another important concept encapsulated in Monroe's doctrine, which came to be called **isolationism** – a wish not to interfere in the internal concerns of any European powers and in any European wars.

One of John Adam's last actions as President was to appoint **John Marshall** Chief Justice the United States (1801). He also appointed a dozen of other judges (William Marbury among others). However, these appointments were not delivered by the new Secretary of State, none other than James Madison later president of the United States, for whom the new judges were all political opponents. So he refused to deliver the appointments whereby he was sued by Marbury. The case **Marbury v. Madison** came up before the Supreme Court and Marshall found in favor of Madison explaining that the law under which Madison was sued was unconstitutional. This famous case established the principle of judicial review and judicial supremacy, and what it boils down to is that if the Supreme Court decides that a law is in opposition to the Constitution, the Court may declare the law illegal. This precedent made the Court the main interpreter of the Constitution. Madison disliked that doctrine very much but could not fight it since it was embodied in a decision in his favor. So John Marshall got away with it and maintained it through his long tenure as Chief Justice (1801–1833). Owing to Marshall's effort the Supreme Court was transformed into a powerful tribunal whose position was as strong as that of the government or the President.²⁸

²⁷ Ironically the greatest battle in the war – in New Orleans was fought after the Treaty because the news of the Treaty did not reach the combatants on time. Americans won this battle under the leadership of General Andrew Jackson.

²⁸ The Court not always used this power with wisdom in the case of *Dred Scott v. Sandford* (1857) the judges declared that Scott had not been freed while being taken through a free state and that the Mis-

As important as politics in the shaping of the new nation was what was happening on **the Frontier**, the areas where white men had just penetrated. Before 1789 the American society kept close to the shore and looked seawards. Afterwards the vast unexplored West started to play an ever more important place in shaping the nation. The Frontier encouraged individual initiative, it broke down conservatism and fostered democracy, and by roughening manners created a more egalitarian society. The people in the West developed an idea that they were equal because on the Frontier men were valued not for their aristocratic descent, inherited wealth or years of schooling but for what they could do. Thus the West had a great faith in democracy, the ability of the common man. Every adult male was eligible for vote and run for public office. Farms were easy to acquire and land was cheap. It was a time when, as one journalist said 'young people could go West and grow up with the country.'

Frontier settlers were a very varied group. The first to come to the wilderness were woodsmen also called frontiersmen. They were followed by pioneers who cleared the land of the forest. Then came the doctors, lawyers, storekeepers, preachers and politicians. The woodsmen and pioneers paved the way for the rest, and those who came after them built roads, mills, churches, and schools and introduced better farming methods and improved stock. When Jefferson made the Louisiana purchase, he predicted that it would take a thousand years to people the unexplored West but he was wrong. By 1830 1/3 or maybe even a half of the American nation lived west of the Appalachian Mountains. Chicago, on the shore of the Great Lakes, became the gateway to the West. It is the best example illustrating the enormous speed of transformation. At the beginning of the 19th century it had been just an unpromising cluster of huts, but before some of its first settlers died it was one of the largest and richest cities in the United States.

Naturally, the white settlers encroached on **the Indian lands** and encountered a stiff resistance. The Indians made fierce attacks on the settlers, in response the settlers exterminated whole Indian villages. During Monroe's presidency the government intervened to protect the interests of the settlers, and the Indians were to be moved to some new territories further west to empty the lands that the settlers wanted. In **1830 the Indian Removal Act** was passed. All Indians living east of Mississippi were to be moved west to the so-called **Indian territory**, where according to the government they could continue their way of life. Dislodging Indians, as the government claimed, was designed to save them from extinction and to make it possible for them to preserve their culture in the territory, which was to be forever theirs, where they could live unmolested by the settlers.

Even before the Indian Removal Act of 1830, Indians had been cheated of their lands. Illiterate Indians were coerced to put their names on documents transferring the land title, which they did not understand. But the Indian Removal Act was the greatest wrong committed against Indians.²⁹ Under the Act 60.000 Indians of the so-called Five Civilized Tribes were uprooted from the land which they had always occupied and moved to lands far across Mississippi (in Oklahoma) that eventually in due time were also wrested from them. In 1831 and 32 President **Andrew Jackson** had the Choctaw tribe (Alabama and Mis-

souri compromise was unconstitutional and thus they contributed to the outbreak of the Civil War. In the 19th century the Court interpreted the Constitution in favor of capital and against labor and in favor of segregation. In the 20th century it disgraced itself by its support for the anti-communist witch-hunt (until Earl Warren, Chief Justice from 1953–69, stopped it).

²⁹ Another wrong on a similar scale was the Allotment Act of 1887.

Mississippi) relocated to Oklahoma. Before they started on their long trek the white settlers had arrived to trick Indians of their property. The winter when they marched to Oklahoma was the coldest since 1776 – at least 1.600 Indian children and old people died due to coldness, starvation and the epidemic of cholera. A similar fate befell Cherokees who long before the Removal Act had realized that in order to survive the encounter with the white man they had to learn his ways. They had changed their life style from that of a Stone Age tribe to a civilized society. They had become successful farmers. They had invented a written alphabet for their language; they had a printing press and published a weekly newspaper. In 1827 they had adopted a constitution based on that of the United States'. They had converted to Christianity, went to church and sent their children to school. To no avail. In 1837 and 38 they were driven out of their farms and marched in the dead of winter to Oklahoma. The nightmare lasted over five months; the death toll amounted to more than 4.000 people. The Cherokee called this chapter in their tribal history **the Trail of Tears** – it was perhaps the most glaring example of the American government's hypocrisy.

The 19th century was the Indian era of defeat, and if Indians had any victories they were usually short-lived and cruelly retaliated. When the government decided to pen Indians in 'reservations' because their wandering way of life simply took too much space, the Indians of the Sioux and Cheyenne tribes rebelled in June 1876. The warriors of the two tribes led by **Crazy Horse** and **Sitting Bull** wiped out an American regiment (225 people). The battle is often called '**Custer's last stand**' because General George Custer died in the battle. For the Sioux it was also their last stand. In 1890 among the Sioux began the so-called **Ghost Dance Movement**. A religious leader persuaded the Sioux that if they kept on dancing a certain dance the dead warriors would rise from the dead and outnumber the whites, thus making it possible for the Indians to sweep the white men away. Such a wish deeply bothered the American government, which sent the army to restore order. On **29 December 1890** the United States soldiers killed more than 200 Indians. Those who did not perish on the spot, died in a blizzard.

A year later some of the **Nez Perces** were forced out of their homes in Oregon. They devised a brilliant campaign in defense of their homes. **General Sherman** said that they fought with almost scientific skill. Finally, however, they were caught near the Canadian border, which, for them, was a border between annihilation and safety. They surrendered and tried to henceforth use diplomacy to get back to their homelands. They received generous promises, which were of course broken. **Geronimo** was the last Indian chief to organize armed resistance. He was an Apache who fought with the American army for ten years in Arizona (1876–86), then he surrendered and spent the rest of his life as a farmer in Oklahoma.

The Allotment Act of 1887 completed Indian expropriation – 86 million acres were taken away from Indians. The reservations in which they were closed were poverty-ridden and the Indians died there by ten of thousands of diseases and famine. In fewer than one hundred years since the Declaration of Independence, Americans succeeded in robbing Indians of their land.

The settlement in the West proceeded with great haste. Indiana was admitted in 1816, Mississippi in 1817, Illinois in 1818, Alabama in 1819, Main in 1820, Missouri in 1821. In 1845 Texas entered the Union. In 1846 Oregon³⁰ was admitted. In 1848 after the war

³⁰ At first settlers had gone to Oregon by ship round South America and along the Pacific coast. In 1832 they started to travel by land – the route was called **the Oregon Trail**.

with Mexico new areas in the South West were annexed to the Union.³¹ Around 1845 a New York journalist's coined a phrase '**manifest destiny**' which designated American nationalists' claim that America should straddle the two oceans because it was the mission of the American people to bring the entire continent under their control. The extremists demanded that the United States should stretch all the way North to the boundary with Alaska at latitude 54° 40 minutes. The boundary with Canada remained at the 49th parallel of latitude, but below it the American hunger for land continued unchecked.

³¹ The territory seized after the war are today California, Arizona, Nevada, Utah, New Mexico, Colorado.

USA – The 19th century

1: The Civil War

When Westward expansion was almost completed the issue of slavery began to overshadow everything else in American politics. At the beginning of the 19th century 1,2 million people out of 7,2 million living in the US were slaves. Washington was a slave owner; Jefferson not only had slaves but also fathered an illegitimate child with a slave woman.

In the South slavery was very well entrenched. In some seaboard states by the 1850s slavery had been more than 200 years old, and it was an integral part of the economic system of the region. The Southerners could not imagine a tolerable future without slaves and came to regard slavery as something permanent and indispensable. Southern political leaders, publicists, professional people and even the clergy were all apologists of slavery, convincing public opinion that slavery was not evil, that it was far more humane than the wage system that existed in the North. But still one could not overlook the fact that the workers in the North were not whipped, their family members were not taken away from them to be sold, and they could not be killed by their employers with impunity. Before 1830 the situation of slaves had been much better. In the old patriarchal system of administering a plantation the owner had supervised his slaves by himself. After 1830 when the volume of cotton and sugar production started drastically to rise, masters took to employing professional overseers whose wages were in proportion to the amount of work they had been able to extract from the slaves. Thus they exacted the utmost labor.

Westward expansion was a necessity for the South because cultivating a single crop – cotton – quickly exhausted the land and new fertile soil was needed to keep up with production.¹ Therefore on the national political scene, next to the protection of the institution of slavery, Southerners endeavored to enlarge the areas available for tillage. That, however, encroached on the interest of northern farmers who also moved west, and who did not have any slaves to effectively compete with the slave-owners. Thus the North vehemently opposed the extension of slavery into the territories not yet organized as states.

¹ By the 1850 7/8 of world's supplies of cotton came from the American South.

As early as in 1787 slavery had been prohibited north of the Ohio River. In 1820, under the **Missouri Compromise**, with the single exception of Missouri all territories to the north of the line of latitude 36° 30' were closed to slavery. But as each new state was applying for admission to the union the issue of slavery in the new territories revived, and it was perfectly clear that the Missouri Compromise did not settle the dispute. Since slavery had already existed in Texas, Texas was admitted as a slave state, then Oregon entered the Union as a free state to offset the admission of the slave Texas.

In 1850 California came into the Union as a free state, but Utah and New Mexico were to decide for themselves whether they wanted to come in as free or slave states. Around that time the territories of **Kansas and Nebraska** were being settled and the question of their system of administration aroused new heated controversies. **Stephen A. Douglas**, a senator from Illinois, argued that the Missouri Compromise had been already violated so many times that it should be altogether abandoned, and the people in the two new territories should be allowed to vote whether they wanted slavery or not. Douglas won this argument, and in 1854 the **Kansas and Nebraska Act** replaced the Missouri Compromise and gave the settlers the right to choose whether they wanted slavery or not. It was a great victory for southern statesmen, but soon it turned out that the results of the act were a complete disaster. Slave holders and antislavery men came swarming into Kansas and Nebraska to influence the vote. All of them were armed-to-the-teeth, and some southern states sent even their militia. The conflict quickly escalated into open warfare that conferred on the territory the unsavory nickname '**bleeding Kansas**'. Thus in the struggle between the North and the South, the West became a bloody battlefield, a stage for the last rehearsal before the Civil War.

There were numerous other animosities connected with the abolitionist movement that contributed to the growing hostility between the North and the South. In 1831 **William Lloyd Garrison** founded in Boston a new journal, *The Liberator*, dedicated to the abolition of slavery. Garrison was a fanatical and uncompromising journalist who wanted to purge the American soul of the deadly sin of slavery. For some Americans, especially those from the South, he was an extremist and a seditious agitator, for others he was the voice of the American conscience.

In 1852 **Harriet Beecher Stowe** published a novel about slavery entitled *Uncle's Tom Cabin* which did more than legislators or pamphleteers to convince Americans of the evil of slavery and to infuse them with enthusiasm for the anti-slavery cause.

Naturally Southerners hated Abolitionists who not only criticized slavery as a violation of the basic constitutional right of every person to be free but also actively helped the run-away slaves. In 1850 Congress passed a new **Fugitive Slave Law** that inflicted severe punishment for all helping run-away slaves. This act was a part of a compromise between the North and the South. California was to be admitted to the union as a free state while Utah and New Mexico were to be given the right to choose their status. These arrangements were clearly converse to the interests of the South, so to placate the Southern politicians and to cajole them into accepting the deal, the Fugitive Slaves Law was passed making it easier for bounty hunters² to recapture run-away slaves.

The Fugitive Slave Law was seen by Northerners as treachery, and it gave momentum to the development of the so-called **Underground Railroad**. The Underground Railroad was

² Bounty hunters were men who earned their living catching fugitive slaves for rewards – 'bounties'.

a system of escape routes for run-away slaves from the South to Canada. The hiding places were called '**depots**', the guides searching and guiding the fugitives north were called '**conductors**'. The money necessary for the efficient organization of the system was provided by the abolitionists, whose determination and boldness was regarded by the Southerners with growing suspicion.

Around that time that feeling was compounded by some violent disputes concerning **import duties**. The North wanted high import duties to protect its young industries from competition with Europe. The South, on the other hand, depended on Europe for import of luxury goods, as well as some necessities. High import duties would raise the price of these commodities significantly. The North, like the South, was predominantly agrarian. Although the towns in the North were growing with unprecedented speed, they were still chiefly commercial, rather than manufacturing centers. But the South completely failed to industrialize and even its agriculture was very backward. Slavery, though extremely profitable, in the long run thwarted progress, and each year, in spite of its wealth, the South lagged further behind the rest of the United States. In 1850 that disproportion started to appear as an unbridgeable gap. It was then that **John C. Calhoun**, a Southern politician and most ardent champion of the Southern way of life, came up with a new doctrine that became known as the '**states' rights doctrine**', according to which a state had the right to disobey the federal law if that law harmed that's state's interests. The corollary of this doctrine was that the state had a right to secede to protect itself from what it believed was the tyrannous majority.

The main opponent of the states' rights doctrine was **Senator Daniel Webster** from Massachusetts who warned Americans that, by usurping the power of the Supreme Court to decide whether the federal authorities were right or wrong, the states' rights doctrine threatened to dismember the entire Union. But the states' rights doctrine was, in fact, nothing else than rhetoric whose main objective was to pull some wool over the public's eyes. In fact the Northern majority was 'tyrannous' only because it actively opposed slavery. Slavery then, appeared as the most important issue in the impending Civil War.

In 1857 a new scandal disrupted the nation and brought it closer to upheaval – it was the case of **Dred Scott v. Sanford**. Dred Scott was a slave who sued for liberation on the grounds that he had been taken through a free state and thus, according to law, he was a free man. The Justices, most of whom were Southerners, declared that by entering a slave state again, Scott lost his right to be free. What is more the Supreme Court rashly declared that the Missouri Compromise of 1820 was unconstitutional, because Congress had not possessed the constitutional right to pass or to enforce it. It was an unasked-for verdict and a pointless provocation because the Compromise was dead anyway. For the Southerners it was a great victory for it justified and sanctioned the existence of slavery in the West. But the North simply regarded it as evidence that the southern conspiracy corrupted the Supreme Court. Tempers grew worse and the tension was steadily mounting. The planters more frequently talked about secession but hesitated and might have done so for years to come if it had not been for **John Brown**.

John Brown was an anti-slavery fanatic whose mind was dazzled by the idea of inciting a widespread slave resurrection in the South. He thought that the slaves would revolt against their masters if they were convinced that the North would support them. Then the rebels could be organized into army that would put an end to the 'peculiar institution', as slavery was called. He was supported by the abolitionists in the North, who gave

him money to carry out this preposterous and unrealistic plan. On **16 October 1859**, with 18 followers he captured the federal arsenal at **Harper's Ferry**. The next day he was forced to surrender, taken to Charleston, tried for treason and hanged. In his last written words Brown predicted the coming of the bloody Civil War: 'I John Brown am now quite certain that the crimes of this guilty land: will never be purged away: but with Blood'³.

