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Imperial Russian Interest and Intervention in Korea, 1860-1903

Edmund J. Zvetina
Loyola University Chicago

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IMPERIAL RUSSIAN INTEREST
AND INTERVENTION IN KOREA,
1860 - 1903

by
Edmund J. Zvetina

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LIFE

Edmund J. Zvetina was born in Chicago, Illinois, on September 7, 1928.

He was graduated from St. Ignatius High School, Chicago, Illinois, February, 1946, and from Loyola University, June, 1949, with the degree of Bachelor of Arts.
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CHAPTER I

KOREA: "SHUTTLECOCK AMONG NATIONS"

In the light of events too recent to be properly termed "history," the peninsula of Korea, off in a far corner of the world, has assumed an importance which few people suspected. Lord Curzon's description of Korea as a "shuttlecock among nations...a sort of Tom Tiddler's ground between China, Russia, and Japan," seems as true today as when it was first pronounced.¹ War, to be sure, is not new to Korea. Standing as she does at the very gateway between Japan and greater Asia, Korea, by virtue of her unique geographical position, has for centuries provided a meeting place and battleground of the Chinese and Japanese Empires. The Korean question, however, was

¹ George N. Curzon, Problems of the Far East, Revised Edition, London, 1896, 188-189. From time to time in its long history the peninsula known to us today as Korea has assumed various names, several of which will recur in this thesis. It is best known to its own people as Chao-hsien, or in the contracted form of Chosen or Chosun, a term of Japanese origin signifying "Morning calm." The name Korea, derived from the native pronunciation of Kao-li (or Ko-raj), supposedly the name of a prehistoric kingdom in Manchuria, is that adopted by the Royal Geographic Society and the United States State Department. Since this name, Korea, enjoys the most general usage today, it will be employed in the following pages, except in quoted passages where the terms Chosen or Chiao-hsien are used in the source of the quotation.
not one that concerned China and Japan alone. In the latter half of the nineteenth century Russia, Great Britain, and the United States joined the powers to whose strategy Korea had provided an historic fulcrum.

Russia in particular saw in Korea the fulfillment of the need and desire for an ice-free, all-year-round port, which centuries of history had impressed upon her. As early as 1861 she had made an unsuccessful attempt to acquire such a port in Korea. In later years she sought to realize her ambitions by the use of military force. These attempts culminated in the 1890's in a concerted drive to the Pacific, which was related to the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, then the chief single factor in Russian Far Eastern policy. 2

The purpose of this thesis, briefly stated, is to trace the historical backgrounds of Russian interest in Korea, to discover the considerations which motivated this particular interest, and to outline Russian attempts to acquire a foothold on the Korean peninsula, against the broad background of Russian imperialistic expansion in the Far East.

Writing in 1894 Lord Curzon described the international position of Korea in these words:

A more anomalous political condition certainly did not exist in the world than that of a country which itself

2 David J. Dallin, The Rise of Russia in Asia, New Haven, 1949, 34.
claimed to be both independent and dependent, and could produce powerful evidence in support of either hypothesis; and as to which outside Powers advanced pretensions of suzerainty, control, protectorate, alliance, most-favoured-nation treatment, or technical equality, for all of which there was a considerable show of justification. 3

This state of affairs had arisen, according to Curzon, first, out of the peculiar geographical position of Korea, secondly, out of the inconsistent, sometimes directly contradictory policy pursued by China with respect to Korea. 4 Hence, before proceeding to a consideration of Russian designs on Korea, it is necessary to arrive at some understanding of Korea's position both with regard to China and Japan, and also with respect to the Western powers which in the last decade of the nineteenth century succeeded in "opening up" Korea as they had Japan a decade before.

To any such understanding an appreciation of Korea's unique geographical position is a necessary precondition. Situated between the Yellow Sea and that of Japan, the peninsula of Korea, despite its exposed condition, had until the time of its so-called "opening" come less into contact with other nations than any other country in the world. 5 Surrounded on three sides.

3 Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 188.
4 Ibid., 188-189.
by sea, Korea's sole land frontier is that supplied by the Tumen and Yalu rivers which, flowing northeast and southwest respectively, delimit Korean territory from that of Russia and Manchuria. The peninsula is six hundred miles long and one hundred thirty-five miles wide on the average; its total area is about 86,000 square miles. The Korean coastline, all out of proportion to the size of the peninsula itself, is largely indented with bays and harbors, thereby affording great possibilities for naval and commercial purposes. The strategic value of the peninsula is thus self-evident: situated at the entrance to the Gulf of Pechli, the gateway between Japan and Asia, Korea commands the approaches to Tietsin and to Peking itself. 6 Vladivostok is but a hundred miles from Korean territory to the east; Port Arthur is but twice that distance to the west of Korea. Perhaps even more important for the purposes of the present study is the fact that whereas the harbors and inlets on the west coast of Korea are frozen in the winter months, those on the east coast remain open all year round.

While the traditions of the founding of the Korean Kingdom go back to primaeval times, these early accounts are largely of a superstitious character. 7 It is known, however,


that owing to her situation midway between China and Japan, Korea was viewed with covetous eyes by both, and at various times in her long history had occasion to try her strength against the forces of each. 8 Though for centuries ruled by successive dynasties of monarchs, there was scarcely a time in her history when she did not acknowledge a greater or lesser dependence on either China or Japan. The claims of the latter power, dating from the nebulous days of the early Christian era, were both earlier in point of origin and were exercised over the longer period of time. In modern times, however, Japanese claims to Korea were allowed to shrink into a virtual state of desuetude during the last years of the Shogunate, and it was not until the revolution of 1868 that any concerted attempt was made to reestablish Japanese hegemony. Thenceforward, Japan, by virtue of her own political resuscitation, was to reestablish a powerful influence in Korea though, as Curzon observes, at the expense of "the feudatory relationship which for so many centuries it had been her boastful pretension to maintain." 9

Several factors combined to militate against the immediate restoration of Japanese overlordship in Korea. Not the

8 An account of several such attempts, including the famous expedition of Hideyoshi to Korea in the late 16th century, is to be found in Krausse, The Far East: Its History and Its Question, 81-84. For a more detailed treatment see Arthur Judson Brown, The Mastery of the Far East, New York, 1919, 20-26.

9 Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 191
least of these was the fact that the Koreans themselves were not well disposed to such control. The reasons for this are not far to seek. In October of 1866 a French fleet had been sent to Korea for the purpose of exacting compensation for the murder of several French ecclesiastics engaged in missionary activities in Korea. In this crisis the Korean government had applied to Japan for aid and assistance. Japan had her hands full at the time, and no material aid was forthcoming. The Koreans resisted the French invasion with such energy that the French admiral, realizing the expediency of a hasty retreat, returned to China without having accomplished his purpose. The Koreans, for their own part, never forgot Japan's failure to come to their aid. Consequently, when in 1868 a Japanese embassy arrived in Seoul to present the formal announcement of the Restoration of the Meiji and to invite from the Koreans a renewal of their ancient friendship, the reply was an insolent refusal.

In 1871, in reply to a similar Japanese proposal, the Tai-Wen-Kun, acting as Regent on behalf of the young Korean king, returned an answer which left little doubt as to Korean sentiment in the matter. His reply runs in part as follows: "In your dis-


11 Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 191.
patch you have made many insinuations of your having adopted foreign customs; we can assure you that Japan is Japan, Korea is Korea—but Korea has its own customs." The document specifically mentions Japan's failure to come to Korea's aid in the French invasion.

...According to our old treaty of friendship, whenever either is attacked by barbarians, the other is to help. To show our honesty, when the barbarians went into your country, we immediately wrote to you that we had made every preparation to help you. During the French attack on Korea we day and night expected that you would come with your forces to our aid; but not having received your assistance we wrote and informed you of our distress, informing you of our position, and asking for immediate help. You have neither sent us aid, nor any answer to our dispatch. From that day our treaty of friendship was at an end. We no longer consider each other friends but enemies....Not only have you broken the treaty as above described, but you have also broken another very chief point of treaty in adopting the manners and customs of the Western barbarians....It is useless to go into any correspondence, because the wrong you have done us is so great, that your apologies will not avail. The only alternative is a bloody war—a war that will cost Japan all its warriors; and then we will bring you to terms.12

Although some assert that this version of the reply is not a true copy, there is no doubt that the Tai Wen Kun made a reply that was regarded by the Japanese as insulting and contumacious.13 Japan, however, was too poor and too much hampered by complications consequent on its internal revolution to maintain

12 Longford, The Story of Korea, 297-298.
13 Ibid.
its claim by the use of force. The Samurai party especially were infuriated, and it was chiefly to satisfy their belligerent dispositions that the government undertook the expeditions to Formosa and the Liu-Kiu Islands in 1874. Two successive missions were dispatched to Korea in 1873 and 1874 in an effort to reestablish Japanese authority by peaceful means; both proved completely unsuccessful. However, the Japanese statesmen of the time wisely concluded that Japan's interests would best be served not by a policy of aggression, but rather by a peaceful policy of economic penetration and commercial control.

In her relationship to China, Korea has stood for centuries as what has been called "the most perfect example of the peculiar Confucian order of Far Eastern international relations which preceded the Western state systems." In modern times, Chinese influence in Korea can be traced back to the inception of the most recent Korean dynasty some six centuries ago. Under the patronage of the Ming Dynasty, Li Tan, a soldier of fortune known in history as Tai-cho, raised himself to the Korean throne in 1392. Breaking completely with the previous Wang Dynasty, Tai-cho established his Court and capital at 

14 Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 168.
15 Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 192.
16 Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders in Eastern Asia, xiv.
known as Seoul. Chinese became the official spoken language, as well as the language of Korean literature. Confucianism was substituted for Buddhism as the official religion, and governmental reorganization was undertaken on the Chinese model, which until 1894 was faithfully reproduced in the Court at Seoul.

However, though possessed of far more natural and basic conditions for Korean allegiance—in the form of common language, religion, customs, philosophy, as well as territorial connection—than could be advanced by Japan, China's position in Korea is rather more difficult of analysis and description. The difficulty is largely one of terminology. In most Western literature on the subject, the international status of Korea is described as that of a "vassal" to China. But like so many terms, peculiarly western in origin and connotation, which have been seized upon by historians to describe Far Eastern political and social institutions, the term "vassal" carries with it many attributes which were in no way characteristic of the relationship of Korea to China. Indeed, it was a misunderstanding arising from the use of this very term "vassal" which stood as the first and most formidable obstacle to the establishment of amicable relations between Korea and the Western powers in their first contacts in

17 Ibid., 71. The name Seoul means literally "the capital."
the latter half of the nineteenth century. Hence the practical necessity of viewing the relationship in terms of the non-legal, familistic Confucian order, rather than in those of Western international law.

While a detailed analysis is necessarily beyond the scope of this study, it might be well at this point to mention several historical traditions which testify to Korea's dependence upon China. Particularly notable among these was the annual Tribute Mission from Seoul to Peking, conveying a specified tribute, and receiving in return the Calendar for the next year which it was the imperial prerogative to prepare, an outward mark of Korean dependence to receive. Through the years the tribute had been gradually reduced and the mission had assumed a more or less ceremonial character to which, in the early years of the nineteenth century, a practical and mercantile aspect was lent by its being used for the export to China of the King's red ginseng. Another practice, carried on since the time of the Manchu invasions in the early seventeenth century and indicative of

18 W. W. Rockhill, China's Intercourse with Korea from the XVth Century to 1895, London, 1905, 3.

19 Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders in Eastern Asia, xv-xvi.

20 Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 198-199. Ginseng was a plant greatly valued for medicinal and recuperative purposes in the Orient, and Korea was one of the principal areas of its production. On the subject of Tribute Missions, cf. also Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders in Eastern Asia, 17-19; 94ff.
the same relationship, was the investiture of the Korean monarch with the patent of royalty by the Chinese Emperor. These and other evidences of Korea's dependence upon China survived until July, 1894, and stood in mute testimony to the reality of that relationship.

These evidences of dependence upon China did not, however, preclude the possibility of Korea's retaining a practical measure of independence in her internal relations. The reason for this lies deep at the roots of the Confucian system, the paternalistic nature of which is perhaps best characterized by M. Frederick Nelson as "that of a Chinese father or elder brother, while Chao-hsien, the lesser nation, maintained the attitude of a filial son and respectful younger brother toward China, the central nation.... As with the natural son, the father nation was by Confucian theory discouraged from exercising its control except in times of crisis."21 This, in turn, would serve to explain many of the seeming inconsistencies in Chinese policy with respect to Korea, which were interpreted by Western observers as the fruits of diplomatic indiscision. The over-all relationship of Korea to China is well summed-up by Nelson:

But being thoroughly Confucian, Chao-hsien... viewed dependency upon China as an honor or mark of civilization which barbarians could not attain. Though in theory her submission was abject and complete, her status cannot in fact be termed 'vassalage.'

21 Korea and the Old Orders in Eastern Asia, 91-92.
for the Far East possessed no counterpart of the word 'suzerainty' as it was understood in the West. Before external pressure was felt on the relationship, as late as the beginning of the nineteenth century, its outward evidences went little beyond formal submission and tribute, the practice of investiture being only the confirmation of the de facto ruler. What is more important, the internal fields of control and policy were left to the discretion of the king, while external relations, necessarily limited to Far Eastern nations, were also directed by the individual rulers. Clearly, then, the position of Chao-hsien was far from being uncomfortable.²²

Thus, though the status of Korea was quite clearly defined in the Confucian order, it is in no way surprising that Western observers, failing to appreciate the unique character of the relationship, should have found in Korea a nation neither sovereign enough to conduct independent relations nor subject enough to shift responsibility for its actions on China.

Korea's early relations with the West were confined, for the most part, to the efforts of a few missionaries and traders to open a wedge for purposes of evangelization and exploitation. As early as 1593 the Jesuit, Cespedes, had insinuated himself into the "hermit kingdom." In the later years of the eighteenth century Catholic doctrine entered Korea through books; from 1784 Catholic missionaries, mainly French, began to enter the country and taught their creed with moderate success. In 1839 a court party came into power which favored the exclusion of foreigners and the extirpation of all traces of Christianity, the immediate result being a persecution which culminated in the

²² Ibid., 92-93.
murder of three French priests and some one hundred thirty of their converts. News of the incident was rather slow in reaching the outside world, and it was not until 1846 that a mission was dispatched to inquire into the execution. The Korean government, stressing Korea's dependence on China, replied in effect that it was only through China that Westerners could deal with her. China in turn, not wishing to alter the relationship in which Korea had traditionally stood, persisted in a policy which to the West appeared anomalous—that of declaring Korea dependent, but refusing at the same time to accept legal responsibility for Korea's transgressions.

The year 1866 is one of major importance in modern Korean history. For some twenty years the French had taken no further steps to exact compensation for the murder of her missionaries, and the outrage had been virtually forgotten. In these intervening years several more French missionaries had ventured across the frontier. However, a false report from China that the Chinese were putting to death all Christians in the empire served to intensify the native anti-foreign sentiment. The cry "Death to the Christians" was raised in the streets of Seoul, and launched a persecution which resulted in the violent

23 Griffes, Corea, 347-367; Longford, The Story of Korea, 242-273. These accounts are based, for the most part, on Charles Dallet's Historie de l'église de Coree, Paris, 1874, II.

24 Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, 115.
deaths of other French priests and hundreds of converts. This time the news was rather quick to take hold, and a gunboat of the French Asiatic fleet was immediately sent to make surveys of the western coastline of Korea. In an interchange of diplomatic correspondence between the Chinese government and the French Chargé, M. de Bellonet, China again repudiated responsibility for the acts of Korea. The outcome of the punitive French expedition dispatched to avenge the massacre has already been described.

In 1867 the United States was placed in a position analogous to that of France the year before by an incident involving the burning of the schooner General Sherman in Korean waters and the murder of its complement and passengers by Koreans. In considering the proper method of obtaining an explanation and satisfaction, the Department of State decided against the expediency of a punitive expedition to Korea, in view of the conspicuous failure of the recent French mission. Instead, it authorized George F. Seward, American consul-general at Shanghai, to proceed to Korea to obtain an official explanation.

25 Ibid., 116-117; Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 201, remarks that China's policy of repudiation was dictated by a desire to escape responsibility for the act as well as the payment of the indemnity which it would entail. This is but another illustration of the misconceptions of the relationship existing between China and Korea.

26 Supra, 6.
tion and, if possible a treaty of amity and commerce. However, discovering in advance the futility of such a mission, this plan was dropped. In 1871 similar authority was granted to the United States Minister at Peking, Frederick P. Low. Taking the precaution of soliciting in advance of his departure for Korea the good will and offices of the Peking government, Low received a reply which ran in part as follows:

Korea is regarded as a country subordinate to China, yet she is wholly independent in everything that relates to her government, her religion, her prohibitions, and her laws; in none of these things has China hitherto interfered.

The actual accomplishments of Low's mission were little greater than those of the French mission five years earlier. On June 1, 1871, while some of the six ships comprising the mission were exploring the coastal waters of Korea, they were fired upon by land batteries and returned fire. Attempts at peaceable negotiation with the Koreans were of no avail. On June 10 an American landing party went ashore; in the ensuing engagement some two hundred and fifty Koreans and three Americans were killed. The American ships then returned to Shanghai.

27 Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, 121, citing Foreign Relations of the United States, 1870, 336-339.

28 Ibid., 1871, 112.

29 For an account of the expedition see Tyler Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia, New York, 1922, 452-453.
In 1876 the caution and self-restraint of Japanese diplomacy in Korea was rewarded by the conclusion of the Treaty of Kangwha between Japan and Korea, by which Japan hoped to separate Korea from her "Confucian" dependency on China. The opening words of Article I stated that "Chosen being an independent state enjoys the same sovereign rights as does Japan." Also of significance is the fact that the document was dated, not according to the year of the Chinese reign, as had previously been the accepted procedure, but rather by the Japanese reign year, and that of the Li dynasty in Korea. According to the terms of the treaty, intercourse between the two countries was to be on terms of complete equality; old restrictions on trade at the port of Fusan were to be removed, and two additional Korean ports were to be opened to commerce. Furthermore, Japanese subjects were to enjoy extraterritorial privileges. The Japanese-Korean Treaty is notable as being the first unilateral treaty entered into by Korea that was negotiated and framed on the basis of Western concepts of international law, and as paving the way for subsequent treaties which were to terminate Korea's long-

30 Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 192.
31 British and Foreign State Papers, LXVII, 530-553. The document is quoted in its entirety.
32 Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 195, n. 1, remarks that: "When Japan dictated the first Korean Treaty in 1876 she copied the extra-territorial clauses almost verbatim from Articles IV. and V. of the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1858; and has never
standing isolation and "open" her to formal diplomatic relations with the nations of the West. 33

During the period from 1878 to 1881 Commodore Shufeldt of the United States Navy was authorized to negotiate on behalf of the United States Government with the government of Korea for purposes of obtaining relief for American sailors shipwrecked in Korean waters, for opening Korean ports to American trade, and for obtaining such extraterritorial rights as had been granted by Japan and China. Though repulsed and ignored by Korean officials Shufeldt found in the Chinese Viceroy, Li Hung-Chang, a willing and sympathetic ally who actively urged on the Korean government the signature of foreign treaties as the sole means of continued security. 34 Arriving at the realization that the foreigner, once having been allowed to meddle with Korea, could never be permanently excluded from closer relations, China undertook to mend her Korean policy by encouraging the various powers to enter into direct treaty relations with Korea. 35 This new policy was appar-

shown any reluctance to set in operation against Korea the prov-
visions of which she complains so bitterly when applied to her-
self." 33 For an account of the negotiations attendant on the completion of the treaty see Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, 126-134.


ently adopted on the theory that the mutual jealousies and animosities of all the powers would necessarily preclude the ascendancy of any one until such time as China's military strength might allow a more active policy.36 It should, however, be noted that China's new policy was not viewed by her as altering in any way the traditional relationship between the two countries, but was designed rather to protect that relationship.37

The year 1882 witnessed the conclusion of the first treaty entered into by Korea with a Western nation, that nation being the United States. More significant than the fact that the treaty opened Korea to American commerce is the fact that each of the contracting parties agreed therein to render assistance to the other in case of necessity. Article I provided:

There shall be perpetual peace and friendship between the resident of the United States and the King of Chosen and the citizens and subjects of their respective Governments.

If other Powers deal unjustly or oppressively with either Government the other will exert their good offices, on being informed of the case, to bring about an amicable agreement, thus showing their friendly feelings.38


The second clause of the above quoted article was later to become the subject of considerable discussion between the United States and Korea, and it was because of this clause that Korea came to regard the United States as her "Elder Brother." The "Treaty of Peace, Amity, Commerce and Navigation between the United States of America and the Kingdom of Chosen" was ratified by the Senate on January 9, 1883, and proclaimed by President Arthur on June 4 of the same year.

