

ZÁPADOČESKÁ UNIVERZITA V PLZNI

FAKULTA PEDAGOGICKÁ

KATEDRA ANGLICKÉHO JAZYKA

Historický vývoj britské Konzervativní strany

BAKALÁŘSKÁ PRÁCE

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Anglický jazyk se zaměřením na vzdělávání

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Plzeň, 2013

UNIVERSITY OF WEST BOHEMIA

FACULTY OF EDUCATION

DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH

**Historical development of British Conservative
Party**

UNDERGRADUATE THESIS

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English Language in Education

Supervisor: Bc. et Mgr. Andrew Tollet, M.Litt.

Plzeň, 2013

Podklad pro zadání BAKALÁŘSKÉ práce studenta

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Historický vývoj britské Konzervativní strany

NÁZEV ANGLICKY:

Historical development of British Conservative Party

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ZÁSADY PRO VYPRACOVÁNÍ:

1. studium odborné literatury na danou problematiku
2. studium dokumentů spojené s tématem práce
3. pravidelné konzultace s vedoucím BP
4. sepsání BP, při dodržení všech formálních aspektů

SEZNAM DOPORUČENÉ LITERATURY:

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Podpis studenta:

Datum:

Podpis vedoucího práce:

Datum:

Prohlašuji, že jsem bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně s použitím uvedené literatury a zdrojů informací.

Plzeň, 26. června 2013

.....

vlastnoruční podpis

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I would like to express my very great appreciation to my supervisor, Bc. et Mgr. Andrew Tollet, M.Litt., for his time, patience and useful advices with which he provided me during writing of my thesis. And I would also like to offer my special thanks to all teachers of Department of English who prepared me for this peak of my study.

ABSTRACT

Klatovský, Jan. University of West Bohemia. June, 2012. Historical development of British Conservative Party. Supervisor: Bc. et Mgr. Andrew Tollet, M.Litt.

This thesis contains summary and description of historical development of the British Conservative Party. It also describes the main persons of the Party history. The development and persons are analysed from the aspects of British society and their influence on the world course of events.

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1 Introduction

The British Conservative Party is one of the first and longest existing parties on the world. Two hundred years since its establishment will pass at the end of the next decade but the Party principles, laid in its first manifesto, are valid since the present. The Party outlasted the reign of seven monarchs, created many significant figures of the British and also the world history and experienced many economic and social crisis and cruel wars.

Thanks to the political system of two main Parties in Britain, where the third significant Party appeared at the edge of the twentieth Century, the influence of the Conservative Party is undeniable. An extensity of the British Empire at the end of the 19th and at the beginning of the 20th Century and the significance of the Great Britain as the world power allowed the Conservative Party to fundamentally affect the course of world history.

Despite these indisputable facts, there are only few writings, especially in Czech literature, summarizing the Party's plentiful history as a whole. That is why this thesis will focus on a description of main events which formed the Party since its establishment until the present. Also the most significant persons, indelibly signed in the Party, British and the world annals, will be characterized in this work. Finally the necessary changes of the Conservative Party, done for the sake of social, cultural and economic shifts brought by history, will be introduced too.

2 Origins of Conservatism

The etymological origin of the word conservatism is generally known. The root 'conserve' means, according to thefreedictionary.com, *keep, preserve, protect from loss or harm, to use carefully*. The Latin base 'conservare' was created many years before formation of the political movement later known as the Conservative Party. But no other word could express conservative ideas better.

No one could have known that Edmund Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* would be a list of almost all conservative ideas, consistent almost until our days, especially if Burke was a member of the opposing party to the Tory Party – the Conservative Party's direct predecessor. But savage events in revolutionary France led Burke to write his warning against impetuous changes brought by the revolution (Nisbet, 1993). And unreasoned changes are those which the Conservative Party stands against.

3 Origins of the Conservative Party

The bases of the British Conservative Party can be set into the seventh and eighth decade of the seventeenth century, when two political movements disagreed with each other – the Tories and the Whigs. Their disagreement had arisen because of the Exclusion Bill – a measure denying the hereditary right to the throne to the successors of King Charles II.

3.1 Tories and Whigs

The Tory Party was formed during The Exclusion Bill Crisis in 1678-1681 from Abhorrrers, the conservative supporters of King Charles II and his successors' hereditary right to the throne. They wanted to keep, in contrast to the Whigs, the strong power of the monarchy as a counterbalance to the power of parliament. The Tories considered it politically wise to balance the state power between The Parliament, with its rights given by the electorate, and the King, with his divine rights (Hearnshaw, 1967).

The Whigs were irritated by the Duke of York's, the successor of Charles II, conversion to Catholicism. This act meant for them basically high treason. They craved to increase the King's power and to strengthen Parliament. But the Exclusion Bill Parliament itself became more radical in its thoughts and acts. And this radicalism braced Tories' compulsion to re-establish the balance between King's and Parliament's power, even if the Duke of York's conversion had worried them too.

The Exclusion Bill Parliament was dissolved in 1681 when the measure was defeated in the House of Lords. And despite the fact that some Tories' main ideas were not compatible with reality, the Tory Party became a powerful political party which played a significant role in the English Parliament in the upcoming two centuries. However existence of the Party was influenced by several external and internal circumstances – especially by ascendant of the French Revolution, the Industrial Revolution and in particular old-fashioned government of Field Marshal Arthur Wellesley, the 1st Duke of Wellington which almost caused the disintegration of the Tory Party (Hearnshaw, 1967). Wellington was a brave soldier and great army commander but, unfortunately, he was also a poor politician. He expected members of his government and the Party to obey his commands without any doubt. And his deprecatory stance against Catholic emancipation

and the Reform Act, which changed the franchise, caused dissolution of his government in 1830. Nevertheless Wellington's steps led to the birth of the new Conservative Party.

3.2 The Tamworth Manifesto

After Wellington's fall, the government was led by the Whig Party with Viscount Melbourne as the Prime Minister for the next four years. But King William, disagreeing with the reforming steps of the government, decided to dissolve the Whig ministry in December, 1834 and offered the Tories to form a new administration. Wellington was still the party leader but refused the King's offer and recommended Peel. Robert Peel stepped into politics at the beginning of the 19th century and became well-known thanks to his police reform (Norton, 1996). Even the nickname Bobby for a policeman is created from his first name.

Peel understood the changing mood in society better than Wellington. The first change came with the name. The Party began commonly calling itself Conservative just in 1834. But Peel realized that the Conservative Party had to adapt more to the conditions of its age. The elections were approaching and Peel assumed a meeting in Tamworth as the best opportunity to issue his manifesto to attract new electors.

Peel began his speech with acceptance of the Reform Act of 1832 as "a final and irrevocable settlement of a great constitutional question". This sentence meant that when the Reform Act was once passed, it should be conserved. Peel promised "a careful review of institutions, civil and ecclesiastical" and "the correction of proved abuses and the redress of real grievances", denoting that the Conservative Party is prepared for any reform, if it would be coherent and rational. On the other hand, Peel expressed an apprehension from "a perpetual vortex of agitation". This term expresses the fear from infinite kowtowing of the political parties to the voters by passing popular but unreasonable measures.

