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Zhiryakov Olexandr Yuriovich,

PhD (History), Associate Professor of the

Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University,

Melitopol, Ukraine.

velchevaug@ukr.net

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-5587-1378>

Pachev Serhii Ivanovich,

PhD (History), Associate Professor of the

Bogdan Khmelnytsky Melitopol State Pedagogical University,

Melitopol, Ukraine.

cbmdpu@ukr.net

<https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3521-7942>

USING THE ALTERNATIVE HISTORY METHOD IN THE STUDY OF WORLD WAR II

Many generations of historians have been brought up on the postulate that the word „if” is incorrect in historical research, about the futility of any attempt to describe historical events in terms of assumptions. Despite this, in recent decades, alternative history has increasingly attracted the attention of researchers. On the one hand, it is following fashion, trying to „revive” the form of historical narrative, to make it more interesting and, thus, more attractive to readers. On the other hand, alternative history is gradually gaining a place under the sun and in serious historical research as a special method, which is sometimes simply irreplaceable in the interpretation of individual historical facts.

Researchers of alternative history emphasize that it is closely related to traditional history and is necessary „for a more multidimensional, true view of the past...” (Kotlyar, 2016, p. 65). The correct application of this method can really be very useful in solving some real scientific problems. This is especially true of the study of the historical process in the so-called „bifurcation points”, in which, as in the fork, there is a choice of further development and, accordingly, the rejection of other options that were not destined to take place.

The history of the Second World War is one of those problem-thematic areas of historical research in which the use of the method of alternative history is the most promising. To test the effectiveness of this method and its scope, it needs to be discussed by a wide range of historians in a scientific discussion. Therefore, the study of the method of alternative

history in the historiography of the Second World War and the presentation of its main provisions is relevant.

The purpose of this article is to compare the main methodological approaches to the application of the method of „alternative history” in the historiography of the Second World War, to determine the degree of their expediency and correctness. To achieve this goal, the following tasks are set: to consider the genesis of the method of „alternative history”, to establish and disclose its key provisions, algorithm of use, application and features of use in British and Russian historiography.

The method of „alternative history” is one of the youngest directions in the methodology of historical research. It is known by many names: alternative history, counterfactual history, „experimental” history, retroalternative studies, etc. (Savelyeva, 1997, p. 647–654; Khuk, 1994, p. 206–208). As V. A. Nehamkin rightly points out in his doctoral dissertation, „one of the important tasks in the field of alternative history is to substantiate the scientific nature of counterfeit research, which is due to the current opinions of some scientists about their anti-scientific. The real role and significance of research data in the system of scientific knowledge should be established” (2008). Since the term „alternative history” became best known in the works of American science fiction writers Raymond Douglas „Ray” Bradbury's „A Sound of Thunder” (1952) and Paul Anderson's „The Time Patrol” (1955), many historians are still inclined to accept the alternative history not as a method of historical research, but as a genre of fiction.

The first known use of alternative history was noted by the ancient Roman historian Titus Livius in his epic treatise „History of Rome from the founding of the city” (Tit Liviy, 1989). In Book IX, written about 35 BC, several pages were devoted to the hypothetical campaign of Alexander the Great in Rome in 323 BC, which, according to Libya, would end in the complete defeat of the great conqueror. Despite the obvious bias, some of the historian's assumptions sound quite sober. However, this was only an episode, an ornate passage within a completely traditional historical work.

The famous British historian George Trevelyan became the first author of a full-fledged scientific work using alternative history. However, this happened at a relatively young age of the scientist, when he won a competition with the work „If Napoleon won the Battle of Waterloo” (1907), and at that time this article did not attract much attention.

Another Englishman, D .S. Squire, collected various publications on this topic and in 1931 published the first such collection of popular science essays „If It Had Happened Otherwise” (Savelyeva, 1997, p. 209).

Sir Arnold Toynbee, already a world great historical science, wrote articles „If Alexander had not died then ...” and „If Philip and Artaxerxes had survived ...” (Toynbi, 1979; Toynbi, 1994) (in the first he considered the hypothetical consequences of prolonging the life of the hero of antiquity, and in the second – his earlier death). With these sensational works, Toynbee

actually initiated such a direction in history as retro-forecasting. However, Toynbee's evidence was based on the use of imagination, and therefore was much closer to fiction than to real science. Colleagues-historians perceived Toynbee's exercises as „pranks of genius”, a kind of scientific leisure.

The works of Trevelyan, Toynbee, and Squire's collection were the basis for the „scientific-historical alternative” which has long been considered the stepson of historical science.

