

RUSSIA, THE FAR EAST,
AND THE SEA POWERS, 1847-1905

by

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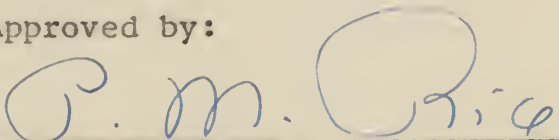
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CHAPTER I

A NEW INTEREST IN THE FAR EAST

Certain Matters of Introduction

Northern Asia was largely isolated from the interests of other states at the time Russians reached the Pacific Ocean in the seventeenth century, and was endowed with natural east-west transportation routes that made expansion of the Russian state equally natural. In the making of the great trans-continental states of the world Russia, above all others, was assisted by facts of geography. The Russian state is relatively flat, and the existing mountain ranges do not amount to barriers; nor have they ever. Since the days of Kiev and Novgorod, the rivers of Russia have provided a remarkable means of internal transportation; and when Russians reached the Pacific, they did so using the river routes of northern Asia.¹ North America, by contrast, has prodigious mountain ranges extending north and south to the detriment of travel, and the rivers of the continent cannot provide for trans-continental transportation.

1. Robert J. Kerner, The Urge to the Sea: The Course of Russian History (Berkeley and Los Angeles: The University of California Press, 1942), pp 1-6.

Most of the rivers of Russia flow either to the north or south; the Dnieper and Don south to the Black Sea, the Volga south to the Caspian Sea, and the Ob, Yensei, and Lena rivers north to the Arctic Ocean. The most important exception to this geographic fact is the Amur river, which flows north and east to the Pacific littoral. Although the Russian rivers, with the exception of the Amur, provide either limited, very limited, or no access to the open sea, they do provide for internal east-west transportation. In spite of their north-south flow, in the upper reaches of the rivers they, along with their many tributaries, fan out to the east and to the west. Thus, by the use of relatively short portages, and in some cases canals, a trans-continental transportation system was being developed in Russia as early as the seventeenth century.² The Volga, Ob, and Yenisei and their tributaries were the primary rivers used by travelers into Siberia, and thence, either to the Lena and its tributaries or to the Amur for the journey to the Pacific. This last passage, that from eastern Siberia on to the Pacific, was, and has remained, the critical juncture. The use of the Lena for passage to the Pacific was problematical. In the first place the Lena does not flow into the Pacific, although a tributary comes within one hundred miles of the coast. Greater problems, however, are to be found in the climatic conditions in this north-eastern portion of Asia. It is considerably north of the

2. See Kerner, The Urge to the Sea.

northern limit for growing food, and east of the Lena basin the terrain becomes relatively difficult. The route up the Yenisei and its tributaries to Lake Baikal and thence down the Amur was much more promising. The Russian state, however, lost access to the use of the Amur in 1689 in the Treaty of Nerchinsk with the Manchus.

The men who were primarily responsible for pushing the Russian frontiers to the east were the fur trappers. Long before the rise of Moscow, fur had been extremely important to the economies of Russian states; and it remained important for Moscow, especially as a source of revenue.³ And so, close on the heels of the fur trappers and merchants came the state officials selecting the finest pelts to provide revenue and probably selecting a few more for their personal benefit.⁴ Thus, the impetus for eastward expansion was the search for fur as the supply depleted further to the west, and in the wake of the fur men the state officials appeared to begin patching together the eastern portions of the Russian Empire. The latter did not lead the expansion, but rather served to place newly exploited areas under the political roof of the tsar.

But this process of expansion overextended itself in the middle portions of the seventeenth century. It had largely been an excursion into the unknown, both politically and

3. Clifford M. Foust, "Russian Expansion to the East Through the Eighteenth Century," Journal of Economic History, XVIII (December, 1961), 472-473.

4. Ibid., p. 482.

geographically. When, however, the fur people approached the Amur river valley, they approached the fatherland of the Manchu rulers of the Chinese Empire. The fur people were not great in number, and any massive support from the source of Russian power in Europe was out of the question. Therefore, in the face of determined Manchu resistance the forces for expansion were halted before they reached the Amur and, consequently, before they reached the best possible river outlet for northern Asia. The Amur valley is just below the northern limit for grain as the Lena basin is not, and the Amur flows directly to the Pacific littoral whereas the Lena flows into the frozen Arctic Ocean along with the other great rivers of northern Asia.

This misfortune of Russia was established in the Treaty of Nerchinsk of 1689, but it was not clear at the time where the Chinese-Russian border lay. In fact, there were two versions of the treaty: one in possession of the Manchus; and another version, translated into Russian, in possession of the Russian state.⁵ In the Manchu version the Russian state did not extend to the Pacific littoral; in the Russian version the border ran along mountain ranges somewhat north of the Amur. The Manchus were not, however, likely to enforce their version of the treaty as long as the Russians remained north of the Amur. The important aspect of the treaty is the loss

5. See V. S. Frank, "The Territorial Terms of the Sino-Russian Treaty of Nerchinsk," Pacific Historical Review, XVI (August, 1947), passim.

of access to the Amur and, thus, of the most practical river-portage system across Asia. Without the Amur any southern route would have to end at Lake Baikal far from the Pacific; and if this were not considered a matter of great importance in the seventeenth century, it was in the nineteenth when Russia was attempting to establish herself as a power in the far east.

In spite of loss of access to the Amur expansion continued, and the Russian state soon found itself in possession of a large portion of North America as well as the vast expanses of northern Asia. It was a curious empire, inhabited by nomadic native tribes and the equally nomadic fur people. The latter were very few in number; but so long as they remained far to the north of the great population centers of the world, their presence was not likely to be disputed. Until the nineteenth century, matters rested much as has been described in the eastern reaches of the Russian Empire. The region was connected with European Russia by means of the river systems, and it was successfully held under the political dominance of the tsars. It was not, however, developed in the sense of settlement or agricultural and industrial production.

In the meantime another mode of transportation expanded the interests of other European states, and they, too, approached the far east. Although the Portuguese came first in their ships, and Dutch vessels soon followed, in the period under consideration it was the British that became the great sea power. Indeed, throughout the bulk of the nineteenth

century the various nations of the world sailed their ships at the sufferance of the Royal Navy; and Russia was certainly no exception to this. As the far eastern trade developed, the interests of the sea powers (and the interest was largely British) expanded from southern Asia to the east coast of China and to Japan. In 1860 the British and French arrived at the gates of Peking in northeastern Asia and soon successfully concluded a war with the Middle Kingdom that had been precipitated by disputes over matters of trading rights. It is important to note that in the same year Russia obtained the left bank of the Amur, full navigation rights upon it, and the Primorsk area as well. This amounted to a meeting of sea routes and overland routes that had their origins in Europe and their ends in the far east. It should also be noted that sea power could not prevail upon the vast interior of Asia, so that Russia had exclusive control over the overland routes to the far east.

But to return to the situation in the eastern reaches of the Russian Empire, the relationship between the Russian east and European Russia changed with the appearance of strong contingents of sea power in the far east. Whereas the region had been relatively secure because of its obscurity, the presence of sea power made the Russian east, and particularly the Pacific littoral, appear to be a dangling appendage with next to no means of defence, a region that could be parted from the Empire by any nation with the means and the desire to do so.

The truth is that in a sense the world was becoming much smaller throughout the nineteenth century, and that fact made itself felt even in eastern Siberia. The great British geographer, Sir Halford Mackinder, considering this fact, said:

Whether we think of physical, economic, military, or political interconnection of things on the surface of the globe, we are now for the first time presented with a closed political system. The known does not fade any longer through the half-known into the unknown; there is no longer elasticity of political expansion in lands beyond the pale. Every shock, every disaster, every superfluity is now felt even to the antipodes and may indeed return from the antipodes.⁶

The development and refinement of various modes of transportation had prompted this astute observation. Among the most important of these were faster and larger merchant marines and navies, and great railroads. By the middle decades of the nineteenth century, British ships left few portions of the globe untouched; and by the same period, railroads had spanned the North American continent in spite of difficult terrain.

