

UNIT 3 – BRITAIN: 1931-1951 (° 5 °)

Key Topic 1: The impact of the Depression 1931-39

What was the 'Great Depression'?

- The Great Depression started after the 1929 Wall Street Crash in America
- A worldwide economic recession began, spreading from the USA, also affecting Britain
- The Great Depression saw unemployment, people losing their savings and other hardships

Why was unemployment such a problem in the 1930's?

- The Wall Street Crash led to, businesses going down and banks collapsing which led to saving being lost.
- This caused unemployment to triple; people could not pay their mortgage and were forced onto the streets.
- **Industries:** were hit hard as too much money and too many jobs were tied to a small number of industries , this meant that the slightest change had a disastrous effect on the economy this was called structural weakness
- Coal: Sales declined after the introduction of oil and electricity which was the preferred fuel, this meant lower wages or unemployment for miners
- Iron and steel: They were hit hard by foreign competition from Japan, Scandinavia and the USA. They did better in 1930s as they created larger mills and fewer workers were required due to efficient plants.
- Shipbuilding: suffered from foreign competition, small shipyards were closed and it left 70% of workers unemployed

How the Government responded to this

- **'The dole'**- workers were given benefits for 32 weeks however they first had to pass a 'means test'
- The dole was cut in 1931 because it exceeded the expenses of the government
- The coalition government cut the benefits of insured workers by 10 % they also cut wages of civil servants and teachers
- **Unemployment Assistance Board:** was an organisation formed in 1936 that took control of dole and means test
- They set up training schemes to help people find work
- Older men were given allotments where they could grow vegetables and raise rabbits
- **Special Areas Act 1934:** the government identified South Wales, Tyneside, West Cumberland and Scotland as areas of special needs and they were given more support. This act had limited success

What is the means test?

- The means test was required to see if the person was eligible for the dole; the possessions in the home of the applicant was checked by an inspector to see if they really needed the dole
- The family could be forced to sell their possessions if they had high value such as furniture and gold if they wanted to receive benefits
- If the family had a part time job or had pensions from the elderly their benefits would be deducted accordingly
- Many called the means test humiliating
- **Public Assistance Committee (PAC)** :Officials who made investigations on the applicant

The experience of the unemployed:

- The unemployment badly affected the standards of housing, health and living for those living in the depressed areas.
- Furthermore as the wages fell people had to spend less and save money such as buying cheaper food
- The means test was then brought in to solve this, an inspector visited the family to investigate all of their possessions to see if there was anything of value.
- A family of two adults and three children were fixed at 29 shillings and threepence, however in 1936 this sum was raised to 36 shillings.
- This was very unpopular as people hated having inspectors go through all of their belongings and then force them to sell some of them.
- The unemployment act of 1943 reduced the age of national insurance to 14 and made the claiming age to 16 years. Also separated benefits earned by paying national insurance and those purely based on the Dole.

What was the Jarrow Crusade?

- One of the worst hit industries by the depression was shipbuilding; it suffered a loss of 2.7% of its average output across the country.
- The main source of jobs in Jarrow was Palmers shipyards. When Palmers shipyard closed in 1955, 70% of the population of Jarrow became unemployed.
- Jarrow council decided to petition Parliament: asking for the government to order and purchase new ships from the Jarrow shipyards and for steelworks to be built, to bring work back in town.
 - This was done to try and help the community to gain more money to sustain itself.
- When Parliament refused to answer the petition, Jarrow MP Ellen Wilkinson decided to organise a march to London to try and see if they could receive any help from the government.
 - The march would be 300 miles from Jarrow to London consisting of 200 unemployed men representing the unemployed workers of Jarrow

- One of the main features of the march was that the march was kept free of any form of political agenda.
 - This was done because the National Unemployed Workers Movement (NUWM) had already organised several protest marches before then. The problem was that the NUWM was led by Communists, and Jarrow council did not want their march to be seen as just another Communist protest.
- This won support from all political parties

Facts on the Jarrow Crusade

- The marchers set off in October 1936
- Ellen Wilkinson led the march most of the way
- Along the way, they were happily greeted and received several donations which helped for their return trip by train
- They were also provided for in many ways eg: care, baths, food

Result of the Jarrow Crusade

- Ellen Wilkinson presented the petition to Parliament on 2nd November 1936.
- The government made them no promises and the marchers went home empty-handed by train
- Unemployment Assistance Board (UAB) officials in Jarrow docked their dole because they had not been 'available for work'

Key Topic 2: Britain at war 1939-45

What was the BEF?

