

# Unit 3 Sources-

## War and the transformation of British Society

1931-51

CONTENT revision guide

PENSBY

## TOPIC 1: Impact of depression

### THE GREAT DEPRESSION

- October 1929 the Wall Street Crash happened in USA. People were desperate to sell their shares in businesses as the businesses were not doing well. Many sold shares for less than they bought them for and lost lots of savings.
- Businesses went bust as no one was investing in them. They had to make people redundant (lost jobs)
- Banks collapsed as people without jobs could not pay back loans.
- Many lost their homes.

### UNEMPLOYMENT

- People saved and did not spend money in case they lost their job.
- Companies had to stop making products as no one was buying any, they had to make more people redundant as they had no money to pay the workers.
- By 1932 there were 3,000,000 unemployed in Britain.

### AFFECTED INDUSTRIES

- The "old industries" were worst effected- ships, textiles, coal, iron, steel.
- Worst hit was ship building- no one was buying or selling and so ships were not needed to transport goods.
- After the war there was foreign competition for coal- it was cheaper in Germany and Poland.
- Man made fibres became popular, not cotton and wool. Cotton and wool were also cheaper in USA and Japan. The textile industry fell by 40% between 1929 and 1939.
- New industries did well as they sold items that helped people in life eg Vacuum cleaner, motor bikes.

### AREAS AFFECTED

- Jarrow and South Wales- relied on employment from heavy industries- 60% unemployment.
- Birmingham and Oxford- newer industry areas were not affected.
- Depression hit only certain parts of the country.

## LABOURS RESPONSE TO DEPRESSION

- 1929- Labour won the election.
- Built new houses, helped unemployed*- benefits were increased, in 1920 everyone who earned less than £250 a year was allowed benefits.
- Labour was *spending more on benefits* than it was making in taxes- the government ran out of money.
- A National government was put in place instead of Labour- this was a government of people from all the main parties. Ramsey McDonald was Prime Minister.

## NATIONAL GOVERNMENT AND THE DEPRESSED INDUSTRIES

- Amalgamation* was encouraged- companies joining up of smaller companies to make bigger companies- they could produce cheaper goods then.
- New large companies were given *grants* to help them develop.
- Special areas struggled- these were the worst hit areas of unemployed. The Government passed the law "*the Special Areas Act*" which offered money to companies who moved to these areas.
- By 1938 only 121 new firms had set up → helping unemployed was slow.
- The Government did not help alot and *relied on private companies* to solve the unemployment problem.

## NATIONAL GOVERNMENT'S RESPONSE

- They wanted to restore confidence in Britain so the USA banks would lend them money.
- They tried to make more money by cutting pay of people who worked for the Government by 10%, eg- teachers, police.
- Benefit was cut by 10%
- Came off the Gold Standard- this reduced the value of the pound- British goods were cheaper to people abroad therefore encouraging people to buy British goods.
- Mears test- After 6 mths on benefit you were tested- an inspector looked at the persons house, savings etc- families sometimes had to sell possessions. This was very unpopular.
- Income tax was raised- to pay for benefits and pay back loans.
- Imports were taxed due to the new law "the import duties act", this made foreign goods expensive so more would buy British goods.
- Ottawa agreements- cheaper trade with countries like Canada.

## EXPERIENCE OF UNEMPLOYED

- Jobs were lost, wages and benefits were low. People felt depressed as they did not have enough to survive.
- People bought cheaper food which led to health problems and malnutrition.
- Booth and Rowntree did surveys. Rowntree discovered that 30% of people in York lived below the poverty line.
- Some in new industries had better pay, housing and entertainment with new technologies such as the cinema.
- Boyd Orr surveyed health- he found that 1/10<sup>th</sup> of the population was seriously under-nourished.
- A richer family would eat two and a half times more fruit than the poorer and three times as many vegetables.

## WOMEN

- Worst affected- they were the first to lose their job.
- poor health and maternity care for poor.
- No health insurance if not working. National Insurance did not cover them. Many could not afford to see a doctor or have medicine.
- Wages for women were low- 2/3 of a mans. They worked in low paid jobs such as in shops and offices.