But Russian Asia, and especially the far east, had not changed drastically since the seventeenth century. It was yet wild and largely unsettled and still depended for transportation upon the river-portage system. The fact is that the eastern portions of the Russian Empire had failed of development when compared to North America or when reconciled with the potentials of northern Asia. There were many reasons for this failure, among them the relative financial, industrial,

6. Halford J. Mackinder, Democratic Ideals and Reality (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1942), p. 28.

and political backwardness of the Russian state, and certain other matters that had to be left to God, such as climatic and geographic disadvantages. The facts remained, God and man notwithstanding, and they found Russia somewhat lacking and at something of a disadvantage with respect to the possible application of sea power.

As remarkable as the river system in northern Asia was, it nevertheless did not amount to a modern, very efficient mode of bulk transportation in the middle of the nineteenth century. Further, although the domain of the tsar extended to the far east, that region was not an organic part of the Empire; and Russia was in no sense a power in the far east. Russian power was centered in Europe, and when her trans-continental river system was compared with modern sea transportation she was, in terms of time and effort, as far from the far east as was Great Britain. This became an even more important factor in 1869, when the Suez Canal was opened. It shortened the sea route to the Orient by thousands of miles.

But in the first half of the nineteenth century certain important Russian statesmen began to concern themselves with the problems of the east. Thus, in the last half of the nineteenth century, and down to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, vigorous steps were taken to make Russia a power in the far east and to develop the trans-continental proportions of the state.

The impact was dramatic. In the end the three great sea powers; Great Britain, Japan, and the United States, formed a coalition against Russia which led to the decisions of the

Treaty of Portsmouth of 1905 following the Russo-Japanese War. All through the period under consideration, the critical aspect of Russia's efforts to improve her position in the far east was her passage to the Pacific. The passage was critical for two basic reasons: first, simply because a favorable line of communication to the Pacific littoral was required; and second, because a favorable base for local power in the far east was necessary if Russian interests were to be respected in the Orient. An examination of the Russian push in the east and further examination of the impact of Russian expansion upon the various powers will demonstrate the fundamental relationship between the fact of Russian power on the Pacific and the nature of her passage to the Pacific. Such examination should also demonstrate the fundamental importance of the decisions reached upon the conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War. These decisions have had a long-term significance that has frequently been underestimated, both with respect to Russia's subsequent position in the far east and to the vicissitudes of international power politics in the Orient.

Muraviev, Nevelskoy, and the Far East

In 1847 Tsar Nicholas I appointed the young and vigorous Nicolai Muraviev Governor-General of Siberia and admonished him to make secure for the Russian state its far eastern territories. Muraviev was fortunate, although he did not always recognize the fact, to have the assistance of the great sailor and explorer Gennadi Nevelskoy. Together these men initiated a far eastern policy that, in its essentials,

continued to dominate the thinking of Russian statesmen throughout most of the period under consideration.

By the time Muraviev arrived in the far east he had formulated a policy that he thought would make Russia a power in the far east, make the Russian far east an organic part of the Russian Empire, and that would provide Russia with a practical passage to the Pacific. The policy consisted of the occupation of the left bank of the Amur river; clarification of the four-thousand-odd-mile Russo-Chinese frontier, with the added hope of making those portions of the Chinese Empire north of the Great Wall some type of Russian protectorate; and finally, the elimination of that great economic burden, Alaska, possibly by sale to the United States, which nation Muraviev thought of as a future ally against British sea power.⁷ These plans range from the most practical to the most grandiose but, in fact, the all important question for Muraviev became that concerning the left bank of the Amur, and it was upon the successful settlement of this that most of his energy was spent.

The Amur river is an exception in northern Asia, not only because it flows into the open sea under relatively favorable conditions, but also because it is the only river reaching far into the interior of northern Asia upon which navigation

7. Perry McDonough Collins, Siberian Journey Down the Amur to the Pacific, 1856-1857, ed. Charles Vivier (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1962), pp. 15-16.

from the sea can be of a practical nature. Thus, in the imperialistic age under consideration, the river could have had potential in one of two ways: by a sea power through penetration up the river from the open sea into the very heart of Asia; or by a land power in close proximity as an avenue of trade, as a possible means of economic penetration into the sparsely settled regions of the Chinese Empire north of the Great Wall and, in the case of Russia, as a means of transportation that would bind the precarious eastern Russian Empire into a recognizable whole and connect it with the land mass of Russia west of Lake Baikal. The former possible use was Muraviev's great fear, and it was the British that he feared most in this context.⁸ The latter possible use represented, as will be demonstrated, Muraviev's aspirations in the far east.

In a letter to Tsar Nicholas I in 1849 Muraviev clearly expressed his opinion on the importance of the Amur:

Basing my judgement on well authenticated investigation, I may state that whoever controls the mouth of the Amur, would in turn dominate all of Siberia, at the very least, that part of Siberia as far west as Lake Baikal... [and] the more it [Siberia] grew in wealth and population the more it would become subject to the influence of the power controlling the mouth of the Amur.⁹

8. Marin Mitchell, The Maritime History of Russia (London: Sedgwick and Jackson Limited, 1949), p. 165.

9. Memorandum, Muraviev to Nicholas I, undated, 1849, cited by John William Stanton, "The Foundations of Russian Foreign Policy in the Far East, 1847-1875" (Unpublished Ph. D. dissertation, Department of History, University of California, 1932), p. 155.

Thus, Muraviev was interested in the material potentials of the Amur region as well as the strategical. The best contemporary statement concerning the economic potentials of the region, however, are to be found in the writings of an American businessman from California. In 1856 and 1857 Perry Collins traveled from European Russia across Siberia and, finally, down the Amur to the Pacific. It is true that he had preconceived ideas on a manifest destiny for Russia to match those of his own country, and that he hoped primarily to see trade develop between the Russian far east and the west coast of the United States. Yet there can be no doubt that the dynamic Muraviev made a great impression on Collins,¹⁰ or that the latter mirrored many of Muraviev's opinions. With respect to the economic possibilities of the Amur, Collins was most hopeful.

This trade [that from Siberia to European Russia], although great, is absolutely one of complete necessity, and flows only in a necessitous and restricted current....What, then, does this country want? The question is easily answered - It wants a cheaper, easier, and more rapid, and a more constant communication with the sea.... [But], East, West, North, South all seem to be barred by nature or by man. But don't be too hasty; look upon that map again.... Throw yourself with confidence upon its [the Amur's] flowing tide, for upon this generous river shall float navies... [and] a mighty nation shall rise upon its banks... and at its mouth shall rise a vast city....¹¹

Muraviev would be in full agreement with Collins with respect

10. Collins, Siberian Journey Down the Amur, p. 5.

11. Ibid., pp. 94-95.

to the potentials of the Amur region, but there is the suggestion in Collins that this "generous river" would direct trade towards the Pacific. Muraviev was convinced that the river must direct trade towards the west so far as the Amur could carry it, and then overland to European Russia. In fact, with the British dominating the seas, the overland route might at times be the only possible outlet for eastern Siberia.¹²

Muraviev did not think the potential trade between European Russia and the far east could be secure on the open sea where it was liable to interruption and perhaps destruction.¹³

The crisis leading to the Crimean War, and the war itself when the Russian fleet was blockaded in the Black Sea, served as an example to Muraviev. In such a situation the Amur region would be left to the mercy of sea powers, he was convinced, but for the existence of a well-developed transportation system connecting the far east with the source of Russian power in the west.¹⁴ Yet, Muraviev expected cooperation between Russia and the United States; and he hoped that it might exclude Britain from the north Pacific and its trade potential.¹⁵ In fact, he hoped that in the future Britain

12. Stanton, The Foundations of Russian Foreign Policy in the Far East, p. 141.

13. Ibid.

14. Mitchell, The Maritime History of Russia, p. 165.

15. George Alexander Lensen, The Russian Push Towards Japan: Russo-Japanese Relation, 1697-1875 (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1959), p. 261.

might be excluded from the entire Asian littoral of the
 16
 Pacific Ocean.

