

UNIVERSITY OF ECONOMICS IN BRATISLAVA

FACULTY OF APPLIED LANGUAGES

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**QUEEN VICTORIA – THE EMPRESS THAT
CHANGED THE BRITISH EMPIRE
(200 YEARS ANNIVERSARY IN MAY 2019)**

Bachelor Thesis

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Bachelor Thesis

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Affirmation

I hereby affirm that this Bachelor thesis represents my own original research and writing and that I have referenced all appropriate source materials.

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ABSTRAKT

GROHOLOVÁ, Tereza: *Kráľovná Viktória – panovníčka, ktorá zmenila britské impérium (200 rokov od jej narodenia – máj 2019)*. – Ekonomická univerzita v Bratislave. Fakulta aplikovaných jazykov; Katedra interkultúrnej komunikácie. – Vedúci záverečnej práce: PhDr. Mária Bláhová, PhD. – Bratislava: FAJ EU, 2019, 48 s.

Táto bakalárska práca sa zaoberá kráľovnou Viktóriou, jej osobným životom, ako aj jej vládou. Cieľom diplomovej práce je priblížiť, ako a prečo panovanie kráľovnej Viktórie ovplyvnilo Britské impérium. Práca sa zameriava na život kráľovnej Viktórie, na udalosti, ktoré ovplyvnili jej osobný život, ako aj na udalosti, ktoré formovali Veľkú Britániu. Bakalárska práca je rozdelená do štyroch kapitol a niekoľkých podkapitol. Prvá kapitola sa zaoberá detstvom a skorými rokmi života kráľovnej Viktórie, ako aj ľuďmi a udalosťami, ktoré na ňu mali vplyv predtým, ako sa stala kráľovnou. Druhá kapitola sa zameriava na ranú vládu kráľovnej Viktórie, udalosti tohoto obdobia na Britskom tróne a na manželstvo s princom Albertom. V tretej kapitole sa zameriavame na politické, kultúrne a spoločenské udalosti vládnutia kráľovnej Viktórie. Štvrtá kapitola sa zaoberá obdobím po smrti princa Alberta, ako aj vplyvom a zmenami, ktoré priniesla kráľovná Viktória a viktoriánska éra Britskému impériu a svetu.

Kľúčové slová: kráľovná Viktória, Britské impérium, vládnutie, viktoriánska éra, monarchia

ABSTRACT

GROHOLOVÁ, Tereza: *Queen Victoria, the Empress that Changed the British Empire (200 years Anniversary in May 2019)*. – University of Economics in Bratislava. Faculty of Applied Languages; Department of Intercultural Communication. – Supervisor: PhDr. Mária Bláhová, PhD. – Bratislava: FAJ EU, 2019, 48 p.

This bachelor thesis deals with Queen Victoria, her personal background, as well as her public life as the Queen of Great Britain and Ireland. The aim of this thesis is to explain how and why Queen Victoria's reign influenced the British Empire. It concentrates on the Queen's life, on the events which impacted her personal life, as well as the events which shaped the country and influenced the public life. This bachelor thesis is divided into four chapters and several subchapters. The first chapter deals with Queen Victoria's upbringing, her childhood and the people and events which had an influence on her, before she became the Queen. The second chapter discusses her early reign, and the events of this period on the throne, and the marriage to Prince Albert. In the third chapter, we focus on the political, cultural and social events of her years on the throne. The fourth chapter deals with the period after Prince Albert's death, as well as the impacts and changes which Queen Victoria and the Victorian Era brought to the British Empire and to the world.

Key words: Queen Victoria, The British Empire, reign, Victorian Era, monarchy

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INTRODUCTION

Queen Victoria was the Queen of The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland from 1837 until her death in 1901. She was on the throne for sixty-three years, which made her the longest reigning monarch in the world history until Queen Elizabeth II surpassed her in the year 2015. Queen Victoria's reign was not only a long one, it was also a period for the British history which we call the Victorian Era, and which to this day is one of the most revolutionary periods in the history of Great Britain, with numerous changes in society, politics and culture, that the Queen contributed to. During Queen Victoria's reign, her country came to power, wealth and success, as well as achievements and innovations, which we can still admire today.

As the 200th anniversary of Queen Victoria's birth is approaching in May 2019, it is appropriate to remember the woman who was adored and celebrated during her life, and remains a subject of admiration and a symbol of British national and imperial power.

The aim of our bachelor thesis is to closely examine the reign of Queen Victoria. In our research, we would like to thoroughly look into the personal life of the monarch, as well as the events, which have shaped Britain and the world. We would like to highlight the importance and contribution of Queen Victoria to the monarchy and to the British Empire. Our aim is to point out the events and circumstances, which shaped Queen Victoria and allowed her to become the revolutionary and momentous female monarch.

Our bachelor thesis is divided into four main chapters. In the first chapter of our thesis, we examine the early life of Queen Victoria. We describe the line of succession to the throne and the childhood of the future Queen. We explain the circumstances of Victoria's upbringing and her relationships with the people that influenced her the most during her childhood. In addition, we talk about Victoria's German origin.

Within the second chapter, we describe the early years of the reign of Queen Victoria. We discuss the coronation and the circumstances in which she became the Queen. Likewise, we examine the condition in which the monarchy was at the time of Queen Victoria's succession to the British throne and the events which accompanied the first

years of her reign. In this chapter, we also describe the marriage of Queen Victoria and Prince Albert, which greatly influenced her reign, as well as the family background of Queen Victoria, in particular the nine children that they had together.

The third chapter of our research focuses on the main political, cultural and social events of the Victorian Era, such as the Great Exhibition, the Chartist movement and the Crimean War. Additionally, we closely examine the influence of Prince Albert's death on Queen Victoria, her reign and the monarchy as a whole.

In the fourth chapter, we study the years of Queen Victoria's reign after Prince Albert's death. We examine the most important events which took place in this period of Queen Victoria's rule. These events include Queen Victoria becoming the Empress of India, as well as her Golden and Diamond Jubilees to commemorate her lengthy years on the British throne. To conclude, we discuss the ways in which the Victorian Era changed the British Empire and how the period of Queen Victoria's reign contributed to the world as we know it today.

In our thesis, we have utilized several methods of research. We have studied different history books, as well as research articles and numerous relevant sources of information associated with the subject matter of our research.

1 EARLY LIFE OF QUEEN VICTORIA

In this chapter, we are going to discuss personal life of the Empress, beginning with her problematic childhood, followed by her teenage years, the time when she became the Queen of Britain. Moreover, we are going to focus on the personal relationships of the Queen with some of the most important people in Queen Victoria's early life, who all helped shape her into the greatest Empress of all time and who contributed to the events in her life. By discussing the Queen's personal life, we are going to shed a light on her upbringing and the events and people who influenced her life in some way and who impacted her in some way on her journey to become Queen Victoria, one of the greatest sovereigns, not only in the history of Britain, but the whole world.

1.1 The Line of Succession

Queen Victoria was born as Alexandrina Victoria on May 24, 1819 at Kensington Palace in London. She was the daughter of Prince Edward, Duke of Kent, and his wife, a young German widow born Princess Victoire of Saxe-Coburg-Saalfeld, and who already had two children from her previous marriage, Prince Charles and Princess Feodore (Reynolds, Matthew, 2007). Queen Victoria's father was the fourth son of King George III. Therefore, his only child, Victoria, was fifth in the line of succession to the throne. Her father died when the future Queen was only eight months old, followed shortly by King George III. King William IV was then to become King, however he died at a young age as well. All these unfortunate events led to eighteen-year-old Victoria becoming the Queen of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland in June 1837 (Pruitt, 2013).

The daughter of the Duke of Kent was named Alexandrina Victoria, after her godfather Alexander I, Czar of Russia, and her mother, the Duchess of Kent. (Reynolds, Matthew, 2007). The young princess was called *Drina*, short for Alexandrina, in her childhood (Stagl, Fahrenberger,). Her German mother called her *Vickelchen*, a nickname for her preferred name, Victoria, and after she learned how to sign her own name, Alexandrina disappeared completely, even though it still was her official name until her coronation (Weintraub, 1988).

1.2 Upbringing and Early Influencers

Since Queen Victoria's father had died very shortly after her birth, her mother, the Duchess of Kent, was left to raise their daughter by herself. Still, she was not the sole person that contributed to young Victoria's upbringing. Queen Victoria's mother received tremendous help from Sir John Conroy, who she was significantly under the influence of. Conroy lived at Kensington Palace with his wife and two daughters to work there as a 'Comptroller' for the Duchess of Kent. Together, they raised Victoria as an English princess (Reynolds, Matthew, 2007). Victoria was not fond of Conroy and resented his authority. He added to the Duchess' concerns and anxieties about Victoria's food being poisoned, and 'accidents', that were planned to get rid of the future Queen. Young Victoria had no idea what her future held for her, she was not told she was to become the Queen one day. Everyone who came into contact with her was instructed not to tell her. It was considered too soon to disturb her while she was still developing and furthermore, there was still a chance that the throne might be taken over by somebody else (Weintraub, 1988).

