



Britain in the XX century

Edward VII
Saxe-Coburg-Gotha
(1841 / 1901 – 1910)



Queen Victoria died in 1901 and was succeeded by **Edward VII**. Though everything seemed fine in Britain the country existed in a twilight zone: the balance of power in many areas was shifting in Europe in which the decisive factor was the rise of a united Germany, and in a world in which the United States would soon dominate.

**George V Windsor
(1865 / 1910 – 1936)**

George V did a lot to continue the popularity of the monarchy but the situation in the country and the world was changing rapidly.





The year 1911 saw the greatest industrial unrest and **nationwide strikes** in Britain's history. The government was forced to respond.

The National Insurance Act was passed to introduce free medical treatment, sick pay, disability, maternity and unemployment benefits.



In 1911, major reforms took place in British Parliament. Which limited the delaying power of **the House of Lords**. From now on, the Lords could no longer veto any bills.

World War I (1914 – 1918)



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The cost of the war for Britain was the loss of 750 thousand people who were killed, while other 2 million got wounded, together with the loss of an entire generation, whose contribution to national life was to be sadly missed during the political mismanagement of the postwar years.



There was a major **downturn in the British economy** after the end of the World War. There was too much reliance on the traditional industries of cotton, coal mining and shipbuilding, all of which were finding it difficult to compete in world markets.



Britain could not control its vast empire effectively any more. The unrest in many parts of the empire became more evident. In 1921, Britain had to grant wide autonomy to **the Irish Republic** (that became fully independent in 1948).

Women were given voting rights for the first time in 1918.



The newly formed **Labour Party** became the chief challenger to the Conservative Party, and formed its first government in 1924.



Edward VIII
(1894 / 1936)



When George V died the throne passed to his elder son **Edward VIII**. But Edward preferred to abdicate in order to marry the woman he loved, a divorced American. Edward's younger brother **George VI** became the monarch.

George VI
(1895 / 1936 – 1952)



The Battle of Britain (1940 – 1941)



Britain entered the Second World War on September 3, 1939. **The Battle of Britain** began with an attack of German bombers on England, July 10, 1940, while artillery began shelling the English coast.

A total blockade of the British Isles by German submarines followed in autumn. Only a year later, in June 1941 when the German armed divisions poured into the east, Britain breathed a huge sigh of relief.

Britain continued to take an active part in the war till its end. The Royal Navy controlled **the Mediterranean** throughout the war. The allied forces recaptured **Italy** in 1943-1945.



In 1944, on "D-Day", the **invasion of the Continent** by allied forces marked the beginning of the end of the war in the West. In March 1945, the allies crossed the Rhine.



British economy was seriously shattered by the war. The election of 1945 returned **the Labour Party** to power. The major change brought about by the Labour Government was **the nationalization** of the Bank of England and about 20% of British industry.

The British Empire reached its crisis after the war. In 1947, **India** became independent from Britain. After that a wave of independence grants followed very quickly.



In 1956, Britain tried to declare war on Egypt when the latter nationalized **the Suez Canal** Company but had to withdraw its forces in the face of international pressure.

In the second half of the 20th century Britain remained the leading country of **the Commonwealth**, the association of 53 independent countries, most of which were former British colonies but preserved the ties of political and economic cooperation.





In 1952
Elizabeth II
became the
British
monarch.

British economy

experienced a number of problems in the second half of the 20th century, such as periods of depression in the 1960s and 1980s, balance of trade, industrial inefficiency, unemployment and rising inflation.



But the government took a number of steps to encourage economic growth. It sold some nationalized industries to private companies, lowered taxes for businesses, let new profitable high-tech and service industries absorb more workers.



Margaret Thatcher – the first woman Prime Minister



British economy received a boost with the discovery and exploration of abundant **oil reserves in the North Sea** in the 1970s.



In 1973, after many years of negotiations, the UK entered the European Economic Community which is known now as **the European Union**. European countries remain chief trading partners for Britain today.





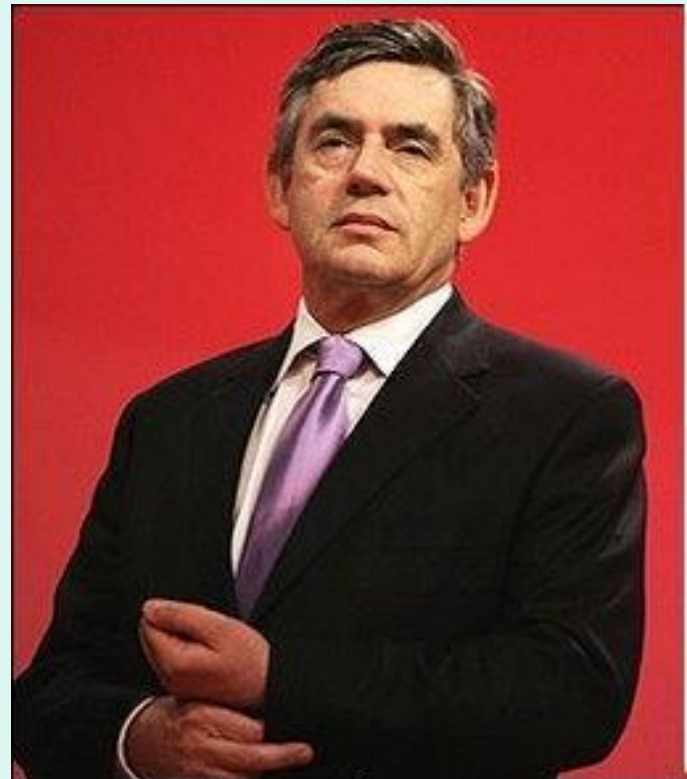
An acute problem has been connected with the reception of numerous **immigrants** who came to the country in the second half of the 20th century. Immigration from the South Asian subcontinent (India and Pakistan) stabilized in the 1990s, but immigration from African countries continued to rise.