Due to various circumstances we allowed the intrusion [sic] of this part of Asia [the Pacific littoral] by the English, who very naturally to the detriment and reproach of all Europe, disturbing the peace and well being of other nations, prescribe from their little island their own laws in all parts of the world, excluding America, laws not the least aimed at the benefit of mankind, but only at the satisfaction of the commercial interests of Great Britain - but the matter can still be mended by a close tie on our part with the North American States.¹⁷

But it is well to remember that even should such cooperation between the two nations have come to fruition, it presumably would have left the British still in command of the sea route from the Asia littoral of the Pacific to Russian ports in Europe. Therefore, if the economic cultivation of the far east was to benefit Russia, there would still have to be a means of transportation through Asia to European Russia. Otherwise, the United States would derive all the commercial benefits. Muraviev never lost sight of this.

Other than the left bank of the Amur and the right of navigation upon that river, there remained only one other territorial acquisition that seemed imperative to Muraviev. This was the island of Sakhalin, which controlled strategically
 18
 the mouth of the Amur. It was Japanese rather than Chinese,

16. Memorandum, Nicolai Muraviev to Tsar Alexander II, undated, 1855, cited by Lensen, The Russian Push Towards Japan, pp. 300-301.

17. Ibid.

18. Stanton, Foundations of Russian Foreign Policy in the Far East, p. 160.

but Muraviev began to place settlers there, just as he had been doing along the Amur, in expectation of making a claim.

Throughout Muraviev's tenure in the far east his colleague and his right arm was the brilliant seaman and explorer Gennadi Nevelskoy. Among Nevelskoy's contributions to the development of the Russian far east were his discovery that the mouth of the Amur could be reached from the south up the Gulf of Tartary, that the river was accessible to sea-faring ships, and that there were no Chinese naval forces stationed near the mouth of the Amur, and that the natives of the lower Amur region claimed to be independent of the Chinese Empire.¹⁹

It was also the influence of Nevelskoy that altered the territorial ambitions of Russia in the far east. Muraviev, apparently, would otherwise have been content with the left bank of the Amur, with Sakhalin, and with making Petropavlovsk the main Russian base on Pacific waters. Nevelskoy repeatedly pointed out that such a base would be isolated, being directly across the Sea of Okhotsk from the mouth of the Amur on the tip of the Kamchatka peninsula. Nevelskoy recommended that Russia direct her aims towards securing the entire coast line as far as Korea.²⁰ He reasoned that by such an acquisition Russia could obtain a much better port and one in warmer waters, and that if Russia should fail to obtain this region there could be no doubt that a sea power, i.e., Britain, would

19. Ibid., p. 151.

20. Ibid., pp. 156-157.

soon establish itself there in opposition to Russian interests. Thus, by occupation of the Primorsk region, consisting of the right bank of the Ussuri River to its confluence with the Amur, and thence down the right bank of that river to its mouth, Russia would throw a ring around Manchuria and be in a position to deny easy foreign access to a sphere of interest along the Amur River. Further, as was the case with the left bank of the Amur, the Primorsk region was very sparsely settled and, so to speak, detachable from the Chinese Empire. At first Muraviev was hostile to the idea, but it was obviously sound reasoning, at least with respect to local strategy; and in 1857 the Primorsk was officially incorporated into the Russian aims in their boundary dispute with China along with the left bank of the Amur.²²

The ideas and aspirations of Muraviev and Nevelskoy ran somewhat ahead of those of the Russian foreign ministry and far ahead of whatever the Chinese ministers had in mind. The latter were understandably not able to see the validity of Russian claims as they developed, and Russia was at first timid in making them. Muraviev had had the confidence of the Tsar since becoming Governor-General in 1847, but it was not until January of 1854 that he assumed control of questions relating to the Chinese boundary.²³ Resistance to eastward

21. Ibid.

22. Ibid., p. 275.

23. Ibid.

expansion was primarily to be found in the person of Minister of Foreign Affairs Nesselrode. He was orientated towards Europe and feared a far eastern venture might disturb relations with Britain. In 1848, much to the chagrin of Muraviev, Nesselrode attempted to settle the boundary dispute with China by recognizing the Amur region as Chinese property.²⁴ It was not done, and in August of 1853 the Tsar took Nesselrode completely out of the far eastern matter.²⁵ Hereafter Russian action was more emphatic. Strategic points were occupied, and Muraviev led several flotillas down the Amur with the purpose of demonstrating Russian interest.

But the incentive to force the issue with the Chinese was supplied by the Crimean War and the crisis leading up to it.²⁶ In the Fall of 1854 sea communications between European Russia and the far east were cut by the combined British and French navies. Thus, if the Russian territory on the Pacific were to be maintained, it would have to be by the transportation of military forces down the Amur. In fact, during the Crimean War, some ten thousand men were finally massed at the mouth of the Amur and there utterly repulsed an Anglo-French attack.²⁷ An earlier attack upon Petropavlovsk

24. Lensen, The Russian Push Towards Japan, p. 272.

25. Ibid., p. 278.

26. Geoffrey F. Hudson, The Far East in World Politics (2d ed. rev.; London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 57.

27. Stanton, The Foundations of Russian Foreign Policy in the Far East, p. 245.

was also repulsed, but later in the war Muraviev, upon Nevelskoy's suggestion, abandoned it for the duration.²⁸

A small success to be sure but, under the circumstances, it stood out and helped solidify the opinion of Russian statesmen in support of Muraviev. What Russia lost at the mouth of the Danube she would gain at the mouth of the Amur.²⁹ Further, this Russian troop movement down the river did not fail to impress the Chinese.

Now one reason Nesselrode had been opposed to aggressive action in the far east was that he was aware of Russia's relatively weak position there. He knew little of China and cared little, but he could scarcely see how Russia with a force of some ten thousand men or less could detach a portion, larger than France, of an Empire of millions. One can easily understand Nesselrode's fears, but as it happened, Russia had little difficulty. China was weak, and at this time was convulsed by the T'ai P'ing Rebellion and, after 1856, was at war with Britain and France. The Russian threat was directed towards regions that were barely settled by the Chinese and were then of no economic importance, whereas the British and French threat was directed towards Canton and later towards the Chinese capital itself. That is, the allies were approaching the economic and political hearts of the empire. Thus, the Russian demands for the Amur and the Primorsk might cause her

28. Ibid.

29. Ibid., p. 246.

to see fit to join the British and French.³⁰ And so, when Russia politely offered to be the friend of China and mediate between the belligerents, the Chinese were delighted to accept.³¹ The price was the cession of the left bank of the Amur and the Primorsk region to Russia. The final treaty was signed on November 2, 1860, by General Ignatiev in Peking. It was actually a confirmation of an extension of an earlier treaty signed by Muraviev in 1858, the Treaty of Aigun.

Thus, so far as territorial ambitions were concerned, Muraviev met with great success within a period of fourteen years. There remained the question of Sakhalin, to be settled in Russia's favor in 1875 by catching Japan preoccupied with internal reform. This was long after Muraviev's day, however, for soon after the Treaty of Peking, he retired from the far east, his health impaired.

The ultimate success of the new Russian far east, however, depended upon much more than the simple possession of land, and indeed Muraviev was well aware of this. There had to be settlers for the new region to exploit the agricultural and mineral potentials. Trade had to flow along the Amur and across Siberia to European Russia and industry had to develop. Otherwise, as a sparsely settled and backward area the new Russian far east would remain almost as precarious as the old, and would become increasingly more precarious with the further

30. Ibid., p. 290.

31. Hudson, The Far East in World Politics, p. 58.

expansion of the interests of the sea powers in the far east. In fact, this is exactly what happened.