Then Peel continued with expression of necessity of a change in the ecclesiastical establishment to promote "the true interests of the Established religion". And he also introduced some measures which the Conservative Party was prepared to adopt – municipal reform, repeal of church rates, commutation of tithes or opening of law and medical education to dissenters etc. (Hearnshaw, 1967).

These opinions and ideas, expressed by Peel during his election campaign soon became known through the whole country. Tamworth Manifesto helped Peel and the Party to gain numerous seats in Parliament; nevertheless it did not help them to win a majority. But although these principles seem simple, they laid down the origins on which the Conservative Party stands until the present.

4 Early Period of the Conservative Party

Although the Tamworth Manifesto helped the Conservative Party to win important urban seats like Bristol, Leeds, York or Newcastle in the 1835 general election, it did not secure enough seats in Parliament to create a government. King William IV called upon Lord Melbourne and the Whigs to form a new administration. . And the country had to wait for the first Conservative government until 1841.

4.1 From Peel to Disraeli

Peel had an opportunity to form an administration in 1839 when Lord Melbourne resigned as Prime Minister, but he did not like the fact most of the Queen's bedchamber ladies were wives of Whig politicians. Peel asked the Queen to replace them with some conservative Ladies but Queen Victoria's intransigence meant that Peel had to wait another two years to become the Prime Minister again (Norton, 1996).

The General election in 1841 brought the Conservatives a majority of more than 70 seats in parliament and the first Conservative government could be established. But it was not an ordinary government. Norton (1996) describes this cabinet with five former or future Prime Ministers as one of the most outstanding administrations of the 19th century.

This government was really diligent. Many measures and reforms were enacted during its tenure. Peel's sense of free trade can be recognized in his government's fiscal reforms: many import duties were swept away and their place taken by the income tax (Hearnshaw, 1967). But not every new measure was quite efficient or popular.

Every government has to find a balance between demands of its electorate and benefits of the whole country. This balance determines future of the political party and the country. One of the hardest choices of Peel's government was choice between the free trade and protectionist Corn Laws.

4.1.1 Corn Laws

The end of the Napoleonic Wars in 1815 brought chaos into the whole of Europe. Among other issues, armies were disbanded and demand for army supplies, including corn, rapidly decreased. Declining demand for corn reduced its cost to a minimum and the landed gentry became scared of their smaller gains.

Landed gentry, the holders of the land, were traditional members of Parliament. Therefore they had no problem legitimizing the Corn Laws, which banned the import of foreign and colonial grain until the price of domestic corn reached 60 shillings a quarter of pound and 80 shillings a quarter of foreign corn. A price stabilized between 60 s. and 80 s. per quarter could keep the landlords and farmers in prosperity.

The situation of the labouring class was not very pleasant. Their salaries, already low, were lowered even more, when veterans of the Napoleonic wars returned home and became unemployed. The combination of low wages and artificially high price of corn meant that ordinary pastry, like bread, was almost unattainable for the working class. People had to spend their whole salaries to obtain food for living. Urban middle-class – social class formed during industrial revolution, consisting of urban factory owners – was dissatisfied too. Their urban workers demanded a raising of salaries most (Hearnshaw, 1967). These events caused industry to slump because people had no money to spend for any other goods and the whole country fell into an economic depression.

From the beginning, the Corn Laws had their supporters and opponents. Wellington introduced a modification of this Act in 1828 to satisfy both groups, unfortunately without any improvement for ordinary citizens. People rebelled against the Corn Laws and the Anti-Corn-Law League was established in 1838 (Norton, 1996). Nevertheless, the landed gentry had a majority in Parliament and did not allow the supporters of free trade to repeal the Corn Laws. But the Reform Act of 1832 moved the franchise from landed gentry more to urban middle-class and this changed the situation.

Peel, as a supporter of the free-trade, felt an urge to repeal the protectionist law. But many members of the Conservative Party were traditional landlords so Peel enacted only some fiscal reforms as first. Peel cancelled several import duties and replaced them with income taxes to fill the state budget. Nevertheless, tension within the Conservative Party was growing. A new political movement appeared within the Conservative Party – New England with Benjamin Disraeli as its founder. Disraeli, one of the big landowners, was an indefatigable opponent of Peel. As Peel's successor, Disraeli and his stances and opinions will be described in detail in following chapters again.

The Irish potato famine in 1845 gave Peel an opportunity to show such protectionist measures could destroy the economic system of the whole nation. Many conservative MPs stood against repealing of the Corn Laws, but Peel was able to legitimize this measure with

the support of some Whig members of Parliament. Although repealing of the Corn Laws improved the situation of labouring people, it strengthens rifts within the Conservative Party between Peel's supporters and the more numerous protectionists. Opponents of Robert Peel used another disputable issue – the Irish Coercion Bill which was to improve the situation in Ireland, to connect with Whigs to defeat this government and Peel resigned in 1846 (Norton, 1996).

Peel was a great Prime Minister and even better economist. Unfortunately, he was not so good as party leader. Although he acted in favour of the whole country and nation, landed gentry forced him to leave the Conservative Party. Peel lived only another four years and passed away in 1850. But he was a strong person and had never abandoned his opinions.

Although repealing of the Corn Laws caused the loss of Peel's membership in the Conservative Party, it is only a trifle when it is compared with gains of this abrogation. Not only had Peel's act improved living conditions of the working people, it also expressed his disagreement with state interventions into the free-trade.

4.1.2 Years of relapse

Sir Robert Peel was the person who formed ideas of Conservatism and set the grounds for the Conservative Party, but his lack of governance and parliament management skills led the Party into the age of unsure and political wilderness. Peel proved an autocratic leader when, certain that his opinions were right, left no space for his opponents within the Conservative Party to express their apprehension about the situation. Peel and his supporters left the Party and went their own political way in June, 1846 (Norton, 1996).

The separation of Peelites from the Conservative Party meant several complications. The leaving of political talents was the biggest one. Some of these talents joined the Peelites, some of them left politics and some of them – especially William Gladstone, joined the Liberals. This separation also allowed the Liberals to govern almost twenty eight years.

This long period of Liberal power was broken only with two very short tenures of the Earl of Derby. Derby was Peel's direct successor. And he had a great task – to reorganise and reconstruction of the Conservative Party. Unfortunately, he was unable to

do it. Hearnshaw (1967) describes him as a man “not prepared to do the hard thinking and the laborious work required to restore his shattered Party. The main result of his long continuance in public life was to block the path of his great lieutenant, Benjamin Disraeli, to independent power”.