At the end of the 20th century **the Labour Party** returned to power after many years of conservative ruling.

Anthony Blair



Gordon Brown



The policy of **devolution** gave more powers to Scotland and Wales that had been long campaigning for more self-government. The decision gave Scotland and Wales assemblies with tax-levying powers and a broad authority to legislate in a lot of sectors.



**Welsh
Assembly
(Cardiff)**



**Scottish
Parliament
(Edinburgh)**



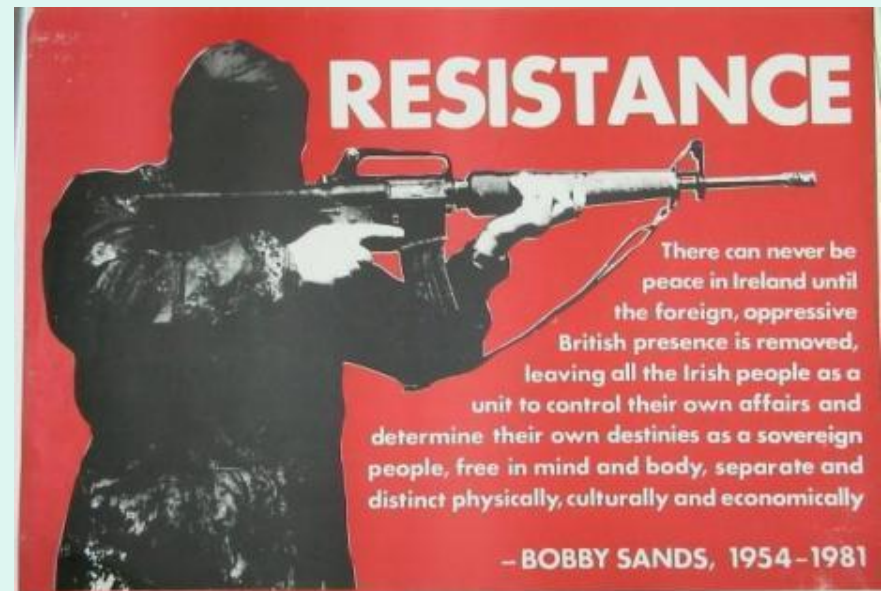
The cultural nationalism is strongly tied to the revival of **the local languages**. Welsh received an official status in Wales in 1993. Irish Gaelic became official in Northern Ireland in 2007.





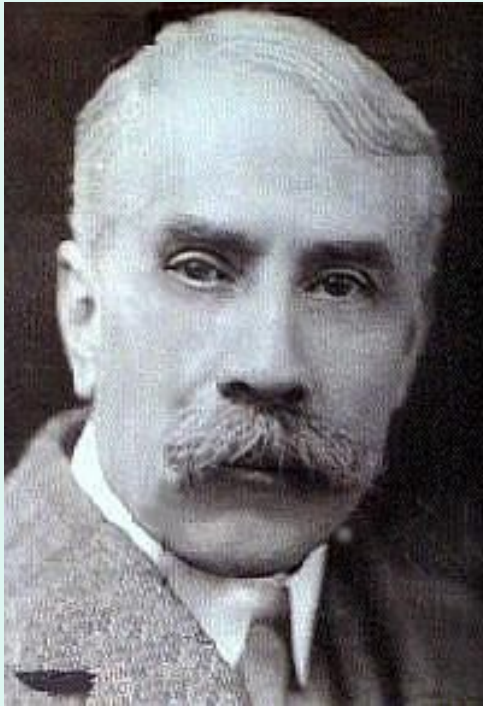
In 1999, **the reform of the House of Lords** resulted in excluding most of hereditary peers from the upper chamber of British Parliament.

Another problem has been the political **conflict in Northern Ireland** which started as Catholic civil rights protests but turned into a 40-year fight for independence.



