

Министерство образования Республики Беларусь

Учреждение образования «Полоцкий государственный университет»

**BRITISH STUDIES**

**СТРАНОВЕДЕНИЕ ОБЪЕДИНЕННОГО  
КОРОЛЕВСТВА ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНИИ  
И СЕВЕРНОЙ ИРЛАНДИИ**

**ПЛАН-КОНСПЕКТ ЛЕКЦИЙ**

для студентов 5-го курса

специальностей 02 03 07 «Немецкий язык», «Французский язык»

(английский язык – дополнительная специальность)

Новополоцк 2003

УДК 802.0

Одобен и рекомендован к изданию методической комиссией историко-филологического факультета

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План-конспект лекций предназначен для аудиторной работы и самостоятельной подготовки по дисциплине «Страноведение Объединенного Королевства Великобритании и Северной Ирландии» для студентов 5-го курса специальностей «Немецкий язык» и «Французский язык».

## LECTURE 1

### PHYSICAL AND HUMAN GEOGRAPHY OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

#### Topics for discussion:

1. The Formation of the UK; Its National Flag and Symbols.
2. Position, Territory and Structure of the British Isles.
3. Surrounding Seas and Coastline.
4. Physical Structure and Relief.
5. Rivers and Lakes.
6. Population, Ethnic Minorities, Languages Spoken in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland.

#### The Formation of the UK; Its National Flag and Symbols

The formation of the UK took centuries, and a lot of armed struggle was involved. The Celts who had first arrived in Wales in the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries BC were defeated by the invading Romans in 430 AD. The Saxons pushed the Welsh further and further towards the west until, in the 8<sup>th</sup> century a Saxon king called Offa built a long ditch to keep them out of England. This ditch is 167 miles (269 km) long and follows the line of much of today's border for most of the way. Then came the Normans who built enormous castles to protect themselves from attacks from the west. The Welsh fought for many years to keep their freedom. The Welsh King, Llewellyn the Great, tried to unite his people against the English, but his grandson, Llewellyn the Last, was finally defeated in 1282. In 1301 Edward I of England made his eldest son Prince of Wales. (This tradition has been kept until the present day and in 1969 a similar ceremony took place again. The present Queen made his eldest son, Charles, Prince of Wales). In 1536 King Henry VIII of England united England and Wales under one Parliament through a special law. Since the 16<sup>th</sup> century Wales has been governed from London and in 1978 the Welsh voted by a large majority against a separate Welsh Parliament. In today's parliament there is a special department and minister for Welsh affairs. In Scotland a similar thing happened. In 1603 Queen Elizabeth I of England died leaving no heir and the son of Mary Queen of Scots (who was Queen Elizabeth's cousin) King James VI of Scotland inherited the crown of England and became King James I of England. The Parliament of England, Wales and Scotland were united a century later in 1707. Today Scotland like Wales is part of the UK and is governed from London. There is a special minister in the Government the Secretary of State for Scotland, who is responsible for

education, local government and other important matters in Scotland. Although the legal education and banking systems are slightly different from those in England, life is very similar to the rest of the UK. The whole of Ireland was united with Great Britain from 1801 up until 1922. In that year the independent Republic of Ireland (Eire) was formed in the South, while Northern Ireland (Ulster) became part of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. In 1949 Northern Ireland still had its own Prime Minister and its own Parliament at Stormont in Belfast which was responsible for the province's internal (not foreign) affairs, but it was still part of the UK. In 1969 there was a rioting in Northern Ireland between Catholics and Protestants who dominated the Stormont Parliament. By 1972 the hostility between the two groups was so bad that Britain suspended the Northern Irish Parliament at Stormont and sent in the British army to keep the peace. Since 1969 there have been a number of attempts to find a political solution to the Northern Ireland problems (the conflict between the Catholics and Protestants; the conflict between those who wanted a united Ireland and those who wanted Northern Ireland to stay a part of the UK). On the 15<sup>th</sup> of November 1985 the British and Irish (of Eire) governments signed the Anglo-Irish agreement. The Agreement gives the Republic of Ireland a voice in the administration of Northern Ireland and the Irish government recognises that there will only be a united Ireland if a majority of people in Ulster agree to it.

The national flag of the UK, known as the Union Jack, is made up of three crosses. The upright red cross on a white background is the cross of St. George, the patron saint of England, whose day is celebrated on the 23<sup>rd</sup> of April. The white diagonal cross on a blue background is the cross of St. Andrew, the patron saint of Scotland (30<sup>th</sup> of November). The red diagonal cross on a white background is the cross of St. Patrick, the patron saint of Ireland (17<sup>th</sup> of March). The Welsh flag, a red dragon on a white and green background, is not represented in the national flag. The patron saint of Wales is St. David (1<sup>st</sup> of March).

Each country has its own flag, symbol and colour (typically worn by sports teams of the different nations). The Symbol of England is a red rose, and its national colour is white; the symbol of Wales is a daffodil or leek, its colour is red; the symbol of Scotland is a thistle and the colour is blue; the symbol of Ireland is a shamrock, the colour is green. Each country of the UK also has its own capital: in England – London, in Scotland – Edinburgh, in Wales – Cardiff, in Northern Ireland – Belfast.

### **Position, Territory and Structure of the British Isles**

The British Isles are situated on the continental shelf of the north-west coast of Europe and comprise a group of about 5,000 islands. The total area of the British Isles is 322,246 square km. The largest island is Britain or Great Britain, which is also the largest island in Europe. It consists of England, Wales and Scotland. The next largest island is Ireland, which is made up of Northern Ireland (Ulster) and the Irish Republic (Eire). Britain and Northern Ireland, together with a number of small islands, form the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. The United Kingdom's area is some 244,100 square km, of which about 99 percent is land and the remainder inland water.

Of the north-western coast of Great Britain there is a group of islands known as the Hebrides. They are divided by the Little Minch and by the Sea of the Hebrides into the Inner Hebrides and the Outer Hebrides. Out of over the total of 500 islands of the Hebrides more than half are inhabitable. Only several families live on some of them. People are mostly involved in farming and fishing. The Orkney islands (about 90) are separated from the northern tip of the mainland of Scotland by the stormy 7 mile wide Pentland Firth and only 1/3 of them are inhabited. Most of the people are engaged in dairy- and poultry farming, bacon, cheese and eggs are exported to Central Scotland.

About 70 miles north of the Orkneys the Shetland Islands are situated. The Shetland farmers are essentially crofters, but during the summer months they are actively engaged in herring-fishing. The Shetlands are far from prosperous, and the population is still steadily decreasing.

In the middle of the Irish Sea there is the Isle of Man. The island though recognizing the Crown is administered by its own Parliament and has population of about 50,000 chiefly engaged in farming, fishing and tourist trade. The only settlement of any size is the holiday resort of Douglas.

In the English Channel there is the Isle of Wight, one of the most popular South Coast's tourist resorts. It is linked to London by ferry and rail services. The decline of light and other industries has presented serious problems of employment for the island, and at present the population is being reduced by migration to the mainland, where the situation is far from being better.

Off the extreme south-western coast of Great Britain there is a tiny group of the Isles of Scilly.