## HUNGER MARCHES

- The National Unemployed Workers Movement was set up to put pressure on the Government to help unemployed.
- Marches took place in over 30 towns by 1931.
- They often ended in riots with police etc.

## HOUSING

- 1935- 12% lived at least two to a room. In London many families lived in one room.
- No toilets or sinks or cooking facilities.
- Rats were common.

## JARROW

- Worst effected town during the depression- near Newcastle, unemployment reached 80%.
- The area depended on Palmer's shipyard for jobs- this company did not survive the depression.
- Living conditions were seriously hit, the national figure for infant mortality was 57 in comparison to 114 in Jarrow.
- Malnutrition and poor health were common in the town.
- The local community could not cope as there were too many people in Jarrow that needed help.
- It was reported in 1934 that only 1 in 3 shops were open in Jarrow and men were standing around on street corners.
- The people of Jarrow sent demands, "deputations" to the Board of Trade for help. The Government believed the Special Areas Act would help and that was enough.

## JARROW HUNGER MARCH

- 1936 one last attempt to attract attention was made.
- 200 men marched to London, they wore their best clothes and were cleanly shaven to make a good impression. This was not a threatening march, they just wanted help.
- They received great support, free meals, shoe repairs etc.
- When they arrived in London the prime minister Stanley Baldwin refused to comment.
- The Jarrow March did publicise the problem but did not result in Government help.

## TOPIC 2: Britain Alone

### BEF, DUNKIRK, CHURCHILL

- Britain declared war on 3<sup>rd</sup> Sept 1939.
- Germany were using "Blitzkrieg" or lightning war- this was a surprise and speedy attack using the tank and planes. Enemy airfields and communication centres were bombed to slow any defence.
- This was working and Germany defeated Belgium and Holland quickly (in 5 days).
- The French were taken by surprise- the Germans attacked the Ardennes- a wooded region unsuitable for tanks.

### DUNKIRK

- The Germans moved across the River Meuse, the British and French were cut off from their forces, they retreated (moved back) to the beaches of Dunkirk to evacuate as many soldiers as they could.
- Fortunately Hitler ordered the tanks be stopped and to finish the British and French attacks from the air. This allowed time to regroup. Hitler also ordered armies to capture Calais rather than Dunkirk.
- The British launched **Operation Dynamo** with ships and yachts crossing the channel to save the soldiers.
- 340,000 were rescued.
- Dunkirk was portrayed to the public as a huge success to create "Dunkirk spirit" and boost morale.
- Really it was an embarrassing defeat- 475 tanks had to be abandoned, 70,000 men were killed.

### CHURCHILL

- France surrendered a month after Dunkirk and Britain stood alone against Hitler.
- Churchill was a strong leader who used propaganda and speeches to boost morale. He toured the country with fighting talk. "We shall never surrender."
- He encouraged the Home Guard of volunteers, worked close with the USA as an ally.
- USA "Lend Lease" meant Britain were supplied with equipment and essential supplies during the war. This also boosted morale as Britain were not alone.

## BATTLE OF BRITAIN

- Hitler was preparing for operation sealion- invading Britain
- 13<sup>th</sup> August 1940 the German Luftwaffe airplanes attacked British Ports and radar stations.
- By September the British had used its reserves and were close to defeat. Hitler fortunately stopped attacking Kent to attack London- this gave the RAF breathing space.
- On a daylight attack on London on 15<sup>th</sup> Sept the Germans lost 56 planes. On 17<sup>th</sup> Hitler stopped the invasion, Britain had won.
- They won due to radar- knowing where Germans were. The Hurricane and Spit-fighter were stronger planes than the Germans.
- The British had the advantage of fighting over their own territory- pilots shot down could be saved and fight again. German planes could only carry so much fuel and so could not fly for long enough to protect their bombers.

## THE BLITZ

- This was the German bombing of Britain from Sept 1940 until May 1941. This was after the Battle of Britain.
- It was intended to destroy morale of citizens into surrendering by bombing their homes and killing their families and industry.
- London was worst hit, 13,000 were killed.
- Coventry was badly hit in Nov with 500 killed.
- Government tried to maintain morale with propaganda "Britain can take it"
- Undergrounds were used for shelter but many were hit including Piccadilly.
- Reality was that people were in despair- there was no milk, telephones or humour.
- 3 million homes were destroyed and 20,000 killed- it did make more support the war and they were determined to win.