British Music

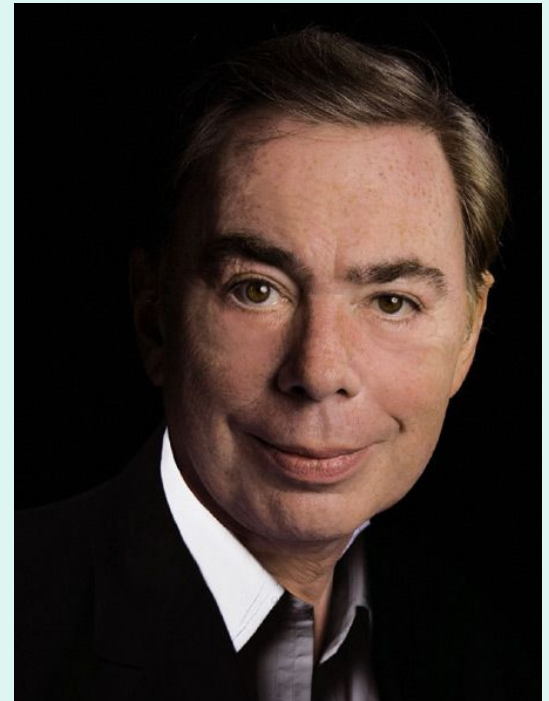
Edward Elgar



Benjamin Britten



Andrew Lloyd Webber



Paul Nash. War landscape



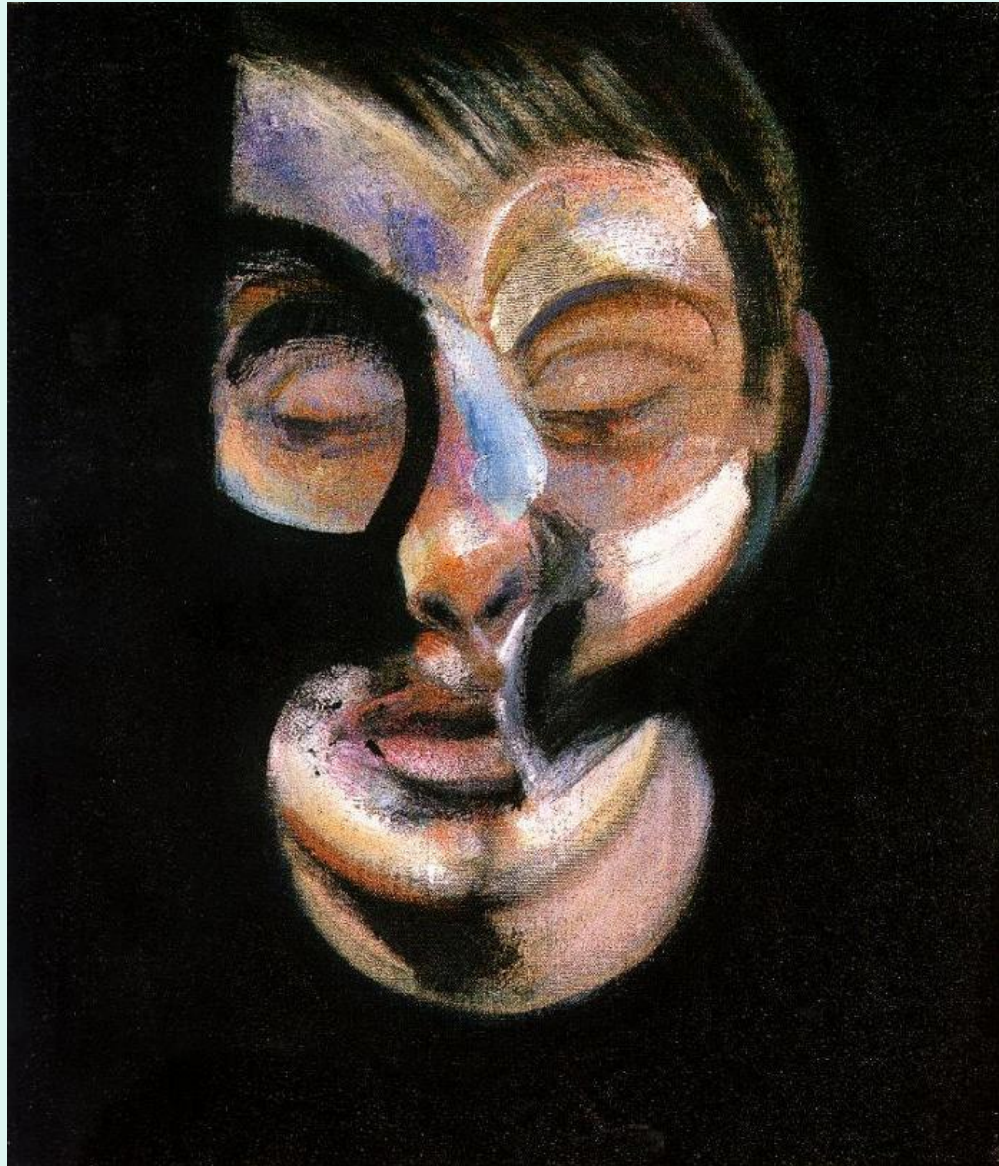
Stanley Spencer. The Scarecrow



Graham Sutherland. Palm Leaves



Francis Bacon. Self-Portrait



Modern architecture of London



30 St.Mary Axe (the Gherkin)



London City Hall



Canary Wharf

