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DENAZIFICATION IN GERMANY: BASIC APPROACHES TO THE STUDY OF THE PROBLEM IN BRITISH AND AMERICAN HISTORIOGRAPHY

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The article is devoted to the examination of the main approaches to the study of denazification policy in Germany that emerged in British and American historiography. Based on the analysis of a wide range of sources, the author established the basic concepts that were used while analyzing the goals, methods and results of denazification. The evolution of scientific assessment during the second half of the 20th – early 21st centuries contributed to revealing of the three main approaches to the study of the issue: critical, revolutionary and rationalistic. The study results and the article conclusions can be used for further research of the historical science in the UK and US, as well as certain aspects of the German problem after World War II.

Key words: British historiography; American historiography; the German question; denazification; renazification; artificial revolution; conservative restoration; re-education.

ДЕНАЦИФИКАЦИЯ В ГЕРМАНИИ: ОСНОВНЫЕ ПОДХОДЫ К ИЗУЧЕНИЮ ПРОБЛЕМЫ В БРИТАНСКОЙ И АМЕРИКАНСКОЙ ИСТОРИОГРАФИИ

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Исследуются главные подходы к изучению политики денацификации в Германии, которые возникли в британской и американской историографии. Изучив многочисленные источники, автор определила основные концепции, которые использовались при анализе целей, методов и результатов денацификации. Эволюция научной оценки на протяжении второй половины XX – начала XXI вв. способствовала выявлению трех главных подходов к изучению проблемы: критического, революционного и рационалистического. Результаты и выводы исследования могут быть использованы для дальнейшего изучения исторической науки в Великобритании и США, а также отдельных аспектов германской проблемы после Второй мировой войны.

Ключевые слова: британская историография; американская историография; германский вопрос; денацификация; ренацификация; искусственная революция; консервативное восстановление; переобучение.

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Introduction

Denazification was one of the four important goals of the Allies in occupied Germany, along with democratization, decentralization and demilitarization. These principles of the occupation policy were agreed during the Potsdam Conference in 1945. However, different approaches of the Great Powers towards denazification became evident soon. As contradictions between the USSR and the USA were deepening (both on German and global levels) the denazification measures in the Eastern and Western zones were getting more and more diverse. By 1947, it became obvious that large-scale denazification was contrary to the long-term economic and political goals of the Western powers in Germany. The study of the allied denazification policy in postwar Germany is one of the aspects of the complex German question study in British-American historiography.

Special studies on the main approaches of British-American historiography of denazification in Germany have not been found. A brief historiographic review, as well as the analysis of certain monographs, can be traced in the works of some British and American researchers who studied the problem of denazification [1–6]. The purpose of this article is to conduct a comprehensive study of the basic concepts and approaches to the study of denazification policy in Germany that emerged during the second half of the 20th – early 21st centuries in the British-American historiography.

Critical approach

In the second half of the 1940s, the works of British and American researchers were mainly represented by analytical articles, published by diplomats, politicians, economic and military advisors who worked in Germany or governmental departments dealing with the German problem. Analyzing activities in occupied zones, they tended to keep the critical approach regarding both methods and results of denazification as unsatisfactory. To their mind, denazification as it was implemented did not have much sense or even concealed some possible dangerous consequences for the Allies in future.

In 1945, H. Morgenthau, the United States Secretary of the Treasury, published a book "Germany is our problem". In that publication the author paid special attention to the analysis of the *Teutonic paranoia* phenomenon which pushed the Germans to unleash two world wars during the first half of the 20th century. To the author's mind, the primary task of the Allies in Germany was the decentralization of the economy, in particular the elimination of its heavy industry. That would eliminate the very possibility of new aggression. The author considered complete elimination of the Nazis from managing the economy as an important prerequisite for the formation of new Germany.