Sir John Conroy made it his objective to become the biggest influence in the future Queen Victoria's life. He was quite successful at influencing the Duchess of Kent, as she was quite lonely and moreover, in need of male guidance and advice (Weintraub, 1988).

During Victoria's early childhood, she became sick several times and there were many rumours that she was chronically ill and unfortunately would not survive much longer. Her succession to the throne was therefore discussed frequently. There were rumours that the Duke of Cumberland, who would become king if Victoria died, had been heard saying that *"...one delicate life only stood between him and the Crown and...he should yet be King of England"* (Weintraub, 1988, p.57).

Other than her mother and Sir John Conroy, a significant influence in her life was Princess Feodor's governess, Louise Lehzen, who became Victoria's governess as well when she was around five years old. She often read to young Victoria, and her ideal of a queen was Elizabeth I (Reynolds, Matthew, 2007). Lehzen came from a family of a pastor. She was very intelligent and quite strict, but she also showed the princess love and affection, which resulted in a devoted relationship of many years. Queen Victoria spoke of Lehzen as *"the best and truest of friends"*. (St Aubyn, 1992, p.15) In 1938, she

actually mentioned Lehzen in her diary as: “*my angelic dearest mother Lehzen, who I do so love!*” (St Aubyn, 1992, p.29)

Queen Victoria’s other father figure was her uncle Leopold, who was interested in her education and often visited Victoria. During his visits, as well as in his letters to her, he would talk and write about his travels and the world, which to an isolated child like Victoria, felt like a great refreshment. She cherished his visits and letters very much and the times spent with her uncle were some of the brightest of her childhood. Her relationship with her other uncle, King George IV was rather unsteady, mainly because Duchess of Kent did not approve of it (Weintraub, 1988).

Queen Victoria described her childhood as rather lonely and very different from a normal child’s life, she was very isolated and a sense of her high position was instilled in her from a young age. She did not have friends, even though she was allowed to play with the two daughters of Sir John Conroy. Instead, the young future Queen spent her time playing with her dog, Dash and her extensive collection of dolls (Reynolds, Matthew, 2007).

As Queen Victoria was not allowed to leave Kensington Palace without an adult and somebody was always with her, paying close attention, she had hardly any freedom and had almost no friends of her own age, it was her collection of small adult dolls who became her cherished companions. The dolls were often based upon characters from plays and operas, which she loved (Weintraub, 1988). Another great joy and source of amusement for young Victoria was theatre. She loved going to see plays, as well as operas (St Aubyn, 1992).

Even though she did feel lonely as a child, young Victoria was never left alone. She never had the room to herself. When she was old enough not to have a nurse sleep in the room with her, she slept in her mother’s room. As a result of the Duchess’ extreme fears and control over her daughter, she was not even allowed to walk up or down the stairs without holding somebody’s hand. Her days went according to a strict schedule, she had meals only at given times and she was only allowed to have tea as a very special treat (Weintraub, 1988).

When looking back on her childhood, Queen Victoria did not have a lot of positive things to say, in fact, she talked about her childhood as miserable and unhappy. According to Lord Esher, who gave her a tour of renovated Kensington Palace when she was around

eighty years old, “*She had no happy recollections of her youth except her dogs*” (St Aubyn, 1992, page 57). She mentioned how much not knowing her father and not having siblings to play with affected her and how much she missed a sense of a happy domestic life (St Aubyn, 1992).

When King George started to deteriorate and became more and more sick, the Duchess of Kent decided she needed to take control over the future Queen’s education, as nobody knew how long the King’s brother would reign and, therefore, how much time would pass until Victoria became the Queen. She had a strict schedule, which was followed every day. At 9:30 in the morning, right after breakfast, her classes began with geography, history, mathematics and drawing. After that, she had some time to play and ate lunch at one o’clock. In the afternoon, she had more lessons, English, French and German. On Wednesdays, she learned about religion. A Reverend lived at Kensington Palace and acted as Queen Victoria’s personal minister. His most important responsibility was to make her a good, faithful Christian. On Thursdays, she had dancing lessons and on Fridays, she learned about music, had singing and piano lessons. By the time Queen Victoria was eleven, she could speak German and French, with English being her first language. Even though her mother was German, she did not speak German to her child (Weintraub, 1988).

The young princess was rather stubborn and she did not enjoy her lessons very much and had quite a quick temper. Her governess Lehzen often had to persuade her to sit still through her lessons and it was rather challenging for her to tame Queen Victoria’s temperament. On the other hand, she was a very honest and straightforward child and she cherished this quality her whole life (St Aubyn, 1992).

Other than her formal education, Lehzen continued to spend her days not only keeping the princess company, but also teaching her manners. Queen Victoria was very polite and well-mannered even as a young girl, just as was expected of a young royal (St Aubyn, 1992).

At the age of eleven, Victoria finally learned about her likely future in the role of a Queen. The Duchess of Kent was asked by the Bishop of London if her daughter knew about her destiny, and was instructed to arrange for her to find out. The next day, when young princess Victoria discovered a page from a history book, which has been removed earlier and which displayed the line of succession. According to her governess Lehzen,

Queen Victoria was very surprised but confident she will be a good sovereign. In Queen Victoria's diaries, on the other hand, she mentioned the immense sadness and despair that she felt after discovering the page and how she hoped that her Aunt Adelaide, wife of her Uncle William, would have children and spare her of this role, which she really did not wish to take on (Weintraub, 1988).

1.3 German Roots

When discussing the reign of Queen Victoria, it is necessary to mention her German roots, and the fact that perhaps the most influential Queen of England was under much German influence throughout her childhood, as well as during her reign. According to St Aubyn (1992, p.15), *‘‘It would be almost impossible to exaggerate the strength of German influences on the young Princess, who had hardly a drop of English blood in her veins’’*. Her grandparents on her mother's and her father's side were both German, and we would have to trace back to the seventeenth century in order to find her British ancestors. Young Victoria was surrounded by Germans her whole childhood – her mother, her governess and close companion Louise Lehzen, her half sister Feodore, her uncle Leopold and most of their visitors. It was thanks to uncle Leopold that after her father's death, the young Victoria and her mother remained in Great Britain and she was raised to be British, as he believed she could one day become the Queen. Furthermore, it was decided that English would be Queen Victoria's first language (St Aubyn, 1992).

Victoria married her German cousin, Prince Albert, and the majority of the children they had together, married German spouses. It is significant to mention that Germany was a country very close to Britain at the time, they were allies against Napoleon and the country did not exhibit any threat to Britain (St Aubyn, 1992).

While Prince Albert was mostly liked by the Britons, there were occasions when his German origin caused some prejudice. After the royal wedding, when Prince Albert was still getting accustomed to life in Britain, and the British had to get used to his presence, it was not easy for the people not to see his foreignness. *‘‘Even the way he rode a horse appeared determinedly, even arrogantly, German’’* (Hibbert, 2001, p.128). Londoners would always mock Prince Albert's German accent in a song that they made up and would sing to ridicule him (Weintraub, 1988).

Prince Albert himself was, in fact, proud of his German roots and wished to never cease to be a true German, and a true Coburg and Gotha man (Weintraub, 1988).

In particular, after the Crimean War was declared, Prince Albert's tense and strict nature, his clothes, tastes, his expectation of authority and his interference in military affairs, in other words - his foreignness, made him a target to the press and to gossip. There were rumours that in the royal household, German was spoken more than English and that Prince Albert and the Queen talked to each other in his mother tongue. The Queen was very hurt by these accusations, and even more by the fact that foreignness and everything foreign was the object of dislike, considering her mother, husband and most close relatives and friends were not British (Hibbert, 2001).

2 QUEEN VICTORIA IN THE EARLY YEARS OF HER REIGN

In this chapter, we are going to discuss the first years of Queen Victoria's reign, the most significant events of her early reign, as well as her happy marriage to Prince Albert and the royal family. We will talk about Queen Victoria's coronation and accession to the throne of a country, which was not in a good situation at the time. We will also examine the most important events, which played a significant role in the early reign of Queen Victoria and which somehow shaped her as a sovereign.

2.1 Coronation and Accession

The future Queen spent some time before her succession travelling, visiting eminent political families, as well as seeing with her own eyes her future Kingdom. She visited Wales, Oxford, Southern England, the North and East of England. Before her first journey, the Duchess of Kent gave Victoria a notebook to write about her travels in. From that day on, Queen Victoria sat every single evening to write about her daily activities. There are only two gaps in her one hundred and twenty-one diaries, one because of an illness and one after Prince Albert's death (St Aubyn, 1992). From Queen Victoria's diaries, we can see her true character, her real personality and the events of her life from her unique point of view, which makes them extremely valuable.

