

Social and Political Situation in Great Britain in the late 50s and 60 in the Context of The Beatles

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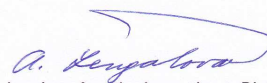
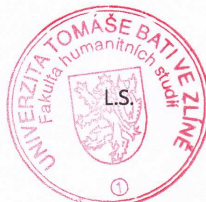
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ABSTRAKT

Tato bakalářská práce prostřednictvím klíčových politicko-spoločenských změn jednotlivých období, posouzením významu a vlivu Beatles na soudobou i budoucí podobu hudby, analýzy textů se zřetelem na specifika sledovaného období a rozborem vlivu Beatles analyzuje společenskou a kulturní situaci ve Velké Británii z pohledu právě skupiny The Beatles. Tato práce se snaží vyhodnotit zda se skupina The Beatles stala produktem dané doby.

Klíčová slova: kultura, politika, společnost, padesátá a šedesátá léta, The Beatles, mladí lidé, vliv, hudba, pop, móda

ABSTRACT

The aim of the bachelor thesis is to analyze the social and political situation in the Great Britain in the late fifties and sixties in the context of the Beatles in relation to key political and social changes. It examines the importance and influence of the Beatles on the shape of music at that time and also on the contemporary music. The thesis includes a lyrics analysis with respect to the specifics of the reported period of time, and takes into account the influence of the Beatles. The thesis tries to assess whether the Beatles became the product of the time.

Keywords: culture, politics, society, fifties and sixties, The Beatles, youth culture, influence, music, pop, fashion

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis concerns social and political changes in the Great Britain from the late 1950s and 1960s and focuses on the cultural and political atmosphere in this time, when post Victorian society which was strict and full of unyielding norms needed to be changed. The Second World War which ended in 1945 caused that the people were seeking for the more freedom, they wanted to change the society where they lived before. People, especially young people started to think more independently and this manifested itself by rebellion of young people against the opinions and lifestyle of their parents. Youth culture was inspired by the various subcultures such as Teddy Boys, Rockers or by the Hippie movement and there can be seen a change in young people's behavior and social position.

The Beatles represent a cultural phenomenon affecting the time full of immense changes. It was a time of changes, particularly related to society, and culture but also politics and economy not only in the Great Britain but all over the world. The thesis studies a period preceded to the Beatles and the period to which the Beatles belongs to. The work is examining the influence of the Beatles on culture and society. However, the opposite is also taken into account, which represents the possibility that the situation in the Great Britain at that time had an influence on the formation of the Beatles. One way or another, the Beatles are unmistakably reflected into the general atmosphere of that time. Music, lyrics and style these are the aspects, which had the effect that the Beatles became so famous. But not only these aspects made them famous, they activities besides the singing must not be forgotten. And last but not least their lyrics were not the usual melodic songs, they may be interpreted in other words which are hidden in them. The songs have hidden meanings responding to the situation of that time regarding mainly society and politics. All these factors contributed to that when considering the sixties most of the people relates them with the Beatles.

1 BACKGROUND

The changes which the Great Britain underwent in the 1950s and 1960s were crucial for its formation. These changes were significant either for the development of British society or for culture. The following years may be considered to be revolutionary for the Great Britain. Gradual economic recovery after the Second World War belongs to the changes in the fifties. The events in politics are shaped by the changes in the governing political parties. Government in the Great Britain alternated between only two political parties, The Labour Party and the Conservatives. During 50s and 60s these two political parties were changing in holding government office during the years 1945 to 1970. Conservative Party was in power in the years 1951 – 1964 and its rival the Labour Party was the leading party during the years 1964 – 1970.¹

1.1 1950s

BBC in its article called *Your 1950s moments* comments on fifties as follows:

“It was the decade of the Coronation, the end of food rationing and the Suez Crisis. And it is fondly remembered as a golden age of decency and strong community ties, although for others, it is about deprivation, chauvinism and discrimination.”²

1.1.1 Political and economic situation

As mentioned above the fifties was the post-war period and the Great Britain was struggling to recover its exhausted economy. Although Britain ended the war as one of the winning countries its financial stability suffered enormous losses. Its financial and economic situation after the war was critical, and its wealth had been severely reduced. After the Second World War the Great Britain was no longer the world power, but was overshadowed by the United States and Soviet Union.

¹ Black, Jeremy. “Overview: Britain from 1945 Onwards.” BBC.
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/british/modern/overview_1945_present_01.shtml (accessed March 3, 2011).

² BBC, “Your 1950s Moments,” BBC News,
http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/magazine/6689411.stm (accessed March 3, 2011).

After the Second World War the British imperial power collapsed. The economic and financial independence was destroyed in the forties when the Great Britain suffered defeats in Europe and Asia.³ In the decades after that the 1956 Suez Crisis worsened the financial weakness of the Great Britain.

Although the Labour and Conservative Party have always competed between each other to become the leading party in the government, they managed to share the same vision and main ideas in this post-war period. To one of these ideas belongs National Health Service, more accurately maintaining free health care.⁴ Despite the deep economic slowdown and the poor financial situation the government had embarked on a social reform program. The Great Britain tried to recover after the war but it was long and difficult process. This post-war period had impact on the people but also on the industrial economy and the market.

The Great Britain was the world's first country to create an industrial economy based on mass production in factories in the eighteenth century. From an agrarian society the Great Britain became an industrial society and the country underwent social and economic development. The principal industries were railways, coal, iron and steel. The Great Britain could be proud to have an international predominance. Therefore, was appropriately called "the workshop of the world"⁵ But on the other hand, in the nineteenth and twentieth century, slightly after the Second World War there was a decline of the British industry. This decline was caused not only by the Second World War but also by the higher numbers of industries set up in other European countries.

In the 1945 general elections took place in the Great Britain. It was the first socialist government in history. Clement Attlee became the Prime Minister during the Labour government in 1945 – 1951. According the article in BBC: "This was the most significant reforming administration of 20th century Britain."⁶ Attlee suggested how to improve the situation in the Great Britain.

³ Black, Jeremy. "Overview: Britain from 1945 Onwards."

⁴ John Randle, *Understanding Britain: A History of the British People and Their Culture* (London: Lingual House, 1986), 155.

⁵ Brian Harrison, *Britain Observed Readings in Contemporary British History and Civilisation For Students of English: 1945 to the Present Day* (Cheltenham: European Schoolbooks Hatier, 1984), 55.

⁶ BBC "Clement Attlee (1883 - 1967)," BBC History Figures, http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/attlee_clement.shtml (accessed March 3, 2011).

Under his leadership he introduced a new political program based on nationalization of industries, he preferred the economy directed by the state.⁷ He came up with the idea of Welfare State, which led to the creation of National Health Service,⁸ which his government set up and in 1946 the National Health Act and the National Insurance Act were passed into law. They provided free medical treatment and medicine for all who were sick and unemployment benefits and retirement pensions.⁹

However, the person who should be actually connected with the idea and development of Welfare State is William Beveridge. The government decided that after the Second World War the Great Britain should be rebuilt. The man who was chosen to take charge of this issue was William Beveridge. In the 1942 he published the Beveridge Report where the welfare state was outlined.¹⁰

“Beveridge's solution was to create a system of social insurance into which everyone paid to insure themselves against life's inevitable hazards – old age, disability, sickness and unemployment. He proposed a national insurance system to pay unemployment benefit, disability benefit and pensions. Every citizen would pay in; every citizen would receive their benefit as an universal entitlement.”¹¹

William Beveridge in his report stated the following:

““Want is one only of five giants on the road of reconstruction; the others are Disease, Ignorance, Squalor, and Idleness.”¹²

During the leadership of Labour government the recovery after the Second World War began. Wartime hardness slowly continued into peacetime. Controls on finance and

⁷ BBC “Clement Attlee (1883 - 1967)”.

⁸ Derek Brown, “1945-51: Labour and the Creation of the Welfare State,” Guardian, March 14, 2001.
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/politics/2001/mar/14/past.education> (accessed March 3, 2011).

⁹ Randle, 154.

¹⁰ BBC “William Beveridge (1883 - 1967),” BBC History Figures,
http://www.bbc.co.uk/history/historic_figures/beveridge_william.shtml (accessed March 3, 2011).

¹¹ Will Hutton, “My Hero William Beveridge,” Guardian,
<http://www.guardian.co.uk/books/2010/oct/23/william-beveridge-hero-will-hutton> (accessed March 3, 2011).

¹² “History,” Southend University Hospital NHS Foundation Trust,
<http://www.southend.nhs.uk/General+Information/History/> (accessed March 3, 2011).

imports were maintained by the government. The government wanted to strengthen exports to the prejudice of home consumption. Immense amount of money was sent into old industries like the coal industry, textiles and rail. But the ‘new’ industries were the sector of the British economy where the increase was noticed. The economic problems the Great Britain underwent in the post-war period were substantial. The old industries did not retain their positions and were in decline, the finances for the reconstruction programme implemented by the government were insufficient. The poor economic situation called for a solution. Some modest charges should have been established for items provided by the National Health Service which had been free before.¹³

“The generation which had won the war also wanted fun and consumerism which the government had failed to deliver.”¹⁴ In the 1951 the Conservative Party won the general election and Winston Churchill was appointed Prime Minister for the second time. In their campaign the Conservatives promised people to help them with following issues. More freedom from control and more opportunities were emphasized in the campaign. Further the solution to “the rising cost of living and housing”¹⁵ was promised.