Once Korea had been penetrated, other nations lost no time in soliciting and obtaining concessions similar to those obtained by Japan and the United States. Subsequent conventions with Japan opened the port of Gensan in 1879, and Chemulpo the following year; further Trade and Fishery Regulations were concluded between the two countries in 1883. The Chinese Overland Trade Regulations and the American Treaty were signed in 1882. England and Germany concluded treaties with Korea in 1883, Russia and Italy in 1884, France in 1886.39

However, this sudden transition from Korea's traditional policy of jealously guarded seclusion to one of almost unprecedented liberality in her dealings with foreigners, was not accomplished without familiar symptoms of domestic unrest. In 1873, upon the assumption by the King, Li Hsi, of full sovereignty, the former Regent became head of the Conservative or

39 Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, Appendix A, 301-32. 
anti-foreign party. Opposing all treaties and concessions to foreigners, the Tai-Wen-Kun remained a dominant figure in Korean politics, chiefly by instigating several plots to remove the young King and the old Queen Dowager, who had associated herself with the liberal and pro-Japanese factions.40 One such attempt in 1882 led to an outbreak in which the Japanese Legation at Seoul was attacked and burned, forcing the Japanese residents to flee. Both Japan and China, the latter acting on her theory of Korean dependence, dispatched troops to quell the outbreak. The Tai-Wen-Kun, as instigator of the uprising, was himself kidnapped and deported to China.41

During his absence events at the Korean Court precipitated a second outbreak, of somewhat similar character, in 1884. The Queen's party, having become supreme, soon reverted to an anti-foreign policy. The so-called Liberal Party, comprising a few well-intentioned but politically inexperienced Koreans who believed that Korea was ready for the same volte face made by Japan in 1868, secured momentary control of the government with Japanese help. The attempt, however, was rendered abortive by the arrival of a Chinese force which, after some thirty Japanese

40 Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 148-149.

41 For accounts of the uprising see Griffis, Corea, 437 ff; also Longford, The Story of Korea, 308 ff.
had been killed, forced the others to withdraw. Japan promptly dispatched two diplomatic missions to settle the incident: one to Seoul under Inouye, the other to Tientsin under Count Ito. At Seoul the Japanese demands, including a formal apology, an indemnity, and the punishment of the guilty, were readily accepted. The mission to China, resulting in the Convention of Tientsin of 1885, which provided Russia with a basis for subsequent intervention in the peninsula, will be discussed in the following chapter.


CHAPTER II

EARLY RUSSIAN DESIGNS IN KOREA

Russia, long an interested spectator, appeared for the first time as an actor on the Korean scene in the early 1860's. Ever since the Crimean War, which had revealed in a most humiliating fashion Russia's all-round weakness when pitted alone against the West, Russian interest had become more and more fixed in the East. The eminent Russian Governor-General of Siberia, Count Muraviev-Amurski, taking advantage of China's preoccupation in her war with France and Britain, had paved the way for Russian penetration in the direction of Korea. By the Treaties of Aigun in 1858 and Peking in 1860 Muraviev had secured Russia's title to the entire northern bank of the Amur River, as well as the some six hundred miles of sea coast comprising the Maritime Province, including the important harbor of Vladivostok. Thus Russia was brought into immediate juxtaposition with Korean territory on the north. "Never," observed Lord Curzon, with an irony tempered with admiration, "was a fine dominion so cheaply or more cleverly

1 Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 208, n. 1.
However, neither the Russian government nor Muraviev himself was thoroughly satisfied. Even at that early date Russian diplomats and military leaders in the East had come to the realization of Russia's absolute need for a port on the Pacific. This need was two-fold: first, as a base for naval operations in eastern waters; second, as a commercial outlet to southern markets, to enable Russia to compete in Pacific trade on an equal footing with such nations as Japan and Great Britain. To be sure, Vladivostok, founded by Muraviev in 1860, was one such port on the Pacific, but its harbor was frozen at least four months of the year. The eastern coast of Korea, on the other hand, possessed several excellent harbors free from ice all year round. Especially notable among these were Pusan on the south east coast, and Genzan, situated on Broughton Bay, half-way between Pusan and Vladivostok. Even more desirable, from the Russian point of view, was Port Lazarev, also on Broughton Bay. The port was first surveyed and named by Russians in 1854, and since that time had been regarded by them with a more than covetous eye.

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2 Ibid.

3 The physical attributes of these ports are described by Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 89-94.

4 Ibid., 92.
In 1861, pursuant to her need for an ice-free, all-year-round port on the Pacific, Russia made her first attempt to acquire such a port in the vicinity of Korea. In August of that year the Russian frigate Possadnik anchored off the coast of the island of Tsushima, a Japanese possession lying about thirty miles to the south-east of Pusan. The crew disembarked, established itself on the island, and proceeded to cultivate the soil and form a colony under the Russian flag. The British Minister to Japan, Sir Rutherford Alcock, becoming immediately apprehensive of the Russian move, dispatched one of his assistants, Laurence Oliphant, to investigate the matter. The latter reported to Admiral Sir J. Hope, Commander of the British Far Eastern Squadron, who in turn notified the Russian Admiral that he intended landing a party of British sailors, who would remain on the island as long as did the Russians. This elementary strategy proved effective; immediately on receiving the message the Russians evacuated the island, approximately six months after they had landed.

To be sure, the circumstances of this rather short-lived enterprise are important chiefly as providing an historical pre-

5 Though at one time belonging to Korea, Tsushima was ceded to Japan in 1615, and constituted her nearest outpost to the Asiatic mainland. Cf. Krausse, The Far East, 7.

cedent for subsequent more determined Russian moves in the direction of Korea. However, in analyzing the situation, the question quite naturally suggests itself as to why the incident should have provoked British rather than Japanese action. The extreme reluctance of the latter power to undertake an investigation seems to have stemmed from the fact that she was at the time in mortal fear of becoming embroiled in a war with Russia. Consequently, she preferred to overlook the occupation rather than, by calling attention to it, run the risk of precipitating a conflict. This is borne out by the fact that, even when the British Minister determined to initiate British action, Japan declined to lend any official assistance. Britain's interest, on the other hand, was dictated or was at least subsequently defended on the ground that her colonial and commercial interests in the Far East rendered "resistance to such an act a necessary measure of self-preservation."8

After the Tsushima episode Russia continued to manifest an interest in Korea, though in such a way as not to provoke any serious suspicions as to her designs. Accordingly, she embarked upon a policy of assimilation, the object of which was to encourage a familiarity on the part of the Koreans by inviting them to settle in Russian villages across the border. There they served

8 Ibid., 768.
first as squatters and colonists in a virtually uninhabited country, later as farmers, graziers and woodcutters. There also they were educated in the principles of the Russian faith so as to become, on their return, the nucleus of a native pastorate for the evangelization of Korea. By 1885 there were an estimated 20,000 Koreans living in Russian territory, and the number was constantly increasing. It was through the agency of these volunteer immigrants and naturalized citizens," writes Curzon, "that Russia first opened her campaign of political intrigue in the peninsula." All the while, Russian officers and agents were travelling throughout the peninsula, conducting geographical surveys, particularly of the coastline, by way of determining the desirability of the various Korean harbors.

The year 1885 is one of signal importance not only in the history of Korean foreign relations, but in the history of Russian Far Eastern policy as well. In April of that year diplomatic representatives of the Chinese and Japanese Empires, Count Ito for Japan and Viceroy Li Hung-Chang for China, met at Tientsin to negotiate a settlement arising from the Japanese-inspired

9 Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 209.

10 Ibid.

11 Ibid., 208-209. Curzon cites as evidence the fact that up to the time of the Sino-Japanese War the only decent map of Korea was one that emanated from Russian sources.
Seoul rebellion of the previous year.\(^\text{12}\) By the terms of the Convention of Tientsin both parties agreed to withdraw their troops from Korea and pledged themselves not to send any military advisers into Korea. Furthermore, it was agreed that neither party would send an armed force into Korea at any future date without first notifying the other party of its intention to do so. This important stipulation, contained in the concluding article of the Convention, ran as follows:

In case of any disturbance of a grave nature occurring in Corea which necessitates the respective countries or either of them to send troops to Corea, it is hereby understood that they shall give, each to the other, previous notice in writing of their intention so to do, and after the matter is settled, they shall withdraw their troops and not further station them there.\(^\text{13}\)

With regard to the Korean Army, the Convention provided that:

The said respective Powers mutually agree to invite the King of Corea to instruct and drill a sufficient armed force, that she may herself assure her public security, and to invite him to engage into his service an officer or officers of a third Power, who shall be intrusted with the instruction of said force.\(^\text{14}\)

In general, the document may be said to have represented a significant diplomatic triumph for Japan, for implicit in it was the

\(^{12}\) *Supra*, 20-21.

\(^{13}\) Full text in *British and Foreign State Papers*, LXXVI, 297-298.

\(^{14}\) *Ibid.*
admission of substantial equality of rights with respect to Korea which Japanese diplomacy had so long been laboring to assert.15 Japan followed up this diplomatic triumph by embarking upon an energetic policy of commercial ascendancy in Korea.16 However, barring "grave disturbances," Japanese advances in the peninsula had to rely thereafter solely on diplomatic and commercial expedients.

China, on the other hand, pursuing a policy of encouraging the commercial nations in order to foil those with territorial ambitions, made every effort to reestablish actual control in Korean affairs. In this she held a distinct advantage over Japan, not alone because of her close connection with the Korean throne, the Foreign Office, and the Customs Service, but, most important, through Korea's recognition of her dependent status.17

However, if the Tientsin Convention was interpreted at the time as a diplomatic triumph for Japan, it was even more a triumph for Russia, inasmuch as it constituted a virtual invitation for her to intervene in Korea. Pursuant to the military clause of the Convention, Korea turned to Russia for military ad-

15 Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 193.
16 Ibid., 194-195.
visers who, from the very nature of the situation, were bound to exercise considerable influence, not only in the Korean Army, but in domestic affairs as well.

In this connection it is important to note the role played by P. G. von Mollendorf, a former official of the German Consular Service in China, appointed by Li Hung-Chang early in 1883 to the important posts of Inspector General of Korean Customs and adviser on economic affairs. This appointment may be said to have marked the introduction of a new element in China's Korean policy—the use of commercial agents as vehicles of control. Mollendorf reorganized the Customs Service and was instrumental in introducing several significant commercial reforms in the country. Not content, however, to confine his attention to internal matters, Mollendorf concerned himself also with the foreign policies of his newly-acquired homeland, which policies immediately took an abrupt turn for alliance with Russia. His plan had as its purpose to forestall the possibility of any repetition of Japanese intervention in Korea, by inviting Russian instructors for the Korean Army and conceding to Russia a port on the Pacific. Seizing the opportunity of obtaining for herself

18 Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, 165.


20 Boris A. Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, Leningrad, 1928, 8.
a port in Korea, Russia in a secret provisional agreement declared her willingness to grant Korea a form of protection and to provide the desired military advisers, in return for a "lease" of Port Lazarev, on the eastern littoral of Korea near Genzan.21

News of the secret Russo-Korean agreement came to light when the Russian agent, Alexis de Speyer, arrived in Korea to secure confirmation of the agreement. The disclosure immediately became a source of embarrassment for all concerned. Von Mollendorm, whose complicity in the scheme to displace Chinese influence in Korea and substitute Russian was evidenced by his support of the Russian envoy, was recalled and summarily dismissed by Li Hung-Chang. The King of Korea, having earlier solicited military advisers from the United States, disclaimed any knowledge of the agreement and, despite repeated Russian threats, disavowed it completely.22 The Chinese Viceroy took the lead in frustrating the Russian attempt, and in so doing further augmented Chinese power and prestige in the peninsula at the expense of that of Russia and Japan.23 Thus, it became apparent that the Sino-

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21 Dennett, "Early American Policy in Korea, 1883-1887," Political Science Quarterly, XXXVIII, 1923, 94. As early as 1880 Russian affection for Port Lazarev was in evidence, and is believed to have further inclined Li Hung-Chang toward the policy of Korean treaties. Cf. Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 209-210.

22 Dennett, "Early American Policy," 95.

Japanese Convention of 1885 had not resolved, even in the minimum degree, the Korean question which, in time, was to become even more complex. 24

Meanwhile Russo-British antagonism in the Far East was becoming increasingly evident, due partly to the disclosure of the secret agreement, partly also as a result of new Russian advances on the Afghan frontier. 25 Again Britain acted without hesitation. Immediately on receiving word of the prospective Russian occupation of Port Lazarev, the British Navy was instructed to occupy Port Hamilton, a small island of the Quelpart group dominating the entrance to the Korean Strait. Without consulting either the Chinese or the Korean governments, the base was seized on April 15, 1885. Though this action on the part of the British was an open and flagrant violation of international law, they remained in occupation until February of 1887, at which time the Chinese government finally succeeded in exacting from M. Ladygensky, the Russian representative at Peking, "a most explicit guarantee" that if the British evacuated Port Hamilton, "the Russian government would not occupy Corean territory under any circumstances whatsoever." 26 It would appear, however, that

24 Morse, International Relations of the Chinese Empire, III, 6-19. Also Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 8-9.
25 Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 169.
26 Letter of Tsungli Yamen to Sir J. Walsham, Peking, October 31, 1886, quoted in full by Henry Norman, Peoples and Politics of the Far East, New York, 1895, 270.
the British were induced to evacuate partly because the admiralty had reported unfavorably on the military and defense aspects of the port.\textsuperscript{27} The Russian action, on the other hand, was undertaken in order to forestall the possibility of a naval conflict, unacceptable at that time, which might very easily develop into something like a "second Dardanelles."\textsuperscript{28}

British interest in Korea at this particular juncture in Far Eastern international relations can be explained, partly as dictated by commercial interests and the political necessities of the time, partly also as arising from contingencies of the none too certain political future. British policy recognized that a Russian port and fleet in Korea would constitute a formidable threat to British shipping in eastern waters, let alone convert Russia within the short space of a few years into the greatest naval power in the Pacific. In such an event the balance of power in the Far East would be seriously threatened, if not completely overturned in the favor of her chief rival in Asia. Furthermore, in the words of Lord Curzon, "England is prohibited alike by her imperial objects and her commercial needs from lending her sanction to any such issue."\textsuperscript{29}

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{27} Norman, \textit{Peoples and Politics}, 369.
\item \textsuperscript{28} Romanov, \textit{Rossiya v Manchzhurii}, 8.
\item \textsuperscript{29} Curzon, \textit{Problems of the Far East}, 214.
\end{itemize}
In the fall of 1885, in the face of rising agitation on the part of the Western nations and Japan for the neutralization of Korea, China took further steps to tighten her hold upon Korea. Since these nations still persisted in viewing Korea as sovereign and independent, the Korean King had manifested a growing indifference to the firm observance of the Confucian relationship. Accordingly, Li Hung-Chang dropped his former policy of maintaining the status quo by encouraging foreign commercial interests, and thereafter attempted, insofar as possible, to exclude all traces of foreign influence. The Tai-Wen-Kun, who had formerly been removed because of his extreme pro-Chinese and anti-foreign sentiments, was returned to Korea. Chinese control in the peninsula was to be further augmented by the installation of a Chinese "Resident" at Seoul. This important office was entrusted to Yuan Shih-Kai, long familiar with Korean affairs from the time of his appointment as "Director-General Resident in Korea of Diplomatic and Commercial Relations," Yuan was in the position of a virtual mayor of the palace, and it was through him that the Chinese Foreign Office administered its Korean policy. Other key administrative and advisory offices in the Korean Cus-

30 Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, 176-177.
31 On the Tai-Wen-Kun's removal, see supra, 19.
32 Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 207.
toms Service and Foreign Office were filled by Li with an eye to insuring maximum efficiency and loyalty under the revised plan of operations.33

Though Russia was in no position to act on her Korean interests at the moment, this is not to say that she had forsaken her desire for an ice-free port on the Pacific. There has been found in the Krasny Archiv a document which records a special secret policy discussion held on May 8, 1888, between Adjutant-General Korf, Governor-General of the Amur, and Zinoviev, Head of the Asiatic Department of the Russian Foreign Office.34 In view of the considerable light which this document sheds on the underlying motives and objectives of Russia's Far Eastern policy at this time, it might be well to examine it in some detail here.

The actual discussion revolved about the following three points: first, whether the acquisition of Korea was immediately desirable, and if so what consequences might be expected from such action. Second, whether danger in Korea might constitute a threat to Russia. Third, what measures should be taken to resist Chinese designs in Korea. As regards the first two points,

33 Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, 179-180.

34 "First Steps of Russian Imperialism in the Far East, 1888-1903," (from 1932, 54-124), Chinese Social and Political Science Review, XVIII, Shanghai, 1934, 237-244. The translator is "X."
the gentlemen were in substantial agreement that though Korea, by reason of her extreme weakness, might easily become a tool of aspirations inimical to Russia, notably China, the immediate acquisition of the peninsula by Russia was neither feasible nor particularly desirable. Three reasons were alleged for this: first, the fact that being a poor country, Korea was hardly a profitable market for Russian goods; second, it was too far removed from Russian defense centers; and, third, Russian occupation of Korea would destroy once and for all diplomatic relations with China and, consequently, with England as well.

As to the policy to be pursued by Russia, it was agreed that Chinese control would be definitely detrimental to Russia. However, since Japanese policy most closely corresponded to Russia's long-range ambitions, the prime object of Russian policy should be to work with Japan in supporting Korea against Chinese pretensions, thereby bringing a certain "moral pressure" to bear upon China. At the same time it was suggested, however, that "to encourage the Korean government in development of its military proportions exceeding the need of maintaining order in that country would not be in harmony with our own interests." 35

In the same year, 1888, a Commercial Convention was concluded between Russia and Korea, according to the terms of which the Korean land frontier and a Korean market at the mouth

35 Ibid.
of the Tiuman River were to be opened to Russian trade. 36 Some three years later, in 1891, a Russian packet service between Shanghai and Vladivostok, touching the harbors of Fusan and Genzan, was initiated and maintained under a liberal subsidy of the Imperial Russian Government. This last seemingly innocuous move is described by Curzon as characteristic of the "energy with which the Russians advance their flag in Eastern waters, and make an experimental and even expensive commerce subserve larger political ends." 37

However, during these years, 1888-1891, the Korean situation remained unsettled, with events working, generally, in China's favor. The assassination in 1890 of the Korean Queen Dowager, at the instigation of the recently returned Tai-Wen-Kun, provided but another instance of China's latent strength in the peninsula. The Korean King, according to a time-honored custom, immediately deputed a mission to report the death to the Emperor, who in turn dispatched a mission of condolence. 38 This incident served as a fitting climax to China's continued efforts to secure recognition of the traditional familial relationship between the two countries. Russia, as is evidenced by the aforementioned

36 Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 212.

37 Ibid., 178.

38 The interesting details of this mission are related by Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 199-201.
discussion between Korf and Zinoviev, was pursuing a deliberately studied policy with respect to Korea, chiefly out of fear of becoming embroiled in a war with England, whose interests in the Far East coincided, for the most part, with those of China.

Japan, for her part, was pursuing a policy not too different from that of Russia; furthermore, she was enjoying no particular success in asserting her position in Korea without the use of force which, for the time being at least, was out of the question because of the government's preoccupation with domestic considerations. Other Western nations, particularly the United States, were still occupied with trying to figure out the subtleties of Korea's Confucian relationship to China and, as a consequence, played no active role in the situation with regard to Korea at this time.39

39 For an excellent discussion of America's relations with Korea in this period, see Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, 180-198.
CHAPTER III

THE "TRANS-SIBERIAN" RAILWAY

In the 1890's Russian eastward expansion took the form of a concerted "push" toward the Pacific. Accordingly, her Far Eastern policy assumed a much broader, more dynamic, aspect than it had previously. This fundamental change was in large measure related to the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway, an undertaking which from its inception was seen to be pregnant with world significance.\(^1\) Predicated not on the simple extension of the base of internal railway communications, nor solely on the commercial advantages of intermittent connections of isolated trade points in Siberia, the railway was heralded as "one of those world events which usher in a new epoch in the history of nations."\(^2\) The bold and rapid construction of a railway across

\(^1\) The term "Trans-Siberian," it should be noted, is one which exists only in foreign, which is to say, non-Russian historical literature. Though, as will be seen later, there was no single organizational unit controlling the line, it will, for the overall purposes of this study, be considered as a single unit.

the frozen steppes of Siberia was to unite central Russia directly with the Far East by an unbroken chain, a total distance of some 6,000 miles. ³

The impulse necessary to the undertaking of so grandiose and far-reaching a scheme was one of the chief results of the so-called "Westernization" of Russia. In the 1880's— at approximately the same time that Japan reversed her two-and-a-half century policy of isolation and made her fateful turn to the West— Russia, already for some two centuries influenced by the West, plunged forward in the gigantic task of Westernization at a far more rapid pace than at any time since Peter the Great. For Russia this Westernization meant two things, primarily. First and foremost, it meant the emancipation of the serfs with changes both for the preponderantly peasant population and, concomitantly, for the whole social and economic structure. Secondly, it meant a large-scale importation of capital and modern technique from the West. This economic Westernization manifested itself most notably in four fields— finance and currency, foreign investment in Russian enterprise, tariffs, and railways. ⁴ All four aspects are to be seen in varying degrees of importance in the

³ In Russian measurement the distance was slightly more than 9,000 versts, the verst being equivalent to 0.6629 miles.

