

# Russian Minister of Finance Vladimir Kokovtsov and Korean Patriot Ahn Chunggün in Harbin (1906-1909)\*

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## Introduction

Minister of Finance Kokovtsov, witnessing Ahn Chunggün (1879-1910)'s assassination of Ito Hirobumi on October 26, 1909 during his tour of the Far East, took the lead in handling the precarious situation after Ito's death in Harbin. Kokovtsov's primary concern in the recovery process was the reaction of the Japanese government and the media for he wanted to ensure that the assassination would not deteriorate the Russo-Japanese relations or spark any conflict. Accordingly, Minister of Finance Vladimir Kokovtsov (1853-1943) decided to hand over jurisdiction over Ahn Chunggün to Japan when he was found to be Korean during the interrogation, and allowed the Japanese consul in Harbin to search Korean residences in Harbin in the presence of the Russian police.

It is noteworthy that there were internal complaints about the way he handled the political context of Ahn Chunggün's case according to the political climate of the day. Kokovtsov informed the Foreign Ministry that he had the consent of the Frontier Prosecutor of the local jurisdiction

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in turning Ahn Chunggŭn over to the Japanese authorities. In contrast, the district prosecutor, K. Miller (К. Миллер, ?-?), intuitively realizing that this case was not an accidental incident but a premeditated plot, talked about the practical way to solve the matter in Russia. As for him, it is fair for the Russian authorities, equipped with its local police force in the region, to handle the investigation and trial.

What, then, made Kokovtsev rush to transfer jurisdiction over Ahn Chunggŭn to Japan rather than resolve the case through the normal legal process? The answer has much to do with Russia's shift toward a cooperative diplomacy with Japan in earnest after the Russo-Japanese War. It means that the changing stance of Russia was closely tied to the fact that the post-war shift in its foreign policy from East Asia to Europe placed less weight to the defense of the Far East as the second best plan. This is why the Russian government planned to rebuild the Baltic Fleet, which was destroyed in the Battle of Tsushima (1905) in East Asia, but had no plan for the reconstruction of the Pacific Fleet.<sup>1</sup>

Russia's return to the European diplomacy was driven by the financial crisis that the Tsarist government had to face after the Russo-Japanese War. Foreign loans were the prescription to recover the financial crisis of the Tsarist government in the wake of defeat and revolution. France and Great Britain were the main providers of loans to Russia. They did not want Russia to collapse because they wanted to keep the German Empire, which had emerged as a rising imperialist power, in check. Therefore, the Anglo-French Entente in 1904, concluded between Russia's ally France and Japan's ally Britain, and the Triple Entente in 1907, a tripartite treaty adding Russia to the former entente, were part of the construction of the Anti-German Defense Network.

After the Russo-Japanese War, French and British loans became the foundation of Russia's defense rebuilding. The heavy dependence on Anglo-French loans made it difficult for Russia to divert these resources away from Europe to the Far East in the reconstruction of national de-

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<sup>1</sup> Щацилло К.Ф. 2000, От Портмутского мира к Первой мировой войне, М, С.95-101.

fense. In order to reassure Anglo-French investors of an economic normalization, Russia had to build up its defense capabilities in Europe while the defense of the Far East had to be addressed through diplomatic compromises with Japan. As a result, the Korean independence movement, centered on Vladivostok after the Russo-Japanese War, was also influenced by the postwar policy of Russia to Japan.

Research on Ahn Chunggŭn in Korea has developed both quantitatively and qualitatively since liberation to the extent of publishing about 450 academic papers by 2019, and can be characterized as follows. One focuses on Ahn's personal heroic narrative, including his ideas (East Asian Peace Thesis), religion, and court struggles while the other deals with his assassination from the perspective of the anti-Japanese independence movement.<sup>2</sup> Both of the research orientations have helped to broaden and deepen the scope of studies on Ahn Chunggŭn whereas it has also revealed the imbalance in the references by relying on Korean and Japanese sources. Therefore, taking the study of Ahn Chunggŭn to the next level does require a more macro-level and international approach to Ahn's assassination.

This study examines Ahn's assassination in terms of changes in Russia's Far Eastern defense plans after the Russo-Japanese War. I utilize the archives of the Russian Historical Archive (РГИА) that keeps written materials related to Kokovtsov's visit to the Far East.<sup>3</sup> These sources enabled me to understand how Korean patriot—Ahn— and Russian and Japanese politicians—Kokovtsov and Ito— came to meet in Harbin and the impact the encounter had on the Korean independence movement in Russian Far East.

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<sup>2</sup> Cho Kwang, 2020, "Current Status and Issues of Recent Research on Ahn Chunggŭn (2010-2019)," in *Revisiting the March 1 Movement and the Provisional Government of the Republic of Korea III - Ahn Jung-geun's Oriental Pacifism*, Northeast Asia History Foundation, 12-36. In the last decade, the topic that has generated the most research on Ahn Chunggŭn has been his "East Asian Peace Thesis." While more than 200 research papers on Ahn Chunggŭn were published from the time of liberation until 2009, the last decade from 2009 to 2019 has seen another remarkable quantitative growth with more than 150 research papers. This was due to the 100th anniversary of Ahn Chunggŭn's birth in 2009 and the 100th anniversary of his demise in 2010.

<sup>3</sup> The Russian State Historical Archive (Российский Государственный Исторический Архив: РГИА) Document Group (Фонд) No. 560 and Document Files (Дело) No. 416-424 were utilized.

## Russia's Fiscal Crisis and Reorientation of Foreign Policy after the Russo-Japanese War

In the fall of 1909, Russian Minister of Finance Kokovtsov visited the Far East to assess the status of defense rebuilding, remaining at a standstill since the Russo-Japanese War, in the Russian Far East. The visitation was prompted not only by the memorial to the Tzar presented by the Minister of War regarding a significantly tightened budget for the defense reconstruction of the Far East, but also the petition by the Priamursky Governor General regarding the fortification of Vladivostok. Kokovtsov was entitled to identify the reasons for the stagnation of defense reconstruction in the Far East and offer some practical solutions to the military issue in the region.

Since the Russo-Japanese War, Russia's foreign policy had been characterized by a shift of its interest from East Asia to Europe. Why did Russia fail to pay attention to rebuilding its defense forces in the Far East after the Russo-Japanese War? This situation was closely tied to the way the Tsarist government overcame the postwar financial crisis through the French and British loans (1906) after the Russo-Japanese War and the Russian Revolution of 1905. It was difficult for Russia to devote the funds received from France and Britain to the defense of the Far East far from the Anglo-French interest.

The reason France and Britain supported the defeated Russians was to prepare for a competition for European hegemony with the emerging German Empire. France, allied with Russia, feared that Germany would be the sole beneficiary of Russia's chaos and decline. Although France had gained British recognition of Morocco as a sovereign power in 1904, Germany's Wilhelm II took advantage of Russia's defeat in Manchuria and intervened in Morocco. The decline of its ally, Russia created a very awkward situation for France when Germany demanded an equal opportunity for all nations in Morocco. Although the Foreign Minister Théophile Delcassé tried to convince his ministers that Germany would not invade because it would have to go to war with Britain as well as France, French Prime Minister Maurice Rouvier disagreed on the optimistic sce-

nario. Instead, “[T]he British fleet does not have the wheels to come to the rescue of Paris,” the prime minister argued.<sup>4</sup>

The correlation between the Moroccan Crisis in 1905 and 1906 and the Battle of Mukden in 1905 in the Russo-Japanese War starkly illustrated the impact of Russia’s defeat on foreign relations in Europe. The Moroccan Crisis was being resolved through an international conference in June, 1905 under German leadership and this diplomatic climate foretold a nexus between a Russia’s defeat in the Russo-Japanese War and a losing position of France in Europe.<sup>5</sup> In fact, the decision to convene an international conference in Algeciras, Spain— Algeciras Conference in January, 1906— to discuss the Moroccan Crisis represented a diplomatic defeat of France.<sup>6</sup>

The aftermath of Russia’s defeat was not limited to the weakening of France’s position in Europe. Britain had to make plans to send troops to France in the event of a German attack. From the beginning of the winter in 1905, the British General Staff planned for British troops to land on the European continent and operate jointly with the French Army if Germany violated Belgium’s neutrality.<sup>7</sup> France, realizing that support from Russia was not possible in the midst of the revolution, was also forced to respond to the British Army’s plan for military cooperation. Britain’s abandonment of its traditional emphasis on naval warfare and

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<sup>4</sup> Кузенцова О.Н. Дальний Восток и развитие русско-французских отношений в 1902 -1905 гг. С.42.

