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The History of the Flag «Union Jack»

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The study of the history of the flag «Union Jack» helps us to understand deeper the historical features of the development of the country, to know the names of the people who took part in the creation of the national flag. It is very important to learn more about the country and develop the interest to study foreign languages.

The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland consists of four countries including England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. The UK flag is one of the symbols of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland. It is a blue rectangular cloth with red slanting crosses [1]. For years, this flag flew high in many locations across the world, symbolizing the British colonial rule in countries across the world.

Why «Union Jack»? Many people know that the English flag is called so. It is known that the son of Mary Stuart James during his reign was nicknamed Jacques. Probably, the flag was named in his honor. However, there is another version, according to which «Union Jack» was to be installed as a bow flag of the ship on warships, thereby emphasizing the unity and pointing to the country [2].

So, the Union Flag is sometimes known as the Union Jack after its creator, James of England, James VI of Scots. When James VI took over the reign in the Kingdoms of English and Ireland in 1603 and united the crowns, he asked for the establishment of a new flag as the representation for the

regal union. On April 12, 1606 a new flag was established with the flag of Kingdom of England, and of Scotland put together to create the flag of the UK and the first ever union flag. The royal flag was meant for civil and military ships of both kingdoms on sea only while the land forces were to continue using their respective flags.

However, the flag gained regular use in the Kingdom of Britain after the Acts of Union in 1707. The flag was finally adopted by the armies operating on land although the shade of blue used on the field resembled that of the flag of Scotland. The current flag has a dark navy blue which traces its origin from the Royal Navy's Blue Squadron. The thin white stripe separating the red crosses from the blue fields is in line with the requirements where some colors like red and blue must be separate from each other. Wales was not recognized in the flag because it had been part of England since 1282. The Kingdom of Ireland was also not represented in the original version of the flag with the flag of the Protectorate between 1658 and 1660 decorated with the Ireland's arms.

Another alternative is that the name may be derived from a proclamation by Charles II that the Union Flag should be flown only by ships of the Royal Navy as a jack, a small flag at the bowsprit; the term 'jack' once meant small. It is so called because it combines the crosses of the three countries united under one Sovereign - the kingdoms of England and Wales, of Scotland and of Ireland (although since 1921 only Northern Ireland has been part of the United Kingdom).

The fact is that the UK consists of three historical areas of the United Kingdom: England, Scotland and Northern Ireland. Each of them has its own flag, the elements of which are "stacked" in the common flag of Great Britain.

1.4 The Flag of England

The first element of the flag of Great Britain (England) is the image of the red straight cross on a white background (St. George's cross). This element of the flag of Great Britain appeared much earlier than the official approval of the modern flag of this country, and has its roots in the middle Ages. There is a version that St. George began to protect the freedom-loving British nation during the Crusades, in which the knights of England for the first time showed their exceptional courage and skill, which later played a significant role in the formation of a huge colonial Empire.

1.5 The Flag of Scotland

The patron Saint of Scotland is Saint Andrew and this part of the flag of England has a blue background and a white diagonal cross. This background supposedly appeared as a tribute to King James I, who started the unification of England and Scotland. In Russia, this flag is known as "St. Andrew's" (in honor of St. Andrew) and it is the official flag of Russian fleet.

1.6 The Flag of Ireland

The red diagonal cross on a white background symbolizes St. Patrick, another defender of Great Britain. St. Patrick is the patron Saint of the Irish and it is clear that this thin diagonal cross on the flag of England is slightly offset. Some people who study the flags of different countries believe that it is this displacement of the cross of St. Patrick gives the flag of England the very originality and uniqueness for which it is valued by the British themselves. Historians believe that such a decision was invented by the British in order not to confuse the sense of national pride of the Scots [3].

1.7 The flag of Wales

Wales is not represented on the Union Flag because by the time the first version of the flag appeared, Wales was already united with England Wales.

So, the cross of St. George, patron saint of England since the 1270's, is a red cross on a white ground. After James I succeeded to the throne, it was combined with the cross of St Andrew in 1606. The cross of St Andrew, patron saint of Scotland, is a diagonal white cross on a blue ground. The cross of St. Patrick, patron saint of Ireland, is a diagonal red cross on a white ground. A Red Dragon is a symbol of Welsh Flag. This was combined with the previous Union Flag of St. George and St. Andrew, after the Act of Union of Ireland with England (and Wales) and Scotland on 1 January 1801, to create the Union Flag that has been flown ever since. The Welsh dragon does not appear on the Union Flag. This is because when the first Union Flag was created in 1606.

So, the Union Flag was originally a Royal flag. When the present design was made official in 1801, it was ordered to be flown on all the King's forts and castles, but not elsewhere. The modern British flag is a blue rectangular cloth with the image of a red straight cross in a white edging, superimposed on top of white and red oblique crosses. Officially, the ratio of the width and length of the flag is not established, but usually public authorities use flags with a ratio of width to length of 1:2 [4].

The Union Jack should be flown at half-mast from public buildings in the following situations: on the day of the death of the monarch, on the day of the funeral of members of The British Royal family, during the funeral of the former British Prime Minister.

The Union Flag is flown on Government buildings on days marking the birthdays of members of the Royal Family, Commonwealth Day, Coronation Day, The Queen's official birthday, Remembrance Day and on the days of the State Opening and sessions of Parliament.

Today the Union Jack is not only the flag but also a popular symbol that regularly appears on clothes, bags,

souvenirs and even cars. Its colours attract people so that it has become a fashionable emblem all over the world [5].

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