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UK Position on Black Sea Ownership during the Crimean War

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Abstract

Introduction. The position of Great Britain on the ownership of the Black Sea during the Crimean War (1853—1856) is being considered. The purpose of the study is to determine the position of Members of Parliament of the United Kingdom on the ownership of the Black Sea during the Crimean War. The tasks of the study involve an analysis of this country's motives which sent its military forces to the territorial maritime belt of Russia in the middle of the 19th century.

Materials and methods. On the basis of historical-comparative and historical-genetic methods of research, the position of Great Britain on the Black Sea belonging, the deployment peculiarities of British military forces in Crimea, party disagreements of members of parliament and the Admiralty regarding Britain's participation in the war are analyzed.

Results. It was established that at the meetings of the Parliament of the United Kingdom, the conviction of members of the government and deputies that Britain became the owner of the Black Sea during this period was repeatedly announced. It is concluded that in the middle of the 19th century the Crimean War, becoming a continuation of the inter-party struggle for power in parliament, was aimed at expanding Britain's colonial ambitions in the Black Sea.

Discussion and conclusion. Back in the middle of the 19th century Great Britain provoked hostilities in the Crimea, doing everything to weaken Russia. However, the war weakened all the powers participating in it, including Britain. Anti-Russian and militaristic sentiments became part of the political struggle of the government and parliamentary fractions, as well as part of the formation of a centuries-old mentality of the government and parliamentary circles of Great Britain. The study is of relevant political importance for the modern understanding of the militaristic foreign policy of Great Britain and the origins of state Russophobia.

Keywords: Black Sea, Crimean War, United Kingdom, Russia, Parliament.

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Научная статья

Позиция Великобритании по вопросу принадлежности Чёрного моря в годы Крымской войны

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Аннотация

Введение. Рассматривается позиция Великобритании по вопросу принадлежности Чёрного моря в годы Крымской войны (1853–1856). Целью исследования является определение позиции членов парламента Соединенного

Королевства по вопросу принадлежности Чёрного моря в годы Крымской войны. Задачи исследования предполагают анализ мотивов этой страны, направившей свои войска в территориальные воды России в середине XIX в.

Материалы и методы. На основе историко-сравнительного и историко-генетического методов исследования анализируется позиция Великобритании по вопросу принадлежности Чёрного моря, особенности дислокации в Крыму британских войск, партийные разногласия членов парламента и адмиралтейства в отношении участия Британии в войне.

Результаты исследования. Установлено, что на заседаниях парламента Соединённого Королевства неоднократно озвучивалось убеждение членов правительства и депутатов в том, что Британия стала в этот период «хозяином Чёрного моря». Делается вывод, что в середине XIX в. Крымская война, став продолжением межпартийной борьбы за власть в парламенте, была направлена на расширение колониальных амбиций Британии в Чёрном море.

Обсуждение и заключение. Ещё в середине XIX в. Великобритания провоцировала военные действия в Крыму, делая всё, чтобы ослабить Россию. Однако война ослабила все участвующие в ней державы, в том числе и Британию. Антироссийские и милитаристские настроения стали частью политической борьбы правительства и парламентских фракций, а также частью формирования многовекового менталитета правительственных и парламентских кругов Великобритании. Исследование имеет актуальное политическое значение для современного понимания милитаристской внешней политики Великобритании и истоков государственной русофобии.

Ключевые слова: Чёрное море, Крымская война, Великобритания, Россия, парламент.

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Introduction. The relevance of the study of the position of Great Britain on the ownership of the Black Sea during the Crimean War (1853–1856) is due to the scientific, practical and political significance of the topic. The analysis of parliamentary debates, as a reflection of the aggressive foreign policy of the United Kingdom, makes it possible to more deeply identify, comparing the centuries-old goals and motives of the country's participation in wars, as well as the existing disagreements in parliament and government. In the works of Russian scientists, the features of the Crimean War were considered in the context of "Army Health Care Service" [1, p. 109], "problems of epidemics and hygiene in Victorian foreign policy" [2, p. 61]. In recent years, the focus has shifted to the study of the factors of resignation of the government, noting "disagreements in the British government regarding the country's entry into the war, the structure of the Admiralty, administrative, medical and military departments. The war became part of a fractional and cross-party power struggle. Members of Parliament insisted on vote non-confidence in the British government, wanted the Minister of War and the government to resign" [3, pp. 38–39]. The purpose of this study is to determine the position of the British Parliament members on the issue of the ownership of Black Sea during the Crimean War, as well as the motives of this country which sent its military forces to the territorial maritime belt of Russia and other countries of the world.