Speaking about the British and American historiography of denazification in Germany, it should be noted that initially researchers focused on the activities in the American zone of occupation. Since the end of the 1960s, much more attention has been paid to the analysis of denazification in the Soviet zone. The denazification programs in British and French occupation zones appear to be less studied. It can be explained taking into consideration that the denazification program undertaken by the Americans was the most ambitious and at the same time the most intricate and complicated. Compared with the United States, the Soviet Union acted much more resolutely and consistently, since it clearly understood its purposes in the occupied zone. The British and French, in comparison with the representatives of the United States and Soviet Union, showed considerable passivity and did not demonstrate a serious interest in the denazification program. Consequently, these aspects of the problem are less highlighted in historiography.

A careful study of the problem has made it possible to distinguish several approaches that formed in British and American historiography of denazification. Each group of researches (representatives of a certain approach) keeps to various methodological models and uses different working concepts while analyzing the purposes, methods and results of denazification in Germany.

Only after the completion of this process, H. Morgenthau considered it possible to undertake a program of large-scale re-education of the Germans, although he regarded its prospects as dubious. According to the author, the story did not give us examples when one civilized people would allow another to impose a different *modus vivendi* [7, p. 147, 153].

Along with the Morgenthau line, which focused on punishment, a pragmatic line emerged among the British and American researchers who followed the critical approach. They stressed the need to reduce the Allies' costs in Germany and recover the German economy. In practice, the purge of the administration soon revealed serious problems. R. M. Havens, a fellow of the University of Alabama, noted that leading posts in the Third Reich were occupied mostly by Nazi Party members, who had good education, work experience and effective management skills. In such circumstances, the transfer of property to other, politically reliable hands, threatened with a fall in profitability of enterprise and aggravation of socio-economic crisis. This entailed either an increased burden on the victorious powers budget, or social destabilization in Germany [8, p. 161]. Similar ideas were also represented by C. Weir (Economic Advisor to the Allied Control Commissions for Germany)

and A. Dulles (Director of the Central Intelligence Agency) who considered it necessary to use the industrial resources of Germany for the restoration and development of the national and European economy and could see no real positive results of (or no sense in) the denazification program [9, p. 422, 430; 10, p. 255].

Since 1948, with the announcement that Western occupation forces were no longer involved in denazification, the program failure got obvious. A new term renazification appeared in the publications of critical historians to denote unsatisfactory results of denazification. A fellow of Howard University, J. Herz, in his publication "The fiasco of denazification in Germany" (1948), noted that as a result of the program implementation, not all of society was denazified, but only part of it – the former Nationalsozialistische Deutsche Arbeiterpartei (NSDAP) members. According to the author, by 1948 the German society had entered into the phase of renazification, which was accompanied by the return of denationalized Nazis to high positions in social and governmental structures. J. Herz came to the conclusion that denazification in Germany was limited only to the temporary removal of Nazis from important posts, but it failed to ensure their long-term removal from the levers of influence. As one of the main reasons for that he called the formation of the bipolar world and the growing rivalry between the United States and the USSR. In such situation, yesterday's denazification objects gradually turned into the political instruments of the two powers. Like most of the researchers of the first postwar decade, J. Herz expressed concerns about the possible strengthening of neo-Nazism in Germany and its return to *Schaulkeln* foreign policy tactics [11, p. 589–594].

The critical approach evidently dominated in the publications during the 1950s. Distrust of the dena-

zification results was expressed by the Adviser to the President of the United States, J. Warburg, in the work "Germany: The Key to Peace" (1953). He described denazification as "farcial inconsistency", including it in the author's catalogue of Western errors in the German settlement. The author considered it wrong to entrust the future of Europe to the Bonn Republic, which he called "unnatural, unregenerate and unreliable" [12, p. 248]. He believed that if democracy did not take root on German soil, then neo-Nazis would come to power in Germany rather than communists. Consequently, the fear of the USSR could not serve as an excuse for a series of fatal mistakes in the German policy of Western countries [12, p. 264]. The vitality of the renazification concept was proved by the work of T. H. Tetens "New Germany and the old Nazis", which also contained extremely negative assessments of denazification results [13].

