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Peter Hitchens: The Abolition of Britain Study Guide

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PETER HITCHENS: THE ABOLITION OF BRITAIN

STUDY GUIDE, 2001-2003

Steven Alan Samson

INTRODUCTION

Study Questions

1. Why should the phrase “The People’s Princess” be frightening to an earlier generation that remembered the war? What is the “new conformism” that has taken the place of British self-confidence? [Roger Scruton refers to it as a “culture of repudiation”]. What are some of the signs and consequences of this unplanned “overthrow of the past” in Britain? How does it resemble and differ from China’s Cultural Revolution?
2. What is different about how the British people view themselves? What are the sources of this “entirely new culture” and what is its political significance? What are some of the visible differences between the world of 1965 and the culture that produced the Labour election victory in 1997? Identify some of the “trends and tremors” that began long before 1965. How has family life changed? What changes are evident in the following areas: housing, television, transportation, work and leisure?
3. How did the age of books differ from that of the cinema and television? How has language changed? How long did the cultural shadow of the Second World War linger? What did George Orwell observe of the intelligentsia of the early months of that war? What suppressed that negative current, at least temporarily? What influence began to undermine and belittle Britain’s image of herself afterwards? What was the unspeakable truth about Britain in 1941?
4. What made America different from Britain? How did Americanization bring about change in Britain? In what ways?
5. How did Thatcherism speed up the triumph of the state? What deeper failures were concealed by her triumphs?

Review

Winston Churchill
George Orwell
Margaret Thatcher

“The People’s Princess”
British self-image in 1940
public sector unionism

changes in family life
Americanization