To many abolitionists Brown became a prophet and a martyr. He himself believed he was an instrument in God's hands. But many Northerners condemned Brown and his deeds and disowned him as a half-mad criminal. To no avail. The South turned deaf ears on anti-Brown manifestations in a stern belief that the Abolitionists wished to maintain the country's unity by means of a slave rebellion.

While Brown's raid was the point of no return, the election of **Abraham Lincoln**⁴ as the next president was the excuse the Southern die-hards needed in order to break the Union. Lincoln carried the majority of Northern and Western states; he did not carry a single state in the South. When the news of his election reached South Carolina, the center of the secessionist schemes, the process of disentangling the state from the Union was immediately set going. In state after state conventions were summoned (bypassing assemblies), during which their union with the US was dissolved. Mississippi, Florida, Alabama, Georgia, Louisiana and Texas sent their representatives to Montgomery, where a new government was to be set up. **Jefferson Davis** became the president of the new state called **The Confederate States of America** (commonly referred to as **Confederacy**). Those events shook the complacent North that had never really believed in the threat of dissolution.

Abraham Lincoln, sworn as president a month later, announced the secession illegal. On **15 April 1861** the Confederates attacked **Fort Sumter** in the harbor of **Charleston, South Carolina** that was occupied by the US troops. The first blood of the Civil War was shed.

The event put other southern states that still hesitated in an agonizing situation. Virginia, for example, did not consider Lincoln's election a danger and had been so far loyal to the Union, in which she herself had invested so much good work. But on the other hand, for Virginia, as for other states, their loyalty was first and foremost to the state not the Union. Virginia endorsed the states' rights doctrine and the vision of the Union as a loose federation, from which she could secede when it suited her. So Virginia joined the Confederacy and Arkansas, Tennessee and North Carolina followed. With Virginia went **Colonel Robert E. Lee**, the most outstanding American commander, who, out of loyalty to his state, refused to become a chief-in-command of the US army, which was a heavy blow to the Union. The border states: Kentucky, Maryland and Missouri, fearing that they would bear the brunt of the Yankee attack, stayed in the Union, which does not mean that they were sincerely loyal because their citizens came flocking into the South to fill the ranks of the Confederate army.

The first months of the war were characterized by a state of inertia caused by general unpreparedness of both belligerents. Gradually, however, the economy of the North was readjusted to meet the wartime needs. In material resources and manpower the North's was much stronger than the South. The North was twice as populous as the South, had

³ qtd. in *The Penguin History of the United States*, p. 309.

⁴ Lincoln's debut on the political scene was in the role of a sworn Abolitionist, who had opposed Southern Senator Stephen Douglas in a memorable series of debates on the issues of slavery.

a full command of the sea, expanding industries and a solid financial base (it had a national bank that could borrow the money it needed for the conduct of the war). What the North could not produce, it could purchase abroad. All these were the assets that the South did not possess.

However, the South had one great advantage. The initiative was now in the Northern hands because it was the North that wanted to restore the Union, and in order to achieve that goal, the North had to invade the South, while all the South had to do was to hold out, and most Southerners believed that they could do that.

Strong though the North was, it lacked skillful military leaders and it lacked a disciplined army. The recruits were poorly trained and there were frequent draft riots and endless desertions. The war was chiefly fought in the Mississippi valley and in Virginia, where the Yankees tried hopelessly to capture **Richmond**, the new capital of Confederacy. Robert E. Lee and **Thomas J. 'Stonewall' Jackson** showed great ingenuity in outwitting the Union army generals. The Northern prospects looked slim for a long time to come.

Then in **February 1862** an obscure West Point graduate **General Ulysses Simpson Grant** took command of the US army in the West and had some first successes in Mississippi. Moreover on **24 April**, a brilliant Naval commander **Commodore David Farragut** captured **New Orleans**, so when Grant pushed southwards and in the **battle of Vicksburg** defeated the strongest Confederate army in the West, the whole Mississippi river was in Union hands. The South was split with Texas and Arkansas on one side and other states on the other. But in Virginia the so called **Army of the Potomac**⁵ suffered defeat after defeat. The morale of Northerners was at its lowest ebb.

Still there was the issue of slavery that remained unresolved. Slavery had been the main cause of the war – it had poisoned the political life in America for more than 30 years. Lincoln had already made up his mind to announce that the abolition of slavery was the main aim of the war, but he bid his time, waiting for an appropriate moment to issue the Emancipation Proclamation. Had it been issued in defeat, it would have seemed a desperate effort on his part to change the tack of the war by resorting to black help in order to bring down the otherwise invincible South. Thus the president needed a victory and since no decisive, spectacular victory was at hand, he used **the battle at Antietam** in Maryland (**September 17, 1862**) as the victory he needed (though the Union army under **General McClellan** hammered back Lee's advance – at best the battle was a draw). He gave the Confederacy an ultimatum – the rebel states were to come back to the union by the end of the year, or all the slaves in the Confederacy were to be freed. When the Confederates failed to comply, on **January 1, 1863**, Lincoln issued the **Emancipation Proclamation**, whereby all slaves in the southern states became free people.

The news caused a considerable turmoil in the South. Even though the Confederacy tried to suppress all reports of the Proclamation before they reached the interior of the country, the news spread quickly along the slave grapevine with a speed that always amazed the planters. The Black people, who had so far quietly worked on the plantations indirectly contributing to the Confederate war effort, now took to fleeing in large numbers undermining the entire economic system of the South. They strengthened the union army, becoming invaluable spies and guides. They helped the Yankee prisoners of war to

⁵ The Union army was named after the Potomac River.

escape in the hundreds, they built trenches, bridges, roads, and forts, and more and more often they were allowed to fight. Thus the Proclamation gave a new dynamic direction to the war, which changed from the war to restore the old union into a war for new better America.

In the North the war taught Yankees their first lessons in management and caused a fantastic expansion of industry. Mass production made it possible to supply the army with the necessary equipment and munitions, while the railways⁶ moved easily both the supplies and soldiers from one part of the country to another. In the South the economy was crumbling. Due to an embargo imposed on the South by President Lincoln, the Southern ports could not ship cotton to Europe and the South was starting to feel the pain and pinch of hunger. There was no sufficient supply of munitions, medicines, clothes and shoes. The South attempted to compensate the lack of supplies by setting up new industries in Atlanta. But the South was only deluding itself. The Southern shoe factory, for example, could produce only 5,000 shoes a year and the Confederate army frequently went to battle barefoot. Confederate money was quickly losing value. As the war went on, there were more and more gaunt, tattered and desperate people in the South.

The North operated at peak efficiency (in spite of occasional cases of incompetence). Under the centralized federal government the north could pass the laws it needed to grapple with all the difficulties: a new banking law, new income laws, new martial laws (to curb desertions and catch southern sympathizers in the North) were passed. The southern political structure was far less efficient. While fighting under the principles of the states' rights doctrine, it seemed that the South was now committing suicide for the sake of it. In order to make any decision connected with, for example, conscription or supplies, the President had to ask permission from the government of each state, which almost made it impossible for him to wage a massive war. The Confederate generals in charge of western and eastern theatres of war competed with each other for replacements and munitions, and the loyalty of each general and his soldiers went predominantly to their own state.

It was clear that the South was growing weaker and could no longer hope that war weariness alone would in the end induce Lincoln to give up the struggle. Therefore Lee thought that if his army could inflict on the Yankees a deadly blow on their own soil, public opinion would force Lincoln to seek a compromise.⁷

In the late spring of 1863 Lee launched his last offensive in the North. First he struck northward into Pennsylvania and almost reached the state capital. The Army of the Potomac, shocked and surprised, hurried after him; in Washington all was in confusion. But Lee did not have complete control of the situation either – 'Stonewall' Jackson, his brilliant cavalry commander, had been already dead and the new one was not so reliable. Anyway at that time the cavalry was not at hand with the effect that Lee did not know his enemy's whereabouts. Then on the 1st of July he was intercepted by a strong Union army near the small town of Gettysburg, Pennsylvania. After 3 days and 3 nights of continuous fighting, Lee's army retreated South – it was a defeat from which Lee never recovered.

⁶ The North had 22,000 miles of rails, whereas the South had only 9,000 miles, which was the major strategic weakness of the South.

⁷ By 1863 the people of the North were so fed up with the war that there were draft and race riots in some Northern cities, frequently the army was used to restore law and order.

At about the same time General Grant was sent with a fresh new army to invade the South and to capture Richmond, and **General Sherman**, Grant's most brilliant and ruthless aid, began a northward march from Georgia. Sherman's army wreaked a terrible havoc through the Southern heartland. His army burned everything of military value, even all the railroads that lay on their way to destroy all southern supply lines. When he finished, behind him was a trail 60 miles wide and 250 miles long trail of burned-out mansions, devastated fields, and wrecked railway lines. Georgia was finished. The trail now led north through South Carolina and North Carolina to Richmond, where he met again with General Grant. A week later in a Court House of the tiny village of **Appomattox**, Lee decided to ask for terms of surrender. The Confederate soldiers were to lay down arms and go home. They could take their horses with them and even received rations. Everything humanly possible was done not to add to the bitterness of the defeat so the terms of surrender were magnanimous. The war was over: 359,000 Union soldiers and 258,000 Confederate soldiers had died. This was and still is the bloodiest war in American history.

The generous treatment given to Lee and his soldiers was in compliance with Lincoln's wishes. Lincoln wanted to patch up the union with generosity, not with repression. Unfortunately before he could put his plan into action he was assassinated (**April 14, 1865**) by an actor, **John Wilkes Booth**, in **Ford's theatre**. **Andrew Johnson**, Lincoln's vice-president was to carry out the task of reconciliation and reconstruction, but his talents could not be matched with his great predecessor. Had Lincoln lived longer the fierce racial war that exploded in the South in result of misguided Reconstruction might have been avoided.

2: Reconstruction, the Closing of the Frontier, and the Industrial Revolution

Andrew Johnson was the embodiment of the American Dream. His unaided rise 'from rags to riches' made him a man of rather unlovable pride. Yet as a self-made man with no great family background, he did not feel at home either in the White House or even in his own Republican party. He was uncompromising and vehement. In no time at all, he made many enemies, most of them in Congress, which to spite and to humiliate the president put to work a plan of reconstruction quite different from the one Lincoln had started and Johnson continued.

Lincoln had stated that the secession had not taken place and only a handful of disloyal citizens defied federal authority and misled the population. Therefore action was to be taken against these individuals not the states, which were to elect new state assemblies,

repeal the acts of secession, and ratify the **13th Amendment to the Constitution** (the abolition of slavery), whereby they could be accepted back to the Union. But when the southern states did all that was expected, they were not restored to their previous position. They had no representatives or senators in Congress, and Congress did not want back former Confederate leaders, pardoned by the President.

It was partially understandable because things were not going well **in the South**. War memorials to Confederate soldiers were appearing everywhere, and even though slavery was finished, the freed blacks were not accepted as citizens. For Southerners blacks were meant to be slaves, and if they could not be slaves then they had to be subdued in some other way. The Southern resourcefulness for racial oppression was limitless, and the wrangling between the president and Congress over the future of the South took place against the background of continuing racial violence.

Even worse than the violence was the state governments' ingenuity in bypassing the federal law favorable to blacks. The so-called '**black codes**' conferred on the black population rudimentary civil rights and the right to vote was not among them. Generally blacks were not much better off than they had been before the Civil War. They had the right to sue and be sued in courts (even to testify against whites) and the right to hold property. They could work for wages but were denied the right to strike, or to leave their employment. A black person found unemployed or traveling without an employer's permission could be arrested and turned over to any white employer wishing to use his or her services.

All these laws were a shocking affront to the northern legislators. The President obviously did not wish to interfere, so the matter of putting things right in the South was, to a large extent, left to Congress, which speedily proposed their own program of reconstruction that revealed itself through a series of daring acts and Amendments. In **July 1866** Congress passed **the Civil Rights Act** and set up **the Freedmen's Bureau** to protect the freed blacks from discrimination by state legislative bodies. The **14th Amendment to the Constitution** excluded all ex-Confederate leaders from political life and repudiated the Confederate debt. It also established, at least in theory, the right of all citizens of the US to equal protection of the law. For the first time the word 'citizen' was used in such a way as to include all African-Americans: 'All persons born or naturalized in the US are subject to the jurisdiction thereof are citizens of the US and the states in which they reside'.

The Military Reconstruction Act passed in **1867** divided the south into 5 military districts each governed by a general of the US army. The ratification of the **14th Amendment** and the adoption of black suffrage was for the Southern states the only way to escape permanent military occupation. In **1868** the **14th Amendment** was ratified and almost right away, in **1869**, Congress came up with a new amendment. **The Fifteenth Amendment** ordained that 'the rights of the citizens of the United states to vote shall not be denied or abridged by the United States or by any State on account of race, color, or previous condition of servitude'. Before **1870** all southern states ratified the Amendment and were re-admitted to the Union.

After the emancipation **the tenant system** replaced slavery. Black people worked for wages for nine or ten hours a day instead of from dawn to dusk, but their dream of working on their own land was too progressive to be realized. They were eager to learn and they supplied a large part of the personnel in newly-set state governments, made chiefly of whites who had been Unionists during the war. Blacks turned out to be very successful in

spite of their short apprenticeship, refuting thus the assertions of white supremacists who professed the inferiority of the black race.

Besides the **scalawags**, that is Southerners who cooperated with Reconstruction, the governments of the southern states were also made of **carpetbaggers**, that is northern Republicans who had gone south to make political careers. Many of them were not opportunists but ex-Union soldiers, who having explored the South fell in love with its wilderness and came to regard it as a kind of new Frontier.

To the white Southern radicals such a situation was unbearable and soon they resorted to violence to reverse the tide of Reconstruction. **The Ku Klux Klan** was the largest and best organized terrorist group in the South. Its objective was to restore white Democrats' control of the southern states by preventing blacks from voting. By burning houses, beating and killing blacks who dared to claim their constitutional rights, the Klan managed to intimidate all others who would try to assert themselves. For 5 years the members of the Klan, dressed in their white robes and hoods, scourged the entire region whipping and murdering blacks and scalawags. The raids of the 'night hawks' were enormously popular among white southerners who endorsed the violent extremism of the raiders and admired their courage and unbending patriotism.

In 1877 it was finally acknowledged that the radical reconstruction policy adopted by Congress was counter-productive, and federal troops were at last withdrawn. Southern Democrats soon ousted Republicans from their offices and Democrat legislatures proceeded to work out the so-called **Jim Crow laws** that kept blacks segregated and docile. The overall objective was to limit black franchise, and it was achieved through reducing the black electorate. In some states a **poll-tax** was introduced. It was a payment which citizens had to make before they were allowed to vote. Consequently almost all blacks and many poor whites were excluded from exercising their 15th Amendment rights. To remedy the situation and make it possible for poor whites to vote, the '**grandfather clause**' was added to some state constitutions, stating that only those people whose ancestors had been eligible for vote in 1867 could vote, and since blacks obtained their right to vote later, no blacks qualified under this law. Once blacks lost their right to vote, taking away other civic liberties was easy. Blacks could only do the most menial and servile occupations; they were excluded from white residential areas of southern towns, from white schools and universities, from white hotels and restaurants. Even trains and later buses were segregated; whites sat in the front, blacks sat in the back and if a white person wanted to take a black person's seat the black person had to give it up.

The South was impoverished and demoralized after years of racial warfare. The debts incurred during the Civil War soared to unimaginable heights. The economy of the region was devastated. The south was under-urbanized, under-capitalized, under-industrialized. It was a backwater ridden with racism and nostalgia over the past. It seemed to be a land without any hope or any future. Nobody wanted to invest in a region so devastated and devoid of a skilled labor force. The Republicans had little interest in the region, which after 1877 always voted Democratic.

The 14th and 15th Amendments that so bitterly failed in the South put some wind in the sails of blacks living in the North. So the successes of the Civil War were not completely obliterated. But Reconstruction was, on the whole, a tragic failure that demonstrated that it was impossible to make people good by means of force by a miscalculated and misguided-

ed legislature. The North did not manage to save the South from itself and the South for decades to come continued to lag behind the rest of the country.