During the 1960s–1980s the critical approach was gradually losing its popularity. The crucial changes in the bipolar world, including rearmament of West Germany and its involvement in the economic and military integration structures of the West, contributed to the methodological shift greatly. After German unification there was a final change of generations at all levels in the united Germany and the concept of renazification finally lost its relevance. Some features of the critical approach may be revealed in the works of the British and American historians who expressed clear criticism of the military administration of the Western zones for refusing to cooperate with the anti-fascist forces. German active anti-fascists, who were often representatives of left parties and organizations, were not appointed to leading posts. For example, in opinion of professor C. Eisenberg (Hofstra University), the failure of the Western powers to accept the ideology of the left forces hindered true denazification [14, p. 124].

Revolutionary approach

Another group of researchers compared the denazification program with the revolution necessary for the rebirth of society and its entry into a new stage of development. Applying of the artificial revolution theoretical model to the study of denazification in Germany represents an attribute of the revolutionary approach. This methodological model started to take shape at the end of the 1940s – the beginning of the 1950s and gained great popularity since the end of the 1950s. The results of such a revolutionary experiment got different evaluations in the publications of revolutionary historians.

In 1947, A. Johnson, a fellow of the John Hopkins University, noted that the absence of a bourgeois-democratic revolution in the country was a great misfortune for Germany. Similar revolutions of the 17th – early 20th centuries put an end to autocracy and feudalism in England, France, the United States, and Russia. Compared to them, Germany remained a state frozen in social and political development since the times of

Frederick II the Great. At the same time, according to A. Johnson, the occupying army could not carry out a democratic revolution. The author admitted that the Americans were not very good at dealing with the bureaucratic type of revolution, because the army could not make democrats out of Germans. He believed that only real German leaders of the new generation would be able to cope with that task [15, p. 59–60].

Professor W. Griffith (University of Cambridge, Massachusetts) in the article "Denazification in the United States Zone of Germany" (1950) concluded that denazification planning suffered from "Washington's indecision, the Morgenthau plan influence, and Roosevelt's decision not to plan anything at all". The Military Government, forced to make political decisions, obviously favored more conservative and "stable" elements in their opinion. As a result, they rarely appointed active anti-Nazis to high posts [16, p. 68, 74]. In 1947, hatred of the defeated Reich was replaced by the fear of

the Soviet empire. As a result, the most serious Nazis either got away with insignificant punishments or were not punished at all. Thus, the US attempt to carry out “revolutionary transformations with bureaucratic methods” ended in catastrophic failure [16, p. 69, 76].

The official termination of occupation, decisions to rearm West Germany and accept it to the NATO identified a new stage in the German question settlement. The publication of Harvard University professor J. Montgomery “Forced to be Free: The Artificial Revolution in Germany and Japan” (1957) defined the completion of the revolutionary methodological model. The author came to the conclusion that during denazification in Germany there was an attempt to make an artificial revolution under the leadership of external forces. However, as a result, the pre-totalitarian elite returned to power, which looked more like a postponed counter-revolution to Nazism than a democratic revolution leading to a new society. Professor Montgomery concluded that the experiment had achieved only limited success, and the denazification policy actually strengthened the position of neo-Nazis in the postwar years [17, p. 150].

In the 1960s the concept of artificial revolution was supported and got further development in the works of the American historians L. Edinger (Michigan State University) and J. Gimbel (Humbolt State College). L. Edinger noted that such a revolution could be considered successful if, as a result, the former opposition leaders constituted the majority of elite. However, in the early 1960s no more than 11 % of West Germany elite could be attributed to the number of Nazi opponents [18, p. 60]. The author called the assumption about the automatic emergence of counter-elite in the process of displacing the former totalitarian elite initially erroneous. In the case of Germany, this assumption turned out to be a myth [18, p. 76].