According to Tim Bale the Conservative government of 1951 – 1955 is accepted as one of the most successful governments of the post-war period for their wise decisions about what to do but also what not to do.¹⁶ Under the Conservatives government the prosperity was growing and exports did well. With the steadily decreasing income tax and the presence of new consumer goods the boom in consumer spending appeared. One of the government’s decisions was not to pump so much money into the social programmes but to invest the money on housing.¹⁷

¹³ Randle, 155.

¹⁴ David Christopher, *British Culture: an Introduction*. (London: Routledge, 1999) 2.

¹⁵ BBC, “1951: Churchill Wins General Election,” BBC News, http://news.bbc.co.uk/onthisday/hi/dates/stories/october/26/newsid_3687000/3687425.stm (accessed March 5, 2011).

¹⁶ Tim Bale, “New Broom Is Not a Clean Sweep,” *Parliamentary Brief*, 2 March 2010, <http://www.parliamentarybrief.com/2010/03/new-broom-is-not-a-clean-sweep#all> (accessed March 5, 2011).

¹⁷ Randle, 156.

“As a result of perhaps the most distinctive Conservative policy of these years, home ownership rose from some 30 per cent to nearly 50 per cent, as the famous pledge given in 1950 to build 300,000 new homes a year was redeemed.”¹⁸

The housing boom became a considerable benefit to the economy. From 1951 to 1956 the economy enjoyed its prosperous time when the standards of living rose.

On the other hand in the 1950s were not only the economy prosperity. In 1956 the government had to face the serious crisis. The Suez question started on 26 July when Colonel Nasser, the President of Egypt, proclaim the nationalization of the Suez Canal and ended on 7 November when the governments of Israel, Britain and France, in the following order, agreed with a withdrawal.¹⁹

However a few years later, the financial difficulties after the Suez Crisis eased. As mentioned before, the great boom in consumer spending began, aided by the acceptance of buying on credit and generally encouraged by mass advertising. Advertising on commercial television caused a demand for the new appliances. The industry produced a new, better or smaller machines such as television sets, refrigerators and washing machines. People had opportunity to buy goods which they had never had the opportunity to use before.²⁰

After the Second World War and the Suez Crisis, Britain came through inconvenient times. However, it was not always easy to maintain and improve the poor financial situation in the country. The government had difficult tasks to decide. When the Conservatives succeeded the Labour Party the changes started to be more visible. The Conservatives continued in what the Labour Party started.

“During the years 1951-64 when the Conservatives were in government under Churchill (1951-5), Anthony Eden (1955-7), Harold Macmillan (1957-63) and Sir Alec Douglas-Home (1963-4) the Party's new approach made Britain more prosperous than ever before.”²¹

¹⁸ Alistair Cooke, “History of the Conservative Party,” Conservative History Group, <http://www.conservativehistory.org.uk/history.html> (accessed March 5, 2011).

¹⁹ Dominic Sandbrook, *Never Had It So Good: A History of Britain from Suez to the Beatles* (London: Brown, 2005), 67-69.

²⁰ Arthur Marwick, *British Society Since 1945* (London: Penguin, 2003), 111.

²¹ Alistair Cooke, “History of the Conservative Party”.

1.1.2 Social and cultural situation

Social and cultural changes in the post-war society in the Great Britain were inevitable. Society was young (in the late 1950s there were about four million people between the age 13 and 25²²) and richer. A post-war ‘baby boom’ caused growth in the youth population. People under the age of twenty increased from around three million in 1951 to just over four million in 1966.²³ People had higher expectations for their lives, they started to feel a challenge to enjoy their lives and make them more comfortable. Generally, the needs and demands in the society changed. Despite the economic situation of the early fifties the Great Britain became the consumer society. Within a decade the economy started to prosper.

This period is also seen as “age of television”. Although the televisions had small and black and white screen it was the television – a new appliance of that time. People went to the shops to buy a television sets to watch the coronation of the Queen Elizabeth. The coronation ceremonial was the most celebrated event of the fifties which was broadcasted on television. This is best illustrated by the statistic in Marwick’s book *British Society Since 1945*:

“In 1956 only about 8 per cent of households had had refrigerators; this rose to 33 per cent in 1962 and 69 per cent by 1971. Television sets had been a rarity in the early 1950s; but by 1961 75 per cent of families had one, and by 1971 91 per cent.”²⁴

Another change closely connected with the post-war period and growing economy was the considerable growth in the employment. The low employment level caused that people earn more money and become financially independent. The more money they had, the more they spent. This was the reason why the British market concentrated their means on young people. An immense amount of advertisements appeared in television in the fifties. The advertisements were mainly aimed to interest working teenagers. Young people had enough money, and wanted to spend it and enjoy their lives. Due to the attraction to television, radio, music, cinema and clothes caused by the advertising young people spent a

²² Christopher, 4.

²³ Bill Osgerby, *Youth Media* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 21.

²⁴ Marwick, 117.

lot of money on these things. Marwick claims that advertising in the fifties became a major new growth industry.²⁵

With the employment is partly linked the issue of the women. Society had expectations on women's behavior at home as well as in public. During the 1950s and 1960s the number of women applying for professions and being successful in them was steadily increasing. Women started to have opportunities to become lawyers or doctors.

There appeared to be a progress in a view on women in comparison with the time during the war and slightly afterwards. Women who wanted to enter the professions did not have to be single anymore. Women were no longer considered to be unable to combine their marriage and private life with the work.²⁶ A contraceptive pill happened to be another change in women's life. 'The era of the Pill' began by the introduction of the contraceptive pill at a medical conference in Tokyo in 1955. However, the pill itself started to be widely used by women in the late 1960s.²⁷

Accordingly as the social and economic conditions changes developed, education attracted attention of the Conservative government. The education system was under such pressure that changes were unavoidable. Previously not enough money was invested into education. Since the government established the Education Act in the 1944, the question of education was not fully solved. In Howard Glennerster's book *British Social Policy since 1945* there is a citation from the Eight Report of the Select Committee, whose task was to search how the public money was used, and this accurately outlines the situation in the education: "... overcrowding, lack of schools, heavy transport costs, a shortage of teachers and often rapidly deteriorating and even dangerous school buildings."²⁸ Slightly afterwards the government released more funds for education.

There came to the following changes: the teachers began to be trained for their profession; the number of oversized classes was reduced; a building programme for technical colleges began; to rise the school leaving age to 16 was recommended²⁹; higher

²⁵ Marwick, 112.

²⁶ Randle, 102.

²⁷ Susan C. M. Scrimshaw, "Women and the Pill: From Panacea to Catalyst," *Family Planning Perspectives* 13, no. 6 (November - December, 1981): 256, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/2134583> (accessed March 5, 2011).

²⁸ Howard Glennerster, *British Social Policy Since 1945* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1995), 91.

²⁹ Glennerster, 92-93.

education came into expansion³⁰; the new universities such as Essex and Kent were built and the existing ones were extended.³¹ Since the year 1945 the standards of the British education system were improved.

Television was the instrument which brought the foreign influence into British society. Through broadcasting in the television or radio people learned about American culture. People in the Great Britain liked the new music style – rock'n'roll, which was very popular in America. However, the Great Britain was not only influenced by the music, but also the lifestyle. People were influenced by the American lifestyle presented in films. British people started to admire America and loved their way of life. America was in media presented as the ideal place to live. Rock'n'Roll was adopted from America where started to be played by Bill Haley & His Comets. But Elvis Presley was the person who brought fame to rock'n'roll music in America. His was popular both by his singing and by his typical style. British rock'n'roll singers featured Cliff Richard, Billy Fury and Tomy Steele. Rock'n'roll inspired one of the subcultures called Teddy Boys who lately appropriated the music of rock'n'roll singers. The first youth cults with their own style and music emerged in the fifties. To those first subcultures belongs above mentioned Teddy Boys and Rockers.³²

Of course, Britain was influenced by the other factors, such as immigrants coming to the Britain to get a job and earn money, not only by America. When the Second World War ended and the government tried to reconstruct the devastated British economy there was a shortage of the labour. The Great Britain required workers and they were recruited mainly from the Indian subcontinent (India, Pakistan).³³ With the millions of immigrant workers the British economy grew faster than ever before, the wages rose more than by 25 percent between 1952 and 1962.³⁴

³⁰ Lynton. J. Robins and Bill Jones, *Half a Century of British Politics* (Manchester University Press: Manchester, 1997), 48.

³¹ Sandbrook, 92.

³² Sandbrook, 101-104.

³³ The National Archives, "Postwar Immigration," The National Archives, http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/pathways/citizenship/brave_new_world/immigration.htm (accessed March 5, 2011).

³⁴ Tony Cliff and Donny Gluckstein, *The Labour Party: A Marxist History* (London: Bookmarks, 1988), 227.

Harold Macmillan, the Conservative Prime Minister between 1957 and 1963 described the years of his government by these words: “Some of our people have never had it so good.”³⁵

As the fifties were passing and heading to the end, the more closely was the beginning of the sixties, and with them a new era in the Great Britain. Uncertainty slowly disappeared and people were entering into the new era full of expectations and optimism.