⁴ B. H. Sumner, A Short History of Russia, New York, 1949, 346-351.
construction of the Trans-Siberian.

Whether regarded from an economic or political point of view, the urgent need for an improved system of communications in Siberia had been obvious to Russian authorities for well over a quarter of a century before the inception of the Trans-Siberian, although, it must be granted, the stupendous conception of a Russian-Pacific railway was not from the beginning grasped in its entirety. The outbreak of the Crimean War in 1853 served to impress upon authorities the necessity for the construction of strategic railways, and it is generally believed that the difficulties of transport, added to those of maintaining communications between the shores of the Black Sea and the administrative centers of the country, were largely responsible for the course of events which ended the campaign. 5 Ever since the time of Muraviev there had been talk of connecting Russia's Siberian possessions with Europe by a transcontinental railroad. 6 Muraviev himself became interested in the schemes advanced by several English and American concession hunters. For the most part, however, these schemes were based solely on conjectures, without any preliminary surveys as to the exact needs and trading possibilities of the districts affected. As a consequence, they

5 Alexis Krausse, Russia in Asia: A Record and a Study, New York, 1899, 196.
6 Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 171.
remained without any immediately practicable result. 7

During the seventies and eighties some consideration was given to the construction of a Siberian railway, especially in view of the need of opening up for exploitation the vast wealth of Siberia. However, several factors combined to obviate the possibility of any action being taken at that time; only after the acute crisis occasioned by the British occupation of Port Hamilton in 1885 was the strategic argument advanced with any degree of persistence by Russian military men in the Far East. 8

Even then, however, the Minister of Finance, Vishnegradski, persisted in his plea of lack of funds, so that no substantial progress was made until news came in 1890 of China's projected Manchurian line. In that year Li Hung-Chang sent an English engineer, C. W. Kinder, to plot a line from the Great Wall at Shant-haikwan northeastward through Manchuria to Mukden, and thence toward the Russian frontier. Despite the secrecy of Kinder's movements, the Russian intelligence discovered his intentions, and both at St. Petersburg and Vladivostok great apprehension was felt. 9 Such a scheme, if realized, constituted a formidable

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7 These early schemes for a Russian-Pacific railway are reviewed by Henry Norman, Peoples and Politics of the Far East, 160-161.

8 Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 171.

9 Ibid. For a fuller discussion of the projected Manchurian line, see Percy H. Kent, Railway Enterprise in China, London, 1907, 38-41.
threat to Russia's territories on the Amur and Ussuri. Finally, on March 17, 1891, the knot of all the technical and official controversies was cut by the Tsar, and the decision was taken to construct the line.

One of the decisive factors in the entire project came in August, 1892, with the appointment of Sergei Witte as Minister of Finance. The ablest and most powerful single representative of the new financial, commercial, and industrial interests which were transforming Russia internally and lending a new cast to Russian imperialism, Witte was born at Tiflis in 1849, where his father, of Dutch-German extraction, was an imperial administrator. Educated at the University of Odessa, Witte devoted some time to reactionary journalism in connection with the Slavophils and M. Katkov, and subsequently associated himself with railway construction in southern Russia. Thus, while a staunch apostle of Slavophil political conservatism, he became also a staunch advocate of Western commercial and industrial development.

Witte served for a time as general traffic manager of the South-Western Railway, and also as a member of an imperial commission appointed to survey railway construction and management throughout the Empire. Appointed head of the department of railways in the Ministry of Finance by Tsar Alexander III, he was promoted to be Minister of Ways and Communications in 1892, and several months later was appointed to succeed Vishnegradski as Minister of Finance. The significance of this appointment cannot be
overestimated, inasmuch as it constituted an official repudiation of the money-saving policies pursued by Vishnegradski, and further testified to the determination of the Imperial government to allow no expense to stand in the way of drawing Siberia closer to itself, as well as to remove the railway from the dead issue point at which Vishnegradski had kept it.10

During Witte's tenure of office the Finance Ministry came to include also commerce, industry, and labor. In Far Eastern affairs it became, for all practical intents and purposes, the superior of the Foreign Office, and the rival even of the War Office.11 As Minister of Finance Witte conceived and put into practice the policy which later came to be called "conquest by railways," and which was subsequently to be merged in the idea of "dollar diplomacy." Throughout the period from 1892 to his eclipse and fall from grace in 1903 Witte's political biography is the story of the building of the Trans-Siberian to the point where it became the most important single factor in Russian expansionist policy in the Far East.

A firm believer in the economic as well as the strategic value of the Trans-Siberian, Witte, in one of his early reports

10 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 55.

to the Tsar, described the extension of the line across the whole of Siberia as "a state undertaking in the broadest sense of the term," one attended with "the greatest benefits in the field of economic, cultural, and political interests," for European Russia as well as for Siberia. He added the fact that the line would establish "an uninterrupted rail communication of Europe with the Pacific and East Asia, thereby opening up a new road and new horizons not only for Russia, but for international commerce as well," and placing it in the rank of "those world events which usher in a new epoch in the history of nations, and which often bring in their wake fundamental changes in the established relationships between states." Among the economic considerations under which the plan was formulated must be counted the famine which in 1891 held European Russia in its grip with unprecedented force, and the fact that the fulfillment of the undertaking was laid, in the course of the next few years, upon the broad shoulders of the Russian peasantry. The railway meant relief from the famine in the form of Siberian grain. To the Russian peasantry it meant an accelerated road of escape from hunger and landlessness into a virtually unpopulated Siberia.

12 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 57. Interestingly, the plan even suggested to Witte the possibility of entering into "more direct relations with the United States." Romanov, 60.

13 Ibid., 57.

14 Ibid., 4-5.
Strategically, the Trans-Siberian was of the utmost immediate consequence.\textsuperscript{15} It was this aspect which Witte emphasized when he wrote that "The railway will secure for the Russian Navy all the necessary prerequisites and will provide it with a firm base of support in our eastern ports....The Navy can be strengthened considerably....In the event of political complications in Europe or the Asiatic East...it will control all international shipping in Pacific waters."\textsuperscript{16} The slogan "Domination over all international commerce in the Pacific," proclaimed by Witte in 1892, contained in itself a program which further impelled the Russian government ultimately to carry the Siberian line across the whole of Manchuria as well.\textsuperscript{17} These economic and strategic arguments provide a clear insight into the essentially realistic motives entertained by Witte in connection with the railway.

That there was, however, also something of the idealist and imperialist in Witte's make-up is revealed in a letter addressed to Tsar Nicholas II on the eve of the Russo-Japanese War, after his own personal influence had been eclipsed and his policy of "peace penetration" thrown to the winds. "We shall proceed southward," Witte then wrote,

along the road of history....The more inert countries in Asia will fall prey to the powerful invaders and

\textsuperscript{15} Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 171
\textsuperscript{16} Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 60.
\textsuperscript{17} Ibid., 5.
will be divided up between them....The problem of each country concerned is to obtain as large a share as possible of the inheritance of the outlived Chinese Colossus. Russia, both geographically and historically, has the undisputed right to the lion's share of the expected prey....The absorption by Russia of a considerable portion of the Chinese Empire is only a question of time....18

To promote construction of the line the Siberian Railway Committee was organized, which exercised both administrative and legislative authority in all matters involved in planning and construction. At Witte's instance the young Tsarevitch, Nicholas, soon to become Tsar Nicholas II, was appointed to head the Committee, and reportedly took a great personal interest in the matter, the task affording him, as Witte put it, "something in the nature of a preparatory school of statesmanship."19 As to the financing of the project, Witte was in a position to take full advantage of the recently concluded Franco-Russian Alliance to solicit loans from the French government, which, in effect, eliminated every financial risk earlier connected with the undertaking.20

As originally planned, the line was divided into seven sections, corresponding roughly to natural divisions, each with

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19 Ibid., 53.
20 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 55.
its own organizational unit. Construction of the railway began simultaneously at both ends of the line. General interest in Russia's Pacific lands was greatly stimulated by the publicity attendant on the much-advertised visit of the Tsarevitch to Vladivostok in May, 1891, when work was commenced on the eastern part of the line. Throughout the nineties there was widespread approval of the idea of Russia's "great, historical mission" in the East, and Russian opinion of almost all shades, except the extreme left, backed Witte's policy of Far Eastern expansion.

In the non-Russian world, however, the order to commence construction of the Trans-Siberian was regarded as a portentous departure in Far Eastern policy. The extension of the line was to take it, theoretically at least, to Vladivostok, at the eastern extremity of Russian possessions in Asia. However, even before the outbreak of the Sino-Japanese war, it became perfectly clear to many well-informed observers in the Far East that Russia had no intention of allowing so important a venture to terminate in a harbor which, like Vladivostok, was frozen for at least a third of each year. Writing in 1895 the publicist Henry Norman inquired somewhat incredulously: "Can anybody believe for a moment that Russia will build the longest railway in the world,

21 Krausse, Russia in Asia, 208 ff.; cf. also Norman, Peoples and Politics, 162-163.

22 Sumner, "Tsardom and Imperialism," Proceedings of the British Academy, XXVII, 38.
stretching five thousand miles from the furthest edge of her European possessions, and will spend upwards of forty millions sterling upon it, for it to end in a harbour that is frozen solid during five months of the year?"23 The answer, quite obviously, was no. Thus, it became perfectly logical to assume that Russia still entertained designs on an ice-free port in Korea, both Genzan and Fort Lazarev on Broughton Bay being considered ideal termini for the railway.

Both Japan and China viewed with a sense of apprehension the progress of the Russian plan. It was in Japan and Korea, however, that the initial repercussions of the railway venture were felt. In Tokyo it was feared that once Russia completed her system of communications it would thenceforth be impossible to resist her advances in the Far East with anything approaching even chances of success. At the same time, the independence of Korea or the maintenance thereof of a fully independent "buffer" were viewed as necessary to the continued security of the Empire. Consequently, in 1893 Japan, under pressure of the radical and militaristic elements at home, tried to reassert her former aggressive policy with regard to Korea. In the same year an acute crisis developed between Japan and Korea, growing out of an embargo placed by the latter government on the export of beans.

23 Peoples and Politics, 165.

24 Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 172.
The affair was settled, but only after Count Ito had appealed to Li Hung-Chang to request Korea to satisfy the Japanese claim. For the time being at least Japan seemed quite willing to recognize China's claims in Korea as an expedient in forestalling Russia's designs, apparently on the theory that if matters came to a war between Japan and China, the former could then occupy Korea without fear of protest from the Western powers. Hence, there can be little doubt that the fear of Russia's establishing herself in Korea had much to do with hastening the outbreak of war over the Korean question.

It will be recalled that, according to the terms of the Tientsin Convention of 1885, both parties, Japan and China, agreed not to send troops into Korea except in case of a "grave disturbance," and then only after giving previous notice in writing of their intention to do so. Such a disturbance presented itself in 1893 with the emergence in Korea of a party calling itself the "Tong-Hak," or Oriental Learning Society. Founded in 1859 as a purely religious sect, by the 1890's the party had assumed a political character which was compounded largely of anti-foreign, anti-Christian, and anti-Japanese elements.

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25 Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, 205.
26 Ibid., 205-206.
27 Supra, 27.
28 For a brief discussion of the Tong-Hak in its early religious phase, see Younghill Kang, "Tonghak," Encyclopedia Britannica, Chicago, 1946, XXII, 279.
straint gave way to violence as the Tong-Hak sought to obtain redress for the execution of its founder, Choi Jaiwoo, as a heretic, and also to secure official recognition of its existence. In 1893 its leaders petitioned the king to prohibit all foreign religions and exclude foreign merchants—in other words, to abrogate the Foreign Treaties—threatening rebellion if the government failed to comply with its demands. Rebellion was not long in coming; originating in the southern provinces, it had attained before long such menacing proportions that the Korean King found it necessary to apply to China for military assistance in suppressing the peril.

There is some evidence to support the theory, held by some authors, that Japan encouraged, albeit indirectly, the Tong-Haks; likewise, evidence is to be found in favor of the suggestion of other authors that the Tai-Wen-Kun may have been using the movement as an instrument to secure his return to power. In any event, the uprising clearly worked to Japan's advantage, inasmuch as it afforded her a unique opportunity for direct intervention in the peninsula, where "superior force could achieve what had baffled diplomacy." Fully aware of the consequences of direct action, China at first rendered all assistance possible


30 Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, 206.
short of actually sending troops to the trouble area. When the Korean government failed to quell the outbreak, however, Li Hung-Chang, on June 6, 1894, dispatched 1,500 troops from Tientsin, with 725 more to follow. Pursuant to the terms of the Tientsin Convention, Li "formally assured the Japanese government that these troops shall be withdrawn immediately upon the cessation of hostilities." Similar assurances were made to the Russian minister at Peking. Quite significantly, the Chinese note to the Tokyo government made use of the term "our tributary state" with reference to Korea.

In reply to the Chinese note of June 6, the Japanese government countered with the statement that "the Imperial Government has never recognized Korea as a tributary state of China," and added that Japan likewise would send troops into Korea to protect her interests there. Accordingly, she dispatched a force which in a short time numbered some 4,500 men. In the series of diplomatic notes which followed each side attempted to justify the course of action upon which it had embarked. China insisted, in effect, that she was merely following the traditional practice

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31 Letter of Charles Denby, Jr., American Charge at Peking, to Secretary of State Gresham, June 9, 1894, cited by Morse, International Relations of the Chinese Empire, III, 21.

32 Ibid.

33 Hsu, China and Her Political Entity, 151-152.

34 Ibid.
of protecting her "tributary states," while Japan, repudiating Korea's tributary status, cited the Japanese-Korean Agreement of 1882, conferring upon Japan the right to maintain a legation guard in Korea.\textsuperscript{35} Both countries kept pouring troops into Korea. In the meantime, however, the insurgents, learning of the arrival of the Chinese troops, had dispersed, thereby obviating the necessity for any outside interference.

A new problem presented itself in the evacuation of foreign troops from Korean soil. By the end of June, 1894, there were slightly more than 3,000 Chinese and, in all, some 18,000 Japanese troops in the Peninsula.\textsuperscript{36} On June 24, at the invitation of the Korean King, the Western powers—the United States, Russia, France, and England—submitted a joint note to China and Japan suggesting a simultaneous withdrawal of troops. China expressed its willingness to withdraw, but Japan, embarking upon a new tack, refused to do so until certain internal reforms had been arranged for.\textsuperscript{37} The Peking government, again citing its traditional practice, flatly refused to interfere in strictly Korean concerns, and suggested rather pointedly that if Japan regarded Korea as an independent nation, she had no right to interfere either.\textsuperscript{38}

\textsuperscript{35} Payson J. Treat, Diplomatic Relations Between the United States and Japan, 1853-1895, Stanford, 1932, II, 445. The dispatches are cited by Norman, Peoples and Politics, 362.

\textsuperscript{36} Morse, International Relations, III, 22.

\textsuperscript{37} Hsu, China and Her Political Entity, 154.

\textsuperscript{38} Morse, International Relations, 22.
At this point Japan decided to go on alone. Dispensing with diplomatic means, the Japanese, on the morning of July 23, took possession of the royal palace and made a prisoner of the king, appointing the octogenarian Tai-Wen-Kun as regent over the king.39

On August 1, both China and Japan issued formal declarations of war, and on August 16, the now Japanese-dominated Korean government announced the abrogation of all treaties and agreements binding Korea to China.

Before actually putting to the test the talents newly acquired as a result of her assimilation of Western influence, Japan had first taken the precaution of sounding out the attitude of the two foreign powers most directly concerned—notably, Great Britain and Russia. The British, long-standing allies of China and the beneficiaries of a considerable trading interest in the Far East, were particularly anxious to preserve the status quo.40 Consequently, Britain declared categorically that she would deprecate any outbreak of hostilities and, specifically, that she refused to countenance the annexation of any Korean territory by Japan. This was accompanied by a warning to the effect that any untoward action on the part of Japan would lead almost inevitably


40 In 1894 Britain controlled 69 per cent of Chinese trade, and fully 83 per cent of all imports and exports were carried in British ships. Cf. Curzon, Problems of the Far East, 281, n. 1.
to Russian intervention.41 Before the war had run its course, however, British Far Eastern policy, largely under the pressure of public opinion at home, was destined to undergo a complete transformation, the consequences of which will be set forth in the following chapter.

Russia, for her part, stood behind China throughout the entire dispute, though for different reasons. Fully cognizant that Japanese occupation of Korea would render illusory all her hopes of obtaining an ice-free port in the peninsula, Russia proceeded on the theory that her interests would be better served should Korea remain under the tutelage of a weak China rather than of an aggressive Japan.42 Shortly after the outbreak of hostilities, on August 21, 1894, a special Committee, comprising the heads of the various military, naval, and administrative departments, was convoked to consider the problems arising from the war and to arrive at a statement of the policy to be pursued by Russia.43 The conclusions adopted by the Committee after its

41 A. M. Pooley, ed., The Secret Memoirs of Count Tadasu Hayashi, New York, 1915, 45-46. Hayashi was the Japanese Ambassador to the Court of St. James in the important years preceding the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War.

42 Witte, Memoirs, 83.

43 Present at this meeting were: Minister of Foreign Affairs, M. N. Giers; War Minister Vannovskij; Acting Minister of Navy, N. Chikhacheff; Finance Minister Witte; Vice-Minister of Foreign Affairs, N. Shishkin; Director of the Asiatic Department in the Foreign Office, Count Kapnist.
discussion were substantially as follows:

(1) Any active interference of Russia in Sino-Japanese War being admitted as unsuitable to our interests, the Committee agrees that in Korean question we must continue to follow a policy compatible with the other interested powers and must use our utmost efforts in order to incline the belligerents to the earliest cessation of war operations and to a settlement of Korean question through diplomatic channels.

(2) The Committee decides to abstain from making a special declaration of neutrality, to continue to inspire the Japanese and Chinese governments respect of our interests and especially to call their attention to the necessity of avoiding everything which might give pretext for misunderstandings on our Korean frontier.

(3) To consider desirable as an issue of the Sino-Japanese War the preservation of the status quo in Korea....

However, in anticipation of any unforeseen developments which might affect Russia's position, the Committee charged War Minister Vannovsky to "come to an agreement with the Minister of Finance as to opening the needed credits when necessary," to reinforce the troops already stationed on the Korean frontier.

The possibility of Russian intervention greatly disturbed Japan. Nevertheless, despite the unfavorable diplomatic auspices, Japan's spirited foreign policy was opportune in view of the situation at home and abroad, particularly in China, where

45 Ibid.
a closer rapprochement with Russia was at that time being effected. It further bears witness to the fact that Japanese diplomacy had kept pace with her rapid material development. However, the contention of some authors that Japan, in taking the initiative, was merely forestalling a similar course of action on the part of China, seems untenable. In her effort to anticipate Russia, whose position in the Far East would be supreme with the completion of the Trans-Siberian, Japan merely forced a convenient issue with China, and because she was prepared, whereas China had only talked preparation, she won.

46 The Secret Memoirs of Count Tadasu Hayashi, 42.

47 This thesis is advanced, though not substantiated, by A. M. Pooley in his preface to Hayashi's Secret Memoirs, 42.
CHAPTER IV

THE TRIPLE INTERVENTION

The military phase of the Sino-Japanese campaign need not concern us here.\(^1\) It is quite sufficient, for the purpose of this study, to observe that during the course of the war the Japanese destroyed or captured the greater part of the Chinese navy, drove the Chinese forces out of Korea, occupied southern Manchuria as far west as the Liao River, and invaded Shantung. The campaign revealed, much to the surprise of all concerned, the complete impotence of China to put any effective military resistance even in the immediate proximity of its own capital, and, on the other hand, the indubitable military preparedness of Japan. Outwardly, the war tied an international "Gordian knot" which, according to the Russian historian Romanov, "was cut, though not untied, ten years later by the treaty of Portsmouth."\(^2\) Finally, it revealed unmistakably the fact that Japan already en-

1 A generally excellent treatment of the military phase is to be found in "Vladimir," *The China-Japan War*, London, 1896.