- ❑ The 'British Expeditionary Force' was a small British army sent to France in 1939
- ❑ It was a professional army sent by Chamberlain to defend France against Nazi invasion
- ❑ The BEF and the French began to lose ground to the Wehrmacht (German army)

What happened at Dunkirk?

- ❑ 20 May: Hitler gave the order to stop the tanks, allowing the Luftwaffe to complete the destruction of the British and French forces. This allowed the British time to regroup.
- ❑ British launch 'Operation Dynamo':
 - 27 May - 4 June : the Royal Navy and a host of vessels crossed the Channel to rescue the stranded troops. 340,000 troops were rescued.
 - Successful evacuation:- many rescue vessels and the protection given by the RAF to the troops on the Dunkirk beaches.
- Hitler
 - stopped advance of German tanks.
 - Order to capture Calais rather than move on to Dunkirk - gave the British three extra days to evacuate their troops.

What was the importance of Dunkirk?

-

What role did Churchill play during the War?

- ❑ Created the 'Dunkirk spirit'
 - Turned a military defeat into a propaganda victory.
 - Kept up the morale of the British people and made them believe in ultimate victory with speeches and tours of the country.
 - He never spoke of defeat or surrender,
 - Rejected peace terms offered by Hitler, choosing instead to fight on.

What was the Battle of Britain?

- ❑ The Battle of Britain was the battle which took place between the RAF and the Luftwaffe over British territory.
- ❑ This was Hitler's attempt at invading Britain - Operation Sealion
- ❑ The decisive battle took place on the 15 September when the Luftwaffe made its supreme effort with an all-out assault on London in daylight.
- ❑ The Germans lost 56 planes and called off their attempt to destroy the RAF. On the 17 September, Hitler postponed the invasion of Britain. Britain had been saved.

What was the importance of the Battle of Britain and how did Britain win?

- ❑ The Battle of Britain was a very significant victory for Britain. Churchill said later on in a speech about this : “Never in the field of conflict was so much owed by so many to so few”
- ❑ The Battle of Britain was Hitler’s first real defeat and a morale booster for the British people.
- ❑ Britain was saved from invasion, at least for the time being, as Hitler postponed ‘Operation Sealion’.
- ❑ In addition it made Britain more attractive as a future ally of the USA and encouraged Roosevelt to give material assistance.

What was D-Day?

- ❑ D-Day was when the allied forces had managed to successfully invade the Normandy area and used that as a gateway to get to Hitler’s headquarters and eventually take him down.
- ❑ The name of the overall operation was Operation Overlord and Eisenhower was the supreme general for all of the allied forces combined.
- ❑ The Americans had called the beaches they would invade Omaha and Utah and the British and Canadian forces called theirs Sword, Juno and Gold.
- ❑ Eisenhower was the supreme general for the allies and the allies had managed to land one million mixed troops and thousands of vehicles.

How was it successful?

- ❑ The D-Day landings provided the Allies with a much needed foothold in France.
- ❑ Over the next nine months they advanced through France and the Low Countries, eventually crossing the Rhine into Germany in March 1945.

What was the Battle of the Bulge? (٥٥٥)

- ❑ Hitler’s last gamble to avoid defeat.
- ❑ Hitler extended the military service age limit to 16 and 50, raising three quarters of a million troops.
- ❑ Hitler’s aim: split the Allied forces and prevent them using the port of Antwerp.
- ❑ 16 December 1944: 30 German divisions attacked the Americans, almost breaking through. Taken by surprise, the Americans were driven back 40 miles in places. The December mists meant that US planes failed to detect the German build up.
- ❑ The Germans did not breakthrough to Antwerp.

What happened at Arnhem?

- ❑ Arnhem was a setback for the Allied forces during the drive to victory.
- ❑ Montgomery (a British General) suggested a plan to hasten the end of the war which he code named Operation Market Garden.
- ❑ Operation Market Garden was to be an airborne attack behind enemy lines to secure key bridges across the Rhine. If this was successful, the Allies would be in Berlin by Christmas of 1944.

Key events of Arnhem:

- ❑ The operation began on 17 September 1944 with more than 30,000 British and US airborne troops flown behind German lines to capture the eight bridges across the rivers on the Dutch/German border and hold them until ground forces arrived.
- ❑ The ground advance linked up with Americans at Eindhoven and Nijmegen, but failed by a narrow margin to reach the British at Arnhem. After a week's heavy fighting they had to withdraw with the loss of half their troops.