In the first place the Amur River proved to be a less than satisfactory means of transportation for anything and especially for commerce, which requires a degree of regularity and dependability. For 173 days of the year the Amur was frozen, and for 17 to 27 more days there was great danger from the thaw.³² Further, until much later in the 1890's, there were never enough draft animals to use the Amur as a frozen highway. When the river flowed freely there was great danger from shoals, snags, unpredictable currents, and all manner of obstruction. The American traveler Perry Collins, in spite of his enthusiasm and optimism, was forced to record his difficulties upon the Amur.

We found today, as usual since we left the Zea (near the Hongharee's confluence with the Amur), the river too wide to be pleasant or agreeable for our mode or means of navigation; there are so many islands, bars, chutes, and channels, that one becomes lost in their labyrinth, and, when the wind prevails, you are thrown on one shore or the other, without the possibility of crossing the river or visiting such objects on the opposite shore as may be of interest.³³

Collins frequently wished for a "little steamer", and was confident that such a vessel would allow one to steam easily some two thousand miles along the Amur.³⁴ Apparently

32. Andrew Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904: With Special Emphasis on the Causes of the Russo-Japanese War (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), p. 2.

33. Collins, Siberian Journey Down the Amur, pp. 270-271.

34. Ibid., pp. 208-214.

he was carried away with enthusiasm, for his own small bark drew only two feet of water, and it was constantly grounded for one reason or another. Steam could scarcely be expected to overcome all obstruction.

There was also the matter of transportation between the head of navigation on the Amur, which was within a reasonable distance of Lake Baikal and Irkutsk, and European Russia. Irkutsk, such as it was, was the center of population and commerce in the Russian east and had long been the eastern terminus of trade from European Russia. But the volume of trade was relatively small and the means of transportation to Irkutsk were somewhat antiquated by the middle of the nineteenth century.³⁵ It has been pointed out that with justice the Russians have been acclaimed for their ancient use of rivers and portages. We have seen that this method was employed with success across Siberia.

But again, if Russia was to actually develop as a trans-continental nation, and thus, as a power in being in the far east, a modern system of transportation was necessary. For example, in 1856, trade from Moscow to Chetah by land conveyance required six months and cost about two hundred and twenty-four dollars per ton.³⁶ By the cheaper but still slower method of river-portage transportation the cost was approximately one hundred and eighty dollars per ton.³⁷

35. Supra, p. 7.

36. Collins, Siberian Journey Down the Amur, p. 179.

37. Ibid.

Another serious problem of the new Russian far east was the matter of settlers. This had been a problem of all of Siberia, or if not necessarily a problem, a fact of its existence. We have seen that economic and political expansion had been by the nomadic fur trappers and state revenue officials.³⁸ But all who were seriously interested in the new far east were aware that it would have to be settled by Russian peoples (preferably Slavic) who would then apply their individual talents to develop the Amur and Primorsk into an integral part of the Russian Empire. Muraviev knew this and had made efforts to bring settlers into the region, albeit with limited success. In the first place it took approximately two years for a family to migrate to the region east of Lake Baikal, and it was an expensive journey as well.³⁹

Another problem was state restriction on migration. Such restriction had been in existence since 1808, but in the years just after the reforms that gave the serf his personal freedom laws were passed that all but prohibited peasant migration into Siberia.⁴⁰ The landowners argued that even though the peasant was now free he should not be allowed to leave his native region. The landowners thought that should such be allowed their property would decline in value, there being

38. Supra, p. 3.

39. David J. Dallin, The Rise of Russia in Asia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 25.

40. Anatole V. Baikalov, "The Conquest and Colonization of Siberia," Slavonic Review, X (April, 1932), 569.

no cheap and plentiful supply of agricultural labor.⁴¹ Thus, most of the settlers in the new Russian far east, and in Siberia as a whole, for that matter, were either exiles or unauthorized migrants. The exiles made poor settlers, and the entire group understandably left something to be desired so far as deportment was concerned.⁴² In 1860 the Russian far east claimed 15,000 souls, although by 1867 there were 108,000.⁴³ Thus, the new Russian possessions on the Pacific were precariously underpopulated, and even in 1900 the population was less than one third of a million.⁴⁴ Without a significant population whatever potential in commerce, industry and agriculture existed would fail of development.

But perhaps the most disappointing aspect of the new Russian far east concerned the misfortunes of the few settlers that were there. They found the short growing season, the harsh climate, and various grain diseases put them in a position of having to import grain into the Amur valley and the Primorsk.⁴⁵ There was plentiful pasture land, but the same climatic disadvantages destroyed a profitable cattle industry. Cattle were imported to the Russian far east until the beginning of the twentieth century.⁴⁶

41. Ibid.

42. Ibid.

43. Dallin, The Rise of Russia in Asia, p. 25.

44. Ibid.

45. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, p. 3.

46. Ibid.

In fact, the new Russian far east had turned out to be a failure when considered as anything other than territorial aggrandizement. There were many problems other than those concerning the settlers and their problems. In spite of Manchu laws prohibiting Chinese migration above the Great Wall that were not repealed until 1878, there had been an alarming influx of Chinese and Korean migrants into Manchuria and the Russian far east after 1860.⁴⁷ Further, there were disputes⁴⁸ along the border with China that caused many to expect war. There was no certainty that Russia could win such a war. By 1881 several Russian military men looked upon the Russian far east as being all but indefensible, and especially in the case of the Amur valley.⁴⁹ The entire region was sparsely settled and had a proportionately large oriental minority. It was weakly defended and at right angle to potential Chinese attack. Moreover, it was not developed enough to support a large army should one be brought from the west, and since 1858 the Russian fleet had been approaching insignificance.

During this post-Muraviev period the most successful undertaking with respect to the Russian far east was an almost complete reversal of Muraviev's policy. That is, the Amur and Primorsk became little more than an overseas colony of European Russia. Settlers were subsidized by the state and

47. Peter S. H. Tang, Russian and Soviet Policy in Manchuria and Outer Mongolia, 1911-1931 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1959), p. 17.

48. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, p. 4.

49. Ibid.

sent to the east by ship, and such trade as there was generally depended upon sea transport. In fact, overland trade across Asia had been dealt a severe blow by the opening of the Suez Canal in 1869. In 1873 the value of Russian export to Tientsin, the main trade center of northeastern China, was only 39,600 rubles, and by 1875 the figure had dropped to 25,000 rubles.⁵⁰ But in spite of some actual progress with respect to settlement in the far east, this new emphasis on sea transportation worked a detriment upon the fundamental development of Russian Asia.⁵¹ The use of the sea caused the facilities of overland transportation to decline through lack of use. Therefore, those prospective migrants who could ill afford the relatively high cost of sea transportation that exceeded the state subsidy were discouraged from a land route that offered nothing but hardship.⁵² Through this process the link between the Russian far east and European Russia became considerably weaker than it had been in the time of Muraviev.⁵³

By the same process the Amur declined as a means of transportation. Supposedly the Amur was the vital link between the Pacific and the more settled regions of eastern Siberia and the cord that held the Russian far east together. And yet, as the far east became an overseas colony the Primorsk area on the coast quite naturally became more important.

50. Ibid., p. 7.

51. Ibid., p. 14.

52. Ibid., p. 13

53. Ibid., p. 14.

It must be said, then, that by the early 1880's Russia was less a trans-continental nation than it had been in the times of Muraviev, even though most of his planning had been projected into the future. All the continental modes of transportation were weakened.

