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**THE PRINCIPLE OF CONCURRENT MAJORITY
IN WORKS OF JOHN C. CALHOUN***

SUMMARY. The name of John Caldwell Calhoun, a native citizen of the North American state of South Carolina, a long-term member of the upper house of Congress and the 7th Vice President of the United States, is among the foremost thinkers in the history of American social and political tradition of the first half of the XIXth century. Being well-known as a staunch defender of the USA institution of black slavery existing in the southern states in this period, at the same time, John C. Calhoun immortalized his name in the annals of American political history, having become the author of the controversial theory of states' rights. Born during the period of confrontation between the north-eastern and southern states of the USA, concerning federal tariffs on imported goods, the theory of states' rights, citing the Xth Amendment of the U.S. Constitution, declared the right of every state in the Union to nullify any decision of the U.S. Congress within its territory, declared unconstitutional by the local legislature. However, having gained no official recognition, the theory of states' rights entered the history of American social and political thought as an example of a radical interpretation of the USA Constitution. The present article is devoted to one of the key elements, lying in its basis — the principle of concurrent majority.

John C. Calhoun's principle of concurrent majority was put forward by its author as a more democratic alternative to the predominant principle of the absolute majority in the state structures of the USA.

KEY WORDS. John C. Calhoun, concurrent majority, states' rights theory

The name of John C. Calhoun (1782-1850), a native of the American South and defender of its interests, a long-term member of the Senate and the 7th U.S. Vice President, who entered American history of the first half of the 19th century as the creator of a controversial theory of states' rights, is almost unknown to Russian readers in the absence of Soviet and Russian historiography on the largest studies, focusing on his work. He is mentioned mainly in the analysis of common problems of the historical development of the U.S. in the first half of the 19th century, as one of the participants in the key events of that period. Herewith, local historians are usually united in giving John C. Calhoun their esteem. But the author of the theory of states' rights was also an advocate of slavery, racism and an ideologist of the southern prewar separatism [1; 258],

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[2; 312], [3; 173]. A similar view is shared by the authors of all Russian studies on the biography and social and political philosophy of the outstanding Southerner: E.V. Pazenko, G.A. Dubovitsky, I.V. Shatunova and V.V. Sogrin [4], [5], [6], [7].

In its turn, the American historiography of John C. Calhoun's views has a wider range of works. Two main approaches dominate in the Americans' view of their compatriot's socio-political philosophy. Those of the first school of thought (B. Parrington, D. Keypers, R. Current, R. Hofstadter and D. Niven) hold a negative point of view regarding the influence of Calhoun's ideas on American history [8], [9], [10], [11], [12]. Their common trend is united by the definition of the theory of states' rights given by John C. Calhoun — a theoretical model of the system of ideal, in the author's point of view, USA Constitutional interrelations between the federal government and some states in the Union — as a negative phenomenon in the political system of the USA. The theory of states' rights, in accordance with the opinion of these researchers, brought the country to the brink of collapse during the tariff crisis in the 1820s-1830s, and became a catalyst for the Civil War of 1861-1865. In addition, a special attention is paid to the position taken by John C. Calhoun concerning the issue of black slavery. John C. Calhoun is considered to be an outspoken opponent of abolitionism, an advocate of ideas based on the racial superiority of whites, and a defender of the pre-war U.S. South slaveholding elites.

An alternative approach to the study of social and political philosophy of John C. Calhoun is found in the works of such scholars as H.L. Cheek Jr., K.N. Wilson, M.L. Coit, L. Ford, T. Marmor and C. Wiltse [13], [14], [15], [16], [17], [18]. Criticizing representatives of the first approach for their excessive focus on the views of John C. Calhoun on racism and slavery, his advocates pay a special attention to his theory of states' rights. They argue, that its elements played a significant role in shaping modern republican traditions of the USA. John C. Calhoun appears, in their works, as one of the theorists of the modern democratic state, with its variety of interest groups, with presence of mechanisms of expression and protection of personal opinions in each of these groups.

This article is dedicated to this mechanism, which is one of the key elements of John C. Calhoun's theory of states' rights: the principle of concurrent majority (PCM). PCM was first formulated by John C. Calhoun in his pamphlet «South Carolina Exposition and Protest» (1828), created during the tariff crisis of the 1820s-1830s, when the confrontation between the U.S. federal government and the governments of the southern states centered around import duties on goods of foreign production. In the future, the idea of PCM was developed in numerous pamphlets, speeches, and letters by John C. Calhoun until his death in 1850. The most complete and evident form of the principle was described in two treatises published near the author's death, «Disquisition on Government» (1849) and «Discourse on the Constitution and Government of the United States» (1851), which served as the apotheosis of John C. Calhoun's philosophy.

John C. Calhoun's principle of concurrent majority was created on the basis of his criticism of the U.S. federal government in the second quarter of the 19th century,

as incapable of implementing the principle of popular sovereignty within the state. According to Calhoun, the reason for that was the principle of the absolute majority (PAM), which lies at the heart of the electoral system and legislative process of the United States [19; vol. 2; 217]. The republican government, he argued, the structure of which is based on the PAM, is not able to express the common will of society as a whole, but only that of the most numerous one of its fractions [20; vol. 10; 451].

According to John C. Calhoun's philosophy, in any state, regardless of the form of government, whether it is an aristocracy, a monarchy or a republic, there will be those who govern and those who are governed. The natural selfishness of human nature inevitably leads those, who hold the reins of government, to the tendency to usurp power to enrich themselves and promote their own interests at the expense of the ruin and oppression of the rest of society [20; vol. 10; 79]. The only difference between republican government based on PAM and aristocracy or monarchy is that the ruling class or the most powerful faction or alliance of factions constitute the numerical majority of the whole society.