1.2 1960s

During the Second World War and shortly afterwards the Great Britain endured the period in its history which was severe both for the British economy and the British population. But in the fifties there were changes that make people feel more optimism, enthusiasm and something new in their lives. As the fifties were coming to the end there was beginning a new decade. It can be well expressed in words that the “change was in the air”. The sixties have been sometimes called for example the revolutionary years or the swinging sixties³⁶. With this decade are connected the key terms which reflect the situation and somehow also outlines the atmosphere of that time. The most significant terms are: consumer society, social policy, race question, equality, youth and last but not least a pop music.

1.2.1 Political and economic situation

The problem with the economy concerning the balance of payment was reappearing again. To improve the economic situation was the priority of British policy in the sixties. This feature is mainly caused by consumerism and an affluent society which is closely connected with it. Consumers had higher and higher demands which resulted in more imports than exports. The exports rate was not high enough to cover the imports. Thus, it was no longer easy to buy on credit, a tax on short-term gains was put on, and government spending was reduced. But the economic situation did not correspond with governments expectations. Government decided that an economic planning approach was required. Thus, the National Economic Development Corporation (made various indicative plans for the economy) and the National Incomes Commission (investigated pay claims) were set up.

³⁵ Marwick, 111.

³⁶ Ian Inglis, *The Beatles, Popular Music and Society: A Thousand Voices* (London: Macmillan Press, 2000), 8.

The trade unions which managed to get responsibility and authority during the Second World War did not like the government's plans and did not want to co-operate.³⁷

However, Macmillan's policy did not concern only the economic problems the government had to deal with the others like the growing immigration connected with the race question. In the post-war period the race question appeared to be increasing on importance. The presence of immigrants in the Great Britain was nothing new. Since the eighteenth century there have been black people. Lately the black immigration began to increase when government recruited labour workers from the West. The number of immigrants started to exceed by the end of fifties and in the early sixties. Thus, the government introduced restrictions.³⁸ Before the law came into force the immigrants came into Britain at the last moment. "A further 218,000 immigrants came into Britain before the Act came into force in June 1962."³⁹ The Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 controlled the immigration from all the Commonwealth countries. Immigrants coming into Britain must have applied for a working permit.⁴⁰ An Excerpt from the Commonwealth Immigration Act of 1962 says:

"An Act to make a temporary provision for controlling the immigration into the United Kingdom of Commonwealth citizens; to authorize the deportation from the United Kingdom of certain Commonwealth countries citizens convicted of offences and recommended by the court for deportation; to amend the qualifications required of Commonwealth citizens applying for citizenship under the British Nationality Act, 1948; to make corresponding provisions in respect of British protected persons and citizens of the Republic of Ireland; and for purposes connected with the matters aforesaid."⁴¹

³⁷ Randle, 172-173.

³⁸ Peter Caterall and James Obelkevich, eds., *Understanding Post-War British Society* (London: Routledge, 1994), 15.

³⁹ Randle, 162.

⁴⁰ The National Archives, "Commonwealth Immigration Control and Legislation," The National Archives, <http://www.nationalarchives.gov.uk/cabinetpapers/themes/commonwealth-immigration-control-legislation.htm> (accessed March 5, 2011).

⁴¹ Commonwealth Immigrants Act, 1962 10 and 11 Eliz. 2. Ch. 21 Arrangement of Sections, *International Migration Digest* 1, no. 2 (Autumn, 1964): 178, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3002891> (accessed March 5, 2011).

The Conservative government faced serious problems till the end of their leadership. They were slowly losing their political power. Harold Macmillan's property planning democracy (where everyone owned his own home) concept was no more popular among people. Finally, he did not manage to stimulate the British economy.⁴²

The Great Britain wished for a new style of leadership which resulted in the general elections held in 1964. The Labour Party came again to power. Harold Wilson had become a leader. When the Labour Party was elected they must faced a profound deficit and falling industry. The National Plan was supposed to develop the economy until the end of the decade. The government planned to detect what the demand was for and then manufacturing accordingly. To do so, firstly the prices and incomes should have been increased and regulated. The prices and incomes were running well ahead of productivity. The government has taken several steps to resolve the situation. Prices and Incomes Bill was introduced to delay pay or price increases. The trade unions clearly expressed their disapproval with the prices and incomes policy. This policy was disliked not only by the trade unions but the general public as well.⁴³

“There was a severe balance-of-payments crisis and overseas investors lost confidence in Britain. With reluctance, the Wilson government devaluated the pound by 14.75 per cent in 1967, hoping that this would help exports, relieve the balance-of-payments crisis and restore confidence.”⁴⁴

The trade unions held several strikes in protest. Therefore legislation against the trade unions strikes was announced by the government.

However, under Wilson's government there were not only economic problems, Wilson's government managed to shortly recover the balance-of-payments. But for the people who had been confined by lowering the incomes and by rising prices of goods, the changes for the better had been too slow. On the other hand according to the book *SDP: The Birth, Life and Death of the Social Democratic Party* written by Iwor Crewe and Anthony King the Labour government was not successful during their leadership at all.

⁴² Sandbrook, 115.

⁴³ Randle, 162-165

⁴⁴ Randle, 164.

“The annual rate of inflation doubled between 1964 and 1970 from 3.2 to 6.4 per cent. Unemployment likewise rose sharply from 1.6 per cent in 1964 to 2.5 per cent. In some ways worst of all Britain’s rate of economic growth, which Labour had come to power pledged to increase, actually fell from a fairly impressive 5.4 per cent in 1964 to a mere 1.8 per cent in 1970. Labour had been elected in 1964 and re-elected in 1966 in order to get the British economy moving again. It had signally failed in its attempt.”⁴⁵

Due to the high prices of goods general elections were called in 1970. These elections were nicknamed the ‘Shopping Basket election’.⁴⁶

Thanks to the government attitudes and regulations the policy of the sixties was called the social policy. The Labour policy started to be more occupied with the equality in the society rather than merely equality of access to state services.

“...a new social policy agenda was emerging, outside the normal range of party politics. It questioned the state's right to interfere in matters of personal concern: sexual relations between consenting couples of whatever sexual persuasion, the state's regulation of marriage and divorce, of women's right to abort a birth, the state's right to take life and its right to censor what people read.”⁴⁷

Previously cited political steps and some others will be discussed in more details in the following chapter dealing with the social and cultural situation in the Great Britain.

1.2.2 Social and cultural situation

What concerned society in the sixties, and the terms that best represent them are equality and freedom. Sixties as such has been the decade when the society and culture began to develop significantly. Together with the fifties they can be considered the most

⁴⁵ Ivor Crewe and Anthony King, *SDP: The Birth, Life and Death of the Social Democratic Party* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1995), 4. 4

⁴⁶ BBC, “18 June 1970,” BBC - Politics 97, <http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/special/politics97/background/pastelec/ge70.shtml> (accessed March 5, 2011).

⁴⁷ Glennerster, 96.

revolutionary decades of the 20th century. The changes that the sixties underwent were related to almost every area – politics, economy, culture, society.

A remarkable shift in the people's thinking has been made in the year 1967. Arthur Marwick expresses this year as “annus mirabilis”⁴⁸ which means extremely wonderful year (year of wonders).⁴⁹ The first event that has been confirmed by was The Abortion Act 1967 which made the abortion legal in the Great Britain. The Abortion Law Reform Association had been putting it forward since the thirties but unsuccessfully. The abortions were possible even before, but only for well-off women and in private clinics, on the contrary women with less money often sought other options which were mostly dangerous. The Abortion Act did not suggest that it is a right move, it extended the restricted categories of women who could be the abortion given.⁵⁰ To be accurate the Abortion Act 1967 said:

“...a person shall not be guilty of an offence under the law relating to the abortion when a pregnancy is terminated by a registered medical practitioner if two registered medical practitioners are of the opinion, formed in good faith – that the continuance of the pregnancy would involve risk to the life of pregnant women, or if injury to be physical or mental health of the pregnant women or any existing children of her family, greater than if the pregnancy were determined; or that there is a substantial risk that if the child were born it would suffer from such physical or mental abnormalities as to be seriously handicapped.”⁵¹

The second event was a Sexual Offences Act 1967 which ended the persecution and blackmailing of homosexuals. Since then the homosexual practices has not been a criminal offence, they has been decriminalized. Predominantly due to the interventions and modification of the state's right in sexual matters the homosexuals slowly managed not to feel the need to hide themselves from public and the information about abortion were publically available. Glennerster comments on the sixties as follows: “...in the field of

⁴⁸ Marwick, 147.

⁴⁹ Gary Martin, “Annus Horribilis,” The Phrase Finder, <http://www.phrases.org.uk/meanings/annus-horribilis.html> (accessed March 10, 2011).

⁵⁰ Glennerster, 157-159.

⁵¹ Abortion Act, 1967, Ch. 87, http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1967/87/pdfs/ukpga_19670087_en.pdf (accessed March 10, 2011).

morals and personal life it was the 1960s that reduced the intrusiveness of the state and extended individual freedom...”⁵²

The liberation in the Great Britain can be spotted even in a feminist movement even though it was at the beginning of its time in the sixties. A proposal to reform divorce laws was successful and The Divorce Reform Act 1969 was enacted. There were five possible evidences on which could led to the divorce – adultery, unreasonable behavior, two years’ desertion, two years’ separation if both parties consented to divorce, or five years if the divorce was contested. A state suffered another defeat in its attempts to control over individuals.⁵³ This was not the only success by which women has been able to move away from the strict Victorian codes. The sixties made casual clothes acceptable. There were mini-skirts, dresses and surprisingly even trousers being wore by women. Women had more freedom and were recognized as independent individuals.⁵⁴ Jane Lewis characterizes the sixties as: “the permissive moment emphasizing the fleeting nature of the trend”⁵⁵

When considering the changes of liberalization the development in the field of education is definitely one of them in the sixties. The big breakthrough concerns a higher education. “In the 1960s higher education doubled in size. The percentage of the age group entering full higher education rose from 7.7 per cent in 1958 to over 13 per cent in 1972.”⁵⁶ Some existing colleges were upgraded and certain colleges became full universities and new universities were built. As far as secondary education was concerned, the government policy abolished the eleven-plus examinations system and selective secondary schools. This led to the fact that new comprehensive schools were established.⁵⁷ Later on the British education, mainly the universities became prestigious and well known around the world.

