

UNIVERSITA' POPOLARE MESTRE
CONVERSAZIONI IN LINGUA INGLESE

Talks by Michael Gluckstern at
Centro Culturale Candiani, Sala Seminariale, 1° piano

Mercoledì 30 ottobre 2019, ore 17,30

Per il ciclo Momentous times for Britain

(*Tempi di capovolgimento nel Regno Unito*)

**1846, Robert Peel succeeds in having Parliament abolish the Corn Laws and causes a lasting split
in the Tory Party.**

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una scissione definitiva del partito Conservatore.***



Sir Robert Peel

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PROGRAMMA 2019-2020

Momentous times for Britain

Tempi di capovolgimento nel Regno Unito

1846, Robert Peel succeeds in having the Corn Laws abolished and causes a lasting split in the Tory Party. <i>L'ottocento: 1846, Robert Peel riesce a far abolire le leggi sull'importazione dei cereali e provoca una scissione definitiva del partito Conservatore.</i>	Mercoledì 30 ottobre 2019
1859, Charles Darwin's <i>The Origin of Species</i> is published and the melancholy thoughts of poets Edward FitzGerald and A.E. Housman. <i>Ancora l'ottocento: 1859, la pubblicazione dell'Origin of Species di Charles Darwin e i la melancolia delle opere di poeti Edward FitzGerald e A.E. Housman.</i>	Mercoledì 20 novembre 2019
1886, Gladstone introduces the Irish Home Rule Bill which does not pass and splits the Liberal Party. And what happened in Ireland afterwards. <i>1886, il Primo Ministro Gladstone propone un disegno di legge per l'autogoverno irlandese, che non viene approvato e spacca il partito Liberale. E quello che è accaduto dopo in Irlanda.</i>	Mercoledì 18 dicembre 2019
Late 19th and early 20th centuries, drumbeats of war – but who was the enemy to be? Like the other sleepwalkers, Britain goes to war. <i>Tamburi di guerra nel tardo ottocento e primo novecento – ma chi sarebbe stato il nemico? Come gli altri sonnambuli, il Regno Unito entra in guerra.</i>	Mercoledì 12 febbraio 2020
From the late 1940s to the 1960s, Britain gives her colonies their freedom, not without problems. <i>Dalla fine degli anni 40 agli anni 60 il Regno Unito lascia libere le sue colonie, non senza problemi.</i>	Mercoledì 11 marzo 2020
The 1960s, the Swinging London phenomenon, how it came about, what some of its manifestations were and what effects it had. <i>Il novecento: gli anni 60, con i fenomeni di Swinging London, come è sorto, quali sono state alcune delle sue manifestazioni e quali sono stati i suoi effetti.</i>	Mercoledì 8 aprile 2020

Acknowledgement: Robert Peel – A Biography by Douglas Hurd, Phoenix, 2008

Douglas Hurd served in various ministerial roles - Minister of State for Europe, Secretary of State for Northern Ireland, Home Secretary and Foreign Secretary - from 1979 to 1995. The following passage is taken from the Introduction Douglas Hurd's biography of Sir Robert Peel.

“Peel (...) became a Minister as a young man of twenty-four and held office during twenty of the next thirty-four years. But the holding of office lodges no claim (*avere una carica governativa non costituisce il diritto*) to greatness. For Peel, office in itself was not an end in itself but an opportunity for action. His appetite for facts and figures was insatiable, and he was never content with what he found. But the changes he made were conservative in spirit. They were designed to protect the institutions and way of life in which he believed. The list is impressive. Peel founded the modern police, first in Ireland, then in London. He completely overhauled (*revisionò*) the criminal code, not so much in a humanitarian spirit as to bring order out of a system of cruel chaos. He reformed the revenue (*proventi*) of the Church of England. He settled the crucial border between Canada and the United States, as part of a foreign policy which preferred reasoned diplomacy to noisy bluster (*discorsi roboanti*). He established firm rules for the banking system. He removed the barriers which prevented Catholics from sitting in Parliament. In the new situation which followed the Great Reform Bill¹ of 1832 he founded the modern Conservative Party. He provided it with its first election manifesto. He was the first Prime Minister to be chosen as the result of victory in a general election (*elezioni politiche*).