Now it is true that in the period from 1860 to 1885 Russian foreign policy was concerned with matters further west, and that this was at least a partial cause of the disappointing development of the trans-Baikal region. Nevertheless, certain innate disadvantages of the Amur and Primorsk played their part. The climatic problem has been noted, but the basic problem was of a geo-political nature. The Russian far east was a result of expansion east from Baikal to the sea, and north to south expansion along the coast from Kamchatka to Korea. Thus the Primorsk and Amur regions form a half circle around Manchuria.

It is of the greatest significance that the hinterland of the Primorsk is not Siberia, but Manchuria.⁵⁴ The same can be said for much of the Amur's left bank. To the north of the Amur there is only a narrow belt of land upon which it is possible to support a significant population.⁵⁵ The northern limit for grain is very close at hand.⁵⁶ It is reasonable to maintain, then, that the natural hinterland of the lower

54. Hudson, The Far East in World Politics, pp. 61-62.

55. Nicholas T. Mirov, Geography of Russia (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1951), pp. 296-299.

56. Ibid.

Amur lies in Manchuria to the south and not towards the frozen north. By any standards of political geography the Russian far east left much to be desired, and Muraviev had been too preoccupied with obtaining the Amur and Primorsk to do anything but speculate on the potentials of Manchuria. Thus, the new Russian far east was a great distance from the source of Russian power and connected with it only by difficult and slow modes of transportation; and it found its natural hinterland to be in Manchuria, the fatherland of the Chinese Emperor. With these things in mind it is not difficult to understand the opinions of later Russian statesmen who concerned themselves with the far east; that Russia must, would, and almost by a natural law, should dominate or occupy Manchuria. Indeed it appeared that the weakness of the Amur and Primorsk regions left no choice but further expansion if they were to be held at all.

Those familiar with the Russian far eastern situation had seen the connection with Manchuria long before the venture had manifested itself as a failure in the years between 1860 and the 1880's. Muraviev had seen it, and the American traveler Perry Collins, writing in 1857, speculated on it in this interesting manner:

The probability is that Russia will find it necessary, in order to give peace and security to the trade on this important river [the Amur], from her Siberian possessions into the ocean, to follow our example in the acquisition of Louisiana; for the whole of Manchooria is as necessary to the undisturbed commerce of the Amoor as Louisiana was to our use of the Mississippi; consequently, in my opinion,

nothing short of the Chinese Wall will be a sufficient boundary on the south....⁵⁷

The optimism and dreams of Muraviev and Nevelskoy, of travelers such as Perry Collins, and of Russian statesmen concerned with the next push in the far east, were not founded on fantasy. Rather, fruition seemed quite probable if Russia could manage to develop, even in a limited way, her trans-continental proportions by modern means of transportation. It seemed quite probable because of two assumptions that were frequently made. These were: that the oriental nations would remain weak in comparison to the great powers of Europe, and that the Royal Navy would be at a loss to check Russian overland advances into the northern portions of the far east.

57. Perry Collins to William L. Marcy, Irkutsk, Eastern Siberia, January 31, 1857, House Ex. Doc. 93, 35 Cong., 1 sess., pp. 15-17.

CHAPTER II

RAILROAD STRATEGY AND ECONOMICS

After a quarter century of relative neglect and disinterest following the Muraviev period in the far east, the situation there called for reform in almost every area and especially in the matter of overland transportation to the source of Russian power in the west. In the period from 1881 to 1888 various important Russian statesmen became aware of the danger in the east, and steps were taken to put the empire in a more defensible position. Until 1885, at least, fear of Chinese aggression was the main impetus to action.¹

It has already been noted that efforts were made to strengthen Russia's position in the far east by means of sea communications, but that this had disadvantageous results along with some improvements. Other measures of reform followed in the 1880's. In 1882 the number of non-Russian settlers allowed in the far east was limited; a measure which points to the Russian fear of creeping Chinese aggression. At the same time the new Russian far east was divided into

1. Andrew Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904: With Special Emphasis on the Causes of the Russo-Japanese War (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), p. 26.

more convenient administrative units: the Amur region; the Primorsk; and Sakhalin. All of these were put under the energetic command of General A. N. Korf. This last was a great improvement, for in the period of neglect responsible positions in the east had been given to civil servants of inferior quality. With respect to the deteriorated overland route to the east, a "temporary law" was passed in 1881 to aid settlers going to Siberia. It provided for medical care along the way and established information services for the migrants. This law remained in effect until 1869, at which time it was replaced by a permanent law giving more tangible aid to settlers in the form of grants to purchase horses, cattle, seed, and implements.² It was also agreed that settlers would be freed from land taxes and other incidental payments for a number of years.

But the fundamental measure to strengthen Russia's position in the far east was the decision to construct a trans-Siberian railway made in the spring of 1886 by Tsar Alexander II. It was several years before construction was begun, but the matter was settled enough at this time for statesmen and dreamers to look to the future with excitement and optimism. The railroad would clearly solve many problems of security in the Russian far east and would allow Russia to pursue a strong policy in the Orient; possibly the strongest.

2. Anatole V. Baikhalov, "The Conquest and Colonization of Siberia," Slavonic Review, X (April, 1932), 570.

The diplomatic deck was also cleared for action in the Orient, and by the end of 1887 there was a very marked shift of Russian interest towards the east. In December of 1881 Minister of Foreign Affairs de Giere said of the Bulgarian problem: "We wash our hands of the whole concern,"³ and later, in July of 1887 Russia arrived at a compromise agreement with Britain over Afganistan. Thus, Russia was in a position to concentrate more on the far east. Another matter that had a great indirect influence on Russian plans was the French difficulty in the Tonkin War of 1884-1885. Reflecting upon reverses suffered by French arms in this war considerable French capital found its way to Russia as an alternate investment, and especially did it gravitate towards the financing of railways in Russia.⁴ For her own part, the Russian Empire was not able to go it along financially.

But the incident that gave the greatest impetus to a new Russian foreign policy in the far east was the Port Hamilton-Port Lasarev affair of 1885. Russia had had some minor influence in Korea in the 1880's, and in 1885 it was rumored that she was going to occupy Port Lasarev on the eastern coast of the peninsula. Acting upon this rumor, the British proceeded to occupy Port Hamilton, an island off the southern

3. D. M. Pozdneev, "Materialy po voprosu peremotre deistvushchik v kitaiskikh morskikh tamozhniakh...", Izvestiia Imperatorskago Institute, XIV (1906), 81, cited by Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 38.

4. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 38. British capital was generally out of the question because of the long-standing tension in Anglo-Russian affairs.

tip of Korea. They feared the prospect of Russia gaining a foothold further to the south and closer to their interests. The Royal Navy at Port Hamilton would balance the situation and give the British command of the Korean Straits. In fact, Russia never occupied Port Lasarev, whereas the British remained at Port Hamilton until 1887. But the point of it all was not lost on the Russians. It demonstrated what a simple matter it would be for British sea power to blockade a Russian squadron in the Sea of Japan so that Russian vessels would not be able to manage a neutral port for coaling and rework, much less a return to European Russia. Reflection upon this incident was one of the primary causes of Russia's return to the policy of Muraviev. That is, that Russia should become an actual land power in the far east by trans-continental development. Therefore, the Port Hamilton incident was an indirect cause of the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad.⁵ It has been noted that in the year after the incident the Tsar ordered the construction of the railroad.

By 1887, then, Russia had reverted to the essential policy of Muraviev, and one that was based on land power rather than sea power. It should be noted, however, that this was not innately an aggressive policy, and that it was not so in any case for some years. It was designed to secure the Russian far east from possible attack by the Chinese or a sea power, and to do this it was necessary to devise a means of communication that was not dependent upon the prevailing mood of the

5. Ibid., p. 33.

British. It was also hoped that the policy would assist Russia in becoming a power in being in the far east as well as simply connect the region with Russia's power in the west. In the meantime it was recognized that Russia had to be cautious, and indeed she was in the opening years of the 1890-1899 decade. First, the Trans-Siberian had to be completed, and then there was an added difficulty in the failure of Germany to renew the Reinsurance Treaty in 1890. This left Russia in uncomfortable isolation, and it was not until January of 1894 that the Franco-Russian Alliance was concluded to relieve the discomfort.