While the South lay prostrate, **the West** was developing rapidly. In 1848 gold was found in California and in the next 20 years prospectors flocked into California, Nevada, Colorado, Montana, Wyoming and Dakota. But gold prospecting turned out to be far less profitable than farming. Within 30 years of the Civil War the last blank on the map of America was filled up. Before the Civil War **the Great Plains** or **Prairies** had been inhabited by Indians following the decimated herds of buffalo. But during the War (1862) Congress passed the **Homestead Act**⁸ which gave 160 acres (65 hectares) of government land in the west to anyone of age (21 years) with a family to support. Also immigrants could claim that land – all they had to do was to make a small payment and till the land for 5 years. Transcontinental railroad lines had some land to sell as well – for them the planting of new settlements along the railway lines was vital for their further development. Before the 19th century closed, the pioneers turned the Great Plains into farms and pastures thus joining the gold-rush settlements on the Pacific coast and the farms and communities on the Mississippi River.

Life on the plains was extremely difficult. The territory was called the '**Great American Desert**' not without reason. There were no trees in the plains to build houses so the people learned to make shelters from 'sod' – that is grass roots and soil. That earned them the contemptuous nickname – 'sod busters'. The same entangled roots made it almost impossible to plough the land, twisting the blades of ploughs out of shape. What was even worse, water was scarce in the plains and fires were very frequent. A fire started by lightning could spread through dry grass faster than a horse could gallop. Other natural disasters added to the distress of farmers. Between 1874 and 1877 a plague of grasshoppers practically wiped out settlements in the affected areas. The grasshoppers ate not only crops but everything made of wood and leather and finally drove many settlers back east. But those who remained learned to overcome adversities; pumps powered by strong prairie winds raised water from deep wells, and new ploughs with steel blades replaced the old inefficient iron blades. Thus the settlers' perseverance gradually brought an end to the existence of free, wild territory in the west. During the famous meeting of the American Historical Association in 1890, the young historian **Frederic Jackson Turner** announced in a brilliant and prophetic paper that the Frontier was closed and a new epoch was at hand.

Railroads had toiled restlessly to 'close the Frontier' and to bind different regions of the country, and they were supported by Congress. In 1862 Congress had granted land and money to the **Union Pacific Railroad** to expand west beyond the Mississippi River and to the **Central Pacific Railroad** to expand east from California. On **May 10, 1869**, the lines met in Utah and the first railroad across the continent from the Pacific to the Atlantic Ocean was a fact. In 1884 four major lines were added. These were the golden times of railroads that were making immense profits. The railroads carried goods from new factories in the east to the new settlements in the west. Then they also carried farmers' crops east, charging enormous fees for their services.

⁸ Homestead means free farm.

The **cowboys of Texas** were among those who made the best use of the new transport system. When the Indians had been removed and the buffalo killed⁹ the cowboys moved into the 'sea of grass' with their cattle herds. The cowboys were a very varied and picturesque group consisting of ex-confederate soldiers as well as ex-slaves and adventurous boys from the East who wished to lead a more eventful and less sedentary life. The cowboys had learnt from the Mexicans how to watch over the herds, driving the cattle north to the railway in Kansas (1,500 miles) where cattle towns popped up overnight, getting quickly rich on the cattle trade. From there, cattle went to slaughterhouses in Chicago and Kansas City. In this way the ranchers in the US fed not only the people in the US but also in Europe proving that the grass of the western plains could be more profitable than gold.

But all good things must come to an end and so it was with the cowboys' colorful lifestyle. The growing number of homesteads obstructed the cattle trail and led to open conflicts in which some people actually got killed. The farmers complained that the Texan cattle were diseased and trampled on their crops. They began to put wired fences round their farms and that became the main reason for skirmishes with the cowboys. But the cowboys' stiff resistance was doomed to failure from the start. In just 10 years it was no longer necessary for the cows to go to the railroad because the railroad was perfectly capable of coming to them. Before the onset of the 20th century, the barbed wire, a recent invention, made the prairies a colorful patchwork of fields and meadows.

The increased acreage of farmland and high levels of productivity on farms caused by the use of improved agricultural equipment (mowers, reapers, gang ploughs, thrashing machines, or combine harvesters), frequently led to 'overproduction'. Therefore farmers producing a surplus of produce were interested in selling it to eastern cities. At the same time new factories in the East wanted to sell their inventions to the farmers. In this way those two groups were drawn together into one compact economic unit. The railroads were the arteries of this new economic organism without which the circulation of goods would not be possible.

The railroad was the epitome of **the Industrial Revolution**. The long years of the construction of new tracks created and sustained hundreds of jobs, new mines and plants, new steelworks and new towns which also were new markets for the flourishing eastern industries. It was the railway that stimulated this amazing growth of American industries and trade and paved the way to American economic independence. At the turn of the 19th and 20th century modern America was born. Already by 1890 the US industries were more profitable than agriculture. By 1913 more than 1/3 of the world's industrial production came from the US.

American industries were organized by powerful businessmen called **tycoons**. Most of them came from a very poor social background, and through luck and pluck but also endurance and hard work, they managed to achieve spectacular successes. Great individual fortunes had made before the 19th century drew to a close, and by 1883 it was estimated that in the US there were approximately 4,000 people worth at least 1 million dollars.

⁹ Just In 2 years between 1872 and 1874, white hunters killed all the Buffalo herds. General Philip Sheridan famous for saying 'the only good Indians I ever saw were dead', saw the extermination of buffalo as the best way to annihilate Indians. He wrote: 'the buffalo hunters have done more in 2 last years to settle the Indian question than the entire regular army has done in last 30 years. Send them powder and lead, and for the sake of lasting peace let them kill, skin, and sell until the buffaloes are exterminated'.

Their admirers called them ‘**captains of industry**’ their critics dubbed them ‘**robber barons**’. The pejorative name was most frequently applied to **John D. Rockefeller**, the founder of the **Standard Oil Company**, one of the oldest and most powerful corporations. Rockefeller built his fortune on the new resource – petroleum. His first step towards building an Empire was buying off and merging into one corporation five refineries.

Another business tycoon **Andrew Carnegie** also started his professional life as a poor man. His career, like Rockefeller’s, was the embodiment of the American dream of rising from rags to riches. Carnegie was a railroad man who built his fortune during the war. He invested in iron and steel businesses buying stock in companies making iron bridges, rails and locomotives. In 1870 he built the biggest steel mill in America in Pittsburgh. He had his own fleet of steamships, a port on Lake Erie, and a railroad line that led to it.

But American exuberant industrial growth had created a terrible chaos resulting from competition. Rockefeller was one of the first ones to notice that the road to success led through consolidation and cooperation rather than competition, which was to his mind a complete waste of time and energy. Rockefeller’s lawyers can be credited with creating the idea of **trusts**. Under the trust arrangement holders of stock in many different oil companies handed over their shares to Rockefeller and his associates, acting as a board of trustees. The trust was such a success that it quickly found followers in other businesses, and ‘trusts’ or ‘corporations’ as they were sometimes called, became the landmark of the 20th century.

Andrew Carnegie was not one of those who followed the fashion. He preferred informal arrangements that left him in absolute control of his businesses. He was very charismatic and persuasive and could easily outwit his competitors, keep his workers at top efficiency and undercut all their attempts at raising wages. There was an enormous relief in the entire business world when he made an announcement of his retirement. His businesses were bought by the most powerful banker of the times **John Pierpont Morgan**¹⁰ who set the Carnegie Steel Corporation on the same road as Rockefeller’s Standard Oil Company. He merged Carnegie’s corporation with various lesser steel companies creating the first billion-dollar trust **US Steel** (**‘Big Steel’**) which has held its dominant position to this day. In effect at the beginning of the 20th century it seemed that all the leading American capitalists were associated either with J. P. Morgan or J. D. Rockefeller.

Corporations had many advantages – they offered companies a permanent existence and a vision of future development, backed up by solid capital. Thanks to this capital, they had greater power to expand and compete with foreign industries.¹¹ On the other hand they encroached on workers’ rights and on the powers of trade unions. Corporations could more efficiently control workers who, since Andrew Jackson’s times, were very successful at organizing themselves to force some social reforms. The trusts controlled both wages and prices, and in this way they held the fate of millions of people. Soon it was clear that the common people could not count on politicians to improve their lot because corporation tycoons bribed politicians to pass laws favorable to them or hired private armies to disperse strikes. They induced railroads to give them secret rebates, in this way killing smaller competitors. To many people it was evident that corporations and their supremacy were in obvious conflict with the American myth of freedom and individualism.

¹⁰ Morgan paid \$480.000.000 to Carnegie whereby Carnegie gave 325.000.000 to various good causes thus proving that his remark that the man who died rich died disgraced was not just empty words.

¹¹ The biggest corporations were richer than most nations.

Cities were swollen by immigrants and by those who left farms in search of a better life. The city became the center of life, villages grew into towns overnight. In the 4 decades from 1860 to 1900, New York City grew fivefold and became the most cosmopolitan city in the world.¹² Chicago grew tenfold. At the beginning of the Civil War, it was just an unpromising cluster of huts on the shore of the Lake Michigan; before the end of the 19th century it had a population amounting to 2 million inhabitants. The steamboat, railroad, telegraph, photograph, telephone and electric power revolutionized the country. The typewriter, the adding machine, the cash register and the rotary press also changed people's lives. But the standard of life of working people were, to say the least, degrading and there were many critics very vocal about the appalling conditions of life in the slums. They put the blame on trusts and demanded that the trusts be disciplined.

The first attempt to bring wild predatory capitalism to heel was made by **President Grover Cleveland**, a Democrat elected to the presidency in 1884. He was the first president who took action against monopolies that made the life of an average American very difficult, acting on the principle that 'public office is a public trust'. He pushed through Congress the **Interstate Commerce Act** which forbade excessive railroad charges, secret rebates for corporations, and discrimination against small companies. Then he set up the **Interstate Commerce Commission** to enforce the act and to regulate railroad charges. Unfortunately he failed in his effort to bring down the high tariffs that in his opinion were responsible for the high cost of living in the US. He argued that if the tariffs had been lowered and competitors from abroad had been allowed to enter the American market, the prices of many commodities would have been reduced. Cleveland lost this battle, as at the time **protectionism** was considered to be a permanent national policy. But his failed attempt brought it home to Americans that the trusts were to blame for the increasing cost of living, and consequently the public antipathy for trusts steadily grew. In 1890 the **Sherman Antitrust Act** was passed and it introduced a degree of control over the wheeling and dealing of big corporations, though it was not fully applied until Theodore Roosevelt's famous presidency.

The American population surged from 31 million in 1830 to 131 million in 1940. Natural increase could be credited with much of that growth but the major factor was the so-called '**American fever**' – the largest peaceful population movement in the history of mankind which saw over 40 million people of different nationalities and religions leave the Old World and settle in the New World. On one hand, immigrants were badly needed to farm the fields or work in the mines, steel mills and factories. On the other they posed a considerable danger to the unity of the Republic. Initially those who came to settle in the US were mostly of Anglo-Saxon origin or at least they came from Western Europe. But after 1880 most immigrants came from Southern and Eastern Europe, many of them were Jews fleeing pogroms. Therefore **Ellis Island** was established as a port of entry for immigrants. There they were examined, questioned and selected, and those who were abnormal, unhealthy or simply suspect were not allowed to enter the United States.

Before the end of the 19th century with each short-lived economic slump there was a surge in **nativism**, directed against the Irish, the Jews, Catholics or some other group of newcomers. But with the emergence of social evils connected with industrialization and urbanization, the hostility between American-born and immigrant citizens became more

¹² New York had twice as many Jews as Warsaw, twice as many Irish as Dublin and as many Germans as Hamburg.

permanent. The Labor Unions organized in the **American Federation of Labor** accused the immigrants, working as a rule for very low wages, of taking away jobs and lowering the standards of living, health and education. The immigrants started to be perceived as a threat to the unity of the country, the traditional American way of life.

Initially before the advent of hostilities Americans had believed that immigrants could be easily turned into standardized Americans. America was envisaged as a **melting pot**, a crucible in which the newcomers shed their old identity to adopt a new one – American. But soon it became clear that America was rather ‘**a salad bowl**’ in which immigrants kept their distinctive cultural identities, thus creating a colorful mosaic of cultures, religions and languages. They were different and they were disliked. Some Americans regretted that they had been given voting rights as now these newcomers might outnumber the American-born citizens at the ballot. Such books as Madison Grant’s *The Passing of the Great Race* (1916) warned Americans that if they persisted in the disastrous enterprise of admitting numerous hordes of ‘inferior races’ (inferior to the great Nordic race) the traditional American way of life would be obliterated and the country would disintegrate. Such ominous ideologies were supported by quasi-anthropological reports, stating that immigrants from Asia and Eastern and Southern Europe were unfit to live in free, Protestant, Anglo-Saxon America. Under the pressure of public opinion Congress responded with the **Reed-Johnson Immigration Act of 1924** which gave 87% of the immigration permits to immigrants from Britain, Ireland, Germany and Scandinavia. This act marked the end of the greatest population movement in the history of the world.

3: The American Empire, Progressivism and World War I

Theodore Roosevelt was brought to the presidential chair by the tragic death of his popular predecessor **President William McKinley**, shot down shortly after his re-election in September 1901 in Buffalo. The main source of McKinley’s popularity was his victory in the **war with Spain**, waged briefly for four months in 1898. This so called **Spanish-American war** had been the first successful act of the American imperialist policy that had been formulated as soon as the Frontier was closed. The war had been provoked by the American government, which had promised to recognize the independence of Cuba, a rebel Spanish colony. The immediate pretext to go to war with Spain was the destruction of the US warship *Maine* that lay at anchor in Havana Harbor, whereby 260 American sailors lost their lives. After the **Treaty of Paris** Spanish rule ended in Cuba and the island was temporarily put under American authority prior to free elections that were to

take place there. The US also acquired **Puerto Rico** (an island in the West Indies, south east of Florida) and **Guam** (an island in the western Pacific Ocean) as indemnity, and additionally the **Philippines** on payment.¹³ Thus the war demonstrated the strength of the United States as well as its willingness to look for ‘new Frontiers’ abroad.¹⁴ After the war the US was recognized as a world power.

Theodore Roosevelt owed some of his political prestige to the Spanish American war as well. He was one of the **Rough Riders** – the volunteers who made the first Regiment of US Cavalry led by Colonel Leonard Wood and none other than Lieutenant Colonel Roosevelt himself.¹⁵ Soon, however, Roosevelt’s political success outstripped his military achievements. Today he is chiefly commemorated for his **Square Deal** programs, **progressivism** and ‘trust busting’ measures.

In spite of American ascendancy in international affairs, the closing years of the 19th century showed that radical improvements in political, social and economic affairs were indispensable. The American people at that time were proud of their country – the US was a world power which had made immense strides not only in diplomacy but also in industry and agriculture. Thus Americans retained their faith in progress and the word ‘progressive’ was their favorite in common speech. At the beginning of the 20th century the word “progressive” became attached to Theodore Roosevelt, and a new epoch in American political life started when America started to tackle many serious internal problems with astounding strictness.

When Roosevelt became president he was a Republican. **The Gilded Age**¹⁶ seemed to have set in for good. Business tycoons were more firmly entrenched than ever, the corruption in local and municipal administrations was rampant. The press was filled with harrowing articles of investigative journalist contemptuously called ‘**muckrakers**’,¹⁷ reporting on wheeling and dealing of bankers and trusts, on abusive railroad practices concerning secret rebates on shipments, and selling confidential information about the activities of lesser competitors. The literature of social protest supported the muckrakers in exposing to the American public the machinations of big business, the evil of child labor, unsanitary conditions in factories producing food, as well as the use of harmful chemicals in the production of food and medicines. Against all these malpractices arouse a full-throated protest that spurred political leaders to action. Roosevelt had no program of presidential action, but had his ear always cocked to cries of public opinion and was particularly adroit in capitalizing on gratifying the American taste for reforms.

¹³ **Cuba** was declared an independent country just after the war, but it was in fact a pretence as it received a puppet government, which speedily agreed to all American claims: to build a military base at Guantanamo Bay, or to intervene whenever American interests were threatened. Such interventions took place repeatedly (1906, 1912, 1917) each time to stop a revolution. **Puerto Rico** became self-governing in 1953, Puerto Ricans are US citizens but they cannot vote in US elections. **The Philippines** gained independence in 1946.

¹⁴ The US cavalry in the Spanish American war largely consisted of ex-cowboys.

¹⁵ Roosevelt became famous after his victory at San Juan Hill in Cuba.