Another important change that can be linked to the shift of women role in the society could have been seen due to the work not performed by the labour but the machines were invented to do so. This has led to the improvements that include the more effective housework and more time for a personal life.

⁵² Glennerster, 153.

⁵³ Glennerster, 159-160.

⁵⁴ Marwick, 148-149.

⁵⁵ Jane Lewis, *Women in Britain Since 1945: Women, Family, Work, and the State in the Post-War Years* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 64.

⁵⁶ Glennerster, 139.

⁵⁷ Marwick, 133-138.

The development in the industry has been enormous, the new industries has replaced the old ones. If considering personal or cultural life of the British people the increases in people's salaries plays a key role. The consumer society which started in the fifties, continued in the sixties in much greater extent. Consumer society was presented mainly by the youth because the advertising has been specifically directed at young people. They had time, money and also a desire to enjoy their lives.

Concentrating on the young people in the sixties, the discussions about their attitudes and behavior were widely spread. They became to be an economic phenomenon related to the new spending power. Young people were seen as a new culture. Youth of the sixties did not share the same visions about the life as the generations of their parent did. The minority of the young people did see any point in values, rules and opinions of the social life which has roots in the Victorian era. They presented themselves in a different way and protested against the conservative society. Thus, the sixties were accompanied by the tension and disagreement between the young and older generation.

With the increase in the number of crimes it was apparent that the social and cultural revolution was coming soon. "The total figures for crimes of violence went like this: 5,869 in 1955, 11,592 in 1960, 15,976 in 1964, and 21,046 in 1968."⁵⁸ As seen from the statistics the numbers were getting higher every year. The origin of the crime can be probably seen in the economic and cultural changes of the decades.

An indication of a cultural revolution in the sixties was best illustrated in the music. A transformation of the music scene was the central feature of a cultural revolution. What Marwick says about this feature is following: "It sprang out of the separate culture of youth, yet it depended upon the spending power of the affluent teenager."⁵⁹ The music industry became a massive commercial enterprise including newspapers, television and BBC. Signs of a cultural revolution can be seen in the fifties when the rock'n'roll music came to the Great Britain from America. British response to rock'n'roll music was in the form of music groups such as the Beatles. In the sixties the British popular music started to have the influence throughout the world. A big bang in British popular music appeared

⁵⁸ Marwick, 144.

⁵⁹ Marwick., 131.

mainly with the formation of the groups The Beatles (already mentioned) and the Rolling Stones.⁶⁰

The changes which the British society underwent in the sixties, whether related to the feminist movement, education or music, are appropriately characterized by Arthur Marwick: “an attack upon the cosines, the clichés, the stereotyped assumptions, and the parochialism of British society.”⁶¹

⁶⁰ Marwick, 131-133.

⁶¹ Marwick, 125.

2 YOUTH CULTURE

Having mentioned the youth culture only briefly in the previous chapter, in this chapter it will be discussed in more details to understand their involvement and influence on British culture and society in the 20th century. When considering the youth culture in the sixties, the expressions like fashion, sex, drugs, crime and last but not least the music are very common.

Young people were considered the best representatives of the sixties as they were not bound by the restrictions from the Victorian era. They became a new phenomenon highly discussed in the spheres of sociology because they became the strength of British economy. The higher standards of living together with the higher wages caused advertising and entertainment industries to focus on young people. With the young people's desire for the offered goods the Great Britain became a consumer society. Many authors like Lawrence Black, Arthur Marwick, and Matthew Hilton claim that the consumerism is in connection with an affluent society. Being influenced by watching television and films in the cinema, young people wished for a better life. They did not want any restrictions, what they wanted were to be free and enjoy their lives. This is the point where the relationships between the young and older generation came into disagreement. Arthur Marwick properly characterizes this situation as: "a gulf between the proponents of the new culture and the older generation."⁶² A tension between these two generations could not have been overlooked. Young people felt the need to distinguish themselves from the other people in the society especially from their parents. Differences appeared mainly in the perspective on life and in approach to it (for example attitudes to sex or fashion). The older generation seemed to be still bound to the "stereotyped assumptions and parochialism"⁶³ of the Victorian era. On the contrary young people wished for freedom and tolerance, they expressed their protest against the established society and tried to get away from conservatism of the Victorian era.⁶⁴ Youth did not hesitate to surprise, shock or sometimes even disgust the society with their behavior concerning especially the way of dressing, hair-cuts or the attitude towards the sex. "Shrill manners"⁶⁵ were usual.

⁶² Marwick 125

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ Marwick, 141-148.

⁶⁵ Marwick, 125.

Inspiration for the rebellion came from the fifties when Angry Young Men emerged. They were a group of intellectuals including, novelists, poets, playwrights, and philosophers primarily represented by Kingsley Amis, John Braine, John Osborne and John Wain. The key works which best captures their opinions are *Lucky Jim*, *Room at the Top*, *Saturday Night and Sunday Morning* and *the Loneliness of the Long Distance Runner*. Predominantly they despised and were dissatisfied with the established order in the British society. Through their work, they expressed their rage and disagreement.⁶⁶ Michael Ratcliffe's opinion on the Angry Young Men movement is as follows:

“The idea of a dynamic, subversive group of angry young men was hot copy for no more than nine months in 1956 and 1957, but it entered the collective memory of the British where it remains, if with diminished clarity, more than half a century later. More significantly, the AYM phenomenon reasserted the very idea of change itself, and helped to sweep clear the stage upon which the far more extensive cultural revolution of the 1960s—in fiction, theatre, fashion, music, media, politics, art, film, gender, sexuality, public satire, and the end of censorship itself—could flourish.”⁶⁷

However, the behavior of the youth was not always within the law. Between the fifties and the sixties the crime rate became much higher than the years before. This perfectly shows the statistics from Marwick which has already been cited in the previous chapter (see page 23). Marwick also says that the increase in criminality involved the whole population, but it was mostly young adults between the ages of seventeen and twenty-one, those between fourteen and seventeen, and even eight to fourteen age groups. Transgressions of delinquents have been mostly referred to as juvenile crimes instead of being recognized as regular crimes. The not very positive situation was reported by The Committee on Children and Young Persons and they had some very wise words to say about this issue:

“While life has in many ways become easier and more secure, the whole future of mankind may seem frighteningly uncertain. Everyday life may be less of a

⁶⁶ Michael Ratcliffe, “Angry young men (act. 1956–1958),” *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, <http://www.oxforddnb.com/public/themes/95/95563.html> (accessed March 18, 2011).

⁶⁷ Michael Ratcliffe, “Angry young men (act. 1956–1958)”.

struggle, boredom and lack of challenge more of a danger, but the fundamental insecurity remains with little that the individual can do about it.”⁶⁸

One of the reasons for the increases in the crime rates could have been the drug consumption. The sixties have been associated with this negative phenomenon which spread among the youth. Drug abuse rose rapidly in the sixties. The well known drugs such as cannabis, heroin or amphetamines were very popular amongst the population. Further, the drug, cannabis, became the most highly available and commonly used substance out there. But not only youth were using drugs. However, the invention of LSD and other psychedelic drugs were a significant moment for the drug culture. LSD came to the Great Britain from America, especially from the San Francisco where it was the number one drug in the underground culture. According to Marwick LSD was associated with: “the San Francisco scene, resistance to the Vietnam War, with support for peace in general, with transcendentalism, and with ‘flower-power’.”⁶⁹ It has been known that artists, whether writers, painters or musicians used various types of drug to free their mind and get inspired. Young people started to use drugs either because their idols did so or it was some kind of rebellion against the society. To the drug consumption is referred in one of the Beatles songs *Lucy in the Sky with Diamonds* (taking into account the initial letters of the nouns).⁷⁰

The youth culture is closely connected with subcultures of groups of people that were trying to distinguish themselves from others. They shared the same vision on life and had the same interests usually in music and fashion.⁷¹ To be accurate subcultures are defined as:

“Every subculture – every social group, large or small, which can be considered as in some way subcultural – carries a set of narrative about itself, some of which are generated internally while others, usually more visible and pervasive, are developed and deployed in and by the society around it.”⁷²

⁶⁸ Marwick, 145.

⁶⁹ Marwick, 143.

⁷⁰ Ibid.

⁷¹ Stuart Hall and Tony Jefferson, eds., *Resistance through Rituals: Youth Subcultures in Post-War Britain*, 2nd ed. (Abingdon: Routledge, 2006), 4-9.

⁷² Ken Gelder, *Subcultures: Cultural Histories and Social Practice* (London: Routledge, 2006), 2.