By 1895, however, Russian policy became quite forceful, if not outright aggressive. The construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway had been proceeding apace and so had Russian plans in the far east under the guiding spirit of Minister of Finance Witte. But also proceeding apace was the development of Japan as a modern great power, and in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 this became manifest. The Japanese dispatched the "Chinese Colossus" with considerable facility, and in the resulting Treaty of Shimonoseki, secured control over, among other things, the very strategic Liaotung peninsula in the extreme south of Manchuria.⁶ Many Russian plans for the future were vitally concerned with Manchuria, and it was decided that Japan could not be allowed to obtain such a foothold on the mainland of Asia in light of their recent display

6. John V. A. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China (New York: Oxford University Press, 1921), pp. 18-19.

of military prowess. All of the leading statesmen interested in the far east agreed in their fear that Japan might soon dominate China to the exclusion of Russian interests. Witte, cautious as he was to prove later, was in favor of pushing Japan out if possible.

There soon followed the Triple Intervention by Russia, France, and Germany which denied Japan the fruits of victory. The French and Germans had their own reasons. The Russian position was stated most accurately by Count D. A. Kapnist in a committee meeting, attended by Witte, concerned with the prospect of an intervention. The Count affirmed that if the great potential of Russia was to be realized in the far east the Japanese would have to be forced to withdraw from the Liaotung peninsula.⁷

Faced with a combination of three great European powers, the Japanese statesmen wisely decided to "bear the unbearable" and retired from the Liaotung peninsula, as the British had advised them to do. The Triple Intervention was a great diplomatic victory for Russia. Japan had been eliminated from the continent. China was left whole and well disposed towards the Russians for their leadership in the intervention, and was considerably weaker. Such a situation in China favored Russian ambitions. Indeed, soon after the intervention Russia and China signed a treaty of alliance.

The Russo-Chinese Treaty of Alliance of May, 1896, was ostensibly directed against Japan, and as such did not divest

7. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 60.

itself from Russian interests. Japan was by now certainly recognized as a potential enemy. But of greater importance, so far as the general Russian push to the east is concerned, is the fact that the treaty contained the concession for the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railway through Manchuria.

In order to facilitate the access of the Russian land troops to the points menaced by Japan, and to secure their means of subsistence, the Chinese Government consents to the construction of a railway line across the Chinese provinces of the Amour (i.e., Reilungkiang) and of Guirin (Kirin) in the direction of Vladivostok.⁸

The Japanese menace was something of a pretext. Witte tells us that as the Trans-Siberian reached Trans-Baikalia he conceived the plan for routing the remainder to Vladivostok through northern Manchuria. He had three main reasons, none of which bear a direct relation to Japan: by not following the great northern bend of the Amur the route would be around 780 miles shorter; the route through Manchuria would obviate the necessity of overcoming the technical difficulties of the Amur route; and finally, in Manchuria there would be much better soil productivity and climate to support Russian penetration.⁹ Here one finds another comment on the innate disadvantages of the Russian far east. But in any case, after a penetration of Manchuria, Russia would not have to depend upon her own

8. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, p. 81.

9. Sergey Yulevich Witte, The Memoirs of Count Witte, ed. and trans. Abraham Yarmolinsky (Garden City, New York, and Toronto: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1921), pp. 86-87.

territory. Along with the right to build a railroad there were rights to maintain a guard which could easily be developed into a significant military force, and there was the right of exploitation along the right of way which could provide a means of economic penetration. The railroad was to be operated by a Russo-Chinese Bank in which the Chinese had no effective control. In truth, the bank was a manifestation of Russian expansion and French support through financial investment. By this time France was Russia's ally.

The Chinese Eastern concession was the most important step yet taken in the trans-continental development of Russia. In so many ways it represented the practical plan rather than the rash ideas of the dreamer. But the new passage to the Pacific ran through the property of another nation, and that was problematical. Hopes were high, however, and it was thought that with the growth of Russian enterprises primed by the Chinese Eastern a great chunk of northern China would ultimately fall to Russia.¹⁰ Witte himself was primarily encouraged by the prospects of economic penetration in Manchuria. But he was quite aware of the political and strategical significance of the proposed Chinese Eastern. Witte visualized Russian forces massed in the far east ready to force concessions from both China and Japan and quite capable of protecting an expected Russian sphere in Manchuria and northern China.¹¹ The proposed

10. David J. Dallin, The Rise of Russia in Asia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 53.

11. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 76.

railroad would be able to support such enterprises.

The next major step in the Russian push to the east was the occupation of Port Arthur in December of 1897 and soon thereafter the entire Liaotung peninsula. This occupation was a part of the general scramble for concessions which was started by the German seizure of Kaiiochow and ended with concessions to the French in the south. It almost precipitated a general war. But so far as Russia's position was concerned it marked another strategical and political improvement, and it greatly improved her passage to the sea. It did not improve her relations with the sea powers involved, the new acquisition being the same region so recently denied Japan after a victorious war.

Port Arthur had many advantages over Vladivostok, which had been the main Russian base since 1860. In the first place it is an ice-free port as Vladivostok is not, but the greatest advantage of Port Arthur over Vladivostok is that the former is not enclosed in the Sea of Japan. It opens on to the Yellow Sea and the Pacific. The outlets to the Pacific proper from Vladivostok are the Soya Strait, the Tsugaru Strait, and the Korea Strait. All three are narrow and geographically dominated by Japan, and the Japanese naval program was proceeding apace. Finally, Port Arthur is so situated that if properly fortified it could have dominated the Chinese capital, the source of all favors on the mainland.

12. Arthur J. Marder, The Anatomy of British Sea Power (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940), p. 302.

With the acquisition of Port Arthur there was a call for further railroad penetration in Manchuria. In fact, there would have to be a railroad to Port Arthur if the base was to be properly supported. Thus, it was by way of the "logic of railroad expansion" that in June of 1898 Russia signed with China an agreement allowing for the construction of a railroad to run south from the Chinese Eastern to the Liaotung peninsula and Port Arthur.¹³ At this stage Russian plans for the rail penetration of Manchuria became intergrated.¹⁴ As the new railroad, the South Manchurian, moved in to exploit rich and relatively heavily-populated southern Manchuria, Port Arthur, as a strong base, would protect the enterprise from interference by an interested sea power or by a wrathful one. At the same time the South Manchurian would feed and support Port Arthur. The Chinese Eastern would connect all major Russian interests in the far east to the Trans-Siberian, which in its turn would link the whole to the primary source of power in Europe. Finally, the Chinese Eastern and South Manchurian, by making possible a Russian stronghold at Port Arthur, would make the Russian's pleasure felt more keenly in the far east and especially in nearby Peking, the Chinese capital. No other power had such an advantage of proximity.

It should be noted that Witte was very much against the occupation of Port Arthur and the Liaotung peninsula. In the

13. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, pp. 154-156.

14. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 112.

first place it was contrary to the terms of the Russo-Chinese Treaty of 1896, and in the second place it seemed to him too high-handed to occupy the same region that Russia had lately been so instrumental in denying Japan.¹⁵ Witte also foresaw "complications likely to have disastrous results"¹⁶ when upon the completion of the railroads Russia would be in an excellent position to threaten the interests of other powers, especially those of Britain and Japan. Apparently Witte thought of the Chinese Eastern as a means of penetration was entirely sufficient for the time being and that in due course it would satisfy all of Russia's aspirations. There is some reason to doubt this, but at any rate, reflecting upon the ultimate failure of the Russian push, Witte thought of the Chinese Eastern concession as being the foundation of a policy that would have succeeded.