¹⁶ The term was coined by Mark Twain to censure the prevalent American materialism and other social evils created by the laissez-fair type of capitalism.

¹⁷ Ironically the term muckraker was coined by Roosevelt himself who initially did not like the journalists’ desire to explore the underside of politics.

How this strategy worked was demonstrated by the **coal strike** in western **Pennsylvania** in **1902**, the first crisis in his administration. Roosevelt was well aware of the fact that on the whole the average people sympathized with miners who had to work in terrible conditions for inadequate pay. Thus by siding with the miners, he could be sure of public support for his actions. What he did astonished even the most moderate people because Roosevelt sent federal troops to the mine districts, while summoning at the same time the bosses of Trade Unions and the mine owners to Washington, where he helped the trade unionists to get much of what they wanted. Roosevelt's prestige soared and he used it to swoop down at the notorious **J.P. Morgan** who had just negotiated an amalgamation of northwestern railroads. To Morgan's astonishment, Roosevelt challenged the bargain thus enforcing the so-far dead **Sherman Anti-Trust Act**, whose primary aim was to break monopolies. The President forced the dissolution of the new company and the public opinion rejoiced, which led the future president Woodrow Wilson to observe:

Let him [the president] once win the admiration and the confidence of the country and no other single force can withstand him, no combination of forces will easily overpower him. His position takes the imagination of the country. He is representative of no constituency, but of the whole people.¹⁸

Indeed Roosevelt's policy of increased government supervision and the enforcement of anti-monopolist laws captured the imagination of common people. Even Congress competed with the President in implementing progressive reforms. In **1906** the **Hepburn Act** gave the Interstate Commerce Commission broad powers to fix the maximum and minimum railroad rates, thus settling one of the most pressing problems of the times.

But much of the groundbreaking legislation was the work of the President. The same year **1906** witnessed the emergence of new laws regulating food production: **the Meat Inspection Act**, **the Pure Food Act** and **the Drug Act**. Thus 1906 was the apogee of Republican progressivism, which, as Roosevelt's second term was drawing to a close, was completed by laws securing the conservation of natural resources and reclamation of vast areas of neglected land.¹⁹

Roosevelt's popularity was at its peak when the next election of 1908 was approaching. He was 50 and felt as vigorous as ever, but he had promised publicly not to seek a third term, and instead he supported **William Howard Taft**, who easily beat his rival. Though Taft was not as spectacular as Roosevelt, he initiated far more anti-trust prosecutions than Roosevelt. His primary achievement was breaking down **Rockefeller's Standard Oil Company**, forcing it to dissolve into 34 for separate companies. But Taft lacked Roosevelt's political charms and was not such a skillful politician. His own Republican party was divided about the scope of conducted reforms. What is more, Taft quarreled with Roosevelt about one of his appointments, and the rift between the president and the ex-president caused further disarray in the Republican Party. In the 1912 elections Roosevelt wanted to take the Republican nomination but failed, so he founded a new **Progressive Party** but was defeated by **Woodrow Wilson**, the candidate from the Democratic Party.

¹⁸ Woodrow Wilson: 'Constitutional Government in the United States', 1908, qtd in *The Penguin History of the U.S.A.*, p. 452.

¹⁹ Roosevelt should be credited with increasing the area of the reserve timberland from 18.800.000 hectares to 59.200.000 hectares.

Dr Woodrow Wilson, the former President of Princeton and governor of New Jersey, had an excellent record as a strong reformer. He was a relentless activist determined to leave his mark on history. Before his term expired Wilson pushed through Congress (with which he could work amazingly well) the most impressive series of laws proposed by any President since George Washington. In 1913 he reduced tariffs on important raw materials, food stuffs, cotton and wooden goods, iron and steel and removed duties from a hundred other items in a genuine effort to lower the cost of living. **The Federal Reserve Act (1913)** imposed a new organization on the banking system. Wilson also set up the **Federal Trade Commission** to eliminate 'unfair methods of competition'. Other laws introduced by his administration gave more power to Trade Unions and facilitated the development of the west by giving farmers access to government resources through credits with low interest rates.

The American preoccupation with progressive reforms made American politicians and leaders oblivious to the danger that came from abroad and **the outbreak of war in Europe** came as a complete shock. With horror Americans read about the trench warfare in France and Italy. They felt pity for the combatants and victims, especially the citizens of innocent Belgium. They felt relief that the war was distant and not theirs. 'A hearty vote of thanks to Columbus for having discovered America' wrote *The Chicago Herald*. The president issued a **Proclamation of Neutrality**, while American industries were getting rich on munitions orders from the western Allies. The Wilson administration was blind to that obvious contradiction and persisted on the course of dogged negation, determined to last the war out.

In the meantime a naval war was being waged in the Atlantic and around Europe. The blockades of European ports had dragged America into European wars in the past, but Wilson and his fellow-citizens still believed that such a scenario could be presently be avoided. Wilson filed protest after protest against all hostilities that affected American shipments; all of them were equally ineffectual. In 1915 Germany embarked on a very successful campaign of submarine warfare, warning that it would destroy all ships in the waters around the British Isles, and soon indeed a British liner was sunk with 128 American passengers on board. Still Wilson was determined to steer clear of the conflict, and on that platform he was reelected in 1917.

By then Wilson was already convinced that the war in Europe was bad for American interests whether his country was a belligerent or not. The British, whose command of the sea was nearly absolute, forbade anybody to trade with the Central Powers. American ships were regularly stopped and their cargo was confiscated without much ado. That realization made Wilson more eager than ever to cast himself in the role of a mediator. In **January 1917** Wilson delivered a famous speech in the Senate calling for 'a peace without victory', which, he said, was the only peace that could last. His efforts showed how little Wilson understood about the nature of the war. The Allies and the Central Powers were fighting for a complete conquest, a war-aim that neither side wanted overtly to proclaim. Just a few days after Wilson's famous speech, the Germans resumed with double zeal the U-boat campaign that had been suspended for a while. In **April 2, 1917**, after 5 American vessels had been sunk, Wilson was convinced that the cost of maintaining neutrality was too high and asked Congress for a declaration of war which he got by a nearly unanimous vote. Immediately industry and agriculture were mobilized. The income tax was raised and the railroads were nationalized for the duration of the war, fuel use and production were regulated as well.

Immigration from Europe was stopped and the **Great Migration** began that saw large numbers of blacks leave the South of the United States in order to settle in the northern cities where their work was essential for the quickly expanding war industries. That migration increased slowly but steadily and Afro-Americans were gaining more and more influence in the political life in the country.²⁰ But the process did not go on unchallenged. In the North the hostility of white workers facing new competition induced numerous race riots in which many black and white people got killed. In the South the situation was even worse; the lynching of blacks resumed on an unprecedented scale and with unheard-off viciousness²¹ – many victims were burned alive.

In the meantime in Europe the war went well. The American troops under the command of **General Pershing** played an honorable part in the Allies' victories (the second Battle of the Marne, the Battle of Argonne), while Woodrow Wilson toiled relentlessly to 'make the world itself at last free', as he put it in one of his speeches. His strategy for a long-lasting peace was encapsulated in the so-called **Fourteen Point Plan**, which postulated the abandonment of secret international understandings, a guarantee of the freedom of the seas, the removal of economic barriers between the nations, the reduction of national armaments, and adjustment of colonial claims with due regard to the interests of the indigenous people. Other points concerned the rights and liberties of small European nations crushed by despotic regimes. Finally he proposed to establish a League of Nations to smooth out differences among different countries by means of diplomatic negotiations.

By 1919 when the Germans received a good thrashing, the German government declared its readiness to sit to peace talks on the basis of the Fourteen Point Plan. The **Armistice** took place on **November 11, 1918**. The Great War was over and Wilson, to whom the enemy had first appealed, was at the peak of his international fame, and deservedly so because he could be credited with the early conclusion of the war.

But then Wilson committed one serious mistake; he decided to go to Paris where the treaty ending the war was to be negotiated and he stayed in Europe for 6 months, totally neglecting American affairs at the time when the country was badly needing attention. The United States was adjusting from a war-time to a peace-time economy, and the process did not go without frictions. The crisis at home brought a profound reaction against Wilson, his party and the idea of Progressivism. Republicans won the elections to Congress and from then on did everything possible to undermine Wilson's authority. It was easy because the President alienated Republicans and kept them away from all important issues. For example he did not take any Republican leaders to Paris, which was another of his serious mistakes.

To make matters worse Wilson did not do well at the conference in Paris which showed that there were limits even to his power. Wilson was in fact an ideologue, which blinded him to some European realities: the English, as usual, adhered to the cornerstone of their foreign policy which was the balance of power (a great immoral game according to the disapproving Wilson); the French, disillusioned and cynical, stuck to the *real politic*, the Germans believed only in force and nothing could change that belief; the Bolsheviks in Russia kept their distance – they had their own plans of perfecting the world.

²⁰ The cities in the north had many electoral votes which went to the blacks.

²¹ Some 754 persons were lynched between 1918 and 1927 – 416 were black, 42 were burned.

Therefore Britain forced Wilson to abandon the postulate of the freedom of the seas; the German Colonial Empire was divided among the French and the British. Germany, which had surrendered on the promise of magnanimous peace terms, was the most maligned country of all. In the eyes of American public opinion, the peace conditions were humiliating and the President's reputation greatly suffered after he had put his name on **the Versailles Treaty in May, 1919**. The vindictiveness of the treaty was the doing of **George Clemenceau**, who believed that there was only one way to prevent another German invasion of France and that was keeping Germany so weak that it would be never able to rise again. His outlook won and the reparations that Germany had to pay to the Allies were fixed at millions of dollars and were practically unenforceable.

Yet the conference had some successes. A new map of Europe was drawn according to the principle of national self-determination (such countries as Poland, Czechoslovakia and Finland gained independence). Additionally, **the League of Nations**, Wilson's priority, had been put high on the conference agenda and finally realized. Unfortunately it was never ratified in the US that was sick of European wars, European folly (connected with the shortsightedness of such European leaders as Clemenceau, who did not see that clearly the Versailles peace terms could be a reason for another war), and with European ingratitude (there was a feeling of resentment against the US because the American government insisted on repayment of war loans).

Wilson refused to make even small concessions to secure the ratification of the Treaty and the League in the US. The Senate was offended by the way Wilson acted and refused flatly to cooperate, so Wilson took the case to the people, embarking on a tour through the country. Then he suffered a massive stroke from which he never recovered. In May 1920 both the Treaty and the League were irrevocably defeated in the Senate. In this way America took her first steps on the path back to isolationism. In 1920 the Republican **Warren G. Harding** replaced²² Wilson in the presidential chair and with him the isolationist mood set in for good.

Republican ascendancy reversed many of the Progressive measures. Republicans sided with capitalists against labor, bringing tariffs to new heights and reducing taxes in a stern belief that high income taxes would prevent the rich from investing in the economy. The government believed in the so-called 'trickle-down' theory, according to which if private businesses were properly protected by the government the prosperity that they generated would trickle down from the rich industrialists and the middle class into the lower ranks of American society. Every possible encouragement was given to business to overcome the post-war slump and to keep inflation at bay.

The Harding's presidency is most often associated with the **Prohibition** period (1919–1933), when it was illegal to produce and drink alcohol. Prohibition was perhaps the best proof of American hypocrisy because it was widely violated, and it contributed to the prevailing corruption of the Harding Era. Prohibition turned out impossible to enforce, and it gave an enormous boost to organized crime. The money from bootlegging (illegal manufacture and sale of alcohol) lined the pockets of such racketeers as 'Scarface'

²² The 1920 election was the first one in which women could vote, which was also Wilson's legacy as it was he who championed the 19th Amendment (enfranchisement of women).

Al Capone,²³ making it possible for them to buy automobiles and submachine guns or to bribe corrupted policemen and politicians²⁴.

In 1920 urban America came to the foreground of American social life. This was a decade of skyscrapers, like the Empire State Building that was a new symbol of the new American lifestyle. During these so-called **Roaring Twenties** the East brought in new standards and values and a completely new image of America. It was a time of wild parties, speakeasies (illegal saloons) and automobiles, in which 'flappers' (young women in short skirts with make-ups and 'bobbed' that is short hair) could be casually kissed by their suitors, away from the sight of their prudish mothers. Freud's ideas were extremely popular among these emancipated young people, and sexuality was discussed on a regular basis.

But this revolution in manners was an anathema for many insular and conservative Americans, living in the small towns and villages in the heartland of the country. For them the sexual revolution, the emancipation of women and full-of-excesses life in the East were signs of the degeneration of American society. They were deeply distrustful and resentful of young people and, what is more, they were very repressive – their objective was to preserve the old American way of life. Most of them overtly proclaimed their hatred of the big cosmopolitan cities in the east which they associated with new dangerous ideas. Immigrants were blamed, as many radicals had either foreign roots or foreign connections.

The most notorious trial of the 1920's – that of **Bartolomeo Vanzetti** and **Nicola Sacco** – attracted the attention of billions of people all over the world. The two defendants were Italian-born anarchists, who allegedly murdered and robbed a postmaster in Massachusetts. Even though the evidence on which the trial was based was tenuous and inconclusive, they were sentenced to death by a judge, who described them in private as 'those anarchist bastards'. After seven years of imprisonment (they had been arrested in 1920) they were electrocuted in 1927.

The conservatism of the post war Republican administration went hand in hand with the growing **nativism**. The **Ku Klux Klan** was revived in 1915 and it went national – 5 millions members of the Klan were scattered far and wide in America. The Klan was no longer confined to the South, and it no longer had only blacks as its main target – it attacked Jews, Roman Catholics and immigrants. According to the Klan's founder **William J. Simmons** America was not a melting pot but a garbage can: 'when the hordes of aliens walk to the ballot box and their votes outnumber yours, then that alien horde has got you by the throat'. In 1922, when **Hiram Wesley Evans** replaced Simmons as the Klan's leader, the Klan became a political power, but it did not have a political program or charismatic leaders, who could, like Mussolini or Hitler, turn it into a national movement.

The bigotry of the 1920's and their repressive spirit was also seen in the reaction of the orthodox Protestant population to **Darwin's theory of evolution**. The fundamentalists

²³ Al Capone was the 'Vice Lord' of Chicago. Besides bootlegging his empire was based on gambling and prostitution. He spent his income on lavish clothes, cars, bodyguards and... city charities. Finally he was 'busted' by Eliot Ness but not for his bootlegging operations but tax evasion.

²⁴ It is estimated that due to the 18th Amendment – Prohibition \$ 2.000.000.000 of business was transferred from brewers and barkeepers to bootleggers and gangsters.

launched a campaign against teaching Darwin's theory in American schools. They had even some successes, as for example in Tennessee, whose assembly outlawed Darwin's theory with the effect that everybody who was not yet familiar with Darwin's book on evolution rushed to the nearby bookstore to get one. Therefore, in a sense, the fundamentalists' victories were self-defeating.

The 20th Century in Great Britain and the USA

1: The Depression and the Rise of Totalitarianism

Warren Harding is remembered nowadays as one of the worst presidents in the history of the US. Certainly he was one of the most incompetent persons ever to live in the White House. Before he became the president he had loved politics, as president he was always unsure of himself. Once he said to his secretary: 'I don't know what to do or where to turn in this taxation matter. Somewhere there must be a book that tells about it... There must be a man in the country who could weigh both sides and know the truth... But I don't know where to find him. My God this is a hell of a place for a man like me to be'. 'A man like him' liked poker, whisky and women and the company of his old buddies, who were laconically called the 'Ohio Gang'. Perhaps there would have been nothing wrong with it if the President had not put his friends, some of whom had very dodgy connections, in high places. Those friends were often frauds, who used their positions to line their own pockets. How much Harding knew of the corruption was unclear, but surely the impending scandals greatly impinged on his health. Finally he suffered a heart attack and died in August 1923.

Then, the scandals, one by one, erupted, tarnishing the dead president's reputation. The biggest of them was connected with **Albert B. Fall** the Secretary of the Interior, who in return for 'loans' let private investors use the oil field that was set aside as a naval reserve under a hill in Wyoming called **Teapot Dome**.¹ The president's memory was also sullied when his long extramarital affair came to light and his pathetic couplings with his mistress in a White House closet.