## V1s and V2s

- In 1944 and 1945 Britain was attacked from the air again.
- 20,000 were killed.
- These were rockets of explosives, they were stopped when the launch sites were overrun in 1945.

### OTHER WEST DEVELOPMENTS

- Cherbourg was taken by the allies in France- this was an important port.
  - Falaise and Paris were both liberated from Germany.
  - Battle of Bulge-The allies had supply problems, Hitler tried to stop them using the Port of Antwerp in Belgium.
  - The Germans attacked the wooded area of the Ardennes with total radio silence, it was a surprise attack in bad weather.
  - The allies could not fly.
- The Germans ran out of supplies and they knew they had lost the war.

### EASTERN FRONT

- Germans lost in Russia at Stalingrad and Leningrad towards the end of the war.

### DDAY

-6<sup>th</sup> June 1944

- The British and US landed in Normandy to attack the Germans. The Germans had been tricked into thinking an attack would be in Calais not Normandy. It lasted for 2 months.
- Double agents were used to trick the Germans into thinking Calais would be attacked, Germans were based here therefore.
- There was a fake army base made in Kent opposite pas De Calais of inflatable tanks etc to ensure German air photos would show an attack on Calais was likely.
- Civilians sent in photos of their holidays so the British could assess Normandy.
- Before the invasion there were constant attacks on the Luftwaffe bases to ensure the allies had aerial superiority.
- Bridges and railways were destroyed to make it hard for Germans to move reserves.
- Mulberries (floating harbours) were used with an underwater pipeline (Photo) to deliver fuel.

### WHY DID GERMANY LOSE THE WAR?

- Allies had more resources.
- Hitler was fighting a war on two fronts- with Russia on the East and France and Britain on the West.
- War at sea- British technical developments ensured U boats could be combated.
- German treatment of civilians in countries they took over led to more resistance against them. These helped the allies.
- Hitler errors in military judgements- eg Dunkirk halting tanks.



### TOPIC 3: Britain at war

#### CENSORSHIP and PROPAGANDA

- The gvt controlled the press and BBC- they could not publish any information that may help the enemy or lower morale.
- Newspapers and to submit articles to the censor before printing.
- Propaganda was used to boost morale and maintain support for the war. Posters were used to encourage conservation of food, Churchill was often featured.
- The BBC used entertainment and humour about wartime hardships and Hitler to keep up morale, 25 million listened.

#### ROLE OF GVT

-The government covered all aspects of life under the Emergency powers Act May 1940 which gave the gvt more powers to control aspects of life. As this was the time invasion was most likely- after Dunkirk and France nearly defeated, the gvt could demand civilians to do anything or go anywhere.

#### RATIONING

- The German Uboat campaign threatened imports to Britain. At first only butter, sugar and bacon were rationed.
- This was needed to ensure there was enough food to supply Britain and keep up morale with everyone being equal- even the King. It was also needed to keep people healthy and therefore able to work and keep healthcare costs down- more time and money for bomb victims.
- Workers in heavy industries and pregnant women received more.
- Everyone had a ration book and registered with a grocer and butcher.
- Rationing extended to clothing and more.
- Rich people sometimes ignored rations and bought off the black market.
- The gvt was praised for improving health with rationing with more people eating fresh fruit and vegetables

## ROLE OF WOMEN

- Women were categorised as mobile- could work, or immobile- housewife looking after children and unable to work. Some worked part time or for the WVS- Women's Volunteering Service.
- Women worked in factories, as mechanics, lorry drivers, engineers. They were paid less than men. In engineering men were paid the equivalent of £3.28 a week and women £2.15.
- In 1941 Women had to register to work as more workers were needed, in December 1941 conscription of women aged 19-30 was introduced. Eventually over 90% of single women and 80% of married women with children over 14 worked.
- Women argued they were better than men at some factory jobs. The factories were often a long way from home as they were built in remote areas to avoid bombing, they were long working days. Women sometimes had to pay to stay in hostels.