Materials and methods. On the basis of historical-comparative and historical-genetic methods of research, the position of Great Britain on the Black Sea belonging during the Crimean War (1853–1856), the peculiarities of the deployment of British military forces in Crimea, party disagreements between members of parliament and the Admiralty regarding Britain's entry and participation in the war are analysed. The study is based on the analysis of government documents of the United Kingdom (parliamentary debates, speeches of parliament members and the periodical press).

Results. Problems arising from the deployment of the British Navy in the Black Sea were discussed in the British Parliament during the Crimean War. MP, Earl of Clanricarde, raised a question of the British officers' reports regarding the operations of the Russian Navy on the eastern coast of the Black Sea. He noted that they contradicted the official reports of the Russian government, having emphasized that "the events described by the Russian and British governments are different". Previously, MP, Earl of Hardwicke, having analysed the military operations, which, as noted, "were successfully conducted by the Russian Navy on the eastern shore of the Black Sea", indicated that several forts were destroyed. He noted that the Russian naval operations were not of the nature and significance that were attributed to them, and the evacuation of these forts by Russia was evidence that "we were the masters of the Black Sea". After the Sinop massacre caused widespread indignation, members of the government in both houses of the British Parliament said that admirals and naval commanders in the Black Sea were ordered to prevent the possibility of any such disaster

that occurred with Turkish ships in the port of Sevastopol, and also “not to allow the Russian Navy to undertake any operations”. The phrase used by the First Lord of the Admiralty of Great Britain in Parliament read: “no Russian warship should be allowed to sail in the Black Sea” [4, pp. 1286–1288].

The Russian government published an official report on naval operations, which was confirmed by the report that Captain Jones sent to Admiral Dundas. “The Russian Empire opposed the alliance of Great Britain, the Ottoman Empire and France” [5, p. 63]. The official statement of the Russian government was that “forts on the eastern coast of the Black Sea are more undesirable to hold by Russian military forces”. The arguments of Earl of Clarendon were that “the destruction of these forts proved our dominance on the Black Sea”, although these forts were never intended to meet an attack of the enemy navy. It was important for Russia to withdraw military forces from these forts, concentrating them where they would be effective against Turkish and English forces. “The Russians conducted an operation to evacuate people and troops successfully”, according to their own report and the report of a British officer. But the number of people taken from the fort differed in the documents, “amounting to about 5.000 people. Approximately 2500 people among them were the most important replenishment of Russian military forces, and their withdrawal was the most important military operation” of Russia [4, p. 1289]. At the same time, the British Minister of War, the grandson of the Russian ambassador, Lord Gray, “considered the army of the Russian Empire formidable in number” [6, p. 117].

In the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, “anti-Russian sentiments” grew [7, p. 26]. About two hundred years ago, the leading British newspaper “The Economist”, forming Russophobia and militaristic anti-Russian sentiments, reflected the colonial policy and aggressive plans of the British government: “We hope to gain control of Sevastopol, revolutionize Georgia” [8].

The British ships “Sampson” and “Stromboli” were deployed in the Black Sea. The military operations they carried out were considered in Parliament to be the most important for the UK. Then the vessels were anchored in Baker’s Bay. “Sampson”, which had six heavy guns and 200 personnel on board, with the assistance of a French frigate of about the same number, was believed “easily to be able to sink all Russian ships”. Threats of Great Britain were sent to the Emperor of Russia, Alexander II. “The instructions of the British government to English courts were to strictly restrict the access of all Russian ships to the port of Sevastopol”. MP Earl of Clanricarde insisted that Russian reports were “truthful”. But Earl of Clarendon, based on the correctness that distinguished Russian statements over the past six to seven months, did not share the opinion of Earl of Clanricarde. British officers were to carry out reconnaissance, observing the line of Russian forts along the coast of Cherkessia and Crimea, as well as the objects for approaching and landing. The report of these operations of March 16, 1854 was based on the instructions of Admiral Dundas, dated March 8, 1854. The instructions to the British Admiral regarding Russian ships were not secret. They were presented to the parliament, reported to the Emperor of Russia, Alexander II, suggesting “the complete dominance of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland over the Black Sea. If any Russian warships are met cruising in the Black Sea, then they must return to the nearest Russian port” [4, pp. 1290–1292].