<sup>5</sup> John C.G.Röhl, *Wilhelm II Into the Abyss of War and Exile, 1900-1941*, 418-436. The International Conference in Algeciras, Spain was held to resolve the First Moroccan Crisis in 1905. Since the crisis began when Germany opposed France’s expansionist policy to protect the independent nation of Morocco, it was expected to weaken the cohesion of Anglo-French negotiations. However, the meeting of 14 countries (Germany, Russia, Austria-Hungary, France, the United Kingdom, the United States, Italy, Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, the Ottoman Turks, and Morocco) resulted in Germany’s diplomatic isolation. At that time, Russia actively supported France.

<sup>6</sup> Olga Crisp, 1961, The Russian Liberals and the 1906 Anglo-French Loan to Russia, *The Slavonic and East European Review*, Vol.39, No. 93, 506.

<sup>7</sup> William J. Philpott, October 2013, The Making of the Military Entente, 1904-1914: France, the British Army, and the Prospect of War, *The English Historical Review*, Vol.128, No.534, 1155-1156.

the deployment of the British Expeditionary Force to continental Europe paradoxically motivated France and Britain to become the most active partners in Russia's postwar recovery. In consequence, Russia's defense rebuilding after the Russo-Japanese War was interlocked with the scale of French and British financial assistance to Russia.

French and British loans to Russia were a crucial way to revitalize the defeated country but their availability came in step with the outcome of the Algiers Conference. Why? It is the Algeciras Conference that came to determine, on top of the introduction of the loans, whether the postwar Russian foreign policy keeps the pro-French position or turns to a pro-German approach.

The tasks of international borrowing and strong support for France fell to former Minister of Finance Kokovtsov. He was recommended by Sergei Witte (1849-1915),<sup>8</sup> who took the lead in the Siberian Railroad Project and served as plenipotentiary at the Treaty of Portsmouth. Thus, Kokovtsov, dispatched as a reliever, must contrive to introduce the foreign loans and resuscitate his country.

Prior to his departure for France, Kokovtsev was granted an audience with Emperor Nikolai II who ordered Kokovtsev to inform France of Russia's financial condition where Russian will definitely fall down without loan from France. Kokovtsev was also directed to imply Russian support at the Algeciras conference on the Moroccan question.<sup>9</sup> Thus, carrying with him the leverage of Russia's support for France in the Moroccan question, Kokovtsev departed for Paris on December 30, 1905, to negotiate the loan.

The meeting at the Russian Embassy in Paris on April 16, 1906 between Kokovtsov, the representative of the Russian government and a consortium of French, British, Austrian and Dutch banks gathered shortly

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<sup>8</sup> В.Н.Кокковцов, 1933, Из Моего Прошлого: Воспоминания 1903-1919, Т.1, Париж, С.118 -119.

<sup>9</sup> В.Н.Кокковцов, Из Моего Прошлого. According to Kokovtsev's memoirs, "The Emperor added that it would add credibility and help to secure the loan if Russia's support for France was conveyed to the French government by the Emperor's envoy Kokopochov himself, rather than through the Minister of Foreign Affairs or the Russian Ambassador to France."

after the Algeciras Conference in April, 1906. It was at this meeting that Russia seized the opportunity to redeem itself from the maelstrom of defeat and revolution. An unprecedented loan of 2.25 billion francs (5 per cent interest) was agreed upon.<sup>10</sup>

In 1906, the loan was primarily funded by France but Britain agreed to provide a quarter of the loan. This had special significance. Britain was well aware of the impact that the fate of Russia, which was in financial crisis, would make on international relations in Europe if the loan was blocked by Germany. The 1906 loan thus provided an opportunity for Britain to seek improved relations with Russia through France.<sup>11</sup>

The signing of the Anglo-Russian Agreement in August, 1907 was a natural consequence of the 1906 loan. The Russo-Japanese Treaty in July, 1907 also resulted from a diplomatic compromise on East Asian issues between Russia and Japan, where both countries secretly recognized Korea and South Manchuria as Japanese interests on the one hand and Outer Mongolia and Northern Manchuria as Russian interests on the other.<sup>12</sup> Russia was in a difficult position with regard to Japan's annexation of Korea.<sup>13</sup> To be certain, this diplomatic change affected the direction and nature of the Korean independence movement in Vladivostok. If Russia and Japan were to move away from the traditional confrontation to a greater cooperation that Britain and France wished, the Russian au-

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<sup>10</sup> V.N.Кокотцов, Из Моего Прошлого: Воспоминания 1903-1919, С.162. Russia's financial agent in Paris, Artur Rafalovich (1853-1921), requested an increase in the size of the subsidy to the French press to 200,000 francs from January 1906 until the date of the loan agreement. After the signing of the Portsmouth Reinforcement Treaty, Russia's subsidy to the French press was reduced to 100,000 francs, which the Parisian press attempted to reciprocate by criticizing the loan. J. W. Long, Russian Manipulation of French Press, 1904-1906, *Slavic Review*, Vol. 31-2, 352-353.

<sup>11</sup> Olga Crisp, *The Russian Liberals and the 1906 Anglo-French Loan to Russia*, 508. The loan paved the way for the Anglo-Russian compromise on Persia, Central Asia, and Tibet in 1907, ending the long-standing confrontation between Britain and Russia over the entire Asian continent.

<sup>12</sup> Masato Matsui, 1972, The Russo-Japanese Agreement of 1907: Its Causes and the Progress of Negotiations, *Modern Asian Studies*, Vol.6, No. 1. 33.

<sup>13</sup> The Russo-Japanese Convention has two public provisions and four secret provisions. According to Article 2, Russia undertook not to interfere with the development of existing political relations between Japan and Korea. John A. White, 1995, *Transition to global rivalry: alliance diplomacy and the Quadruple Entente, 1895-1907*, Cambridge University Press, 304-306.

thorities' stance toward the Korean independence movement in Primorye was likely to change.

Kokovtsov, appointed Minister of Finance in 1906 after the successful mission to France,<sup>14</sup> oversaw Russia's finances until 1914. Given that no one else would take on the role during the chaos of defeat and revolution, his long tenure as Minister of Finance was due to favorable domestic and international conditions.<sup>15</sup> Internally, he received the full trust of the emperor while French and British loans to Russia served as a safety valve for his activities in government. The diplomatic development of the Russo-French Alliance into the Anglo-French-Russo-Japanese Quadruple Entente in 1907 helped to create a peaceful external environment.

The Anglo-French loan, in exchange for acting as a check on Germany, allowed Kokovtsov to manage the Tsarist government's finances and normalize the economy from the Russo-Japanese War through World War I. Still, the loan was a debt to be repaid. In response, he took the position that the defense budget had to be cut or made more efficient for stimulating the private sector and securing new sources of revenue. Thus, the Tsarist government's plans for defense reconstruction after the Russo-Japanese War were constantly in tension with the Minister of Finance.

Kokovtsov's 1907 budget, based on the 1906 loan, pursued the principle of balanced budget.<sup>16</sup> As a means of balanced budget, he sought to ensure that new expenditures were approved by the legislature before they were included in the budget. Nevertheless, the domestic situation in

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<sup>14</sup> V.N.Коковцов, Из Моего Прошлого: Воспоминания 1903-1919, С.171-173. No one was more pleased with the 1906 agreement than Tsar Nicholas II (r.1894-1917) "You have made a great and unforgettable contribution to Russia and to me even under difficult circumstances. I look forward to hearing from you personally," and wanted to appoint Kokovtsov as Minister of Finance. Kokovtsov declined on health grounds but on May 8, 1906, the day before Russia's first modern parliament (the Duma) convened, what was delivered to him was an imperial letter confirming his appointment as Minister of Finance.

<sup>15</sup> Переписка В.Н.Коковцова Эд.Нецлину, 28 Июля(8.10.)1906 г. Красный Архив, (hereinafter abbreviated as К.А.), 1923 Т. 4. С.133.

<sup>16</sup> Переписка В.Н.Коковцов Эд.Нецлину, 14(27) нояб. 1906 г. Красный Архив, 1923 Т. 4. С.143-146.

Russia proved to be difficult to achieve a balanced budget without a deficit. The internal revenue had not increased so a balanced budget was possible only if expenditures were minimized.

