

COLONIZATION OF THE RUSSIA AND USA IN THE WORKS OF CONTEMPORARY ANGLO-AMERICAN HISTORIANS: A COMPARATIVE ASPECT

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ABSTRACT

The article analyzes the works of Anglo-American researchers on the history of Russian colonization, in which the territorial expansion of Russia and the United States is considered in a comparative manner. G.V. Ibneeva and I.A. Popov shows that modern Anglo-American works are characterized by a tendency to establish direct analogies between the colonization of Russia and the USA: between Cossacks and cowboys, Ukraine and Louisiana, etc. At the same time, analyzing the research literature on the studied problem, the authors of the article come to the conclusion that modern Anglo-American historians tend to see more differences in the colonization processes in Russia and the USA than similarities. Development methods of new lands are often evaluated by Anglo-American researchers in favor of Russia; the means by which colonization was carried out is seen as a more "positive" example of territorial expansion. This conclusion is not typical for the history of Russia in foreign historiography. The research results show a variety of interpretations of the history of Russian colonization in this historiography.

Keywords: Anglo-American historiography, Russian colonization, frontier, The Middle Ground, Wild West, Caucasus, Siberia, Steppe.

1.INTRODUCTION

The 20th century is the era of the collapse of all colonial empires and the construction of a bipolar world, dominated by the Russian (Soviet) state and the United States of America. Given the features of the formation and development of these states, their perception and evaluation as empires is quite natural. Historians of both continents began to find historical parallels in the expansion processes of these two empires. It should be noted that in Soviet historical science such analogies were not popular, as well as a comparative study of the colonization processes in Russia and the USA. This was largely due to the existing ideology and censorship. At the same time, the writings of Anglo-American researchers raised questions of a comparative study of the colonization of these two countries, and made analogies in the study of the development of new lands. This article analyzes the works of Anglo-American researchers on the

history of Russian colonization, in which the territorial expansion of Russia and the United States is considered in a comparative manner.

2.METHODS

Since the 1980s, a departure from ideological attitudes has been outlined in the foreign historiography of Russian history, the development of pluralism of concepts in research has become noticeable. At this time, a publicity policy was announced in the USSR, which led to an increase in the access of foreign researchers to the Russian archives. This in turn entailed the emergence of new conceptually diverse works on the history of Russian territorial expansion. In the framework of this study, the work of representatives of Anglo-American historiography was studied, which included the works of graduates of historical schools of universities in America and the UK, as well as specialists conducting teaching and research activities in universities and other scientific centers of these countries.

Anglo-American historiography of Russian colonization of the last 30–35 years is of most interest for research using discourse analysis. Using a discursive approach to the analysis of historiographical texts, it becomes possible to identify the situational context in which the authors of the studied works are located and those cognitive attitudes with which they form the image of Russian colonization in comparison with American history.

To compile a complete picture of interpretations of historical facts, it is impossible to do without comparing the points of view of the authors using the comparative historical method.

3.RESULTS

According to Thomas Barrett, an American researcher of the history of the Russian Cossacks, the search for complete analogies between Russia and the USA is a fascinating activity for many young authors who begin to equate various historical events directly: “Kazan becomes St. Louis, the conquest of Novgorod is likened to the transition of Ohio out of control Great Britain to the USA, and Ukraine’s accession is akin to Louisiana’s purchase” (Barrett, 1999: 4). Such direct comparisons are enough for various kinds of amateurs, publicists and beginners, romantically inclined American historians. It should be noted that such analogies are typical not only for Americans, but are also found in modern Russian historiography.

An important conceptual basis for drawing historical parallels between the history of the United States and the growth of the Russian Empire was the theory of the frontier, created by Frederick Jackson Turner at the end of the 19th century. He argued that the American state and the entire American nation were formed under the conditions of a moving border, that is, under the conditions of the constant growth of the territory and its intensive development. This theory was very popular in the USA and it was quite natural that attempts to shift it to the history of other states appeared. In this regard, the Russian Empire, constantly expanding its space within the framework of one continent, seemed ideally suited to justify its formation as a history of the frontier.

It should be noted that F. Turner himself considered his theory applicable only to the history of North America and never mentioned Russia as a country in which similar processes took place. However, this did not prevent other historians in the middle of the

20th century from starting to describe the history of the territorial expansion of the Russian state in line with Turner's theory of the frontier. This idea was actively developed by Russian historians emigrating to America, as well as their students - A. Lobanov-Rostovsky (Lobanov-Rostovsky, 1965), I. Vekzinsky (Wieczynski, 1976), B. Summer (Sumner, 1944), D. Treadgold (Treadgold, 1952) and others.

The USA had the "Wild West" - a territory of wild conditions where there was no legislation, and a huge amount of free land. Russia possessed Siberia with similar features of a vast undeveloped space in which the active population moved, trying to find a job or avoid government control. The influence of such an opinion in Anglo-American historiography was also noted by the outstanding American scholar of Siberian history Alan Wood (Wood, 1991: 11).

