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QUIT INDIA MOVEMENT, JAWAHARLAL NEHRU AND THE ALLIED POWERS OF GREAT BRITAIN

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Abstract

The article is devoted to one of the little-studied aspects of Indian history - the anti-British "Leave India" movement of 1942 and the reaction of allied countries in the Anti-Hitler and Anti-Japanese coalitions. The authors use the materials of the Ministry of External Affairs of the National Archives of India, published volumes of British government documents, memoirs, and the press of those years. Based on a critical analysis of the sources, it is concluded that the Allies' position on the "Leave India" movement was similar - none of the countries supported it. The growth of a national movement in India against British rule in 1942 was a less pressing issue for the Allies than waging a world war against the aggressors. Internationalism discretely took precedence over anti-colonial nationalism.

Keywords: country, politics, history, industry, movement.

I. INTRODUCTION

The August Revolution of 1942 in India, also known as the anti-British movement under the slogan "Quit India", was a significant stage in the history of the liberation struggle of Asian peoples against colonialism. It occurred during World War II, when Indians were forced to make a choice – to fight against fascism or against British imperialism. The National Congress Party (INC), representing the interests of the overwhelming majority of Indians, did not hinder the military efforts of Great Britain and did not use the difficulties of its position to end colonial oppression. However, after Japan entered the war and the threat of new enslavement arose for India, the INC took a course on immediate achievement of state independence. One of the most experienced and authoritative leaders of the INC, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, proposed to the party a plan to put pressure on the colonialists, the essence of which was concentrated in the laconic slogan "Quit India" Gandhi called on the British administration to immediately leave the country (NAI, 1942, file 635-F). He hoped that the voluntary withdrawal of the British from India would raise a wave of enthusiasm among its population and would facilitate the organization of an effective resistance to the Japanese invaders.

In the event of the authorities' refusal to accept the Congress's demand, Gandhi decided to apply an original method of struggle that he had repeatedly used in the past – to declare an all-India campaign of civil disobedience (satyagraha). The INC President Abul Kalam Azad, a member of the party leadership and Gandhi's favorite student, Jawaharlal Nehru, and many other Congressmen did not immediately support his idea. They were sure that the colonial authorities would repress the Congress. However, there was no alternative plan of action and on August 8, 1942, the party session in Bombay approved the resolution "Quit India" (1942 August Resolution, 2007). Thus, Gandhi received the authority to negotiate with the colonial administration. Having accused the Congress of preparing a "rebellion", the authorities launched a preemptive strike and arrested the Congress leaders. However, their expectation that the measures taken would help prevent the rise of the liberation struggle did not come true. The mass arrests backfired and sparked a massive popular movement. The British had to withdraw 57 battalions of the colonial army from the Indo-Burma front to suppress the Quit India movement (NAI, 1942, file 635-F).

The purpose of this article is to characterize the position of the leading countries-allies of Great Britain in the Anti-Japanese and Anti-Hitler coalitions in relation to the "Quit India" movement.

II. DISCUSSION AND RESULTS

The problem of the national liberation struggle of the Indian people against British rule during the Second World War has been studied by Russian authors for quite a long time, and among the late Soviet and modern Russian publications, one way or another concerning the "Quit India" movement, one can name the works of L.B. Alaev, A.A. Vigasin and A.L. Safronova (Алаев, Вигасин, Сафронова, 2010), A.V. Gorev (Горев, 1989), A.V. Raikov (Райков, 1989), F.N. Yurlov and E.S. Yurlova (Юрлов, 2008; Юрлов, Юрлова, 2010), and other authors. They emphasize that the movement created certain difficulties for Great Britain during the period of Japanese aggression in Hindustan, and its allies did not welcome it or support it. At the same time, the movement demonstrated the influence of the INC among the masses and anti-British sentiments in society.

Indian historians have certainly studied this movement and the reaction of foreign countries to its rise. All of them emphasize the historical significance of the Gandhian struggle against the British regime and its high moral message, but also recognize the ambiguity of the consequences for India's defense capability in the context of the military campaign of 1942. The study draws on the works of A. Bhuyan (Bhuyan, 1975), R.S. Jauhri (Jauhri, 1970), П.К. Майти (Maity, 2002), V. Mehta (Mehta, 1976), B.R. Nanda (Nanda, 1985), D.N. Panigrahi (Panigrahi, 1984), V.T. Patil (Patil, 1984), S. Sen (Sen, 1985/86), M.S. Venkataraman and B.K. Shrivastava (Venkataraman, Shrivastava, 1964).