When King William IV succeeded to the crown, it made Victoria the next heir. King William was Victoria's uncle from her father's side and unfortunately, her mother's relationship with him was rather problematic. She did not allow Victoria to attend King William's coronation. The Duchess of Kent was on extremely bad terms not only with him, but also with her other brothers-in-law, which did not make Victoria's succession to the throne smooth, it caused a lot of arguments and troubles for the new young Queen (StAubyn, 1992).

“Sir Robert Peel predicted in 1830 that Monarchy had become so unpopular in Britain that only a miracle could save it.... The lowest ebb, in fact, was reached during the reign of George IV” (St Aubyn, 1992, p. 62).

Moreover, the unpopularity of her predecessor made Queen Victoria that much more popular and she was already loved by her people at the beginning of her reign. Strachey (2002, chapter 3, part I), wrote: *“The nasty old men, debauched and selfish, pigheaded and ridiculous had all vanished like the snows of winter, and here at last, crowned and radiant, was the spring”*.

On the one hand, there was much positivity surrounding Queen Victoria from everyone who was happy to see her on the throne. *“The change in the monarch’s gender was an event of major importance. On the positive side, the image of a youthful unmarried queen, following a succession of gouty old Hanoverian kings, considered by so many contemporaries to be out of step with their times, was a breath of fresh air”* (Beem, 2008, p. 149).

On the other hand, though, she succeeded to the throne at a time, which was very hard for the monarchy and the country. She became Queen to a country suffering from poverty, unemployment, hunger and general unhappiness. The gap between the rich and the poor was becoming bigger and bigger, there was a threat of revolution. The Empire as a whole was in an unpleasant situation (St Aubyn, 1992). The popularity of the British monarchy was the lowest that it has ever been. Following rapid industrialization, the lower working class was established. People of all ages worked in factories, mines and mills. Wages were becoming lower and the price of bread was rising, there was extensive unemployment (Rappaport, 2003).

“Not only did the Queen succeed to a country threatened with revolution, but to an Empire in decline. Canada was in rebellion, India was governed by a private company, and, sixty years before, her own grandfather had driven his subjects in America to repudiate their allegiance” (St Aubyn, 1992, page 63).

Queen Victoria succeeded to the throne on June 20th 1837. After breakfast that day, she had a meeting with Lord Melbourne, in which they discussed her declaration which she was supposed to read at the meeting of the Privy Council later that morning. In her speech, she mentioned that even though it was very sudden and she was still very young, she was very aware of how great her new responsibility was. She left an amazing impression on the members of the Council, who all found her speech and her delivery of it really impressive (St Aubyn, 1992).

In the few weeks leading up to the King's death, Conroy tried tirelessly to keep his power over Queen Victoria, even though he knew she was going to become Queen shortly, and his power over her would not last much longer. He planned to get Queen Victoria to make him her private secretary, therefore he could supervise her every decision, which he did not succeed at, because Queen Victoria was advised to turn to Lord Melbourne as soon as she became queen (StAubyn, 1992).

The Queen banished Sir John Conroy from her Court and he retired soon after that. On July 13th 1837, the Queen moved to Buckingham Palace. She was the first Sovereign to ever live there. In her diaries, she wrote that while Kensington Palace was still her birth place and she did have some happy memories there, it reminded her mostly of the unhappiness during her childhood. She instructed for a door to be installed connecting her and Lehzen's room, while her mother lived as far away in the Palace as possible in a very small apartment (St Aubyn, 1992).

Her cramped living space was not the only issue that worried The Duchess of Kent after her daughter became the Queen. She had lost all the power and influence over her daughter and she felt like after eighteen years of looking after her only child, she suddenly had nothing to live for. She tried to get the status and rank of Queen Mother, but Queen Victoria rejected it. The Duchess blamed Lehzen and Lord Melbourne for the poor relationship that she had with her daughter, saying that they replaced her role in Queen Victoria's life. She often admonished her daughter for things such as going to the theatre, eating or drinking too much. On the other hand, the Queen and Lord Melbourne were not shy of comments about the Duchess either. They often talked about how much they disliked her and how foolish she was (St Aubyn, 1992).

The Coronation ceremony took place on June 28th, 1838. It was a massive celebration all around London, with fairs, fireworks and a huge consumption of alcohol. On the journey from Buckingham Palace to Westminster, where the ceremony took place, the Queen smiled and waved to the huge crowds. (Rappaport, 2003)

Around 400,000 visitors came into London to watch the grand event. At around ten o'clock in the morning, the Queen left for the ceremony in her carriage pulled by eight horses. The majestic ceremony took five long hours and the Queen changed her dress two times. While some problems did arise during the commemoration, the event was memorable and altogether a pleasant one for the Queen (Rappaport, 2003).

2.1.1 Lord Melbourne

Lord Melbourne was Queen Victoria's first Prime Minister in the years 1837 until 1841. He was one of the first positive male influences in the Queen's life, he guided her through political affairs and events, but also significant is the very friendly and almost familiar relationship that the Queen and Lord Melbourne shared (Flantzer, 2018).

The relationship between the Queen and Lord Melbourne was rather unique and unusually close. Lord Melbourne had a huge influence on the Queen and her political views; she really appreciated his opinions and trusted him with the most complicated issues. This was also due to the fact that in the first years of her reign, she did not understand politics very well. She was not ashamed to admit that, but her political views were strongly influenced by Lord Melbourne. Her fondness and dependence on Lord Melbourne soon grew into a very strong relationship and he somehow replaced a father figure in the Queen's life. She described how very safe she felt with him, and discussed every delicate matter with him. Lord Melbourne was very fond of the Queen as well, and took her in as his own daughter (St Aubyn, 1992).

In 1839, Melbourne expressed his intention to resign as Prime Minister, which led to the Bedchamber Crisis. The intention was for Sir Robert Peel to become the new Prime Minister (Flantzer, 2018).

2.1.2 The Bedchamber Crisis

One of the prominent political events of the early years of Queen Victoria's reign was the Bedchamber crisis. This political event reflected the changes that were happening in the society in those times. The reign of a woman, which was a big part of the gender transformations within the British society, was one of the biggest changes (Beem, 2008).

When Lord Melbourne decided to resign in 1839 as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom, he advised the Queen to appoint Sir Robert Peel as his successor. Sir Robert Peel agreed under the condition that some of the Queen's Ladies of the Bedchamber, who were her personal attendants and mostly wives and relatives of Whig politicians, will be replaced by Tory ladies, proposing that the Queen should not under any condition favour one political party or show her inclination to a party (St Aubyn, 1992).

However, due to the fact that the Ladies of the Bedchamber were the Queen's closest companions, and she would have never used them as political tools, she turned Peel's proposal down. He therefore did not agree to become the new Prime Minister and Lord Melbourne was forced to stay in office (St Aubyn, 1992).

The significance of this event, which was political as well as personal, lays in the fact that it was one of the first times that the Queen stood up for herself and showed that she was powerful. She demonstrated that even though she was a woman, her power as a Queen and her determination to exercise this power was immense.

The Bedchamber Crisis was not the only event in which the Queen decided to express her own personal opinion and it affected her people's views about their ruler. The Queen's popularity in the summer of 1838 was the greatest until her Golden Jubilee, almost a half century later. A very harsh change of the public's affection towards her occurred after a misunderstanding concerning Lady Flora Hastings, the Duchess of Kent's lady-in-writing, which was extremely publicized (St Aubyn, 1992).

Queen Victoria was extremely suspicious of Lady Flora, accusing her of pregnancy and being a spy. Unfortunately, by that time that the Queen realized she was mistaken and apologized to Lady Flora, the regrettable episode had already been made public. The Queen was accused of defamation by her people and was even booed when she was leaving Buckingham Palace (Rappaport, 2003).

The affair affected the Queen more than she was ready to admit but she made it known that she deeply regretted her quick judgement (Hibbert, 2001).

This event was significant, because it was one of the first times that the Queen was publicly criticized and her people did not like her behaviour. The publicity of this episode was vast and it truly affected people's outlook on their Queen.

2.2 The Royal Wedding and Marriage to Prince Albert

In May of 1836, Queen Victoria's Uncle Ernest and his two sons, Ernest and Albert, were invited to Kensington Palace for a visit, which is when Prince Albert and Queen Victoria met for the first time. The visit was carefully scheduled, but there was enough time for the cousins to spend time together and get to know one another. Queen Victoria wrote in her diary many praises about both of her cousins, but since the beginning

she seemed fonder of the younger brother, Albert, describing him as intelligent, merry and handsome (St Aubyn, 1992).

When the Queen and Prince Albert met for the second time in 1839, they had a connection immediately. Queen Victoria and Prince Albert got engaged only four days after his arrival in England. On February 10, 1840, they were married (Rappaport, 2003). The entries in the Queen's journal during the days around their engagement and the letters that they wrote to each other and to their friends during the days after their engagement were so full of love and happiness that there is no doubt that their affection was very deep already, such a short time after they met. The Queen called her husband *an Angel* multiple times, and described how much joy she felt when he was around (Hibbert, 2001).