Comparing the US Wild West and Siberia, it is difficult to resist direct analogies. The simplest interpretations create the idea of Cossacks as American pioneers, of the indigenous people of Siberia as Indians of the United States. Similar direct analogies are more characteristic of publicists such as Benson Bobrick than professional historians (Bobrick, 1992: 41).

At first glance, such assumptions seem strained. However, many researchers find the similarities in the colonization of the United States and Russia precisely in the direct actors of colonization, which moved the borders of the state. For example, Denis Shaw, in his article "The Southern Frontier of Moscow 1550-1700," emphasizes that the Russian anti-state movement was carried out by the same anti-state elements as in America. These were the Tatars, runaway peasants, religious dissidents, that is, all those who fled from official power and sought to gain freedom and build their new society without state pressure. This was a living embodiment of the ideology of the American frontier" (Shaw, 1983: 139). In this perception, there is a certain romanticization of Russian history, and especially the history of the Russian Cossacks. It is the Cossacks - the main actors of Russian colonization, perceived by the Anglo-American authors as the closest social group to the American colonists and landowners. However, a significant number of Anglo-American historians are opposed to such comparisons and the involvement of frontier theory in the study of the history of the expansion of the Russian state.

The main argument against a direct comparison of the colonization processes of the United States and Russia is the completely different relationship established between the indigenous population and the newcomers. As almost all Anglo-American researchers emphasize, in the Russian state, the indigenous population was included in national processes, which is not at all implied in the theory of the American frontier and in the idea of the development of the Wild West, where the Indians became enemies, and still have not been fully incorporated into American society.

There are various explanations for such practices of the Russian government in relation to the colonized peoples. The main one is purely economic in nature: the annexed peoples paid *yasak* and other fees. They were needed, because the Cossacks themselves could not hunt fur riches from the vast territory of Siberia with their own hunting. So the population was necessary for the extraction of financial, economic benefits in general. However, such judgments cannot sufficiently explain the reasons for the "humane" behavior of the Russian authorities in relation to local peoples.

For the Western powers, the local population was also an object for profit, but they did it very differently. As David Collins emphasizes, "in dealing with the Tatars and other peoples, the Russians did not have a trace of the racial superiority that all other

European colonists had” (Collins, 1991: 63). In addition to the absence of racism, it is also said that Russians have no slave-owning culture. According to Gudrun Ziegler, “the Russians, arriving in Alaska, did not continue the profitable slave trade that the British and Americans practiced there, but rather tried to treat the local population well” (Ziegler, 2005: 166). Consequently, the economic interest in the indigenous population still cannot explain their incorporation into the state economy, which took place in the Russian state.

An important factor explaining this phenomenon is that the formation of the Russian state took place surrounded by different peoples who professed completely different civilizational values: these were the steppes, beginning with the Polovtsy, Finno-Ugric peoples and Turks. Moreover, these peoples did not just surround the Russian state, but took a direct part in its history: they participated in civil strife, served in the army, and carried on trade. The long-standing tradition of including foreigners in their economic and political (incorporation of the nobility) activities has largely influenced the formation of a kind of Russian state “tolerance”.

At times, such constructive assessments are met with criticism from Russian colleagues. Symptomatically, for the opinion that “in British North America, the white colonists almost did not try to introduce the local population to the European way of life or integrate local cultures into Anglo-American society, while the Russians, on the contrary, ruled the peoples of Bashkiria, Siberia and other border regions using their policies inclusion in public life ”(Donnelly, 1995: 260–261) the American historian A. Donnelly was criticized by the Russian researcher I.G. Akmanova. The latter prepared an introductory article for his Russian edition (“The Conquest of Bashkiria by Russia, 1552-1740”), in which he noted that “such arguments contribute to the justification of the aggressive policy of tsarism” (Donnelly, 1995: 22).

Anglo-American authors call the military a different factor in the “tolerant attitude” of the Russian state toward indigenous peoples. The constant need to maintain a strong army, ongoing wars and border skirmishes demanded flexibility in the formation of the armed forces. Attracting allies at key frontiers, using the local nobility as officers for the tsarist army, strengthened the Russian army, and military groups from non-Russian peoples became full-fledged military units, held together by a policy of incorporating the nobility and population. Considering the features of military incorporation of the local elite in the United States and Russia, A. Donelli notes the following: “This difference in the initial principles of command was reflected in the military strategy. The British and American forces used allied Indians as scouts, and in critical situations their help was sometimes welcomed by Anglo-American warlords. However, the authorities of Great Britain or the USA almost never seriously considered the possibility of recruiting large groups of Indians allied to them to serve in the army against their hostile tribesmen, as well as state support for such an army and equipping it with weapons. The border military strategy of Russia was the exact opposite of this” (Donnelly, 1968; Vargas, et al 2019; Alpeisso, et al 2018).