The agreement was an act of the highest importance. Had we faithfully observed it, we would have been spared the disgrace of the Japanese War and we would have secured a firm foothold in the Far East. Anticipating upon the course of events, I may say here that we ourselves broke the agreement and brought about the situation we are now facing in the Far East.¹⁷

Indeed, by the middle of 1898 Russian prestige in the far east was seriously declining. The Chinese Government, displeased over Russia's expansion in Manchuria, now had definitely an anti-Russian group in their foreign office. The thrill was gone.

15. Witte, Memoirs, p. 99.

16. Ibid., p. 100.

17. Ibid., p. 93.

The Chinese had recently made a rail concession to Britain that would infringe on the Russian sphere, and a rapprochement between China and Japan was in the air.

Because of this deteriorating position, Russia came to an agreement with Britain in February of 1899 concerning railroad spheres.¹⁸ It was something of a retreat from the maximum policy in Manchuria, but nevertheless, did nothing to seriously hinder Russian penetration. It did have the beneficial effect of easing international tensions, which were understandably high at the time. Tensions were further eased by the circulation of the "open door" note in September of the same year by the United States' Secretary of State, John Hay. Since the Russian position in Manchuria was something of a monopoly, the "open door" was clearly not designed to further the Russian cause. It was possible, however, for Russia to make an innocuous interpretation of the note, and this was allowed.

But even as tension was eased and Russia saw fit to compromise with the British, an event occurred which precipitated another major encroachment in Manchuria. This was the mystic "Boxer" Rebellion, designed to expel all foreigners and return the Celestial Kingdom to its pristine state of cultural purity. Now so far as Russia was concerned, the importance of this event was not the famous siege of the legations in Peking (she cared little enough about that), but rather how to react

18. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 115.

as the rebellion spread to Manchuria. At first the Russians had no real choice. The extent and homogeneity of their interests left no option but that of military action.¹⁹ Thus, Russia's regular troops entered Manchuria and by October of 1900 were in full control. It was originally planned that the regular forces would be withdrawn immediately, but because of the local situation this proved to be impossible.²⁰ There was no means of transporting the troops back to Siberia. The rivers were frozen by this time, and the railroad was not as yet repaired from damage suffered during the rebellion. Further, many of the ex-Boxers had turned to outright banditry, and the troops were needed to protect Russian lives and interests. The following spring, however, a good harvest put the Boxers back to normal work, and the rails were ready. There was no longer any reason for the presence of regular forces. Still they remained, and in fact never left in the period under consideration. The army was there, not precisely by pretense, and it all seemed too good an opportunity to miss. It was expected that an agreement could be extracted from China that would all but give Manchuria to Russia. Repeated efforts to secure such an agreement were made, always with the same result: China would politely decline to discuss the matter until such time as the Russian troops were recalled. In fact, the presence of these troops served to solidify opposition to Russia, and,

19. Ibid., p. 136.

20. Ibid., pp. 143-144.

because the sea powers were behind her, China felt strong enough to deny Russia.

Tension mounted, and in March and April of 1901 there was a war scare with a Japan concerned lest Russia come to dominate all north China. There were two parties in Japan: one that wanted to keep the peace and reach an agreement with Russia over Manchuria and Korea; and one that wanted an alliance with England whereby war could be waged against Russia if necessary. The war scare of March and April closed this split considerably and caused Japan to move closer to an alliance with England.²¹ It also caused the beginning of some rethinking on the part of Russian statesmen, but nothing positive was done immediately. When, however, after a long and complicated travail, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was concluded, there was action. The alliance had two immediate effects on Russian policy. First, Minister of Foreign Affairs Lamsdorf attempted to make his nation's alliance with France a counterpoise. He was not entirely successful. The French, having the Germans in mind, were not especially anxious to expend energy in the far east,²² and the resulting agreement was vague at best. Second, Russia came to a quick agreement with China to evacuate Manchuria in three stages.²³ The first stage of the evacuation was carried out on schedule, but there the matter rested.

21. Ibid, p. 167.

22. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, pp. 325-326.

23. Ibid., p. 327

In spite of the fact that opposition to Russia had been becoming firmer, her position in the far east was nevertheless quite strong, at least from the purely physical side. In 1903 her regular troops were still in Manchuria, and in February of 1903 the entire extent of the Chinese Eastern Railway was opened for traffic. Thus, the passage to the Pacific was open, modernized, and well protected. The physical defects of the Russian position seemed almost insignificant. The railroads were of one track, but this did not appear to be all important at the time. Also, the Trans-Siberian did not extend around the southern tip of Lake Baikal because of technical problems of construction. Therefore, material had to be conveyed across the lake by boat or upon the ice in winter and required loading and unloading. But again, this did not seem too important. Finally, sea transportation from Vladivostok to Port Arthur would be extremely dangerous in the face of a hostile Japan. Such traffic had to pass the Korea Strait, and Japan commanded it. Even so, Russia was by now a land power in the far east. In fact, Russia seemed strong enough for Witte to deliver himself of this opinion in a report of July, 1903, after summarizing the far eastern situation.

Accordingly, the problem of each country concerned is to obtain as large a share as possible of the inheritance of the outlived oriental states, especially of the Chinese Colossus. Russia, both geographically and historically, has the undisputed right to the lion's share of the expected prey.... Given our enormous frontier line with China and our exceptionally favorable situation, the absorption by Russia of a considerable portion of the Chinese Empire is only a question of time, unless China succeeds in protecting herself. But our chief aim is to see that this absorption shall take place

naturally, without precipitation of events, without taking premature steps, without seizing territory, in order to avoid a premature division of China by the powers concerned, which would deprive Russia of China's most valuable provinces.²⁴

This report is frequently quoted, but only to the point at which Witte remarks that the absorption must take place

"naturally."²⁵ By such cutting Witte is made to appear, quite simply, an aggressive strategist, and the point is missed.

By natural absorption he had in mind economic penetration, first in Manchuria along the Chinese Eastern, and ultimately further south, possibly towards Korea and the Yangtze valley. But the truth is that even by the time of the writing of this report Russia's economic venture in Manchuria and the far east was failing. In spite of very clear strategic advantages she was far behind in the world of trade and industry.

Until the beginning of the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad in 1892 the basic far eastern policy of Russia had been, the unrequited dreams of the likes of Muraviev notwithstanding, to secure the region from invasion and encroachment by one means or another.²⁶ Hereafter Russian policy became more positive and as a means of implementation began to rely upon economic penetration. Thus, Siberia and the new Russian far east felt the impact of Russia's industrial

24. Witte, Memoirs, p. 322.

25. Dallin, The Rise of Russia in Asia, p. 35, cuts the quotation alluded to short and in doing so fails to represent Witte's caution as well as the economic foundation of his plans.

26. Robert J. Kerner, "The Russian Eastward Movement: Some Observations on its Historical Significance," Pacific Historical Review, XVII (May, 1948), p. 139.

revolution of which railroad construction was an important
²⁷
 part. It has been stressed that the railroad net constructed
 in the period under consideration was of great strategic
 importance, and so it was, but in the final analysis the economic
 motive was behind it all. It was Witte's opinion that strategic
 value in transportation would naturally follow economic interest.
 He tells us in his memoirs that:

After dealing with railroads for forty years,
 I can say that in most cases the strategic considera-
 tions of our War Ministry regarding the direction
 of the roads are pure fantasy. The country will be
 best off if, in building railroads, it is guided by
 the purely economic consideration. On the whole,
 such railroads will also meet the strategic needs.
 It is my opinion that this should become a basic
 principle of railroad construction.²⁸

It is difficult to question the wisdom of this opinion as
 applied to a long-term and general policy. On the other hand,
 this manner of thinking suggests that the economic venture
 would have to be successful if the rail construction was to
 have any value. Unfortunately, the economic venture in the
 far east left a lot to be desired. Russia, compared with the
 great powers of Europe and with Japan, was economically back-
 ward in spite of vast improvements that were being made, and
 she found it all but impossible to compete with them in the
 same market.
²⁹
 Therefore, if the far eastern enterprise was to

27. Ibid., pp. 40-41.

28. Witte, Memoirs, pp. 75-76.

29. Kanichi Asakawa, The Russo-Japanese Conflict: Its Causes and Issues (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin, and Company, 1904), p. 35.

be an economic success, Russia had of necessity to make Manchuria an area of commercial monopoly.³⁰ This, in turn, would have to depend upon diplomacy and military force, and would consequently compromise Witte's afore-mentioned principle of railroad construction. Ultimately, Russian commercial and industrial interests would have to follow Russian power and protection, at least for the time being.