The Channel Islands lie to the south-west on the French side of the English Channel. As part of the Duchy of Normandy, they have been attached to the English Crown since the Norman Conquest (1066). The population of the Islands is over 133,000 people; their total area is about 194 sq. km. The chief

islands are Jersey and Guernsey. Jersey is the largest and most populous island; it occupies over 60 percent of the total area and has almost 60 % of the population. The chief industry on the islands is tourism. Like the Isle of Man, the Channel Islands have their own Parliament and are largely self-governing.

### **Surroundings Seas and Coastline**

The British Isles are of the continental origin and once formed part of the European continent. The separation took place thousands of years ago, after the last Ice Age. When the ice melted the level of the ocean rose and the low-lying coast lands of the continent got drowned. This was when the English Channel (which was originally a westward extension of the North European Plain) appeared and became a shallow stretch of the sea. This zone of shallow water which at present surrounds the continent next to the really deep water of the ocean is called the continental shelf (A line joining points at a depth of 200 m shows the approximate boundary of the continental shelf). The British Isles lie entirely on the shelf. The area abounds in fish which feed largely on plankton living in the shallow waters above the continental shelf, besides, such valuable natural resources as oil and natural gas have been discovered beneath it and are being exploited.

From the European continent the British Isles are separated by the English Channel and the North Sea. The English Channel in its widest part in the west is 220 km wide, and in the narrowest, what is called the Strait of Dover, only 32 km. The average depth of the Channel is 60 m, and that of the Strait of Dover – 30 m.

In the west the British Isles are washed by the Atlantic Ocean, in the East – by the North Sea, the average depth of which is 95 m. Great Britain and Ireland are separated from each other by the Irish Sea and the two Straits, the North Channel and the St. George's Channel.

The most important sea routes pass through the English Channel and the North Sea linking Europe with the Americas and other continents. The advantageous geographical position of Great Britain created favourable conditions for the development of its shipping, trade and the economy as a whole.

Climate of Great Britain is greatly conducive to the development of British agriculture. Due to the presence of the warm waters, the North Atlantic current, in the Atlantic Ocean, the seasonal range in air temperature over Britain is slow and slight.

The British Isles are known for their greatly indented coastline. Therefore, there are many bays and harbours, peninsulas and capes on the coast. Due to its extreme indented the coastline of Great Britain despite its relatively modest size, is 8,000 km long. Very much indented is the western coast, especially the coasts

of Scotland and Wales. The highlands here rise quite abruptly from sea level. Along the west coast there are many inlets that are called sea lochs or fiords. The east coast is less lofty and more regular than the west coast. The Irish coasts are more like those of England. The west coast is more indented with long ribs and peninsulas, while the south coast conforms more with the general run of the relief. The east is relatively smooth.

### **Physical Structure and Relief**

Britain has a great diversity of physical characteristics: from the generally high relief of western and northern Britain to the lowland areas of the south and east.

There are no high mountains in Great Britain. The most mountainous region is Scotland. It can be divided into three regions: the Scottish Highlands, with the highest mountains, the Grampians, containing the loftiest summit, Ben Nevis – 1,343 m; the Central lowlands, a wide lowland area, where most of the large towns, including Edinburgh and Glasgow, and  $\frac{1}{4}$  of the population are located; and the Southern Uplands – a region of rolling hills with sheep grazing on their grass. In the South the Uplands rise to the Cheviot Hills forming the border between Scotland and England.

The most important range of mountains is the Pennine range, regarded as 'the backbone of England'. It stretches from the north to the south about half the way down the length of England (a distance of about 250 km). Its highest point is Cross Fell (893 m). West of the Pennines lies the Lake District, one of England's most famous recreation areas with its clear, quiet lakes and low mountains.

The English part of Wales is occupied by the Cambrian mountains (the highest summit is Snowdon, 1,085 m). Southern Wales is largely a plateau deeply cut by the river valleys. It's a region of contrast. The industrial cities of Swansea, Cardiff and Newport are only a short journey away from sandy beaches and busy holiday resorts. Much of the remainder of Wales consists of bare rocks, barren moorland and rough pasture, with only a few people to the square kilometre.

Northern Ireland is a region of low mountains, deep valleys and fertile lowlands. The land is lowest near the centre and rises to its heights near the north and south coasts.

### **Rivers and Lakes**

Rivers in Great Britain are quite short in length and navigable but in their lower reaches, especially during high tides. The longest rivers are the Severn (England and Wales) which is 354 km long and the Thames (England) – 346 km. The longest river in Scotland is the River Tay (170 km); the longest river in Ireland is the Shannon (384 km). Most of the rivers flow to the North Sea such as

Tweed, Dee, Tay (in Scotland); the Trent, Tyne, Humber (in England). Others like the Clyde in Scotland, the Eden, Ribble, Mersey, Severn flow to the Irish Sea.

The largest lake in Great Britain and the biggest inland loch in Scotland is Loch Lomond; the longest lake is Loch Ness, which also has the greatest volume of water. In England the largest lake is Lake Windermere (the Lake District). The largest freshwater lake in the British Isles is loch Neagh in Northern Ireland.

#### **Population, Ethnic Minorities, Languages Spoken in the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**

The United Kingdom has the population of 57 million people and ranks about 15 in the world in terms of population. England (46 million) is the most populous part. It is followed by Scotland (5 million), Wales (2,8 million) and Northern Ireland (1,5 million). The population is increasing very slowly and in 1976 - 78 and 1982 actually fell.

The average population density in Britain is about 239 per sq. km, compared with, for example, 190 per sq. km in Italy. England, with 361 inhabitants per sq. km is one of the most densely populated countries in the world. (Wales - 135 per sq. km, Scotland - 65, Northern Ireland - 111 per sq. km).

People have been coming to settle in Britain for centuries from many parts of the world. Some came to avoid political or religious persecution, others to find a better way of life or an escape from poverty. For example, many people from Wales, Scotland and Ireland have settled in England; and Jews, Russian, Germans and Poles have come to Britain (particularly London) during political changes in the rest of Europe in the 1930s and after 1945. Commonwealth citizens were allowed free entry into Britain until 1962. Before the World War II these immigrants were mostly people from Canada, Australia, New Zealand and South Africa. In the 1950s people from the West Indies, India, Pakistan, Hong Kong and Bangladesh were encouraged to come and work in Britain. Today 2 million British people are of West Indian or Asian origin and over 50 per cent of them were born in Britain. The new immigrant communities are concentrated in the following towns and cities: London, Slough, Leicester, Wolverhampton, Birmingham, Luton, Bradford, Coventry, Bedford, Reading and Sandwell. The latest waves of immigration have of course caused problems. There is certainly racial tension and racial prejudice in Britain today. In spite of laws passed to protect them, there is still discrimination against Asian and black people, many of whom are unemployed or in low-paid jobs. However, the atmosphere is improving. Many individuals have achieved distinctions in their careers and in public life and the proportion of ethnic minority workers in professional and managerial jobs has increased. There are at present three black Members of

Parliament and one Asian Member of Parliament and the number of ethnic minority councillors in local government is growing.

Today in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland is the language predominantly spoken. It developed from Anglo-Saxon and is a Germanic language. However, all the invading people, particularly the Norman French, influenced the English Language and there are a lot of words in English which are French in origin. In Wales, however, Welsh, a form of British Celtic is spoken by some 20 % of the population (about 600,000 out of 2,800,000). In Scotland over 80,000 persons, mainly in the Highlands and western coastal regions speak the Scottish form of Gaelic. A few families in Northern Ireland still speak the Irish form of Gaelic. But in general the number of people speaking the above-mentioned languages is declining, though all three languages are now officially encouraged and taught in schools.