It should be noted that such differences in relation to the indigenous peoples in the USA and Russia forced the Anglo-American researchers to abandon the use of frontier theory to the history of the Russian state and to resort to the use of other concepts. For example, Thomas Barrett, in his research on the Russian colonization of the Caucasus, is trying to draw an analogy with American history, based on the theory of Richard White about the “Middle Level”. This concept is that in the XVII-XVIII centuries. in the Great Lakes region, the ongoing relationship between French, English colonists

and Indians created a kind of “middle” community, which included the culture of all participants in the exchange process (White, 1991). Barrett believes that similar processes at the same time took place between the Cossacks and the indigenous peoples of the Caucasus. (Barrett, 1999). The theme of the mutual influence and diffusion of peoples in the Russian Empire, thus, resonates in American history.

It should not be thought that all Anglo-American authors present the history of Russian colonization as a peaceful process of relations between Russian colonists and indigenous people. There are works focusing on various crimes of Russians against the peoples of Siberia and the Caucasus, which is clearly expressed in the texts of Maria Benningsen-Broxup (Benningsen-Broxup, 1992: 4–16) and James Forsyth (1991: 80). James Forsyth believes that Russian intervention in the life of indigenous peoples had disastrous consequences for them: they were destroyed by disease and war, and their culture was destroyed. On the other hand, the American author Valerie Kivelson on this occasion notes that “violence and disease brought losses to the Siberian peoples no less than they devastated the indigenous population of America.” In her opinion, Russians, unlike the Americans, tried to establish a long-term partnership with indigenous peoples, within the framework of which each ethnic group had its own distinct territory, which is a zone of its cultural influence. Consequently, they sought to maintain these differences, and not to assimilate or destroy as in the United States. Russian politics was aimed at preserving local settlements and states on the periphery (Kivelson, 2008: 36–37).

James Forsyth draws attention to other, cultural aspects of the history of the colonization of the United States and Russia, revealing their differences. According to him, “the situation of the indigenous peoples of Siberia and North America varies greatly. Before the advent of Europeans, the Indians lacked any contacts with other cultures and peoples, while the Siberian peoples were subjected to different influences of the great civilizations of Eurasia” (Forsyth, 1991: Sazesh, & Siadat, 2018; Mendonça & Andrade 2018]. Therefore, Russian colonization was faced with much greater cultural and civilizational diversity, was able to “digest” this, and became the owner of a more diverse culture itself.

4.DISCUSSION

Summarizing the discussions on the general features of the colonization of the United States and Russia, the American researcher Mark Bassin brought out the concept that “the United States and Russia are a product of European expansion into a non-European world. They are just peripheral branches of the promotion of pan-European civilization, which gradually became not quite European. In this, in his opinion, is the similarity of the colonization of the USA and Russia” (Bassin, 1993: 485). It is difficult to argue with this statement, since it brings the territorial expansion of Russia and the United States together with all European colonial countries to the same criteria, thereby making any condemning statements unnecessarily in the direction of one country or reducing the degree of bias towards this topic.

5.CONCLUSION

In conclusion, it must be said that the prejudice towards the colonization of Russia was especially pronounced in Anglo-American historiography during the Cold War. The

presence of a large number of works in modern Anglo-American historiography, where when comparing the colonial policies of the United States and the Russian state, the latter looks more and more as a positive example of a tolerant policy, confirms that there is a revision of the established unambiguous negative judgments regarding the history of Russian colonization. The ideology of the Cold War is gradually becoming a thing of the past: at least, this is evident from the works of American historians.

In modern Anglo-American historiography, in conditions when the ideological component has faded into the background, there is no consensus on similar features of the colonialist policies of Russia and the United States. At the same time, some patterns can be distinguished. This is, first of all, the universal desire to transfer theories and concepts created to explain the expansion factors on the American continent to the history of the Russian state. In addition to the theory of frontier Frederick Turner, Richard White's Middle Ground concept was also widely adopted.

An attempt to transfer purely American theories of the historical formation of the nation and use direct analogies between American and Russian history shows the existence of a stable "American-centric" discourse in the entire Anglo-American historiography of Russian history. Assessment of the evolutionary processes of the development of states of modern and recent times is perceived through the prism of their own ideas about the development of US history. At the same time, the "anti-orientalist" discourse on the history of colonization, which has gained popularity in Western historiography, clearly criticizes the traditional notions of European expansion as a boon for "affiliated" peoples and cultivates the guilt of the "white man". In studies on Russian history, the impact of this discourse on Anglo-American scholars leads to conflicting conclusions. On the one hand, the Russian version of colonization favorably differs in the work, as it is more "humane" and humane, coupled with methods of incorporating indigenous peoples into the general life of the state that are different from Western models. On the other hand, historians criticize any form of manifestation of colonization as processes that ultimately lead to the suppression of local communities and negatively affect their sustainable development.

The views of foreign scholars on the historical development of Russia can set new lines of research, and a description of the relationship between Russian and indigenous peoples from the perspective of outside observers may help develop approaches to resolving complex national issues.

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