The turnover came in 1866 when the Liberal administration introduced a new Reform Bill, which should change the distribution of the seats in the Parliament and expand the franchise. This measure divided Liberals and part of them joined the conservatives to defeat the government. Derby was called to form a new ministry. Derby, with significant help of Disraeli, introduced a new Reform Bill, much more radical than the liberal one (Norton, 1996). This measure did not ensure a majority in the general election in 1868. But it paved the way for a new conservative government in 1874 led by Disraeli.

4.1.3 Benjamin Disraeli

Benjamin Disraeli is one of the most famous Conservative Party Prime Ministers. He achieved many domestic and foreign successes. He was an imperialist but he was also great a democrat, supporter of broadening the suffrage over the masses. Benjamin Disraeli is considered as the founder of Tory Democracy or Tory Socialism – a philosophical trend within conservatism. The trend was followed by another great conservative Prime Minister – Winston Churchill.

This term could be described as an attempt to set the new industrial masses into the conservative tradition and into politics and Parliament. Disraeli made a strong speech to support extending the electorate in 1867. He did not build his arguments on a belief of liberal faith in working masses, but on the desire for a broader base for the old conservative traditions of monarchy, constitution and established church (Viereck, 1956).

Peel wanted to broaden the conservative electoral base by enticing the urban middle-class away from Liberals. A connection of both ends of the society against its middle – a join of the rural landlords and urban worker against the middle-class – assumed Disraeli as a way to win the elections. This cultivation of workers, called Tory Democracy, made Disraeli the Prime Minister in 1874 (Hearnshaw, 1967).

Viereck (1956) states that someone can see a similarity of the Tory Democracy and Communism, but he also describes the difference: “In contrast with Karl Marx’s class war,

Disraeli's Tory Democracy reconciled the two nations by making the Party of aristocracy and conservatism take the lead in improving the working conditions of the poor".

Disraeli's social conscience was not only palaver to earn more votes. During his government's tenure, conservatives established the trade unions, allowed peaceful pickets and legalized the right to strike. The Conservative Party introduced the Employers' and Workman's Act and the Conspiracy Act in 1875, which improved working conditions. Workers even considered these measures as more liberal than any measure introduced by the Liberal Party.

Disraeli was a pure imperialist on the international stage. Norton (1996) states that Disraeli started "the second British Empire" in June 1872 when he delivered a famous speech in the Crystal Palace. Disraeli blamed William Gladstone and the Liberals for undermining the Empire. But Disraeli delivered results too, not only words. During the 1870s, Disraeli made Queen Victoria the Empress of India. He also used British power to acquire control of the Suez Canal in Egypt and to broaden the Empire through Africa.

There was an ethical issue for Disraeli. Disraeli was a democrat. But rising imperialism stands against democracy in the dominions. Democratic tensions in colonized countries and enlightenment in Africa and Asia had to be suppressed by force. However, fortune of the Great Britain increased so citizens of the Isles were not interested in issues of the others.

Unfortunately, serious issues appeared in 1878. And however successful Disraeli and his administration had been either in home and foreign politics, these issues cost them their functions. Failed wars in Afghanistan and Zululand, commercial crisis and agricultural relapse were the main problems. In combination with Mr. Gladstone's lofty public speaking, they meant defeat in the elections in 1880. Benjamin Disraeli, Lord Beaconsfield, resigned on April 19 and one year later died.

Disraeli was a person of brilliant intellect, social conscience, patriotism and imperialism. This kind of man, the Conservative Party and whole nation needed most. He started the golden age of the Victorian era. He paved the way for one of the greatest age of the conservatism.

4.2. From Salisbury to Balfour

It took five years to get an opportunity to form the conservative government again. These years were restless and disorderly but when they had passed almost one century of Conservative ascendancy began. During the next century the Party was not in office only for short periods of time.

After the death of Disraeli the leadership of the Party passed to Lord Salisbury in the House of Lords and to Northcote in the House of Commons. But Norton (1996) claims that Northcote was not a good leader and was harried by a group of four members led by Lord Randolph Churchill. And when in 1885 the Liberal government resigned because of amendment of the Financial Bill, the Queen chose Salisbury to create a new government. Nevertheless, this short attempt of Salisbury to govern ended on January 26, 1886 when an alliance of liberals and Irish nationalists overthrew the Salisbury government.

Relations of Ireland and Great Britain were never simple, but after the Act of Union in 1800, which connected these two countries into the Union, became complicated. Governments in London acted more in the interests of England, Wales and Scotland rather than Ireland. All circumstances escalated during the Irish Potato Famine in 1845 and tensions within the Union started to grow even more.

It took another 25 years after the potato crisis for Isaac Butt to found the Home Rule League. But this association was not favoured by Irish nationalists and the Catholic Roman clergy. In 1879 a bad harvest caused fear of a new famine and a new nationalist organization was founded – Irish Land League, by Michael Davitt and Charles Stewart Parnell. These two organisations joined forces in Parliament and together were able to implant in Gladstone's head an idea that Ireland should have its own government (Home Rule, n.d.).

Gladstone stepped into politics as a member of the Tory Party. He was a member of Peel's government. As a witness of many conservative measures and their effects on ordinary citizens, Gladstone began to be more and more liberal in his ideas and defected to the Liberal Party. He became Prime Minister four times as a Liberal. Gladstone's ideas of the independent Ireland peaked with introduction of the First Home Rule Bill during his third government.

Norton (1996) states that Gladstone drafted the Home Rule Bill almost himself. It was the first attempt to set a law creating house in Ireland during the existence of the

United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. Britain should keep the right to make nationwide decisions like declaration of war, agreeing international treaties or coinage, but local matters should be solved within the Irish government.

Gladstone introduced his Home Rule Bill in April, 1886. He assumed an easy approval through Parliament, because Liberals with Irish nationalists outnumbered conservatives almost two times. But Gladstone had not assumed the unionist supporters within the Liberal Party. He made a similar mistake to Peel with Corn Laws forty years previously and divided his Party. Conservative leaders - Lord Salisbury, successor of Disraeli, and Lord Randolph Churchill, father of Winston Churchill, added strong speeches against the measure in Parliament and the destiny of the first Home Rule Bill was sealed (Hearnshaw, 1967).

Gladstone recommended disbanding Parliament and in the consequent election in 1886 the Conservatives won as the largest party. The cooperation of conservatives and liberal unionists during the Home Rule Bill vote heralded coalition of these two groups in Lord Salisbury's next governments. With their support, the Conservatives could govern with a majority in parliament and, except for the years 1892 – 1895, Salisbury occupied the premiership until 1902 before he passed the office to his nephew, Arthur Balfour (Norton, 1996).

During the six years of Salisbury's second ministry (1886 – 1892) the conservatives had to ally with the “liberal unionists”. The alliance was undoubtedly strengthened when Mr. Goschen, former Liberal and Liberal Unionist, agreed to succeed Lord Randolph Churchill as the Chancellor of the Exchequer; but amalgamation of Unionists and Conservatives still did not happen. Nevertheless, the influence of liberal unionism upon conservative policy was evident and real although Salisbury's racial intolerance became more and more visible (Hearnshaw, 1967).