Another unexpected problem that shocked Khrushchev's balanced budget was the massive defense reconstruction program. The Ministry of War wanted to maintain a larger force even before the Russo-Japanese War. This was because the Minister of War, Aleksandr Reodiger (1854-1920) considered the shortage of men and equipment to be the reason for the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. That is why in October 1906 Reodiger submitted a proposal to the Council of Ministers for a budget of 215 million rubles to rebuild the army with 134,000 standing troops.<sup>17</sup>

Kokovtsov's response to the Army's demands was to delegate the review of defense spending to the national congress, or Duma. The idea was to use the power of the legislature to check the military's defense spending. The Minister of Finance's principle of spending legitimate budget expenditures, approved only by the legislature, was also a way to avoid deficit financing. Fiscal rebalancing was also necessary to improve the country's creditworthiness for continued loan. The Army's need for increased defense spending could be realized only through the issuance of government bonds to be approved by parliament.

The fierce confrontation among the Ministry of Finance, the Ministry of War and the Ministry of the Navy after the Russo-Japanese War stemmed also from the introduction of a parliamentary system that took control of the budget. Systematically, the finance minister, in response to the military's demands for increased defense spending, set up a structure in which defense budgets pass through legislative approval. The more the Minister of the Navy, Alexey Birilev (1844-1915) and Ivan Dikov (1833-1914)) as well as Reodiger pressured Ministry of Finance to increase the budget, the more Kokovtsov had no choice but to stand up squarely to the pressures. In the end, Kokovtsov proposed the military's own budget

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<sup>17</sup> Шацкило К.Ф. 2000, От Портсмутского мира к Первой мировой войне. М., С. 126-127. The Russian Army operated as a peacetime force of 1% of the 138,100,000 men obliged to military service, so that in January, 1900, the Army's strength was 1,385,061 men.

reductions on the ground that it would be difficult to find additional sources of tax revenue.

When the Ministry of War requested new funding, restructuring was the solution to meet its limited budget. It was also a desperate attempt to reduce the number of troops and use the savings to fund new defense buildup projects.<sup>18</sup> Ultimately, after the decision made by the Council of Ministers to reject the request of the Ministry of War for an additional budget, Reodiger resigned from his post in March, 1909. The nub of the issue here is the demand of the Ministry of Finance to reduce the standing army and reorganize the troops.

The conflict between the Ministry of War and the Ministry of Finance over the defense budget continued as the new Minister of War, Vladimir Sukhomlinov (1848-1926) determined on keeping the policy of his predecessor, Reodiger. At a special cabinet meeting in June, 1909 to review the 1910 budget, organized by Kokovtsov, Sukhomlinov maintained that no reduction in troop strength was possible. Considering the length of the borderlines, the vastness of the territory to be defended, the sparsity of resident population, and the state of transportation, he argues, the Russian army should remain at a size comparable to the combat power of a potential enemy state and even the standing army was not excessive but rather insufficient.<sup>19</sup> This disagreement between the two ministries over the defense budget continued into Kokovtsov's trip to the Far East in the fall of 1909 when the issue of how to fortify Vladivostok came up.

It is the commander of the Priamursky Military District, Pavel Unterberger (1842-1921) who proposed the need for the fortification of Vladivostok. The fortification of Vladivostok and the construction of

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<sup>18</sup> М.В.Зайцев. Путешествие из Петербурга во Владивосток: К Вопросу о противоречиях правительстве России по поводу финансирования вооруженных сил накануне первой мировой войны, Изв. Саратовского университета. Нов. История. Международные отношения. 2017. Т. 17, вып. 4. С.447-449. In 1909, the budget of the Ministry of War reached 470 million rubles, or a quarter of the state budget.

<sup>19</sup> Особый Журнал Совета Министров, 6 июня 1909 г.

land and coastal defenses on its outskirts went along in conjunction with his operational plan against Japanese landing and rear attacks. In the event of a new conflict with Japan and Qing China, he would draw up a campaign plan in which the district should hold the line until reinforcements from Europe.<sup>20</sup> Thus, the fortification of Vladivostok became a national issue that Kokovtsov had to solve through his field visits.<sup>21</sup>

The fortification project came to emerge when the Minister of War wrote a report to the Tsar and blamed the Minister of Finance for the project's delays. The Minister of War attributed to the fault of the Minister of Finance the disapproval of the budget for the project and the defenselessness of the Far East for three years after the post-war recovery began. Important is that the army had not received any money from the Ministry of Finance to upgrade Vladivostok's defense.

Kokovtsov immediately refuted the critique of the Army by presenting the Council of Ministers with budget documents proving that the budget for the defense of Vladivostok had not been cut by a single penny for the last three years. In the documents, the budget allocated to the Ministry of War three years ago had remained completely unspent. Rather, according to Kokovtsov, the only mistake his ministry made was an inability to oppose new budget allocations to the Ministry of War despite the accumulation of unspent funds. The Ministry of Finance suggested the Ministry of War to utilize the unspent funds from the ministry's own budget<sup>22</sup>; otherwise, the only way to secure any budget for urgent projects was to seek parliamentary approval, which entails a highly time-con-

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<sup>20</sup> Р.С. Авилов, 2016, По Транссибу на Восток. Визит Министра Финансов В.Н.Кокотцова в Приамурский Военный округ, Вестник Томского гос.уни., № 405, С.38-49.

<sup>21</sup> В.И.Калинин, Н.Б.Аюшин, 2000, Крепость Владивосток, *Россия и АТР*. № 4, С.112- 121.

<sup>22</sup> Шацилло К.Ф. 1991, Последние военные программы Российской империи, Вопросы истории, № 7-8, С.224-233. The issue of strengthening the defense of the Far East was part of the modernization of the Russian army. From the Russo-Japanese War to World War I, 1.8 billion rubles were budgeted for the modernization of Russian military equipment, but only 376,500,000 rubles, or one-fifth of the budget, were actually spent by 1914. This was a product of the inefficient bureaucracy of the Russian administration, especially the Army and Navy, rather than a lack of funding or Kokovtsov's personal problems. These, like the Russian military defense industry, suffered from low productivity and were unable to meet budgetary demands in a timely manner.

suming process.<sup>23</sup>

Therefore, the first task of Kokovtsov's visit to the Far East was to find out why, despite the funding for Vladivostok's defense, the project had not progressed. The Ministry of Finance had not cut the budget for Far Eastern defense for the past three years and even issued government bonds for the military request.<sup>24</sup> This is why Tsar Nikolai II directly sent the Minister of Finance directly to the Far East.

## Kokovtsov's Far East Tour and Ahn Chungŭn's Assassination

When the Minister of Finance Kokovtsov planned his trip to the Far East in the fall of 1909, a meeting with Ito Hirobumi at Harbin was not on the agenda. On September 22, 1909, Kokovtsov received Tsar Nikolai II's approval for his plans to visit the Chinese Eastern Railway as well as Khabarovsk and Vladivostok.<sup>25</sup> The Minister's tour was conducted in the midst of a busy schedule to finalize the 1910 budget so the time and location of the tour was extremely limited.<sup>26</sup> During the five-week tour, Kokovtsov was not to leave the Dongcheng Railway Zone and the Russian Consul General in Beijing, Ivan Korostovets (1862-1933) had to travel to Harbin to meet him.<sup>27</sup> Although Kokovtsov had been invited by the Japanese government to visit since the spring of 1909, a trip to Tokyo was not

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<sup>23</sup> М.В.Зайцев. Путешествие из Петербурга во Владивосток, 449-450. The emergence of the legislature in accordance with the principle of the separation of powers in the 1906 Russian Constitution (April 23, 1906) revealed the various layers of the process of passing the budget of the executive branch through parliament. The Ministry of War, in particular, had the greatest difficulty in obtaining a budget. This was because the military, especially the army minister, who was a vassal of the Tsar, did not value the role of parliament in defense projects with national significance.

<sup>24</sup> М.В.Зайцев. Путешествие из Петербурга во Владивосток, С. 448-449.

<sup>25</sup> РГИА. Ф.560. Оп.28. Д.416. Л.6-8. Всеподданнейший доклад министра финансов 9 сентября 1909 г.

<sup>26</sup> Переписка В.Н.Кокцов Эд.Нецлину, 21 сентября(4 октября) 1909 г. Красный Архив, 1923 Т. 4. С.155-156.