However, in the eyes of the majority of experts, alternative history continued to be a fun game of imagination, rather than a scientific method.

The breakthrough came thanks to the American economic historian Robert Vogel, when in 1964 his infamous book was published, with the inconspicuous title „Railways and the economic growth of America: essays on econometric history” (Levchik, 1989, p. 181).

The fact is that in American historical science it was traditionally believed that the mass construction of railways in the 19th century was one of the main reasons for such vigorous economic development of the country. Vogel, by mathematical calculations, built the so-called counterfactual model – a hypothetical version of US development, in which instead of railways, the main means of transportation in the American space would be stagecoaches and steamships.

The result of unbiased calculations turned out to be paradoxical – the real contribution of railway construction to economic development was negligible (equal to the US national product in a few months), and demand for railways was artificially provoked by steel tycoons. Thus, Vogel's work on the spot killed one of the „sacred cows” of American historical science! And the tool was not theoretical mental juggling, and strict language of numbers. In 1993, for his research, the scientist was awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics.

Although Vogel's conclusions were not approved by all experts, the main result of his work was a radical change in the views of the scientific community on „alternative history”. From now on, retro-forecasting began to be perceived as an integral part of a very serious area of historical science, the so-called „Cliometry” (historical and mathematical research). The construction of alternative historical models has also become considered quite acceptable, albeit somewhat exotic, scientific method for other areas of historical science.

Another cornerstone of retro forecasting is the ideas of the famous Belgian scientist, Nobel laureate Ilya Prigogin. According to the synergetic approach developed by him, the development of society is not rigidly defined. There is an alternation of periods of evolution, when the vector of development of society can not be changed and periods of bifurcation points.

The subject of retro-forecasting is the study of bifurcation points (better known as „fork”), some key moments in history, during which the choice of the path of further development of society from a fan of different alternatives. The choice in such situations almost always occurs in conditions

of uncertainty and instability of the balance of social forces. Therefore, bifurcation may be affected by seemingly insignificant and subjective circumstances.

Since the works of famous historians J. Trevelyan and A. J. Toynbee already existed in British historiography, new works using the method of alternative history have not been self-censored by researchers. The traditional diversity of methodological approaches in British historical science has also contributed to the rejection of the principle of determinism – „History does not know the conditional slope”. It seems that it was British military historians who were psychologically and methodologically best prepared to use alternative history, for which they simply needed to adapt the well-known method of military staff play from the future to the past. It is therefore not surprising that the first major monograph on alternative history was written by Kenneth Maxi, a former officer of the Royal Tank Regiment and then a well-known English historian of World War II.

In 1980 his monograph „Invasion” was published (in 2001 the second edition of „Invasion: German Invasion of England, July 1940” was published). This monograph identified the features of the use of the method of alternative history in modern British historiography.

First, the modifier is chosen by the researcher arbitrarily and its affiliation to bifurcation points is not substantiated. Second, the main method of research is narrative, often with the inclusion in the text of the documents of the basic Reality. Accordingly, the description of tactical skirmishes is very wordy and detailed. Although the course and results of tactical combat are determined by the Ostrogradsky-Lanchester equations, deviations from the average norm are not significant. And therefore are not of interest and are usually not considered. Third, the researcher introducing a modifier and constructing an alternative reality, the information field in which historical characters act, takes the same from the basic reality.

It cannot be said that alternative history was a „terra incognita” for Soviet historical science, but for obvious reasons, Soviet historiography, guided by the principles of Marxism and partisanship, strongly rejected the „alternative” of social development. As noted by L.R. Hutt „Alternative as a special category of socio-historical knowledge has not received any detailed special development in Marxist social science, is practically absent in its categorical apparatus” (Khut, 2006, p. 61).

Such studies have long been unknown in the Soviet scientific literature. It is noteworthy that N. Ya. Eidelman's „Impossible 1826” (scenario of events during the victory of the Chernihiv Regiment uprising) was published by the author in the book „Apostle Sergius” (Eydelman, 1980) from the popular art series „Fiery Revolutionaries”, ie in the publication which clearly does not claim scientific status. The situation began to change somewhat in the 1980s, when it began to develop controlled by I. D. Kovalchenko Russian school of cliometrics. Yu. V. Latov believes that

„unfortunately, the founder of Russian cliometrics was very skeptical of alternative imitation modeling of the historical process, which did not contribute to its popularity” (Latov, 2000). L. R. Hutt, on the contrary, is convinced that „the 1980s were marked in Soviet historiography by the appearance of serious methodological works by I. D. Kovalchenko, ... in which special attention was paid to the probabilistic nature of the historical process” (Khut, 2006, p. 62).