Among the British and American historians the following researchers studied the problem: J. Brown (Brown, 2003), R. Coupland (Coupland, 1943), J. Hess (Hess, 1971), F. Hutchins (Hutchins, 1973), R. Reynolds (Reynolds, 1959), S. Wolpert (Wolpert, 2006) and others. Many of them try to place the responsibility on the Indian National Congress for the government's repressions, as well as for the possibility of worsening the situation on the Indo-Burma front due to the distraction of battalions of the Royal Army, as well as tanks to suppress the movement. At the same time, American authors show that the United States simultaneously understood and protected the interests of the Indian people.

Based on the historiographical experience available in world science and the documents involved in circulation, the authors of this article offer their view on this problem. The "August Revolution" of 1942 attracted the attention of the governments of the Allied powers – China, the USA, the USSR. Since his visit to Delhi in the winter of 1942, the President of the Republic of China Chiang Kai-shek closely watched the developments in India, since China's security largely depended on the level of defense capability of this British colony.

During the spring and summer, he made efforts to facilitate the achievement of an Anglo-Indian agreement on the constitutional problem, and persuaded the President of the USA F.D. Roosevelt to act jointly as mediators between the government of Winston Churchill and the INC (See: Churchill, 1978).

The British authorities did not consider it necessary to inform Chiang Kai-shek about the plan for a preemptive strike on Congress. It was decided that he would learn about everything after the necessary actions had been taken (Constitutional Relations, vol. 2, 1971, p. 612). It was only on August 11, 1942, that the British ambassador to China informed Chiang Kai-shek of the mass arrests of Congressmen (See: Coupland, 1943). The Chinese president assessed the actions of the British War Cabinet of W. Churchill and the administration of the Viceroy of India, Lord Linlithgow, as hindering a peaceful resolution of the Indian problem. He did not agree with the British insinuations about some Japanese involvement in the preparation of the Quit India movement: "The current events are a natural reaction to the arrests of the INC leaders. And although the movement hinders England's military efforts, it was not provoked by the Japanese, but is purely nationalistic in nature" (Constitutional Relations, vol. 2, 1971, p. 612).

On 12 August, Chiang Kai-shek sent a telegram to the Viceroy of India in which he reported that he had written personal letters to Jawaharlal Nehru and Abul Kalam Azad. He requested that the Chinese commissioner be allowed to hand over the said papers to the addressees and to personally talk to Nehru "to ascertain his opinion on what was happening in the country" (Constitutional Relations, vol. 2, 1971, p. 676-678). The colonial authorities responded to the president with a categorical refusal: "There can be no question of any messages to the imprisoned Congressmen. The Government will not tolerate interference by China or any other power in the internal affairs of India" (Constitutional Relations, vol. 2, 1971, p. 695). In order to soften the harsh tone somewhat, Linlithgow wrote a note to Chiang Kai-shek: "I would be glad to put an end to the difficulties, but the INC has left us no choice but to set the machinery of law in motion" (Constitutional Relations, vol. 2, 1971, p. 695). The British government's Secretary of State for India and Burma, L.S. Amery, approved of the Viceroy's firm position and expressed his dissatisfaction with the Chinese leader's intentions to enter into contact with the Congressmen. On August 27, he wrote to Chungking: "I think the Allies should adhere to the golden rule of not interfering in each other's internal affairs. "No British government, whether I am the head of state or merely a minister, will accept foreign mediation in matters of state, because it infringes on the sovereign rights of His Majesty the King" (Constitutional Relations, vol. 2, 1971, p. 830-832).

In these circumstances, Chiang Kai-shek made his last attempt to prevent the escalation of the Anglo-Indian conflict by diplomatic means. On August 12, he sent an urgent telegram to Washington, in which he appealed to F.D. Roosevelt, as the author of the "Atlantic Charter" called upon to defend the rights of every nation to freedom and independence, with a proposal to exert "appropriate influence on the cabinet of W. Churchill" (Constitutional Relations, vol. 2, 1971, p. 672). Thus, it depended on the United States whether the British would have a free hand to deal with the "Quit India" movement or would be forced to act with restraint and sooner or later compromise with Congress.

At the time of the outbreak of the "revolution" of 1942, India did not have its own representative of the President of the United States of America, but a military mission had been operating since February (NAI, 1942, file 434-X). The White House received information on the development of events from reports from senior officers commanding American troops in India, as well as from other sources. American politicians believed that the British repressive measures would only ensure temporary success, since the movement would "go underground" and "become even more dangerous for the colonial regime" (USA. Department of State, 1960, p. 703). A number of US journalists accredited in India openly expressed sympathy for the liberation movement, for which one of them, L. Fisher, was branded by the colonial authorities as a "dangerous revolutionary" (Bhuyan, 1975, p. 200). His publications in India were subject to strict censorship. At the same time, Gandhi's "Quit India" slogan was seen by most Americans as "contrary to the war aims of the Allied Powers" (NAI, 1942. File 96-X (Secret); Jaudhri, 1970, p. 77). A survey of US public opinion in August 1942 showed that 43% of those polled favored settling the question of Indian independence after the war, since it was second in importance to the general task of the United Nations - the defeat of the countries of the Hitler coalition (Hess, 1971, p. 82). The White House realized that the conduct of military operations by the Allies in Southeast Asia, as well as the safety and well-being of thousands of American soldiers stationed in India - all depended on the domestic political situation in that country.