Calvin Coolidge, Harding's vice president who took the presidential chair, cut himself off from the scandals, took control of the Republican Party, and did what was necessary to win his party's nomination for another term in office. He was a very taciturn man, nicknamed

¹ The word "Teapot" became a synonym of corruption, and was associated with the scandal.

‘Silent Cal’ who nevertheless uttered quite a few memorable lines, for example: ‘The chief business of the American people is business. The man who builds a factory builds a temple. The man who works there worships there’. Indeed whereas Harding had tried to balance the interests of agriculture and industry, Coolidge developed industry at the expense of other sectors of the economy. In the words of a Wall Street journalist ‘Never before, here or anywhere else, has a government been so completely fused with business’.

During Coolidge’s years prosperity rolled onwards, and it seemed the good times would never end. A newspaper editorial exulted that ‘the American’s first obligation to his country is no longer that of a citizen but that of a consumer’. Installment payments were invented to make buying possible even for those without money. Advertising, itself a new invention, lured people with a variety of exciting products: cameras, watches, washing machines, radios, vacuum cleaners, motion pictures and above all cars. **Ford** set up his company in 1903 and in 1916 the production passed for the first time one million cars. In 1923, 23 million cars were registered. Such a rapid development was only possible due to mass production and scientific management in which Ford’s factories pioneered. Ford’s success gave momentum to the growth of a network of roads, oil industries and many other businesses that were essential in the manufacture of automobile parts.

Herbert Hoover is the man to be credited with the Republican prosperity. As the head of the **Commerce Department** he was indefatigable in finding new markets for American goods, in sponsoring conferences and increasing the efficiency of American industries. In **March 1929** Hoover ‘the architect of Republican prosperity’ became president, and as he was sworn in, he said ‘I had no fears for the future of this country’. Unfortunately he was deluded. At that time shares in Wall Street markets were incredibly expensive; they were changing hands at prices that no dividends would ever justify. The so-called ‘bidder boys’, that is speculators, bought shares only to sell them at a profit to gullible investors called ‘suckers’. Most of the speculators bought shares ‘on margin’ (with credit, not cash) assuming that there would always be a sucker willing to buy them out.

But the gamblers ignored the signs that business in America was no longer so good. By the late summer of 1929 unemployment grew and consumer spending declined. Industries were slowing down with the demand; production fell, as people had no longer any money to spend. In September it started to dawn on some investors that the time was ripe to sell their shares. In October the prices of shares continued to go down. On one single day, **29 October 1929** remembered as **Black Tuesday**, everybody was selling. The following week selling continued, the prices further slumped, and things went from bad to worst until the collapse was total. Small investors were ruined; the savings of the greater part of the population were wiped out. Rockefeller issued his first public statements in decades declaring that he was still buying ‘some sound common stock’. A well known comedian observed: ‘sure, who else has any money left’.

The mechanisms that precipitated the crisis were incredibly complex, but the chief reason for the collapse was the fact that people no longer had any money to spend. The cut-backs in business increased unemployment, whereas those who held on to their jobs had their salaries cut by half. While workers and miners were laid off in thousands, farms were foreclosed for debts and sold.²

² During the Great War American farmers also fed GB, almost starved by the German blockade. Consequently farmers took loans to keep up with demand and to modernize their farms. After the war the prices of food fell and the farmers were not able to pay off their loans.

Unfortunately the money failed to ‘trickle down’. Big businesses maintained high prices while holding the workers’ wages down. The profits went into expansion instead of pay rises – 1/3 of the wealth produced in the country went into the hands of 5% of its population. While productivity was increasing, purchasing power was declining. High prices caused by monopolies and high tariffs³ accelerated the speed of the economy’s collapse.

Hoover undeservedly took the blame for the recession even though he did everything humanly possible to avert the crisis. ‘Hoovervilles’ were cardboard boxes or wrecked cars in which homeless people lived, ‘Hooverblankets’ were newspapers with which they covered themselves, ‘Hoover flag’, was an empty pocket turned inside out. ‘Hoover hogs’ were jackrabbits, the food of the poor.

The American disaster shook the whole world economy. After the Great War the US had been the only prosperous country in the world whose economy was virtually untouched by the war. Other countries, including GB, had looked to the US for loans which were the chief source of investment capital. Even before the Wall Street Crash, unwise American investors had started to withdraw their assets from Europe to speculate in Wall Street. It seemed that there they could earn more and faster than in the ruined Old World. After the Crash, Americans withdrew all their assets from Europe, and in this way they precipitated a global economic crisis.

The world trading community was almost utterly destroyed, but the worst blow was still to come. In 1931 **Kredit Anstalt**, Austria’s greatest bank, went bankrupt, triggering the collapse of the whole German banking system. That almost cut the ground from under the Bank of England, which had underwritten both the Kredit Anstalt and the German banks. The payment of war debts and loan installments to the US were frozen and the Depression deepened.

Great Britain before the recession had followed more or less similar paths of development as the US. When World War I ended the English had enormous hopes for the future in spite of their awareness that Britain’s position as the premier industrial power of the world was gone. Great Britain also experienced a short period of prosperity created by the postwar trade boom.⁴ But there were also many reasons for discontent. During the war some industries, like coal mines and railways, had been protected by the state and the workers were given high wages as well as the guarantee of full employment. Now these workers feared peace-time competition and the loss of their war-time privileges and demanded full nationalization.

Other problems included a steep rise in prices which always induced a wave of strikes. Trade Unions in GB were very powerful institutions that efficiently fought for the workers’ rights through strikes or other constitutional means. **The Labor Party**, the political wing of the Trade Union movement, was established in 1900, and it was continuously growing in power, as the franchise was gradually extended chiefly among the working class.⁵ In the 1918 election the Labor Party won 57 seats, while in 1922 – 142 seats and

³ High tariffs in the US were retaliated by equally high tariffs against American industry which made it impossible for American industries to be re-stimulated by foreign demand.

⁴ The shortage of certain goods during the Great War produced a lot of savings which were quickly spent right after the war.

⁵ In 1918 the number of voters rose twofold from 8 to 16 million people, most of whom came from the working class. All men over 21 received the right to vote and some women aged 31. It was not until a decade later that the voting age of women came down to 21.

in 1923 – 191 seats. In 1924 the **First Labor government** was created⁶ with the effect that the Liberal Party almost ceased to exist because most of its conservative members joined the ranks of the Conservative Party, whereas the radical members fused with the Labor Party. On the whole, GB was steadily becoming more and more a democratic country, which explains why the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917 and the Communist party did not have wide support among the working classes.

Still the working classes mostly bore the brunt of the Great War. Taxes rose from 6 percent (1914) to 25 percent (1918). The coalminers were hardest hit, as the export price of coal plummeted while the cost of extraction grew. The **first great strike** broke out in 1921, and it was provoked by an offensive of mine-owners who were determined on the reduction of wages. The strike was defeated and the miners were forced to resume work. In 1925 mine-owners, who were men completely closed to progressive ideas and interests other than their own,⁷ again tried to further cut miners' wages. The **General Strike** that ensued in 1926 caught everybody unprepared. Railway workers and dock workers came to the miners' support, and the crisis lasted for 9 days and then the strike again failed. What followed was a widespread revenge on miners, who got lower wages and longer working hours. In 1927 the Conservatives passed an act which made all strikes illegal, and in this way the government sided with big business and against labor, whose working and living conditions steadily deteriorated.⁸

When **the Depression** hit England, the areas worst affected were the industrial districts. Between 1930 and 1933, over 3 million workers were out of work. Neither Conservative nor Labor governments could efficiently improve the workers' lot. Indeed it is surprising that the British working class did not follow the footsteps of equally maligned workers of Germany or Italy, where similar social injustice, compounded by the economic collapse, paved the way for totalitarianism.

The German economy was in a state far more deplorable than that of England or of the United States. The Italian economy was also in a state of complete disintegration. People in those countries were desperate and the governments were blamed, and as a matter of fact they had very little to offer. In such a situation a dynamic leader who claimed to have a solution to the great general distress was bound to find numerous followers. Those leaders popularized ideologies that were variously called, but had the same principal tenets: one man was to rule, everybody else to obey. In all **totalitarian states** there was no room for dissent or opposition. The state personified in the leader was almighty; the individual was a small and unimportant cog in the great machinery of state.

Benito Mussolini, a veteran of World War I, was the first European leader to rise on the wings of nationalism. His **Fascist Party** was founded in 1919, and in 1921 for the first time it became a part of the Italian government. Mussolini seized power when the government collapsed a year later, starting the campaign of intimidation leveled at his political opponents. His party had no political program – it demanded action against unem-

⁶ It held onto power for only a year.

⁷ One British politician once remarked that he would have thought that the miners' leaders were the stupidest people in the country, had he not met their employers.

⁸ In England a situation similar to that in the USA developed – the government protected business tycoons' interests against the demands of working people for higher wages with the effect that 2/3 of the income of the nation went into the hands of less than 1 percent of the population.

ployment, it demanded that Italy be respected abroad. When Mussolini turned out to be a tougher player in foreign policy than his predecessors, his rule gained popularity, and he received full powers to reform the Italian government. He used those powers to build a dictatorship – with all opposition suppressed and the press subjected to censorship. There was no person or institution within the country that could challenge Mussolini, who, as Head of State, could issue decrees that had the full force of law.

Adolf Hitler also served in the army in the Great War, in which he saw a chance to restore German prestige abroad and to fulfill the German destiny to become the master-race of the world. The failure of the war and the consequent humiliation of Germany moved him to go into politics. In spite of the defeat, the army was still powerful in the country and gradually it assumed leadership. Hitler, who was appointed the task of infiltrating into the German Workers' Party, took over in the party and turned against the generals whom he blamed for accepting the Treaty of Versailles, which was to his mind a blatant treachery to German interests. His program of the reconstruction of Germany was based on a well known factor in German politics – force. He wanted to annex Austria as well as parts of Poland and Czechoslovakia; he wanted to expel Jews and repeal the Treaty. His opponents were hunted by the so-called 'storm troopers' or 'Brown Shirts'. This policy of repression combined with propaganda and Hitler's skills as an orator and performer⁹ did the rest. Soon Hitler found equally mad and ruthless helpers, Rudolf Hess, Herman Gœring, Joseph Goebbels, Heinrich Himmler and many others who filled the ranks of his party.

An overview of totalitarian regimes would not be complete without due attention paid to **Bolshevik Russia**, which from 1917 onwards strove to realize **Karl Marx's** ideals.¹⁰ The Bolshevik plan was postponed by a civil war in which the Whites, the dispossessed middle and upper class, tried to reverse the revolution.¹¹ In 1922 their efforts were rendered futile and the Soviets (as the Bolsheviks were also called) became the sole rulers of the devastated country. In 1922 the visionary of the revolution – **Lenin** – died, and **Stalin**, who was more a nationalist than communist, took over power in the country, by exiling another Soviet leader **Trotsky**, whom he later had killed (1940). Secret police, executions, and labor camps were used to annihilate all the opposition at home. Party cleansings obliterated in a pre-emptive strike all potential challenges from his comrades – it is even hard to say whether there was any real opposition.

The League of Nations was hopeless in the face of the ruthlessness of the totalitarian regimes, whose leaders were deeply immoral and slightly insane individuals, making nothing of international laws, agreements or treaties. In 1931 **Japan**, also suffering from the Depression and the lack of natural resources, seized **Manchuria** from **China**. In 1935

⁹ Hitler was a good psychologist. His speeches were cleverly crafted to whip up almost hysterical support for his arguments. The key to his success lay also in his great skills to appeal to emotions, by passing the rational intellect. The theatrical atmosphere of his rallies with burning torches red banners and choruses drilled to chant '*Sieg Heil*' was instrumental in mesmerizing the crowds.

¹⁰ Karl Marx, a 19th century German thinker, father of socialism and the author of the Bible of Communism (*The Communist Manifesto* and *The Capital*) propagated the idea of 'dictatorship of the proletariat' as a polity towards which all countries were inevitably going. That polity was based on the idea of government of people for people. There was to be no private property, everybody was to work for the state which would in return provide free education, health services and all necessities.

¹¹ Great Britain was one of the countries that supported the Whites.

Mussolini conquered Abyssinia (that is Ethiopia in eastern Africa) thus putting an end to the existence of the last free and independent African state. In 1936 Hitler bet with his Generals that nobody would take action if he sent his troops to **the Ruhr** area, which according to the Treaty of Versailles was to remain demilitarized, and he was right. The same year a **civil war** broke out in **Spain**, where army officers with the help of the Roman Catholic Church and the rich staged a *coup d'état* against the leftist government. The Germans and the Italians sent men and weapons to help the insurgents led by **Franco**. The Russians did the same for the proponents of the toppled government. Spain became a battlefield on which the European regimes could test their new military equipment (most notably aircraft) in the last rehearsal before the coming of a global war. Britain and France failed to face the facts¹² while America was completely absorbed by **Franklin Delano Roosevelt** and his '**New Deal**' Programs.

F. D. Roosevelt was elected president in 1932. Contrary to Hoover, who refused to acknowledge that there was anything wrong with the American economy and who claimed that it was only temporarily affected by the global depression, Roosevelt insisted that the crisis had been brought up by certain flaws and inadequacies in the system, and he was ready to take vigorous action and use all his powers in order to make a recovery.

The new president in spite of his physical weakness¹³ projected the image of infinite strength and unflagging optimism that already on his Inauguration Day rallied people to his side. He was a charismatic politician with self-confidence and vision that quickly took the form of his '**New Deal**' programs whose overall aim was to put an end to the principle of *laissez-faire*.¹⁴ That meant nothing else but return to the progressive ideas of the Theodore Roosevelt and Woodrow Wilson Era.

The new president's first action was preparing a Banking Bill whose aim was to rescue the prostrated banking system. After announcing a national bank holiday¹⁵, he pushed his **Emergency Banking Act** through Congress in the record time of 8 hours and then gave the first of his famous **Fireside Chats** on the radio. In this broadcast he reassured Americans that the banks were safe and that Americans should stop withdrawing their money. It worked exceptionally well; Americans believed him and the next day bank deposits for the first time exceeded withdrawals. The act closed many weak banks and put the authority of the federal government behind those which re-opened. In return the government received many powers with which it could control the whole system.

Congress cooperated with the President eagerly putting trust in him and his team of brilliant, young advisors who quickly acquired the nick name '**The Brain Trust**'. With their help Roosevelt produced a remarkable bulk of legislation. The **Civilian Conservation**

¹² GB under the premiership of Neville Chamberlain carried out the policy of **appeasement** – giving Germany what it wanted in order to avert the threat of a war. In 1938 Chamberlain co-operated in the take-over of the German speaking part of Czechoslovakia extracting from Hitler a promise that he had no more territorial claims. Chamberlain was disgraced when six months later Germany took over the rest of Czechoslovakia.

¹³ In 1921 he contracted polio and lost the use of his legs. He was able to stand only in iron leg braces, which was very painful.

¹⁴ *Laissez-fair* – an economic doctrine claiming that the economy does not need regulation because it can regulate itself; the lesser the government's intervention, the better.

¹⁵ This was a joke because the banks were closed anyway.

Corps (CCC – March 1933) took a quarter of a million young unemployed men to work on the gigantic program of re-forestation, dam-building, and marsh-draining. The **Agricultural Adjustment Act (AAA)** was ready in **May 1933**. It offered financial help to all the farmers who were willing to cooperate with the government to avoid surplus food production. The farmers were expected to reduce their crops; in return they received subsidies from the federal government. It worked well – the prices of produce stabilized and the poverty in the country was a little bit relieved. The New Deal also rescued mortgaged farmers by subsidizing them so that they could purchase the land on better terms. The **National Industrial Recovery Act (NIRA)** suspended anti-trust laws in return for far-reaching concessions from big business.¹⁶

The **Tennessee Valley Authority (TVA)** used the federally owned dams on the Tennessee River to produce cheap electricity. TVA was the first publicly owned company that created thousands of jobs, built many dams and power-lines. It was a purely socialist enterprise that was quickly gaining momentum, revitalizing one of the most backward regions in the country. It taught farmers conservationist agricultural techniques, conducted agricultural experiments, promoted public health and built recreational facilities. It became a paragon of a public corporation that helped local communities in every possible way. All these undertakings not only provided relief for the poor but greatly contributed to the conservation of natural resources, soil and forest conservation, elimination of stream contamination, and the creation of wild-life sanctuaries.