Researchers also disagree about the beginning of the scientific development of alternative history in Russian historiography. Yu. V. Lativ believes that the beginning of the development of the problem was the publication in the „Questions of Philosophy” of the conceptual article „Retroalternative in the philosophy of history” (Bestuzhev-Lada, 1997) by the famous Russian historian I. V. Bestuzheva-Lada.

L. R. Hutt connects the beginning of the development of two events of scientific life, a special issue of the journal „THESIS” in 1994, which published a number of translated materials by foreign authors and in 1999 the editors of the yearbook „Odyssey” round table on „History in a conventional way” (Odissey, 2000). V. A. Nehamkin shares the formation of methodological and empirical studies of alternative history. The beginning of methodological research related to the philosophy of history, in his opinion, related to the publications of I. V. Bestuzheva-Lada, S. A. Ekshuta, and their final formation with the joint holding of the Institute of General History of the Russian Academy of Sciences and the editors of the yearbook „Odyssey” of the round table on „History in a conditional way”. He connects the beginning of applied research with the publication of K. Maxi's work „Invasion, which did not exist” (Nekhamkin, 2008).

The opinion of O. V. Bocharov stands out, which dates the beginning of development to 1964, the beginning of the sector of methodology of history of the Institute of History of the USSR Academy of Sciences, under the leadership of M. Ya. Gefer (Bocharov, 2002).

As K. Yeskov rightly points out, it is „in military history science that the idea of alternative history as an objective analysis of lost opportunities has always been the leading paradigm” (Eskov, 2003). Therefore, it is not surprising that Russian historians engaged in the study of World War II were the first to decide to use the method of alternative history in practice.

As correctly noted by V. A. Nehamkin, the impetus for the theoretical development of a new method of historical research was the release in 1995 of a study by a group of Anglo-American historians edited by K. Macksey „The Hitler Options”. In 2001, a Russian translation of Hitler's Missed Opportunities was published. And in the afterword to it S. Pereslegin formulated the basic requirements for a new method, called „alternative history”. Its theoretical basis was the bifurcation hypothesis.

The essence of the bifurcation hypothesis is as follows: there is a sequence of related events, parameterized by physical time. These connections

have causal character, that is there is some dynamic law which controls movement of system, and this management is carried out exclusively from the past to the future.

If $T_1 < T_2$, then changing the system at time T_2 will never change the system at time T_1 . Since the system „History” is homeostatic (stable system that eliminates deviations), ie there is only a countable number of points at which changes at time T_0 will cause changes at time T_2 . Moreover, any small changes at points T_0 can cause any noticeable changes at point T_2 . Thus, at these points there is not a dynamic but a statistical law.

S. Pereslegin warns that „alternative history” is a very difficult method. The researcher is required not only perfect mastery of the facts, but also „he must feel the key points of the historical process, understand the dialectic of subjective / objective, understand the relationship of homeostatic and induced behavior of the system, navigate in catastrophic decisions when the slightest changes in initial conditions lead to colossal changes in the dynamics” (Pereslegin, 2001, p. 398–399).

O. Shirokorad was the first, among all Russian historians of the Second World War, to use the method of „alternative history”. In the course of using this method, he empirically discovered the criteria for its applicability and the accuracy of some theoretical developments.

First, the limited number of modifiers / iterations (the only term to indicate changes in system parameters has not yet been developed). O. Shirokorad warns: „In my opinion, the historian should consider only one or two iterations, and then begins non-scientific fiction” (Shirokorad, 2005, p. 252). Thus, O. Shirokorad in the course of practical use confirmed the accuracy of the specified in the theoretical article of Yu. V. Latov principle of „minimum necessary influence” (Latov, 2000) and the need for its strict observance.

At the same time, the theoretical position on the observance of the principle of extrapolation, ie the need to consider the further development of an alternative version of history has caused objections from practitioners. This method works only in the area of the first bifurcation point. According to O. Shirokorad, „... a historian can say ... what would be the immediate consequences. But further forecasting of events is already fantastic, as the number of options for the development of events is growing exponentially” (Shirokorad, 2005, p. 252).

In 2010, Exmo commissioned three models of alternative history from leading Russian historians: „Stalin's first blow. 1941”, „Hitler is the winner. Could the Führer have won the war?” and „Alternative Reality 1941. Everything could have been different” were published in the collection „1941. A completely different war” (2011). Different historians have coped with this research task in different ways. The collection contains examples of both a fully qualified use of the method of alternative history and obvious failures.