“...cultural logic tends to equate subcultures with excess or exaggeration, registering the ‘deviance’ of a subculture through a range of excessive attributes – behavior, styles and dress, noise, argot or language, consumption...”⁷³

One of the youth subcultures known as Hippies, or often called the flower-power, were also connected with features that were typical for the youth in the sixties. Hippie movement became the most widely known and influential subculture of this decade. Hippies as such came from America and then spread to Europe and the Great Britain. They rejected established institutions, protested against nuclear weapons and the Vietnam War. They wanted to find a new meaning in life. They promoted sexual revolution, peace and freedom, and seemed to have no boundaries. Drug consumption was typical for hippie people, and as LSD and cannabis were commonly used because they believed it helps to explore the consciousness. On the contrary and interestingly enough, they criticized the hard drugs that they found harmful and addictive.⁷⁴ To focus on their music, The Beatles, Janis Joplin, Jim Morrison and many others were musicians during the hippie era. In the following quotation Jim Morrison describes Hippies influence on his life.

“I like ideas about breaking away or overthrowing of established order. I am interested in anything about revolt, disorder, chaos, especially activity that seems to have no meaning. It seems to me to be the road towards freedom – external freedom is a way to bring about internal freedom.”⁷⁵

The Beatles together with the Hippie movement perfectly portray the atmosphere of the youth culture in the sixties. The style of clothing and haircuts changed significantly. They came up with new trends and brought the fashion revolution to the Great Britain. However, they influenced the British society not only in the field of fashion but also their music meant something completely different in the 20th century Britain. They expressed themselves through their songs and lyrics, where they stored their feeling and opinions. Through the song called *All You Need Is Love* is the involvement of the Hippies the best

⁷³ Gelder, 4.

⁷⁴ Mortal Journey, “The 1960’s Hippie Counter Culture Movement,” Mortal Journey, <http://www.mortaljourney.com/2011/03/1960-trends/hippie-counter-culture-movement> (accessed March 18, 2011).

characteristic. The masses of young people identified themselves with the Beatles. This phenomenon has been called “Beatlemania”.⁷⁶

The whole decade is marked by the young people and their revolt against the society. An influence that the youth culture has had was immense. To some extent, they managed to change people’s expectation from life and their attitudes to sex, fashion, marriage and others. Nevertheless, a rebellion of the young people itself was predominantly through pop music. Popular music has become increasingly more popular. Music itself changed radically in the sixties.

⁷⁵ Robert Gordon, “Morrison,” *SPIN*, August 1990, 28.

⁷⁶ Sandbrook, 754-796.

3 THE BEATLES

The general background is discussed in the previous chapters. To understand the time the Beatles belongs to – the sixties, one should know what preceded it. It is important to be aware of the fact that the sixties were the recourse to the fifties. Although the increasing optimism of the sixties was undoubtedly the result of the deep influence of different kinds of music, it was perfectly expressed through the pop music. It was ideally represented by the music of the Beatles. Aaron Copland, one of the most famous American composers of the classical music said that if one wants to learn something about the sixties, he should listen to the music of the Beatles. During the late fifties and sixties young people were excited by the music and fashion which was unique at that time. The excitement of this time spread all over the world, not only among the teenagers but among all other generations. The Beatles were so successful that nobody dared to deny it. It has been said that the Beatles have been the best pop band ever and that their music has enriched the lives of millions of people. The Beatles were without doubt closely connected with the sixties. On the one hand the optimism and the general enthusiasm are mentioned but on the other hand, Ian MacDonald describes that this carefree time became the darkest period of the 20th century.⁷⁷

It should be noted that the group as such, as we know it today did not arise from day to day. It took several years before the group consisting of the members who we know nowadays came together. The beginning of the group can be found at the end of the fifties when John Lennon and Paul McCartney met in 1957. They soon became play together. From the beginnings they played under a variety of names. John and Paul started to play at the schoolband called “Quarry Men”⁷⁸, where they began to write their own lyrics. At that time they could not imagine that they will become members of the most famous group of the history.⁷⁹

A year later in 1958 George Harrison joined Quarry Men. It took him weeks of persuading and begging to join the group, because he was too young. He was only fifteen years old when he joined them.

⁷⁷ Ian MacDonald, *Revoluce v hlavě: Beatles, jejich písně a 60. léta* (Praha: Volvox Globator, 1997), 7.

⁷⁸ Craig Cross, *Beatles-Discography.com: Day-By-Day Song-By-Song Record-By-Record* (Lincoln: iUniverse, 2004), 1.

⁷⁹ City Portal Liverpool, “The Beatles - a Brief History,” City Portal Liverpool, http://www.liverpoolcityportal.co.uk/beatles/beatles_history.html (accessed March 21, 2011).

However, he has been a better guitarist than the two of them. In the year 1960 they renamed themselves to Silver Beatles and the band travelled to Hamburg strengthened by Pete Best (drummer) and Stuart Sutcliffe became their bassist. In the same year they finally came up with the name The Beatles (in honor of Buddy Holly's band The Crickets).⁸⁰ At their beginning they played only songs taken from other musicians.

Their four tours to Hamburg have been seen as important for the involvement of the group. A journey to Hamburg arranged their first manager Allan Williams. They went to Hamburg to earn money but they ended up in an appalling club Indra, where they were forced to play almost whole night (three times a night) for the local people in the club.⁸¹ Paul McCartney said about that time the following:

“The first night we played, I think there were about two people there. But it was there that we started learning our showbusiness skills. The club was in a tourist area, and when people stopped by the door, the first thing they would look at was the price of beer, you know, to see if they wanted to come in and have a cheap drink and hear this band. As soon as we saw them at the door, we would change the number and do a better song, as a way of enticing them in.”⁸²

George Harrison referred to it as the time when they learned to live together, to adapt to what the audience wants, and they also developed their distinctive style.⁸³

Although Stuart Sutcliffe did not continue to play with the group he influenced their appearance and sense of style. His girlfriend cut him the first-ever Beatles' haircut. A few months later all of them had that haircut. During this time they also started to dress up in a black-leather gear – they had a new image of sharp boys.⁸⁴ From their second visit to Hamburg they brought this new image and also a new manager Brian Epstein, who took over the role of Allan Williams. Brian Epstein was a record trader with his own record shop in Liverpool. After he took the position of the manager he fired the drummer Pete Best to replace him by Ringo Starr because John, Paul, and George requested him to do that. They thought he did not fit to the rest of the band. The final formation of the band members

⁸⁰ Cross, 1-15.

⁸¹ Cross, 16 – 20.

⁸² Cross, 20.

⁸³ Alan Clayson, *George Harrison*, 2nd ed. (London: Faber And Faber Ltd., 2001), 74.

was: John Lennon (vocals, rhythm guitar), Paul McCartney (vocals, bass guitar), George Harrison (lead guitar, vocals), and Ringo Starr (vocals, drums). He remained the Beatles manager until he died. He was the man who discovered the Beatles and guided them through their career. His interest in the Beatles started when he was continuously asked for a record called *My Bonnie*. That is why he decided to go to their performances and later sign a contract with them. He took his role of the manager responsibly and began with the complete change in the Beatles' image. He forced them to look smart by wearing the right clothes – a suit, and do not smoke or eat during their performances.⁸⁵ Paul McCartney said about Brian Epstein: "If anyone was the fifth Beatle, it was Brian."⁸⁶

Although they were famous and successful when playing in the clubs, it showed that to be famous in the whole Britain is not as easy as it seemed to be. They had to find a way to show their style of music and enforce it among the general public. Brian Epstein tried hard to sign a contract with record companies but he has been rejected several times. He finally used all his contacts, acquaintances, and influences and then managed to join EMI Parlophone label. Under EMI they released their first single *Love Me Do*, "which charted partly because Epstein ordered a large quantity of the singles from EMI for his family's record store."⁸⁷ The second single "Please Please Me" from their first album became the number one hit in the chart. Their first album was the mix of songs written by John Lennon and Paul McCartney and also some covers were there.⁸⁸ The Beatlemania began to spread through the Great Britain.

"Beatlemania emerged on a postwar British landscape pocked with poverty and craters – the liberal scars of the socioeconomic havoc wrought by the long reach of World War II. Vast unemployment and stultifying class disjunction were in the air, but younger Britons had simply had enough. They no longer wanted to hear about the Great Depression or the Blitz. As events would so clearly demonstrate, they wanted to bathe themselves in the

⁸⁴ Cross, 33.

⁸⁵ Hunter Davies, "The Beatles," *LIFE* 65, no. 11 (September 13): 105.

⁸⁶ Martin Lewis, "Brian Epstein Autobiography," Brian Epstein, <http://www.brianepstein.com/cellarful.html> (accessed March 21, 2011).

⁸⁷ City Portal Liverpool, "The Beatles - a Brief History".