The relationship that Queen Victoria and Prince Albert shared could be described as rather unusual for those times. In an era in which arranged, unhappy marriages and marriages of state were the standard, the relationship between Queen Victoria and Prince Albert stands out.

The Queen told to Albert once: *“It is you who have entirely formed me”* (James, 1983, p. 275). The prince consort acted as an incredibly important and active part in the Queen's royal duties and not only the political life, but also the cultural and civil life in Britain (Rappaport, 2003).

During the first months of their marriage, Prince Albert struggled with his idea of independence and his role in the monarchy as the Queen's husband. For the first months of their marriage, she did not allow him to take part in her duties, and not even the household duties. She was reluctant to talk to Prince Albert about politics, while he always wanted to discuss this topic during their evenings together (St Aubyn, 1992).

The Queen did wish for him to receive the status of King, but finally his legal title became Prince Consort. The marriage was generally accepted by the public, though a few thought that an older husband would be better at leading the Queen and supporting her in crucial decisions (Hibbert, 2001). When Albert's yearly allowance was decreased to £30,000 from the expected £50,000, it made the Queen furious and *“...she hated the Tories more than ever”* (Hibbert, 2001, p. 112).

What concerned Prince Albert even more was the composition of his Household, and therefore the people that would be closest to him. He had assumed that he would be

able to choose these men himself, some of them would be German, and also that they would be representatives of both the Whig and the Tory Parties. However, the Queen informed him that she and Lord Melbourne had already chosen some suitable men for him and that he should rely on them with this matter, which shows us how much power the Queen still had over her husband, and somehow explains Prince Albert's loneliness and uneasiness (Hibbert, 2001).

To a man of Prince Albert's intelligence, simply sitting at his wife's side was not enough (Rappaport, 2003). While the Queen seemed like she could not be happier, Prince Albert was quite concerned with his role in the Household, and his role in the political matters, as well as the Queen's talks with the Prime Minister, during which he was asked to leave the room. Queen Victoria accredited this behaviour to the British people not liking it when a foreigner interfered with their country's affairs, and moreover, she simply did not like to share her authority with anyone (Hibbert, 2001).

Prince Albert was a man that wanted to progressively improve, to study, to gain knowledge and who needed intellectual impulse. His determination to play some part in the political affairs of England led him to study the law, constitution and monarchy. He started to help the Queen by teaching her about impartiality and her role as the sovereign (Rappaport, 2003). After Queen Victoria started having children, it was natural for her to start spending more time with them and rely on her husband more and more with her duties. She started recognizing how good he was at helping her, how much she relied on him and how it was not necessarily bad for Prince Albert to be a part of politics, public life, duties and the reign (St Aubyn, 1992).

“Prince Albert was almost the perfect private secretary: industrious, methodical, well-informed, and always at hand” (St Aubyn, 1992, p. 152). The Queen started realizing more and more how incredibly helpful and useful it was to always have Prince Albert ready to help with any issue, whenever she needed him. The first time that he proved his usefulness was in 1840, after the Queen gave birth to their daughter and Prince Albert had to represent her at a meeting of the Privy Council, meaning he took on her duties and fully acted in her position at the occasion (St Aubyn, 1992). By 1845, Prince Albert's influence on the Queen, and therefore the events and affairs of the country, was immeasurable (Rappaport, 2003).

The Parliament realized after the first assassination attempt of 1840, that the Queen is not immortal. In fact, because she was pregnant, it was not that unusual in that time to fear that she might die during childbirth. The idea of Prince Albert becoming the Queen's Regent was discussed and after the objections of the Duke of Sussex, Victoria's uncle, were dismissed, Prince Albert became the Regent by law. The Prince saw this as a personal achievement of great importance, as he was for the first time officially recognised as an important political personality of a certain status (St Aubyn, 1992).

His knowledge of foreign affairs was made useful when the war against Russia in Crimea began. *‘‘He wrote endless memorandums on every aspect of the war, yet the only publicly acknowledged contribution he was allowed to make during this time of national crisis was the design of the newly instituted Victoria Cross’’* (Rappaport, 2003, p.18). One of the many passions of Prince Albert was art and architecture, he therefore attended and organised many exhibitions and also gave lectures. Other than that, he worked tirelessly at delivering speeches, *‘‘opening bridges and hospitals, laying foundation stones, and appearing as patron or chair at the many scientific, cultural, and academic organizations that he supported’’* (Rappaport, 2003, p. 18).

2.2.1 The Family Background

While the Queen and Prince Albert were both very busy with politics, foreign affairs and royal duties, what concerned the public eye the most, and was most observed about their life, was the royal family (Reynolds, Matthew, 2007).

Although Queen Victoria never tried to hide her reluctance to have children, and even though she expressed her great fear to have them and her wishes to never have any, her and Prince Albert had nine children together over the course of seventeen years. The Queen became pregnant for the first time very shortly after the royal wedding, and gave birth to Princess Victoria, known as Vicky (Hubbard, 2019).

Not only did Queen Victoria have strong emotional aversion to being a mother, her pregnancies also distracted her greatly from her reign. Being pregnant made her less focused on her royal duties and during these times, Prince Albert was the one taking the roles of both of them (Hubbard, 2019).

Contrary to what is usually believed about Queen Victoria, she was not a cold, distant, or unaffectionate mother to her children. As a result of her unpleasant childhood, the Queen wished to have a peaceful, happy family life. While she was less involved in their life while they were infants, she became increasingly interested and involved the older her children were (Reynolds, Matthew, 2007). To Prince Albert, family was also of great importance, and he strongly believed that their large family was there to set an example of what the monarchy stood for (Hubbard, 2019).

In spite of the fact that both Queen Victoria and Prince Albert were both busy, the Queen with her numerous royal duties and the Prince with his many activities, the most important thing, still, remained the raising of their nine children. In particular the education of the royal children was what concerned their parents the most of all (Strachey, 2002).

The idea of raising the future King was extremely significant to the Queen and Prince Albert; therefore their focus was primarily on the oldest son, Albert, the Prince of Wales, and the future King Edward VII. It was unfortunate that this child in particular, was not fond of learning. Bertie, as he was called, seemed repugnant towards any form of intellectual exercise, especially in comparison to their eldest child, Victoria, the Princess Royal, who was extremely intelligent. Although everybody tried to get the Prince to cooperate and take part in his lessons, and in spite of his father's extraordinary forethought, the Prince's feeling towards studying only became worse and he entered his adult life without a sign of positive thought towards studies (Strachey, 2002).

Their second son, Alfred, showed very similar behaviour and stance towards studying as his older brother and joined the navy at thirteen years old. The third child, Alice, was also observed similarly to her older siblings, but her four younger siblings were in a different situation. Since it was very unlikely that they would ever succeed to the throne, they were not looked after as strictly, and their upbringing was not of such importance (Reynolds, Matthew, 2007).

On January 25, 1858, their first daughter, the Princess Royal, got married to the Prussian heir to the throne, Prince Frederick William. This event marked Prince Albert's success at his aims for his oldest daughter to create a union with Prussia. After she moved to Berlin, the Queen wrote letters to her very frequently, which were full of criticism, instructions and advice about her marriage. Soon after the wedding, the Princess Royal

became pregnant and gave birth to Queen Victoria's first of numerous grandchildren, the future Kaiser Wilhelm II (Reynolds, Matthew, 2007).

In 1860, Princess Alice became engaged to Prince Louise of Hesse and a bride, Alexandra of Denmark, was chosen for the Prince of Wales. These marriages marked the beginning of an expansion which placed Queen Victoria's direct descendants on ten of the European thrones, as well as numerous other European royal houses (Reynolds, Matthew, 2007).

3 POLITICAL, CULTURAL AND SOCIAL EVENTS OF THE REIGN OF QUEEN VICTORIA

In the following chapter, we are going to observe some of the most prominent events of Queen Victoria's reign, the significance of these affairs, as well as the Queen's approach and stance towards them. We are also going to discuss the impact of Prince Albert's premature death on the Queen and her reign, as well as the nation.

Queen Victoria's actions were severely influenced by her husband, Prince Albert, at all times. In Albert's formulation, the monarchy was to be politically neutral. The aim was always to put the interests of the nation first, and while Prince Albert was well and healthy, he was the main politician in the royal family. The Queen and Prince Albert's main interest was, as far as domestic political agenda was concerned, the quest for political stability. In regards to foreign affairs, Prince Albert considered it his greatest vision and aim for Europe to be led by Germany in alliance with Britain. The Queen, naturally, shared her husband's views, and became increasingly interested in developing an international alliance (Reynolds, Matthew, 2007).