General elections in 1892 brought an unexpected win of Mr. Gladstone with the Liberals. Gladstone had not abandoned the idea about Home Rule of Ireland and prepared the second Home Rule Bill. It differed from the first Bill and passed in the House of Commons. But the House of Lords refused it and Gladstone resigned. This decision caused dislike of the House of Lords and a need of coalition between conservatives and liberal unionists became evident.

General elections in 1895 reflected national antipathy to Irish independence. After three years of Liberal government, Salisbury came back to office for the third and the last time. He offered important seats to liberal unionist leaders: Lord Hartington became the Lord President of the Council and Mr. Joseph Chamberlain became the Head of Colonial Office. Cooperation of Chamberlain with Salisbury brought several improvements and issues of the empire.

Together, these two politicians were able to inaugurate a new era of imperialism. Chamberlain was responsible for reviving the prosperity of West Indian Islands by his measures for supporting the sugar industry and its shipping. He led the negotiation which formed the Commonwealth of Australia. During his service, the British Empire acquired large territorial gains in West Africa. But his most known efforts were aimed at South Africa.

Chamberlain was determined to keep the supremacy of the British Crown over the English and Dutch settlers in South Africa. But his determination brought a conflict with Transvaal and Orange State formed in the territory of today's Republic of South Africa. What at first seemed a small disagreement had grown into the Boer War. Young Winston Churchill participated in this conflict. During this period famous Queen Victoria passed away and the Victorian Era vanished with her. Salisbury felt a responsibility for the outbreak of the Boer War and, despite his failing health, resigned after the British victory.

Grenville (n.d.) states: "Salisbury was the last aristocratic statesman to head a British government while in the House of Lords and not the elected Commons. He represented a tradition that passed away with him. He combined a realism and clarity of view with a fundamentally ethical approach to diplomacy".

Arthur James Balfour, successor and nephew of Lord Salisbury, was born in 1848 to Salisbury's sister and her husband, the Lord of Whittingehame. Hearnshaw (1967) describes his study on the college as sluggish, but in 1874 Balfour obtained a seat in parliament. Although he was indolent, lacking interest, without energy, the people who knew him more intimately, especially the philosopher Sidgwick and his uncle Salisbury, discovered a great intellect, unusual sane judgement and a strong will. Balfour even was with his uncle in Berlin in 1878, but he was in that time more interested in philosophy than in the politics. Hearnshaw (1967, p.242) also states that "He had profound trust in inherited

wisdom, in institutions tested by long experience, in tradition handed down from times immemorial. And he had an ineradicable doubt of abstract theories”.

Balfour started his political career when he had been elected to parliament in 1874. In 1886, his uncle Salisbury made him Chief Secretary of Scotland. And one year after, when the post of Irish Secretary became suddenly vacant, Balfour accepted this role. As a strict opponent of Irish home rule, Balfour earned the nickname “Bloody” (Arthur James Balfour, n.d.). Despite his strict stand and a threat of assassination, Balfour was interested in improving the material conditions of Irish people. When in 1891 Balfour had left the secretariat to become the First Lord of Treasury in his uncle's government and the leader of House of Commons, Ireland was more prosperous and peaceful than it had been many years ago (Hearnshaw, 1967).

With progressing time and a failing health of Salisbury, Balfour was becoming more and more important within the Party. And after Salisbury's death in July 1902, Balfour succeeded his uncle as leader of the Party and as Prime Minister also. But Balfour's administration did not start well: although his ministry passed the Education Bill, the Conservative Party got into problems because of Joseph Chamberlain's scheme of “Imperial Preference”. This tariff reform was to provide resources for a social reform, but it split the Party and united the Liberals to defend the free trade (Norton, 1996).

As a response to the reform three members of his administration, those who advocated the idea of the free trade, left office. Imperial preference had a bad response from the electorate too: the working class was afraid of more expensive food. The disarray within the Conservative Party and negative public opinion forced Balfour to resign from the post of Prime Minister in December 1905 and Liberal Campbell-Bannerman was called to form a new ministry. The following year he dissolved parliament and the consequent election was – and still is – the worst defeat of the Conservative Party since 1832 (Hearnshaw, 1967).

Although Balfour failed in home politics, it would be unfair not to mention his successes in foreign matters. In 1904 Balfour was one of those responsible for “entente cordiale”. This pact significantly improved relations between Britain and France and was essential for their alliance during the First World War. The same year he established the Committee of Imperial Defence, an organisation responsible for the Empire's defence and navy budgets. And after his resignation in 1905, Balfour remained active in foreign politics

and even became the Minister of Foreign Affairs in David Lloyd George's government. His greatest successes include the Balfour Declaration, a letter to Lord Rothschild where Balfour supported the idea of a creation of a homeland of all Jews in Palestine or signing the Treaty of Versailles between the Allies and Germany (Balfour Declaration, n.d.).

Eight years following the defeat of the Conservative Party in election 1906 caused a relapse of the Party from strength to weakness and drafted the nation almost into a civil war. The Party endangered by the majority of liberals in parliament showed a will to use Conservative peers in the House of Lords to obstruct the government measures. The refusal of the budget in 1909 outraged voters. Two general elections and passage of the Parliament Act of 1911, which restrained power of the House of Lords, reduced an influence of conservatives and split the Party in two wings – hedgers, compliant to pass the Act rather than see the House flooded by liberal peers, and ditchers, prepared to stand again the measure at all costs (Norton, 1996).

Balfour's tackling the constitutional crisis and divided Party exasperated both the Party and himself and Balfour resigned from the party leadership. Each of the party wings introduced its own party leader contender. But in the interest of party amalgamation both candidates withdrew and a third candidate, Andrew Bonar Law, became the party leader. He was a businessman born in Canada with Ulster ancestry, a supporter of tariff reforms and a “hedger” (Norton, 1996).

The Liberal reforms, passed through Parliament thanks to the conservative minority, led to the imperial and social disorder. The Trades Disputes Act of 1906 allowed the trade unions to abuse the right to strike without responsibility and the number of strikes had risen from 358 in 1906 to 1497 in 1913. The Home Rule Bill of Ireland in 1912 forced Protestants in Ulster's counties (the most northern in Ireland) to arm themselves against the Catholic South. So close was the United Kingdom to a civil war (Hearnshaw, 1967).

Eight years after the dire defeat of 1906 the Conservative Party was playing a dangerous constitutional game with the amendment of the Parliamentary Act, to restore the House of Lords' power, as a first duty. And the salvation of the Party did not come by its own efforts, but by the arrival of the First World War (Norton, 1996).

4.3. Influence of the World Wars

Everyone felt growing tensions on continental Europe at the beginning of the 20th century. Germany escalated its aggression and brought the world into the biggest conflict of world history. Millions of people lost their homes and their lives. All the peaceful people of the world hoped that a massacre of such size and intensity would never happen again. But the same nation brought the world into the even more huge conflict after twenty years of relative peace.