2 *Rossiya v Manchzhurii*, 10.
tained very proud and far-reaching ambitions, the essence of which reduced to the following: (1) the establishment of a protectorate over Korea; (2) the establishment of a military base close to the shores of the Middle Kingdom; and, (3) the occupation of Manchuria, including the Liaotung Peninsula.

Japan's victory over the "ramshackle Empire" had ostensibly been complete, and China was compelled to sue for peace, formal negotiations for which were initiated at Shimonoseki in March, 1895. However, Japan's success brought her up at once against the Western Powers, all of whom, having failed to foresee the outcome of the war, were deeply concerned with the sudden upset of the status quo in the Far East. It was perfectly clear that they could not be expected to maintain an indifferent attitude to the terms imposed by Japan, which found herself in the rather paradoxical position of not being able to imitate the Western nations without challenging them.

At this juncture in Far Eastern relations, Russia was having considerable difficulty in fixing upon a definite course of action. The question now was whether it was advisable for her to continue to act conjointly with the other interested powers,

3 Several earlier attempts on the part of China to effect a settlement—one in November, the second in December—were rejected by Japan on the grounds that the Chinese ambassadors did not possess full diplomatic powers. Cf. Morse, International Relations, III, 37-43; also Treat, Diplomatic Relations, II, 502-522.
or to take independent action. Her position was rendered particularly uncertain by the fact that the exact nature of the Japanese demands could not be ascertained, despite Japan's assurances that she had no intention of encroaching upon the independence of Korea. For this reason, any discussion of the possibility of guarantees for Russia against the further strengthening of Japan's position was bound to assume a highly conjectural, not to mention controversial, character.

The entire question of Russia's policy was submitted to a meeting of the Special Committee held on February 1, 1895, and presided over by the Grand Duke Alexis. Throughout the course of the discussion, a marked divergence of opinion obtained, particularly among the representatives of the Foreign Office and the military. The Foreign Minister suggested that Russia might occupy the island of Kargodo (Koje-do), on the southeastern littoral of Korea at the entrance to Broughton Strait. This suggestion met with a sharp objection on the part of the Chief of the General Staff on the ground that the island was too remote to serve any effective military purpose. The Navy Department favored occupation of some "part of Manchuria," to counterbalance Japan's occu-

4 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 67.

5 The membership of the Committee, with the exception of Alexis, was substantially the same as that of the meeting of August 21, 1894. Cf. supra, 54, n. 43. The minutes of the meeting are quoted in full in the Chinese Social and Political Science Review, XVIII, 251-260.
pation of Port Arthur and Weihaiwei, but this was rejected as ill-advised until such time as the Trans-Siberian should be completed. Witte maintained that, for the time being at least, it would be advisable to do nothing beyond augmenting Russia's naval forces in Far Eastern waters so as to be able "at any time to meet all kinds of eventualities." This opinion was concurred in by Minister of War Vannovsky and Count Kapnist, Director of the Asiatic Department, and was one of the conclusions adopted by the Committee in its report to Tsar Nicholas II. The chief point of Russian policy, it was generally agreed, must be to insist on the preservation of Korean independence. For the rest, it was determined to reach an agreement with England and France for "collective pressure" upon Japan, contingent upon the gravity of her demands. To Witte this last point was of prime importance, because only in this way could Russia secure the time necessary to complete the Trans-Siberian—"when we shall be able to step forward in full possession of our material means."

6 Chinese Social and Political Science Review, XVIII, 255.

7 It should be noted that Alexander III died on November 1, 1894, and was succeeded by his eldest son, the Tsarevitch Nicholas. Though Nicholas assumed the responsibilities of office immediately on his father's death, the actual coronation ceremonies were deferred until the spring of 1896.

8 Ibid., 259-260.

9 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 68.
The dilemma with which the Russians found themselves confronted at this time was characterized in an extremely penetrating dispatch of the American Minister at St. Petersburg, Mr. Breckinridge, to Secretary of State Gresham, dated February 18:

...I conclude that what Russia most needs and wants at this time is outlets upon the Pacific Ocean. She would be glad to have with this a considerable population to help make her railroad pay expenses. Mongolia is a desert fit only to sustain cross ties or to act as a frontier. Manchuria is thinly populated and too far North to alone fully answer her purposes. Corea and the country about Pekin, one or both, coupled with the other, more nearly meet her requirements.

This war has come too early for Russia. Her Siberian road is not completed, and the great increase of her navy is not finished. Both continue to be rapidly pushed, but some years are required for their completion....In a few years she could pick a quarrel with China and take what she wanted....

I take it, then, that Russia is in a state of extreme embarrassment. She may not officially reveal her full desires unless favored by circumstances in the course of the negotiations for peace. But if she cannot now get what I am sure she wants, she will at least leave nothing undone to prevent Japan from gaining a foothold upon the continent, and to prevent anything like a protectorate over Corea....Having formed fairly confident opinions of the wishes of Russia, I will add that her diplomacy may, in view of the complications of the situation, abound in surprises.10

This analysis of the situation proved quite correct and, with the development of the peace negotiations at Shimonoseki, took on an added note of prophecy.

10 Breckinridge to Gresham, cited by Treat, Diplomatic Relations, II, 532-533.
As regards the proposed entente between England, France, and Russia, there was no apparent reason, in the days before Shimonoseki, why it should not come off as originally planned. In the early conversations held between the three powers in February and March of 1895, it was found that a community of interest existed, and it was presumed that concerted action would follow.\(^\text{11}\) From the very outbreak of the war, England had declared herself as unalterably opposed to any infringement of Korean independence and the annexation of Korean territory by Japan.\(^\text{12}\) However, she was somewhat hesitant about lending her sanction to any interventlonary measures until the commercial clauses of the Japanese terms should be known. Although all sources are strangely silent on this matter, there can be little doubt that England's subsequent policy of non-intervention was due in large measure to the fact that British interests were benefited by the commercial and industrial concessions exacted by Japan from China.\(^\text{13}\) Also of importance, though considerably more difficult of evaluation, is the fact that public opinion in England, particularly as reflected in the press, seems to have been sentimentally influenced by the evidence of Japanese "progress" afforded by the

\(^{11}\) Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 176, citing Baron A. Meyendorff, Correspondance Diplomatique de M. de Stall, Paris, 1929, II, 259-264. Stall was the Russian Ambassador in London at that time.

\(^{12}\) Supra, 53.

\(^{13}\) Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 185.
In the meantime, however, the peace negotiations at Shimonoseki were proceeding rather tenuously, and no amount of inquiry or deliberation on the part of the interested powers could throw much light on the Japanese conditions. The progress of the deliberations was retarded somewhat as a result of an attempt by a Japanese fanatic to assassinate the Chinese Ambassador, Li Hung-Chang. Though the wound sustained by Li did not prove fatal, the attempt on his life altered appreciably the course of the subsequent negotiations. In recognition of the flagrant and unprovoked nature of the assault, the Japanese government felt constrained to offer China an unconditional armistice, and the severity of its terms was mitigated considerably. Thus, according to Morse, the incident "benefited China more than a victory in the field." Nevertheless, in view of the desperate straits to which China was reduced by the war, the Japanese terms were still more severe than she could hope to meet.

With the exception of England, which positively refused to intervene, the position of the powers remained indefinite.

15 Only on April 1 was the first draft of the conditions presented to the Chinese delegation. Cf. Paul H. Clyde, *International Rivalries in Manchuria, 1689-1922*, Columbus, Ohio, 1928, 22.
16 *International Relations*, III, 45. The assault took place on March 24.
At the same time, however, it was becoming increasingly evident that to procrastinate further was also to run the risk of losing altogether the opportunity to intervene. It was to this extremely critical state of affairs that Prince Alexis Lobanov-Rostovsky addressed himself immediately upon his appointment to succeed Giers as Minister of Foreign Affairs. Prior to this appointment Lobanov had occupied for some sixteen years the post of Ambassador in Vienna, the same capacity in which he had also served in London and Constantinople. According to Witte, Lobanov, at the time of his appointment, was utterly ignorant of the Far East. This statement must be interpreted, however, in the light of the fact that Lobanov entertained views radically different from those of the Finance Minister. His observations concerning the situation that had developed in the Far East Lobanov set forth at length in two memoranda to the Tsar, dated April 16, 1895.

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17 Giers had died on January 26, 1895; Lobanov's appointment was confirmed by Nicholas on March 6 of that year.

18 Memoirs, 82. According to his own statement, Witte was the only one fully conversant with the Far East. Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 180, puts this down as "just one of the many exaggerations in Witte's vainglorious account of his own career." Strangely enough, Baron Roman Rosen in his Forty Years of Diplomacy, New York, II, 134-137, confirms Witte's estimate of Lobanov.

19 Both of these dispatches are quoted in "First Steps of Russian Imperialism in the Far East," Chinese Social and Political Science Review, XVIII, 260-263.
In the first of these memoranda Lobanov characterized as extremely undesirable "from the point of view of our interests" any occupation by Japan "of the peninsula where Port Arthur is situated." There was no doubt in his mind that Russia should protest such a move. The question presented itself, however, as to whether she should carry this protest so far as to "have recourse to measures of force"—and in such an event could she count on the support of the other powers? The British Ambassador, he continued, had informed him that though the British government shared Russia's concern over Port Arthur, it would "in all probability... use neither measures of force nor demonstrations, because lately public opinion in England was more than inclining to the side of the Japanese." Furthermore, in view of the ill-defined policies of France and Germany, there was no telling how far they would be willing to support a Russian protest. Under such circumstances, Russia could do little more than "to indicate to the Japanese government in the most friendly manner that the taking possession of Port Arthur would become an everlasting impediment to the restoration of friendly relations with China, and serve as a pretext for the disruption of peace in the Far East." But preliminary to any such action, advised Lobanov, Russia should


21 Ibid., 261.
first make certain that the other powers would join her in such an expression.

In his second report of April 6, Lobanov stressed the broader aspects of the problem: notably, the choice between China and Japan as a "future ally" of Russia. "If our present position in the Far East satisfies us and we intend only to strengthen it," Lobanov reasoned, Russia could find no better ally than a hopelessly defeated China. On the other hand, if Russia intended actively to seek satisfaction of her "essential requirements" in the East—the acquisition of an ice-free port on the Pacific, and the annexation of a part of Manchuria necessary for a more convenient routing of the Trans-Siberian—then she would almost inevitably have to turn to Japan. In the first place, China, after the loss of Korea, possessed no such port which could be given to Russia and, secondly, she could not reasonably be expected to cede a part of Manchuria. Thus, he concluded, China could hardly be regarded "as an active and useful ally." Japan, however, was quite another story. She would prove eminently "useful" to Russia as a check upon England—"our principal and most dangerous adversary in Asia." An agreement with Japan appeared to Lobanov quite conceivable, and while he did not definitely express himself in favor of this alternative, he did propose "carefully to abstain from any hostility, apart from the other powers, in order not to affect future good relations with the
Japanese government."\(^{22}\)

From the foregoing it is quite evident that Lobanov was pushing the Tsar, unconsciously perhaps, into the arms of Japan. Nicholas, in turn, was apparently disposed to accept Lobanov's analysis of the situation and, according to Romanov, readily agreed not to demand the retrocession of Port Arthur.\(^{23}\) At the same time, however, Nicholas himself raised the question as to whether, by way of compensating herself, Russia should not occupy Port Lazarev or some other port on the east coast of Korea. Thereby, in the terminology of the January 20 conference of ministers, he laid the basis for an "independent course of action."

In a marginal note to Lobanov's second memorandum the Tsar expressed himself categorically in favor of such action: "Russia absolutely needs a port free [from ice] and open all year round. This port must be located on the mainland (south-east of Korea) and certainly, connected with our possessions by a strip of land."\(^{24}\) These two memoranda of Lobanov, together with his own thoughts on the subject, the Tsar arranged to submit to another meeting of the Special Committee.

However, when the Committee convened five days later—on April 11—it did so under sharply modified circumstances. In

\(^{22}\) Ibid., 263.

\(^{23}\) Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 70.

\(^{24}\) Ibid., 71. The italics are Romanov's.
the meantime, as Lobanov informed the assembled ministers, word had been received from the Russian representative at Berlin to the effect that Germany had declared her readiness "to participate in every step which we might deem necessary to take in Tokyo with the view of compelling Japan to forego not only the occupation of South Manchuria, including Port Arthur, but also the occupation of the Pescadores Islands." France, likewise, had agreed "to coordinate her policy with ours." This sudden change in the attitude of the German government was explained as having been dictated by her commercial interests in the Far East, interests which might suffer from the increase of Japanese influence in China. There can be little doubt, however, that this action was also designed to forestall the possibility of a Russo-Japanese coalition, such as that advocated by Lobanov.

Although the question of intervention would seem to have been decided once and for all by the agreement of Germany and France to participate, it still remained very much of an open issue, and revealed once again the difficulty of reaching a decision. Certain of the Russian ministers, Grand Duke Alexis among them, fell in with Lobanov's proposal for an alliance with Japan, though Lobanov himself had to concede his distrust for the Tokyo


26 Ibid., 266.
government. The burden of opposing Lobanov's proposal was assumed by Witte, who outspokenly insisted that the decision as to a course of action concerned most of all the Finance Ministry because, as he put it, "in case of a wrong solution we risked to lose everything which had been done [to improve Russia's finances]." Inasmuch as Witte's argument was the one which finally prevailed over all the confusion, it might be well at this point to consider it in some detail.

Taking as his starting-point the fact that the Sino-Japanese War was a direct consequence of the Construction of the Trans-Siberian, Witte went on to observe that the Japanese occupation of Liaotung was likewise directed against the railway. All the European powers as well as Japan were aware that a partition of China was only a question of time and were becoming increasingly apprehensive that the railway would secure for Russia a lion's share of the expected prey. If allowed to remain in occupation of Manchuria, Witte argued, Japan would proceed to annex the whole of Korea, would fortify herself in those positions and attract to her side the belligerent Mongols and Manchus; indeed it was not inconceivable, under such circumstances, that the Mikado would at some future date replace the Emperor of China. Sooner or later, according to Witte, a clash with Japan was in-

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evitable. Consequently, from the Russian point of view, the question was merely whether it was better to concede South Manchuria to Japan and seek compensation after the Trans-Siberian was completed, or to take immediate issue with Japan. To Witte the latter course appeared more logical, inasmuch as France and Germany were willing to support a protest. It was unlikely that such action would lead to war. If, however, contrary to expectations, diplomatic measures did not suffice, then the Russian navy should be ordered to open hostilities against the Japanese fleet and to bombard Japanese ports. The Russian forces already stationed in the Far East were adjudged sufficient to handle the situation and, besides, in any resistance to Japanese pretensions, Russia could count on the support of the Chinese and Koreans. By virtue of such an act, concluded Witte, Russia would appear as the "Savior of China," which, out of gratitude, would readily agree to an extension of the Russian frontier.

Later, during the same session, Witte expressed his willingness to give Japan anything--Formosa, the Pescadores, even Port Arthur and, in an extreme case, the southern part of Korea--but not Manchuria. The plan to route the main line of the Trans-Siberian across Manchuria had become so fixed in Witte's mind that he was willing to risk even an immediate war to prevent Japan from establishing herself there just when Russia's capacity
for Far Eastern expansion was about to mature.\textsuperscript{28} Russia, said Witte, should accept this challenge rather than postpone it. Otherwise, she "would be obliged in the future to make far greater sacrifices."\textsuperscript{29} The Army and Navy Ministers concurred in this view, and testified to the battle readiness and relative sufficiency of the Russian forces. Consequently, the question was resolved much as Witte had wished. However, the official report of the proceedings, along with the conclusions adopted by the Committee, was not submitted to the Tsar until April 15.\textsuperscript{30}

On April 14, Lobanov conferred with the French Ambassador, Count Montebello, who had just returned from Paris. During the course of their conversation Montebello admitted two alternative courses of action: first, intervention to force Japan to retrocede Port Arthur and the Pescadores; second, to allow the Sino-Japanese peace settlement to stand.\textsuperscript{31} If the latter course was the one adopted, as Lobanov wished, then the question of compensation would have to be considered. According to Montebello, France would be quite satisfied with the Chinese Island of Hainan.

\textsuperscript{28} Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 74.

\textsuperscript{29} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{30} Ibid.

\textsuperscript{31} Text of Lobanov's report to the Tsar, dated April 14 quoted in Chinese Social and Political Science Review, XVII, 263-264.
and he left it to Russia to determine upon a suitable compensation for herself. The Ambassador pressed for a quick decision, pointing out the extreme impatience of the French government. After reading Lobanov's report of the conversation, Tsar Nicholas noted: "I agree with the second suggestion, that is, after an agreement with France, to accept carrying out of the Sino-Japanese peace settlement, to get by all means a desirable compensation in the form of an open port."32

In the meantime, the peace negotiations at Shimonoseki were rapidly drawing to a close. Despite constant appeals from China, no intervention by any of the Western powers took place during the actual course of the negotiations. According to Article I of the final draft, China recognized definitely "the full and complete independence and autonomy of Korea,"--the original matter of dispute--and further agreed that "the payment of tribute and the performance of ceremonies and formalities by Korea to China, in the derogation of such independence and autonomy, shall wholly cease for the future."33 In addition, Japan secured for herself most-favored-nation status in China, certain additional rights not yet possessed by any foreign power, an indemnity of two hundred million taels, and the complete cession

32 Ibid., 265, n. 11.
"in perpetuity and full sovereignty" of Formosa, the Pescadores, and the whole of the Liao-tung Peninsula, including Port Arthur. The Treaty of Shimonoseki was formally signed on April 17, by Viceroy Li Hung-Chang for China, and Counts Ito and Mutsu for Japan.

On April 16, the Tsar summoned for final consultation four of the ministers who had participated in the meeting of April 11—Alexis, Lobanov, Witte, and Vannovsky. However, as no official record or transcript of their discussion was kept, it is extremely difficult to determine what transpired on that occasion. The only suggestion as to what took place is provided by a brief entry in Witte's Memoirs, according to which "I reiterated my opinion and, as it met with practically no opposition, the Emperor accepted my suggestions." The Tsar, reversing his preference for Lobanov's plan, approved the minutes of the Special Committee meeting of April 11, and instructed Lobanov to carry out the program outlined in its report, to wit:

34 Memoirs, 84; however, Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhuriu 76, argues that this entry in the Memoirs "suffers from inaccuracies which form themselves into a kind of tendency, distort perspective, and lead the reader on a false track." Whereas Witte claims to have defended the principle of non-violation "of the integrity of the Chinese Empire," this argument had no place in his statements at that time, but appeared only after 1907, the product of post facto intelligence. Likewise, the reason for Lobanov's "silence" during the conference with the Tsar was merely the fact that there were before Nicholas "two points of view, but not two concurrent practical proposals," Lobanov's proposal having already been dismissed from consideration.
(1) To endeavor to preserve the status quo ante bellum in the North of the Chinese Empire and with this in view to advise Japan, first in a friendly way, to desist from occupation of southern part of Manchuria because such occupation interfered with our interests and would be a permanent menace to the peace of the Far East; in case of a determined refusal of Japan to follow our advice, to declare to the Japanese government that we reserved for ourselves freedom of action and would act in conformity with our interests.

(2) To communicate officially to the European powers as well as to China that we on our part without seeking for any seizures, considered it necessary for the security of our interests to insist upon Japan's foregoing the occupation of the southern part of Manchuria...

With this the basis for the three-power intervention was firmly established. Pursuant to the Tsar's orders Lobanov immediately put himself in touch with Berlin and Paris, and on April 23 the diplomatic representatives of the three powers in Tokyo presented a formal protest to the Japanese government, calling for the retrocession of the Liao-tung Peninsula to China.

The outcome of the demarche is too well known to be set forth in detail here. After consultation with her military and naval experts had revealed that resistance to the Dreiban, or Far Eastern Triplice as it is variously called, was out of the question, Japan deemed it wise to capitulate. Accordingly, on May 5, she agreed to retrocede her acquisitions on the mainland, requesting only that the Treaty of Shimonoseki be ratified first,
and that a slight increase in the indemnity be allowed her. As there was no serious objection to either request, the powers assented. The Treaty was ratified at Chefoo on May 8, while a Russian fleet comprising seventeen warships and several torpedo-boats lay at anchor in the harbor. The final settlement, by which Japan agreed to retrocede Liao-tung in return for an increase in the indemnity of thirty million taels, was subscribed and sworn at Peking on November 8, 1895.