Today some of the countries ethnic minorities formed as a result of recent immigration have their own languages, normally as well as English. Among the Asian community, for example, the most usual languages are Punjabi, Gujarati, Bengali or Urdu, the languages of the Indian and Pakistani communities.

## **LECTURE 2**

### **CLIMATE, NATURAL RESOURCES AND NATIONAL PRODUCTION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

#### **Topics for discussion:**

1. Climate, Weather.
2. Vegetation. Natural Resources.
3. Industry, Agriculture.

#### **Climate and Weather**

Britain has a generally mild and temperature climate, which is dominated by marine influences and is rainy and equable. Britain's climate is much milder than that in any other country in the same latitudes. This is due partly to the presence of the North Atlantic Drift (a warm current) and partly to the fact that north-west Europe lies in a predominantly westerly wind-belt. This means that marine influences and the winds blowing over the Atlantic warm the land in winter and cool it in summer; besides the winds carry large amount of moisture which is deposited over the land as rain. Britain's climate is generally one of mild winters and cool summers, with rain throughout the year although there are

considerable regional changes. Because of the North Atlantic Drift and the predominantly maritime air masses that effect the British Isles, the range in temperature throughout the year is never very great. The annual mean temperature in England and Wales is about 10 °C, in Scotland and Ireland about 9 °C. There are few extremes in temperature, which rarely goes above 32 °C or below - 10 °C. June and August are the warmest months of the year on average and January and February are the coldest. The mean monthly temperatures in the extreme north (the Shetland) ranges from 3 °C during the winter to 12 °C during the summer. The corresponding figures for the Isle of Wight, in the extreme south, are 5 °C and 16 °C.

Spring is normally Britain's driest season, even though April is by tradition shower. Cold weather usually lasts no later than mid-Aprils and the second part of the month is frequently very warm. Late summer is often noted for very warm weather and this may continue into September. North and north-west winds often bring heavy falls of snow to north Britain during late October and November, but they are usually short-lived. In fine, still weather there is occasionally haze in summer and mist or fog in winter. Annual rainfalls is fairly evenly distributed, but ranges from more than 1,600 mm in the mountainous areas of the west and north to less than 800 mm over central and eastern parts. This is because depressions from the Atlantic bring rainfall first to the west and because Western Britain is higher and so gets more relief rain. On average March to June are the driest months and October to January the wettest.

### **Vegetation, Mineral Resources**

The present vegetation of Great Britain owes much of its character to the influence of man. Only in the more remote parts of Ireland and the Scottish Highlands do remnants of the natural vegetation still exist. The 'natural vegetation' in the true sense of the term has practically disappeared from Britain, and most of the present cover is loosely known as semi-natural. With its mild climate, a wide variety of relief and soils Britain once had a diverse pattern of vegetation. The original natural vegetation consisted of forest, fen and marsh in the wet Lowlands and shrub, heath and moorland on the uplands where soils were thin. In the lowland areas the oak forest must have been the natural vegetation. Apart from oak other trees of the wooded Lowland were ash, maple, elm, and hazel. Today only a few scattered areas of extensive woodland remain, such as the New Forest in Hampshire and Sherwood Forest in Nottinghamshire. The greatest density of woodland occurs in the north and the east of Scotland, in some parts of south-east England and on the Welsh border. Throughout most of England and parts of Wales and Scotland where temperatures are high enough

deciduous varieties (such as oak, birch, beech and ash) are more numerous. In the north and on higher ground in the west these are replaced by coniferous species, pine, fir and spruce. Today forest and woodland occupy only about 9 per cent of the surface of the country. Fifty-six per cent of forest and woodland belong to private landowners. Over 90 per cent of the timber used in the UK is imported.

Certain areas of the country are characterized by extensive moorland. The moorlands provide several types of wind vegetation, such as heather, fern, other hill grasses and these are to be found in the Highlands of Scotland, the Pennines, the Lake District, the mountains of Wales and elsewhere with a surface of thin poor soils.

The rise of Britain as an industrial nation in the late 18<sup>th</sup> and early 19<sup>th</sup> centuries was partly due to the presence of considerable mineral resources. She possessed abundant supplies of coal and an adequacy of iron. Coal has been worked in Britain for 700 years, and as an industry, coal-mining has been in existence for over 300 years, twice as long as in any other European country. For over a century coal was the most important of power and fuel in Britain. Britain had enough non-ferrous metals – copper, lead, and tin. But in the course of the last hundred years or so the situation has gradually changed. Many of Britain's most valuable and accessible deposits have been worked out. Moreover, coal has lost some of its former importance, and such minerals as petroleum and uranium ores have become essential materials in the modern world. At the same time British industry has become increasingly orientated towards lighter industry, and the heavier coal-field-based industries have tended to decline as the dependence upon coal as a source of power has declined. The absence in Great Britain of high-grade iron ore, manganese, chrome, nickel and many other rare metals makes her economy greatly dependent on imported raw materials.

Although many good seams of coal have now been worked out due to the early development of the industry, total reserves in Britain are estimated at 190,000 million tonnes, which are sufficient for at least three hundred years at the present rate of consumption. The main consumers of Britain's declining coal industry are the thermal power stations.

Britain is the world's fifth largest oil producer, and although production is expected to start declining slowly, Britain should remain a significant producer in the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Up to early 1960s over 99 per cent of Britain's petroleum requirements were imported. Since then considerable discoveries of crude oil and natural gas have been made in the North Sea and the first oil was brought ashore in 1975. The discovery of substantial offshore oil and gas reserves has changed Britain's energy position it has become self-sufficient in energy. The

most important offshore oilfields are to be found off the coasts of north-east England and especially eastern and northern Scotland. Onshore production of crude oil in Britain accounts for only a small fraction of the country requirements. The largest onshore field is Wytch Farm (Dorset). In 1967 with the first commercial natural gas discovery in the North Sea the offshore gas production started. About half of the national consumption of natural gas is used for industrial and commercial purposes, and the remainder for household use. The industry was sold back to the private sector as British Gas in 1986.

The total reserves of iron ore in Britain are estimated at 3,8 billion tonnes. British iron ores are of poor quality and produced in small quantities. The largest part of Britain's annual consumption of iron ore is imported from Sweden, North Africa, Spain, Canada, West Africa, South America.

A great variety of non-metallic minerals is produced in Britain, such as granite, sand-stones and lime-stones, clay, slates, chalk, salt, gypsum, potash, peat.

#### **Industry. Agriculture**

Within the system of contemporary capitalism Great Britain has lost its former position as the leading industrial nation of the world. Britain today is fifth in size of its gross domestic product (GDP) and 23 in terms of GDP per head among the capitalist countries of the world.

After World War II Britain experienced an accelerated growth of monopolies and their subsequent mergers. The export of capital abroad continued to be a major factor in its development. In terms of foreign investments Britain was second only to the USA. The bulk of foreign investments is directed mainly to the manufacturing industries of West European countries (unlike the past – to the extracting industries of the former colonies). The monopolies in the country lay special emphasis on the development of such branches of the manufacturing and chemical industries which require high-skilled labour. Manufacturing and chemical industries, facing strong competition in overseas markets from newly industrialized as well as from other developed capitalist countries, have undergone considerable reorganization to improve competitiveness. A number of industries such as aerospace, chemicals, oil, gas, electronics, biotechnology have gained strength while textiles and some other traditional industries, including steel and shipbuilding have declined.