Earl of Hardwicke stressed that Officer Jones, the captain of “Sampson” ship, was an outstanding officer who had tested his abilities in the service of Her Majesty the Queen Victoria. He successfully conducted the most difficult naval operations in Lagos, on the African coast, and in the Black Sea acted in accordance with the instructions of December 1853, about which Russian naval officers are aware. During this period, both English and French naval ships were in the Black Sea. Speaking in Parliament, Earl of Clanricarde cited the official journals of St. Petersburg, where it was reported that “5.000 combat-ready members of the armed forces were withdrawn by Russia from the Circassian coast. Then they had to be delivered to Sevastopol... 5.000 first-class members of the armed forces were withdrawn who could harm Britain by uniting with the garrison of Sevastopol”. The parliament noted that “without notifying Russia, Britain is at war, conducting hostile actions against it”. It was welcomed if “the French and English officers had won and sunk the Russian ships”. Captain Brock and several officers of Britain landed and were met by local Circassians who said that all forts were destroyed and should be destroyed except one. It was the first time when the UK representatives had spoken directly to the Circassians. The forts were staffed by soldiers sentenced to punishment. Earl of Clarendon stressed that “with all our intentions and goals, we fulfilled our declaration and remained the masters of the Black Sea” [4, pp. 1290–1296].

Earl of Clanricarde said that Earl Clarendon had misled him, since it was not the officers, but the government. He complained of “hesitation, pomposity, uncertain and hesitant behaviour of the government, which had no right to use the threat to the emperor of Russia, unless they were ready to give admirals and officers under their command instructions on its implementation”. They did not give such instructions. Earl of Clanricarde said that Britain “had no right to interfere

in Russia's communications before the declaration of war". Russia was not allowed to transport its troops from one Russian port to another in the Black Sea. The First Lord of the Admiralty, J. Graham, stressed that "the French and English governments issued orders that no Russian warship would be allowed to move along the Black Sea if the British and French forces could prevent this". Earl of Clanricarde knew from a private letter that the Navy knew that operations to withdraw Russian troops were about to begin or had already begun on the eastern shore of the Black Sea. The ship "Sampson" and the French steamer were sent there, and Admiral Dundas warned that British officers would attack, sink or destroy Russian ships, obeying instructions. Earl of Clanricarde believed that the withdrawal of Russian troops from Cherkessia was a military operation of great importance, which Her Majesty's government allowed. The parliament discussed that the Russian captains were offered to return to Russian ports, while they could be rudely told: "If you do not return, we will beat your brains out" [4, p. 1293].

The Emperor of Russia, Alexander II, in a manifesto addressed to his people, noted the injustice: Russian troops were not allowed to strike on their own coast, although the Turks were allowed full-scale actions. The published manifesto explained this as one of the reasons of the war between England and Russia. The parliament discussed that "the Government of Her Majesty Queen Victoria insulted the Emperor of Russia, Alexander II, considering it necessary to make such statements". MP Hardwicke believed that "Her Majesty's government should either refrain from threatening by taking conciliatory methods, or, using threatening carry it out in an energetic, honest and appropriate to the statesman of Britain manner" [4, p. 1299].

Duke of Newcastle as a representative of the Peelite party served in the coalition government of Earl of Aberdeen as Secretary of State for War and the Colonies (1852–1854), and as Secretary of State for Military Affairs and Minister of War (1854–1855). He "denied the statement of Earl of Hardwicke, which can be considered as an accusation of Her Majesty's government". Presenting distorted extracts, he began by accusing indecision, pomposity, setting out accusations using offensive words, making a shameful accusation of lying, saying that "the government did not give Admiral Dundas any instructions". At the same time, Duke of Newcastle stressed that "the instructions were sent out and implemented". They were as follows: "After the accident in Sinop, we have come to the point where we should set aside all hope of maintaining peace, take every precaution as possible so that this does not happen again. The admiral of the Navy in the Black Sea was sent instructions to defend the Turkish territory and the Turkish flag. In order to achieve this goal, if any of our ships meets the Russian Navy or Russian warships in any part of the Black Sea, then wish them to retreat to the nearest Russian port". Instructions sent by the British government had been brought to the attention of the Russian government before the declaration of war, explained by the "need to protect the Turkish territory and the Turkish flag". Newcastle noted that he regreted that they were prevented from winning on the shores of the Black Sea by destroying enemy forts. If Russian vessels, acting on these instructions, did not immediately retreat to the Russian port, then the officers, according to British instructions, would force them to do so. It was welcomed to «instruct the British officers to attack and destroy any Russian ships they find in the Black Sea" before declaring war, which made them necessary to protect the national honour" of Britain [4, pp. 1301–1302].

During the Crimean War, in the military hospitals of the British Empire, located in the coastal regions of the Black Sea, "unsanitary conditions, dysentery, epidemics (plague, typhus, cholera)" began to be recorded everywhere [2, p. 83]. In the middle of the 19th century. in Great Britain there was a legislative "formation of socio-hygienic ideas" [9, p. 111]. It was proposed "to introduce control of the medical department of armies located in the coastal regions of the Black Sea in the Crimea and in Turkey" [10, p. 84].