3.1 The Great Exhibition

In 1849, at a conference in Buckingham Palace, which was attended by numerous members of the Royal Society of Arts, the idea of an exhibition was discussed for the very first time (Hibbert, 2001). It was Henry Cole, an artist and an inventor, as well as an extremely versatile man, who first expressed the idea of such an event (McNamara, 2018). Later, at the beginning of the year 1850, the first meeting about the Great Exhibition took place. As President of the Royal Society of Arts, Prince Albert was one of the most important people who stood at the beginning of the development of the event (Hibbert, 2001).

The Great Exhibition was developed as an idea to show and demonstrate the fact that international cooperation was the only way to make progress in the world as a society, that the countries were not only responsible for their own well-being, but also the success of the other countries and that Great Britain was there to begin this development of

civilization (Hibbert, 2001). Prince Albert's idea was to show that Britain was the modern world leader of development and that it was running into the future (McNamara, 2018).

“The Great Exhibition has continued to be understood as a key component in the promotion of the British Empire to the globe and as instrumental in the programmes of social reform and cultural modernization developing at the time” (Auerbach and Hoffenberg, 2008, p.28). It was Prince Albert's, as well as the other organizer's intention to bring attention to the fact that Britain is the world leader and the most natural, suitable country to host such an international event that would connect the countries of the world in a way in which it has never been done before.

After much pondering, the site for the Exhibition was decided on. It was settled that the best place to host the Exhibition would be London's Hyde Park. Inevitably, there were people who predicted a disaster to happen, such as food shortages, riots, robberies, and even the outbreak of a second Black Death. After it became known to the public that a massive glass building was to be built in Hyde Park especially for this occasion, the skeptics began expressing their opinions even more, these being very doubtful and pessimistic (Hibbert, 2001).

The Queen, however, remained calm and had a very positive attitude, dismissed all the skeptic opinions and was greatly impressed by Prince Albert's plans for the great event. She remained sure that everything would go well, visited the Crystal Palace, as the glass building was called, numerous times before it was finished and after it was complete, was amused and admired the glorious construction. Even more, she admired her husband's great mind and devotion to create such an idea and bring it to life (Hibbert, 2001).

In the summer of the year 1850, the building of the Crystal Palace began. It took 2,000 men around four months to finish the massive construction (Rappaport, 2003). The building was designed by architect Joseph Paxton, and it was a work of art by itself. More than 500 metres long, the Palace was massive and occupied a big part of Hyde Park, and some trees were also included in the construction, as they were too big to move. To ensure safety of the visitors, Prince Albert would march soldiers inside the building. When it remained unharmed, the building was confirmed as safe and the Exhibition was ready to begin (McNamara, 2018).

The day of the opening ceremony was described by Queen Victoria as one of the greatest days of her life, far more exciting than her coronation day. The entry of the Queen,

Prince Albert and the Princess Royal was accompanied by people cheering, waving handkerchiefs, a choir and a military band. Queen Victoria described how incredibly grateful she felt for the day, her beautiful country and people (Hibbert, 2001).

The Great Exhibition was a fascinating display of inventions, works of art and different objects coming from numerous different countries around the world (McNamara, 2018). It was attended by over 6 million visitors, which was equal to one third of the British population (Rappaport, 2003). Among the visitors were also some outstanding, well-known figures, such as Charles Darwin, Charles Dickens or Alfred Tennyson (Walton, 2014).

The exhibits included inventions, works of art, gems and minerals, fabrics, military articles and different objects from all around the world. Perhaps the most remarkable exhibit was the Koh-I-Noor diamond, which was the largest diamond in the world (Walton, 2014).

Prince Albert's vision of a united world in a peaceful atmosphere with underlined British national pride came to life in the Great Exhibition. The venue was beautiful, the exhibits were fascinating. Moreover, an incredible amount of visitors coming to London made the accommodation businesses prosper (Rappaport, 2003). The profits made from the admission fees were used to fund the creation of Albertopolis, a museum complex which included the Victoria and Albert Museum, the Science Museum and the Natural History Museum (Walton, 2014).

3.2 The Chartist Movement

As an impressionable and inexperienced young sovereign, Queen Victoria was led to believe that Britain was in much better state than it was in reality, and that her people were much happier and fond of her than they actually were. In fact, the horrible conditions which Charles Dickens describes in his *Oliver Twist*, were unfortunately the gruesome reality (Hibbert, 2001).

The working-class movement for democratic reform in Britain first started in 1836 (Rappaport, 2003). The Chartist Movement demanded changes from the Parliament. They asked for universal manhood suffrage, secret ballot voting in elections and other democratic reforms of the parliamentary system (Cavendish, 1998). The Chartists

presented a petition to the Parliament on April 10th, 1848 (Roberts, 2011). There were supposedly over five million signatures on this petition, however it was later shown that it contained only two million, many of which were fake or bogus (Rappaport, 2003).

This event came during a turbulent time for Europe, shortly after King Louis Philippe was removed from the French throne (Rappaport, 2003). Many other European countries were going through disruptions as well. Greece, Spain, Portugal and the Habsburg Empire were experiencing their own disputes (Weintraub, 1988).

In spite of the fact that the Chartists themselves have always presented their commitment to peace and peaceful protest, the Parliament was extremely concerned with the events and the authorities believed that the movement was planning a violent revolution. As a result of the Parliament's concern and attitude towards the Chartists, the Queen with her family were hurriedly sent to the Isle of Wight to ensure their safety and protection from the protests (Roberts, 2011). The army was mobilized and nine thousand troops were prepared to defend London (Rappaport, 2003).

“From the moment that Chartism first emerged as a public movement, what seized the imagination of contemporaries were not the formally radical aims and rhetoric of its spokesmen, but the novel and threatening social character of the movement. A nation-wide independent movement of the ‘working classes’ brandishing pikes in torchlight meetings in pursuit of its ‘rights’ was an unprecedented event, and whatever Chartism’s official self-identity, contemporary observers could not refrain from projecting onto it deeper unavowed motives and sentiments” (Epstein and Thompson, 1982, p.3).

The day of the procession, after a number of speeches, the crowd started to march towards Westminster. Mr Mayne, a Police Commissioner, talked to O’Conner, the chartist leader, and they agreed on a peaceful repeal, and that their petition might be given to the House of Commons. It can be concluded that the procession ended very peacefully, but it undoubtedly brought to the Queen’s attention the state of the working class and the nation. With the assistance of Lord Ashley, it was decided that Prince Albert would visit the slums and that it was essential for the working class to see how greatly the royal family cared about the welfare of working people (St Aubyn, 1992).

3.3 Crimean War

Sadly, only three years after The Great Exhibition, an event which brought the world together and celebrated international cooperation, most of Europe found itself involved in a war (Rappaport, 2003).

The Crimean war, a military conflict that took place in the years 1853-1856 between Russia and Turkey supported by Britain and France, became a significant event in the British history. It was not only the one war that the British troops fought in during the Victorian age, with approximately 22,000 killed soldiers; it was also the first war in which the modern mass media took part. It was the first war, which we have photographs from and the first military conflict in which journalists, poets, artists and photographers played a big role (Figes, 2010). The politicians and regular citizens at home had immediate access to the graphic details of the war (Sweetman, 2001).

Although a few weeks before the outbreak of the war, the Queen was not eager to go to war to defend Turkey, she changed her mind after the Russian fleets sailed out of Sevastopol and sank numerous ships of the Turkish flotilla at Sinope in the Black Sea, killing almost four thousand sailors. On March 27, 1854, following the example of France, Britain declared war on Russia. While the military troops were marching through London, the royal family stood on the balcony of Buckingham Palace and waved them goodbye (Hibbert, 2001).

Queen Victoria took personal interest in the well-being and the condition of the soldiers, and the military affairs in general. She called the soldiers *her own* and even *her children*. She expressed how disappointed she is that she was only a woman and not a man, and she sympathized deeply with the men fighting for her country. She often wrote letters to the soldiers and to the soldiers' widows, she spent her evenings knitting mittens and scarves for them. After the wounded soldiers started returning to Britain, she visited them in hospitals. As can be seen, the Queen felt like it was her personal duty to do everything in her power to reduce the pain and suffering of her people during these extremely difficult times (St Aubyn, 1992).

Queen Victoria admired Florence Nightingale, a nurse who organized a military hospital in Scutari. The Queen envied her for her ability to take care of soldiers, save lives

and look after the heroes of their country. She even sent Miss Nightingale a letter, in which she thanked her for her service and great influence on health care (Hibbert, 2001).

We can observe the spirit of the Victorian era in the family correspondence and the use of words and phrases on the military memorials. While the war was definitely disastrous and catastrophic for the whole nation, we can also see how people were proud of the soldiers, how much they admired them, their courage and devotion. There was a great sense of pride that the soldiers' devotion and sacrifice defended Britain's national honour and defeated the evil (Sweetman, 2001).