The British economy is primarily based on private enterprise. However some industries were nationalized after World War II. The nationalized sector as a whole accounts for about 37 per cent of GDP and 38 per cent of all employees. Part of public transport, the power industry, the coal mines, some steel, manufacturing plants are managed by the state. The atomic industry is also within the public

sector. The national economy of GB is vitally dependent on foreign trade. About a third of the industrial products of the country is exported. The proportion of Britain's exports of goods going to other EC countries accounts for about 50 %, while that going to other Commonwealth countries – 10 %. Britain's imports more than half of its foodstuffs, raw materials (silicon, copper, zinc, cotton), timber, mass-produced products like washing machines, dishwashers, refrigerators, TV or hi-fi sets. In recent years, Britain has had a negative balance of trade as regards visible exports and imports, though the balance as regards invisible is better.

Less than 3 % of the working population (around 690,000 people) is employed in agriculture in Britain, yet the industry produces nearly 2/3 of Britain's food requirements, with gross output accounting for about 4 % of the country's GDP. Just over three-quarters of the land in Britain is used for agriculture. About three-fifths of full-time farms are devoted to dairying or beef cattle and sheep. The majority of sheep and cattle are reared in the hill and moorland areas of Scotland, Wales, Northern Ireland and south-western England, although beef fattening takes place in better grassland areas and arable farms. The farms devoted primarily to arable crops are found mainly in eastern and central England. Pig production occurs in most areas, but is particularly important in eastern and northern England. Britain is also self-sufficient in poultry meat and eggs.

### **LECTURE 3**

#### **MAIN STAGES IN THE FORMATION OF THE PRESENT POPULATION OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

##### **Topics for discussion:**

1. Ancient Population of the UK.
2. Celtic Invasion.
3. Roman Invasion.
4. Anglo-Saxon Conquest.
5. Danish Raids.
6. Norman Conquest.

The UK has a population of 57 million to which people often refer as 'the British'. To call the people living on the British Isles 'the English' is not strictly correct and can make some of them angry because the four politically united nations (in 1800) – English, Scottish, Welsh and Northern Irish – though having one government and the same kind of passport regardless of where in Britain

their representatives live, are still very distinct from each other and feel their identity very strongly. To understand this we must take a glimpse at the history of the formation of the nation, its ancestry.

### **Ancient Population of Great Britain**

In prehistoric times Britain was part of the European continent and the first people and many animals came there over dry land. Towards the end of the Ice Age and the formation of the English Channel the hunters who crossed it in small boats of bent wood in search of food settled mainly along the western shores of GB and Ireland, from Cornwall at the south-west end of Britain all the way to the far north. These first inhabitants are thought to have come from the Iberian peninsular (the region of the Mediterranean Sea where Spain is located) somewhere after 3000 BC and are known as the Iberian or Megalithic people: megalith = big stones which they used. They kept animals, grew corn crops and knew how to make pottery. They were small, dark, long-haired and might be the forefathers of dark-haired inhabitants of the present Wales and Cornwall. New groups of people entered the country from the east of Europe after 2400 BC. The newcomers were strongly built, taller than the Iberians and had very good metal-working skills. Their arrival was marked by the first individual graves, furnished with pottery beakers, from which these people got their name: the Beaker Folk. (They used a specific type of wide-mouthed cups for drinking, hence the name. Many such cups have been found in their burial places.) The Beakers brought with them from Europe a new cereal, barley, which could grow almost anywhere and started making bronze tools to replace stone ones. The Iberians and the Beaker people intermingled, accepted each other's way of life and traditions and left behind some impressive monuments of those prehistoric times, of which the most remarkable are to be found in the country of Wiltshire – the Stonehenge (a great circle of standing stones which is believed to have some religious or astronomical purpose) and Silbury Hill, the Largest man made burial mound in Europe.

### **Celtic Invasion**

A new and important page of British history was opened up by the arrival of the Celts from Central Europe after 800 BC. They were tall, had fair or red hair and blue eyes. They were technically advanced, knew how to work iron and could make better weapons of it than those made of bronze, knew more advanced ploughing methods and could farm heavy soils harvesting enough crops for the growing population. They were very clean and neat and wore shirts and breeches (knee length trousers) and cloaks, fastened with a pin.

The name 'Britain' comes from the name of a Celtic tribe, the Britons, who settled in the country and were driven to Wales, Scotland and Ireland by the

invaders who followed them. Due to this fact, these parts of Britain, where the influence of the Celts was greatest, are even now very different from England in language, customs and traditions. According to the commonly accepted theory of the Celtic invasions, they came to Britain in 3 distinct waves. The first group, called the Gaels, were driven by the later invaders into the less fertile and more mountainous western and northern regions. Thus the original language of Ireland and North-West Scotland is Gaelic Celtic. The second wave of Celtic tribes – Brythons from whose name the country's name is derived – arrived in England between 600 and 500 BC and settled in the south of England and south-west Scotland. Their languages developed into the Celtic language of modern Wales. A third wave of Celtic invaders, containing many people of Teutonic origin, arrived about 100 BC and occupied most of the central part of GB.

The Celts are important for the British history because: a) they introduced an early form of agriculture, b) their tribal organisation, and c) they are the ancestors of many of the people in Scotland, Wales, Ireland and Cornwall, who took on their culture and languages which have been continuously used in those areas since that time. In England itself Celtic influence is felt to this very day, though its influence is much weaker, as compared with the other parts of the country: there're place names connected with the Celts, for example, the Avon – the name of the river, which means 'water' in Celtic; the Severn – is connected with the name of a Celtic goddess – Sabrina; the Christmas tradition of decorating the homes with branches of mistletoe and holly is connected with the customs of the Celts who believed that these plants protected their homes against evil spirits, etc.

#### **Roman Invasions of Britain**

In 55 BC Julius Caesar, the Roman ruler, with his warriors invaded the country. They called the country 'White Albion'. It might come from the Latin word ALBUS, meaning 'white', because the white chalk cliffs around Dover on the south coast are the first part of England to be seen when crossing the sea from the European mainland. Caesar came to Britain to get slaves, corn, widely produced in Britain, and tin, needed by the Romans. Moreover he wanted to punish the Celts for their support of their kinsmen in Gaul (the present territory of France) in their struggle against the Romans, who wanted to conquer them. But the Celts fought well and Caesar's first expedition failed. In 54 BC (the next year) he came with a larger army and defeated the Celts, but didn't stay in the country. Having received a promise from the Celts that they'd pay a regular tribute to Rome, he left Britain with plenty of riches and slaves.

90 years later, in 43 AD the country was conquered by the Romans under the leadership of Claudius and this occupation lasted to the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century (about 410): the Romans' power was greatest in the south and south-east, while in the north and west the country remained very much independent. The Roman couldn't conquer 'Caledonia' as they called Scotland, although they spent over a century trying to do so. At last they built a strong wall along the northern border named after the Emperor Hadrian, who planned it, which marks the border between the two countries, Scotland and England.