However, some general conclusions can be drawn. First, Russian researchers of World War II adopted the method of alternative history as scientific knowledge. This was most clearly formulated by O. Isayev, who pointed out that this method „is one of the tools for studying history” (Isayev, 2011, p. 8).

Secondly, the use of the method by researchers of the Second World War is based on an algorithm developed by S. B. Pereslegin, theoretical developments of I. V. Bestuzheva-Lada, Yu. V. Latov, B. A. Nehamkin they are not used.

Thirdly, all researchers agree that „the study of history is a search for possible options” (Khmelnitskiy, 2011, p. 186), because without a detailed analysis of unrealized options, many in the events of that time remain unclear, especially the relative impact of various reasons ..” (Savin, 2011, p. 274).

It is hardly possible to agree with L. S. Yakovlev that „in the genre of alternative history is the approbation of a new type of historical consciousness” (Yakovlev, 2009, p. 60). More precisely determined the place of the method of alternative history E. N. Davydenko „the possibilities of applying the method of variable-modeling explanation in history are huge” (Davydenko, 2008, p. 34), but „modeling has its limits of application and it can not be idealized and absolute” (Davydenko, 2008, p. 34).

Thus, at the present stage, the method of alternative history can significantly expand the cognitive capabilities in the study of the history of World War II. Its use was initiated by representatives of Anglo-American historiography. In the post-Soviet space, this method was established much later. In Russian historiography, there are two unrelated areas of using the method of alternative history – methodological and empirical. At the same time, the connection of the empirical direction with the corresponding British historiography of the Second World War is more significant than with the methodological direction of Russian historiography.

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Жириков О. Ю., Пачев С. И. Використання методу альтернативної історії у вивченні Другої світової війни

У статті розглянуто науковий досвід використання методу „альтернативної історії” у вивченні історії Другої світової війни. Автори розкрили особливості методики застосування даного методу у світовій історичній науці до середини ХХ століття, показали його дослідницькі можливості та недоліки. Розкриті особливості використання методу альтернативної історії у сучасній історіографії Другої світової війни. Мета даної статті полягає у порівнянні основних методологічних підходів до застосування методу „альтернативної історії” в історіографії Другої світової війни, визначенні ступеню їх доцільності та коректності. Для досягнення поставленої мети ставляться наступні задачі: розглянути генезу методу „альтернативної історії”, установити й розкрити його ключові положення, алгоритм використання, застосування та особливості використання у британській та російській історіографії.

Ключові слова: метод „альтернативної історії”, історіографія Другої світової війни, точка біфуркації.

Жириков А. Ю., Пачев С. И. Использование метода альтернативной истории в изучении Второй мировой войны

В статье рассмотрены научный опыт использования метода „альтернативной истории” в изучении истории Второй мировой войны. Авторы раскрыли особенности методики применения данного метода в мировой исторической науке до середины ХХ века, показали его исследовательские возможности и недостатки. Раскрыты особенности использования метода альтернативной истории в современной историографии Второй мировой войны. Цель данной статьи состоит в сравнении основных методологических подходов к применению метода „альтернативной истории” в историографии Второй мировой войны,

определении степени их целесообразности и корректности. Для достижения поставленной цели ставятся следующие задачи: рассмотреть генезис метода „альтернативной истории”, установить и раскрыть его ключевые положения.

Ключевые слова: метод „альтернативной истории”, историография Второй мировой войны, точка бифуркации.

Zhiryakov O. Yu., Pachev S. I. Using the alternative history method in the study of World War II

The article discusses the scientific experience of using the „alternative history” method in the study of the history of the Second World War. The authors revealed the peculiarities of the methodology for applying this method in world historical science until the middle of the twentieth century, showed its research capabilities and shortcomings. The features of the use of the method of alternative history in the modern historiography of the Second World War are revealed. The purpose of this article is to compare the main methodological approaches to the application of the method of „alternative history” in the historiography of World War II, to determine the degree of their appropriateness and correctness. To achieve this goal, the following tasks are set: to consider the genesis of the method of „alternative history”, to establish and reveal its key provisions, the algorithm of use, application and features of use in British and Russian historiography.

At the present stage, the method of alternative history makes it possible to significantly expand the cognitive possibilities in the study of the history of the Second World War. Its use was pioneered by representatives of Anglo-American historiography. In the post-Soviet space, this method was established much later.

Keywords: „alternative history” method, historiography of World War II, bifurcation point.

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