In short FDR (as he was popularly called) was incredibly successful. Within a year his law-making improved trade visibly and the situation of the farmers whose income doubled in 1939 – the seventh year of FDR's presidency. Thus the president fulfilled the hopes of the American people providing strong and wise leadership that other countries affected by the Depression lacked.¹⁷ His active government created general euphoria, mesmerizing even the most conservative opponents and changed for ever the American concept of government. The New Deal convinced Americans that regulation and planning were the only ways to operate the economy and that the federal government that did all the planning was responsible for the welfare of the whole nation.

Of course the support for such radical measures could not be unanimous. Industrialists and conservative politicians resented the extension of the power of the federal government and the growing influence of unions. Republicans were embittered because in the 1936 election the president carried with him the Black, so-far Republican electorate.¹⁸ This success of the Roosevelt administration was the effect of the work of the President's wife, the First Lady Eleanor Roosevelt, who was an indefatigable champion of human and civil rights.

In his second term in office Roosevelt suffered his first setback. The president needed more money for the **Social Security Plan** launched in **1935** by the **Social Security Act**.

¹⁶ Workers received the right to organize themselves freely into unions and the National Recovery Administration could enforce its policies on every industry in the country.

¹⁷ The British Prime minister Lloyd George can be a notable example of a leader whose ambitions were similar to those of FDR – he wanted to win wide national support to realize his dream of a modern welfare state. He introduced pensions (1908) and National Insurance (1911) but had to resign because of his support for Ireland's aspirations to independence.

¹⁸ The Blacks traditionally had voted Republican out of loyalty to Lincoln – a Republican president who abolished slavery.

Roosevelt believed in the necessity of balancing the budget in order to avoid the risk of inflation, so he intended to limit the spending program on which so many people depended. The cuts in the government's spending put 2 million people out of work and induced another recession. Roosevelt then quickly abandoned his plans to reduce the deficit and returned to his former policies. The crisis was averted and the economy started back on its long strenuous climb to complete recovery. But the incident almost wrecked his reputation and revealed a strong opposition to Roosevelt's programs within his own Democratic party. When the president tried to get rid of the mutineers (mostly elderly gentlemen from the South) by intervening in local elections to persuade the public to vote for his friends, not enemies, there was a widespread outcry of his opponents that Roosevelt, like Stalin, wanted to purge his party.

But FDR's government seemed to have run out of steam and his cabinet was showing signs of fatigue. Gradually the support for the Democrats started to fall. Still FDR's achievements were enormous – Roosevelt greatly reformed the capitalist machinery of state saving it from the extremes and excesses of the policy of *laissez fair*. He shaped anew the American constitution and political system, showing that in the 20th century it was necessary for presidents to take the lead, and it was necessary for the government to be active. He showed how much could be achieved if the government assumed responsibility for the welfare of the nation, and that policy has been continued into the present times.

By 1935 **Great Britain** was also on her way to recovery. The so-called **National Government of Conservatives**, which was formed with conservative and liberal leaders after the Depression had begun, took little credit for that. In fact the recovery was caused by the general recovery of the world economy – the terms of trade turned to Britain's favor and Britain could import the same volume of goods at a much smaller price. In general the cost of living fell while the income of most of the people was on the increase. Employment steadily grew until the outbreak of World War II. But miners and farmers still suffered extreme poverty. The government provided these people with cheap credit, keeping the interest on the borrowed money low. Some encouragement was also given to industry through government spending on public works: the reconstruction of railways, building roads, bridges, homes, hospitals and schools. All such initiatives provided people with jobs and income and thus gave a boost to the economy by increasing the amount of money in circulation.

In 1934 Parliament passed a bill to help 'special areas', that is the industrial districts worst stricken by the Depression, whereby municipalities received subsidies for developing their infrastructure and essential facilities such as water supplies or sewage disposal. By 1937 the situation in those impoverished areas tangibly improved, so improved the situation in the whole country whose economy was already affected by rearmament.

Winston Churchill, the leader of the opposition, was the first politician to question the wisdom of the disarmament that followed the Great War. In 1934 he had predicted that by 1937 Germany would have a military force twice as strong as Britain. The British government initially refused to countenance such predictions and objected to the program of enlarging the RAF, but just a year later it could no longer ignore the facts – after Mussolini's attack on **Abyssinia (1935)**, German reoccupation of the **Rhineland (1936)**, and the outburst of the **Civil War in Spain (1936)**, the belief that world peace could be sustained flew in the face of common sense. Yet a conciliatory mood prevailed among the British and every possible concession was made to Germany, as well as to Italy. Public opinion supported politicians who wanted to buy peace at almost any price.

In America the isolationist mood reigned even though people were beginning to realize that Hitler would never stop while there was still one democracy to challenge. There were some statesmen who thought he should be resisted while the US could still have some allies. But the bulk of the American people vigorously opposed all American involvement in the impending European war. The President, who was a pacifist and isolationist at least through the first six years of his presidency, was in rapport with the people, but American business had world-wide connections, which were repeatedly being affected by the expansionist designs of the totalitarian regimes, and thus the President was gradually forced to give up 'the now somewhat obvious delusion ... that the US is a lone island in a world dominated by the philosophy of force'.¹⁹

2: World War II and Great Britain in the second half of the 20th century

British Prime Minister Chamberlain flew twice to Germany to negotiate with Hitler. After the second round of talks and the shameful **Munich Agreement** the Czechs had been forced to surrender the Sudeten to Germany. Chamberlain's exultation was evident while he addressed his compatriots upon his return: 'My good friends this in the second time in our history that there has come back from Germany to Downing Street peace with honor. I believe it is peace for our time'.

Chamberlain was quickly undeceived. In **March 1939** Hitler seized the rest of **Czechoslovakia** rendered helpless by the Munich Agreement, which had stripped her of the heavily defended frontier. In **September** he attacked **Poland** displaying the full brilliance of his new strategy of '**Blitz-Krieg**' – 'the lightening war'. The secret non-aggression pact between Germany and USSR and the subsequent Russian attack against Poland precipitated Poland's defeat. In spring **1940** the Germans attacked and conquered **Norway** and **Sweden**. It was then that **Winston Churchill** (now the Prime Minister) made his famous speech saying 'I have nothing to offer but blood, toil, tears and sweat. You ask, what is your policy? I will say: It is to wage war by land, sea and air with all our might and with the strength that God can give us'. Indeed England was bracing herself for one the worst ordeals in the entire history of the island. In **1940** the Germans overran **Belgium** and **Holland** and stormed against **France**, defeating the French in six weeks. Hitler now ruled half of Europe, and for the first time in English history it was quite conceivable that Eng-

¹⁹ F. D. Roosevelt, *Charlottesville Address*, 10 June 1940.

land might also succumb under the ferocity of a German attack. It was clear that the battle of England would be fought between the Royal Air Force and Luftwaffe. The **Battle of England** began on **August 8, 1940**, and ended with a score – the German forces were not defeated but neither was the RAF, and the threat of an invasion was staved off for a while. At the same time a naval war raged in the Atlantic where U-boats anew started their reign of terror.

After the defeat of France, Italy entered the war on the German side. British and Italian interests clashed mostly in the Middle East – England controlled Egypt and the Suez Canal; Italy controlled Libya, Tripoli and Ethiopia. War in the Middle East was inevitable, as both sides wanted to control the Arab oil fields. When **the war in Africa** broke out Hitler sent **General Rommel** and his army to support the Italians, who did not do well. From that moment on the war continued with changing luck until in **1942 Field Marshal Montgomery**, the best known British military leader in World War II, defeated Rommel in the **Battle of El Alamein**, which was the first major success for the Allies²⁰ in the war.

In **1941 Japan** attacked British possessions in Asia – **Malaya (Malaysia)**, **Burma** and **India**, and forced the British to give up **Singapore**. The same year Japan attacked the US²¹ and **Germany** attacked the **Soviet Union**, thus bringing the two most powerful nations into the war and saving Great Britain who could not possibly have defeated Germany without the help of these new allies.

In **1943 Montgomery** had driven the German and Italian armies out of Africa, with the support of American troops. Then those combined forces advanced in Italy, which surrendered the same year. The Soviets were gradually pushing the Germans out of the USSR. American aircraft joined the RAF in a continuous bombardment of Germany²² and great forces were being assembled to invade German-occupied France. On **June 6, 1944 (D-day)** the allied forces landed in France, and by Christmas the Germans were pushed back into their old frontiers. By **spring 1945** Allied armies entered Germany from the East and West. In **May 1945** Germany surrendered and the focus of the war was transferred to the Pacific theatre. In **August 1945** Americans dropped **atomic bombs** on **Hiroshima** and **Nagasaki** killing instantly 110.000 people.²³

World War II was over, but peace was not restored because the world remained divided into two mutually hostile blocks – the capitalist countries of the west (the US and Western Europe) and the communist countries of the east (the Soviet Union, Eastern Europe and communist China). The ideological contest between those two blocks produced numerous foreign crises and acquired the name of **the Cold War**. The threat of a new, this time nuclear conflict, was steadily mounting and the world cringed under the fear of nuclear annihilation. In March 1946 Churchill said ‘**an iron curtain** [had] descended across the continent’ and it seemed that nothing would ever bridge the existing gap.

The conferences (**Yalta in February 1945; Potsdam in July 1945**) failed to solve the problems that divided Europe. Germany was split into two separate zones of occupation with

²⁰ Allies – a group of countries that fought together against Germany, Italy and Japan (the Axis powers). Allies included Britain, the Commonwealth countries and later France, the US, the USSR.

²¹ In **December 7, 1941** Japanese attacked **Pearl Harbor** on the island of Oahu in Hawaii – the main American base in the Pacific. The attack destroyed 19 ships and 188 American planes.

²² During one such raid against Dresden 130.000 civilians died.

²³ Many more died in the decades to come as a result of the exposure to radiation.

Berlin later divided by the infamous wall. Berlin was the center of the political tug-of-war. When in 1948 the Soviet Union tried to take over West Berlin by blocking all access to the city the Allies organized a massive **air-lift** to deliver supplies to West Berliners. The operation lasted for almost a year before the Russians finally gave up. In **April 1949** the **North Atlantic Treaty Organization** was formed to defend the western nations from the Soviet threat. A similar pact was signed by the Eastern block countries which rallied under the **Warsaw Pact**.

These and other security organizations that came into being in the post-war years sought to amend the inefficiency of **the United Nations Organization** which had been created after the war. It was based on the so-called '**Atlantic Charter**' signed in 1942 by the Allied powers and based on such ideals as the necessity for national self-determination and collaboration among countries. But in the face of the growing rift between the war-time Allies soon it turned out that reaching such far-fetched goals was a very difficult, if not impossible, task.

In that new world **the US** was economically and militarily the strongest nation in the world. America was virtually unscathed by the war. With only 6% of the world's population Americans were producing 50% of the world's goods. The war-time economy brought back prosperity. The veterans returned to schools, new jobs, houses in the suburbs and of course wives. Soon the indicators of the population growth soared as the 'baby boom' generation was coming into the world.

After the war America renounced isolationism and became a member of the United Nations. When Churchill first talked of the 'iron curtain' falling across Europe, not only Europe but the whole world was in fact divided into two spheres of influence – American and Soviet. At that time the US was the only country that had the atomic bomb, and brandishing the nuclear weapon only increased the existing tensions without intimidating anyone. **Harry S. Truman**, who replaced Franklin Delano Roosevelt (he died in 1945), has to be remembered as the president who gave permission for the first atomic bombs to be dropped on Japan. Contrary to Roosevelt, Truman adopted a more belligerent stance – he strongly opposed communism which he believed should be 'contained'. This belief was later dubbed '**the Truman doctrine**', and it was announced in 1947 in a very provocative phraseology: 'I believe', said the president, 'that it must be a policy of the United States to support free people who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures'. **Greece** and **Turkey** were the first countries that received American help to crush the Communist opposition.

That same year (1947) the US Secretary of State **George Marshall** proposed a far better plan to prevent Europe from giving in to communism. His **European Recovery Program** provided economic help to 17 European countries, help which amounted to 13 billion \$²⁴. France and Britain were the two largest recipients of the American aid, and millions of dollars pumped into their economies helped to avert unemployment and a drastically lower the standard of living. Russia which had also been invited to benefit from the Program rejected it as an 'imperialist scheme', and after the American intervention in Greece and Turkey regarded the US with growing skepticism.

In Truman's second term **China** ruled by the communist government of **Mao Tse-Tung** was the hotbed of the Cold War. The US supported the Chinese government in exile in

²⁴ In 1953 he received the Nobel Prize for Peace.

Taiwan and desperately looked for an ally in Asia, finally finding it in the Vietnamese regime that had already been supported by the French. Finally the tensions in the region erupted into violence when on **June 25, 1950** Communist **North Korea** attacked **South Korea**. In response the US, backed up by the UN, sent naval, ground and air forces to counterattack. The Russians and the Chinese supported the communist regime in North Korea (the Chinese even fought as ‘volunteers’). The war continued with changing luck until **1953** when the belligerents agreed to leave the frontier where it had been before the war commenced.

But the Korean War whipped up the **American fear of communism** that had already been grave when it turned out that the Russians had built their atomic bomb. Every person entering civil service had to take a loyalty oath and renounce all associations with communism. Everybody was subject to a background investigation whose aim was to detect any attempt at espionage. Though no plot was discovered millions of peoples lost their jobs, but the worst was still to come. The anti-communist hysteria reached a fever pitch early in the 1950s when an obscure Republican senator **Joseph McCarthy** emerged as the chief organizer of the anti-communist witch-hunt. He claimed that he had evidence that the American establishment was infested with communists and spies and though the evidence did not bear out his words he managed to ruin the lives of many public people.

Great Britain in the post war years grappled with quite different predicaments. There was a leftward current of opinion in the country and both the Conservative and Labor parties moved politically to the left in their unbending commitment to build what was called the **Welfare State**. Both main parties agreed that GB should become a **social democracy** in which all people would share common rewards of their work, better housing and social services. What they disagreed about was only what methods should be adopted to achieve these aims or how far the nationalization of some of British industries should go.

Nationalization was high on the post-war Labor government’s agenda. The Bank of England was first to be nationalized; civil aviation, coal mines, transport, electricity, iron and steel industries followed. As much as 20% of the British industry was nationalized and the Labor government was satisfied, but still to many people nationalization was a fiasco. The most profitable industries remained in private hands and the workers in nationalized industries were no better off than before.

What certainly improved the workers’ lot were a comprehensive **Social Security** system and a **National Health Service (NHS)** that were developed by successive post-war governments.²⁵ In **1946** the Labor Government gave all citizens the right to free medical treatment. Under the **Health Service Act** and **National Insurance Act** passed the same year people were entitled to draw sickness and unemployment benefits. In **1948** the **National Assistance Act** provided financial help to those permanently unable to work due to sickness – the blind, deaf, crippled or insane. Great strides were taken in the field of education – all children received the right to free education till the age of 15. Universities were subsidized by the state which paid for those who could not pay themselves.

In **1951** the Conservatives came back to power, and **Winston Churchill**, aged 77, formed his only peace-time administration. In **1955** when he retired **Anthony Eden** formed the

²⁵ Social security provision had at that time already a very long and impressive record: old age pensions were introduced in 1908, and 1928; unemployment insurance and health insurance in 1911.

next also conservative government. Eden had a reputation of a great international diplomat, but his premiership did not live up to that reputation, as Eden mishandled the delicate issue concerning **the Suez Canal**. In 1956 the Egyptian government unexpectedly announced its plan to nationalize the Suez Canal, in which England as well as France owned shares. So France and England concocted a military intervention plan which, when carried out, was condemned by the UN and by **Eisenhower**, the American president who replaced Truman.²⁶ The intervention, which was a total fiasco, taught the British a lesson in humility. Finally it dawned on the British diplomats that Great Britain was no longer a world power capable of mounting an efficient military operation with blatant disregard of international public opinion. Furthermore they realized that their policies could be easily undercut if they were at variance with American plans. The Suez affair demonstrated British weakness and gave momentum to the process of dismembering the British Empire.

Britain's concern with her **Empire** turning into a **Commonwealth** and with her transatlantic connections (with the USA) diverted for some time the attention of British statesmen from very important developments that were taking place in Europe. The first plans to create a **European Union** were laid in 1955. The first treaties establishing a **European Common Market** were signed in 1957 and took effect from the beginning of the following year. Britain, which was still economically tied to the countries of the Commonwealth, poured scorn on the European federalist movement.