The United States needed India as a reliable bastion in the fight against militaristic Japan in Asia. Based on this, the American administration headed by President Roosevelt took a special, dual position with regard to the "revolution" of 1942.

On the one hand, the USA tried to play the role of patron of colonial peoples in their struggle for independence. Thus, on Roosevelt's initiative, the Information Administration proposed to official London that the heads of both powers exchange messages on the occasion of the anniversary of the signing of the "Atlantic Charter" and thereby confirm their loyalty to the principles of democracy. In a reply telegram dated August 9, 1942, W. Churchill agreed with F.D. Roosevelt's proposal, but again, as a year ago, emphasized that the application of the 3rd point of the "Charter" to the countries of Asia and Africa was "highly problematic" and fraught with "serious complications in India and the Middle East" (Churchill, 1989, p. 686). Then, after Churchill's sensational speech in the House of Commons accusing the INC, criticism of the "imperial ambitions" of the British War Cabinet appeared in the official American press, with editorials emphasizing that "the British Prime Minister is deliberately preventing a compromise with the Indians" (New York Times, 1942, September, 11).

On the other hand, the ruling circles of the United States did not intend to unconditionally help the Indian liberation movement. F.D. Roosevelt's anti-imperialism was limited. His criticism of British colonial policy did not reach the level that could shake the foundations of the Anglo-American military alliance. On August 11, 1942, the President approved the statement made by the State Department that American troops stationed in India would not interfere in the internal affairs of that country (Hess, 1971, p. 81). On August 12, he received a telegram from Chiang Kai-shek with a proposal to influence the cabinet of Winston Churchill to resolve the situation in India. Roosevelt immediately reported it to London and on the same day spoke at a meeting of the Pacific Council with information about his correspondence with the Chinese leader. During his speech, the US President stated that "India is not ready at the present time to become an independent state" (Constitutional Relations, vol. 2, 1971, p. 686-688). In conclusion, he concluded that although the USA and China are partners of England, they have no right "to dictate to Winston Churchill and his ministers the rules for solving internal problems" (Constitutional Relations, vol. 2, 1971, p. 686-688). On the same day, Roosevelt gave a reply to Chiang Kai-shek, from which it followed that the USA would not accept the role of arbitrator in the conflict between the British Empire and the leaders of the Indian liberation movement until "the British government and the INC asked them to do so" (USA. Department of State, 1960, p. 716). This meant that the Indian people could not count on political support for their struggle from the governments of the great powers of the USA and China.

Unlike the USA and China, the Soviet Union practically did not react to the "Quit India" movement. It is well known that the Indian question has always occupied a significant place in the programmatic documents of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) and the Communist International. However, in 1942, interest in the events in distant India was small, which was explained by the main reason – the USSR was waging the Patriotic War against Nazi Germany. Having suffered defeat in the Battle of Moscow, the Hitlerite leadership made a new attempt to capture the most important political and economic centers of the USSR in 1942. In June, German troops launched an offensive on the southern wing of the Soviet-German front. According to the memoirs of German General K. Zeitzler, former Chief of the General Staff of the Ground Forces, Hitler's plans were to capture Stalingrad and the Caucasus, and then "he wanted to send highly mobile units to India through the Caucasus" (Роковые решения, 1958, с. 153). In preparation for the implementation of the plan for the "second Aryan invasion of India," known as "Orient," the fascist command formed and transferred to the Caucasus a specialized corps of General Felmy (Райков, 1989, с. 133-154).

The main event on the Soviet-German front in the second half of 1942 – early 1943 was the Battle of Stalingrad. India and the USSR understood well the significance of the battles on the Volga and the Caucasus for the fate of the Indian people. The address of the Chairman of the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet of the USSR M.I. Kalinin said: "The Germans want to enslave the peoples of the Caucasus and pave the way to India through it. We have every opportunity to deal a mortal blow to the enemy. Let us make the Caucasus a grave for the German occupiers!" («Правда», 1942, 1 августа). Thus, the liberation goals of the Soviet people in the Great Patriotic War coincided with the national interests of the Indians.