## ARMED FORCES

- By 1943 443,000 worked in the armed forces, they worked in intelligence, repaired ships, operated searchlights, admin, code breakers at Bletchley Park.
- Many worked in medical centres, first aid posts.
- Women could not fight on the front line.

## LAND ARMY

- 80,000 women worked in the Land Army- farming had to produce as much as possible to prevent the country being starved. They were often badly treated with low pay- around £1.40 a week and no training.

## HOME

- Women had to make rationing work, this was a major task: to ensure the family was fed. It was hard trying to vary meals.
- The Gvt helped with recipes, they knew food was important to morale, women were told to avoid waste.

## WOMEN AFTER THE WAR

- Women lost their jobs and adverts pressurised women to go back to normal. The GVT stated that men should get jobs over women.
- Some women's attitudes changed, they had more confidence and self respect, they enjoyed the independence the war had given them.
- Many Trade Unions campaigned for women to be treated the same as men.
- Most men believed women should go back to their traditional role.
- Many women also believed the traditional role was for the best, 58% of women believed that married women should not work. Nurses were shut down which made it hard for women to work.

How did Labour deal with the giants?

WANI- Family allowances Act 1945- money to families with children, National Insurance Act- Employees and employers and gov all pay into a fund which pays people when they are sick, unemployed or on maternity so they do not quickly become poor and homeless. National Assistance Act- help homeless.

IGNORANCE- Education Acts- free education until 15 years old.

SQUALOR- New Towns Act- new towns and towns enlarged eg Warrington. Housing building Scheme- 750,000 built by 1948- all those destroyed by war.

DISEASE- NHS set up- free healthcare

IDLENESS- Government building schemes to provide more jobs.

NHS benefits

-it provided free healthcare, eye care and dental care for all.

-By 1949 the government had to charge for some things as the bill was too high, they brought in a prescription charge- although the old, poor and disabled did not have to pay. People also had to pay towards eye care and dental.

-This was a huge improvement on before the war, even with some charges people were accessing healthcare and the poorest got it for free.

-This helped build a more equal society where the government were helping citizens.

NHS and opposition

-Many doctors were members of the BMA- British medical Association. They were against lots of reforms as they did not want the Government to take over and have too much control.

TOPIC 3: Labour in Power 1945-51

This report said that the people should have support "from cradle to grave" - all through life they should be supported by the state. It wanted to attack 5 giants by putting in support from the government.

