

LECTURE № 3

THE POLITICAL STRUCTURE AND ELECTIONS IN GREAT BRITAIN

Great Britain is a constitutional monarchy. Britain is administered from the centre of Westminster in London. Technically the UK is ruled by the Parliament, the Prime minister and the Monarch (at the moment the Queen Elizabeth II who has been in power since 1953). She is formally the Head of the State.

The Parliament which is the oldest in Europe (1258) made up of two chambers (палаты) — the House of Commons and the House of Lords.



The House of Commons has 651 seats which are occupied by Members of Parliament (MPs) who are elected by the British people during general elections which are held every five years. The country is divided into 650 constituencies (избирательные округа) each of which elects one Member of Parliament (MP).

The party which wins the elections gets the most seats in the House of Commons and forms the Government. Its leader becomes the Prime Minister.

The House of Commons is presided over by the Speaker. The government party sits on the Speaker's right while on his left sit the members of the Opposition.

Although Britain is called constitutional monarchy it does not have a written constitution, but a set of laws. Most legislation (законодательство) originates in the Commons. The Bill becomes a law when it is debated and confirmed after three hearings by the MPs, then debated in the Lords and finally signed by the Queen.

The House of Lords comprises about 1 200 members. The members of the House of Lords are not elected: they sit in the House because they are aristocrats who have inherited their seats from their fathers or those who got the titles from the Queen and also bishops (эпископы) of the Church of England.

This House has no real power but acts as an advisory council for the House of Commons. The House of Lords may take part in legislation, but it cannot permanently block a bill (законопроект) passed by the Commons.

The House of Lords is presided over by the Lord Chancellor (Лорд Канцлер, председатель суда) and is the highest court of appeal.

The Queen opens and closes the sessions of the Parliament.

The English monarchy has been interrupted only once during the Revolution and the Cromwell republic. Succession (наследование) to the throne is hereditary (наследственное). Formally the monarch has a number of roles. The monarch is expected to be politically neutral, and should not make political decisions. Nevertheless, Queen Elizabeth the Second still performs some important executive and legislative duties (исполнительные и законодательные обязанности) including opening and dissolving Parliament, signing bills (законопроекты) passed by both Houses and fulfilling international duties, visits to foreign countries, and especially those to the Commonwealth (Содружество наций), whose interests and welfare (благосостояние) are very important to her. She started the tradition of the "walkabouts", when she walks among the public crowds and stops to talk to some people. The annual Christmas broadcast made by the Queen on radio and television has become a tradition. The Queen's husband is Duke of Edinburgh and her heir (наследник) is Charles, Prince of Wales, who was born in 1948, married Lady Diana Spencer and has two children, Prince William and Prince Harry. Diana died in a car accident in August, 1997. The Queen's other children are Princess Anne, Prince Andrew and Prince Edward.

Government

Two main parties in the UK are the Conservative party, descended from the old Tory party, and the Labour party, which was organized in 1906 and is moderately socialist. The Liberal Democrats, which is a weaker third party, was

formed by the merger (слияние) of the Liberal party and the Social Democratic party.

Both Scotland and Wales have nationalist parties whose goal is independence.

The party which wins the most seats in the General Election forms the government in Britain. The leader of the winning party becomes Prime Minister (PM). The PM chooses a committee of ministers called the Cabinet (about 15-25 members or ministers). This is made up of a selection of senior MPs (members of parliament) from the House of Commons and some members of the House of Lords. Each member of the Cabinet is a minister responsible for a government department such as Home Affairs, Foreign Affairs, and the Exchequer (treasury). The Secretary of State for Education and Science is responsible for all the schools, universities and teachers in Britain. The Cabinet of ministers runs the country (управляет страной) and the ministers are responsible for the principle spheres of the country's life: foreign affairs, internal affairs, education, health care, etc. The Cabinet meets at the Prime Minister's house 10 Downing Street. Cabinet meetings are held in private and the details must remain secret for at least 30 years. Cabinet ministers cannot, however, do as they please! They are responsible to Parliament and must answer their questions. Even the Prime Minister must answer questions every Tuesday and Thursday in the Commons — this is called Prime Minister

Question Time.

The highest court in the UK is Supreme Court that consists of 12 judges that are selected by an independent commission and nominated by the Monarch. There is a range of subordinate courts and specialized tribunals all over the country.