This was, no doubt, a severe wound to the amour propre of Japan. However, the disappointment was accepted by her in the spirit of stern philosophic resignation inherited from her feudal past. By way of illustration we may cite the words addressed by Count Hayashi to his fellow-countrymen, published at that time:

It must never be forgotten that discontent is the prime factor which incites men to great activity and diligence. We should therefore retain our discontent to spur us on to greater diligence, with a view to one day dispersing the gloom around us. We must persistently suffer the insufferable and support the insupportable for the sake of what the future will have in store for us. In this way we shall truly promote the strength and prosperity of our nation.

36 Morse, *International Relations*, III, 47, citing John W. Foster, *Diplomatic Memoirs*, II, 151. Foster, Secretary of State during the Harrison Administration, was legal adviser to the Chinese delegation at Shimonoseki.

37 Text in William W. Rockhill, ed., *Treaties and Conventions With or Concerning China and Korea*, 1894-1904, Washington, 1904, 28. The total indemnity was thus increased to 230 million taels, or approximately 175 million dollars.
We should exert ourselves to develop our commerce and our industries, for these are the principal factors of national expansion....

We must continue to study according to Western methods, for the application of science is the most important item of warlike preparations that civilized nations regard. If new ships are considered necessary, we must build them at any cost. If the organization of our army is found to be wrong, it must at once be renovated. If advisable, our whole military system must be entirely changed. We must build docks to be able to repair our ships. We must establish a steel factory to supply guns and ammunition. Our railways must be extended so that we can mobilize our troops rapidly. Our overseas shipping must be developed so that we can provide transports to carry our armies abroad.

This is the programme that we have to keep always in view. We have suffered hard things, and we must suffer yet harder things before we arrive at our destiny. Whilst our preparations are in the making, things will not be easy. Our taxes will increase, our people will suffer distress, our Government officials must work for small salaries, and amidst a discontented populace. Political parties will use the distress to raise political disputes, and our whole Empire may feel unhappy. But if we always keep in view the great ends which I have indicated, then we shall endure all these things gladly.

Peace has been restored, but it cannot be a lasting peace. We must sacrifice ourselves, we must work for those who come after us. We must face difficulties, even as 'combing our hair in the rain and bathing in the wind.' Many will be disappointed and discontented, but they must endure all their disappointment and discontent in silence and with a brave heart.

If they were private merchants they would endure and continue struggling. As a nation we must do the same. The actions of great Powers are like those of individual merchants. Each one seeks his own gain, and if he cannot at once win continues with increased energy until he does so at last.
This testament of Hayashi reveals the extent to which Japanese political thought had been influenced by the West. It likewise suggests the determination of the Japanese nation to recover from the setback administered by Russia and her allies in depriving her of the fruits of her victory over China and to even the score at an opportune moment.

Russia's official interest at this stage, far from the expansionist policies of Peter the Great, was motivated, as has already been suggested, by distinctly imperialistic considerations. The Tsar's personal intentions were already quite generally known. "Emperor Nicholas," wrote Witte, "was anxious to spread Russian influence in the Far East. Not that he had any definite program of conquest. He was merely possessed by an unreasoned desire to seize Far Eastern lands." Fortunately for Russia, however, Witte had motives more intelligent. He perceived that "...it was to Russia's best interest to have as its neighbour a strong but passive China, and that therein lay the assurance of Russia's safety in the East." The particular stress in Witte's mind was perhaps rather on the word "passive" than on the word "strong," but, whatever the reason, it was to Russia's interest that China remain, for the time being at least, unpartitioned. For this reason Russia had taken the lead in or-

39 Memoirs, 83.
40 Ibid.
ganizing the opposition to the terms which Japan had attempted to
exact of China at Shimonoseki. This opposition became the basis
for the rivalry which was to dominate Far Eastern relations from
1895 until the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War.

At this point, having established Russia's concern in
the Far East, it is relevant to our purpose to inquire into the
mOTives of France and Germany in supporting Russia. The motives
of Britain, in refusing her support, have already been suggest-
ed.41 The attitude of France is most readily comprehensible.
French policy with respect to the Far East was predicated, as the
French diplomatist, M. Hanotaux, said later, on "considerations
of general policy."42 That is to say, France was bound to Russia
by the Franco-Russian Alliance of 1893.43 The creation of the
alliance had established a delicate balance of power in Europe,
and it was not France's intention at this time to disturb the
balance. Consequently, even though she might, and in this situa-
tion probably did, prefer a different course of action, there was
no alternative for her but to tag along in opposing the Japanese
demands.44 France's role in the three-power intervention was

41 Supra, 62.

42 Quoted by Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 185.

43 For a full account of the origin and original in-
tent of the Alliance, cf. Langer, The Franco-Russian Alliance,
Cambridge, 1929.

44 The French preference was undoubtedly the second al-
ternative proposed by Montebello in his conversation with Lobanov.
Cf. supra, 64.
distinctly secondary to that of Germany and Russia.

The German motives, on the other hand, were somewhat more numerous and complex, having been dictated by a combination of considerations, European and Asiatic. In the first place, Germany had had her eye upon a port in China; "Willy" broached this matter to "Nicky" in a letter dated April 26, 1895:

I shall certainly do all in my power to keep Europe quiet and also guard the rear of Russia so that nobody shall hamper your action towards the Far East! For that is clearly the great task of the future for Russia to cultivate the Asian continent and to defend Europe from the inroads of the Great Yellow race. In this you will always find me on your side ready to help you as best I can. You have well understood that call of Providence and have quickly grasped the moment; it is of immense political and historical value and much good will come of it. I shall with interest await the further development of our action and hope that, just as I will gladly help you to settle the question of eventual annexations of portions of territory for Russia, you will kindly see that Germany may also be able to acquire a port somewhere where it does not 'gene' you.45

From this it would appear that the Kaiser had finally grasped what the Iron Chancellor had realized long before--namely, the expediency of "nailing" Russia's attention to the East, so that it might be diverted from the Balkans and the Russian frontier. The stronger Russia became in the East, reasoned William II, the weaker it would become on the Russo-German border; moreover, in its eastward expansion Russia would embarrass England's interests

and would eventually clash with Japan. At the moment, the usual friction between France and Germany was making itself felt, and in the face of this friction the Germans were intent on avoiding, as Langer puts it, "any consecration of the Franco-Russian coalition, any encouragement of a larger English-Russian-French combination, and any antagonism between Germany and her continental neighbors." Consequently, Germany had nothing to lose and much to gain by fostering friendly relations with France and Russia.

A still further reason for Germany's participation in the Dreibund is the fact that the Kaiser seemed confident that by joining the intervention and having a voice in the resettlement he could thereby ingratiate himself with the Chinese and, at the same time, insure Germany a voice in all future dealings of Europe and Asia. There can be no doubt that William II was fully aware of the possibilities for German political and commercial development in the Far East. Perhaps even more interesting, however, when viewed in the light of international diplomacy, was the Kaiser's use of the "Yellow Peril" to scare Nicholas and to gain public support for a more forward Asiatic policy. That he envisioned, or at least pretended to envision a future conflict between East and West, is evident from his letters to the Tsar. "The development of the Far East," he wrote to Nicholas on September 46.

46 Diplomacy of Imperialism, 184-185, citing Die Gross Politik, IX, No. 2735.
ber 26, 1895,

especially its danger to Europe and our Christian Faith is a matter which has been greatly on my mind ever since we made our first move together in Spring. At last my thoughts developed into a certain form and this I sketched on paper....It the sketch shows the Powers of Europe as represented by their respective Genii called together by the Arch-Angel Michael,--sent from heaven--to unite in resisting the inroad of Buddhism, heathenism and barbarism for the Defence of the Cross. Stress is especially laid on the united resistance of all European Powers, which is just as necessary also against our common internal foes, anarchism, republicanism, nihilism. I venture to send you an engraving, begging you to accept it as a token of my warm and sincere friendship to you and Russia.47

For these several reasons and, no doubt, for others as well, the German government ranged itself in the East, on the side of the alignment which had been formed against itself in the West.

Britain, in declining to intervene, committed a blunder the full consequences of which she failed to realize until it was too late. At the time there were no foreseeable advantages in joining the intervention, and she proceeded on the theory that a strong Japan must needs by cultivated to replace an impotent China as Britain's eastern bulwark against Russia. However, in failing to see in Japan a serious threat to her commercial interests in the Far East, Britain completely misjudged the situation, and lived to regret the error as Japanese trade gradually succeeded its own. By not intervening, Britain did court Japan, but in so doing abdicated its dominant influence in Peking in favor

47 Letters from the Kaiser to the Tsar, 16-17.
of Russia, the very power which it sought to halt. Britain's declining position was later buttressed by a rapprochement with Japan, and the void created by her abdication was supplied by the emergence of Germany as a Far Eastern power.

Perhaps the cardinal phenomenon of the realignment of powers in the Far East in the decade 1895-1904 was the placing in contrast of "progressive" Japan and Britain, later to be joined by the United States, against "backward" Russia. What might have happened had Russia followed Lobanov's advice and joined Japan in picking China's bones it is quite useless to speculate. Lobanov's will did not prevail, and instead, a chain-reaction of events which would have world-wide significance was set in motion in large measure, by the will of one man--Sergei Witte. By initiating the Triple Intervention Russia had won a brilliant diplomatic victory: Japan was repulsed, Britain humbled, and China placed in her debt. However, Russia's diplomatic victory, like the military victory of Japan over China, was short-lived, and

48 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 11-12.
49 Dallin, Rise of Russia in Asia, 41.
50 There is considerable divergence of opinion among scholars as to which of the three powers actually initiated the intervention. However, from the evidence already cited here in describing the origin and development of the Dreibund, it is certain that the initiative for the move is to be found in St. Petersburg, rather than in Paris or Berlin. Specifically, the three-power intervention had its origin in the Russian policy discussions of April 11 and 16.
was won at the expense of alienating the Russian Empire's mortal enemies, Japan and Great Britain.

On paper the Dreibund was a very formidable combination of powers and, up to a point, an effective working partnership as well. Ostensibly, the chief bond uniting the three nations was the desire to impress the Chinese with their good will. Underlying this, however, was the realization that concerted action would contribute to the eventual breakdown of British hegemony in the Far East. The inherent weakness of the combination is evident; each of the three powers was out to secure advantages for itself. According to a Russian statement published at the time in the Novoye Vremya, Russia paid for the cooperation of France with an agreement to support an eventual French demand for a rectification of the Indo-Chinese frontier, and for Germany's help with a promise to advance German demands for industrial and commercial concessions in China. Thus, even as early as 1895, it became fully evident that Russia and Japan, both nations in full progress, both operating in the same sphere of action, must sooner or later meet face to face.


CHAPTER V

RUSSIAN ASCENDANCY IN KOREA

Throughout the course of the Sino-Japanese War and the subsequent peace negotiations at Shimonoseki, Russia had continued to manifest a vital interest in the affairs of the Korean government, being particularly concerned with the guarantee of Korean "independence" and territorial integrity. This is evident from the decisions of the Special Committee, discussed in the previous chapter, notwithstanding the fact that in its deliberations the Korean question had assumed an importance more or less subordinate to that of Manchuria. Meanwhile, however, events within the Korean peninsula were working to Russia's advantage much more effectively, perhaps, than if Russia herself had been guiding them. It will be recalled that, previous to the outbreak of the war between China and Japan, the Japanese had invaded the royal palace and seized the person of the king, making him a prisoner in his own palace.¹ Thereupon the administration of the country was assumed by a cabinet of pro-Japanese Koreans, with the aged

¹ Supra, 53.
Tai-Wen-Kun acting as regent. Under the supervision of a group of Japanese advisers the government of Korea was reorganized the better to subserve Japanese interests in the peninsula, as well as to eliminate once and for all the traces of Korea's "Confucian dependence upon China. All this was done with a pretext to securing Korea's "independence."

Diplomatic procedures proving too slow for the realization of absolute hegemony in Korea, however, the Japanese once again had recourse to more forceful measures. In an effort to stamp out all internal opposition to such control, the Japanese agent, General Muira, arranged the assassination of his most outspoken opponent, the Korean Queen, by a group of Japanese soshi, or strong-arm men. The murder was accomplished on October 8, 1895, in the palace. The body was then removed to a grove nearby, saturated with kerosene, and burned. Shortly thereafter Muira appeared at the palace and presented for the king's signature several prepared documents calling for the appointment to office of certain of the conspirators and agreeing to the management of all internal affairs by the Japanese-dominated cabinet.

2 The nature and extent of this reorganization is described by Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, 224-228.


4 Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, 228.
Revulsion against this crime brought severe criticism both at home and abroad, yet the Japanese government took no action other than to recall Muira. As no foreign opposition was forthcoming, the internal situation was allowed to stand.5

Events reached a climax on February 11, 1896, when the King, disguised as a woman, managed to escape from his Japanese captors and took refuge in the Russian legation in Seoul, where he remained for exactly a year. Inasmuch as Japanese control had clearly centered in the possession of the King's person, all illusions of Japanese domination in the peninsula were now completely shattered. Thus, as Langer puts it, "the Russians suddenly found themselves on the crest of the wave. The Japanese, by their indefensible policy, had done the work of the Russians more effectively than the Russians themselves could have done it."6 Russia was now not only the "Savior of China," but by reason of this most recent development she had emerged also as the "protector" of Korean independence.

In this situation Russia found scope for implementing her Korean policy. Not wishing, however, to dissipate the initial advantage, she played her hand somewhat more cautiously than

5 The American Minister at Seoul, Mr. Sill, was severely reprimanded by the Secretary of State for even suggesting a protest: "intervention in political concerns of Korea is not among your functions." Telegram, November 11, 1895, cited in Morse, International Relations, III, 46-47.

6 Diplomacy of Imperialism, 297.
had Japan. At first the Russians were quite content to pursue a policy based on ingratiation and gentle persuasion, keeping their own designs temporarily in the background. Meanwhile, from his asylum in the Russian legation the king issued proclamations annulling the Japanese-imposed reforms, announcing the dismissal of the pro-Japanese cabinet and the creation of a new cabinet to take its place, in short, reconstituting his own rule.7 One such royal proclamation, issued the very day of the King's escape, read in part as follows:

Alas! Alas! on account of Our unworthiness and mal-administration the wicked advanced and the wise retired. Of the last ten years, none has passed without troubles. Some were brought on by those We had trusted as the members of the body, while others, by those of Our own bone and flesh. Our dynasty of five centuries has thereby been often endangered, and millions of Our subjects have thereby been gradually impoverished....

Fortunately, through loyal and faithful subjects rising up in righteous efforts to remove the wicked, there is a hope that the tribulations experienced may invigorate the State, and that calm may return after the storm....We shall endeavour to be merciful. No pardon, however, shall be extended to the principal traitors concerned in the affairs of July 1894 and of October 1895. Capital punishment should be their due, thus venting the indignation of men and gods alike. But to all the rest, officials, or soldier, citizens or coolies, a general amnesty, free and full, is granted, irrespective of the degree of their offences. Reform your business, public or private, as in times past....8

7 Isabella L. Bishop, Korea and Her Neighbors, London, 1898, 365-368.

8 Quoted by Bishop, Korea and Her Neighbors, 366.
To his soldiers the King addressed these words:

On account of the unhappy fate of Our country, traitors have made trouble every year. Now We have a document informing Us of another conspiracy. We have therefore come to the Russian Legation....Soldiers! come and protect Us. You are Our children....Do your duty and be at ease. When you meet the chief traitors ...cut off their heads at once and bring them.9

In accordance with this edict of the King, and in retaliation for the murder of the Queen, a blood purge was instituted, in which the former premier and several cabinet-ministers, some of them quite innocent of the crime, were killed by mobs in the streets of Seoul.10

The first lines of Russian policy, namely ingratiation and "gentle persuasion," paid substantial dividends in securing the implicit trust and confidence of the Korean monarch, to whom it appeared that Russia was merely aiding in the restoration of the status quo ante bellum in the peninsula. During the coronation festivities for the new Tsar held in May and June of 1896 a special Korean representative, a brother to the murdered queen, made his appearance in Moscow. Having secured a private audience with the Tsar, he presented on behalf of the Korean King a request for the establishment of a Russian protectorate over Korea.11

9 Ibid., 367.
10 Hulbert, The Passing of Korea, 148.
11 Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 405.
Without consulting either Lobanov or Witte before committing himself to such a drastic course, Nicholas granted the request then and there, seeing in it nothing but "a very proper acknowledgment of and homage to his power and greatness."\(^{12}\) The very serious international complications to which such action on the part of Russia might give rise entirely escaped the young Tsar.\(^{13}\) Both Lobanov and Witte were of the opinion that the situation was not as yet propitious for the realization of such a protectorate. Consequently, the fact of the promise having been given was kept highly secret.\(^{14}\)

Japan, at this time, had not quite succeeded in reconciling herself to her sudden loss of power in Korea, and was engaged in a large-scale program of military and naval rearmament along Western lines.\(^{15}\) Russia, for her part, was directing her every effort to the earliest possible completion of the Siberian Railway. Consequently, it became the primary task of Russian diplomacy to maneuver cautiously until such time as sufficient force was available to sustain a more aggressive policy. The extremely delicate nature of the situation in which Russia found

\(^{12}\) Rosen, *Forty Years of Diplomacy*, I, 125.

\(^{13}\) Ibid., 125-126. Thenceforward Rosen detects a marked "coolness" affecting the relations between the Tsar and Lobanov.

\(^{14}\) Ibid.

\(^{15}\) Langer, *Diplomacy of Imperialism*, 405.
herself as a result of the sudden change in the political power balance in Korea, not to mention the Tsar’s rash promise of a protectorate, was reflected in two agreements negotiated between Russia and Japan in May and June of 1896. In general, these treaties had the effect of establishing a more-or-less condominium over Korea between Russia and Japan. They were of special importance to Russia because Japan reaffirmed Korea’s independence, to Japan because Russia pledged itself to send no military or financial advisers into the peninsula.16

The first of the aforementioned Russo-Japanese agreements, the so-called Waeber-Komura Agreement, was signed at Seoul on May 14, 1896.17 According to the terms of the compact, Japan recognized that the Korean King remained at the Russian legation of his own volition and at his own discretion, while Russia agreed to advise his departure at such time as his personal safety was no longer in question. To insure the king’s safety, Japan undertook to restrain those of its subjects who advocated forceful action in Korea. Moreover, Japan was constrained to recognize the new Korean Cabinet, and agreed to restrict the number and dis-

16 Romanov, Rossiya y Manchzhurii, 143.

17 Text in Korea: Treaties and Agreements, Pamphlet No. 43, of the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, Division of International Law, Washington, 1921, 21-22. Both Waeber and Komura were the official diplomatic representatives of their respective governments at Seoul. The document is sometimes referred to as the “Seoul Memorandum.”
position of its troops and telegraph guards in the peninsula.

Russia was allowed to maintain a force equal in number to that of Japan. However, both sides were to withdraw when order had been restored.

The means by which Russia would attempt to consolidate and give definite form to its influence in Korea remained a completely open question. Japan, at the same time, was confronted with the first-class problem of blocking the path to any further extension of Russian influence in Korea. This, ostensibly, was the origin of the Lobanov-Yamagata Agreement, negotiated in the early days of June, 1896, and signed on June 9 of that year. Expanding on the earlier agreement, it provided, in substance, that neither of the contracting parties would lend financial aid to Korea by "mutual accord," and that Korea should be allowed to establish an armed force and a native police "in sufficient proportions to maintain internal order without foreign aid." In this way Japan hoped to forestall the possibility of complete Russian domination over Korea, either through loans or through control over its armed forces and police.

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18 The total strength of the Japanese force was set at 1,000 men: 200 telegraph guards, 800 guards for Japanese settlements in Fusan, Genzan, and Seoul. However, as Romanov points out, such a limitation constituted a virtual evacuation of the Japanese forces stationed in Korea. Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 142.

19 Full text in Korea: Treaties and Agreements, 23-24.
More significant, in the light of subsequent developments, is the fact that the agreement, as finally approved by Russia and Japan, was but a substitute for a more radical solution proposed by Japan in the early stages of the negotiations. Yamagata, Japan's special representative to the coronation festivities, had initially suggested a partition of Korea at the thirty-eighth parallel. The northern part would become a Russian sphere, the southern, including Seoul, would go to Japan. Inasmuch as the proposal had clearly been inspired by considerations of national self-interest on the part of Japan, it is not surprising to find that it was rejected by Russia for much the same reasons. Basically, Russia's rejection stemmed from the recognition that at the moment her influence in Korea was, de facto, stronger than that of Japan. To agree to such a partition, Russia would not only have had to surrender the most important part of Korea, from the military-strategic point of view, but also to compromise her future freedom of action in the peninsula. Besides, why divide Korea with Japan when, in the near future, she might have it all to herself? Thus, for the first time in history the thirty-eighth parallel was proposed as a line dividing Korea into two foreign protectorates. As we already know, it was not to be

20 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 142-143; cf. also Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 406.