The Roman occupation was a matter of colonial control rather than large-scale settlement. They imposed their own way of life and culture making use of the existing Celtic aristocracy to govern and encouraging this ruling class to adopt Roman dress and the Roman language: they exerted an influence, without actually governing there. They brought the skills of reading and writing to Britain. While the Celtic peasantry remained illiterate and only Celtic speaking, a number of town dwellers and rich landowners in the country started to speak Latin and Greek with ease. They also built many towns and roads (most British towns with names ending in 'chester', were then fortified camps; the wonderful spas and baths built by the Romans in Bath are now one of the main tourist attractions; roads, such as Watling Street from London to Chester, and Icknield Way connecting London with Cirencester, still exist. The largest of the towns built at that time was called Londinium. It originated as a Roman fort at a place where it was possible to cross the Thames. There's also a belief that in this place there used to be a Celtic settlement called 'Llindyn' which the Roman changed into Latin 'Londinium'. Ruins of the old Roman wall can still be seen in the Tower of London. Thus, the Romans left behind 4 things of importance; their roads, the sites of important cities, the traces of their language and culture, and the seeds of Christianity. But the Latin way of life - villas, arts, language (both spoken and written) and political organisation - all vanished after the Anglo-Saxon invaded Britain in the 5<sup>th</sup> century AD.

### **Anglo-Saxon Conquest**

After the departure of the Romans in the beginning of the 5<sup>th</sup> century, the Celts remained independent for some time, but soon the wealth of the country began to attract the warlike and illiterate Germanic tribes from the continent: the Jutes and the Angles (from the southern areas of present Denmark), and the Saxons (northern Germany, areas between the Rhine and Elbe rivers). At first they only raided Britain but later started to settle.

The Jutes landed in Kent in about 450 and were followed by the Angles and Saxons so that by the end of the 5<sup>th</sup> century most of the country, except

Wales, Cornwall, the northern part of Britain, and Ireland, was occupied by the invaders. The Angles settled to the north of the Thames and soon the country began to be called 'the land of the Angles', later 'Engla-land'. The Saxons settled mainly in the south, south-west, partially east and formed the ancient kingdoms of Wessex (west Saxons), Sussex (south Saxons) and Essex (east Saxons), East Anglia (east Angles). Since the Anglo-Saxons and Jutes were close to each other in their language and customs they gradually intermixed into one people referred to as the Anglo-Saxons. After the attacks of the Germanic tribes many of the Celts moved to the areas which remained unconquered – Wales, Cornwall, the northern part of Britain (came to be called Scotland in the 9<sup>th</sup> century), Ireland – and continued to struggle against the Anglo-Saxons. Many legends and stories remind of those times, such as the tales about King Arthur and his knights.

The Anglo-Saxons kingdoms waged a constant struggle against one another for predominance over the country. From time to time one of them seized the land of the neighbouring kingdoms and made them pay tribute or even ruled them directly. The number of kingdoms was always changing and so were their boundaries. The struggle for predominance continued and at last at the beginning of the 9<sup>th</sup> century Wessex became the strongest state. In 829 Egbert, King of Wessex, was acknowledged by the other states. This was actually the beginning of the united kingdom of England, for Wessex never again lost its supremacy and King Egbert became the first king of England. Under his rule all the small Anglo-Saxon kingdoms were united to form one kingdom which was called England from that time on.

One of the most important events which contributed to the unification of the country and the development of culture was the adoption of Christianity. Christianity spread throughout Britain from two different directions during the 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> centuries. It came directly from Rome when St. Augustine arrived in 597 and established his headquarters at Canterbury in the south-east of England. It had already been introduced into Scotland and northern England from Ireland, which had become Christian more than 150 years earlier. The preachers from Rome brought with them learning and civilization and the Anglo-Saxons were easily converted to Christianity. Although the Roman Christianity eventually took over the whole of the British Isles, the Celtic model persisted in Scotland and Ireland for several hundred years. It was less organized, and the monarchy didn't support it. Officially the adoption of Christianity was proclaimed at the Synod of Whitby in 664. The spread of Christianity promoted a revival of learning with monasteries and churches as the major centres. Such words of Greek origin as 'arithmetic', 'mathematics', 'theatre', 'geography' or those of Latin origin, – 'school', 'paper', 'candle' – reflect the influence of the new wave

of Roman civilization brought about in the 7<sup>th</sup> century by Christianity. However the cultural influence of the Church effected mainly the clergy and rich people, while the rank-and-file Anglo-Saxons remained completely illiterate.

The Anglo-Saxons had little use for towns and cities, but they had a great effect on the countryside where they introduced new farming methods and founded thousands of self-sufficient villages with rich landowners as their head which formed the basis of English society for the next thousand or so years. The Anglo-Saxons were pagans and worshipped different gods whose names are reflected in the names of the days of the week: Tia – Tuesday – the god of war, Wodern – Wednesday – the god of kings, Thor – Thursday – the god of war, Frigga – Friday – the goddess of nature and love. The *Poem of Beowulf*, the monument of the Anglo-Saxon folklore, reflects the life of the Celts, their traditions and customs.

### Danish Raids

Britain experienced another wave of Germanic invasions in the 8<sup>th</sup> century. These invaders, – known as Vikings, Norsemen or Danes, came from Scandinavia and in the 9<sup>th</sup> century they conquered and settled in the extreme north and west of Scotland and some coastal regions of Ireland. First they acted like pirates, attacking, robbing the country and leaving it, then they started to conquer one territory after another. They burnt churches and monasteries along the east, north and west coasts of Britain and Ireland and raided London in 842. By 875 only king Alfred of Wessex, held out against the Vikings, who had already conquered most of England. After some serious defeats Alfred won a decisive battle in 878 and 8 years later he captured London. He made the Vikings sign a peace treaty which divided England between Wessex, in the south and west, which was under Alfred's rule, and the 'Danelaw' in the north and east, where the Danes spoke their language and kept to their way of life. In the 2<sup>nd</sup> half of the 10<sup>th</sup> century the Anglo-Saxons won several victories over the Danes, took away the Danelaw and ruled over the whole of England. Moreover, the cultural differences between Anglo-Saxons and Danes were rather small: they led very similar way of life, spoke two varieties of the same Germanic language, the same religion (the Danes very soon converted to Christianity), etc. These similarities made political unification easier, and by the end of the 10<sup>th</sup> century England fell under the Danish rule with King Canute finally managing to unite the Anglo-Saxons and the Danes at the beginning of the 11<sup>th</sup> century into a united kingdom with a Germanic culture. Danish influence is still felt in the place names ending in -by or -toft, such as 'Derby', 'Appleby', 'Lowestoft', etc. and word borrowing, – nouns like 'sister', 'husband', 'sky', 'fellow', 'law'; verbs 'take', 'die', 'call'; adjectives 'happy', 'ugly', 'weak', 'ill', 'loose', 'low'.