Much later in 1963, **Harold Macmillan**, who replaced the disgraced Eden as Prime Minister, changed the government's policy with respect to the **European Economic Community**, as the European Union was then called. This change of direction was not so much caused by the sudden British fondness of European federalism, as by a dazzling idea of Macmillan, who envisaged GB as a new center of the world, lying at the intersection of three political spheres – Europe, America and the Commonwealth. But **Charles De Gaulle**, the French president, pierced through the British pretence, realizing that the British real aim was to restore Britain flagging prestige in the world at the expense of the EU. He said *non* and Britain had to wait another 10 years to make the next, this time successful, approach.

De Gaulle not only habitually disliked '*Les Anglo-Saxons*', but first and foremost feared the complete dependence of the English on the US. When after World War II Britain had failed to keep pace with the arms race between the US and the Soviet Union and could no longer pay the costs of her nuclear research, the government of Harold Macmillan decided to buy from America nuclear missiles in return for leasing to the Americans a nuclear submarine base. That led the leader of the opposition and a future Prime Minister **Harold Wilson** to deride in the House of Commons that the 'independent British deterrent' was neither independent, nor British nor even deterrent', especially that the British had to promise not to use the missiles without American consent. It was therefore not surprising that De Gaulle saw GB as an American 'stooge'.

In spite of Harold Wilson's criticism not much was changed when Labor was in power. The Anglo-American alliance remained the cornerstone of English foreign policy. Wil-

²⁶ Eisenhower ran for a second term of presidency on a peace platform and did not want to get involved in such a risky operation.

son's Government supported American involvement in Vietnam. In view of the rapid loss of the Empire²⁷ English loyalty was increasingly turning to the American ally.

At the same time, however, the harsh facts of economic life brought about a dramatic reversal in the English policy towards the European Common Market. The great economic recession that shook the country during Wilson's second term in office was the result of long period of negligence under many listless governments. From 1951 to 1964 GB had been ruled for 13 consecutive years by the Conservatives and was prospering in spite of bad management. In the early 1960s there was a first series of economic crises that brought it home to the British that the Tory prosperity would not last much longer. Wilson's government took some measures to deal with the catastrophe, but it was not until 1968 that the situation started to improve. Under such circumstances it began to seem possible that European integration would strengthen and modernize British capitalism. **Edward Heath**, the next Prime Minister (from 1970), applied for membership in the **European Common Market** and Britain entered the Community on **January 1, 1973**.

The same conservative government had to come to grips with the bloody strife in **Ulster**, the province of Northern Ireland that remained outside the Irish Republic (then called the **Irish Free State**²⁸). Ulster was a self-governing province, but its government was in the hands of the Protestant majority who discriminated against Catholics in housing, jobs and political rights. In 1969 the province erupted in violence, and the British army was deployed in Ulster to stop the fighting. That gave impetus to the **Irish Republican Army (IRA)**, a terrorist organization launching attacks against British soldiers and civilians. The whole nation as well as the British Parliament divided over the measures to be taken to solve the problem. In the meantime the campaign of urban terrorism continued with both sides committing terrible acts of slaughter.²⁹

In 1973 the Government declared a **State of Emergency**³⁰ because of the global oil crisis caused by the outbreak of the Arab-Israeli war. The situation would not have been so bad if it had not been for mine workers who went on strike. In the post-war period Trade Unions became a formidable political power, practically a state within the state, and their position was very strong. Even Labor governments could not successfully curb the recalcitrance of Trade Unionists, to whom too many concessions had already been made.

In 1979 **Mrs. Margaret Thatcher** set about reversing Britain's sagging fortunes, but she failed to do so by 1983. In the words of a historian the relative decline that Britain had experienced for some time became an absolute decline in the first years of her premiership. The volume of production fell further, unemployment was on the rise, taxation increased while wages did not grow fast enough.

²⁷ During the whole period of the Labor Government (1964–70) colonies in Africa were becoming independent. Ex-colonies India and Pakistan went to war over the question of Kashmir, while Rhodesia unilaterally declared independence in 1965.

²⁸ Irish Free State was created by the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1921. Its name was changed to Eire in 1937 and to the Republic of Ireland in 1949.

²⁹ The most infamous incident of that campaign of terror took place on **30 January 1972** – '**Bloody Sunday**' when 13 Catholics were shot during a civil rights march. On **July 21, 1972** – '**Bloody Friday**' 20 bombs killed 11 people in Belfast and injured 120.

³⁰ Industries had electricity on 3 days a week and consequently there was a three-day working week, a speed limit – 50 km/ph was introduced on all roads, TV was closed down at 10: 30 in the evening.

But in many respects Mrs. Thatcher's ascendancy was a watershed in British domestic policies. Instead of subsidizing outdated industries pampered by the Labor governments, she emphasized the need to be competitive, technologically advanced and resourceful in the search for new markets. She was convinced that privately owned companies were more skillful in achieving these aims, so she made a start on **denationalization** (now called **privatization** as the word is not so politically charged) of these state-owned enterprises that drained public money. She was also successful in bringing the Trade Unions to heel by outlawing sympathy strikes and restricting illegal strikes whose costs were now incurred by the Trade Unions themselves. In fact it was the growing unemployment as well as a change of public opinion that started to be fed up with the Unions leaders' intransigent militancy that helped Mrs. Thatcher to break the Trade Unions' teeth. Finally in an effort to cut public spending, she reduced the size of the government's administration and limited the scope of social services in a firm conviction that it was high time to 'roll back the frontiers of the state'. Till the very end of her rules as Prime Minister, Thatcher remained determined to reverse the post-war trend towards socialism. Her policies, needless to say, did not bring her sympathy among her countrymen, who nevertheless accepted them with resignation, seeing no viable alternatives to Mrs. Thatcher's plan of recovery.

To compensate for Mrs. Thatcher's lack of popularity caused by her raid on Trade Unions and welfare state facilities, she made her name as a stateswoman to be reckoned with in international politics. This was primarily due to the **Falklands War**³¹ but also due to her support of NATO and the US and her anti-communism which earned her the nickname the '**Iron Lady**'.³² Her toughness was nowhere more apparent than in her determination to stand up to 'Brussels'. She provoked the first full-scale Community crisis over the Community budget by stating that she wanted 'Britain's own money back'. In the words of the Irish Prime Minister she was not only 'adamant and persistent' but also 'repetitive'. But the strategy worked well and she managed to secure some rebates for GB.

The British attitudes towards the European Community continued to be rather unenthusiastic when **John Major** replaced Margaret Thatcher as premier and Tory leader in 1990. Even though he called for Britain to be 'at the heart of Europe', most of the British remained convinced that the European Community did not represent the principle of federalism but rather a defense of French and German interests (Paris-Bonn axis). The so-called **Eurosceptics** within the Tory party were bolstered by public fears regarding the overwhelming Brussels bureaucracy. The British press contributed greatly to the anti-EU anxiety through a relentless campaign against the growing power of EU institutions, convincing the public that elite statesmen had pushed the idea of federalism further than ordinary people wished. So even though the majority of the British people wanted to stay in the Union, few of the politicians were willing to press for more European integration for fear of being branded as the 'poodles of Brussels'. Britain's uneasy relationship with the EU was put to a test in 1996 when an outbreak of '**mad cow disease**' led the EU to ban the sale of British beef. The deadlock was averted by the firm measures that were adopt-

³¹ A war between Britain and Argentina (1982) over the possession of the Falkland Islands in the South Atlantic Ocean. After Argentina took over the islands the British mounted a counter attack and after 2 months of warfare recaptured the islands.

³² The nickname was given to her by the Russians and she loved it.

ed by the British to deal with the catastrophe. But although the EU lifted its ban in 1999, the French put their own embargo on British beef, and the relations with France and by implication the entire EU remained strained.

In 1997 Tony Blair and his ‘**New Labor**’³³ party won the general elections, thus ending the period of long conservative rules. Blair engineered his pre-election pledge of **devolution** (decentralization of government) by establishing **legislative bodies in Scotland and Wales**, which wished to have more to say in their domestic affairs. In 1999 Labor pushed through Parliament a bill abolishing the voting rights of hereditary peers, which besides the devolution is the second major modification of the unwritten English constitution. Of course the entry into the European Union which *The Economist* described as ‘something of a rolling constitutional revolution’ was the greatest change. By joining the EU significant powers were grudgingly transferred to the European Union institutions. European law now takes precedence over British law which makes the European Court in Luxemburg the supreme body, whose authority surpasses that of a British Court or Parliament. Even though Euro-sceptics would like to retrieve some of the powers from the EU, it probably would be impossible without a complete withdrawal from the Union. Such a withdrawal is very unlikely because each year GB is more economically bound with Europe and because the US supports the idea of a more integrated Europe, and in fact both Tory and Labor politicians came to realize that Britain’s influence in Washington depends on British clout in Europe.

After the devastating **terrorist attack on the World Trade Center of September 11, 2001**, the British government became the most faithful American ally in the **American War against Terrorism**. The British forces supported the Americans in the war in Afghanistan that broke out when the **Taliban** refused to hand over **Osama bin Laden**. The Blair government also committed British forces to the invasion of **Iraq** that was launched by the US in **March 2003**.

3: The USA in the second half of the 20th century

After World War II Americans learned their lesson, and they were no longer indulging in isolationism. The US after the war gained the status of a superpower, which for a while held the monopoly on nuclear arms. Its main adversary, the USSR, the other superpower, did not lag behind and soon equipped itself with bombs of its own. Soon a great **arms race** was under way, and it seemed quite possible that another global conflict was at hand. That neither superpower decided to unleash the dogs of war is the most optimistic fact

³³ New Labor – the phrase was coined by Tony Blair to indicate that the modern Labor party moved away from the left to the center of the British political scene. The objective was to win a larger electorate.

of modern times. Still **the Cold War** raged pitilessly and determined the policies of all countries whose governments had to take into account the fact that the two great enemies might at any moment start to fight.

The Cold War had powerful consequences for **the economy of the US**. The arms race as well as a conscript army (much of it scattered in different places in the world such as West Germany, Japan or South Korea) were very costly. Millions of dollars were spent on the maintenance of these forces, on arming them and developing superior weapons for them. Defense establishments proliferated in the country especially in the areas neglected by private investors such as the South or South West of the country, which for the first time since the Civil War flourished.

Where defense went other investments followed, generating incredible wealth lavishly spent on public enterprises. The warfare state worked amazingly well – weapons research created new employment, and private and public companies grew rich on contracts with the US Defense Department. Instead of the post-war depression that everyone had expected there was a great boom – the wonder of the ruined world. At the same time social programs were extended, this time under the label of ‘**Fair Deal**’ coined by **President Truman**: the minimum legal wage was raised, the benefits of Social Security were extended, and a vast slum clearance and public housing program was begun. The next president **Eisenhower**³⁴ slashed national defense spending and several Fair Deal Programs but did not reverse the policy of building welfare capitalism.

What absorbed Eisenhower most were foreign affairs. The foreign policy of his administration was shaped by the secretary of state **John Foster Dulles** who enriched Truman’s Containment Doctrine with two new terms: ‘**massive retaliation**’ and ‘**going to the brink**’. ‘Massive retaliation’ meant dependence on nuclear weapons as a deterrent, even in local conflicts. Such a policy could, in Dulles’ opinion, allow the US to reduce the army and expenditures on conventional weapons and thereby lead to budgetary savings. ‘Going to the brink’ was a new doctrine which claimed that in order to contain communism the US must take a more active stance, even sometimes going to the brink of war. Such a policy proved effective in the conflict in Korea when Eisenhower’s threat to use nuclear weapons accelerated the speed of peace negotiations, but it dismally failed elsewhere, especially in Indo-China.

After the war in Korea (1950–53) **Vietnam**, divided into the communist Democratic Republic of Vietnam (under the leadership of **Ho Chi Minh**) and the French-ruled South, became the next battleground of the Cold War. When the French attacked Ho Chi Minh’s Vietnam, Eisenhower supported the French, and by 1953 the US paid 2/3 of the costs of the war. Red China and Russia of course supported Ho Chi Minh and his **Viet Kong**. After the spectacular defeat of the French at **Dien Bien Phu** in 1954, there was a temporary armistice during which the US put **Ngo Dinh Diem** in charge of the South Vietnamese government. His government was excessively corrupt and provoked more resistance. In 1957 **the guerilla warfare** was resumed.

At that time Eisenhower was mostly concerned with the Middle East where **Nasser**, the Egyptian President who gained new confidence and charisma after the Sues Crisis in 1956, was cleverly plotting to abolish all pro-western governments in Arab countries. In

³⁴ Dwight Eisenhower – 34th president (1953–61) and a famous general. He was the supreme commander of Allied Forces in World War II, his popular name was Ike.

1958 the Iraqi government fell, but the governments in **Lebanon** and **Jordan** did not go down due to American support.

Before Ike retired, he was presented with yet another immediate problem that emerged very close to the American shores. On **January 1, 1959**, after 3 years of guerilla warfare against the dictator **Fulgencio Batista**, **Fidel Castro** came to power in **Cuba**. As soon as he murdered all his political adversaries, he began a program of land redistribution and nationalization that hit hard against American interests on the island. To make things worse, Castro started hobnobbing with Russians and worked out with them some agreements. This friendship was soon bound to pose a serious threat to American security and to international peace.

Eisenhower is remembered as the only President who deployed American troops to enforce **desegregation in the South**. In fact Eisenhower's action was a logical conclusion of the Republican policy of cajoling blacks, whose position was strengthened by their war-time service and wartime mobility. Over 1 million blacks had served in the segregated army, and after the war they demanded equal chances. The popular slogan in black communities was '**Double V**' – a victory over Hitler and a victory Hitlerism, whose potent signs the blacks could see in the political and social realities of segregated America.

The **National Association for Advancement of Colored People (NAACP)** founded in 1909,³⁵ led blacks in their fight for civil rights. Blacks were continually gaining ground – they were becoming richer, better educated and better organized, and their votes were more and more important. Therefore Eisenhower continued the policies of his Democratic predecessor Harry Truman, who not only ordered the desegregation of the armed forces and but also opened civil service jobs to blacks. The situation of African Americans was improving but, in their view, it was not improving fast enough. So the NAACP continued its own work towards progress, and in 1954 had its most spectacular victory. The **Supreme Court** presided over by **Earl Warren** as Chief Justice struck down *the Plessy v. Ferguson* decision that had upheld the racial segregation in schools ever since 1896. The case known as *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* made segregation in schools illegal. The president who was against this decision, nevertheless had to take action when in 1957 a white mob wanted to lynch black children who wanted to attend the white city school in **Little Rock in Arkansas**. The president sent 1000 paratroopers to protect the black students and the soldiers had to stay throughout the whole school year³⁶.

The resistance of southern diehards against desegregation reignited acute racial hostility towards blacks who were in turn becoming more and more intransigent and determined to claim their constitutional rights. In 1955 they received a new dynamic and eloquent leader in the person of **Martin Luther King Jr.** who was launched into national prominence by the **Montgomery Bus Boycott (1955–56)**.³⁷ King initiated a strategy of **nonvio-**

³⁵ The membership in NAACP rose during the war from 50.000 to 450.000 people.

³⁶ In 1958 the school was closed – the local authorities preferred to have it closed rather than desegregated. The fact bore out Eisenhower's objections that it was impossible to make people good by force and all federal legislation forcing desegregation was in fact counter-productive, as it produced a backlash, even in those areas where racism was subdued and the problems with segregation had already been on their way to peaceful solution.

³⁷ Montgomery in Alabama, often called 'the cradle of Confederacy', was the place where the **Civil Rights Movement** started, after an incident connected with a black woman **Rosa Parks** who refused to sit in

lent, passive resistance³⁸ based on the writings of Thoreau and the example of **Mahatma Gandhi**, who had overthrown the British Empire in India.