<sup>27</sup> РГИА. Ф.560. Оп.28. Д.416. Л.9. Копия телеграммы Правления Общества КВЖД в Пекине от 10 сентября 1909 г. на имя Коростовца.

on his itinerary. So, the meeting with Ito in Harbin was decided upon after Kokovtsev had embarked on a tour of the Far East.

On October 1, 1909, Kokovtsov began his journey to the Far East. When he arrived at Manchuria Station on October 11, the junction of the Siberian Railway and the Chinese Eastern Railway, he was faced with a decision that would prove to be the most difficult of his Far Eastern tour. He received a telegram from the Russian Financial Agent Grigory Vilenkin (1864-1930) in Japan that delivered a message from Ito Hirobumi via Goto Shinpei (1857-1929) regarding a meeting in Harbin.<sup>28</sup>

On the same day on October 11, Nikolai Malevskiy-Malevich (1856-1917), the Russian Ambassador to Japan reported more details about Ito's plan to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. They can be summarized into the following three points. First, Ito's itinerary to Manchuria will be from Dalian to Shenyang to Harbin to Vladivostok and accompanied by an entourage of about eight people. Second, without any official title, still, Ito, widely known as a pro-Russian figure, wants to meet with Kokovtsov in Harbin. Third, Ito wants to strengthen bilateral relations between Russia and China regarding connection between the Chinese Eastern Railway and the South Manchurian Railway on top of Far Eastern issues in general.<sup>29</sup> Two days later (October 13), the ambassador gave a more detailed report on Ito's trip to Manchuria. To summarize, Ito's visit to Harbin was intent on a meeting with Kokovtsov to discuss the recently concluded Jiandao Agreement between the Qing and Japan in September 1909<sup>30</sup> and lay the groundwork for reconciling the Russian and Japanese interests in Manchuria. What was expected to be addressed between Kokovtsov and Ito was how to finalize the unfinished agreement

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<sup>28</sup> РГИА. Ф.560. Оп.28. Д.416. Л.44. Телеграммы Велинкина из Токио на мия Министра Финансов от 28 сентября 1909 г.

<sup>29</sup> Там же. Л.61. Секретная телеграмма Малевского-Малевича 28 сент. / 11 октября 1909 г.

<sup>30</sup> Там же. Л.77-78. Текст секретной телеграммы Товарища МИДа на имя Коковцова, 30 сентября 1909 г. By the recent Jiandao Agreement, I mean the "Agreement between China and Japan relative to Chientao, and concerning the mines and railways in Manchuria, 4 se,1909" signed by the two countries on September 4, 1909. Here, Jiandao and Chientao can be interchangeably used.

on the transshipment of cargo on the Chinese Eastern Railway and the South Manchurian Railway, and find a solution to Russian demands that Japan had rejected after the Russo-Japanese War. Therefore, Russia believed that Ito's visit to Harbin displays a Japanese aspiration to rapprochement with Russia in resolving the U.S.-Japan conflict emanated from the Jiandao Agreement.

The confidential report from Vilenkin to Kokovtsov in October 14, 1909 is notable for the former's systematic analysis regarding the reasons for Ito's hasty departure to Manchuria without prior consultation.<sup>31</sup> Vilenkin judged that the ostensible reasons of Ito for visiting Manchuria was to refresh himself and revisit a place he had not been to in a long time but the real purpose was to find a solution to the deteriorating relations between the U.S and Japan over Manchuria. Paying attention to the fact that Manchuria had been the highly controversial issue of the recent U.S.-Japanese relations, he identified Ito's trip to Manchuria as a business travel with a clear purpose. The reason was that the Qing had ceded to Japan Fushun coal mining rights and the coal mining rights along the Tandong-Fengtian railroad reinforcement section through 'Agreement between China and Japan relative to Chientao, and concerning the mines and railways in Manchuria' in September 1909.<sup>32</sup>

Ito wanted to meet with Kokotchov immediately after the signing of the 'Agreement between China and Japan relative to Chientao, and concerning the mines and railways in Manchuria' because this step sparked the beginning of the U.S.-Japanese conflict. The U.S. State Department took issue with Japan over the problem of the agreement by claiming that it violated "The Root-Takahira Agreement of 1908" based on the principle of open doors and equal opportunity for Manchuria. Likewise, the U.S.-Japan conflict consisted in the clash of interests between Japan, in pursuit of a monopoly over the South Manchuria after

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<sup>31</sup> РГИА. Ф.560. Оп.28. Д.421. Л.7-15. Доверительное письмо Виленкина Коковцову от 1 октября 1909 г.

<sup>32</sup> Foreign Relations of the United States, 1909. 118-120. Japanese-Chinese Agreement concerning Mines and Railways in Manchuria.

the Russo-Japanese War, and the U.S whose aim was to enter the Manchurian market under the slogan of open doors and equal opportunity.

Vilenkin credited Shinpei Goto, the former president of the South Manchuria Railway as the unsung hero of Ito's visit to Harbin. Upon hearing about the Far East tour of the Minister of Finance, he had tried to organize a visit of the Russian minister to Tokyo. But, as the event seemed impossible he persuaded Prime Minister Katsura Taro (1848-1913) to invite Ito to visit Manchuria. As a result, Ito visited the Russian Ambassador to Japan, or Malevich Malevich and proposed a meeting in Harbin and through Goto Shinpei the ambassador instructed Vilenkin to telegraph the proposal to the Minister of Finance.

Ambassador Malevich characterized Ito's offer to meet in Harbin as a gesture of Japan's friendly approach to Russia. The Japanese government, according to Malevich's analysis, endeavored not only to show the United States and China, wary of this Russo-Japanese meeting closely after the Russo-Japanese War, that the two countries were aligned in their interests and in solidarity with each other in Manchuria, but also to secure continued concessions from the Qing. Thus, by placing a stress on the Russo-Japanese partnership, Japan hoped to gain a free hand in Manchuria at the expense of neutralizing the Root-Takahira Agreement that promised the opening of Manchuria and the territorial integrity of the Qing.

So what cards could Japan play to gain access to Russia? The key was the return of Russian ships captured by Japan during the Russo-Japanese War. This incident had been used by the Russian media to foment anti-Japanese sentiment. In response, Russia sought for an unconditional return of three steamships—Manchuria, Argun, and Mukden— owned by the Chinese Eastern Railway for the issue had been left unresolved after the Russo-Japanese War so the matter could be put on the agenda at Harbin.<sup>33</sup> Vilenkin was hopeful that the issue of the return of these vessels

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<sup>33</sup> РГИА.Ф.560.Оп.28.Д.416.Л.132-133. Телеграмма Управления дороги Директору Канцелярия Министра Финансов, 9 октября 1909 г. According to the report of the Board of Directors of the Chinese Eastern Railway, the Mukden was captured by the Japanese Navy on

(worth 1,759,000 rubles) belonging to the Chinese Eastern Railway, run originally by Russia, would be resolved satisfactorily because Japan wanted to conclude an agreement between the South Manchurian Railway, operated by Japan, and the Chinese Eastern Railway on the transshipment of cargo.

Preparations for the meeting began in earnest when in response to Ito's proposal Khokovtsov informed Ito of his itinerary for his stay in Harbin. Ito was given a choice for their meeting schedule during the inbound trip of Kokovtsov to Vladivostok (October 24-27) or the outbound trip (November 7-9).<sup>34</sup> Ito personally visited Ambassador Malevich-Malevich on October 11, confirmed the Japanese Embassy's report on the arrival of Khrushchev at Harbin on October 25, and expressed his hope for a meeting in Harbin.<sup>35</sup> On October 14, Financial Commissioner Vilenkin in Japan informed the Japanese that Kokovtsov had agreed to meet with Ito in Harbin; and then Japan confidentially reported that Ito's arrival date in Harbin had been set for October 26. Finally, along with his final report on October 16, 1909 regarding Ito's arrival in Harbin and a list of Ito's entourage, Vilenkin informed the Russian authorities that Ito and his group were scheduled to depart by overnight train on October 25 from Kuancheng to Harbin.<sup>36</sup>

"Such a meeting in neutral territory would be beneficial," the Tsar wrote on October 15 when approving an official imperial document reporting that Kokovtsov had agreed on a Harbin meeting with Ito.<sup>37</sup> Har-

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February 7, 1904 at Busan, the Argun on February 8 in the Korean Strait, and the Manchuria on February 17 at Nagasaki.

<sup>34</sup> РГИА.Ф.560.Оп.28.Д.421.Л.2. Телеграмма Коковцова Виленкину, 28 сентября 1909 г.