21 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 143, citing a letter of the later Foreign Minister, Lamsdorff, read at the Imperial Conference of May 20, 1905.
the last.

If the Lobanov-Yamagata Agreement had been sacutely ob-
served in the subsequent period, it might be possible to say that
it preserved the illusory independence of Korea. However, as the
Russian historian Romanov points out, Russia, in signing the pact,
was clearly double-crossing Japan. 22 The evidence which he addu-
ces is so conclusive as to leave little room for doubt as to
Russia's bad faith. It will be recalled that the Tsar had pre-
viously committed Russia to the establishment of a protectorate
over Korea. The precise form which this protectorate was to take
was not disclosed until after the Russo-Japanese treaty had been
signed—nor, for that matter, the fact that any such agreement
existed. Then it appeared that Russia had undertaken to supply
a military patrol to "protect" the Korean King, as well as mili-
tary instructors for the Korean army. Furthermore, a Russian
financial adviser was to be attached to the Korean Court, and a
Russo-Korean loan negotiated as soon as the financial needs of
the Korean government had been made clear. 23 That these condi-
tions were retrograde, both in spirit and substance, to the terms
of the Moscow Protocol is fully evident, and they provide an in-
teresting commentary on the duplicity of Russia's Korean policy

22 Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 144.

23 Ibid., 144-145, citing the letter of Lobanov to Witte, June 16, 1898.
at this time. Only when the Korean ambassador returned from Moscow with the first group of Russian instructors was there any indication that Russia had no intention of abiding by the terms of the agreement.24

Concurrent with its negotiations with Japan over Korea, the Russian government was also carrying on negotiations with China for railway rights in Manchuria. For some time the builders and planners of the Trans-Siberian had recognized how greatly the work of construction might be facilitated and how substantial an economy in time and distance might be effected if, instead of following the circuitous route along the Amur River, the line could be carried directly across Manchuria. This idea had actually predated the Triple Intervention, although it gained virtually no support or momentum up until that time.25 Investigations in the summer of 1894 had disclosed almost insuperable technical difficulties of construction, particularly in the Lake Baikal and Amur River areas, and inspired Witte to consider the political and economic advantages latent in the Manchurian route.26 These advantages he outlined in a report to the Siberian Railway Commis-

24 Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, 233, citing letter of Allen to Olnay, October 27, 1896.

25 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 82. According to Romanov, the idea originated with a certain Admiral Kopytov as early as 1887.

26 Witte, Mémoires, 86-87.
not only would such a route be shorter by some three hundred and forty-five miles and appreciably cheaper, but it could also better compete with the existing sea routes. Furthermore, once she had the line direct to Vladivostok, no other railway could be constructed in Northern China without Russian consent.

In Manchurian matters; however, the Russians made haste slowly. Witte, the prime-mover in all matters related to the construction of the railway, laid his plans carefully so as to obviate all possibility of failure. The first and most important requisite to success, as he saw it, was the establishment of a Russian bank in China. Such a bank, Witte wrote to the Tsar, might "prove to be a very useful weapon in the hands of the Russian government in the latter's carrying out of the measures most closely connected with the completion of the Siberian Railway." Plans for the formation of the bank took definite shape in Witte's mind in June, 1895, when French financiers arrived in St. Petersburg to negotiate the joint loan which would enable China to pay off the Japanese indemnity. The Russo-Chinese Bank, later known as the Russo-Asiatic Bank, came into being by an Imperial Russian Charter of December 10, 1895, and in Witte's hands was to

27 Ibid., 92, citing report dated November 11, 1895.
28 Letter of July 26, 1895, quoted in Ibid., 92.
29 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 90.
become an integral part of the Trans-Siberian scheme and a flexible instrument in his policy of "conquest by railways."  

Nominally, the bank was an ordinary joint-stock company formed, according to its charter, for the purpose of developing commercial relations with the Far East. Its capital, fixed at 11,250,000 gold rubles, in addition to five million taels advanced on permanent loan by the Chinese government, was subscribed in part by four of the leading banks of Paris and many of the leaders of the French financial world. Among its functions—over and above the right to engage in regular banking operations—the Russo-Chinese Bank was empowered to engage in such diverse pursuits as the following:

The collection of duties in the Empire of China, and the transactions relating to the State treasury of the respective place, the coinage, with the authorization of the Chinese Government, of the country's money, the payment of the interest on loans, concluded by the Chinese Government, the acquisition of concessions for the construction of railways within the boundaries of China and the establishment of telegraph lines.

Also worthy of note is the fact that all of the important admin-

30 Text of the Charter in Rockhill, Treaties and Conventions with or concerning China and Korea, 1894-1904, 207-212.

31 Morse, International Relations, III, 83. Of the six million rubles actually raised, 5/8 was French, 3/8 Russian. Nevertheless, of the nine votes Russia commanded six. Cf. Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 91, n. 2.

32 Rockhill, Treaties and Conventions, 209. The above-quoted section is Article XIV of the Charter.
istrative posts were held by Russians, the president of the bank being Witte's chief lieutenant, Prince Esper Ukhtomsky, companion to Nicholas on his Far Eastern tour of 1890-1891, and an ardent apologist for Russia's "manifest destiny" in Asia. All this would seem to bear out the truth of Baron Rosen's description of the bank as "a hybrid politico-financial institution which in reality was but a slightly disguised branch of the Russian Treasury."33

The establishment of the Russo-Chinese Bank was but a means taken by Witte to the ultimate end of securing from China railway rights in Manchuria. Should such rights be obtained—and there was no reason to doubt that they would—then the instrumentality for putting them into effect already existed in the bank. Preliminary negotiations for railway rights were conducted in Peking from December, 1895, to April, 1896, by the Russian Minister, Count Cassini, and were conspicuous for their lack of success. Even attempts at bribing the obstinate Chinese officials proved futile, reported Cassini, chiefly because of apprehension on the part of the Chinese that "in the near future we will demand certain exclusive concessions, the true significance and extent of which we now conceal."34

33 Forty Years of Diplomacy, I, 198.

34 Telegram of Cassini, December 28, 1895, cited by Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhuri, 95. The idea of placing a certain amount of "bribe money" at Cassini's disposal originated with
A more auspicious issue of the Manchurian question was presaged by the appointment of Li Hung-Chang as China's Ambassador Extraordinary to the Coronation of Nicholas II. Russia would take full advantage of Li's presence at the event much as she had availed herself of the Japanese and Korean representatives. A plan of operations was mapped out at the minutest detail by Witte well in advance of Li's arrival in St. Petersburg on April 30. Indicative of the care with which Witte's plans were laid is the fact that he even arranged to have Li met at Suez by Prince Ukhtomsky and carried directly to Odessa, so as to preclude any possibility of his being seduced prematurely by any other European power. 35

The two giants of Far Eastern diplomacy conferred in St. Petersburg for three weeks in deepest secrecy, after which negotiations were resumed and concluded in Moscow. After preliminary assurances that Russia intended to adhere strictly to the principle of China's territorial integrity, Witte proceeded to point out that to do so effectively she must be in a position to render China armed assistance, which at the moment was practically impossible because of the lack of railroad facilities. By way of a solution Witte proposed that Russia be allowed to lay a

Witte and was approved by the Tsar. However, none of the funds were used at this time. *Ibid.*, 92-93.

35 This and other details of Li's reception are recounted by Witte, *Memoirs*, 87.
branch line of the Trans-Siberian from China to Vladivostok. To make his argument more persuasive, Witte recalled for Li's benefit the services which Russia had recently performed in arranging the Triple Intervention and the indemnity loan. Such a railroad, he added, would increase the economic productivity of both empires.36

Li, fully cognizant of the disagreeable and dangerous features of the Russian proposal, was reluctant to agree. Consequently, Witte was forced to resort to bribery as a means of securing Li's support. In his Memoirs Witte emphatically denies the use of bribes, but the evidence is much too conclusive to admit of any doubt. 37 Romanov quotes in full a Ministry of Finance Protocol which assigned a fund of three million rubles credit to be advanced to Li, payments to be made in installments of one million rubles each at the following specified times:

(1) upon the concession of the line to the Russo-Chinese Bank by an edict of the Chinese Emperor;

(2) the determination of the exact route and its confirmation by Chinese law; and

(3) the completion of the railroad.

36 The Li-Witte conversations are discussed by the latter in ibid., 88-90. Cf. also Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 107-117.

37 Memoirs, 95. "At the time it was rumored in Europe, I remember, that Li Hung Chang had been bribed by the Russian Government. I must say that there is not a particle of truth in this rumour." Technically, this statement of Witte is quite correct, inasmuch as the bribe was guaranteed, not by the Russian government, but by the Russo-Chinese Bank.
Withdrawals against this fund were to be entered as "expenses of construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway." Li gave in and applied to Peking for the desired concession, permission for which was granted on May 30. Accordingly, the secret treaty was signed on June 3, 1896.

By this agreement the Russo-Chinese Bank received the right to construct and exploit a railway through Manchuria, Russia to have the right to transport its troops over the line in war and peace. In return for this concession China received a mutual defense pact against any further Japanese aggression, this being the price that Russia had to pay for the railway concession and also a face-saving device with which China could cover her humiliation. The treaty was so constituted as to make it appear that the alliance was its primary concern, the railway merely a means of implementing the military provisions of the alliance. It is significant, from the point of view of this study, that the

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38 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 116, citing Secret Protocol of June 4, 1896. The protocol was drawn up the day after the signing of the treaty, presumably to give Li some written assurance of payment.

39 Li did not receive the first million until September, 1896. According to Romanov, this was the only payment he actually received from the fund. Ibid., 118-119.

terms of the agreement extended to Korea as well as to Russian and Chinese possessions: "Any attack by Japan on Russian territory in East Asia as well as on the territory of China or Korea will be considered cause for the application of this treaty." However, the treaty was not to become final until China had confirmed the contract for the railroad.

Shortly thereafter, on September 8, 1898, the contract was negotiated between the Imperial Chinese government and the Russo-Chinese Bank, providing for the construction and management of the projected new line—the "Chinese Eastern," as it was called. According to the agreement, China might redeem the lines in thirty-six years, and at the end of eighty years, dating from the opening of the line over its entire system, they were to revert to her without payment. A careful examination of this agreement reveals beyond all shadow of doubt that the Chinese Eastern Railway was, in reality, a Russian one. A few brief extracts will suffice to make this clear:

...The statutes of this Company will be in conformity with the Russian usages in regard to railways.

...The gauge of the line should be the same as that of the Russian railways (five Russian feet—about four feet two and one-half inches, Chinese).

...The Company will have the absolute and exclusive right of administration of its lands....

41 Ibid.

42 Text in ibid., 74-77.
The Company is responsible that the Russian troops and war material, dispatched in transit over the line, will be carried through directly from one Russian station to another, without for any pretext stopping on the way longer than is strictly necessary....

Passengers' baggage, as well as merchandise dispatched in transit from one Russian station to another, will not be subject to customs duties; they will likewise be exempt from any internal tax or duty....

Moreover, all profits of the company were to be tax free, and only Russian and Chinese subjects could be shareholders. The right to acquire and exploit mines and other concessions was also given. The statutes of the newly formed Company were approved by the Tsar on December 16, 1896. "With this," writes Langer, "the preparation for the Great Russian enterprise was complete; the Russian government had succeeded in cloaking its action by using the fiction of a private company, and everything was regulated to meet the needs of the government as Witte saw them."46

The strategic and political implications of this Russian move are manifest. Not only would Russian offices have to

43 Ibid., passim.

44 Witte saw to it that all the shares, one thousand in number, fell into Russian hands. Seven hundred were reserved for the Russian government; the remaining three hundred, set aside for private purchase, were absorbed by the Russo-Chinese Bank. Cf. Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 12.

45 Text in Treaties and Agreements with and concerning China, I, 84-88.

46 Diplomacy of Imperialism, 409-410.
be set up in Manchuria, but an armed guard stationed there as well, thus throwing wide open the door to Russian penetration. The Trans-Siberian, no longer a purely internal enterprise running through unknown territories to terminate in a Pacific port had, by virtue of the Manchurian alignment, become a world highway from West to East, and had passed into the domain of foreign affairs. Furthermore, it had developed into a political instrument whose far-reaching effects it was difficult to gauge—a work, as one author wrote at the time, "destined to play a premier part in the transformation of Asia." This prediction, as we shall see, was more than borne out by subsequent events.

By the end of 1896 Russia was, to all intents and purposes, so absorbed in consolidating its most recent gains in Manchuria that Korea was relegated to the background. However, to infer from this that Witte had sacrificed Korea to the prospect of more immediate gains in Manchuria is to overlook certain considerations which were implicit in Witte's thinking. The distinction here, as before, is one between the means and the end. Rejecting the narrow view that in undertaking the Manchurian railway Russia was merely trying to assert itself in Manchuria, Witte remarked rather candidly that "Manchuria is not worth going to

all the trouble."\textsuperscript{48} Instead, he preferred to rest his justification of the enterprise on the fact that it would open for Russia an ever-broadening wedge of penetration: "the very force of things will oblige us shortly to carry through branches from this main line into the very depths of China."\textsuperscript{49} Therefore, by consolidating her position and increasing her means of action in Manchuria, Russia was enlarging upon rather than lessening her chances in Korea, and at the same time conserving instead of dissipating her energy.

Although urged to take immediate steps to insure the realization of the Korean protectorate, Witte stood firm in his opposition to any precipitate action. Both Lobanov and Pokotilov, Witte's China agent, anxiously called his attention to the fact that at that very moment British and French agents in Korea were attempting to force loans upon that unhappy kingdom, and earnestly urged him to take immediate action on the question of a Russian loan and the establishment of a Russo-Korean bank.\textsuperscript{50} Witte categorically forbade any action being taken until November, 1896, at which time he approved the loan only in principle and on the condition that a Russian be placed in charge of the Korean Cu-

\textsuperscript{48} As quoted by Romanov, \textit{Rossiya v Manchzhurii}, 80.

\textsuperscript{49} Ibid., 99.

\textsuperscript{50} Ibid., 149-150.
This condition entailed something of a revolution in Korean internal affairs, inasmuch as it involved the expulsion of British influence which had sustained itself solely on the basis of its administration of the Korean Customs.

Needless to say, there was considerable opposition in St. Petersburg foreign circles to such a long-range Far Eastern policy as Witte proposed. The controversy which ensued contained, in an incipient stage, almost all the elements of the struggle carried on in the following decade, and was but a foreshadowing of the eventual breakdown of Russian policy in the Far East. For the time, however, Witte was the virtual dictator of Tsarist Far Eastern policy, and was quite willing to forego immediate partial gain for the sake of the future whole. Consequently, the plans for the Korean protectorate were put temporarily "on ice," as Russia under Witte directed its attention elsewhere. However, as we have seen, Korea occupied a place of paramount importance in Witte's plans for a Russian-dominated East. As the later Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lamsdorff, recalled on the eve of the war that was to terminate once for all Tsarist designs on Korea: "The fate of Korea, as a future component of the Russian Empire, due both to political and geographic considerations, was early

51 Ibid., citing letter of Witte to Ministry of Foreign Affairs, November 14, 1895.
determined by us."52

52 Letter read at the Imperial Conference of May 20, 1903, cited in ibid., 66.
CHAPTER VI

DECLINE AND FALL

Whether or not the motives underlying the construction of the Manchurian branch of the Trans-Siberian Railway were basically military and strategic rather than economic, the fact remains that they were so interpreted by the other powers. Consequently, as Witte's policy of "peaceful penetration" gained in momentum, it also stirred the other powers to bring corresponding counter-pressure to bear. Once again Korea provided the fulcrum to their strategy. The activities of British and French agents who were attempting to force loans upon Korea have already been mentioned.\(^1\) Japan, still smarting under the blow received at the hands of the Dreibund, was further provoked to action by the now-evident duplicity of Russia in signing the Lobanov-Yamagata Protocol when all the while she had no intention of abiding by its terms. Germany, for her part, was sitting tight, waiting for the opportune moment to seize the Chinese port of Kiaochow.

In the early months of 1897 Russia's position in Korea gave evidence of deteriorating. In February of that year, in

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\(^1\) Supra. 104.
response to the many memorials of his subjects, the King departed from the Russian legation for his newly-constructed palace near the American legation. He did so without interference on the part of the Russians, though not before he had granted to Russian companies a twenty-year lumber monopoly along the River Tiumen, a five-year lumber option in the Yalu Valley, as well as a mining concession in the Ham-Kyang Province. After the King's departure Russia's position in the peninsula was further compromised when, in March, the Japanese government communicated to Korea the text of the theretofore secret Lobanov-Yamagata agreement. With this a marked cooling of Korea's affection for her would-be "protector" set in. Disillusioned with Russia's dilatory tactics in the matter of the loan, and finally awakening to her duplicity in promising military and financial advisers, the King openly solicited aid from Germany and France, even going so far as to suggest that the latter station a naval squadron at Chemulpo.

In a sense it is possible to state that the then-evident need for a more forward policy in Korea had already been anticipated by Witte. That his attitude may have undergone a change in the months of December and January is indicated by the minutes of

2 Brown, Mastery of the Far East, 142.
3 Bishop, Korea and Her Neighbors, 456.
4 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 155, citing telegram of Alexeiev to Witte, February 18, 1897.
a meeting of the Board of Governors of the Chinese Eastern Railway Company held on February 3, 1897. Having already realized the desired contract for the Manchurian line from China, and disturbed by foreign railway concessions in Korea, Witte proposed at that time that Russia institute pressure by way of requiring Korea to refuse all subsequent contracts to foreign companies as well as to change all existing lines to conform to the Russian broad gauge.

Finally, on May 21, 1897, Witte gave his consent to the appointment of a Russian financial adviser to be attached to the Korean court. His choice for the post was Kir Alexeiev of the Russian Customs Service, whose task it thereby became to effect, carefully but steadily, the transfer of the Korean customs administration into Russian hands. Alexeiev's persuasive powers were such that within two months of his arrival early in October a new and thoroughly pro-Russian cabinet was enstated, and the existing head of the Korean Customs Service, J. McLeavy Brown, an Englishman, was ordered dismissed. The office of "Resident" in charge

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5 Minutes cited in ibid., 164. The Board of Governors was formed on December 27, 1896, and its first meeting was held on January 21 of the following year.

6 Ibid.

7 Ibid., 165.

8 Brown refused to accept his dismissal on the ground that his term of office had not yet expired, and the matter re-
of finance was conferred upon Alexeiev on November 5, at which time Korea agreed that it would apply only to Russia for financial assistance in the future. 9

Further signalizing this departure from the previous policy of non-interference in Korea was the appointment, also in September, 1897, of Alexis de Speyer to succeed the mild-mannered and generally well-liked Waeber as Russian Minister in Korea. From the time of his arrival in Seoul, Speyer let it be known that he had been sent to impart a new vigor to Russia's Korean policy. His conduct of Russian affairs, quite devoid of the conciliatory policy of his predecessor, was to lose for Russia many of the advantages which had already been secured. Of this we shall have more to say later.

In the closing months of 1897 the international status of Korea underwent a profound and rather significant change. On October 12, the King of Korea ascended the "Altar of Heaven" and there assumed the title of Emperor. 10 Two days later Korea remained unsettled until the Russian advisers were withdrawn in 1898. Cf. Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, 234-240.

9 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 178.

10 This move was urged upon the King by the so-called "Independence Club" organized in June of 1896 by a Korean, at that time an American citizen, Dr. Phillip Jaisohn. This organization published a newspaper, The Independent, the first issue of which was printed on April 7, 1896. A memorial of the Independence Club, urging that the King take the step of becoming Emperor, appears in The Korean Repository, Volume IV, 1897, Seoul, 387-388. The Imperial Edict upon the assumption of the title Emperor is quoted in ibid., 388-390.
dropped her official name of Chao-hsien or Chosen, which had obtained since 1392, and became the Empire of Dai Han. As early as 1895 such a step had been contemplated and at that time had been sponsored by the Japanese, who were then in control of the peninsula. Russia, which on the earlier occasion had strenuously opposed the move, now lent every measure of support, presumably to further the illusion of Korean independence, and at the same time to strengthen her position as Korea's "protector" at the expense of Japanese pretensions which were momentarily in abeyance. Within a relatively short period Korea was recognized by the treaty powers as an Empire, and assumed a position of equality in the Far East with China and Japan.