⁸⁸ Hunter Davies, "The Beatles," *LIFE* 65, no. 11 (September 13): 112.

sounds of “Please Please Me” and “She Loves You” – and they wanted to hear the words of love and possibility over and over again.”⁸⁹

The Beatles were gradually becoming a national phenomenon, despite the fact that their popularity was still confined largely to the youth. From the year 1963 when the Beatles performed in London’s Palladium, their performances involved a number of screaming fans.⁹⁰

However, the band’s success was not limited only to the Great Britain, but began to spread to neighboring European countries and even to America. After finishing the album *With the Beatles* they went to a European tour. The end of the year was marked by the Beatlemania and imitation of their style and appearance whether it was the clothing or hairstyles. Wigs in the style of the Beatles, jackets, berets, hats, sweaters, belts and shoes were often sold at that time. Portraits and signatures of the Beatles appeared on almost everything from pins, pens, ring, bags to bed-clothes and wallpapers.⁹¹

A fame and success in a show business which the Beatles have achieved had also its downsides. New and new creation of the songs, the endless travelling on the concert tours, the days and nights spent in the airplanes, almost daily concerts, stress before the concerts, crowds of screaming fans, this all have changed their personal lives. They sought to free themselves from this infinite loop by the means of drugs such as amphetamine pills, LSD or cannabis. The influence of drugs can be seen or heard in the song *Help!*. John Lennon admitted that although the song was written to an order, he had later realized that through it he really called for help. He proclaimed that it was the period when the Beatles were experiencing something that hardly came close to their wildest expectations. They smoked marijuana instead of a breakfast and it was almost impossible to speak with them because at that time they were living their lives in their own worlds.⁹²

The Beatles were coming through a difficult period in the mid-sixties, beginning with the mentally demanding world tour, problems on the island of Mykonos, and ending with the

⁸⁹ Kenneth Womack and Todd F. Davis, *Reading the Beatles: Cultural Studies, Literary Criticism, and the Fab Four* (New York: State University of New York Press, 2006), 1-2.

⁹⁰ City Portal Liverpool, “The Beatles - a Brief History”.

⁹¹ Antonín Matzner, *Beatles: Výpověď o jedné generaci* (Praha: Mladá Fronta, 1987), 116.

⁹² Matzner, 118.

Lennon's words: "We're more popular than Jesus."⁹³ American journalists turned the words into the meaning which Lennon did not mean by saying that. And so the last live concert of the Beatles took place in the San Francisco Candlestick Park on August 29, 1966.⁹⁴ This was the last performance according to Matzner. However, according to Kenneth Womack and Todd F. Davis the last, although unofficial performance was on the roof of the Apple Corps building after finishing the shooting of *Let It Be* documentary.

"On a cloudy, frigid afternoon in January 1969, the Beatles performed their final, impromptu concert on the rooftop of their London office building. In the ensuing months, they recorded their brilliant swansong *Abbey Road* (1969), saw their personal relationship dissolve into bitter litigation, and seemingly walked off their considerable global stage forever."⁹⁵

Even though the Beatles had not organized the concerts, they were still working on producing their new albums. *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* brought a real revolution to the pop music. This album is considered as the top of their work. The album has been linked to various themes and styles of the songs written by John Lennon, Paul McCartney and George Harrison which together have created an impressive whole. Paul McCartney made a comment to the creation of this album, which described their state of mind at that time.

"We were fed up with being the Beatles. We really hated that fucking four little Mop-Top byes approach. We were not boys, we were men. It was all gone, all that boy shit, all that screaming, we didn't want any more, plus, we'd now got turned on to pot and thought of ourselves as artists rather than just performers. ... Then suddenly on the plane I got this idea. I thought, let's not be ourselves. Let's develop alter egos so we're not having to project an image which we know."⁹⁶

A few months after the release of the album, happened the unexpected event which directly affected the lives of the Beatles. Brian Epstein who inherently belonged to the Beatles, was found dead in his London villa. Initially, the members of the group did not realize how

⁹³ Cross, 164.

⁹⁴ Matzner, 123.

⁹⁵ Womack, 1.

closely they were linked to him. However, Brian Epstein was the strongest bond that held the four of them together. But later, they admitted that after the Brian's death there was gradual break-up of the Beatles. Although, they released two more albums (*White Album*, *Abbey Road*) after the death of Brian Epstein, the maintenance of the band on the scene of show business was slowly approaching to the end.

In 1990 the Beatles officially broke up and a few months later their thirteenth album *Let It Be* was released. Hopes of the fans that the Beatles will come together and play ended when John Lennon was assassinated in 1980. This event contributed to the fact that the Beatles became legends.

“From their heyday as recording artist from 1962 through 1969, the Beatles enjoyed a staggering musical and lyrical leap that takes them from their first album *Please Please Me* (1963), which they recorded in a mere sixteen hours, to *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearts Club Band* (1967), the *White Album*, and *Abbey road*, which took literally hundreds of hours to complete.”⁹⁷

⁹⁶ Barry Miles, *Paul McCartney: Many Years from Now* (New York: Henry Holt & Company, 1997), 303.

⁹⁷ Womack, 3.

4 LYRICS

The previous chapter deals with the Beatles career from the beginning till their break out. It deals with their complicated beginnings before they managed to get into people's awareness, mentions the important part when they took a new manager, Brian Epstein, who did everything he could to make them successful and who had a great credit for their career success. The chapter analyses the second part of their career, when developed both the Beatles themselves (they were no longer only four young boys from Liverpool) and their music, which were becoming revolutionary.

4.1 Music inspiration

Music of the Beatles was what played the key role in the success of the band. Although, their music was influenced by other musicians, the music of the Beatles was influential, too. The success of their music was largely based on the talents of the composing couple, John Lennon and Paul McCartney, who were competing to each other when composing the lyrics. However, George Harrison also contributed with his lyrics, too.

The influences of rock'n'roll music, blues, and skiffle are heard in their music. They were inspired mainly by black musicians, Chuck Berry and the others like Smokey Robinson, Edie Cochran, Isley Brothers, Gerry Leiber, Mike Stoller, Jerry Lee Lewis, and Elvis Presley. The Beatles admired these musicians and loved their songs. In the early beginnings of their career they often played and covered their songs. To choose the musician with maybe the biggest influence on the Beatles it was Chuck Berry. His sound can be heard in many Beatles' songs. They made covers of his *Roll Over Beethoven* and *Rock And Roll Music*. The inspiration of his music is heard from *Everybody's Got Something to Hide except Me and My Monkey* and *Come Together*. Especially because of the song *Come Together* was John Lennon sued for copyright infringement. The other significant influences came from Buddy Holly and Roy Orbison. It can be heard from *Misery* and *Please Please Me* songs. This is admitted by Paul McCartney when he said: "At least the first forty songs we wrote were Buddy Holly influenced."⁹⁸ The naming of the

⁹⁸ City Portal Liverpool, "The Beatles – The Influence and Music," City Portal Liverpool, http://www.liverpoolcityportal.co.uk/beatles/beatles_influences.html (accessed March 21, 2011).

Beatles which has been already mentioned in the previous chapter is based on Buddy Holly's band, The Crickets.⁹⁹

George Harrison was interested in American rock music of Eddie Cochran and Carl Perkins. His fondness in these musicians influenced his guitar style which he derived from them (heard for example in *All My Loving* and *She's A Woman*). However, he also brought the influence of Indian sitar to the music of the Beatles. A significant contribution to that had his collaboration with Hindu musician, Sri Ravi Shankar. Hindu forms are visible in *Love You To* and *With You, Without You*, and *The Inner Light*¹⁰⁰, but according to Matzner the first song, where the sitar was used was *Norwegian Wood* from the *Rubber Soul* album.¹⁰¹

The Beatles were not only influenced by the single musicians. Interesting is for example the mutual influence with the group The Beach Boys. Paul McCartney was inspired by Brian Wilson of the Beach Boys and on the other hand Brian Wilson considered the Beatles album *Rubber Soul* influential for their album *Pet Sounds* which then inspired Paul McCartney to start developed the thought about the *Sgt. Pepper's Lonely Hearst Club Band* album.¹⁰²

Through their career the Beatles had the opportunities to meet with famous musicians to which belong Elvis Presley or Bob Dylan. After the meeting with Elvis, George Harrison commented on that as: "Seeing Elvis was like seeing the messiah arrive."¹⁰³, and also John Lennon spoke about Elvis: "Before Elvis, there was nothing."¹⁰⁴ To focus on Bob Dylan his work had immense impact on the Beatles, too. His folk music style and protests songs influenced mainly John Lennon's writing. (*You've Got To Hide Your Love Away*).¹⁰⁵

4.2 Changes and improvement of the music

Matzner appropriately comments on the development of the Beatles by the words that while the music of the Beatles was changing, the lyrics were changing and evolving, too –

⁹⁹ City Portal Liverpool, "The Beatles – The Influence and Music".

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Matzner, 178.

¹⁰² City Portal Liverpool, "The Beatles – The Influence and Music".

¹⁰³ Ibid.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

from tentative boyishly in love lyrics from the first period of their career they came to the thoughts of this world, about its hopes and fears.¹⁰⁶ When composing the lyrics they had no premeditated idea of what will follow or what chord is needed to be played. They knew that what makes their music so energetic and authentic is the lack of structures established in the pop music. When composing they were unceasingly looking for new incentives, inspiration, they were trying to experiment with everything. The good example is their experimentation with drugs which have been already mentioned. Another interesting fact was that either John, Paul or George each of them composed just by another way. Many Beatles songs are based on the random connections coming from the newspapers and from the absently played pieces of the tunes from the radio.¹⁰⁷

“Although the Beatles’ first few albums were solidly in the concept of the pop tradition, lately albums are marked by a wide range of explorations into other albums are marked by a wide range of explorations into other musical genres, as well as massive incorporation of them into rock’n’roll.”¹⁰⁸

It is noteworthy to say that the music of the Beatles is so unique, that even nowadays almost everyone can identify it.

