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THE PROBLEMS OF WORLD WAR II AS THEY ARE SEEN BY BRITISH AND AMERICAN HISTORIANS

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Summary: In the paper the approaches of British and American historians to the study of the problems of World War II are considered. The main trends of their researches have been investigated. The prerequisites for World War II and World War I have been compared. The consequences of World War II for the USA have been analysed. It has been concluded that as a result of World War II the USA became the leader of the Western world.

Key words: World War II, World War I.

Анотація: У статті розглянуті підходи британських та американських істориків до вивчення проблем Другої світової війни. Було вивчено основні напрямки їх досліджень. Порівнювалися передумови Другої та Першої світових війн. Було проаналізовано наслідки Другої світової війни для США. Зроблено висновок, що в результаті Другої світової війни США стали лідером Західного світу.

Ключові слова: Друга світова війна, Перша світова війна.

Аннотация: В статье рассматриваются подходы британских и американских историков к изучению проблем Второй мировой войны. Были изучены основные направления их исследований. Сравнились предпосылки Второй и Первой мировых войн. Проанализированы последствия Второй мировой войны для США. Сделан вывод, что в результате Второй мировой войны США стали лидером Западного мира.

Ключевые слова: Вторая мировая война, Первая мировая война.

World War II is one of the key events in the history of mankind, therefore scientists from many countries study all aspects of it. The papers by British and American experts are of special interest as Great Britain and the USA were participants in the Anti-Hitler Coalition and made a valuable contribution to the victory over the Fascist Block.

Among the recent studies the books by I. Akira [1], A. Brinkley [3], S. Ambrose [2], L. Hunt [4] and R. Palmer [5] should be mentioned as being the most important.

Analysing the causes of the beginning of World War II, R. Palmer came to the conclusion that while dictators stormed in the 1930s the Western democracies were swayed by profound pacifism which was defined as an insistence on peace regardless of consequences. Many people, especially in Britain and the United States, believed that World War I had been a mistake, that little or nothing had been gained by it, that they had been deluded by wartime propaganda, that wars were really started by armaments manufactures, that Germany had not really caused the war of 1914, that the Treaty of Versailles was too hard on the Germans, that vigorous peoples like the Germans or Italians needed room for expansion, that democracy was, after all, non-suited to all nations, that it took the two to make a quarrel, and that there need be no war if one side resolutely refused to be provoked, and there was a whole system of pacific and tolerant ideas in which there was perhaps the usual mixture of truth and misunderstanding [5, p. 802]. According to

L. Hunt and T. Martin, Great Depression was one of the prerequisites for World War II because it brought massive social dislocation and fear and thus provided a setting in which dictatorship could thrive [4, p. 970].

The contradictions in the question of the dividing of Eastern Europe are considered to be one of the main causes of the beginning of the Soviet-German War. The Russians were expanding toward the Balkans, another area of historic Russian interests in winning control over Eastern Europe. The Germans viewed this with dismay. They wished to reserve Eastern Europe for themselves as a counterpart to industrial Germany. Hitler moved to bring the Balkans under German control [5, p. 815].

More attention to the American foreign policy during World War II was given by S. Ambrose, in particular, to the relations between the USA and Great Britain. In his opinion, examples of America's newly developed leadership and single-mindedness abounded and most involved the British, and practically none of the Russians, partly because the Americans had a close working relationship with the British and almost no contacts with the Red Army, and partly because the British were more concerned with long-range questions than were the Americans [2, p. 29].

All American scientists focus on the assistance which was given to the USSR. Thus, R. Palmer and I. Colton state that American equipment all through 1943 arrived in the Soviet Union in prodigious quantities. The terms of lend-lease were liberally extended to the Soviets, a stream of American vehicles, clothing, food, and supplies of all kinds made its way laboriously to the USSR through the Arctic Ocean, and through the Persian Gulf. The Allied contribution to the Soviet war effort was indispensable but Russian human losses were tremendous [5, p. 820].

I. Akira considered the chronology of World War II. Thus, he distinguishes three stages in the history of World War II as far as the United States was concerned: from December 1941 to January 1943; from January 1943 to summer 1944; from then to the end of the Pacific War in August 1945 [1, p. 191]. The first period, including the events connected with the US – Japanese conflict, the war on the Pacific Ocean and the North American campaign, wasn't ending because the US fleet had been destroyed at Pearl Harbor. The next period is characterized by the war for the Philippines, the battle for the island of Midway and the liberation of Southern Italy. The third period is connected with the opening of the second front, the liberation of Western, Southern and North Europe and the victorious end of the Pacific campaign against Japan.

L. Hunt, T. Martin and B. Rosenwein paid great attention to the problem of the Holocaust. They state that the main nation who suffered from the Holocaust was the Jews. Six camps in Poland were developed specifically for the purpose of mass extermination – Aushwitz, Majdanec, Chelmno, Belzec, Sobibor and Treblinka. Some, like Aushwitz, served both as extermination and labour camps, in which prisoners produced synthetic rubber and fuel for the chemical firm "I. G. Farben". Others existed only for extermination [4, p. 962].

Alan Brinkley considered the development of the atomic weapons and using it in Japan to be one of the key factors of the ending of World War II.

President Harry S. Truman issued an ultimatum to the Japanese demanding that they surrender by August 3 or face utter devastation. When the Japanese failed to meet the deadline, Truman ordered the air force to use the new atomic weapons against Japan. Controversy has continued for decades over whether Truman's decision to use the bomb was justified and what his motives were. Some have argued that the atomic attack was unnecessary – that had the United States agreed to the survival of the emperor (which it ultimately did agree to in any case) or had it waited only a few more weeks, the Japanese would have surrendered. Others argue that nothing less than the atomic bombs could have persuaded the Japanese to surrender without a costly American invasion. Some critics of the decision, including some of the scientists involved in the Manhattan Project, have argued that whatever the Japanese intentions could be, the USA as a matter of morality should not have used the terrible new weapon. The nation's military and political leaders, however, showed little concern about such matters. Truman who had not even known of the existence of the Manhattan Project until he became president was, apparently, making what he believed to be a simple military decision. A weapon was available that would end the war quickly, he could see no reason not to use it. On August 6, 1945 an American B-29 dropped an atomic bomb on the Japanese industrial center of Hiroshima. More than 80 000 civilians died. A few days later another American plane dropped another atomic bomb, this time on the city of Nagasaki – inflicting 100 000 deaths and horrible damage. Finally, the emperor intervened to break the stalemate in the Cabinet, and on August 14 the government announced that it was ready to give up [3, p. 770-771].

We have arrived at a conclusion that World War II brought great dividends to the USA: the American domination in the Alliance reflected a new era in the world history. The United States replaced Great Britain as the dominant world power. By 1945 the American production had reached levels that were scarcely believable. The United States was producing 45% of the world's arms and nearly 50% of the world's goods. In the spring of 1945 America had enormously more power, both absolute and in relation to the rest of the world, than it had possessed by 1941. To a less degree, that had also been the situation by 1918, but after World War I the USA disarmed and for the most part refused to intervene in affairs outside the North American continent. America was shaping the post-war world. In May 1945 it did not have a firm idea of what those decisions would be. It was still possible for the USA to travel down any of several roads [2, p. 29, 37]. The moment for leadership came for the USA sooner than it was expected with the German invasion of Poland in 1939 and the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor two years later. Thus, the USA became involved militarily, economically and politically in all parts of the world: the Western Hemisphere, the Atlantic Europe, Africa, the Middle East, Asia, the Pacific [1, p. 215, 216]. Thus, as a result of World War II the USA became the leader of the Western world.

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