3.3.1 The Victoria Cross

After Prince Albert's suggestion, the Victoria Cross was established. It was the highest military honour that could be awarded to a soldier in the army of Britain or the Commonwealth. The Victoria Cross was instituted in 1856 and was intended for every single soldier that fought in the Crimean war. This way the Queen wanted to honour the devotion and heroic sacrifice of her men. The medal was awarded to all men of all ranks in the army and navy (Rappaport, 2003). *“The medal would also take precedence over all other British military awards and brought with it, from 1857 on, a pension of £10 per year”* (Rappaport, 2003, p.399). The first medals of the Victoria Cross were awarded on June 26, 1857 in London's Hyde Park. It was a memorable ceremony during which the Queen handed the medal out to sixty-two men, with 12,000 members of the audience watching (Rappaport, 1992).

The Victoria Cross is to this day considered the highest award a soldier can be awarded for his service in the military. Since it was established by Queen Victoria with the help of Prince Albert, the Victoria Cross has been awarded 1355 times to 1352 soldiers, which means three people have received this remarkable award two times. There are twelve people alive, who are holders of the medal (British Legion, 2019).

Smith (2008) suggests, that the Victoria Cross established by Queen Victoria and Prince Albert was somehow connected to the idea of a hero of the Victorian era. The heroic ideal of a confident, just and manly hero was only confirmed and supported by the Victoria Cross. The existence of this heroic Victorian ideal and the establishment of the Victoria Cross influenced each other in a way. The Victorian hero was represented in the literature by authors such as George Alfred Henty, Henry Newbolt or Rudyard Kipling.

These writers offered description of men who were made heroes by dying in the war for their country, fighting, or losing a limb. Such ideas of heroes reached the people who read their works and influenced them greatly, which we can see in the people's attitudes and feelings towards the war and soldiers who fought for their country.

Queen Victoria herself believed that to die on the battlefield is the best way to die, and like we mentioned earlier, she did regret she could not fight alongside her men, and decided to institutionalize the idea of a hero through her Victoria Cross (Smith, 2008).

3.4 The Death of Prince Albert

In 1858, around Prince Albert's thirty-ninth birthday, his health started to deteriorate. Not only was he overworked, he was also suffering from mental problems, he was easily upset. The state of his physical health could be seen from his outer appearance. The contrast in their image, which could be observed when he was seen next to Victoria, was vast. (Strachey, 2002).

His complicated relationship with their eldest son, Prince Albert, and the death of the Duchess of Kent put him under a lot of mental pressure. The death of her mother overwhelmed Queen Victoria, it seemed like the disagreements of the past were completely forgotten and the Queen was left with tremendous grief and intense mourning (Strachey, 2002). Even though Prince Albert had to support his wife during this very difficult stage and deal with his personal problems at the same time, he always remained calm, kind and forgiving (Rappaport, 2003).

Approximately one year after the Duchess of Kent passed away, Prince Albert got seriously ill with rheumatism, sleeplessness and fatigue and complained of feeling thoroughly unwell. In the midst of his sickness, him and the Queen were obliged to visit their son Albert at University, where he was placed the previous year, because of his bad behaviour. Upon returning to Windsor, mentally drained, he gradually became weaker. He, however, continued to work, and when the Civil war broke out in America and it seemed like England would be drawn into the conflict, the very sick Prince wrote a memorandum about a peaceful solution to the conflict. The war was ruled out, but this memorandum was the last one that the Prince worked on (Strachey, 2002).

As the Prince's health condition continued becoming worse day by day, the Queen, although in distress, remained positive and sure that everything would be all right. Only two days after the doctors assured her he was getting better, the Prince Albert died unexpectedly on December 14th, 1861 at the age of only 42 years (Strachey, 2002).

“The impact of Prince Albert's death, coming as unexpectedly as it did, was dramatic and unprecedented. The last time the nation had mourned the loss of a member of the royal family in similar circumstances had been back in 1817 when Princess Charlotte, daughter of the Prince Regent – and heir to the throne failing the birth of any legitimate male heirs – had died shortly after giving birth to a still-born baby boy. Public grief at this tragedy had been enormous, and it was no less with the death of Albert” (Rappaport, 2019).

Undoubtedly, the impact of Prince Albert's death enormously affected the public. Not only did the nation lose its beloved monarch, the loss came very unexpectedly and in a time of political turbulence caused by the American Civil War. Although he did help ease the tension shortly before his death, the fact that England lost such an important and influential political personality was catastrophic. Shortly after the Prince's death, it was as though time had stopped in England, shops had closed, events were cancelled and the nation was covered in black. (Rappaport, 2019)

The Queen considered her husband's death the end of her happiness. The sorrow and grief, which overcame her as a result of this incredible loss, was awfully deep. She filled the pages of her diary with feelings of unfairness and cruelty that she felt. She was determined to continue living only to fulfil his wishes and plans, his views about everything (Strachey, 2002).

Moreover, it was the pivotal turning point not only in Queen Victoria's life, but also the history of her reign. The loss of the Prince at such a young age highlighted the importance of his role not only for his people, but also in politics, as a centre of affairs, as a man of prestige and tremendous influence (Strachey, 2002). It was only after he died that the nation felt a sense of guilt for never acknowledging how much he had done for the country, performing as a king, only without the title (Rappaport, 2019).

By the mid-1860s, the public, as well as her family, were all beginning to seriously worry for the Queen's mental state, as she was still refusing to attend any public events. A bitter feeling towards the monarchy was forming, as there were arising complaints that

Victoria's did nothing to justify her income. Victoria's continued behaviour sabotaged all Albert's effort to educate her about her duties as Queen. By the end of the 1860s, Victoria's abdication was brought to the table. In the midst of such public displeasure with the Queen, in 1871, the Prince of Wales miraculously recovered from an almost fatal illness. Shortly after that, the Queen attended a thanksgiving service at St Paul's Cathedral, which was her first time since Albert's death that she made a public appearance (Rappaport, 2019).

In 1872, the nation's feelings about their Queen changed once again, when an assassination attempt took place. The nation felt a sense of relief that the attempt was not successful and the people were grateful that their Queen was safe (Rappaport, 2019).

During her extremely long reign, Queen Victoria survived eight assassination attempts. Luckily, none of these attempts were successful and only one left the Queen injured. The first attempt took place only four months after the wedding and when the Queen was already pregnant with their first child. There were seven more assassination attempts after the first one, two of which were actually committed by the same man (Klein, 2017)

If any of these assassination attempts were successful, Queen Victoria's incredibly long reign could have been cut much shorter. The protection of the royal family in the Victorian era was not as great as it is today. It was considered quite normal for the Queen to sit in an open carriage completely exposed to any outside dangers, which would not be possible or allowed today for the safety of the royals (Klein, 2017).

By the end of the 1870s, the Queen was beginning to recover from her unpleasant mental state, and the familiar image of the empress as the Grandmother of Europe was starting to form. It was also the time that the term *Victorians* emerged, as her people started calling themselves by this name (Rappaport, 2019).

4 WIDOWHOOD AND QUEEN VICTORIA'S INFLUENCE ON THE EMPIRE

In the following chapter, we are going to discuss the years of Queen Victoria's reign in which she was ruling by herself, as a widow, without the support of her husband. We are going to talk about the Queen becoming an Empress of India, as well as the huge celebrations of the Queen's long and successful reign – her Golden and Diamond Jubilees. Finally, we are going to describe the impacts and changes which the Victorian Era brought to the Empire and the world.

4.1 Empress of India

In accordance with the new Imperial policy in the East, it was suggested by the Queen that she should become Empress of India. Through this political act, the importance of Britain in the world among the most powerful countries was to be emphasized. Not only that, but also Russia's continuing imperial ambitions, made the Queen and her Prime Minister Benjamin Disraeli seriously consider the idea. Moreover, after many years of the Queen developing deep interests in India, and after Britain assumed direct control of Indian affairs during the Rebellion in 1857-1858, the Queen felt a sense of responsibility and connection to the Indian subcontinent. Becoming an Empress of India seemed natural.

The process of getting the Royal Titles Bill, which would elevate the Queen to Empress of India, through Parliament, was rather challenging for Prime Minister Disraeli. Neither the Parliament, nor the press and the public were particularly enthusiastic about the idea. In 1876, the Bill was eventually passed by Parliament (Rappaport, 2003).

In 1877, Queen Victoria was officially proclaimed Empress of India. She had always expressed a sense of admiration and love for the country, its people and culture, but at this point it became even more prominent. What is more, the Queen was remarkably free from all racial prejudice, which was rather unusual for her time. She believed that people of colour should be treated as brothers, not any different (Reynolds, Matthew, 2007). Although during her life, she never visited the country, she was extremely fascinated by it.

India's affairs felt very personal to her, and her title of an Empress had great significance to the people of India (Rappaport, 2003).

The popularity of the Queen was immense, and through this act, Great Britain became established as one of the greatest imperial powers in the world.