The government of the USSR, like the American one, avoided open pressure on the cabinet of W. Churchill and sharp criticism of his colonial policy, since it was connected with him by the ties of the Agreement on Joint Actions in the War against Germany, signed on July 12, 1941 by People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs V.M. Molotov and the Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of Great Britain to the USSR S. Cripps.

In addition, part of the technical and raw material aid from England to the USSR came from India. At one time, there were even discussions about sending a Soviet representative to Delhi for better coordination of supplies. In other words, the policy of the USSR was completely oriented towards creating favorable conditions for waging war against Germany, and from this point of view, India was considered a possible source of strategic resources. There were practically no articles about the liberation movement in India in the press. Thus, the central organ of the All-Union Communist Party (Bolsheviks) "Pravda" regularly published the texts of speeches by W. Churchill and L.S. Emery, but ignored the most important documents of the INC, including the resolution "Quit India", or published only those excerpts that spoke of the readiness of the Indian people to participate in the war («Правда», 1942, май-август). The "August Revolution" also did not receive any timely and adequate coverage in the Soviet press. Only at the end of 1942, an article by S.M. Melman "The Situation in India" appeared in the journal of the USSR Academy of Sciences "World Economy and World Politics" (Мельман, 1942, с. 41-46). The author examined the events on the eve of August 8-9, 1942, the movement itself and its suppression by the British authorities. The leitmotif of the publication was the idea of the need to resolve the contradictions between the government and the Indians in order to mobilize the Indian people to fight fascism: "The question of India's participation in the war is of great importance. Consequently, at the present time it is very important to regulate Anglo-Indian relations" (Мельман, 1942, С. 41-43). With regard to the INC, Melman noted: "The time has not yet come for open negotiations between the British government and the Congress" and expressed the hope that Gandhi's party "will not claim the role of the sole representative of the Indian people" (Мельман, 1942, С. 41-43). Melman's point of view was, in fact, official and reflected the view of the Soviet leadership on the problem of granting independence to India. In Moscow, it was not without reason that the solution to this issue should be postponed until the end of World War II.

Commenting on the attitude of the USSR to the events in its homeland, Nehru wrote: "It is impossible to say what the Russian government thinks about India... It is completely absorbed in solving the problem of how to expel the invaders from its country and has no opportunity to think about things that are not directly related to that. And yet it is accustomed to looking far ahead and will not be able to ignore India, which adjoins the borders of the USSR in Asia" (Nehru, 1988, p. 492).

Thus, England's allies in the fight against fascism did not exert any real political influence on the course of the Indian people's struggle for freedom in August - September 1942. Having decisively condemned Chiang Kai-shek's attempts to participate in Indian politics, having accepted the neutrality of F.D. Roosevelt and I.V. Stalin as a given, Churchill's war cabinet once again proved that it would not allow other powers to interfere in the internal affairs of the empire.

III. CONCLUSION

Thus, the "Quit India" movement was generally not supported by the leadership of Great Britain's allies in the Anti-Hitler and Anti-Japanese coalitions. Despite the differences in their socio-political systems, China, the USA and the USSR agreed that in 1942 the most important task was to conduct military operations against the Axis countries and all their interests were subordinated to this. The unexpected and inappropriate rise of the anti-British protest movement in India was an undesirable circumstance at the moment, burdening their military efforts and partly complicating the supply system. At the same time, all of Great Britain's allies from among those presented in this article advocated a mandatory post-war solution to the constitutional problem in India and its independence. These emphases of the allies testified to the priority of international anti-fascist and anti-militarist goals over anti-colonial ones, but not in general, but at the current moment of the war, when the radical turning point had not yet been completed and victory was still very far away.

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ДВИЖЕНИЕ ОСТАВЬТЕ ИНДИЮ, ДЖАВАХАРЛАЛ НЕРУ И СОЮЗНЫЕ ДЕРЖАВЫ ВЕЛИКОБРИТАНИИ

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Аннотация

Статья посвящена одному из малоизученных аспектов индийской истории - антибританскому движению "Оставьте Индию" 1942 года и реакции стран-союзников по Антигитлеровской и Антияпонской коалициям. Авторы используют материалы Министерства иностранных дел Национального архива Индии, опубликованные тома правительственных документов Великобритании, мемуары, прессу тех лет. На основании критического анализа источников сделан вывод о том, что позиция союзников в отношении движения "Оставьте Индию" была схожей - ни одна из стран не поддержала его. Рост национального движения в Индии против британского владычества в 1942 году был для союзников менее актуальным вопросом, чем ведение мировой войны с агрессорами. Интернационализм дискретно взял верх над антиколониальным национализмом.

Ключевые слова: страна, политика, история, промышленность, движение.

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