-WANT- the lack of basic needs like food- People were so poor they would starve

-IGNORANCE- lack of education as people could not get jobs

-DISEASE- address medical care for all no matter how poor

-SQUALOR- deal with poor living conditions

-IDLENESS- unemployment

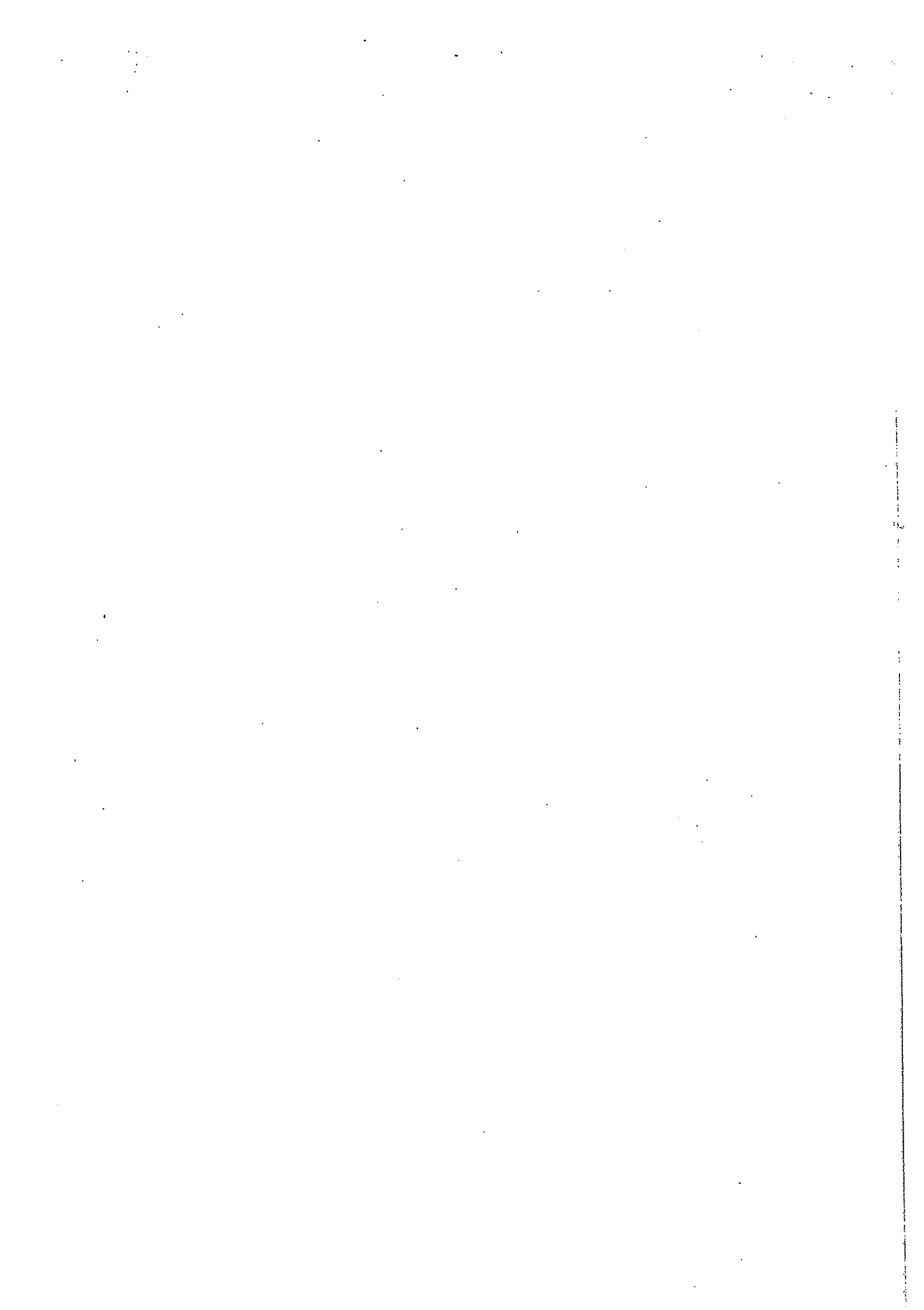
The Beveridge Report

Election May 1945

Conservatives- focused on Churchill and how he won the war- they thought people would vote for them as they liked Churchill. They lost. People did not trust Conservatives or Churchill after the "Gestapo speech" where Churchill slated Labour MPs who he had worked well with during the war. People thought Labour ministers had done well and so did not like Churchill going against them.

Why did Labour win the election?

- They promised social change- more equality- people wanted this after the war as they had seen how life for poor was tough after looking after evacuees.
- Labour promised to implement the Beveridge Report which was going to help poor people and allow the government to protect society. Conservatives said they would implement parts of the report.
- Labour were a more interfering government- people wanted this after seeing what a good job the government did in the war with rationing and emergency health care.
- Labour promised to build 5 million homes- people needed this after the war.



## **Evacuation**

**Children, pregnant women, blind people and some mothers were evacuated out of dangerous towns and cities into the countryside. 3 million were evacuated in the first 4 days in 1939. By December there had been no bombing – this was the Phoney war period. Many wanted their children back.**

### **Positives-**

- Over 1 million children were evacuated out of danger in towns and cities likely to be bombed to the countryside. It saved many lives.
- Some saw countryside for the first time and enjoyed living in wealthy areas with farm life and green fields.
- Many had a healthier style of living- healthier food and diet, fresh air and walks in the countryside.
- Evacuation made society realise that some people were very poor and needed help. They saw children with little belongings and who had a difficult life. This led to pressure being put on the government to help people after the war.

### **Negatives-**

- Sometimes children were "chosen" by host families by being lined up in village halls and inspected. Clean and strong looking children were chosen with dirty, weak children left until last. This was humiliating and upsetting for the evacuee children.
- Evacuees often were not used to living in wealthy countryside areas, their standard of behaviour was different, many host families could not cope with improper toilet habits and no table manners.
- lots were homesick.
- Some evacuees were bullied by other children in the countryside for being different and causing over- crowding in classrooms.