### **Norman Conquest**

The royal council, the Witan chose Canute, the Danish king, to be their ruler after the death of the English King Ethelred. When Canute died in 1035 and his son died shortly after in 1040, the Witan chose Edward, one of Saxon Ethelred's sons to be the king. Edward, known as 'the Confessor' was more interested in church than in kingship. Church building had been going on for over a century. By the time Edward died there was a church in almost every village. In December 1065, Edward started a new church for a king at Westminster, Westminster Abbey. Edward only lived until 1066, when he died without an obvious heir. The Witan chose Harold Godwin (his family, having risen during the reign of Canute, had been made the ruler of Wessex) to be the next king of England. Harold's right to the English throne was challenged by Duke William of Normandy (William had been promised the crown of England by his cousin, Edward the Confessor). After defeating Harold at the Battle of Hastings on the 14<sup>th</sup> of October, 1066 William of Normandy was crowned king of England (in English history he is known as William the Conqueror). He introduced the Norman feudal system, rewarding his French-speaking followers with land in return for their continued support, and French remained the language of the upper classes and administration until the 14<sup>th</sup> century. In the 14<sup>th</sup> century the enriched English language emerged as the language predominantly used in speech and writing – the official language of the state.

## **LECTURE 4**

### **THE EDUCATION SYSTEM OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

#### **Topics for Discussion:**

1. Organisation of Education in Britain.
2. Nursery Education.
3. Primary Education.
4. Secondary Education.
5. Exams.
6. Academic Year and School Day.
7. Private Education.
8. Further Education.
9. Higher Education.
10. Open University.

### **Organisation of Education in Britain**

The educational system of the country has developed for over a hundred years. It is a complicated system and there are variations between one part of the country and another. Education in Britain is provided by the Local Education Authority (LEA) in each country. It is financed partly by the Government and partly by Local taxes. Until recently, planning and organization were not controlled by central government. Each LEA was free to decide how to organize education in its own area. In September 1988, however, the 'National Curriculum' was introduced, which means that there is now greater governmental control over what is taught in schools, i.e. the subjects and syllabus are decided by the group of experts working under the DES (the Department of Education and Science). The 'National Curriculum' consists of ten subjects which all pupils must study at school. The 'core' subjects are English, Mathematics and Science. These are considered to be the most important because they help pupils to study all the other subjects. The rest of the subjects are called 'foundation' subjects and they include Technology and Design, Music, Art, History, Geography and Physical education. A modern foreign language usually French or German is a foundation subject for all 11 to 16 year-olds. At the same time, the new curriculum places greater emphasis on the more practical aspects of education. Skills are being taught which students will need for life and work, and 'work experience' – when pupils who are soon going to leave school spend some time in a business or industry – has become a standard part of the school programme.

Together with the 'National Curriculum', a programme of 'Records of Achievement' was introduced. This programme, known as 'REACH', attempts to set learning objectives for each term and year in primary school, and for each component of each subject at secondary school. This has introduced much more central control and standardization into what is taught. As part of the 'REACH' programme, new tests have been introduced for pupils at the ages of 7, 11, 13 and 16. The aim of these tests is to discover any schools or areas, which are not teaching to high enough standards.

Compulsory education in Great Britain begins at the age of 5 and the minimum school leaving age for all pupils is 16. Education is provided both in state schools, which are absolutely free and in private schools, where the parents have to pay for their children. Education within the state school system normally comprises two stages, i.e. primary education and secondary education.

### **Nursery Education (Under 5 Years)**

Children do not have to go to school until they reach the age of five, but there is some free nursery-school education before that age. However, LEAs do not have nursery-school places for all who would like them and these places are usually given to families in special circumstances, for example families with one parent only. Because of the small number of nursery schools, parents in many areas have formed play groups where children under 5 years can go for an hour or two twice a week. Nursery schools give little formal instruction. The children spend most of their time in some sort of play activity as far as possible of an educational kind. Their aim is to provide four-year-olds with basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic.

### **Primary Education (5 to 11 years)**

Primary education takes place in infant schools (pupils aged from 5 to 7 years) and junior schools (from 8 to 11 years). For the first two years of schooling (5 – 6) children are expected to learn to read and write, to do simple sums, to learn basic practical and social skills, and to find out as much as they can about the world through stories, drama, music, crafts and through physical exercises. From 7 to about 11 or 12, children are at school where the class teacher is still a central figure for them, because he or she teaches many basic lessons. But increasingly there is emphasis on subjects with subject teachers. There will be probably a special teacher for maths, another for crafts, another for French, if French is provided at this age. But at these ages, except perhaps for maths, children are not usually divided into different levels of ability.

### **Secondary Education (11 to 16/18 years)**

Since the 1944 Education Act of Parliament, free secondary education has been available to all children in Britain. Indeed, children must go to school until the age of 16, and pupils may stay on for one or two years more if they wish. Secondary schools are usually much larger than primary schools and most children – over 80 per cent – go to a comprehensive school at the age of 11. These schools are not selective – you don't have to pass an exam to go. The policy of comprehensive education was introduced by the Labour Government in 1965. Before that time, all children took an exam at the age of 11 called the '11+'. The exam consisted of an arithmetic paper, an English paper and an Intelligence test, which played the dominant role because it was supposed to determine the children inborn abilities and their intellectual potential. Approximately the top 20 per cent were chosen to go to the academic grammar schools (11 to 18 years). Those who failed the '11+' (80 per cent) went to secondary modern schools (11 to 16 years). Grammar schools prepared children for national examinations

such as the General Certificate of Education (GCE) at ordinary and advanced levels. These examinations qualified children for the better jobs, and for higher education. The education in secondary modern schools was based on practical schooling, which would allow entry into various skilled and unskilled jobs.

A lot of people thought that this system of selection at the age of 11 was unfair on many children. So comprehensive schools were introduced to offer suitable courses for pupils for all abilities. There are a few LEAs who still keep the old system of grammar schools, but most LEAs have now changed over completely to non-selective education in comprehensive schools.

Comprehensive schools offer a wide choice of subjects, from art and craft, woodwork and domestic science to sciences, modern languages, computer studies, etc. Pupils choose from the numerous subjects taught in their particular school. However, the National Curriculum has made it compulsory the three core subjects – English, math and science – and seven other foundation subjects – technology, history, geography, music, art, physical education and a modern foreign language – to be included in the curricula of all pupils. Pupils at comprehensive schools are quite often put into ‘sets’ for the more academic subjects such as mathematics or languages. Sets are formed according to ability in each subject, so that for example the children in the highest set for maths will not necessarily be in the highest set for French. All pupils move to the next class automatically at the end of the year. In addition there are middle schools (from 8 to 12 or from 9 to 13).

### **Exams**

When pupils reach the age of 14 – 15, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> or 4<sup>th</sup> form, they begin to choose their exam subjects and work for two years to prepare for their General Certificate of Secondary Education (GCSE) qualifications. The exams are usually taken in the 5<sup>th</sup> form at the age of 16. The GCSE must be taken in ‘core’ subjects, plus three, four or five other subjects. One of the subjects must be practical, another must be part of ‘social studies’ – geography, history, etc. Academic pupils will be able to choose mostly academic subjects, those who find school work more difficult can concentrate on practical and technical subjects. The actual written exams are set by independent examination boards, and are marked anonymously by outside examiners, though they must be approved by the government and comply with national guidelines. There are several examination boards in Britain and each school decides which board's exam its pupils take. Most exams last for two hours, marks are given for each exam separately. Exams are usually marked out of 100 and then are ‘converted’ into grades from A to G (grades A, B, C are considered to be ‘good’ marks).