Historical Personalities and outstanding Prime ministers

Russia's relations with Great Britain have always been marked by chronic tension but. the bombing of British cities by the Nazi planes and the German threat to British colonies in 1941 promoted the Military Alliance between Britain, the

Soviet Union, and later the United States. Winston Churchill (1874-1965) as prime minister of that period together with the Soviet Union and the USA leaders rallied the British people during WW11, and led his country from defeat to victory.

Unfortunately after the war the relations between Britain and the Soviet Union chilled again. Only a year after the Second World War in 1946 Winston Churchill delivered his Iron Curtain Speech at Westminster College in the United States, in which he called for special relationship between the United States and the British Commonwealth against the Soviet Union. This speech was considered to be the beginning of the Cold War between the USSR and the West. The formation of two military alliances, NATO (1949) and the Warsaw Pact (1955) strengthened the Cold War, which lasted until 1989.

Among the personalities of postwar period we must remember, of course, the first female Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher who became Britain's Conservative Party leader in 1979. During her three terms, she cut social welfare programs, reduced trade union power, privatized certain industries and got the nickname "the Iron Lady".

The years after Margaret Thatcher are characterized by the victory of the Labour Party represented by Tony Blair and David Cameron, who in their foreign policy believed in a "special relationship" with the USA. This relationship is based upon a shared language, strong Anglo -- Saxon culture, and particularly strong private relationships between Prime Minister Churchill and Roosevelt during the war and between M. Thatcher and Reagan in the 1980s. Special relations of Tony Blair and Bush led to the war in Iraq after the attack on the World Trade Center in New York in 2001) and later to Blair's resignation.

Britain has encouraged the development of a strong arms industry to supply the armed forces, and became the second largest arms trader internationally. Britain still spends proportionally more on defense than other NATO members.

Since 1972 the UK has got very close relationships with the European Union and its headquarters in Brussels. The country joined the European Economic Community (EEC or "Common Market") in 1975. But last summer a very interesting phenomenon took place. During his last electoral campaign David Cameron promised the people of the UK that in case of his victory he would

launch a referendum whether to stay in the EU or leave it. The United Kingdom European Union membership referendum, also known as the EU referendum and referendum took place on Thursday 23 June 2016 . Absolutely surprisingly for David Cameron and the European Union the referendum resulted in an overall vote to leave the EU, by 51.9% to 46.6%, on a national turnout of 72% making it the highest ever for a UK-wide referendum and also the highest turnout for any national vote since the 1992 UK General Election Scotland backed Remain by 62% to 38%, while 55.8% in Northern Ireland voted Remain and 44.2% Leave. New words appeared Brexin or Brexit? What does Brexit mean? It is a word that has become used as a shorthand way of saying the UK leaving the EU - merging the words Britain and exit to get Brexit, in a same way as Brexin means EU membership in it. .

What happened after the referendum? David Cameron resigned after losing the referendum and Britain got a new Prime Minister - Theresa May who was the former home secretary. Like D. Cameron, Teresa May was against Britain leaving the EU but she said she would respect the will of the people.

Nothing would happen immediately. Firstly, following a vote to leave the EU, the UK Parliament would have to endorse the referendum and prepare legislation to affect the divorce. Commentators suggested that it would take at least two years, perhaps longer, for everything to be put in place. This transitional period would be spent negotiating a withdrawal agreement and the basis of the new relationships with the remaining EU countries.

Answer the questions:

1. Which political parties in the UK do you know?
2. How do elections take place?
3. How many Chambers (Houses) are there in the British Parliament? What is the difference between them?

4. Who is the head of the Government?
5. What is a cabinet?
6. Call any great political figures in the UK who you remember.
7. What is Brexit?

Translate from Russian into English:

Британский парламент состоит из двух палат

Проводить выборы

Выигрывать выборы

Образовывать правительство

Свод законов

Наследовать, наследники

Не иметь реально власти

Совещательный Совет

Принимать участие

Заблокировать законопроект

Высший Апелляционный суд

Принимать политические решения

Исполнительные и законодательные обязанности

Открытие и роспуск парламента

Выполнение обязанностей

Благосостояние

Быть ответственным

Управлять страной