When in the year 1966 the band announced stop of the touring it did not meant the end of the band, yet. They began to focus on their music and spent a lot of time in the recording studio. Their main aim was to produce a music they could be proud of. They no more involve so much love, thoughtlessness and desires to their lyrics.¹⁰⁹ This feature began with their later albums *Rubber Soul* and *Revolver*, but can be most recognizable in the album *Sgt. Pepper’s Lonely Hearts Club Band*, which is according to Dorůžka considered as their best album.¹¹⁰ This album was considered revolutionary for the pop music industry because there appeared features which there have not been before. One of the thing which were absolutely new was absolutely new was that the Beatles invited another musicians to play with them. They invited not only other musicians but the support of an orchestra was

¹⁰⁶ Matzner, 182.

¹⁰⁷ MacDonald, 16, 28.

¹⁰⁸ Womack, 13.

¹⁰⁹ City Portal Liverpool, “The Beatles – The Influence and Music”.

¹¹⁰ Lubomír Dorůžka, *Panoráma populární hudby 1918/1978* (Praha: Mladá Fronta, 1981), 163.

the biggest novelty.¹¹¹ The other thing was that they have made their lyrics printed at the back side of the album which inspired other band to do the same.¹¹² With the development of industries, technologies and electronics the Beatles took advantage of this progress to experiment in their music. They used the records played backwards and the disparate effects. Because of the new technologies in recording studio it was almost impossible to perform some of their song on the live performance.

The feature of the involvement, experimentation and influence of other music styles is typical for the second period of their career. There was not only change in their music but in their lyrics and appearance, too. They wear long hair which was typical for the people influenced by the hippie counterculture to which the Beatles for some time belonged to. The impact of the hippie movement can be seen in the usage of drugs, which was another typical thing connected to the hippies.¹¹³ The lyrics started to be more important. There were not so much topics about love. They began to reflect other influences to their music and lyrics. They involved some kind of social criticism and comment on the society¹¹⁴, which is discussed below.

4.3 Lyrics analysis

The most frequent and used theme of all the Beatles' songs is unquestionably love. The theme of love has repeatedly appeared in various forms throughout their work. Initially it was probably an imitation of musical influences from the United States, where was virtually enough for several times mentioned the word love, and the lyrics were almost ready. Lyrics were simple, with no serious depth. A good example is the song *Love Me Do*, which in the Great Britain became the first Beatles' hit. In the song sounds twenty-one times the word love and the entire text of two verses is repeated over and over throughout the whole song.

The only exception is an interlude:

Someone to love,
Somebody new.
Someone to love,

¹¹¹ MacDonald, 185.

¹¹² Matzner, 211.

¹¹³ MacDonald, 19.

¹¹⁴ MacDonald, 135-136.

Someone like you.

With the gradual evolution of the band, the lyrics about the love were still appearing in their repertoire. However, in the later work can be found a greater creative invention in the lyrics than in the song *Love Me Do*. This can be well illustrated by the song *All You Need Is Love*. Although this song was originally composed to order with the task to be as simple as possible, for all that a distinct difference from the early work can be seen in it. *All You Need Is Love* was for the first time heard on television during the BBC's unique project. This was the first worldwide live television program, watched by viewers from five continents.

„Only the Beatles could have been so supremely casual about appearing in the world's first television satellite link-up and being seen by a potential 400 million viewers“.¹¹⁵

Superficially, the song is about love, but the deeper meaning hidden in the lyrics reflects the atmosphere of the late sixties. The hippie movement was at its peak which is reflected in the final form of the lyrics and on the way of its creation. An anthemic atmosphere evokes the beginning of a few bars of "La Marseillaise" (The French National Anthem) which is then extraordinary visible next to the chorus. The song evokes an endless carelessness characterizing then music scene as well. In addition to the performance of the Beatles it reflects both the elated mood of the band as well as their approach to the music in the dazzling light of LSD.¹¹⁶

The next song dealing with love is the hit *Yesterday*. However, the lyrics has different meanings according to different authors, therefore the real meaning is perhaps known only to its author Paul McCartney. It took quite a long time since the inception of tunes to record of the song in the studio. Likewise, the lyrics of the song took long time to write. In the draft the singing started by the words:

Scrambled eggs,
Oh you've got such lovely legs.

¹¹⁵ Mark Lewisohn, *The Beatles: Recording Sessions* (New York: Harmony Books, 1988), 116.

¹¹⁶ Steve Turner, *Jak vznikaly písně The Beatles* (Praha: Svojtka, 2004), 169.

Finally, the song got a completely different form and not just lyrically, but the musical arrangements defied of the band's typical production. Only Paul McCartney from the four members have appeared on the record, the rest of the band have been replaced by other instruments. The musical structure gives an impressive atmosphere perfectly underlining the mood of the song. Although this is one of the biggest hits, compared to the normal practice a single was released only in the United States. In the Great Britain the song appeared only on the studio album which McCartney commented: „We never released ‘Yesterday’ as a single because we didn’t think it fitted our image. In fact it was one of our most successful songs“.¹¹⁷ The whole song has a slightly gloomy mood, the author seems to hesitate over himself:

Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away,
Now it looks as though they're here to stay.

The third verse then begins with the words:

Yesterday, love was such an easy game to play,
Now I need a place to hide away.

One of the reasons for the song's popularity is a universal nature of the lyrics which can be interpreted in different ways and applied to various life situations. The strength of this song obviously lies in its ambiguity. Peculiar to the song is that the song is said, to be inspired by the death of McCartney's mother, or that deals with the breakup with former girlfriend, Iris Caldwell.¹¹⁸

The Beatles of course did not write lyrics only about love. The lyrics of their songs often captured the spirit of the times, and even themes follow a reality in the British society. For example, *Lady Madonna* song deals with the situation of single mothers, a phenomenon in the British Isles which was until then relatively unknown and taboo. The number of young mothers who had to care for the child themselves sharply rose thanks to

¹¹⁷ Lewisohn, 12.

¹¹⁸ Turner, 103.

the hippie inspired sexual revolution in the sixties. McCartney in his lyrics gives honour to the courage of young women in the difficult life situation which underlines the couplet:

Lady Madonna, children at your feet,
Wonder how you manage to make ends meet.
Who finds the money when you pay the rent?
Did you think that money was heaven sent?

Although the members of the group never publicly stand any particular political beliefs and their lyrics purposely did not connect with the politics and their songs directly referred to the then-political reality. Just like that it is in the song *Taxman*. An ironic song alludes to the tax policy of the government. The song was written by the guitarist George Harrison after he discovered that in the highest tax bracket is payable on each pound of 19 shillings (by then monetary system pound had 20 shillings).¹¹⁹ In the original version of the song sounded even the name of Harold Wilson and the former Conservative leader Edward Heath.

To the relax atmosphere of the sixties inherently belonged drugs, one of the symbols of the changes in the society. The Beatles themselves had a positive approach to a variety of drugs, and so quite logically, some of their lyrics touch this topic. This is best illustrated by the song *Doctor Robert*, which was based on a story about a New York doctor who prescribed mysterious "vitamin" injections. According to Paul the song was meant as a joke about the guy who was able to cure everyone from everything with all those pills and sedatives. He just kept New York on drugs.¹²⁰

In addition to those examples the Beatles wrote lyrics about various events related to their lives. The themes of the songs were quite diverse. However, they brought by their music themes which appeared rarely or not at all at that time. The texts were one of the essential things by which the Beatles influenced their fans, development of pop music and to some extent the society. As has been previously written the Beatles went through a development, which was reflected both in their music, appearance, and in lyrics. They

¹¹⁹ MacDonald, 166.

¹²⁰ Turner, 128.

wanted to be proud on their work and that is why the lyrics became the important part of their music.

5 INFLUENCE

Through the previous chapters is displayed the social, cultural and political background which is significant for the understanding of the atmosphere at the late fifties and sixties. The chapters about the Beatles and the analysis of their lyrics refer to the cultural phenomenon which the Beatles became during the sixties. It discussed their career and lyrics with references to the events and situations happening at that time. The aim of this chapter, as the title outlines, is to through the appropriate analysis of the previous chapters focus on the influence which the Beatles brought to the society during their career and to some extent also nowadays. As written before the success of the Beatles was so dizzying that was rarely questioned. It is said about them that they were the best band ever and that their music has enriched the lives of millions of people.¹²¹ It is therefore easily inferred that if their music had certain influence, the band and its members had to have some influence on the situation and society in that period of time.

According to MacDonald, the sixties were the rebellion against the restrictions of the obsolete forms of the fifties. This period was represented by revolt of the young power – they are described as youth, youth culture or counterculture. John Lennon, Richard Starkey (Ringo Starr), Paul McCartney, and George Harrison were born in Liverpool in the first half of the forties thus they became the generation of the youngest members of the British teenagers. They were representatives of the time when could be seen the biggest generation gap between the older (parents) and the young generation (their children) of the teenagers.¹²² The attempt of the young people to distinguish from other people especially from the generation of their parents could be seen on the Beatles members as well. In their early year, mainly during their performing in Hamburg and slightly after, they had the appearance of bad boys in leather jackets often smoking cigarettes when playing.

The Beatles with their uncanny similarity to one another and by their talking when they were quickly taking turns in speaking they introduced several key terms into the cultural lexicon of the sixties: “mass character” defined by the working class, informality, lively skepticism from the street, and simultaneousness that in every way reversed the convention of the priorities.¹²³ The sixties was the period in the history with the changes related to the

¹²¹ MacDonald, 7.