4.2 Golden and Diamond Jubilees

In her 63 years long reign, Queen Victoria had two great celebrations to mark and commemorate not only her years on the throne, but the Queen herself. The Golden Jubilee took place in 1887, celebrating fifty years of Queen Victoria on the throne, was not seen solely as a celebration of the Queen's long life, health and reign, but also as an affirmation of Great Britain being an imperial power. It was a celebration of the great reign of the Queen who managed to restore the monarchy and keep it in peace for many long years. The Golden Jubilee was celebrated in all the distant countries of the British Empire, and soldiers from the countries were marching through London (McNamara, 2019).

The biggest, most colossal celebration took place in the course of two days, June 20 and June 21, 1887. On the day of the anniversary of Queen Victoria's succession to the throne, there was a private breakfast held with the Queen's family and later, an enormous reception took place, which was attended by various members of the European royal families, as well as diplomatic personalities. The next day, on June 21, was the day of the main celebration, with Queen Victoria travelling in her carriage through London, accompanied by an enormous procession, followed by a thanksgiving service at Westminster Abbey (McNamara, 2019).

However, the reactions to Queen Victoria's long reign were not only positive. The attitude of Irish people towards the celebrations was rather negative, protesting against the British rule over Ireland and Britain's actions during the Great Famine of Ireland in 1840 (McNamara, 2019).

Ten years later, Queen Victoria's Diamond Jubilee was celebrated, marking sixty years of her reign, and also her surpassing King George III as the longest reigning monarch in British history the year before. On June 20, 1897, the celebrations started with a thanksgiving service. On June 21, a state banquet took place and London started preparing for the huge celebrations. The next day, on June 22, 1897, after the day was declared a

public holiday, thousands of people were waiting in the streets of London for the Queen to travel through the city in the parade. The sense of national pride could be felt incredibly strongly on this day, with Union Jacks draping from balconies, flowers, soldiers and huge crowds all over the city of London. The Queen, dressed in black even on this celebratory occasion, remaining in mourning for her husband, travelled through the city in an open carriage, accompanied by representatives of all of the nations belonging to the Empire (Klein, 2012).

As described, the Golden and Diamond Jubilees were colossal celebrations, taking over the whole country and nation. Moreover, they were a symbol of national and imperial pride, of the reign of a monarch who, very unexpectedly, after becoming the Queen at a very young age, managed to restore the monarchy and preserve peace. They were celebrations of not only Queen Victoria, but also the power and dominance of Great Britain, now an imperial power, which was achieved by the admired and beloved sovereign.

4.3 Victorian Era – Impacts and Changes in Britain and the World

Even in her eighties, and after six decades on the throne, the Queen was still working and busy with her royal duties. One of her last events, in which she played a role as the Queen of Britain, was the South African War which broke out in 1899 (Reynolds, Matthew, 2007).

As the century was coming to an end, Queen Victoria's health started to seriously deteriorate. Queen Victoria died on January 22, 1901. Her death overwhelmed the nation and left her people in shock. It also marked the end of the Victorian era (Richards, 2019).

During her reign, Queen Victoria witnessed ten Prime Ministers, eighteen Presidents of the United States, sixteen Viceroy of India, France ruled by one king, one emperor and seven presidents, among many other milestones and achievements (Richards, 2019).

The reign of Queen Victoria is defined by progress in economy, industry, culture and imperial expansion. During her long period of time on the British throne, the Queen saw advances in industry, science, communication and technology, among numerous other fields (History, 2019).

Before Queen Victoria came to the British throne, the nation's population lived primarily in rural areas. As a result of the Industrial revolution, people started moving to the cities. By the end of Queen Victoria's reign, 80 % of the population were city residents, many of which lived in horrible circumstances, in slums and row housing. These people worked in almost inhumane conditions, for long hours in factories, without a break or vacation. What is more, child labour was also legal and very normal, with the child mortality rate being extremely high. Another issue was the extreme class differences and unequal growth of wealth, with the lower and middle class living in horrible conditions and poverty, and the upper class being wealthy and prosperous (Baker, 2019).

The advances in technology also brought numerous beneficial inventions, such as the building of railways, London's underground or the utilization of steam engines in factories throughout Britain. During the Victorian Era, the telegraph was invented, as well as photography, a telephone, postage stamps or a bicycle (History, 2019).

As far as politics is concerned, Queen Victoria's main objective was to maintain peace, in which she succeeded. In 1864, she decided not to intervene in the war between Prussia and Denmark. During the Crimean War and the Second Boer War, she remained very personally involved. Although the Second Reform Act of 1867 and the People's Act of 1884 transferred the power away from the sovereign, Queen Victoria remained respected, maintained influence and prestige. Queen Victoria's rule helped shape the modern idea of a British monarch as a person who is neutral in terms of politics, but preserves the status and respect of the throne (Basinger, 2018).

Although before she came to the throne, the Queen did not like politics and did not know much about it, during her reign, she became extremely knowledgeable and an essential part of the British political life. Her prime ministers respected her greatly and she was rarely taken by surprise by political developments. When it came to her objectives, the Queen acted very boldly and bravely, never getting embarrassed by her unusual actions. During the reign of Queen Victoria, the British constitutional monarchy began developing. She established considerable privileges to a monarch who was willing to be active publicly, as well as privately. When Queen Victoria came to the British throne, the popularity of the monarchy was extremely low. When she left it to her son in 1901, it was restored and renewed. The monarchy was also very different, considering Queen Victoria established the monarch's duty be occupied with politics, to be active in engaging with ministers in the business of government (Reynolds, Matthew, 2007).

During Queen Victoria's reign, the British Empire grew, until it became the largest Empire in history (Basinger, 2018). At the height of the Empire, Queen Victoria ruled over a quarter of the world's surface. By the beginning of the 20th century, Australia, New Zealand and Canada were part of the Empire, as well as South Africa and other large parts of Africa, India, South America and the Far East Oceania (Britain Magazine).

“In the waning days of the 19th century, the United Kingdom was the most powerful country on earth. The British Empire was at its imperial zenith. More than a quarter of the world's population—and a portion of every continent—was under its dominion, and ruling over it all was Queen Victoria, the woman who had worn the crown longer than any sovereign in British history” (Klein, 2012).

Queen Victoria also had a different kind of influence over Europe, as she was related to nearly all the ruling houses on this continent. The Queen's role as the Grandmother of Europe and of the Britons started forming in the 1870s. Her people thought of her as a Grandmother, considering she was on the throne for such a long time and because she was a very loved monarch, they almost had a familiar relationship towards the Queen. The majority of her people did not remember a time when Queen Victoria was not on the throne. After Queen Victoria died, she had thirty-six grandchildren and thirty-seven great-grandchildren. After most of her children got married into foreign royal families, family members of Queen Victoria ruled almost all of the European monarchies (Rappaport, 2003).

CONCLUSION

The main aim of our bachelor thesis was to examine the reign of one of the most influential monarchs in the world history, Queen Victoria. Our aim was to point out the importance and influence of this great Queen, and to highlight the events and circumstances which made Queen Victoria the great Empress that she was. We have provided information and insight into the life of Queen Victoria. We have talked about the personal life of the Queen, as well as her social, political and public life. We have described the main events of the Victorian era and the life of Queen Victoria. We have shown the contribution of Queen Victoria to the Empire through describing the events of her reign and also her outlook on these events and her attitude towards them.

Queen Victoria, the longest reigning monarch in British history until the year 2015, also gave her name to a period in history, the Victorian Era. This period is defined by progress, change and innovation. We have discussed the reasons why Queen Victoria's reign was influential and how the Queen contributed to the changes happening in those times. Through her determination to fulfil her duty as a sovereign, she changed the role of the monarch, she introduced the role of the sovereign as a person involved in politics, staying in close touch with her prime ministers. Through taking part in political decisions and always putting her country first, her main objective was preserving peace in the British Empire and the well being of her people. Queen Victoria managed to gain her popularity already while she was alive. The Britons admired her and she was a celebrated and loved Queen. Her jubilees were huge celebrations, in which the whole nation proudly took part. Her death stunned the nation and marked an end of an era.

With a significant anniversary approaching, the 200th anniversary of Queen Victoria's birth, it is important and appropriate to talk about this influential woman and to look deeper into her life and reign. When she succeeded to the British throne, the reputation of the monarchy was on the decline. In the many years of her reign, Queen Victoria managed to save the monarchy, restore its popularity and make the royal family admired again. What is more, at the end of her life, the British Empire was the largest Empire in history, with a quarter of the world under Queen Victoria's rule.

In our bachelor thesis, we wanted to highlight the importance and influence of Queen Victoria, her personal background, as well as her reign. Queen Victoria will always be remembered as the Empress that changed the country, expanded the British Empire and restored the monarchy, while gaining the admiration and respect of her people.