4.3.1 The First World War

The Conservative Party was in opposition when the Great War began. The United Kingdom had a Liberal government with Herbert Henry Asquith as the Prime Minister. The Conservatives were prepared to suspend normal government, but were not prepared to step into a coalition government. Nevertheless several crises in 1915, such as the tragic Dardanelles campaign, the resignation of the First Sea Lord or lack of shells, made public press for a coalition government. And both party leaders succumbed to this pressure (Norton, 1996).

The Conservative Party was in a minority in this cabinet and Liberals held the important ministries. Nonetheless the Party was in office and was preparing some backstage intrigues. Bonar Law found an ally in the Liberal Secretary of War, Lloyd George. Although they had paid the greatest cost of the war - both of them lost their sons in the fighting - they did not stop working and prepared grounds for Asquith's resignation.

This doing split the Liberal Party. The first half supported Lloyd George and the second half left the government and formed an official opposition. This split caused Liberal Party serious harm and it took several years to heal it. Lloyd George became the Prime Minister but Bonar Law took the seat of Chancellor of the Exchequer and other senior posts were also taken by Conservatives. Britain had a Liberal Prime Minister but the government was predominantly Conservative (Norton, 1996).

Hearnshaw (1967) describes the influence of the Great War more in general. According to him there were three main effects. The first one was the shuffling a politicians between parties and re-grouping people into two groups – patriots and pacifists. The second effect of the war he saw in postponing of the Home Rule issue. This delay was

equivalent to the repealing of Home Rule. And the last consequent was cancellation of the great general strike. The last two effects actually saved Great Britain from civil war. However “saving” is not an exact term because the general strike was only delayed until the interwar period.

Lloyd George’s cabinet with Conservatives clenched all their muscles to win the Great War, to defeat the German Empire and to give the freedom to whole Europe and to Great Britain. But the biggest Conservative gain was the return to the government.

4.3.2 The Interlude

Conservatives were back in office but under the Liberal Prime Minister Lloyd George. After the end of the Great War, the coalition government was dissolved. But both coalition members decided not to fight the seats against one another. During oncoming elections the coalition achieved a great victory. The coalition received 478 Members of Parliament, 335 of which were Conservatives.

No government can be in office forever, especially the coalition government. Hearnshaw (1967) assumes that a big problem is made by the lack of a functional opposition. It is possibly comfortable for the government members not to be criticized, but without beneficial opposite view all ideas and the whole government inevitably degenerates. But the biggest issue of every coalition results from concessions which must every coalition member do. In 1921 Bonar Law had to resign from position of the Party leader due to his declining health. And Austen Chamberlain became the new leader of the British Conservative Party.

According to Hearnshaw (1967), Chamberlain’s affection to the coalition was much bigger than Law’s. He even wanted a fusion of the Coalition Liberals with the Conservative Party. His opinions growth tensions within the Party and Chamberlain had to summon a meeting of the Conservative Members of Parliament in the Carlton Club in 1922 to give the Party a choice: continue with the coalition or to choose a new leader.

Speeches of Chamberlain and Balfour were overshadowed by a strong speech given by an almost unknown minister Stanley Baldwin arguing that the Conservative Party would be ruined if remained in the coalition with Liberals. Bonar Law supported this speech and the audience decided that the Conservative Party should fight next elections as an independent Party. This solution caused Chamberlain’s resignation from the party

leadership and George's resignation from the post of Prime Minister. Bonar Law, enjoying better health than a year previously, accepted King's appeal to form a new government - the first fully Conservative government after twenty years (Norton, 1996).

Bonar Law's premiership lasted less than a year when he was forced to resign by his doctor because of deteriorating health. The choice of the new Prime Minister was between the Foreign Secretary Lord Curzon and the Chancellor of the Exchequer Stanley Baldwin. The King called for the member of the House of Commons, Stanley Baldwin. One of the reasons was the absence of the Labour Party, an effective opposition, in the House of Lords.

The second reason was Mr. Baldwin himself. He was successful and wealthy iron master, well known as humane and caretaking of his workers. He was a patriot and he believed in the necessity of protection of British industry. He was a disciple of Disraeli and his Tory Democracy. And Great Britain needed his enthusiasm for the welfare of the whole nation and of the poor people in particular in such hard times. Irish civil war and many strikes kept whole country in disorder. Industry and commerce were still desolated after the War, currencies collapsed and the unemployment was increasing (Hearnshaw, 1967).

The Irish Civil War began in 1919. The war was sparked after proclamation of the Irish Republic. The War ended in 1922 with a signature of the Anglo-Irish Treaty which established the Irish Free State on the South of the island. The northern part of Ireland remained part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

Norton (1996) assesses Baldwin as a Tory paternalist or a 'balancer' – trying to find the balance within the nation and within the Party. He assumed the national unemployment as the biggest economic problem. Protection of the home market was Baldwin's way to solve this issue. But his predecessor, Bonar Law, promised no principal changes in the fiscal policy during duration of the existing Parliament. This dilemma brought Baldwin to a decision to dissolve Parliament and call a general election.

The election was held in December, 1923. The Conservative Party remained the largest party in the Parliament, but lost more than 80 seats. Baldwin requested the new Parliament to form a new administration but was defeated and the Labour leader, Ramsay MacDonald, was summoned to form the new government with support of the third largest party – Liberals. Nevertheless, forming of the first Labour Government did not mean the last Baldwin's days in the office.

The first time in office was not easy for the Labour Party. Growing unemployment, failing industry and unresolved war reparation were not easy issues to be solved. However, at least one big success was brought by the Labour government. Mr. MacDonald and Mr. Herriot, Prime Minister of France, were able to ease the tension between the United Kingdom and France. Nevertheless, this success could not stop the impact of the so-called Campbell scandal, when Labour backbenchers forced the General Attorney to withdraw a prosecution directed against Mr. Campbell, the acting director of the *Workers' Weekly*, who encouraged sailors and soldiers to commit mutiny (Hearnshaw, 1967).

Liberal and Conservative Members of Parliament combined their votes to establish a Select Committee of Inquiry. MacDonald treated this defeat as one of confidence and dissolved Parliament. The general election of 1924 was a stunning conservative victory returning the Party 419 seats in Parliament. Although this meant a loss of seats for Labour, the Liberals suffered the biggest loss: their seats were reduced from 159 to 40. One ex-Liberal MP, now Conservative was Winston Churchill. And for the first time in history, one party achieved more than 400 seats in Parliament (Norton, 1996).