According to J. Gimbel, the military administration of the Western powers met the greatest support from the communists and political opportunists, but did not consider them politically reliable being in ideological confrontation with the USSR. As a result, the conservative middle class came to power. For them it was much more important to preserve the political, socio-economic and cultural system that existed in Germany before Nazis than to carry out a revolutionary transformation of society and political system [19, p. 85, 105]. From J. Gimbel’s point of view, the limited success of the artificial revolution in Germany was caused not only by methodological difficulties (as professor

J. Montgomery supposed), but also by the initially false theoretical premise that the image of American democracy is universal. The United States was uninterested in accepting German democracy based on the compromise of influential forces (including socialists and nationalists), who had their own vision of the German historical development [2, p. 172; 20, p. 88–93]. The ideas of J. Montgomery, supplemented by J. Gimbel and L. Edinger, got further development in the monograph “Denazification”, published by the American historian C. FitzGibbon in 1969. The author explained the end of the program in the Soviet and American zones by political motives such as struggle for the influence in Germany and the Cold War escalation. C. FitzGibbon noted that both the Soviet Union and the United States attempted an artificial revolution in their zones, and in this respect their goals were similar [21, p. 100, 128].

The model of an artificial revolution was inextricably linked to the conservative restoration concept which gained particular popularity at the turn of the 20th century. Contemporary historians, keeping to the revolutionary approach, agreed that as a result of denazification, the old conservative elite, which existed in the Second Reich and the Weimar Republic, came back to power. In the 1930s for economic reasons, many representatives of the old elite cooperated with the Nazis. After the collapse of the Third Reich, they became the mainstay of the restoration of the political and economic foundations of West Germany. Thus, the Federal Republic of Germany, born after denazification, represented not re-nazified Germany (as critical historians supposed), but a state that returned to traditional conservative values. In the conditions of the bipolarization of the world, the Western powers staked on the economic recovery of Germany, which meant “victory of continuity over change” [22, p. 288]. The concept of “conservative restoration” was reflected in the works of such historians as R. Boehling, D. Prowe, R. Merritt in the 2000s [5; 22; 23]. The failures of American foreign policy in the Greater Middle East in the 21st century led to a gradual and mild review of the results of the denazification program in Germany. The American authors began to consider denazification (despite admitting its numerous shortcomings) as a successful event that made it possible to achieve the long-term goals – the Federal Republic of Germany became a state of Western democracy and reliable ally of the United States [24–28]. However, according to the American historian A. Levy, this “house of democracy” contains some “Nazi bricks” [3, p. 631].

Rationalistic approach

The rationalistic approach appeared within the framework of the English School of international relations theory. Liberal American historians were close to the rationalists in their theory and methodology. When studying the denazification problem they tend to take

into account the existing realities. Contrary to the “revolutionary” historians they did not believe in the very possibility to conduct a kind of artificial revolution in postwar Germany. In their opinion, the nature of German people could not be changed. A distinctive feature

of rationalistic works was solidarity with the concept of German mentality. According to this concept, Nazism was not a historical accident, but a manifestation of the features of the German character, which include bellicosity (*Teutonic paranoia*) and a low level of political responsibility [6, p. 239; 29, p. 55; 30, p. 144; 31, p. 673]. Taking it into account, Great Britain never sought to conduct an artificial revolution, since it never believed in its success. The authors noted that the long-term denazification program could not be implemented due to rapid changes in the international arena. Democracy could be built in collaboration with active anti-Nazis, which included leftist parties and organizations. As a result, the Cold War led to the rapid rehabilitation of Germany. Rationalistic historians did not express harsh criticism towards denazification policy. Admitting its shortcomings they nevertheless tried to concentrate on the achievements of occupied forces that had to cope with an extremely difficult task in unfavorable conditions [6, p. 248; 30, p. 163; 32, p. 189].

The declassification of the documents concerning the postwar period in British and American archives started in 1975, when a 30 years' period of classification expired. In the 1970s–1980s the number of works devoted to the study of denazification in the British, French and Soviet zones of occupation significantly increased. The representatives of the rationalistic approach such as I. Turner (Henley Management College), B. Marshall (Polytechnic of North London), G. Murray (FCO), R. Birley (City University, London) became well-known experts on British occupation policy. Rationalistic researchers also paid much attention to the study of the educational component of denazification, as well as special programs aimed at drawing the eminent minds of the Third Reich to Western countries service [33–37].