<sup>35</sup> РГИА.Ф.560.Оп.28.Д.421.Л.3-3об.: Копия секретной телеграммы Малевского-Малевица, 11 октября 1909 г. Ambassador Malevski-Malevich informed the Russian consul in Dalian, the Russian legation in Peking, and the governor of Priamursky Province about Ito's trip to Manchuria in October.

<sup>36</sup> Там же. 16-17об. Письмо Виленкина Коковцову 3 октября 1909 г. Vilenkin's report included nine people in the entourage of Ito. But, he informed that it is unclear whether all of them would accompany Ito.

<sup>37</sup> Там же. Л.19. Телеграмма тайного советника Вебера Коковцову, 4 октября 1909 г. "Такая

bin was neither Russian nor Japanese territory, thereby making an ideal place for both countries to discuss some issues of their interest without external influence and interference. That's why Russian Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sazonov considered the Harbin meeting as an opportunity to handle unresolved issues after the Russo-Japanese War. He was confident that the circumstances, leading the Japanese political tycoon, in spite of his advanced age, to come to Manchuria in person and visit the Russian minister, were in no way unfavorable to Russia.

Ito's itinerary, as understood by Kokovtsov, was to depart Kuancheng on the night of October 25, stay in Harbin for two days (October 26 & 27), and depart for Vladivostok on the night of October 27. Then, Kokovtsov was impelled to telegraph on October 24 to the Primamursky Governor-General Unterberger that he would travel to Vladivostok via Khabarovsk after a meeting with Ito in Harbin but that he could not expect any exact date.<sup>38</sup> "I never know how long the meeting with Ito will keep me," he said.<sup>39</sup> Thus, Kokovtsov, scheduled originally to arrive in Harbin at 6 m. on October 24 and depart for Vladivostok in the afternoon of October 28, began preparing for the meeting from October 25.<sup>40</sup>

As the highest-ranking official on the scene immediately after Ahn Chunggün's assassination in Harbin in October 26, Kokhovtsov set out to investigate the incident. The most immediate issue he sought to determine was responsibility. The question of who is responsible for the shooting of a Japanese statesman by a Korean in Harbin, belonging to the leased territory of Russia, was inseparable from detecting whether the Russian security was negligent or whether the Japanese Consulate General in Harbin failed to check visitor identification thoroughly.

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встреча на нейтральной почве может быть полезна."

<sup>38</sup> Там же. Л.21. Телеграмма Приамурского Генерал-Губернатора Коковцову, 4 октября 1909 г. When Unterberger was informed that Ito would be returning home via Vladivostok after a Harbin meeting, he suggested to Kokovtsov that they travel together from Khabarovsk to Vladivostok. This idea was proposed because Kokovtsov would feel more convenient for a Vladivostok visit if seeing Ito first going back to Japan via Vladivostok.

<sup>39</sup> Там же. Л.27. Телеграмма Коковцова Унтербергеру, 11 октября 1909 г. из Харбина.

<sup>40</sup> РГИА.Ф.560.Оп.28.Д.418.Л.56.: Программа.

That is why Kokovtsov summarized Russia's position on the security issue and forwarded it to the Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs Sazonov. In the event that the Russian railroad authorities were criticized for their lack of preliminary screening of guests, Kokovtsov suggested how to refute Russian responsibility by enumerating the mistake made by the Japanese Consulate General that not only confirmed the Chinese Eastern Railway to allow Japanese people to enter freely the welcoming ceremony for Ito without any tickets, but also let An, to whom the slightest attention was paid, in.<sup>41</sup> In short, Kokovtsov made it clear that the blame for the incident lies in the mismanagement of the Japanese consulate thoroughly ill-prepared for keeping close check on visitors.

In addition to a matter of responsibility, another issue that Kokovtsov focused his efforts on to resolve the incident was the Japanese media's and Japanese government's assessment with regard to the assassination. Why? The assassination, partly due to the Japanese Consulate General's failure to escort the Japanese special guests, did occur under Russian jurisdiction and Russia was by no means immune from responsibility. This is why General Dmytro Horvath (1858-1937), the head of the Chinese Eastern Railway Garrison, and Korostovets escorted the wagon train, where Ito's coffin is enshrined, to Kuancheng with the utmost courtesy.<sup>42</sup> The Minister of Finance was therefore keenly attuned to Japan's reaction to the incident, fearing another possibility of conflict with Japan when his country recovered from the crisis of defeat and revolution.

Kokovtsov's decision to transfer the disposition of Ahn to the Japanese authorities was a desperate measure of self-defense against Japanese public opinion. He informed the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that all doc-

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<sup>41</sup> РГИА.Ф.560.Оп.28.Д.421.Л.38-38об. According to a confidential letter [October 14, 1909 (27)] from Korostovets, Russian Envoy to Qing China, the Russian authorities took measures against the European and Chinese to restrict the entry of the crowds into the Harbin Station but allowed the Japanese to enter without restriction in accordance with the wishes of the Japanese consul. Korostovets attributed this indiscretion to a failure to be careful about the easy entrance of Ahn into the welcoming ceremony for Ito at the Harbin Station. (АВПРИ.Ф.150.Оп.493.Д.1279.Л.44-47об.: Секретное письмо Коростовцаб 14 октября 1909 г.)

<sup>42</sup> АВПРИ.Ф.150.Оп.493.Д.1279.Л.44-47об.

uments would be transferred to the Japanese consulate since the assassin is a Korean and jurisdiction over all Korean cases belongs to Japan. And, this action was taken in consideration of the fact that despite the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth after the Russo-Japanese War, rumors of a second Russo-Japanese War continued to circulate.<sup>43</sup> The expeditious decision was designed to avoid any potential for Russo-Japanese conflict that would have resulted from the failure to prevent the assassination.

Kokovtsov also viewed the arrests of Cho Tosön (1879-?) and Ŭ Töksun (1880-1950) by Russian military police at the Ciajiagou station as vital evidence that would absolve him of responsibility for failing to prevent the incident.<sup>44</sup> The rationale was, first, that they were accomplices because the ammunition from the revolver pistols seized from them were devastator bullets identical to Ahn's and, second, that their arrest disproved Ahn's statement that he traveled alone from Vladivostok to Harbin and stayed overnight at the station. This is why Korostovets, the Russian Legation to the Qing said, "There is no need to blame ourselves for the lack of security or the lack of preventive measures. The assassination was an unfortunate coincidence."

Meanwhile, Kokovtsov's transfer of Ahn Chunggün to the Japanese authorities on the political pretext of improving Russo-Japanese relations and preventing a recurrence of the conflict with Japan was not acceptable to District Prosecutor Miller. Russian judiciary, Miller reasoned, should exercise its extraterritoriality in Harbin and, then, Ahn's case was also to be investigated under the Russian authorities.<sup>45</sup>

Still, prosecutor Miller was unable to oppose the transfer of this

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<sup>43</sup> РГИА. Ф.560. Оп.28. Д.421. Л.6-6об.: Русско-Японское Сближение.

<sup>44</sup> The Consul General of Japan in Harbin, Kawakami Toshitsune (1861-1935), also confirmed that the issuance of free passes to Japanese people for the Ito welcome ceremony was the request that the consulate had made. In response, the district prosecutor Miller pointed out that the Russian Minister of Finance was present at the Harbin station, as well as Ito, and accused the Japanese officials of not caring security issues at all when preparing the welcome ceremony. РГИА. Ф.560. Оп.28. Д.422. Л.41-45. Прокурора Пограничного Округа Суда Миллера Господину Прокурору Иркутской Судебной Палаты, 14 октября 1909 г.

<sup>45</sup> РГИА. Ф.560. Оп.28. Д.422. Л.23-23об. Записка Прокурора Пограничного Округа. Б/Д.

case to Japan to the end. Why? Paradoxically, there were no Russian victims in Harbin at that time. Ahn Chunggŭn and his comrades used devastator bullets to avoid killing, if unwittingly, any Russians, which paved the way for Japan to claim for its jurisdiction. The use of devastator bullets, as district prosecutor Miller pointed out, did not wound bystanders, specifically Russians around Ito, and for this reason the Russian authorities came to have little legal basis for proactively investigating the Korean suspects.<sup>46</sup> Thus, what we can see here is a complex diplomatic reality that made the assassination of Ito without any Russian casualties in Harbin treated by political, less than legal, judgment.