How was the landings successful?

- ❑ President Eisenhower turned the invasion force into a team in two year period. Allies had control over the air space so they were not susceptible to air attacks.
- ❑ The allies were able to bomb Germany's communications in Normandy to slow down the German reinforcements.
- ❑ The location of the landings were kept a secret and Hitler thought it was a decoy and that Normandy was not going to be invaded.
- ❑ Because of this Hitler held back two divisions of tanks that had over 500 units. By this time Britain, America, USA and Canada had a firm hold on France so

Key Topic 3: The home front 1939–45

What was the Blitz?

- German bombing of Britain (September 1940 until May 1941)
- It occurred after Hitler gave up his attempt to invade Britain in September 1940 (Operation Sealion).
- Hitler's aim was to get Britain to surrender by breaking the moral of British people
- The Blitz was an attempt to destroy British industry, railway lines and junctions.

The effect of the Blitz?

- ❑ British industry, railway lines and junctions were bombed by the Luftwaffe
- ❑ Every major town and city in the British Isles was attacked.
- ❑ The worst affected city was London, where 13,000 people were killed in 1940. In the rest of Britain about 10,000 people were killed.
- ❑ Nazi Germany carried out an aerial bombing campaign against Britain in WW2.
- ❑ People's morale dropped
- ❑ 43,000 civilians died and it lasted eight months.
- ❑ Coventry aircraft factory bombed by 30,000 incendiaries but was in operation after 5 days
- ❑ Increased morale of the population because they were more determined to get revenge.

- ❑ However over 3 million homes were destroyed and 20,000 people were killed.

The government's response:

- The government attempted to maintain morale by publishing stories of bravery and determination, which created the impression that 'Britain could take it'.
- Photographs were published in newspapers of smiling people clearing up after the night before.
- They attempted to create the impression that Britain could take it for the USA. US newsreels showed the people of London getting on with the job after nights of destruction.

Extra info about Blitz:

- In October 1940, 64 people died after bomb hit Balham underground station resulting in water main bursting. To prevent panic the story was never released as people seek shelter from bombs at subways.
- Common bomb type was incendiaries (small bombs which burst into flames)
- Effects of bombing were much more devastating than had been anticipated because people did not expect actual fighting as the the blitz occurred after the Phoney War. Also bombing was sudden not gradual.

What was V1

- V1 planes were not piloted
- They were launched from railway trucks which moved around constantly
- once they ran out of fuel they dropped and exploded
- RAF counteracted by shooting them down

What were the V2 rockets:

- This was a real rocket fired from Holland
- There was no defence for them as they could not be shot down
- They were stopped when the launch sites were overrun 1945.

Britain at war points

- Emergency Powers Act - The Act provided the government with almost unlimited powers. From then civilians could be required to do anything and be sent anywhere.

Why roles of women changed?

- ❑ In December 1941 women had to volunteer to do the essential work so that the armed forces could go into war.
- ❑ After world war 2, spring 1941, all women between the ages 18-60 had to be registered.
- ❑ Most women roles changed after World War went into the civil defence and helping the men fight the war.
- ❑

Key Topic 4: Labour in power 1945–51

Why did the labour party win so many seats in the 1945 election?

- The 1945 general election produced a massive landslide victory for the Labour Party, with Labour winning 393 seats to the 213 of the Conservatives.
- In 1945, there was a powerful feeling in Britain for reform – for widespread economic and social reform, encouraged by the sacrifices of the Second World War and the Beveridge Report. This would not be provided by the tired Conservative Party.
- Labour seemed to be the party promising change and was not associated with the mistakes of the 1930s. It was judged as best fitted to undertake the task of reconstruction and reform.

What was the National Insurance Act?

- All people, except married women, had to join the National Insurance scheme. They paid 4 shillings and eleven pence (about 25p) a week, and their employer and the government also paid contributions. This entitled the person to every benefit provided by the Welfare State.
- Unemployment pay was 26 shillings (£1.30) a week, with 16 (80p) shillings for a wife and 7 shillings and sixpence (33p) for a child. Old Age Pensioners received 42 shillings (£2.10) for a married couple.
- Benefits included sickness and unemployment widow's pensions, maternity allowance and a death grant to cover funeral expenses. All benefits were paid to everybody at a flat rate, which means that everybody got the same amount.
- There was no limit to the length of time for which they could be claimed, with the exception of unemployment benefit, which ended after 180 days

What were the 'Five Giant Evils' in Beveridge's Report?