A special feature of rationalistic publications was the emergence of the first positive assessments of the denazification results in the Soviet zone. The authors noted a predictable and understandable for the Germans mechanism of denazification in the East and a high degree of its effectiveness. The skillful concentration of the Soviet military administration on the eliminating of the Third Reich “big fish” from power

was also pointed out [30, p. 144; 38, p. 35]. According to the British historian B. Marshall, the USSR was the only occupation state that could link the aspect of punishment with a positive program for the future [31, p. 668]. It should be noted that in the publications before 1990, positive assessments of denazification in the Soviet zone appeared rarely.

In the 2000s historians got access to new archive materials and documents concerning denazification in Germany. Firstly, numerous documents of the Soviet Military Administration in Germany were declassified in 1998–2002, about 90 % of them in the State Archive of Russian Federation, 10 % in the Russian Archive of Social and Political History. In 1992 Archive of Parties and Mass Organizations (includes the documents of East German State Archive and libraries) was declassified after emerging with Bundesarchiv. Thus, the end of the Cold War, the final settlement of the German question and the opening of new archives funds contributed to significant deepening and objectification of historical research.

The authors explained the reasons for the success of the USSR by the similarity of the totalitarian systems in Germany and the Soviet Union, the readiness of the new staff to replace the Nazis in leadership positions, as well as the absence of strict regulation of denazification. The American historian B. Blessing (Oregon State University) came to the conclusion that as a result of the Soviet denazification, carried out with the support of leftist forces, “anti-fascism became the core of the emerging German self-consciousness in the Soviet zone” [39, p. 190]. Historians also considered concentration on the “big fish” with general loyalty to the “small fry” as one of the advantages of the Soviet denazification program. In the East (in contrast to the West), former NSDAP members could never return to leading posts neither in the political, economic, cultural, nor in the educational spheres [1; 7; 14; 40–44]. In the rationalistic works of the 1990s–2000s special attention was also paid to studying the positive results of denazification in education, which made it possible to lay solid foundations for a future democratic system [45–47].

Conclusion

As we can see, there are three main approaches to the research of denazification policy in Germany in the British and American historiography. Initially, in the works of the first post-war decade, critical approach took a leading role. Two lines could be distinguished in its frame, which was a reflection of the struggle between economic pragmatism and Morgenthau line in the US foreign policy. Special attention in the critical publications was paid to the concept of renazification in the German society. The renazification phenomenon was regarded as a result of the Western Allies' unsuc-

cessful denazification policy. Due to structural changes in the bipolar world, the critical approach started to lose its popularity since the 1960s. After German unification and complete generation change, it finally gave way to the revolutionary and rationalistic ones.

The revolutionary approach was formed in the late 1950s – early 1960s by the historian J. Montgomery who developed the concept of artificial revolution through denazification in the German society. That concept was widely used for the scientific analysis of denazification in Germany by his followers. He also

laid the foundation of the conservative restoration concept. It gained enormous popularity at the turn of the century. In the 21st century, taking into account the events in the Greater Middle East where all American efforts in democratization had failed, there was a significant softening of criticism and a general reassessment of denazification results in Germany. The concept of renazification finally lost its relevance while the concept of conservative restoration gained popularity. Nowadays harsh criticism of the denazification program in Germany in the works of American historians is gradually going into the past. History has once again proved a simple truth: everything is known in comparison.

Contrary to the representatives of the revolutionary approach, rationalistic historians rejected the very idea of possible artificial revolution through denazification considering the German national character as something unchangeable. Hereby, they demonstrated consolidation with the concept of German mentality. At the same time, while analyzing denazification policy they avoided harsh criticism, paying attention to its every positive and constructive element instead. Since the end of the 1970s, in the works of the rationalist historians there has also been a gradual shift to the study of re-education achievements in the Western zones, which was regarded as a solid cornerstone in the building of the new democratic Germany.

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