However, this assertion of Korea's independence of foreign suzerainty did not seriously deter Russia's designs. The success which had attended Alexeiev's initial efforts caused Witte to reconsider the long-delayed creation of a Russo-Korean Bank. The advantages of such an institution were outlined to Witte by his Assistant Minister of Finance, P. M. Romanov:

It is my conviction that Korea has paramount importance for us; Northern Manchuria is of importance only insofar as it affords us access either to Liaotung or to Korea. However, at this time the Chinese would hardly allow us to reach by railway one of the ports of the Liaotung Peninsula, since they understand that this would place Peking completely at our mercy; on the other hand, they would not oppose very strenuously the leading of a

railway from Bodun through Kirin to one or other of the Korean ports, inasmuch as this would protect them from any seizure of Korea by the Japanese. In order that we may obtain such permission from Korea it first becomes necessary to secure influence in her financial affairs, in which connection we need not avoid financial sacrifices, since our investment will be returned a hundredfold in the not too distant future....

It would seem that Romanov's argument was sufficiently persuasive, for on October 28, Witte at last approved the foundation of the Russo-Korean Bank. That such an institution is not to be considered an innocent humanitarian undertaking on the part of the Russian government, but rather as another pliable instrument fashioned by Witte in his program of Far Eastern expansion, is clear from the above-quoted words of Romanov. Interestingly enough, the board of directors of the newly created bank was virtually identical with that of the Russo-Chinese Bank established in December of 1895.

It is fitting that we here introduce into these pages the name of one Mikhail Muraviev who, in the post of Minister of Foreign Affairs, was shortly to become the most outspoken opponent of the then omnipotent Minister of Finance, Witte. Prince Lobanov had passed away in August of 1896. The following January, Muraviev, by virtue of his personal acquaintance with the Tsar, and particularly with the Empress Dowager, was recalled.

12 Letter, March 20, 1897, quoted by Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 157-158.
13 Supra, 96-97.
from his relatively obscure post as Russian Minister in Copenhagen to become Acting Minister of Foreign Affairs; in April of the same year Muraviev was appointed Foreign Minister. The son of Nicholas Muraviev-Amurski, whose name has already been mentioned in connection with the Russian acquisition of the Amur territory and Vladivostok in 1860, Mikhail Muraviev was, as will be seen, a considerably more forceful personality than his predecessor, Lobanov. Described by his contemporaries as a "fast liver" and an "ignoramus," Muraviev was, nevertheless, reluctant to be merely a tool in the hands of Witte, for whose policies he had little sympathy. Consequently, when, after Germany's well-timed seizure of Kiaochow in November of 1897, the choice of a suitable Russian policy again presented itself, the discussion found Witte and Muraviev on opposite sides of the fence.

Before proceeding to a consideration of the Kiaochow and Port Arthur "incidents" however, passing notice should be paid to the situation which gave rise to the first expression of personal antagonism between the two men. In the spring of 1897, Witte had decided to parallel his revised Korean policy with an attempt to exact still further railway concessions from China. Accordingly, in May of that year he dispatched to Peking the ubi-

14 The tone of most of the contemporary estimates was in general quite critical. Cf. Rosen, Forty Years of Diplomacy, I, 102; Hayashi, Secret Memoirs, 105-106; Alexander Isvolsky, Recollections of a Foreign Minister, New York, 1921, 119.
quitous Prince Esper Ukhtomsky. Ostensibly the purpose of Ukhtomsky's visit was to distribute certain "gifts" to the Chinese officialdom—notably the first installment of the bribe to Li Hung-Chang. Underlying this, however, Ukhtomsky was instructed by Witte to inquire into the possibility of acquiring rights for an extension of the Chinese Eastern to a port in Korea, as well as for a branch line running south to the Yellow Sea.

Actually, Ukhtomsky's mission bore little fruit. Li refused categorically to consider any further concessions and pointedly characterized Russia's constant encroachments at China's expense with the words: "We have let you in the yard, and now you want to enter with us into the very room where we keep our wives and children." The only point to which he would agree was that no concession for joining the Russian and Chinese lines would be granted to any other power. When, in mid-August, Muraviev finally learned from his personal agents in Peking the real purpose of Ukhtomsky's visit, he launched into a violent

15 Ukhtomsky's mission had originated in the February 3 meeting of the Chinese Eastern Railway Board of Directors, and is described in detail by Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 162-172.

16 These secret instructions were cleared through Tsar Nicholas, but were concealed from Muraviev, ibid., 168-169.

17 Telegram, Pokotilov to Witte, May 27, 1897, quoted in ibid., 171.

18 Ibid., 172-173.
tirade against Witte, criticizing the latter's move as one calculated to provoke China and push her into the waiting arms of Great Britain. Witte's judgment in employing a known expansionist to negotiate behind the back of Russia's legitimate diplomatic representatives, as well as his constant and repeated interference in the conduct of Russian foreign policy, were seriously questioned by Muraviev, who was soon to take revenge for these invasions of his diplomatic domain. 19

The failure of Ukhtomsky's mission to secure from China rights to construct a railway to the Yellow Sea paved the way for Muraviev's action in the occupation and lease of Port Arthur, a move inspired by the German occupation of Kiaochow in November, 1897. With this, Russia was once again confronted with a choice of alternative policies: whether to oppose the German occupation of Kiaochow or to acquiesce and seek compensation for herself elsewhere. The ensuing debate presents a striking parallel to the controversy occasioned by Japan's defeat of China some two and a half years earlier. In both instances, Shimonoseki and Kiaochow--Witte championed a policy which insisted that China remain unpartitioned; in both cases the Finance Minister was opposed by a Foreign Minister who advocated concession and compensation. The difference between the two policy debates was, as

19 Letter, Muraviev to Witte, August 18, 1897, cited in ibid., p. 172.
shall be seen, in their outcome: in the case of Shimonoseki, Witte's will had triumphed over that of Lobanov; in the question of Kiao-chow, Muraviev was to emerge the victor.

The seizures of Kiao-chow by Germany and Port Arthur by Russia present themselves as an interrelated episode, the full details and consequences of which it is impossible, and indeed quite needless to enter into here, except to establish the relation between Russia's decision to occupy Port Arthur and the eventual abandonment of Witte's policy of "peaceful penetration." It is clear that the motives underlying the German action may be traced back to her participation in the three-power intervention of 1895. We have already cited the Kaiser's letter to his cousin the Tsar, in which he first broached the question of a Far Eastern port for Germany, suggesting that, "...you will kindly see to it that Germany may also be able to acquire a Port somewhere where it does not 'gene' you."20 Indeed, this would seem to have been one of the major considerations in view of which the Kaiser agreed to take part in the intervention. In the ensuing years Germany's search for a place in the Asiatic sun had narrowed down to Kiao-chow, a Chinese port situated at the threshold of the rich Shantung province. Discounting a prior Russian claim to Kiao-chow, the Kaiser bided his time until a convenient opportunity to accom-

20 Supra, 79.
plish the seizure might present itself. 21 The murder of two German Catholic missionaries in Shantung on November 1, 1897, provided William with the desired pretext; the German Far Eastern squadron was dispatched immediately upon receipt of the news, and by November 14 was anchored in Kiao-chow Bay. 22

Before this fortunate opportunity of obtaining Kiao-chow by means of warships rather than by resorting to the more tenuous processes of diplomacy presented itself, however, the Kaiser in a visit to St. Petersburg in August of 1897 had personally inquired of the Tsar whether Russia would object were Germany to occupy Kiao-chow. The popular interpretation of this so-called Peterhof conference is that "Willy" tricked "Nicky" into approving such a move, and that he in turn had given Russia the go-ahead to occupy Port Arthur. 23 In view of Russia's subsequent opposition and resistance to the move, it would seem that however ambiguous may have been the Tsar's answer to the Kaiser's inquiry, Russia did not write off Kiao-chow to Germany until faced with the fiat

21 This alleged Russian claim to Kiao-chow took the form of a priority on the port in the event that it were to be alienated to another power. It was, however, but an expansion of a temporary concession granted by China for the use of Kiao-chow as a winter anchorage for the Russian fleet in the years 1895-1896 and was probably based on the spurious "Cassini Convention" of 1895. Cf. Langer, _Diplomacy of Imperialism_, 450-452.

22 Ibid., 449-454.

23 This is the version of Witte in his _Memoirs_, 98-101. Substantially the same version is presented by Witte's friend and apologist, Mr. E. J. Dillon, _The Eclipse of Russia_, New York, 1918, 245 ff.
accompli of a German war fleet in possession of Kiao-chow Bay. Upon hearing of Germany's intentions, Muraviev, who had not previously been consulted by Nicholas, was irate and protested vehemently to the German Foreign Office. However, his intention forcibly to resist such a German move was undermined by the arrival, on November 16, of news of the German seizure two days earlier. Accordingly, plans to dispatch a Russian fleet to the trouble zone were abandoned in favor of the alternate solution--compensation. Then and only then did Russia turn northward to Port Arthur.

Within a week of the announcement of the German seizure of Kiao-chow, Muraviev had submitted to the Tsar a rather lengthy memorandum in which he called for a complete and radical volte face in the course of Russian policy. He suggested that, by way of compensating herself, Russia might occupy either Port Arthur or Talienswan, both ports in the Liaotung Peninsula, as a point of leverage toward Korea and a gateway to Manchuria. Employing Germany's actions as a pretext, Muraviev reasoned, it would be easy to justify the occupation to China on the ground that a strong base for the Russian fleet was a virtual necessity should

24 The notes of Muraviev, dated November 8 and 9, were described as diplomatic "bombshells," and for about ten days to two weeks thereafter it seemed as though war was imminent. Cf. Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 452-453.

25 Ibid., 457.
events take a course harmful to China. On November 26, the
Tsar summoned his ministers to discuss the Muraviev memorandum
and himself presided at the deliberations. Present on this occa-
sion were Muraviev, Witte, War Minister Vannovsky, and Naval
Minister Tyrtov. Muraviev repeated his argument to the assembled
ministers and added that circumstances now favored such action.
In favor of Muraviev's proposal were three members of the confer-
ence--himself, Tsar Nicholas, and Vannovsky; opposed was a minor-
ity of two--Witte and Tyrtov.

The most outspoken opponent of the move was, of course, Witte. He reminded the ministers that any occupation of a Chinese
port would constitute a violation of the spirit of the Moscow
Protocol of 1896. By the terms of this treaty, in the event that
Japan infringed upon the territorial integrity of either China or
Korea, Russia was obliged to come to China's aid. The occupation
of either Talienwan or Port Arthur, argued Witte, would place
Russia in the anomalous position of doing the very thing she had
committed herself to prevent others from doing. Besides setting
an extremely dangerous precedent, such a move would be unfeasible
from the standpoint of national self-interest because it might
endanger the construction of the Manchurian railway. Implicit in

26 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 186-188. Cf. also
Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 457-458.

27 Witte, Memoirs, 99-100.
Witte's thinking was the fact that he himself had moves under way, which, if successful, stood to gain infinitely more for Russia than the rash grabbing-off of Port Arthur. Consequently, argued Witte, Russia should not emulate Germany, but rather should do everything in her power to force Germany to withdraw from Kiaochow. Admiral Tyrtov also opposed the move, but from considerations different from those suggested by Witte. Speaking from the naval point of view, he declared both Port Arthur and Talienwan to be inadequate as compared with certain of the Korean ports. Therefore, according to Tyrtov, the best thing would be to get along with Vladivostok for the time being in the hope of ultimately acquiring a port in Korea.28

Muraviev replied to these objections with the rather pointless argument that Russia was obligated to China only in the event of an attack by Japan. Witte countered with the prophetic assertion that any such action on the part of Russia would almost inevitably lead to war with Japan. His argument evidently carried some weight since the Tsar, though himself completely converted to Muraviev's viewpoint, temporarily shelved the plan to occupy Port Arthur.29

28 Curiously enough, the Tsar, in his conference with the Kaiser in August, had expressed a decided preference for the port of Ping-yang on the northwest coast of Korea. Russian naval authorities, on the other hand, seem to have preferred Massampo. Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 456, citing Die Große Politik, XIV, no. 3663.

29 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 188-189; Witte,
Here the personal equation comes increasingly into evidence as a determining factor in the formation of Russia's Far Eastern policy. The clash of personalities between Witte and Muraviev had, as has already been suggested, developed into a personal struggle for advantage which, though it stemmed from legitimate differences of opinion, stemmed also from Muraviev's resolve to conduct his own foreign policy, exclusive of Witte's interference. For his own part, Witte, after almost six years as virtual dictator of Russian Far Eastern policy, could not succeed in reconciling himself to this radical idea of Muraviev. Even after the November 26 conference of ministers it appeared that Witte's will had triumphed again. However, this victory over Muraviev and compensation was extremely short-lived. The outcome is best described in Witte's own words, in which he recalls an interview with the Tsar "several days" after the November 26 conference:

"... 'You know, Sergey Yulievitch,' said the Emperor to me, evidently somewhat put out, 'I have decided to occupy Port Arthur and Ta-lieng-wan. Our ships with troops are already on their way there. Here is why I have taken this step. After the conference the Foreign Minister reported to me that, according to his information, British warships were cruising off the ports in question, and that if we did not occupy them, the English would do so.'" 30

Muraviev had apparently concocted this story by way of scaring the

30 Memoirs, 100.
Tsar into action.31 Thus, he had taken his revenge upon Witte for the latter's invasion of the diplomatic domain in sending Ukhtomsky to China the previous summer. However, in so doing Muraviev set in motion a course of events which was to have serious and far-reaching consequences for Russia.

In this situation, Witte made one last futile attempt to forestall the occupation of Port Arthur. In his Memoirs, Witte relates that directly from his interview with the Tsar, he approached Tschirsky, the German Charge at St. Petersburg, and asked him to wire William II "to withdraw from Kiaochow, after having punished those guilty of the assassination of the missionaries."32 To this personal plea the Kaiser replied, in effect, as follows: "I see from Witte's words that some very important details relating to the matter are unknown to him. Therefore we cannot follow his advice."33 Just what Witte hoped to accomplish in so going over the head of the Tsar remains open to question. In any event, his rash act was, thanks to Muraviev's ever-alert intelligence agents, shortly made known to Nicholas and thenceforward there is discernable a marked coolness in the theretofore

31 Witte adds that, "Muraviev's information was... false, as I later found out from the British Ambassador." Ibid.

32 Ibid., 101.

33 Ibid. The "important details" referred to by William evidently had to do with certain secret aspects of the Peterhof conference, or at least with the Kaiser's interpretation of Nicholas' reaction.
cordial relations between the Tsar and his Finance Minister.
There can be little doubt that this overstepping of his authority was in large measure responsible for Witte's subsequent fall from grace, as the Tsar sought increasingly to assert himself in foreign affairs and to throw off Witte's influence.

Precisely what Russia stood to gain in the Far East had she adhered to Witte's long-range program instead of embarking upon Muraviev's precipitate adventure presents an interesting problem to the historian. It will be recalled that throughout the summer of 1897 Witte had been engaged in seeking for Russia an ice-free port on the Yellow Sea. It was this very assignment which Ukhtomsky had bungled and which had occasioned the first antagonism between Witte and Muraviev. Witte's hopes for success were revived somewhat when, in June, Li Hung-Chang approached him for a loan to China. If he could condition the loan upon his previous demands, Witte stood to gain "the most substantial advantages for Russia." The chances of realizing these advantages increased with Germany's seizure of Kiaochow, for then Witte could command a dear price indeed for the loan and a promise of Russian aid against German encroachment. Again in December of 1897, Li repeated his request; this time Witte enumerated his conditions: (1) a railroad and industrial monopoly through-

34 Telegram, Witte to Ukhtomsky, June 13, 1897, cited by Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 192.
out all Manchuria and Mongolia; (2) the issue of a concession to the Chinese Eastern for a branch line south to the China Sea; and (3) permission for Russia to construct there a port with the right of access to all ships flying the Russian flag. Whether or not Li could have accepted these conditions it is needless to speculate. However, in view of the possibility of obtaining these demands it is not in the least surprising that Witte should so strenuously have opposed the occupation of Port Arthur.

On December 23, Russia began the process of self-compensation by dispatching a telegram to Peking disavowing all intentions of territorial acquisition, and assuring the Chinese government that Russia would withdraw from Port Arthur and Talienwan "as soon as political conditions and the interests of Russia and China permit doing so." With this the stage for the seizure was set: a few days later a Russian squadron entered the harbor of Port Arthur and ran up the Russian flag. News of the Russian seizure was joyously received at Berlin where the move was rightly interpreted as constituting acquiescence to Germany's seizure of Kiao-chow. Britain, France, and Japan took a somewhat dimmer view of the situation, each realizing that the previously existing balance of power in the Far East had been broken. According-


36 Quoted in ibid., 196.
ly, Britain, discarding her more-or-less traditional policy of upholding China's territorial integrity, got into the act by seizing Wei-hai-wei; France, likewise, seized Kwang-chow-wan. Thus, instead of preserving China from outward aggression, the action of Germany and Russia proved to be the first step towards the foreign invasion of Chinese territory. At one moment the Manchu world seemed to awaken to the danger. This was, however, but a flash of lightning on an already darkened horizon.

All of these cases of seizure and occupation later took the legal form of "lease of territory," a concept very similar to that embodied in the Russian lease of Manchurian territory for the Siberian railway. Chinese sovereignty was nominally maintained and respected, but the local administration was given over entirely into the hands of the occupying foreign powers. The convention arranging for the "lease" of Port Arthur to Russia for twenty-five years was signed in Peking on March 27, 1898, and an additional agreement, defining the boundaries of the leased territory, on May 7, 1898. By this understanding the technical sover-

37 Important background material on the British and French seizures is provided by Langer, Diplomacy of Imperialism, 473-476.

38 Supra, 100-102.

39 For the text of this convention see Treaties and Agreements with and concerning China, I, 119-121.
eighty of China was explicitly recognized, as well as the allegiance of Chinese subjects, but Russia acquired all governmental rights, being allowed to establish her own courts and otherwise given a free hand in matters involving law and administration.

Although Port Arthur marks the first major defeat sustained by Witte in the realm of Far Eastern diplomacy and the beginning of the end for his policy of "peaceful penetration," it by no means terminated his usefulness to the cause of Tsarist expansion. Both Nicholas and Muravev recognized Witte's value when confronted with the problem of overcoming China's resistance to the "leasing" of Port Arthur. Accordingly, Witte's talents were enlisted to negotiate for the desired "lease."40 The outcome of Witte's negotiations was the treaty described in the preceding paragraph. The means by which the task was accomplished, however, recall Witte's dealings with Li in May and June of 1896. Again he had recourse to bribery, a tactic which this time he candidly admits, arguing that it was the only way in which bloodshed could be averted.41 In this way Witte contributed to the consolidation of gains won in consequence of a policy which he

40 It would seem that, in agreeing to undertake the task, Witte was compromising his principles. This charge is somewhat mitigated by the fact that Muravev had decided to push Witte's loan conditions upon China. Cf. Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 198-199.

41 Memoirs, 103-104. Details of the bribe are to be found in Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 198-199.
had opposed, a task which must have salved his pride somewhat even though it did not necessarily restore him to his former confidence in the councils of the Tsar. In any event, this would suggest that Witte was not so much opposed to Russia's occupation of Port Arthur as to the method of seizure sponsored by Nicholas and Muraviev.

To return to Korea, it will be recalled that, on the eve of Kiaochow and Port Arthur, Witte, after long and serious consideration, had consented to a more forward policy, which was to take the form of a Russo-Korean Bank. Alexeiev had been sent to Korea as financial adviser to the royal court, and a new Russian Minister in Seoul had been appointed in the person of Alexis de Speyer. Thus, after momentary setbacks in the early months of 1897, Russian influence was once again definitely in the ascendancy. However, in Korea, as at Port Arthur, Witte's position was shortly to be compromised and rendered untenable by a combination of considerations, not the least of which was the belligerent attitude assumed by the new Minister, M. de Speyer.