The joint Russian-Japanese investigation into the assassination was a desperate attempt of Russia to maintain the amicable relationship with Japan. Despite having a real police force and the ability to exercise its judicial authority, Russia cooperated with Japan by enforcing search & seizure, finding evidence, and handing over investigative materials to Japan.<sup>47</sup> As a result, the Russo-Japanese cooperation system for the case

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<sup>46</sup> РГИА.Ф.560.Оп.28.Д.422.Л.41-45. Прокурора Пограничного Округа Суда Миллера Господину Прокурору Иркутской Судебной Палаты, 14 октября 1909 г. According to a document reported to the Irkutsk Court by district court prosecutor Miller, “a devastator bullet is lodged in the body of the wounded when fired and if it had not been for the bursting round, Ito would have received only a penetrating wound and Minister of Finance Kokovtsov, walking next to him, would have been wounded due to the close distance.”

<sup>47</sup> РГИА.Ф.560.Оп.28.Д.422.Л.24-28об. *Ход События, относящихся к убийству Князя Ито после 14 октября 1909 года.* Here are some highlights of the Russian authorities' investigations after the death of Ito. On October 29, the Irkutsk Military Police sent a telegram about the results of their search. A search of the house of an anti-Japanese activist Cho Tosŏn (1879-?)'s lover, Vozaeva, an ethnic Korean living in the Irkutsk ethnic district in Irkutsk, revealed a large number of letters written in Russian and Korean to confirm the close relationship between the Irkutsk Korean community and the Harbin Korean communities. Still, important is that even if Bozayeva and the Koreans at Irkutsk engaged themselves in political activities against Japan, their activities did not violate Russian law so the search was terminated and Japan was not required to be notified. In addition, according to reports from the Irkutsk Military Police, the October 30 raid on a Korean residence in Harbin was conducted by the Japanese consulate with the participation of Russian police. Ahn Chunggŭn was found to have stayed at the home of Kim Tichon (Ким Тихон, Kim Sŏngbaek), the chairman of the Harbin Korean community, the day before the assassination. Later, Kim was released because there was not enough evidence to prove that Kim had arranged the shooting or was involved in the assassination. However, nine other Korean Russians were arrested and handed over to the Japanese authorities.

continued from the following day of the assassination until November 3, 1909 when the search & seizure and findings of the investigation, executed both in Harbin and Irkutsk, were handed over to Mizobuchi Takao (1874-1944), or the Japanese prosecutor of Kwantung District High Court.<sup>48</sup>

## Russia's Approach to Japan and the Setbacks to the Russo-Japanese Intelligence Cooperation Initiative

It is Korostovets, escorting Ito's funeral train to Kuancheng, who even suggested Kokovtsov to travel to Tokyo and attend Ito's funeral. This Russian Legation to the Qing believed that even though Ito had traveled to Manchuria, in spite of his advanced age, his assassination on "Russian" soil i.e., in Harbin, could mar the Russian-Japanese relations. The assassination might be interpreted as an expression of Russia's hostile stance toward Japan and what was definitely needed is another plan to attenuate potential conflicts between two countries. Sending a high-level condolence mission was raised as an appropriate solution in clearly conveying to Japan Russia's sympathy for Ito's death. Consequently, Kokovtsov was recommended by Korostovets not only because the former was trusted by the emperor but also because he possessed the ability to fulfill a responsible task.<sup>49</sup>

By the time the condolence plan was discussed in Harbin, however, the Tsarist government had already taken steps to demonstrate its sincerity

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<sup>48</sup> Ibid. It was Mizobuchi who met with the district prosecutor Miller to thank the Russians for their cooperation in the investigation on November 1, 1909. After a two-and-a-half-hour conversation, Mizobuchi, dressed in a military uniform, made three requests before Miller. First, he wanted a handwritten account of what Miller had seen and felt about the murder; second, he wanted a floor plan of the Harbin Station, the specific location of Ahn Chunggūn, Consul General Kawakami and Minister of Finance Kokovtsov; and third, he wanted to know more details of the situation since Ito shook hands with Miller before Ahn shot him. Two days after the meeting, Miller handed over some relevant materials to Mizobuchi.

<sup>49</sup> АВПРИ.Ф.150.Оп.493.Д.1279.Л.44-47об. Секретное письмо Д.С.С. Коростовца. Korostovets believes that Kokovtsov's questioning will be seen as a sign of the strength of Russian-Japanese relations, even by Chinese who have reservations about Russia's Manchurian policy.

ty in restoring amicable relations with Japan. Russian Emperor Nikolai II sent the Emperor of Japan a formal telegram of condolence for the loss of the political magnate Ito.<sup>50</sup> The telegram did play a crucial role in mending the misunderstandings and mistrust between Russia and Japan caused by the assassination.

Before the imperial condolence messages, Japan was suspicious of Russia, particularly regarding the reasons behind Russia's neglect of security management. The reason is that although the Russian Railways Police monitored and detained two suspicious Koreans at the Ciajiagou station, they took no action to prevent Ahn Chunggün, who had already traveled to Harbin, from entering the welcoming ceremony for the Ito's arrival.<sup>51</sup> The Tsar's telegram to the Japanese emperor, shocked to receive a report from Prime Minister Katsura the assassination of Ito, became the vital catalyst that turned the situation around. Since that time, the two countries stopped blaming each other for the incident and did not engage themselves in recriminations.

Following the Tsar's telegram, Japan was also eager to improve relations with Russia.<sup>52</sup> The Japanese government tended to focus on the strengthening of the ongoing cooperation with Russia rather than taking a hard line against Russia. The telegrams from Goto Shinpei to the Commercial Attaché Vilenkin and Russian Ambassador to Japan Malevich revealed that the Japanese government did not harbor any regrets toward Russia. The Japanese media also seemed to acknowledge the utmost efforts which Russia made. Furthermore, Goto expressed his willingness to improve bilateral ties between two countries by stating that the Harbin incident would contribute to the strengthening of Russian-Japanese rela-

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<sup>50</sup> РГИА.Ф.560.Оп.28.Д.422.Л.2-2об.: Телеграф О-ва Китайской Восточной железной дороги. 14 окт. 1909 г.

<sup>51</sup> РГИА.Ф.560.Оп.28.Д.421.Л.29-33. Телеграмма Коковцов Послу в Токно, 13 окт. 1909 г. "It is clear that the conspiracy is organized," Kokovtsov telegraphed to the ambassador on the day of the incident, "and yesterday in the Chaga district the Russian police arrested three Koreans in possession of Browning pistols.

<sup>52</sup> РГИА.Ф.560.Оп.28.Д.421.Л.142.: Телеграмма Коковцова Веберу, 15 октября 1909 г.

tions in the future. Therefore, Kokovtsov decided not to visit Japan as a condolence envoy on October 28 and continued his Far Eastern tour according to the planned itinerary.<sup>53</sup>

After the visit of the Far East, Kokovtsev went to the Tsar at the Livadia Palace on November 30, 1909 and addressed a memorial to the Tsar.<sup>54</sup> His memorial consisted of three parts; first, a report on the state of the Chinese Eastern Railway and the situation of the Railway Guard; second, an analysis of the impact of the removal of Vladivostok's free port designation on the Far East's economy; and third, a report on an inspection of the defense situation in the Far East. Since the original Far East visit plan did not include a meeting with Ito, there was no mention of Ahn's assassination.

The memorial paid more heed to economic efficiency from the standpoint of the Minister of Finance than military matters from the point of view of a defense expert. Along this line, it proposed some measures to stabilize the security and economy of the Far East after the Russo-Japanese War with minimal fiscal expenditures.

Kokovtsov's financial principle for the Eastern Railway Company was the implementation of an independent accounting system. The guidelines stated that the state treasury of Russia could not be used to finance public enterprises abroad such as the Dongcheng Railway operating a line through Manchuria. The economy of Russia was still dependent on foreign loans after the Russo-Japanese War so no one would agree to subsidize a company operating in the Qing. Rather, the Minister of Finance posed, the Chinese Eastern Railway should develop into a

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<sup>53</sup> Там же. Л.124. Копия письма Американского консула в Харбине на имя Российского Генерал Консула 14 октября 1909 г. Gordon Paddock (1865-1932), the U.S. Vice and Deputy Consul in Harbin sent a letter to the Russian Consul General in Harbin that congratulates him on the safety of Kokovtsov rather than mourning Ito's death. reflected the complex trilateral relationship among Russia, Japan, and the U.S over Manchuria. "I wish to express my sincere pleasure that Mr. Kokovtsov and other Russian officials remain safe from yesterday's tragic events and congratulate them on their providential survival in such a dangerous place," his letter reads.