The consequence of these reforms and the Crimean War was the formation of a new health care system for the army of the countries of the world. This problem was also discussed in the British Parliament, where "it was proposed to introduce control of the medical department of armies located in the coastal areas of the Black Sea in the Crimea". It was noted that the losses of the British army only in September 1855 were significant.

"More than 3.500 people died of disease or fell into the hands of the enemy. Fever, dysentery in a short time led to the fact that more than a thousand people died in hospitals" [11].

There was much discussion, criticism and controversy in the UK Government and Parliament on war organization, Army health, Navy supply and hospitals. Lord John Russell as a former Prime Minister and spokesman for the Tory Party in 1854 "expressed dissatisfaction with the managing the affairs of the war department, proposing transferring the management from the Duke of Newcastle to the Lord Palmerston. The opposition insisted on replacing the Duke of Newcastle. But Earl of Aberdeen's coalition government did not do it. MP Benjamin Disraeli opposed the appointment of

Lord Palmerston and the resignation of the Duke of Newcastle, stressing that “the great army died in the distant country to which it was sent by the government. But he has no doubt that “the Duke of Newcastle is appointed to his post with the most laborious duties, and as a politician, he owes his success to the party”. Speaking in parliament, the ambitious Lord Palmerston strongly stated that the English “nation is unanimous in its determination to wage war, considering it fair” [12, pp. 1121–1233].

MP, Earl of Malmesbury, stressed that “this is the first time he found out that the Lords are not free to criticise the Government using language in their remarks that they may have considered appropriate. He always thought they were free to do that. But in fact, the Lords had no right to make such remarks”. Particular criticism of members of parliament was caused by the interpretation of the word “demand” when “the British admiral met a Russian ship in the Black Sea”. Should he have “demanded that the ship enter the Russian port? There was the word “to force” (contrastre), then to return” in the instructions to the French admiral. Earl of Malmesbury pointed out that “Newcastle should know, as a member of the Cabinet, that it was discussed which of these words is better to respond clearly, and whether force should be used”. The Duke of Argyll said that he did not deny that there could be a difference between words in French and English, and the negative speeches and accusations of parliament members were “in the spirit of party hostility to Her Majesty’s government”. But in fact, MPs “attacked the officers’ behaviour”. The sent instructions were that “Russian ships were to return to the nearest ports. And the officers, having received instructions, believed that the retreat under the Russian fort in the Russian bay could be interpreted as a setback”. The warning to the Russian emperor was fulfilled when instructions were given that no operations should be allowed in the Black Sea. Since the publication of these instructions, “the Russian Navy has never shown a nose from Sevastopol, and no major naval operations have been carried out” [4].

In the historical consciousness of Foggy Albion’ inhabitants, the perception of the Crimean War as a victory of Great Britain remained. The memorial complex in honour of heroes of this war has stood for several centuries in the centre of London. However, already at the end of the war, the parliament noted that the military operations of the English army in the Black Sea are “a struggle not to defeat Russia in the Crimea, but to defeat the Whigs”. The Lord Palmerston stressed that the resignation of the Aberdeen government in Britain in the post-Crimean War is a “disappointment for the nation” [12].

Even before the war, the Peelites insisted that Lord John Russell become the British Foreign Secretary, and Lord G. J. Palmerston become the Home Secretary. As a result, after the Crimean War, Prime Minister Aberdeen and Secretary of State for Military Affairs Newcastle were forced to resign. But in the end, Lord Palmerston at an advanced age of more than seventy years became the oldest prime minister in English political history, who was first appointed to this high (for the United Kingdom) position. Currently, in the 21st century, not a single British Prime Minister who first entered 10 Downing Street surpassed this record of Lord Palmerston.

But Prime Minister Lord Aberdeen, ending the war, rightly expressed his long-distance vision, doubt, about the practical effect of the Paris Treaty of 1856 in terms of neutralizing the Black Sea, which at that time was “open to the whole world” [13].

Discussion and conclusion. Thus, the analysis shows that back in the middle of the 19th century Great Britain, trying to capture and control the Black Sea, provoked hostilities in the Crimea, having done everything to weaken Russia. However, the war weakened all the powers participating in it, including Britain, bringing an increase in dissatisfaction with the state policy of the United Kingdom. Anti-Russian and militaristic sentiments became part of the political struggle of the government and parliamentary fractions, as well as part of the formation of a centuries-old mentality of the government and parliamentary circles of Great Britain. This study is of scientific, practical and political importance for the modern understanding of the origins of Russophobia, the aggressive foreign policy of the United Kingdom, the centuries-old motives of its participation in the wars in the Black Sea.

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