Perhaps the most notable instance in which de Speyer exceeded his authority was the so-called "Deer Island episode."42 In August of 1897, Speyer's predecessor, Waeber, had marked off

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some twenty acres of the small island in Fusan harbor as a possible location for a Russian coaling station, notwithstanding the fact that the same tract had some two years earlier been demarked by Mr. Mc Leavy Brown as a site for a general foreign colony. In February and March of 1898 Speyer decided, apparently on his own authority, to press the Russian claim. This he presented to the Korean government in the form of an ultimatum threatening that, if the Russian demands were not met within a specified time, Russia would withdraw its military and financial advisers.\footnote{The text of Speyer's ultimatum is quoted by Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders, 238, citing Korean Repository, V, 113.} In the long run Speyer's bullying tactics, as ill-tempered as they were ill-advised, accomplished nothing save to focus Korean resentment against Russia's peremptory methods and to arouse general suspicion as to her objects. Backed by the Japanese Minister, Mr. Kato the Korean King took full advantage of this opportunity to rid himself of overbearing Russian influence. Thanking Russia for her past aid, he explained: "Your officials have accomplished their work and it is convenient for us to have them relieved from our service. I feel grateful to you for suggesting the idea of relieving these officials."\footnote{Quoted ibid., 239.} Thus, as Nelson observes, de Spey-
er was made "a victim of his own designs." In this situation Russia could do nothing but back ignominiously out of Korea. Speyer was recalled, the Russo-Korean Bank closed its doors which had been open for only three months, the Russian military experts were sent to Port Arthur and the financial advisers were reassigned to the legation at Tokyo.

More or less contemporaneously with these untoward developments Russia and Japan were negotiating intermittently among themselves to clarify their respective positions with reference to Korea. Actually, these efforts had antedated the Russian debacle by several months, having originated in a protest against Alexeiev's activities in Seoul. In February, 1898, Japan proposed a joint Russo-Japanese interference in Korea, Russia to supply Korea with military instructors, Japan to replace Alexeiev with a financial adviser of its own choice. This proposal Witte dismissed as detrimental to Russia's prestige in Asia. Japan, however, persisted and, after Russia's withdrawal from Seoul in April, was emboldened to request that Russia write off Korea entirely, in return for a like Japanese promise to stay out.

45 Ibid.
46 Ibid., 239-240.
47 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 179.
of Manchuria. This proposal Russia likewise turned down, although from it was to evolve the well-known Nissi-Rosen Protocol.

This agreement, concluded on April 25, 1898, carried many of the same provisions as the ineffectual Lobanov-Yamagata Protocol of 1896. This time, however, it was Japan which held the upper hand. According to the terms of the agreement, both parties pledged themselves to recognize the full sovereignty and independence of Korea, and "to abstain from all direct interference in the internal affairs of that country," except by common agreement and mutual consent. Russia was forced to recognize the "wide development taken by the commercial and industrial enterprise of Japan in Korea," and agreed "in no way to obstruct the commercial and industrial relations between Japan and Korea."

Here the personal antagonism between Witte and Muraviev comes once again into focus. With his plans for the "leasing" of Port Arthur well on their way to realization, Muraviev began to perceive the need for conciliating Japan. His hopes for effecting such a conciliation he placed in Korea, reasoning apparently

48 Rosen, Forty Years of Diplomacy, 179.
49 Text of the Nissi-Rosen Agreement in Korea: Treaties and Agreements, 24-25.
50 Ibid.
that once Russia had obtained Port Arthur she would have no further need of Korea. In other words, Korea was expendable and should be written off as a concession to Japan.\textsuperscript{52} Muraviev's expediency once again triumphed over Witte's objections when Russia pulled up stakes in Korea in April. Thenceforth, Russia, concentrating on consolidating her newly won gains in Manchuria, would be forced to relinquish, for the time being, dominance in Korea to Japan.\textsuperscript{53}

However, Russian interest in Korea, though checked momentarily by the counterpressure of Japan and the disinclination of Muraviev to jeopardize relations with Japan and Great Britain, was far from being extinguished. The idea of obtaining a port in Korea had become so fixed in the official Russian mind that even Muraviev's steadfast opposition could not quite dispel the hope that in the not too distant future Russia might have such a port to herself. In 1899 the Russian Ministry of Marine, arguing the inadequacies of Port Arthur as a base for the Pacific fleet, turned its hungry eyes toward the south Korean port of Massampo, an excellent harbor which also provided a complete strat-

\textsuperscript{52} Letter of Muraviev to Witte, December 11, 1897, cited by Romanov, \textit{Rossiya v Manchzhurii}, 179.

\textsuperscript{53} At the same time, however, Russia tried to keep a hand in Korean internal affairs through its new representative in Seoul, M. Pavlov. Cf. Hulbert, \textit{The Passing of Korea}, 169.
This demand for Massampo culminated, in March of 1900, in an agreement whereby Russia received the right to build at Massampo a coaling station and naval hospital in return for a promise not to seek further concessions.55

This concession at Massampo served merely to whet the Russian appetite. Throughout the early years of the twentieth century, indeed up to the very outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, Russia continued, in direct violation of the above-mentioned agreement to press for further advantages and concessions in the peninsula. In April, 1901, Russia secured from the Korean Emperor a non-alienation guarantee whereby the latter promised not to grant any mining concessions to foreigners and to lease his own personal mines only to Russians if foreigners were to operate them. At the same time it was agreed that Russia would be called upon to furnish any foreign capital borrowed for the construction of the projected Seoul-Wiju railway.56

Further indication of a more aggressive Russian policy was provided on April 13, 1903, when Russia notified Korea of her intention to exercise the option of cutting lumber in the Yalu

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54 Brown, Mastery of the Far East, 142-143.
55 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 337.
56 Brown, Mastery of the Far East, 144.
Valley, as provided in the Russo-Korean Agreement of April, 1896. Since the agreement had stipulated that the Russian interpretation was to prevail in all disputes relating to the concession, Korean and Japanese protests were of no avail. Furthermore, Russia interpreted the word "valley" in its broadest sense, which is to say, as embracing the territory drained not only by the Yalu River itself, but all its tributaries as well. The whole enterprise assumed an unmistakably military-strategic aspect when Russia proceeded to construct forts to protect the territory, sent "frontier guards" to patrol it, and selected the port of Yongampo, near the mouth of the Yalu, as a shipping port for the timber that was cut. At Yongampo the Russians erected several large "warehouses" which later turned out not to be warehouses at all but barracks and stables. These Russian "lumbering" activities in the Yalu basin did much to intensify the already existing strain between Russia and Japan, and must be counted among the major causes of the Russo-Japanese War.

By the time the anti-foreign Boxer disturbances had broken out in China in 1900, it had become perfectly clear to many well-informed observers that Russian Far Eastern policy was no longer as univocal as had previously been supposed. In June of that year Muraviev had died, and was succeeded as head of the Rus-

57 Ibid., 142. The original five-year option had been extended to twenty years on January 1, 1901.
sian Foreign Office by the more conservative and circumspect Lamsdorff, who was later to become Witte's staunchest supporter in his final hour. Witte's chief opponent at this time was the new Minister of War, General Kuropatkin. As Witte's long regime neared its close, the position of predominant influence in the Tsar's confidences and de facto control over foreign policy was assumed by a group of militarists, courtiers, and adventurers headed by a retired army officer and state councillor, Ivan Bezo-brazov. Known also as the "Koreans," this is the group which championed the Yalu timber concessions as a blind for a more forward policy in Korea, and whose activities were responsible, in large measure, for Witte's final downfall.

Bezobrazov and his followers saw in the Yalu timber concessions a convenient jumping-off point for a future invasion of Korea. As their plans unfolded, a bogus private company would be created for the ostensible purpose of operating the timber concessions. Actually, the "lumberjacks" would be soldiers in disguise who, at the propitious moment, would strike out and invade the peninsula.58 This crack-brained scheme was favorably regarded in high governmental circles and apparently had received the approval of the Tsar himself. The only stumbling-block in the path of the desired company was Witte, who successfully countered

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58 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 386-388; cf. also Witte, Memoirs, 116-117.
all the initial moves to realize its creation. At last, however, Witte's opposition was broken through and, on July 1, 1901, the East Asiatic Development Company was established. From this time on Russia slowly but surely courted disaster in the Far East.

The final seal was set upon Witte's defeat when, in August, 1902, he was relieved of his ministry and elevated to the innocuous and purely ornamental position of President of the Committee of Ministers. At approximately the same time as his political powers was rendered nugatory, his control of economic development in Manchuria was also broken through. In the now-impending crisis a one-dimensional military policy would lead Russia to throw all caution to the winds. Thenceforward, as Langer remarks, "Russian policy was being made by the soldiers who had won over the Tsar and who were, before long to March him straight into the disastrous conflict with Japan."

59 Romanov, Rossiya v Manchzhurii, 396-398.
60 Diplomacy of Imperialism, 795.
CHAPTER VII

CONCLUSION

Imperialism, as a concept of expansion, has carried various connotations in different periods of history. All historians agree, however, in seeing it as one of the dominant features of the period between the Congress of Berlin and the outbreak of World War I. Though nineteenth century imperialism was a protean institution which assumed many different shapes and forms, it can be in no way divorced from the political economy ushered in by the industrial revolution of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. The extension of territory overseas, extension of capital investments abroad, ever-increasing competition for overseas markets and control of supplies,—all these factors combined to impart a distinctive character to this "new imperialism."

Russian "imperialism" under both the Tsarist and Communist regime has frequently been denounced. Rarely has it been praised; even more rarely has it been defined. To be sure, Russian imperialism would seem more difficult of definition than of condemnation. One reason for this difficulty lies in the fact that from the time, beginning in the 1450's of the final unifica-
tion of the principalities of Greater Russia around a single cornerstone of power,--Moscow--the Moscovite state itself was constantly expanding.1 Russian history has been the epic of building a vast empire by penetrating thinly settled regions and either destroying or assimilating the sparse native populations. The road of American empire-building moved westward--over prairies, rivers, mountains, until it finally reached the Pacific. The Russian frontier moved gradually eastward until it too reached the Pacific and at one time overflowed onto the American continent.2 "Russian history," writes the Russian historian George Vernadsky, "is the history of the expansion over a vast continent of a vigorous people imbued with the pioneer spirit."3 At what point, the student is prompted to inquire, can "expansion" be said to end and "imperialism" to begin?

A further difficulty of definition derives from the fact that Russian "imperialism" was, at one and the same time, similar to and different from imperialism as conceived and practiced by the nations of Western Europe and the United States. Russia was similar, for example, in her efforts to extend her

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2 In addition to Alaska which was sold to the United States in 1867, the Russians also maintained Fort Ross approximately 60 miles north of San Francisco until the early 1840's.

3 A Political and Diplomatic History of Russia, Boston, 1936, 4.
away in the Far East, where before 1890 she had made no substantial progress since her acquisition of the Amur region with Vladivostok in 1860. She was different in that the Russian Empire, like its Chinese neighbor, was territorially compact. Perhaps even more significant, however, is the fact that Tsarist Russia was both a colonial power and, as Lenin contemptuously styled her, a semi-colonial adjunct of Western European finance-capitalism.4

These perfunctory and admittedly very general observations as to the nature of Russian imperialism may seem beside the point, in view of the stated purpose of this thesis "to trace the historical backgrounds of Russian interest in Korea, to discover the considerations which motivated this particular interest, and to outline Russian attempts to a foothold in the Korean peninsula."5 However, it is evident that such a study affords a unique vantage-point from which to view Russian expansion in the Far East. Without going into excess detail, it is possible to state here that from such a study of the period 1860-1904, several facts emerge quite clearly. First and foremost among these is Russia's desire for an ice-free port on the Pacific, this having been one of the major considerations in view of which the vast Trans-Siberian Railway project was undertaken. Another fact of

5 Supra, 2.
major importance is Russia's constant encroachment on Chinese sovereignty, always carried out under the guise of preserving China's territorial integrity. From the impotent Manchus, Russia obtained not only the right to construct railways across Manchuria but also full extraterritorial rights to police the land which the lines traversed. Still another and no less decisive factor in the evolution of the "Korean question" is the growing recognition on the part of Japan that if Korea were to fall into Russian hands it would become a dagger pointed at her very heart. Hence Japan's determination either to have Korea for herself or to maintain there a fully independent "buffer" against Russian aggression.

It yet remains to inquire into some of the reasons for the breakdown of Russian expansion in the Far East, particularly the breakdown of Witte's policy of "peaceful penetration" which had netted the Tsars some of their most substantial gains in Asia. It has already been noted that there was, among St. Petersburg foreign circles, no little opposition to Witte's program. Much of this opposition focused on the degree of intensity with which Russia was to pursue her imperialist aims in the East. While virtually all Russian statesmen of the period accepted Russia's "manifest destiny" in Asia as a matter of course, there was no general agreement as to the best means of bringing about Rus-
Witte's policy, as has already been remarked, favored a gradual economic penetration by means of the bank and the railway, rather than direct military action. A comprehensive statement of his attitude and method is afforded by a remark he once made to a Dutch journalist: "My motto," said Witte, "is trade and industry always in the front; the army always in the rear."7 The military and naval men, on the other hand, and to some extent the Foreign Office as well, had adopted the diametrically opposed position of taking whatever could be taken whenever a convenient opportunity presented itself. This group favored not only strong military measures against China, but also direct military intervention in Korea. This extremist view was expressed by Minister of the Interior Plehve, when he said: "Bayonets, not diplomats, have made Russia; by bayonets, and not by diplomatic pens, must the Far Eastern problem be solved."8

One of the reasons for the failure of Tsarist imperialism as conceived by Witte was the fact that it involved a patient, long-range policy, and was dependent for its ultimate success upon a feeling of security for the future. This feeling of security was gradually being sapped and undermined by Japanese and other foreign action, and especially by the fact that, after 1900,

7 Quoted by Sumner, "Tsardom and Imperialism," 34.
8 Quoted by Dallin, Rise of Russia in Asia, 46.
the growth of revolutionary conditions within Russia were shaking
genral confidence in the government. A still further reason for
the breakdown lay in the fading away of the solid support which
had been forthcoming during the 1890's from most quarters of the
business world. Witte's railway project had naturally been backed
by the heavy industries, and his general financial policies had
been shaped with this consideration in mind. The general pros-
perity which marked the 90's was in part the result of, in part
the reason for, support of the government's Far Eastern adven-
tures. Consequently, after the 1900 slump and crisis, which hit
particularly the heavy industries and accentuated the rapidly in-
creasing political and social unrest, Far Eastern projects became
more and more open to attack.

A further reason for the breakdown of Witte's type of
imperialism is purely personal to Witte himself and to the Tsar--
yet another instance of the personal equation at work. Through-
out the period from 1892 to his eclipse and fall from grace in
1903, Witte had stood in glaring contrast, not only with his pre-
decessors, but also with the military leaders and the old-fash-
toned routine circles in the Russian Foreign Office. During his
tenure of office the Finance Ministry had become the superior of
the Foreign Office and a rival even of the War Office. The im-
mense concentration of power which Witte exercised for ten years
came in time to arouse the jealousy and resentment of Tsar Nicho-
las himself. The particular role played by Witte's Korean policy
in attenuating his already strained relations with the military and naval clique headed by Bezobrazov has already been related, and this has been set down as one of the main reasons for his fall from grace shortly before the outbreak of the disastrous war with Japan.

Subsequently, with all the rancor and criticism typical of the statesmen out of office and unable to return to his former station, Witte composed his Memoirs. To be sure, all memoirs, because of their highly subjective character, require cautious handling by the historian, not the least of these being Witte's. However, despite certain defects inherent in such writings, Witte's Memoirs enable us to see the more clearly the workings of certain aspects of Tsarist Far Eastern imperialism at its height.
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The volumes compassing the years 1876-1885 contain much of interest and value on early American policy in Korea. Later volumes, particularly those for 1894-1901, contain important documentary material on the Chinese situation, though comparatively little on the policies pursued by the European powers.

A scholarly work, prepared by one of America's foremost orientalists who was also for a time American Consul in Seoul.

B. RUSSIAN DOCUMENTS, GUIDES, HANDBOOKS


These three collections, translated from the documents now in the Red Archives in Moscow, are indispensable to any study of Tsarist Far Eastern policy. The documents, otherwise unavailable either in English or Russian, include minutes of secret policy meetings, diplomatic reports and correspondence, and secret agreements. The translator is "X".

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The official Russian history of the Trans-Siberian, this volume, though stressing by implication Russia's great "civilizing mission" in Asia, contains much valuable source material.

C. MEMOIRS, LETTERS, ETC.


As Japanese Ambassador to the Court of St. James in the years 1900-1905, Hayashi was instrumental in negotiating the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. His Memoirs perform the same function for Japanese policy as Witte's do for the Russian.

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The reminiscences of a level-headed if somewhat conservative Russian diplomat, these volumes contain interesting sketches and estimates of prominent Russian figures of the time, as well as a critical discussion of Far Eastern policy which is of real value.


One side of the famous "Willy-Nicky" correspondence; from these pages several facts emerge quite clearly--Willy's striving to divert Russia's attention to the East, his use of the "Yellow Peril" as a means to do so.


By far the best known source of the history of Russian Far Eastern policy in the period here considered, written by the architect of that policy. However, caution is necessary since the Memoirs are incomplete, often unreliable, and contain several glaring inconsistencies.
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A generally excellent survey of the Manchurian aspect of the Far Eastern question, though the author entertains the rather naive idea that Russia had no expansionist intentions in connection with the Trans-Siberian. Based almost exclusively on materials in the western European languages.


Written by a staunch Korean sympathizer, this work is somewhat colored by the time and situation in which it was written. Based almost exclusively on Korean sources, its treatment of the modern period (i.e. from the 'opening' of Korea to Western influence) is deficient. Valuable, nonetheless, for its treatment of earlier periods.


An excellent study, quite conventional in approach, but deficient, as Langer points out, in the use of Russian material. Marred also by several blunders--the practice of sometimes translating, sometimes failing to translate, old style dates to new, give rise to a rather confused chronology of events, thereby upsetting causal relationships.

A scholarly work, excellently documented. If its treatment of the Korean problem is not, perhaps, quite as unified as one might wish, it does, nevertheless, enable the student to see the subject in the broad perspective of international affairs. The bibliographies at the end of each chapter are particularly helpful.


A thoroughgoing and scholarly study of the alliance in its origin and intent as well as its later development. Based in part on previously unpublished Austrian archive material.


A standard textual survey-history of the Far East.


A more or less popular treatment of Korean history through the period of the Japanese protectorate. Particularly helpful on the growth of the western reform movement, anti-Japanese activity, and the assassination of the Korean queen. A source not to be overlooked.


A rather general survey, based on material available in the western languages.


Discusses Korean foreign relations rather sketchily in v. 2, in greater detail in v. 3. Vol. 2 covers the period 1861-1893; vol. 3 deals with the years 1894-1911. Valuable also for its excellent treatment of Russian financial and economic penetration in China.

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B. BOOKS


Important, for the purposes of this study, for its treatment of the causes and antecedents of the Russo-Japanese War. Though written from the Japanese viewpoint, and based chiefly on Japanese sources, this work is remarkably objective, well balanced.


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Interesting descriptions and observations of Korea in the period 1894-1897; generally sympathetic to Japanese influence and reforms in the peninsula.


An interesting and well-informed though somewhat colored treatment; pro-China in orientation.

A good biography of the most outstanding of Chinese statesmen, now somewhat out-dated.


Subtitled "The Story of Korea's Transformation and Japan's Rise to Supremacy in the Orient," this work is important for its emphasis on the strategic position occupied by Korea in the Far East.


An illuminating contemporary study, outspokenly British in its orientation.


A discussion of the problem as it appeared at the time, particularly good for its discussion of the southern aspects of Russian penetration in China.


First-hand observations of Korea during the 1880's and 90's made during a visit to the Far East, rendered more important because of the official position of the author. Shows to what extent British policy was dictated by her trading interests in the Far East and outlines the growth of Japanese influence in the peninsula.


A scholarly, up-to-date study of the means of Russian penetration in the Far East. The author uses considerable Russian language material.


A critical study of 19th century American policy with reference to China, Japan, and Korea, based entirely on western sources.

A personal friend of and apologist for Witte, Dillon sees Russia's "eclipse" as stemming from the overthrow of Witte's program of "peaceful penetration."


Prepared originally as a doctoral dissertation at Columbia University, this volume provides a sketchy historical and geographical setting, placing greater emphasis upon the economic aspects of the later period of the Japanese protectorate.


Based on Western and Japanese sources, this book first appeared in 1882. Though its approach is somewhat out-dated, it remains a reliable source, containing discussions on the social and economic aspects of Korean life as well as illustrations from Korean literature and folklore.


A discussion of Korean customs and history, placing emphasis on international rivalries in Korea up to the time of publication.


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APPROVAL SHEET

The thesis submitted by Edmund J. Zvetina has been read and approved by three members of the Department of History.

The final copies have been examined by the director of the thesis and the signature which appears below verifies the fact that any necessary changes have been incorporated, and that the thesis is now given final approval with reference to content, form, and mechanical accuracy.

The thesis is therefore accepted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts.

Date: Feb. 7, 1952
Signature of Adviser: [Signature]