Those wishing to go on to higher education stay on for two years more into sixth form (17-year-olds in the 'lower sixth' and 18-year-olds in the 'upper sixth'). If their schools do not have the sixth form or do not teach the desired subjects, pupils may choose to go to a sixth form college. The pupils then prepare to take the General Certificate of Education Advanced level ('A level'). 'A level' taken in single subjects, usually not more than three is used as an entrance qualification for university (minimum two passes) and other types of higher education, as well as for many forms of professional training.

#### **Academic Year and School Day**

Education in Britain is not solely concentrated on academic study. Great value is placed on visits and activities like organising the school club or field trips, which are educational in a more general sense. At Christmas teachers organise concerts, parties and general festivities.

Classes of pupils are called 'forms' and are numbered in secondary schools from one to six, beginning with first form. Nearly all schools work a five-day week and are closed on Saturdays. The day starts at about nine o'clock with three hours of lessons in the morning and two hours of lessons after the lunch break. School normally finishes between three and four, for younger children the day is shorter. The lunch break or 'dinner hour' usually lasts about an hour-and-a quarter. Nearly two-thirds of pupils have cheap meals provided by the school. Parents pay for this except for the 15 % who are rated poor enough and have it for free. Other children either go home for lunch or take sandwiches.

Instead of one very long holiday in the summer with very short breaks at other times as in the rest of Europe, English schools usually divide their year into three 'terms': Autumn term (Christmas holiday – about two and a half weeks), Spring term (Easter holiday – about 2 weeks), Summer term (Summer holiday – about 6 or 7 weeks).

#### **Private Education**

7 % of British school children go to private schools called independent schools. There are 2,400 independent schools and they've been growing in number and popularity since the mid 1980s. Parents pay for these schools and fees vary from about 250£ a term for a private nursery to 3,000£ a term or more for a secondary boarding school. Pupils board i.e. leave at the school. Some independent schools are called prep. schools because they prepare the children for the common entrance exam which they take at the age of 13. This exam is for entry into the best schools. The most famous schools are called public schools and they have a long history and tradition. It is necessary to put the name of your child on a waiting list at birth to be sure he or she gets a place.

Children of wealthy or aristocratic families often go to the same public school as their parents or their grandparents. Eton is the best known of these schools. The majority of independent secondary schools including public schools are single-sex. Although in recent years girls have been allowed to join the sixth form of boys' schools. Independent schools also include religious schools.

### **Further Education**

Many people decide to leave school at the age of 16 and go to a Further Education (FE) College. Here most of the courses are linked to some kind of practical vocational training, for example, in engineering, typing, cooking or hairdressing. Some young people are given 'day release' (their employer allows them time off work) so that they can follow a course to help them in their job (if they are on part-time courses).

For those 16 year-olds who leave school and who cannot find work but do not want to go to a FE College, the Government has introduced the Youth Opportunities Scheme (YOPS). This scheme places young, unemployed people with a business or an industry for six months so that they can get experience of work, and pays them a small wage. They generally have a better chance of getting a job afterwards, and sometimes the company they are placed with offers them a permanent job.

### **Higher Education**

There are 46 universities in Britain. Good 'A' Level results in at least two subjects are necessary to get a place at one. However, good exam passes alone are not enough. Universities choose their students after interviews, and competition for places at university is fierce. There are only a limited number of places (around 100,000 available each year).

For all British citizens a place at university brings with it a grant or loan from their Local Education authority. The grants cover tuition fees and some of the living expenses. The amount depends on the parents' income. If the parents do not earn much money, their children will receive a full grant, which will cover all their expenses.

Universities in Britain enjoy complete academic freedom, choosing their own staff and deciding which students to admit, what and how to teach, and which degrees to award. They are mainly government-funded, except for the totally independent University of Buckingham.

All degree courses are full-time and most last three years (medical and veterinary courses last five or six years). Students who obtain their Bachelor degree (graduates) can apply to take a further degree course, usually involving a mixture of exam courses and research. There are two different types of post-graduate courses –

the master's degree (MA or MSc), which takes one or two years, and the higher degree of Doctor of Philosophy (PhD), which takes two or three years.

### **Open University**

In 1969 in Milton Keynes, Buckinghamshire, the Open University was founded; to cater for those people who, for some reason, hadn't had a chance to enter any of the other universities, especially those above normal students' age. It takes both men and women at the age of 21 and over. The university provides part-time degree and other courses. No formal academic qualifications are required for entry to these courses, but the standards of its degrees are the same as those of other universities. In teaching the Open University uses a combination of television and radio broadcast, correspondence courses and summer schools, together with a network of viewing and listening centres. Written works are corrected by part-time tutors, who meet their students once a month to discuss their work with them.

Degrees are awarded on the basis of credits, gained by success at each stage of the course. Six credits are required for a BA degree and eight credits for a BA Honours degree. The time of staying at the Open University is unlimited.

## **LECTURE 5**

### **STATE SYSTEM OF THE UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND**

#### **Topics for Discussion:**

1. UK as Constitutional Monarchy.
2. Parliament.
3. Legislative Procedure.
4. Government.
5. Party System.

#### **UK as Constitutional Monarchy**

The United Kingdom is one of six constitutional monarchies within the European Community. That means it is a country governed by a king or a queen who accepts the advice of a parliament. It is also a parliamentary democracy. That is, it is a country whose government is controlled by a parliament, which has been elected by the people.

There are features of the British system of government, which make it different from that in other countries. The most notable of these is the question of

the constitution. The fact is that the British constitution is unwritten. There is no single written document, which can be appealed to as the highest law of the land.

Britain is a constitutional monarchy. This means that the monarch, at the moment Queen Elizabeth II, is the Head of State. She is also the Head of the Judiciary and of the Church of England, as well as the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

A constitutional monarch is one who can rule only with the support of Parliament. The Bill of Rights (1689) was a major legal step towards constitutional monarchy. Since that time the power of Parliament has grown steadily, while the power of the monarch has weakened. Today the monarch reigns but doesn't rule. The Queen acts on the advice of her Prime Minister and doesn't make any major political decisions. Although the Queen is deprived of actual power she has retained many important though formal functions. Every autumn, at the state opening of Parliament the Queen makes a speech. She summons, prolongs and dissolves Parliament, gives royal assent to Bills passed by both Houses of Parliament. She appoints every important office holder, including government ministers, judges, governors, diplomats and bishops, she confers peerages, knighthoods and other honours. She appoints the Prime Minister to form a government. The Queen has the power to declare war and make peace, to recognise foreign states and governments, to conclude treaties, etc. She gives audiences to her ministers and other officials at home and overseas, receives accounts of Cabinet decisions, reads dispatches and signs innumerable state papers; she is informed and consulted on every aspect of national life. The Queen is Head of the Commonwealth of Nations where she is represented by the Governor-General appointed by her by the advice of the government of the country concerned and completely independent on the British government.

### **Parliament**

The British Parliament works in a large building called the Palace of Westminster. It is the supreme legislative authority and consists of three separate elements: the Sovereign, the House of Lords and the House of Commons. They meet together only on symbolic occasions such as the coronation of a new monarch or the opening of Parliament. In reality, the House of Commons is the only one of the three which has true power. The main function of the House is to legislate. The House is presided over by the Speaker.