“The list is long. There were few intervals of leisure. But alongside the burden of work Peel collected pictures, helped the arts and the sciences, built two large houses, shot grouse and partridges (*fagiani e pernici*) and married a beautiful wife to whom he was entirely devoted. Overarching (*sovrastante*) all this stands (*sta*) the repeal of the Corn Laws (*l'abrogazione delle leggi riguardanti il dazio sui cereali d'importazione*) and the lowering of tariffs across the whole range of imports. Peel moved slowly in this direction, until the Irish famine (*carestia*) induced him to quicken his pace. The high drama which followed brought about his own downfall (*caduta*), and the fracturing of his party.

“What drove this proud man forward into destruction? The answer was poverty. Peel was strongly moved by concern (*spinto dalla sua preoccupazione*) for what was called ‘the condition of the people’, in particular distress (*privazioni*) in the industrial north. He was not alone; many others concerned themselves with poverty.(...) But Peel was the man who acted. He worked out a clear analysis and remedy. The answer was to make food and other necessities cheaper for ordinary people, and above all for that great majority which did not have the vote. (...). With them in mind he reduced the cost of living by cutting tariffs and eventually repealing the Corn Laws. Sweeping aside sectional interests (*spingendo da parte interessi settoriali*), he argued and governed on behalf of the nation as a whole. The ideas owed much to others, but the action was Peel's.”

¹ The 1832 Reform Bill removed obvious abuses in the system for electing Members of Parliament, mainly by abolishing ridiculously small constituencies (*seggi*) that elected 1 or even 2 MPs and creating new constituencies in the new manufacturing towns, which were under-represented or in some cases not represented at all under the existing system, and by increasing the number of persons qualified to vote.

This is an extract from Peel's final speech in the House of Commons, when he knew that his Government would have to resign and that he would never be able to serve as Prime Minister again. It is a powerful passage in which Peel says that he knows that some will curse his name because they sincerely and disinterestedly believe that protection was for the good of the country and others because their own interests are affected; but that others again, especially the labouring classes, will remember him kindly.

“In relinquishing power I shall leave a name, severely censured I fear by many who on public ground deeply regret that severance not from interested or personal motives, but from the firm conviction that fidelity to party engagements – the existence and maintenance of a great party – constitutes a powerful instrument of government: I shall surrender power severely censured also by others, who from no interested motive adhere to the principle of protection considering the maintenance of it to be essential to the welfare and interests of the country.

Rinunciando al potere lascerò un nome che, temo, sarà severamente criticato da molti che, per motivi inerenti al pubblico interesse, sono profondamente dispiaciuti da questa separazione [Peel intende la separazione fra i suoi sostenitori e quelli del suo partito che sono a favore di mantenere il dazio sui cereali importati], non per motivi di interesse o personali, ma in base alla loro ferma convinzione che il rispetto delle politiche del partito – l'esistenza ed il mantenimento di un grande partito politico – costituisce uno strumento di governo vigoroso: cedendo il potere sarò severamente criticato anche da altri, i quali, non per motivi di interesse, aderiscono al principio della protezione in quanto reputano che il suo mantenimento sia essenziale per il bene e per gli interessi del paese.

“I shall leave a name execrated by every monopolist who from less honourable motives clamours for protection because it conduces to his own individual benefit; but it may be that I shall leave a name sometimes remembered with expressions of good will in the abodes of those whose lot it is to labour, and to earn their daily bread by the sweat of their brow, when they shall recruit their exhausted strength with abundant and untaxed food, the sweeter because it is no longer leavened by a sense of injustice.”

Lascerò un nome che sarà esecrato da ogni monopolista che, per motivi meno onorabili, chiede la protezione a gran voce perché conduce al suo particolare vantaggio; ma forse lascerò un nome che talvolta sarà ricordato con espressioni di ben volere nelle dimore di quelli la cui sorte è di sgobbare e di guadagnare il pane quotidiano con il sudore della fronte, nei momenti in cui recupereranno le loro forze esaurite mangiando cibo abbondante e non tassato, il cui sapore è tanto più piacevole in quanto non è più lievitato da un senso di ingiustizia.