Stanley Baldwin became the Prime Minister and the Conservative Party had five years of governing ahead. And these years were not easy. Commerce and industry still had not recovered from the consequences of war. Especially the coal industry had suffered serious wounds. Unfortunately, the reorganisation of this branch included a closure of exhausted mines or releasing superfluous workers. These unpopular measures compelled dissatisfied miners to call a general strike in 1926. Hearnshaw (1967) describes this crisis:

Never before within the memory of any living person had there been in England so direct and deadly challenge to constitutional government. Fortunately, Mr. Baldwin and his colleagues rose to the height of the great crisis, and happily the community as a whole recognised instinctively the magnitude of the revolutionary menace. The result was that in nine days the strike was broken. (p. 279).

There were also more cheerful issues to be solved. Baldwin's government finally decided that women were a very significant part of the society and enfranchised women, older than 21 years, with its Representation of the People Act in 1928. It is interesting that British dominions New Zealand and Australia enfranchised all adult women more than thirty years ago.

After the Labour interlude, Baldwin became the Prime Minister for the third time. His last ministry lasted only two unhappy years. King Edward VIII abdicated. Unemployment was still high. The German threat became growing. Rearmament of the British forces did not go well. Baldwin was a great politician, but he left the impression of passing the country to his successor, Neville Chamberlain, unprepared for war.

4.3.3. The Second World War

Baldwin retired in 1937 and his successor for the party leadership was Neville Chamberlain. Norton (1996) describes him as first-rate Minister of Health, competent administrator, dedicated party member, but also as the wrong person for the wrong time.

Chamberlain stood for appeasement, but his estimation of Hitler was bad. Chamberlain signed a pact with Germany in Munich, 1938. Germany was to stay peaceful in exchange for several conditions. One of these conditions was annexation of a border region of Czechoslovakia to Germany. This pact was generally popular, but a group of anti-appeasers formed around Winston Churchill (Dutton, 2001).

This group was proved right when Germany attacked Poland and war was declared a few days later in September, 1939. Chamberlain tried to change himself into a wartime leader, but he was not well-suited for this role and resigned as Prime Minister after an unsuccessful Norwegian campaign. Winston Churchill was chosen as his successor.

War veteran Winston Churchill understood the relevance of the War much better than Chamberlain and sacrificed all his, party and national efforts to cease this conflict. Churchill asked all parties to form a coalition government. Party order was almost stopped during the war. Churchill frequently motivated the entire nation with his strong speeches.

When the war had been won in 1945, Churchill decided to dissolve the parliament. Winston Churchill had earned a reputation of a strong leader and everyone expected his victory in the following election, but Labour Party won the election and conservatives were again moved to opposition. It took another six years of “political wilderness” (Norton, 1996) before conservatives became the government party again.

5 Modern Conservatives

5.1. From Eden to Heath

General elections in 1951 brought a conservative victory. It adumbrated the longest period of one political party in the government. The Conservative Party won two next elections in 1955 and 1959. Defeat came in the election of 1964. Four conservative Prime Ministers served during those 13 years.

The first of them was Winston Churchill. The great wartime leader returned to the office as a 76 year old man. The abilities which had made him a superb politician during the war were not successful during peace. But he had some able ministers in his cabinet and his government as a whole was quite efficient. Norton (1996) assumes the most notable measures of Churchill's peacetime government were reduction of government expenditure, building of new houses for families or abolishing of climate rationing and reduction of income tax. Nevertheless, political intrigues and Churchill's deteriorating health forced him to leave office in 1955.

Churchill's cabinet accepted a policy of national consensus. The Labour Party believed that the state should guarantee full employment. An instrument to achieve this goal was seen in the nationalization of most important industries. This rule was consented by the Liberal and also by the Conservative Party. At first, this policy brought economic welfare and was accepted by all governments until 1974. But it also brought several issues later.

Anthony Eden was Churchill's successor, but his tenure was quite short: he served as Prime Minister only twenty months. His tenure was sealed with an international issue – the Suez Canal Crisis. The Egyptian Prime Minister decided to nationalize the Suez Canal in 1956. Great Britain, in collusion with France and Israel, took military action to take the canal under control. But the action had to be ceased after diplomatic intervention of the USA. This failure undermined Eden's position and his health, and he resigned in January 1957.

Harold Macmillan, the person responsible for the housing sector measures in Churchill's last government, became Eden's successor. Macmillan's premiership, or the first three years at least, has been variously described as superb by authors like Norton (1996) or Green (2002). In foreign affairs, Macmillan was able to restore good relations

with United States. He was even familiarly connected to John Fitzgerald Kennedy. Many of the commonwealth countries became independent during his tenure.

On the domestic scene, Macmillan preferred an expansionist economic policy. Some of his ministers did not agree with this kind of policy and resigned when they were not able to uphold their opinions. Macmillan assessed these resignations as small local difficulties. Together with a new Chancellor of the Exchequer, Macmillan introduced a highly expansionary budget in 1959. General elections took place the same year and the conservative victory was bigger than expected. The Conservative Party increased its majority to 100. But every period has its end and Macmillan's had reached its peak (Norton, 1996).

There came an economic breakdown in 1960. The government introduced some policies to slow down the fall. But it became generally unpopular – especially the restraint of wages. Macmillan saw the resolution in changing some of his ministers and in 1962, he dismissed seven of them. The action which should have brought a brisk freeze into the Party only showed that he was losing the control. The second blow came with an attempt to join the European Economic Community (EEC). Macmillan saw there a solution for British fiscal issues. But the French president, Charles de Gaulle, vetoed Britain's attempt to join the EEC. Nevertheless, joining the EEC was quite unpopular within the Party and among the people too. These blows and Macmillan's illness convinced him to resign in 1963 (Harold Macmillan, n.d.).

The resignation made more issues than solved. There was no clear successor of Macmillan within the Party. The battle for Premier within the Party began. Senior party members favoured their candidate, but Macmillan had his own person to be elected. After several discussions both sides found a consensus in the third candidate and advised the Queen to send for Sir Alec Douglas-Home. Almost all members of the Party agreed to serve under Home. And he accommodated to constitutional convention and entered the House of Commons for Kinross and West Perthshire (Norton, 1996).

Douglas-Home had to face the next struggle within the Party after he became the Prime Minister. He had not proved an efficient party leader and an effective public person and a general election became more and more inevitable. In 1964, the Labour Party with the young party leader, Harold Wilson, won a small majority in the general election. And the Conservative Party got back to opposition.

The Conservative Party proved economically able when enabled Great Britain to prosper relatively. The Party used social consensus to improve living standards of all classes. It was more a social democratic or Labour approach than conservative and it caused internal dissension within the Party. The pressure within the Party peaked in 1965 and Douglas-Home announced his retirement.

Edward Heath followed Home as the party leader. All the conservative party leaders before him were drawn from high social and aristocratic classes. Heath was the first one drawn from a lower middle class. His father was a carpenter and his mother was a maid. But Heath was well-educated. He graduated at Oxford in 1939. And he also served in the Second World War.