The House of Commons is made up of 650 elected members (who are elected at general elections held every five years), known as Members of Parliament (MP), each of whom represents one of the 650 geographical areas (called constituencies) into which the country is divided for electoral purposes.

If an MP, resigns or is made a peer, a by-election is held in that constituency to elect a new MP. The election campaign usually lasts about three weeks. Everyone over the age of 18 who is resident in Britain can vote in an election (members of the Royal Family and lunatics are not allowed to vote). People vote for any one of the candidates in the constituency in which they are registered. The candidate that obtains the most votes in that constituency, irrespective of whether he or she has an overall majority, becomes its MP and the other votes are 'wasted'. Anyone over 21 who is entitled to vote (except for clergymen, civil servants, felons and bankrupts) can stand as a candidate. Candidates are normally selected by the local party associations but independent candidates can also stand. Each candidate has to pay a deposit (currently £500), which is returned if a candidate obtains at least 5 % of the total number of votes cast in that constituency. The one-candidate system means that a party can obtain a considerable number of votes nationally but have very few MPs in the Commons. These are the results from two constituencies in 1992:

<i>Party</i>	<i>Chesterfield</i>	<i>Votes</i>	<i>Taunton</i>	<i>Votes</i>
Conservative	Peter Lewis	9,437	David Nicholson	29,576
Liberal Democrats	Tony Rogers	20,047	Jackie Ballard	26,240
Labour	Tony Benin	26,461	Jean Hole	8,151

If we add the votes received for each party in these two constituencies together we find that the Liberal Democrats got more votes than Conservative or Labour. And yet these two parties each won a seat in Parliament while the Liberal Democrats not. This is because they were not first in either constituency. It is coming first that matters. In fact the system is know as the first-past the post system.

The members of the House of Lords, which is presided by the Lord Chancellor, are not elected. The House of Lords has more than 1,000 members, although only about 250 take an active part in the work of the House. It is made up of Anglican bishops, hereditary and life peers, and judges. Unlike MPs they do not receive a salary. They debate a bill after it has been passed by the House of Commons. Changes may be recommended, and agreement between the two Houses is reached by negotiation. The Lords' main power consists of being able to delay non-financial bills for a period of a year, but they can also introduce certain types of bills. The House of Lords is the only non-elected second chamber among of the democracies in the world, and some people in Britain would like to abolish it.

### **Legislative Procedure**

To become a law a Bill (a draft law) must be presented and go through all the necessary stages in both Houses of Parliament and the Queen must approve it (though her approval is a formality). The Bill then becomes an Act and comes into force on the day in which it receives the Royal Assent. A Bill has to pass through the following stages: first reading, second reading, committee, report, third reading. The stages follow at intervals of between one day and several weeks depending on the nature of the Bill.

The first reading of a public Bill is a formality. This is a formal announcement, with no debate.

During the second stage the House debates the general principles of the bill and, in most cases, takes a vote. When a Bill has passed its second reading, it is usually referred for detailed examination to a standing committee consisting of from 16 to 50 members. The committee examines the details of the Bill and votes on amendments to parts of it.

During the report stage the House considers the amendments and not the clauses of the Bill.

During the third reading the amended Bill is debated as a whole. When the Bill has passed its third reading it is sent for consideration in the Lords where it goes through the same stages. If the Lords make new amendments, it is referred to the Commons. After both Houses have reached agreement, the Bill receives the royal assent and becomes an Act of Parliament, which can be applied as part of the law.

### **Government**

The party, which wins the majority of seats in Parliament, forms the Government and its leader usually becomes Prime Minister.

The term 'the government' can be used to refer to all of the politicians who have been appointed by the monarch (on the advice of the Prime Minister) to help run government departments (there are several politicians in each department) or to take on various other special responsibilities. There are normally about a hundred members of 'the government' in this sense. All ministers come from the ranks of Parliament, most of them from the House of Commons.

The other meaning of the term 'the government' is more limited. It refers only to the most powerful of these politicians, namely the Prime Minister and the other members of the cabinet. There are usually about twenty people in the cabinet (though there are no rules about this). The cabinet meets once a week and takes decisions about new policies.

Partly as a result of the electoral system Britain normally has 'single-party' government. In other words, all members of the government belong to the same political party. The habit of single-party government has helped to establish the tradition known as collective responsibility. That is every member of the government shares the responsibility for every policy made by the government. This is true even if he or she didn't play any part in making it. Individual government members may hold different opinions, but they are expected to keep these private. No member of the government can criticize government policy in public. Any member who does so must resign.

The largest minority party becomes the Opposition, and forms the so-called 'Shadow Cabinet'. In doing so it accepts the right of the majority party to run the country, while the majority party accepts the right of the minority party to criticize it.

### Party System

Britain is normally described as having a 'two-party' system. This is because, since 1945, one of the two big parties has, by itself, controlled the government, and members of these two parties have occupied more than 90 % of all of the seats in the House of Commons.

The Conservative and Liberal parties are the oldest, and until the last years of the nineteenth century they were the only parties elected to the House of Commons. At the beginning of the twentieth century the Labour party was formed, and once working-class men were given the vote Socialist MPs were elected, but it was not until 1945 that Britain had its first Labour Government. At this election, the number of Liberal MPs was greatly reduced and since then Governments have been formed by either the Labour or the Conservative Party. Usually they have had clear majorities – that is one party has had more MPs than all the others combined.

The Conservative Party (developed from the group of MPs' known as the Tories in the early nineteenth century) can broadly be described as the party of the middle and upper classes although it does receive some working-class support. Most of its voters live in rural areas, small towns and the suburbs of large cities. Much of its financial support comes from large industrial companies. The Labour party, on the other hand, has always have strong links with the trade unions and receives financial support from them. While many Labour voters are middle-class or intellectuals, the traditional Labour party support is still strongest in industrial areas.

In 1981, some MPs left the Labour Party to form a new 'left-of-centre' party – the Social Democratic Party (SDP). In 1988, the majority of SDP and

Liberal MPs (the party developed the wing in the early nineteenth century) and party members decided to form a permanent single party, to be called the Social, Democratic and Liberal Party or the Social and Liberal Democrats. However, SDP MPs and party members disagreed with the idea, and so SDP still exists as a separate party.

There are numerous very small parties, such as the Green Party, which is supported by environmentalists. There is a small party, which was formerly the Communist Party, and a number of other left-wing parties, and also an extreme right-wing party, which is fairly openly racist. It was previously called the National Front but since the 1980s has been called the British National Party (BNP). By the second half of the twentieth century none of these parties had won a single seat in Parliament.

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Учебное издание

Составитель

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**BRITISH STUDIES**

**СТРАНОВЕДЕНИЕ ОБЪЕДИНЕННОГО КОРОЛЕВСТВА  
ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНИИ**

**ПЛАН-КОНСПЕКТ ЛЕКЦИЙ**

для студентов 5-го курса

специальностей 02 03 07 «Немецкий язык», «Французский язык»  
(английский язык – дополнительная специальность)

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Подписано в печать 27.10.03.

Формат 60 × 84<sup>1</sup>/<sub>16</sub>.

Печать офсетная.

Усл. печ. л. 1,86.

Уч.-изд. л. 1,82.

Тираж 50 экз.

Заказ 2/0

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Отпечатано на ризографе ПГУ

211440 г. Новополюцк, ул. Блохина, 29