<sup>54</sup> РГИА.Ф.560.Оп.28.Д.422.Л.1-42. Всеподданнейший доклад Министра Финансов по поездке на Дальний Восток осенью 1909.

competitive enterprise able to benefit Russia.

So what are the options for the Chinese Eastern Railway protected by the 29,000-strong Railway Guard of the Zaamursk Military District to survive financially on its own? Kokovtsov's solution to reducing the tremendous budget to maintain the guard force and increasing the business profit of the Chinese Eastern Railway was to sign a reciprocal agreement with Japan's Manchurian Railway Company. The plan was to connect Russia's Chinese Eastern Railway and Japan's South Manchurian Railway together and create conditions for the coexistence of the two railways.<sup>55</sup> Their connection, which was set up as one agenda of the meeting between Kokovtsov and Ito, was resolved with the signing of the Second Russo-Japanese Treaty on July 4, 1910.

The issue of defense buildup, integral to Kokovtsov's Far East visit, was also approached by the Minister of Finance from the angle of budgetary savings. He was of the opinion that the problem of defense buildup in the Far East, such as the fortification of Vladivostok, stems from psychological factors linked to the memory of the defeat of the Russo-Japanese War.

The demand for stronger defensive reinforcement in the Far East was a reflection of a pathologically sensitive situation subject to local public opinion. Understandably, Japan had recently acquired the right to build a railway between Jilin and Hoeryöng according to the "Qing-Japanese Convention on Manchuria and Kando" on September 4, 1909, an implicit warning as opposed to the safety of the Chinese Eastern Railway and Vladivostok. The movement heightened social anxiety that Japan could attack Vladivostok from behind with the construction of this new railroad. Kokovtsov believes that not only are these local opinions not based on a correct assessment of the situation, but their insecurity is fueling the demand for security.

Diagnosing the problem of defense buildup in the Far East after the

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<sup>55</sup> Там же. Л.5-5об. the management of the public institutions in Harbin, Kokovtsov asserts, should be financed through taxation of residents, including foreigners living in the area. The South Manchurian Railway ran from Yushun to Ciajiagou, both of which were located south of Harbin.

Russo-Japanese War as psychological, Kokovtsov focused on how to stabilize local public opinion rather than increase military spending. One of the effective actions was to promote a stable political environment aimed at a vigorous economic life in the Far East. Hence, the Minister of Finance reached the conclusion that the best solution to the issue of defense buildup in the Far East, as in the case of the Chinese Eastern Railway, was to (re-)establish friendly relations with Japan.<sup>56</sup>

Meanwhile, after Kokovtsov's visit to the Far East, the Minister of War Sukhomlinov treated the defense of the region from a different angle on the premise that his visit would not lead to a budget increment for the Vladivostok fortification project as well as the defense buildup. While Kokovtsov tended to focus on the establishment of a friendly Russo-Japanese relationship for the psychological comfort of the people in the Far East, Sukhomlinov would take more practical measures for the defense of the Far East.

If the Minister of Finance was reluctant to allocate budget for an increase in defense buildup of the Far East, what would be the corrective action of the Minister of War for the defense improvement of the region? When the Tsarist economy continues to rely on European loans and the Far Eastern defense budget keeps shrinking, how will the Far East be secured in the long term? What eventually emerged was a strategy of establishing a cooperative system with partners who could share anti-Japanese sentiments for the defense of the region.

In a confidential letter to Prime Minister Pyotr Stolypin (1862-1911) on May 24, 1910, Sukhomlinov asserted the need to prepare for a

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<sup>56</sup> РГИА.Ф.560.Оп.28.Д.422.Л.1-42. Всеподданнейший доклад Министра Финансов по поездке на Дальний Восток осенью 1909. The gist of Kokovtsov's rationale for persuading Emperor Nikolai II that his office—the Ministry of Finance—and the Ministry of War were in a constrictive competition was the imbalance between limited budget and ongoing demand for military defense. Even if the Ministry of Finance were to commit to funding and helping revitalize the Russian fleet, getting the congress to approve the maximum amount of the budget for the shipbuilding program would be a challenge. Instead, the Minister of Finance proposed an alternative of fortifying Vladivostok, the country's sole naval base in the Pacific Ocean, as a top national priority and separating the project from general shipbuilding and fortification construction.

military conflict with Japan.<sup>57</sup> The Minister of War was well aware of the implications of the Japanese railroad concession from Jilin to Hoeryōng through the Jiandao Convention. He did not want to repeat the mistake of the Russo-Japanese War when the Japanese navy blocked the Russian fortress of Lushun from the sea and the Japanese army crossed the Yalu River to attack from the rear. Likewise, Sukhomlinov thinks, in the case of Vladivostok Fort the Japanese army could press into the rear of Vladivostok from the Jiandao area while the Japanese navy carry out sea blockade. Without doubt, what concerned the Ministry of War was another grim scenario in which a defeat, analogous to the fall of Fortress Lushun, might be repeated at Fortress Vladivostok.

The intransigent anti-Japanese sentiment of the Korean independence movement in Russia, as impressively expressed by Ahn Chunggūn, had attracted the attention of the Minister of War. He summarized the expected advantages of constructing a united front with the Korean independence movement against Japan in two cases of wartime and peacetime. In peacetime, the Korean resistance could sap the troops and resources of the Japanese military while supporting intelligence collection and counter-intelligence alike; in wartime, Russia could fight a two-frontal war capable of emboldening the Korean resistance movement in order to take arms against Japan in Korea and disturb the Japanese troops in Manchuria from the rear. Thus, Sukhomlinov came up with the idea that Russia could make use of the Korean independence movement as a new solution to the impending challenges of defense buildup in the Far East.

This Russo-Korean cooperation plan as above was based on a report by Lt. Col. Oscar Enkel (1878-1960), an intelligence officer from the military headquarters of the Priamursky Military District.<sup>58</sup> The report, appraised by Sukhomlinov as logical, was enclosed in a confidential

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<sup>57</sup> РГИА. Ф.1276. Оп.6.1910г. Д. 514. Л.1-2: Секретное письмо Сухомлинова Столыпину, 11 мая 1910 г.

<sup>58</sup> РГИА Ф.1276 Оп.6, 1910 г. Д. 514. Л.3-6.: Копия докладной записки, полученной в Главном Управлении Генерального Штаба.

letter to the prime minister, which became instrumental in spreading the Korean independence movement in the Far East up to the highest levels of the Russian government. Locating Ahn's assassination in the grand vision of the Korean resistance groups for independence, the colonel recommended that Koreans in the region be actively mobilized for anti-Japanese intelligence and counterintelligence.

Enkel's report was based on his two-year experience of gathering information on Japan from elderly Koreans, including Lee Sangsöl (1870-1917) and Chŏng Chaegwan (1880-1922), in Primorsky Krai. As is well known, the prototype of the Russo-Korea intelligence cooperation was the Shanghai Intelligence Agency (Шанхайская агентура), or Shanghai Service organized by the Russian legation to Korea, Alexander Pavlov (1860-1923) at the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>59</sup> The core operatives of the Korean section of the Shanghai Service were nine state-sponsored Korean students studying in Russia and two of them, Yun Ilbyŏng (?-?) and Kang Hant'aek (?-?) graduated from the Russian Language School in Seoul. They had been assigned to the Russian Army during the Russo-Japanese War and involved in Russo-Korean intelligence cooperation, especially anti-Japanese espionage activities. The commander of this Korean group was Nikolai Biryukov (Н.Н.Бирюков, 1861-1916), a former captain in the Eastern Siberian Artillery Brigade who had been a teacher at the Russian Language School in Seoul. The appointment of Biryukov as Russian Consulate in Ch'ŏngjin, Korea after the Russo-Japanese War in 1907 signaled the reestablishment of Russo-Korean intelligence cooperation against Japan in the Jiando region—one primary concern of the Russian military at that time—, as well as northern Korea.<sup>60</sup>

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<sup>59</sup> Dukkyu Choi, 2014, "Emperor Gojong's Independence Movement and the Russian Shanghai Intelligence Service (1904-1909)," *Journal of Korean National Movement History*, No. 81, 43-84.