RESUMÉ

Témou našej bakalárskej práce je život kráľovnej Viktórie a jej vládnutie. Kráľovná Viktória panovala v Spojenom kráľovstve Veľkej Británie a Írska od roku 1837 až do svojej smrti v roku 1901. Kráľovná Viktória vládla 63 rokov, čím sa stala najdlhšie vládnucou panovníčkou v histórii až do roku 2015, kedy ju v dĺžke vládnutia prekonalala súčasná kráľovná Veľkej Británie, Alžbeta II. Počas vládnutia kráľovnej Viktórie nastalo vo Veľkej Británii, ako aj vo svete, mnoho zmien. Bola panovníčkou, ktorá svojej krajine priniesla viacero prelomových udalostí a vo veľkej miere prispela k zmene a rastu Britského impéria v 19. storočí. Obdobie, počas ktorého vládla kráľovná Viktória sa podľa jej mena nazýva Viktoriánska éra. V máji 2019 si pripomínáme významné výročie, dvesto rokov od narodenia tejto významnej ženy, preto je vhodné a dôležité priblížiť jej život a úspechy, vďaka ktorým je Veľká Británia krajinou, ako ju dnes poznáme.

Cieľom našej bakalárskej práce bolo priblížiť dôvody, prečo panovanie kráľovnej Viktórie tak výrazne ovplyvnilo Britské impérium a tiež poukázať na to, ako táto panovníčka prispela ku zmenám, ktoré sa diali počas jej vládnutia. V našej práci sme sa zameriavali na udalosti a fakty, ktoré zmenili Veľkú Britániu počas vládnutia kráľovnej Viktórie. V našej práci sa zameriavame na túto revolučnú panovníčku, jej vládnutie a osobný život. Taktiež opisujeme udalosti, ktoré mali vplyv na jej život a vládu. Bakalárska práca je rozdelená do štyroch kapitol a niekoľkých podkapitol.

V prvej kapitole bakalárskej práce sa venujeme detstvu a mladosti kráľovnej Viktórie. Opisujeme, ako sa po smrti jej otca a dvoch strýkov stala následníčkou trónu. Venujeme sa jej detstvu, ako aj ľuďom, ktorí jej raný život najviac ovplyvnili. Boli nimi napríklad jej matka, vojvodkyňa z Kentu, John Conroy alebo vychovávateľka Louise Lehzen. V tejto kapitole sa venujeme tiež opisu detstva kráľovnej Viktórie, ktoré ju v mnohom ovplyvnilo na celý život. Počas svojho detstva bola kráľovná Viktória do veľkej miery osamelá a izolovaná od spoločenského života. Bola v kontakte iba s niekoľkými ľuďmi, z ktorých ani jeden nebol jej rovesníkom. Vo svojich spomienkach kráľovná Viktória opísala svoje detstvo ako nešťastné a osamelé, čo sa neskôr odrazilo na jej túžbe po pokojnom rodinnom živote. V prvej kapitole tiež opisujeme spojitosť kráľovnej Viktórie s Nemeckom a vplyv nemeckej kultúry a jazyka na jej život.

Druhá kapitola našej bakalárskej práce sa venuje opisu začiatkov vlády Kráľovnej Viktórie. Opisujeme v nej jej korunováciu, ako aj Britániu v dobe, keď sa stala jej panovníčkou. V roku 1837, kedy sa stala kráľovnou, bolo impérium vo veľmi zlom stave. V krajine vládla chudoba, nezamestnanosť a celková nespokojnosť obyvateľov. V novej panovníčke videli ľudia nádej a kráľovná Viktória bola už od začiatku jej vládnutia medzi obyvateľmi obľúbenou panovníčkou. Po dlhej dobe, kedy Británii vládli muži, bolo vládnutie ženy výraznou zmenou. V tejto kapitole sa venujeme taktiež udalostiam, ktoré ovplyvnili ranú vládu Kráľovnej Viktórie, ako aj vzťahu s jej prvým predsedom vlády, Lordom Melbournom. Jeho vplyv na jej panovanie bol vďaka ich blízkemu vzťahu a vzájomnej dôvere značný. Táto kapitola sa zameriava aj na v tej dobe neobyčajne šťastné manželstvo Kráľovnej Viktórie s princom Albertom. Opisujeme svadbu a udalosti krátko po svadbe, kedy sa princ Albert snažil začleniť do chodu kráľovskej domácnosti a do udalostí vo Veľkej Británii. Jej manžel mal na kráľovnú Viktoriu veľmi významný dosah a vplyv. Aktívne sa podieľal na spoločenskom, politickom a kultúrnom dianí v krajine.

Tretia kapitola našej bakalárskej práce sa zameriava na udalosti vládnutia kráľovnej Viktórie, ktoré najviac ovplyvnili jej panovanie a politické, kultúrne a spoločenské dianie vo Veľkej Británii. V tejto kapitole sa venujeme udalostiam ako napríklad Krymská vojna. Tento vojenský konflikt sa zapísal do dejín ako prvá vojna modernej doby a zároveň jediná vojna, v ktorej britské vojská bojovali počas vládnutia kráľovnej Viktórie. Kráľovná pociťovala osobnú zodpovednosť za vojakov, ktorí bojovali za jej krajinu a pozorne sledovala vývoj tohoto konfliktu. Venujeme sa tiež prvej Svetovej výstave, ktorá bola obrovskou a významnou udalosťou, predstavila Britániu ako krajinu budúcnosti a zároveň poukázala na význam spolupatričnosti a vzájomnej podpory krajín sveta. V neposlednom rade sa tretia kapitola našej práce zameriava na predčasnú smrť princa Alberta, ktorá ovplyvnila nielen osobný život kráľovnej Viktórie, ale mala dopad aj na jej ďalšie vládnutie a hlboko zasiahla celý národ. Až po jeho smrti si ľudia uvedomili, aký bol Princ Albert pre krajinu dôležitý. Jeho smrť bola pre krajinu zásadnou a veľmi smutnou udalosťou.

V poslednej, štvrtej kapitole bakalárskej práce sa zameriavame na obdobie vlády kráľovnej Viktórie, ktoré nastalo po smrti jej manžela, princa Alberta. Opisujeme teda roky, počas ktorých bola kráľovná Viktória vdovou, ale aj roky, kedy bola panovníčkou najväčšieho impéria na svete a jednou z najmocnejších osobností v histórii. Opisujeme udalosti, ktoré boli pre Britániu dôležité a ktoré túto krajinu navždy zmenili. Kráľovná

Viktória sa v tomto období stala cisárovnou Indie, krajiny, ktorú celý život obdivovala a ktorej ľud a dianie boli pre ňu dôležité. Počas dlhých šesťdesiatich troch rokov vlády kráľovnej Viktórie sa udiali dve významné oslavy, ktorými si krajina pripomínala roky vládnutia a život ich kráľovnej, ako aj úspechy a veľkosť Britského impéria. Päťdesiatročné a šesťdesiatročné panovnícke jubileá boli honosné viacdenné udalosti, ktoré neoslalvovali iba ľudia v Británii, ale po celom svete, vo všetkých krajinách Britského impéria. Tieto oslavy pripomínali vládnutie kráľovnej, ktorá dokázala Britániu zmeniť na úspešné impérium a zachovať si obdiv a uznanie svojho ľudu. Vo štvrtej kapitole sa zameriavame tiež na zhrnutie zmien, prínosu a vplyvu, ktoré kráľovná Viktória priniesla Veľkej Británii. Kráľovná Viktória bola do veľmi vysokého veku aktívnou panovníčkou a zomrela v roku 1901, vo veku osemdesiatjeden rokov.

Kráľovná Viktória sa stala panovníčkou Veľkej Británie v čase, kedy v krajine vládol nepokoj, nespokojnosť, chudoba a veľké sociálne rozdiely. Počas jej dlhej vlády zažila Británia mnoho zmien a udalostí, ktoré túto krajinu formovali a menili. Kráľovná Viktória po sebe svojmu nástupcovi, kráľovi Edwardovi VII, zanechala krajinu, ktorá bola najväčším svetovým impériom, krajinu ovenčenú úspechom a slávou. Pred jej nástupom na trón bola monarchia na zostupe, jej popularita klesala. Kráľovná Viktória svojim vládnutím opäť priviedla monarchiu na výslnie a obnovila pozitívny vzťah ľudu ku kráľovskej rodine. Kráľovná Viktória sa tiež aktívne zapájala do politického diania v krajine. Vďaka svojmu manželovi, princovi Albertovi, bola vždy informovaná a výborne sa orientovala vo všetkých politických otázkach. Taktiež vždy udržiavala blízky kontakt s predsedami vlády. Jej prioritou bolo stavať svoju krajinu vždy na prvé miesto a zachovať v nej spokojnosť a mier, čo sa jej vďaka jej odhodlaniu a odvahe aj podarilo. Kráľovná Viktória bola významnou panovníčkou, ktorá obnovila monarchiu a rozšírila britské impérium, a tak bude navždy zapísaná v dejinách Veľkej Británie a sveta ako jedna z najvýznamnejších žien v modernej histórii.

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