The position of the controlled informally falls to the numerical minority. Thus, the rule of PAM turns numerical majority into an absolute ruler, and those, who accept and execute laws — into its representatives and agents. At the same time, strengthening and enrichment of the majority occurs due to the devastation and oppression of a society's minority, which inevitably leads to a conflict between these two sections [20; vol. 10; 80].

Such a confusion leads to the fact that any national government, since the moment of its creation of republican institutions, based on the PAM, have a tendency to failure and degradation into more primitive and tyrannical forms of government [20; vol. 10; 451]. John C. Calhoun saw the solution to this problem in the establishment of an effective system of checks and balances, able to overcome the selfish nature of the bearers of power and, thus, reverse the trend to a constant conflict, that lies in the foundation of all human societies. An essential element of such a system, according to his opinion, should be the principle of concurrent majority (PCM), designed to replace the PAM in the structure of republican governments. Calhoun's PCM was supposed to consider the opinion of each group or faction within the society, and view their combined agreement as the will of the whole society [20; vol. 6; 168]. Herewith, two possible options to achieve this result were assumed. The first option was to reform the electoral law and legislative decision-making process in such a way that they would not be possible without the unanimous approval of all the groups that make up a society (in the case of the USA, it was considered that each state in the Union will give a consent), expressed with the help of a structure which was specially created for this [20; vol. 2; 234].

The second version is not much different from the first. The essence of it was to allow each faction a veto for adoption of any legislation and election of any candidate for any public office. In other words, no government action, in this case, could be taken without a positive decision of the concurrent majority of all the groups that make up the society [20; vol. 2; 234-235]. In the case of the United States John C.

Calhoun proposed to establish a PCM by giving each of the states the right to nullification, i.e. the authority to prohibit the action of any federal legislation on the state's territory, that is accepted as unconstitutional by the local legislature. According to John C. Calhoun, when all the actions of the government are not possible without a general and concurrent approval of all parts of the society, it is the only way to avoid the factional struggles and conflicts within the state. In the works of Calhoun, PCM appears as an antidote to the inherent tendency of the government institution to usurp the power by the ruling elite. Thus, Calhoun argued, that the concurrent majority would be effective, even if it would be formed with the interests of not all, but at least a few of the most significant social groups. In this case, the public decision-making would require consent of such a large part of society, that the number of victims will be fairly small, and the number of winners — large enough not to allow the possibility of usurpation of power by one of the factions. Therefore, no matter how imperfect the executive structure of PCM is, John C. Calhoun stated in 1848, it will lessen the negative tendency, inherent in the government, to some extent [20; vol. 10; 364]. In this case, the main factor that can provide speed and efficiency of the republican government, founded on the PCM, according to John C. Calhoun, is the fear of anarchy, which is one of the inherent and dominant attributes of thinking of any person [19; vol. 1; 67]. PCM, as he claimed, would put numerous and various public interest groups within the state in front of the choice between making a quick and compromise decision that should satisfy all parties, or slowing down work of the government, which would inevitably lead to the destruction of the state. John C. Calhoun was sure, that, without a doubt, the choice will always fall on the compromise, which in its turn will provide an adequate speed to government decision-making, even in emergency situations [19; vol. 1; 65].

Researchers of the social and political philosophy of John C. Calhoun viewed the principle of concurrent majority, formulated by the Southerner, in different ways. Supporters of a negative assessment of his views suggested that the introduction of this principle in the form of states' rights to nullification in the U.S. federal government structure would lead to a monstrous disproportion, in which the state, smallest in size and population — Rhode Island would have equal voting and legislative rights with the largest and numerous states [11; 91]. The idea of PCM was recognized as utopian and unsustainable. The nullification movement, led by John C. Calhoun on its basis, popular at the pre-war South, was claimed to be the cause of the beginning of the Nullification crisis in 1832-1833 and, indirectly, in the outbreak of the Civil War [12; 256-257]. In addition, there was a view, according to which the PCM, as well as the whole theory of states' rights, was just a populist ploy, aimed to win the trust of the southern states and to strengthen the position of their opportunist author [9; 349]. In their turn, defenders of Calhoun argued that PCM made a contribution in the development of the American democratic tradition. Created originally as a means to guard interests of the southern states from the infringements of the federal government, the principle of concurrent majority was positioned by historians, defenders of

Calhoun, as a promising addition to the tools of expression and protection of interests of different national, cultural, social and gender groups [13; 14-15].

In turn, a significant drawback should be noted, which underlies the very principle of concurrent majority and reduces its value to zero. The weak point of PCM is justification of its effectiveness, which the author saw as an inherent feature, always dominant in a personality — the fear of anarchy. This fear, in his opinion, can rise from any obstacle, that befalls the work of government. It is this fear, that, in conditions of implementation of PCM mechanisms at the state level, must inevitably push groups involved in decision-making, to a rapid and satisfactory to all compromise, even during resolution of the most pressing and controversial issues [19; vol. 1; 182-183].

Contrary to the opinion of John C. Calhoun, the alternative to compromise in a situation like this can be found not in the fear of anarchy, but in the pursuit of national, cultural and religious separatism, which in its turn, can lead to a crisis and collapse of the country. An indirect confirmation of this is the events in 1861, when six slave states of the South, not being able to find a compromise with the industrial North in the questions concerning the future status of slavery and its expansion into new territories, declared their secession from the United States and the formation of the Confederate States of America, that served as a prologue to the beginning of the Civil War, 1861-1865.

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