**THE BRITISH EMPIRE**

During the reign of Queen Victoria Great Britain had an enormous and powerful empire. We can say that the imperial activity begun in the half part of the 16th century when Elizabeth I and later James I conquered Ireland. Elizabeth I ruled over the most part of India with the trading institution of British East India Company. In 1857 there was a revolt because Indians wanted the independence from Britain. The revolt was repressed and Queen Victoria was crowned Empress of India by the British prime minister in the same year. The empire also included Australia, New Zeeland, some territories of China, Africa, Asia and Burma that was conquered in 1886. Britain founded his colonies in Africa in the 19th century. In this period also other European countries as France started spreading in Africa. Britain conquered Egypt (and the Suez Canal), Sudan and South Africa where it had to fight successfully against Dutch settlers and Boers for the control of diamond and gold mines. Lots of different cultures and people belonged to the British Empire and Britain ruled over them in different ways and using different laws. In the 19th century there were lots of national movements for independence and Britain tried to maintain the control also by the use of army. National movements were also an expression of racism. Britain justified the empire claiming that it was a necessary institution to civilize other inferior people. Queen Victoria wanted to be crowned Empress of India by the British prime minister in 1887 because she wanted to have the same title of the emperor of Germany and Russia. When Elisabeth I died, her son Edward VII became Emperor of India. The title continued until Indian independence in 1947.

**BRITISH IMPERIAL TRADING ROUTES**

Britain could create such an enormous empire because it had the supremacy on the seas. It always protected its ocean trading. It had several safe harbours in Africa that permitted it to reach India in a safe way. Britain could reach China from its bases in Malaysia , from the Falkland Islands and other ports in the Pacific ocean. Hong Kong permitted to Britain to *have* influence in the “Middle Kingdom”. Britain became interested in Mediterranean when the Suez Canal was opened in 1869 which made easier reaching Indian. Britain conquered Egypt in 1882, Cyprus and some territories of Somalia. It also controlled the transoceanic rotes. Its power was so big that the Greenwich Mean Time was adopted to fixing world time zones. Lots of British people and Christian missionaries moved to colonies. This contributed to spread English culture in the territories of the empire.

**CHARLS DARWIN AND EVOLUTION**

In the second part of the 19th century Britain became the most powerful country in the world but it started to have ideological conflicts. There were lots of changes in science, religion and industrialization. In 1859 Charles Darwin published his theory of evolution in *On the Origin of Species* and the theory of natural selection. This theory was in contrast with what was said in the Bible. The philosopher applied Darwin’s ideas to social life saying that so economic competition was the same as natural selection and that poor didn’t deserve compassion.