<sup>60</sup> ГАРФ. Ф. 818. Оп. 1. Д.164. Л. 43-45об.: Письмо Плансона Извольскому, 14 мая 1907 г. Lev Goyer (1875-1939), a Russian Commercial Attaché reported to the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Alexander Izvolsky (1856-1919) on May 27, 1907 that "only if the Japanese agree to retreat from the Tumen River and establish a vast neutral zone in the northern part of the Korean Peninsula can their rhetoric of peace be believed" in the belief that the Jiandao issue between Russian and

The information which Biryukov obtained from his Korean sources was shared with Russian intelligence officers in Vladivostok, specifically Lt. Col. Enkel and Lt. Col. Alexey Budberg (1869-1945) at the Vladivostok Fortress Command. Hyōn Sanggōn (1875-1926) acted as a medium among Lieutenant Colonel Budberg, Lee Sangsōl, and the Korean imperial family. And, it is Lev Goyer (1875-1939), the Russian Commercial Attaché from the Ministry of Finance, that wrote the letter of introduction to Hyōn Sanggōn, connected him to Budberg, and rebuilt the Shanghai Intelligence Bureau after the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>61</sup> In this sense, it can be said that the Russo-Korean cooperation as above was manifested through Ahn's assassination in Harbin.<sup>62</sup>

Nevertheless, the proposal, made by the Ministry of War for the collaboration with the Korean Independence Movement in the defense of the Russian Far East, was never materialized into policies. Prime Minister Stolypin had taken a negative stance for two reasons. First, Russia has been seeking to improve relations with Japan. During the time, Russia

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Japan might be a prelude to a second Russo-Japanese war. Under this context, Goyer reactivated the Shanghai Intelligence Bureau, suspended after Pavlov's return on November 30, 1905, and reestablished an intelligence network connecting North Hamgyong Province with Jiandao and Vladivostok.

<sup>61</sup> РГИА. Ф. 560. Оп. 28. Д. 390. Л. 379-387: Письмо Гойера Военному Агенту в Китае, 14 ноя. 1907 г.

<sup>62</sup> Ahn's assassination was planned by 1) Yun Ilbyōng, a former student of Biryukov and interpreter at the Vladivostok Fortress Command, 2) Lt. Col. Vadim Mikhailov (1872-1929), who had served as chief of the Vladivostok Military Police, 3) and Ahn Chunggūn & Ahn's comrades. Mikhailov was an elite man who graduated from the Orlov Secondary Military School (Орловский кадетский корпус) in 1890 and the Konstantinovsk Military Academy (Константиновское военное училище) in 1892, both of which were attended by high-ranking members of the Russian aristocracy, and served as an officer in the Russian Imperial Guard in Warsaw, Poland. He was appointed captain of the Vladivostok Military Police at the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War in 1904. Sergey Volkov, Штаб-офицеры и генералы белых армий [Staff Officers and Generals of the White Armies]. Энциклопедический словарь участников Гражданской войны [Encyclopedic Dictionary of Civil War Participants], Центрполиграф, 2019. 86. The interpreter who escorted him to Vladivostok was Yun Ilbyōng, a Korean graduate of the Russian Language School in Seoul. When Mikhailov was in charge of a reconnaissance mission against Japan in Vladivostok, Yun also served under Biryukov's command on a mission to gather intelligence on the movement of the Japanese military. Therefore, Korea and Russia had been accumulating experience in intelligence cooperation since the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War.

was preparing to sign the Second Russo-Japanese Treaty (July 4, 1910), which mutually recognized Outer Mongolia and Korea respectively as a special interest area of Russia and Japan. Second, there was a government decision that prevents the influx of Asian peoples into the Russian Far East. Stolypin, spearheading the agrarian reforms after the Russo-Japanese War, encouraged the migration of Russian peasants to revitalize the economy in Siberia and the Far East and took a negative stance on Korean migration to Primorsky Krai.<sup>63</sup> Therefore, most of the Army's policies to strengthen the defense of the Russian Far East after the Russo-Japanese War remained unfinished under the framework of the Eurocentric quadrilateral—Anglo-French-Russo-Japanese—cooperation system. In short, the lenders of France and the Britain that had financially supported Russia after the Russo-Japanese War wanted Russia's defense to be concentrated in Europe.

In the end, Kokovtsov's visit to the Far East did not improve Russia's defense situation in the Far East. This situation remained at a standstill even in the spring of 1911 when Sukhomlinov's tour of the Far East provoked again heated debate between the Army and the Ministry of Finance. The issue was the unused budget. The Ministry of Finance maintained that it had financed the Vladivostok defense buildup to the best of its ability while the Ministry of War pointed out the difficulty of using up unspent budget due to budgetary rigidity. The Ministry of Finance blamed the Army's budget shortfall on its failure to deal fairly with its budget. The Army, on the other hand, raised the problem of Article 98 of the Constitution prohibiting the use of unexpended budget balances for other emergency defense needs, not foreseen in advance, and stipulating the return of the balances to the national treasury by the end of the fiscal year.

The Ministry of War was one of the departments that failed to respond to the demands for reform of the Russian society after the defeat of

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<sup>63</sup> РГИА. Ф.1276. Оп.6. 1910 г. Д. 514. Л.14-14об.: Секретное письмо П.Столыпина Унтерберге, 8 июня 1910 г.

the Russo-Japanese War and the Russian Revolution. Particularly, the Army was unable to properly execute the defense reform projects due to a rigid interpretation of Article 96 of the Constitution requiring the Army to spend the budget in the only way that was approved by the national congress.<sup>64</sup> This stipulation included the unspent budget able to strengthen the defense forces of Primorsky Krai and Vladivostok. The Army allocated 2.286 billion rubles to cover the shortfall of 140 million rubles, which was not covered by the national treasury for the three years (1907-1909), by issuing government bonds at 5 percent per annum; however, 88 million rubles remained unspent. This has become a classic case of wasted budgeting, where the Army had to pay 5% APR interest on unspent budget.

The issue then shifted back to the interpretation of Article 96. The Army contended that the original purpose of the provision was not to eliminate the possibility of using unspent budget balances for unforeseen defense needs. On the contrary, the Ministry of Finance upheld that it could not and did not support the Army's interpretation of Article 96 as its right to disposal of budget approved officially by the congress. As a result, the military buildup of the Far East's defense and the fortification of Vladivostok, which had been called for immediately after the end of the Russo-Japanese War, remained unfinished until World War I.

## Conclusion

As mentioned above, the Russian Far East Military buildup project after the Russo-Japanese War was interlinked to a change in the foreign policy of the Tsarist government. The two leading imperialist powers of Britain and France sought to restore Russia by providing large loans to the Tsarist government, imperiled in financial crisis, in order to keep the rising power of German in check. Thus, after the Russo-Japanese War, pursuing

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<sup>64</sup> РГИА.Ф.560.Оп.28.Д.422.Л.1-42. Всеподданнейший доклад Министра Финансов по поездке на Дальний Восток осенью 1909.

the Eurocentric military policy, the Tsarist government placed the Baltic Fleet in priority to all other regions for restoring the Russian Navy; the Pacific Fleet had no opportunity to accomplish the Navy buildup. Defense needs in the Russian Far East came to remain unfinished due to financial shortfalls, or better yet lagged behind the importance of European Russia. Alternatively, the Tsarist government sought to unravel the security issue in the Far East through the establishment of friendly relations with Japan while Korean independence movement exerted itself basing their anti-Japanese struggle in Vladivostok, Primorsky Krai.

As a result, the Korean independence movement in Russia was influenced by the Tsarist government's foreign policy in attempts to emphasize a constructive Russo-Japanese cooperation. In this context, Russia transferred jurisdiction over Ahn's case to Japan despite its experience in intelligence cooperation with some local Korean independent groups since the Russo-Japanese War. The reexamination of how Russia treated Ahn's assassination enabled us to have a better understanding of Russia's policy of appeasement against a larger conflict with Japan and its restrictive effect on the Korean independence movement which had worked in constant cooperation with local Russian intelligence officials. In the end, the policies of the Ministry of War for strengthening the defense of Russian Far East after the Russo-Japanese War remained unfinished until World War I because of the Russo-Japanese *détente* initiated after Ahn's assassination. However, Ahn's case was resolved politically with the Tsar's immediate condolences to the Japanese emperor and the instantaneous transfer of jurisdiction over to Japan so the investigation into who was behind the incident and who was responsible had not progressed in Russia. Further research is needed to explore the extent to which the Russian authorities had prior knowledge of the assassination plan and the degree to which they were involved.

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