Heath's win in the party leader election was quite surprising and he had to solve many issues within the first years in office. The Party was in opposition and he had to avert attacks of Enoch Powell, his biggest opponent within the Conservative Party. In March 1966, Heath had the first opportunity to lead the Party into an election. But he had so little time to make some changes within the Party and no one could prevent a Labour victory.

Heath was not an efficient opposition leader. He suggested many proposals but they were so similar to government ones that the Conservative Party failed to distinguish itself from other political opponents. This brought many splits within the Party and especially Enoch Powell challenged Heath's position many times. Powell even provoked Heath so much that he was dismissed from the shadow cabinet (Norton, 1996).

In 1970, Harold Wilson, the Labour prime minister, decided to dissolve the parliament and called an election in June. Heath had not strong support of his Party and no one assumed him as a winner of the election, but the Conservative Party surprisingly won. Heath surrounded himself with loyal people to form the Cabinet, but Powell was left to undermine Heath's position (Lynch, 1999).

As an able negotiator, Heath was able to convince France to allow Great Britain to join the European Economic Community in 1973. But on the domestic scene, Heath did not prove an able politician. Violent conflicts in Ireland appeared. Unemployment and inflation rapidly increased. Government tried to restore the economic situation with many measures, but they led only to various labour strikes (Sir Edward Heath, n.d.).

Heath called for a general election in 1974 to find who really governs. His lack of economic and political skills caused the Conservative Party's defeat and the Labour Party

won. Pressure for Heath's resignation grew but Heath tried to be re-elected as the leader in the following party leader election. But Margaret Thatcher became the new Conservative Party leader.

5.2. Thatcher years

Margaret Thatcher, the first female British Prime Minister and Conservative Party leader, had not walked an easy way to gain these accomplishments. Her diligence and dedication allowed her to take the post of Education Secretary in Heath's 1970 government. Thatcher was an able speaker and was not afraid to express her disagreements within the office. This acting made her one of the possible Heath's successors. Nevertheless, Sir Keith Joseph, former Secretary of State for Social Services, was still the most expected contender. But his tactless speeches against the lower social classes made him an unacceptable party leader. The battle lay between Heath and Thatcher in the end and was won by Margaret Thatcher (Evans, 1997).

Thatcher became leader in 1975. She introduced a new direction of the leadership and whole party policy. The change included differences of substance and style of the Party. Green (2002) describes Thatcher's economic approach even more neo-liberal than Heath. But Thatcher intended measures to distinguish herself from Heath. Within the Party, new policy groups were formed but they differed from groups under Heath in 1964-1970. She called for cautious realism. This inner party change was made to gain the Party an advantage in following election Norton (1996).

But the main factors which affected the election against the Labour government appeared from outside the Conservative Party. The economic crisis raised prices each year by more than 15 per cent. The Labour government was also strongly influenced by and almost subordinate to the trade unions. This caused inner tensions and the Labourers started to lose the electorate. Mrs Thatcher and modified Conservative Party were prepared to take their chance (Norton, 1996).

A continuing crisis in 1978 forced Labour Prime Minister James Callaghan to dissolve his cabinet and general elections were scheduled for May, 1979. The Conservative Party achieved an outstanding victory and Margaret Thatcher became the first woman

Prime Minister in Great Britain. No one knew that she would become a significant reformer and the longest serving Prime Minister since Lord Liverpool.

Since the first steps into number 10 Downing Street, Thatcher had to face serious economic issues – growing inflation and increasing unemployment. Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party saw the solution in *laissez-faire* - the approach restricting state interventions into the economy. The main measures to restore the state fiscal situation were decreasing the money supply, because money became almost a worthless piece of paper thanks to inflation, reduction of expenditure of public money and abandonment of the state from as many economic areas as possible. State industries should be privatized or work more efficiently at least. Consumer's will and choice, not state dictate, should control the economic activity (Norton, 1996).

The first years of government were not easy. Many measures, like tax cuts or pay increases were not popular within the Party and Thatcher had to fight to carry her ideas through. Privatization and other measures led to doubled unemployment. Inflation doubled also. These years were difficult also on the political scene. The Social Democrats Party, a new political party, was founded. The SDP immediately started to gain the electorate at the expenses of the Conservative Party. Thatcher also had to uphold her party leadership.

All these factors caused Margaret Thatcher to become very unpopular. But she received an opportunity to prove her strength to the Party and to the whole nation too, when in 1982, Argentina attacked the Falkland Islands and undermined national pride in Britain. Thatcher proved a strong will to maintain British interests abroad and called for military action. The strong and fast response of the British army expelled Argentinian soldiers from the Falklands. It was a good move for Thatcher and the Conservative Party because this action restored the public popularity of the Conservative Party (Evans, 1997).

General elections took place in 1983. The economic situation had started to improve, but it was still bad that year. Unemployment was still increasing but the Falkland Islands War proved Thatcher a strong leader and people expressed their sympathy. The Conservative Party achieved a great victory. They received a majority of more than 140 seats in Parliament. Thatcher became Prime Minister and made several changes in her cabinet. Some former ministers were replaced with ministers more loyal to Thatcher.

This act caused tension inside the Conservative Party. Some party members were dissatisfied with the way of Thatcher's leadership. Some of them started to describe her

leadership as absolutism. Nevertheless, Thatcher received another opportunity to prove strong leader after a bomb attack of IRA terrorists during the Conservative annual conference in Brighton in 1984. This attack caused opposite reactions than the terrorists had expected – the Party rallied around Thatcher and her public popularity increased.

1984 was a year of issues for Margaret Thatcher and the Conservative Party. Since 1979 conservatives had wanted to weaken the power of the trade unions. Especially the National Union of Mineworkers was a strong player on the political scene. The union did not like the weakening of their power and summoned a strike during March 1984. It lasted a long eleven months, but the Conservative Party appeared as the winner. The Unions had to retreat from their requirements (Evans, 1997).

Another serious issue appeared in 1986 – the Westland Crisis. This crisis cost two ministers their seats and started proposals about a change of the party leader. Westland was a company producing helicopters with state co-ownership. It faced fiscal issues in the mid-eighties. Defence Secretary Michael Heseltine saw the solution in the sale of the state share to European helicopter manufacturers. On the other side, Trade and Industry Secretary Leon Brittan favoured selling to the American company Sikorski. Thatcher considered Brittan's opinion better, but she was not decisive enough to express her support for him within the Party. This affair cost both Ministers their posts in the end and raised rumours within the Party that a new Prime Minister was needed.

Nevertheless, in June 1987 when the general elections were summoned, the Westland issue stopped being called “crisis”. The Conservative Party won the election for the third time in a row so Margaret Thatcher strengthened her position for some time. The government had a good position to inaugurate many measures. The government introduced changes in education, local government financing and housing. Many public services were privatized. Thatcher also achieved many international results and became an important senior figure on the world stage. (Norton, 1996)

Ten years lasted since Margaret Thatcher became Prime Minister. And these years were relatively successful. Many people bought their own houses, trade unions were reformed, many state industries were privatized and unemployment, after a massive increase, decreased.