- **Squalor** -
To deal with the problem of Squalor, the government aimed to build 200,000 houses. The New Towns Act passed in 1946 laid plans for 14 new towns in Britain. However there was still a serious shortage of housing at the end of labour's time in office.
- **Ignorance** -
The education act made secondary education compulsory until the age of 15 with meals, milk and medical services provided at each school.
At age 11, an examination will test the child's ability and they will be placed into schools based on the results.
Children who passed would continue to secondary education and children who failed would take on unskilled types of employment. This did not create equal opportunities
- **Want** -
National Insurance Act passed in 1946 - provided sickness and unemployment benefits.
Industrial Injuries Act passed in 1946 - insurance against industrial injury compulsory for all employees.
National Assistance Act passed in 1948 - provided benefits for those not covered by the national insurance act.
- **Idleness** -
The labour government maintained high levels of employment.

By 1946, unemployment was reduced by 2.5%.

Following the principles of John Maynard Keynes, the government took control of certain industries which allowed them to use tax money to keep an industry afloat.

- **Disease -**

1946 National Health Service Act - British citizens were allowed to receive free medical, dental and optical services.

By 1950, charges were introduced to dental and spectacles treatment.

What was the Family Allowances Act of 1945?

- It was recommended on the Beveridge Report
- Paying five shillings per week for each child in the family other than the eldest
- It was payable up to the age of 16 or if the child was employed full time.



What were people entitled to under the new National Health Service

- Free health care such as: glasses, eye test, dental treatment, medicine, free prescription, free GP check up etc

When did Bevan introduce the National Health Act.

- In 1946 he introduced the National Health Act.

What were the four proposals that Bevan introduced?

- 1) all hospitals would be taken over and put under thirteen regional health boards. These in turn would be controlled by the Ministry of Health.
- 2) all doctors would be paid a salary, instead of receiving fees for each of their patients.
- 3) doctors would not be allowed to set up new practices in areas where there were already enough doctors. Instead they would be encouraged to move to areas where there were insufficient doctors.
- 4) doctors would not be allowed to buy and sell practices and with them lists of patients.

Who opposed the NHS?

- The BMA, which represented 51,000 GPs and hospital doctors, threatened to boycott the NHS if Bevan's plans went through unchanged.
- The BMA set up a campaign to fight the NHS Bill. It was led by two doctors, Guy Dain and Charles Hill.
- He was well known as the 'Radio Doctor'.
- Hill was also used by the Conservative Party in its campaign against the NHS.

Which Political Party did Bevan belong to?

- a left-winger in the Labour Party

Why was known as a medical Fuhrer?

- as he was likened to Adolf Hitler because of the way he was attempting to enforce changes without consultation.

What were the important two important concessions made by Bevan?

- 1) Consultants would be able to work part-time for the NHS and so continue with their private patients.
- 2) They would also be able to use private beds in NHS hospitals to treat their private patients.

How did Bevan win over the BMA?

- 1) he agreed that doctors would not be paid solely by a salary; they would also receive a fee for every patient on their list.
- 2) Bevan also agreed that doctors who joined the NHS would be able to retain private patients and the fees that they received for treating them.
- 3) Bevan also began a publicity campaign and it soon became obvious that the British public was giving overwhelming support to the NHS. Doctors who opposed the NHS were, therefore, faced with a simple choice. If they refused to join, they could well lose large numbers of patients to doctors who had joined.

What was the impact of the NHS?

- In October 1949, the Minister for Health, Aneurin Bevan announced what had happened since July 1948: 187,000,000 prescriptions had been provided; 5,250,000 pairs of glasses had been prescribed and 8,500,000 people had been treated at dentists
- The GP soon became the 'Family Doctor'. Not somebody remote and austere, which people had been frightened to visit because of the likely cost
- The first charges to be introduced were for dental and optical treatment in 1951; these had proved to be the most costly items in the NHS budget. Nye Bevan resigned in protest.
- The **most** important change after July 1948 was that people no longer had to worry about whether they could afford treatment.

What were the criticisms of the NHS?

- On the one hand some said it encouraged people who wanted something for nothing and that taxpayers' money was being needlessly squandered. Some disliked the fact that there was still private practice. This would lead to twin standards – better care for those that could afford to pay.