¹²² MacDonald, 13.

¹²³ MacDonald, 20.

political and social sphere. But the changes which appeared in the lifestyles of the people were impossible to miss. Emergence of the youth cultures and growing popularity of pop music were significant changes happening in the sixties. Suitable examples are the events surrounding the Beatles. Michael R. Frontani in his book *The Beatles: image and the media* wrote that it is: "... apparent in the growing acceptance of countercultural style and fashion into the mainstream, including longer hair on men, bell-bottom pants, or tie-dyed shirts."¹²⁴

The Beatles were regarded as the some king of the teen idol which influenced the culture in the Britain but also whose influence spread to America and to other countries like the Czech Republic. They became considered as leaders of a grouping aware of its own status as a social, economic and political force. The mainstream press and media described them as the leaders of the youth culture at that time.¹²⁵ From the beginning of their career they were promoted to the mind of people as the teen idols. The songs which belong to their initial products were supposed to appeal mainly to the opposite sex – to young female audience. This production has been represented by the easy love songs – P.S. I Love You, *I'll Get You, Please Please Me* or *I Want To Hold Your Hand*.¹²⁶

The magazine Billboard has described the situation and the atmosphere around the Beatles as follows:

"With the Beatles, however, there were changes beyond those of music. With them the English brought new hairstyles, clothing, manners of speech and, some will even say, a new morality. None of those things, however affected the industry as much as the marketing changes..."¹²⁷

The appearance of the Beatles members played the key role in their promotion and image. Brian Epstein made an attempt to make the band more commercial by the changes of their appearances, which includes their mop-top haircuts and suits which were lately typical for them. The Beatles influenced thousands of fans through their music and appearance. To certain extent they looked and spoke like their fans (because they were born to the working

¹²⁴ Michael R. Frontani, *The Beatles: Image and the Media* (Jackson: University Press of Mississippi, 2007), 8.

¹²⁵ Frontani, 17.

¹²⁶ Frontani, 50.

¹²⁷ Alan W. Livingston, "Alan Livingston, Capitol's Former President When The Beatles Came Calling. Recalls The 'British Invasion'," *Billboard* 86, no. 18 (May 4, 1974): 54.

class families in Liverpool) many people started to identify with them and they became more and more popular around the Britain and also worldwide. As can be seen, their biggest impact was on fashion (which has been already mentioned in The Beatles chapter). People copied their hairstyles called mop-tops and got themselves cut to this hairstyle. Their suits, boots and glasses were the inspiration for the clothing in the sixties mainly when the Beatlemania reached its highest peak. But the fashion was not the only influence they made on the society. The other influences which are needed to be mentioned are language, marketing and social issues.¹²⁸

In the Janne Mäkelä's book *John Lennon Imagined: Cultural History of a Rock Star* is explained that the Beatles were closely identified with the Liverpool region. Although they were the members of the famous pop group they were not ashamed of their origin. In the book are cited John Lennon's words stated in the early seventies: "Yes, well, the first thing we did was to proclaim our Liverpoolness to the world and say 'It's all right to come from Liverpool and talk like this.'" ¹²⁹ Through his speech it is clear that they had no intention to hide their background. They were proud of being from the lower and working class. Their Scouse accent was the feature that made them "special". It was their provincial image and vernacularity that started to be popular about them. In the book is referred to their accent: "The Beatles accent was often ridiculous and regarded as a kind of impenetrable gobbledygook, especially by the southerners." But on the other hand:

"The accent expressed their distance from the cultural "center" and identified them as "remote", but it also proclaimed change and the potential for renewal. Ultimately, the accent came to represent something fresh in English culture. ... upper and middle class youth had began to accept the music, the clothes and also the language of the urban lower classes."¹³⁰

The accents of lower and working class became popular and people, especially young people, started to copy the accent because they wanted to speak as the Beatles did. Moreover, to that contributed their openness during their first interviews which seemed

¹²⁸ George R. Goethals, Georgia Jones Sorenson and James MacGregor Burns, eds., *Encyclopedia of Leadership*, vol. 1 (London: Sage, 2004), 86.

¹²⁹ Janne Mäkelä, *John Lennon Imagined: Cultural History of a Rock Star* (New York: Peter Lang, 2004), 45.

¹³⁰ Mäkelä, 45-46.

funny and openly just because it was spontaneous and unpredictable, unlike the earlier musicians who had ordered what and how to answer to the questions. On the contrary the Beatles respond to journalist's questions by impromptu jokes.¹³¹

“The concept of the Beatles meant long hair, electric guitar, and Liverpool accent.”¹³²

The Beatles impact has accelerated mainly because of the rising popularity of the media in the Great Britain. The technological development of the fifties and sixties helped them to become known worldwide. By the end of the sixties almost every family had a television set. But not only televisions, people had also the radios. In the televisions and radios where broadcasted programmes about music and the interviews with the musicians.

“The Fab Four played live to a worldwide audience of 400 million via satellite during one single concert in 1967. This broadcast is also considered the first major high-tech link up ever accomplished.”¹³³

That was the way how the Beatles became widely known. The music of the Beatles captures the mood of the sixties. People have gone through the difficult times after the war and were seeking for something new, they wished for happiness and love and needed a new approach which appeared in the music and the lyrics of the Beatles.¹³⁴

To speak about the music of the Beatles a technology need to be considered. In their later production they often used the technology that allowed them to experiment with the music. They first used a feedback, machines' language style, as types of guitar and drums. They used a four track typing, stereo technology and other technological development in the music industry. By their usage of modern technology in recording studio, they inspire other musicians to follow their example. The famous singer Bob Dylan commented on their music: “They were doing things nobody was doing. Their chords were outrageous,

¹³¹ MacDonald, 26-27.

¹³² Womack, 9.

¹³³ Larry Lange, *The Beatles Way: Fab Wisdom For Everyday Life* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 2001), xiii.

¹³⁴ Alan W. Livingston, “Alan Livingston, Capitol's Former President When The Beatles Came Calling. Recalls The 'British Invasion',” *Billboard* 86, no. 18 (May 4, 1974): 54.

just outrageous, and their harmonies made it all valid... I knew they were pointing the direction of where music had to go."¹³⁵

In their beginnings they refresh the rock'n'roll rebellion of the fifties through covers of Chuck Berry's, Little Richard's, and Larry Williams songs, and a huge inspiration came from Elvis Presley. Thanks to these inspirations they through their songs brought black culture, style and feeling in the white culture. As Ian MacDonald writes they helped to accelerate the "forbearance revolution".¹³⁶ They contributed to change the general view on black people and their culture. People started to be more open to their culture.

The impact of the cultural phenomenon which the Beatles became in the sixties cannot be denied. Whether their influence was imperceptible or substantial, there was some. In the Larry Lange's book *The Beatles Way: Fab Wisdom for Everyday Life* are stated some achievements and influences the Beatles made: the Beatles have sold over one billion records worldwide; thirty years after the Beatles disbanded, the finance magazine Forbes placed the group third in its annual table of entertainment profit-makers, behind only movie and sport moguls Tom Cruise and Tiger Woods; the Beatles single-handedly brought the rock concert tour industry to new, international heights by performing at sports stadiums and touring worldwide; the group was the first to deploy the music-video format as a promotional tool, now the de fact music-industry standard popularized by MTV."¹³⁷

¹³⁵ Anthony Scaduto, *Bob Dylan*, 5th ed. (London: Helter Skelter, 2001), 203.

¹³⁶ MacDonald, 15.

¹³⁷ Lange, xi-xii.

CONCLUSION

This bachelor thesis analyzes the social and political situation in the Great Britain in the late fifties and sixties in the context of the Beatles on the basis of key political and social changes. To understand the situation and atmosphere at that time it was necessary to explain the background consisting of the social, cultural and political situation including the changes and development during the post-war period taking into account the fifties and the sixties. Therefore, the involvement and influence of the youth culture on British culture and society was discussed in the second chapter. The Beatles themselves belonged to the first generation of the youth culture and represented the time when the generation gap was the strongest. It is demonstrated that the youth rebellion manifested mainly through the pop music, including the music of the Beatles music. The songs were used as a medium for expressing the feelings and opinions representing the atmosphere of the time.

The Beatles chapter and the analysis of their lyrics referred to the cultural and the social phenomenon they had become during the sixties. Their career and the lyrics are discussed with the reference to the most significant events happening at that time.

The thesis is examined the influence of the Beatles on culture and society. However, it takes into account the possibility that the situation in the Great Britain at that time had an influence on the formation of the Beatles. After the Second World War, the Great Britain was prepared for the changes that were necessary. The British economy and society sought for the changes. These changes which took place in the post-war period were represented by the phenomenon of youth culture which is probably never going to appear again. The reason for that is its close link to the end of the war and to the atmosphere and changes happening in the Great Britain. This can be observed through the formation of the Beatles and the fact, that their revolutionary music has become a phenomenon.

Based on these facts the thesis came to the conclusion that to some extent the Beatles were the product of that time. It has also been clearly demonstrated that the band was one of crucial factors which formed the society.

In fact it could be a mere coincidence which helped four young boys from Liverpool to become popular music band and had an influence on the British society. They became a phenomenon which is absolutely essential for an accurate description of the situation in the Great Britain of the late fifties and sixties. The legacy of the Beatles can be observed in the contemporary music as well, and will surely be an inspiration for other generations to come, even though two of the band members have already passed away.

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