But especially unemployment reached its peak during the Thatcher government in 1984. Almost 13, 5 per cent of people were unemployed. And many critics attribute its

decrease to an improving world economy. Many measures, like the Community Charge, also aggravated living conditions of many people. And the difference between social conditions of people from the North and from the South also rose.

Situation changed in 1989 and the following year. Especially the economic situation became increasingly worse again. The Community Charge and Thatcher's negative stand against the European Community were extensively unpopular. But Margaret Thatcher denied any compromise. Great Britain even experienced several riots and demonstrations all over the country. The London riot against the Poll Tax at the end of March, 1990 was the worst one in memory of all living people - what started as a peaceful demonstration ended with looting and rage. And unpopular measures cost the Conservative Party many of its voters.

Some party members sent signals of their dissatisfaction with the party leader and her opinions. At the end of 1989, Margaret Thatcher had to face a challenge for the post of party leader. The only opponent of her was Anthony Meyer. He had no chance to become party leader, but almost 20 per cent of all voters voted against Thatcher or absented the ballot (Evans, 1997).

The last straw for Margaret Thatcher's leadership appeared on 1st November, 1990, when the Leader of the House of Commons resigned from his post. Two weeks later, Sir Geoffrey Howe made a statement where had described that the main reason for leaving his post was the way of governance and stance to Europe of Margaret Thatcher. The next day, Michael Heseltine announced his attempt to become the party leader (Norton, 1996).

The first ballot was won by Thatcher. But she did not reach a sufficient majority. Advised by some members of her Cabinet, Thatcher decided to withdraw from the second round the ballot. Instead of her, two members of her Cabinet stepped into the challenge – John Major and Douglas Hurd. John Major won the second ballot over Heseltine and Hurd, but he also did not achieve a total majority and the third ballot was on the programme. Major's rivals decided to leave the challenge in his favour so John Major could enter Downing Street to become the new Prime Minister.

5.3 John Major

John Major had an unusual background for a Prime Minister. His father was a circus performer, gardener and his mother was a variety manager. He has not graduated from a prestigious university like his predecessors. His political career was quite fast. Major entered the House of Commons in 1979. In 1987, John Major became Chief Secretary to the Treasury and in 1989 became a Cabinet Post Foreign Secretary. He had served in this post only few months when he was appointed Chancellor of the Exchequer (John Major, n.d.).

This post prepared him a good starting position to the party leadership when Margaret Thatcher became undesirable. John Major won the ballot against two other candidates and on 28 November 1990 entered Downing Street as the new Conservative Party leader and new Prime Minister. Major was much more tolerant and inclined more to consensus than Thatcher.

His first year as Prime Minister was successful. Many unpopular measures, like a poll tax, were refused. His stance against European Community became less inimical. Major also improved relations with Russia and supported Kuwait during the Gulf War against Iraq. All these changes made Major quite popular and allowed the Conservative Party to win the general elections in 1992 (Norton, 1996).

However, the following years after a general election became more and more complicated for the whole government. One of the main problems appeared during Black Wednesday. Irresponsible and uncontrolled currency trade with a pound sterling caused Britain to leave the European exchange rate mechanism, which deepened the economic recession. The total costs of this disaster are estimated at 3.3 billion pounds (Tempest, 2005).

Another European issue came with the Maastricht Treaty. This document established the European Union and its three basic pillars. Its approval got into serious trouble after being vetoed by Denmark. It encouraged some Eurosceptic Conservative MPs to deny this treaty at first. The Maastricht Treaty was accepted in the second vote, but this disobedience within the Conservative Party undermined Major's authority in the Parliament.

It could seem that the period of Major's government was only a chain of debacles. But Major achieved at least one big accomplishment. In 1993, Major initiated negotiations

with Irish Prime Minister Albert Reynolds. This parley between Roman-Catholics and Protestants led to the provisional peace and cease-fire in Northern Ireland after many years of armed conflict with the IRA. Major had not been negotiating only with big groups, but he also invited several small paramilitary groups (Norton, 1996). And all his efforts were crowned with the Good Friday agreement.

Unfortunately it was the only success among many failures. Especially Michael Heseltine got into serious trouble when he had introduced many unpopular and inefficient measures like closing of most of the British coal mines, privatisation of the Post Office or imposition of Value Added Tax on domestic fuel. The Bill about increasing of the European Community budget was not popular among MPs or people either and Major decided it as a vote of confidence. The Bill passed at the end but some conservative MPs were against it (Norton, 1996).

Major also had to face several resignations of his ministers because of sexual or financial scandals. This thwarted his 'back to basics' campaign trying to restore moral and family values. John Major was also criticized for his indecision on important issues. Criticism among opposition and the Conservative Party was rising too and Major decided to resign. Although Major was criticized within his Party too, he was re-elected to the post of the party leader.

Nevertheless, people were dissatisfied with the conservative governments. The financial situation of the whole country was not gladdening and living standards of many people became worse. Many people did not remember any other government than the conservative and has desired for the change. They got an opportunity during 1997 general election. Voters expressed their opinion and the Labour Party won. The Conservative government was dismissed after 18 years.

6 Conclusion

The main point in my research was to summarize and describe the main events and philosophical trends of the Conservative Party throughout its history. I have often omitted some party matters when they were not such important for my thesis. The Conservative Party has rich history so I mentioned only the most notable facts for its development.

There are not many Czech references about the Conservative Party and Conservatism at all and English publications are not easily accessible so I had to help myself with many articles and essays which allowed me to make a comprehensive view on the development of the Conservative Party.

My thesis suggests that the Conservative Party started its history as a party of the upper class of British society. But the Party representatives realized that it would be necessary to find the social consensus in the course of time. Some of them, like Disraeli, were really successful in that but some of them lost support of their electorate because of their bad measures deteriorating living standards of ordinary people. It was not caused by personal lust but by the lack of political skills.

In conclusion, I have to say that the Conservative Party always tried to act in favour of Great Britain and whole British Imperium and it does not matter if its laws and measures were right or not because the purpose was always the same – to improve British affluence.

7 Shrnutí

Tato práce obsahuje shrnutí a popis historického vývoje britské Konzervativní strany a událostí, které tento vývoj ovlivnily od jejího založení až do konce dvacátého století, kdy byla Konzervativní strana vystřídána v čele vlády stranou Labouristickou. V práci jsou také popsány hlavní osobnosti strany, které se podílely jak na jejím utváření, tak na utváření celé britské společnosti i světové historie.

Popis vývoje strany je realizován jak v rovině chronologické, tak i v rovině společenské, kde obzvlášť došlo k velkému posunu. Britská Konzervativní strana byla ve svém počátku převážně stranou britské šlechty, ale postupem času se změnila na stranu obhajující práva všech společenských vrstev a jako taková se snaží konat ve prospěch celé Velké Británie.

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