During **John F. Kennedy's** 'thousand days' (1961–63), King began to change his strategy. He provoked staunch racists to air their radical views in public, whereby the federal government had to take action to enforce anti-racial legislation. The civil rights issue was of paramount importance in the **1961** presidential election, and J. F. Kennedy did his best to rally black voters to his side. In fact it was **Robert Kennedy**, John's brother and attorney-general in Kennedy's and later Johnson's administration, that was the driving force behind many of J. F. Kennedy's decisions. He was a man of great compassion and vision, and he persuaded the president to propose an ambitious civil rights bill that was to eradicate discrimination of blacks in all public places. The bill bogged down in Congress due to the opposition of Southern Democrats, which provoked a massive demonstration of supporters of the bill – 200,000 blacks and whites marched on **August 28, 1963** to the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, where Martin Luther King delivered one of his most famous speeches in which he said: 'I have a dream that one day this nation will rise up and live up to the true meaning of its creed: 'We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal'. I have a dream that one day... the sons of former slaves and the sons of former slave-owners will be able to sit together at the table of brotherhood'.

John F. Kennedy in fact showed very little political talent in pushing his '**New Frontier**'³⁹ Programs through Congress dominated by opposition coming from his own Democratic party. Some people argued that he was a 'Prince Charming' whose lofty rhetoric could fan Americans into uncommon fervor.⁴⁰

Kennedy's worst failure was **the Bay of Pigs** – an attempt to invade Cuba. On **April 19, 1961** 1500 Cuban exiles supported by the CIA attempted to end the rule of Fidel Castro but failed, thus causing a great embarrassment to the President. But the failure was relatively quickly redressed. In **1962** American intelligence discovered that the Cubans were preparing to receive **Russian nuclear missiles**, which began the most serious crisis in Cold War history and took the world to the brink of a nuclear war. But the Russians relented and took the missiles back, to which America responded with a similar friendly gesture, removing their missiles from Turkey, Italy and Britain.

Kennedy also announced his plans to withdraw American forces from **Vietnam** which plunged into chaos after a series of military *coups*. Unfortunately he failed to do so, be-

the back of a segregated bus. When she was arrested M. L. King organized the bus boycott which forced the city authorities to change the law forcing the blacks to sit in the back.

³⁸ The sit-in movement – blacks occupied white restaurants demanding service; 'kneel-ins' movement in churches and 'wade-ins' in segregated swimming pools completed this tactics of non-violent resistance.

³⁹ During his presidential campaign Kennedy used the expression meaning the 'Frontier of unknown opportunities and perils – a frontier of unfulfilled hopes and threats'. His domestic program included urban renewal, rise of the minimum wage, enlargement of social security, grants to areas stricken by poverty. The new Frontier was first and foremost space. Kennedy poured more money into space exploration. His goal was to offset the Russian success in launching SPUTNIK with the first landing on the moon.

⁴⁰ A good example of his rhetoric, the 'Kennedy style' was using the Frontier image as a metaphor for his programs. Another example is the well known rhetorical question he posed before Americans during his inauguration: 'Ask not what your country can do for you – ask what you can do for your country'.

cause on **November 22, 1963** he was shot down by **Lee Harvey Oswald** while visiting **Dallas**. His early tragic death, which made him something of a legend, remains the most mysterious American political assassination.

Kennedy's reputation of a great American president eclipsed some of the accomplishments of his successor **Lyndon Johnson** who was not so glamorous and charismatic but had more clout than his dead predecessor. As soon as he became president the legislation blocked in Congress poured through and '**the war of poverty**' started. Its aim was to create what Johnson called the '**Great Society**', free not only of poverty but also racial injustice. His programs were supported by the majority of Americans who reelected Johnson in **1964**, and he immediately gave shape to his New Deal liberalism by flooding Congress with legislation aimed at improving health, education, safety, purity of environment and the conditions of living. In **1964** Johnson signed the most far reaching **Civil Rights Bill** that had ever gone through Congress. The Bill forbade discrimination in public places and job discrimination. **The Voting Act** passed a year later gave all the so-far disenfranchised citizens the right to vote.

But the legislation did not end segregation and discrimination and made blacks bitterly disillusioned with American justice. Many blacks also felt disillusioned with King and his non-violent tactics, which anyway did not turn out to be useful in northern ghettos which in the 1960s were continually burning. Finally the violence took the form of the **Black Power Movement** whose leaders, such as **Malcolm X**, were dedicated to destroying white supremacy with guns and clubs if need be. **Martin Luther King's assassination** on **April 4, 1968** (he was killed by a half-insane Southern white) seemed to bear out the **Black Panthers**⁴¹ claim that the time had come to use brutal force to end discrimination. This seemed to be the end of the '**Second Reconstruction**' as Kennedy's and Johnson's efforts to give Afro-American fair treatment were called. The Black population sunk back into apathy, as the eyes of the nation were turning on **the Vietnam War**.

The American commitment in the war was steadily growing, and by 1969 there were over half a million American troops in Vietnam, engaged in 'search-and-destroy' operations. As the Americans involuntarily accepted the primary responsibility for fighting the communist Vietcong, the death toll among the American soldiers dramatically rose. In spite of American military superiority, the war in Vietnam was a 'limited war' – the American involvement had to be relatively small not to provoke a Soviet or Chinese reaction. For the Vietnamese communists the war was a matter of survival, and they were ready to go on as long as they had any strength to fight. As for the limited war with unclear objectives, the war in Vietnam started to seem too costly in terms of casualties and money pumped into it.⁴² As the war was turning out to be un-winnable, it started to tear to pieces Johnson's popularity. It was then that **Robert Kennedy** assumed the leadership of the anti-war forces in the Democratic Party and won the race for the nomination for president. He was murdered on the day he won the California primary election by the Palestinian fanatic **Sirhan Sirhan**. There seemed to be no end to the national traumas.

Richard Nixon, a Republican, won the next presidential election (**1968**) and took over the task of patching up the distressed nation. He had to deal with the wide spread youth

⁴¹ Black Panthers were black extremist.

⁴² \$322.000 were spent on every communist killed in Vietnam, as compared with 53\$ spent on every poor person in the country.

revolt and the emergence of the anarchistic counter-culture, with race riots that followed in the wake of M. L. King's assassination, and with the escalation of the Civil Right movement that now embraced other marginalized ethnic groups such as: Hispanic Americans or Native Americans and minority groups such as for example gays. Many of these developments were anathema for the president who represented '**the silent majority**' – the white working class and middle class citizens who held back from the political and social upheavals that were transforming the nation.

In fact Nixon was a cynical man, morally shallow and duplicitous, which quickly got him the nickname '**Tricky Dick**'. He promised 'peace with honor' in Vietnam, but instead he launched a last offensive against the communists in Vietnam, just when the peace agreement was about to be signed. In 1971 the so-called **Pentagon Papers**, leaked from the Defense Department, were printed in the *New York Times* and revealed to the public the truth about the American involvement in Vietnam.⁴³ This scandal gave the Americans a foretaste of what was about to come.

Nixon's handling of economic problems was equally ineffective. The country was suffering a recession due to its effort to win the expensive Vietnam War and cover the costs of the 'Great Society' programs that the president could not manage to roll back. He was far more successful in foreign affairs where he had the assistance of the most remarkable American diplomat **Henry Kissinger**, a German Jew who made a tremendous career in the US where his unsentimental, un-ideological outlook on international politics and his 'shuttle diplomacy' around the world to find solutions to international problems were appreciated. Thanks to him Nixon acquired the reputation of a 'global peacekeeper' that secured his reelection in 1972. He was the first and only president to resign just two years later because of the petty intrigue he himself had set up. The intrigue involved people from Nixon's closest environment who during the 1972 election tried to steal information from the offices of the Democratic Party in the **Watergate** Hotel in Washington, D. C. The burglars were caught and the worst political scandal in American history started to unfold that sent most of the president's associates to jail and started **impeachment** proceedings. On 8 August 1974 Nixon resigned claiming that he had been destroyed by unprincipled and vindictive enemies. Till the very end he refused to admit that the charges against him were valid even though there was overwhelming evidence piled against him⁴⁴.

Thus the 1960s and 1970s were a watershed in American history. President Jimmy Carter⁴⁵ aptly recapped all the important changes that took part in American consciousness in his 1979 speech:

We were sure that ours was a nation of the ballot, not the bullet until the murders of John Kennedy, Robert Kennedy, and Martin Luther King Jr. We were taught that our armies were always invincible and our causes always just, only to suffer the agony of Vietnam. We respected the presidency as a place of honor until the shock of Watergate. We remember when the phrase 'sound as a dollar' was an expression of absolute dependability, until ten years of inflation began to shrink our dollar and our savings. We believed that our nation's resources

⁴³ Two years later on March 29, 1973 the last American troops left Vietnam.

⁴⁴ The most conclusive evidence against Nixon was the tape recording of the conversations in the White House between Nixon and his aids which were revealed to the public.

⁴⁵ One of the chief advisors of President Carter was Zbigniew Brzezinski, a Polish refugee whose ideas about foreign politics were in many ways similar to those of Henry Kissinger.

were limitless until 1973, when we had to face a growing dependence on foreign oil. These wounds are still very deep. They have never been healed.⁴⁶

President Gerald Ford, who took the reins of the country after Nixon stepped down in disgrace, was not the man that could avert the decline, so it was not surprising that in the 1976 election **Jimmy Carter**, a Democrat, had a crushing victory.⁴⁷ But still only 50% of voters took part in the election, which was the lowest turn-out in American history. The other half decided to sit the election out following the popular advice of bumper stickers which said: 'Don't vote it only encourages them' (the politicians).

Carter had some notable successes in the first two years of his presidency. He admitted to his administration more blacks and women than any president before. He offered amnesty to those who had fled the country to avoid being drafted for the unpopular Vietnam war. But the **energy issue** was the most urgent and difficult. American oil reserves had been running out for some time, and the US depended on Arab countries for supplies, while at the same time politically supporting the biggest enemy of oil-producing countries in the Middle East – Israel. This obvious contradiction, which American politicians failed to notice, made the Arab countries ask pretty obvious questions: why should they supply America with cheap petrol? Why should they subsidize the 'American way of life'? Since no legitimate reasons could be found **The Organization of Petroleum-Exporting Countries (OPEC)** decided to increase the price of oil fourfold in **December 1973**. In the **summer of 1979**, with the outburst of another war in the Middle East, America was again hit by another devastating fuel shortage. The support for Carter fell lower than that for Nixon during the worst moments of the Watergate scandal. The drastic drop in his popularity was not even remedied by his success in engineering a peace arrangement between Israel and Egypt in Camp David (a presidential retreat in the hills of Maryland). The final blow came from **Iran** where the Pro-American **Shah** and his government were abolished and a new Muslim government under the leadership of **Ayatollah Khomeini** took control. The Shah fled to the US where he was treated for cancer while Iranian nationalists took control over the **American embassy (November 4, 1979)**. Diplomats, officials and other staff members were held as hostages. The rescue attempt fell through and there were eight casualties. In his last act as president Carter bought off the prisoners with several billions dollars of Iranian assets from American banks which he had frozen when the conflict had began.

When **Ronald Reagan** became president in 1981 the economy was still in recession. Reagan was a Conservative Republican and a *nouveau riche* who hated taxes. He was a second-rate actor and host of a popular TV show through most of his professional life, which gave an air of confidence to his public appearances. When he won the presidency few people believed he was up to the job, yet a very fortunate incident helped to improve his outlooks. He was shot by an assassin and went about the business in such an exhilarating way that most Americans could not help but admire his courage and his sense of humor.⁴⁸

⁴⁶ This fragment of Carter's speech is quoted on page 669 of *the Penguin History of the USA*.

⁴⁷ Ford did not stand a chance mostly due to his decision to pardon Nixon. Another thing that pulled Ford down was the collapse of South Vietnam in 1975. The last Americans fled from Saigon ignominiously leaving behind to their enemies many of their Vietnamese collaborators. Communists also won in Laos and Cambodia.

⁴⁸ Reagan had a real gift for catchy lines. When he came round after the attempted assassination he told his wife 'Honey I forgot to duck'. This and other famous lines he uttered came from old films or other people (in this case the boxer – Jack Dempsey).

That admiration helped Reagan to carry out his policies dubbed **Reaganomics**. He cut the money for health, housing, education and culture; he cut funds for civil rights enforcement as well. He carried out the biggest tax cuts in history believing that more cash in the hands of rich would result in more investment and less unemployment. He increased military spending.

In foreign politics Reagan had to deal with crises in Central America. In **Nicaragua** he reversed Carter's policy of supporting the existing Cuban-sponsored government of **Sandinistas**⁴⁹ by giving money and weapons to the government's enemies called 'contras'. A Civil War also continued in **El Salvador** where the Reagan administration subsidized **Duarte's** government. The Middle East still was an unsolvable problem, this time it was torn by a bloody religious war between **Iran** and **Iraq**. The two conflicts, in Central America and the Middle East, came together for a while to the foreground of public attention when it turned out that Reagan's administration endorsed a secret sale of military hardware in Iran in order to gather funds to subsidize the contras in Nicaragua. The **Iran-Contra affair (Irangate)** showed how deep was Reagan's commitment to destroy the Sandinistas. His attempts, for the time being, ended in fiasco and seriously undermined American credibility.

George Bush, Reagan's Vice President, who took office after Reagan's two terms (1989), pledged to continue Reagan's agenda. Bush was more interested in foreign policy than domestic policy, where he was unwilling to make certain unpopular moves (like raising taxes). His dream was to restore America's prestige abroad and to reinstate America in her position of the invincible world superpower. For two years of his presidency he just sat back and observed how communism was crumbling in central and Eastern Europe. In 1991 Bush surprised everybody announcing unilateral American cut backs in nuclear weapons in Europe and Asia. **Gorbachov** responded promising he would do the same. The Cold War ended, but it did not put an end to local wars. In 1991 Bush sent a large army to **Saudi Arabia** after **Iraq's** annexation of **Kuwait**. The climax of this so-called **Gulf War** was the swift ground assault '**Desert Storm**' (February 24, 1991) that ousted the Iraqi forces from Kuwait in four days.

In 1993 the tables turned again. **Bill Clinton**, a Democrat, introduced some more liberal measures into White House policies focusing again more on domestic issues and the ailing economy which by then was showing the first signs of recovery. He increased taxes for the rich, and further cut government spending; he introduced a number of anti-crime bills and other social reforms. In brief he was commonly regarded as the successor to the New Deal and Great Society Programs. Accused of lying about his affair with **Monika Lewinsky**, he pressured her to give false testimony in court. He was **impeached on January 7, 1999**, but the impeachment did not receive the required 2/3 majority and failed. Therefore he remained in office till the end of his second term.

After this so-called **Zipper gate** scandal **George Walker Bush's** victory was a forgone conclusion. G. W. Bush is the son of the former President George Bush and like his father he is a Republican. He became president on 20 January 2001 after a very tough race. The 2000 election for President between him and Al Gore, the candidate of the Democratic Party, was very close and the votes had to be counted again. Finally the Supreme Court

⁴⁹ The government of Sandinistas named after the guerilla leader from the 20s and 30s Cesar Augusto Sandino took power in coup d'état in 1979 after overthrowing the pro-American government of Somoza.

ruled that Bush had won, and in this way Bush became the 43rd US President. But after the terrorist attack against the **World Trade Center** in New York (**11 September 2001**)⁵⁰ his crusade against terrorism rallied many people to his side. The attacks were ascribed to **Al Qaeda**, a terrorist group led by **Osama Bin Laden**, who carried a variety of terrorist acts in the past. The attacks resulted in strong anti-terrorist laws passed not only in the US but also many other countries. Soon the war on terror also became the main justification for different military campaigns – in Afghanistan, where Osama Bin Laden was thought to be hiding, and in Iraq (2003), which allegedly was producing nuclear weapons to launch attacks against the US and its western allies. **The war on terrorism** was used by other countries as well as a pretext to dispatch old enemies, as it was in the case of Israeli action against Palestinians or Russian action against the Chechens. Bush easily defeated his rival John Kerry in the presidential election in 2004, but presently the support for him is at its lowest ebb. Bush has not managed to capture Osama Bin Laden and there were no nuclear weapons in Iraq, which after several years of guerrilla warfare is gradually turning in the eyes of public opinion into another Vietnam.

⁵⁰ The terrorists carried the attack through the hijacked planes from the Eastern coast. Two planes hit the twin Towers which soon after collapsed. The third plane hit the Pentagon and the fourth that headed for the White House crashed in Pennsylvania. Nearly 3.000 people died.

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