greater powers than they really did; GB economic decline had profound causes rooted in the past and politicians could do little to change it; followed from this that GB did not have wealth or power to dominate European diplomacy; appeasement was a sensible policy- politicians, naturally, attempted to avoid another war in which GB had everything to lose and little to gain; critics concentrate too much on the role of individuals and ignore real problems the government had to face; journalists are in business of making snap, black and white judgements: historians aspire to deeper understanding based on more evidence; the new policies of being able to research without the 50 year rule has greatly benefited historians now, and the 30-year rule has been much more fair in establishing judgements for historians; much fuller studies of inter-war politicians now been made- leading figures emerge as multi-dimensional characters, no longer dwarfed by great figures of Victorian/Edwardian eras; nor does inter-war period, from modern perspective, seem such a time of failure: maintenance of parliamentary democracy was considerable achievement; no general election after 1918 did less than 70% electorate turn out to vote; public retained confidence in democracy; in contrast, Europe was failing in this aspect- democracy collapsed in Italy, Germany, Austria and elsewhere; many Europeans must have admired resilience and stability of British political institutions at a time of unparalleled upheaval elsewhere.

Conclusion

- Possible to view period in sharply contrasting ways, and to be ‘for’ or ‘against’; also possible to seek to give balanced account, but not easy, for many myths survive about these years; one idea = ‘hungry 30s’ which is actually no more than very partial truth; figures such as the 3million given by George Orwell were the worst, and the figure was not below this, not the normal or average; too often worst has been depicted as the norm; 20s and 30s did see hunger marches and depressed areas and no one should ignore them or human tragedy they represented, but decades saw boom as well as bust, especially in growth in new consumer goods industries; many people’s lives substantially improved between the wars- in a sense, several Englands, and each must be given due consideration; difficulty is all too easy to mistake the part for the whole; all too often inter-war years have been caricatured; on aspect been to magnify out of proper proportion, so other aspects have been unjustly minimised or ignored; e.g. politics, which produced National Government and led to its overwhelming victory in 1931 too of course, attracted attention, leading historians to overlook political fermentation which energised left and right and produced British Union of fascists and Socialist League; inter-war years not just a wasted period of acute political controversy in which GB became mass democracy, especially in some senses, especially terms of political personnel; Liberals went into decline, Labour achieved electoral support to form 2 minority governments between wars and Tories seemed to go on forever in long period of domination by Baldwin saw intense strife within the party; 1939 is of great importance in development of modern British policy- much of modern world war, to, lot we cannot write about political history; politics not a self-contained political game- speeches and votes, party intrigues and honours, egotism of those who climb to the top of a greasy pole; more it is like this, more a political system becomes decadent; true democracy is government ‘for’ as well as ‘of’ and ‘by’ the people; business of politics should be to obtain/retain power in order to grapple with problems that beset a country and therefore politicians need to be men of vision and humanity as well as competent legislators and administrators.

The Policy of Appeasement: Basics

Appeasement is “the policy of settling international quarrels by admitting and satisfying grievances through rational negotiation and compromise, thereby avoiding the resort to an armed conflict which would be expensive, bloody, and possibly dangerous.” The word “appeasement” has been used as a synonym for cowardice since the 1930s and it is still used in that sense today as a justification for firm, often armed, action in international relations.

The aftermath of the First World War

- Chamberlain’s subsequent policy of appeasement emerged out of the weakness of the League of Nations and the failure of collective security: The League of Nations was set up in the aftermath of the First World War in the hope that international cooperation and collective resistance to aggression might prevent another war. Members of the League were entitled to the assistance of other members if they came under attack. The policy of collective security ran in parallel with measures to achieve international disarmament and where possible was to be based on economic sanctions against an