Now this type of closed commercial system was managed with considerable success in Manchuria. In fact, Russian policy in the far east may be called one of entrenchment in Manchuria after the military occupation of 1900, the object of which was to await the completion of the rail system and the beginning of monopoly profit. Witte was convinced that at some time in the future such enclosure could be moved further south, but he was just as convinced that for the time being Russia had to wait patiently. The cost of trans-continental development and of expansion had been great, and it was not as yet paying off. Further, Russia was at the time experiencing a period of financial difficulty arising out of overgrowth in the 1890's.

But this policy of retrenchment in Manchuria soon appeared to be in vain, for as the railroads began to come into operation it became obvious that they were going to work at a deficit. The fundamental problem was that the Russian far east and Manchuria were not developed enough to provide a satisfactory

30. Geoffrey F. Hudson, The Far East in World Politics (2d ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 115.

market, and, as has been noted, Russia could not compete outside
 her pale.³¹ Other than this, rail transportation proved to be
 much more expensive than sea transport.³² As it turned out,
 Witte was forced to apply artificial tariffs and prohibitions
 on other means of transportation to keep his railroads open.³³
 Such manipulations were ruinous to the private traders involved.

Within Russia there was a growing conviction (not without reason) that the far eastern situation did not have a sound economic foundation and that it was a house of cards built by a cunning man of finance, Witte. Indeed, as early as the summer of 1902, even before the Chinese Eastern was entirely open, it was generally admitted that the far eastern venture was in grave danger of collapse. It will be remembered that China would not come to an agreement legalizing Russian dominance in Manchuria and that after the Anglo-Japanese Alliance Russian troops were actually being evacuated. Add to this the fact that the Ministry of Finance was no longer able to guarantee the domination of Manchuria's economic wealth (there had been foreign encroachments) and that private interests were not willing to move in without official backing, and the only solution other than retirement seemed to be outright colonization.³⁴ At any rate, it seemed a proper time for a rethinking of the far eastern problem.

31. Asakawa, The Russo-Japanese Conflict, p. 33.

32. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 192.

33. Ibid., p. 193.

34. Ibid., p. 201

In April of 1903 Russia made a fourth attempt to persuade China to arrive at an agreement that would give her economic and political dominance in Manchuria. Again China refused, having the support of other powers. This more or less forced the issue for Russia: she could either pull out of China entirely, or she could remain in spite of the stalemate with China, international objection, and such consequences as might well be expected.³⁵ The latter course was adopted so that Russia would have a chance to wait and see in hopes that a favorable agreement could finally be extracted from China. In the meantime she could continue to invest in her sphere. It was thought that the only military threat was from Japan, and that an agreement could be secured from her by recognition of her dominance in Korea. Further, it was agreed that international objection might be relaxed by a show of greater Chinese authority in Manchuria and by allowing a minimum amount of foreign economic penetration.³⁶ Neither of these were to be allowed to develop into significant proportion.

This policy of virtual retrenchment in Manchuria was pursued by Russia, in all important aspects, down to the outbreak of war with Japan. It is important to note that this policy was agreed upon by all of the responsible Russian ministers and that this included the relatively cautious Witte and Lamsdorf.

35. Ibid., p. 206.

36. Ibid., p. 207. Malozemoff refers to this policy as the "New Course", and he in turn took the term from B. Romanov. It is not apparent from which of Romanov's works it is taken.

It is clearly not an aggressive policy, given the accomplished fact of the Russian sphere in Manchuria.

Two other developments of an administrative nature took place before the war with Japan that had a significant effect upon the ultimate direction (or lack of it) of the Russian venture. On August 12, 1903, the Tsar created a Viceroyalty to govern the Russian interests and possessions east of Baikal, and a Special Committee For Far Eastern Affairs which was to hereafter make the final decisions. ³⁷ These are primarily important because of the massive confusion they created. The chain of command to the Viceroy was utterly incomprehensible, if one existed at all, and so far as is known the Special Committee ³⁸ never met.

A few days later, on August 28, Witte was dismissed as Minister of Finance. It has been noted that there was a growing criticism of his policy in the far east, and it would seem that Tsar Nicholas II wanted to try his wings. All attempts to extract an agreement from China had failed, and this played its part, but the basis of the criticism concerned the economic failures of the far eastern venture. We have seen that there were many problems indeed. Yet the fact remained that Witte had created a vast, exceedingly complex, and partially artificial financial machine. There was no one else in Russia competent to make it run, and upon Witte's dismissal the system began to fail. ³⁹

37. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, pp. 104-105.

38. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 208.

39. Ibid., p. 226.

This was the state of Russia in the far east when that nation entered into the final negotiations with Japan just prior to the Russo-Japanese War. The economic system in the far east was in confusion with the dismissal of Witte; there was a Viceroy of the far east with no chain of command and no clearly defined policy to follow; and there was a committee concerned with far eastern matters that did not meet. It is not surprising, then, that Russia was scarcely able to make manifest a far eastern policy, either aggressive or passive, with any clarity at all.

Mention of this chaotic situation provides a proper opportunity to introduce the subject of Russian interests in Korea (or rather the lack of it), and of the so called "Bezobrazov group." As defined, it is beyond the scope of this paper to discuss areas where Russian interests were not significant, but so much attention has been given to the Russians in Korea that an explanation is necessary.

In the 1880's there were some unofficial attempts to establish Russia in Korea, but they never obtained sufficient state support. It will be remembered that in 1885 the British

40. The Yalu concession and the "Bezobrazov group" have been stressed in several works dealing with the causes of the Russo-Japanese War. See Dallin, The Rise of Russia in Asia as an excellent example of this. Since the concession amounted to so very little materially, the reason for its prominence is, I think, that it was one of the few really tangible Russian interests in Korea, that there were some fantastic schemes connected with it, that Bezobrazov's chauvinistic utterance made it seem more dangerous than it was, and that contemporary Japanese writers used it as propaganda and/or panicked over it. The matter will be placed into context later.

occupied Port Hamilton upon the rumor that Russia was intending to move into Port Lazarev on the east coast of Korea. It is not clear what Russia had in mind, if anything, but at any rate, the occupation of Port Lazarev never took place. Also at this time there was apparently a vague scheme to make Korea a Russian protectorate, but with the encouragement of the British, China reasserted her ancient claim to that country and nothing came of the Russian plan.⁴¹ All the while Japan was developing greater and greater economic influence in Korea, and by 1894⁴² accounted for at least ninety per cent of Korea's exports. One might reflect that if Russia was unable to compete with other nations in Manchuria she could hardly be expected to in Korea.

After the Sino-Japanese War Japan attempted to mastermind reforms in Korea. There can be no doubt that reforms were in order, but, of course, Japanese commerce would have been enhanced by a more stable Korea. The reforms proposed were, however, so ludicrously thorough that the length of pipes and the configuration of top-knots were reduced and standardized.⁴³ It was all too much. In February of 1896 the Korean King fled to the Russian legation for protection, and that nation then found itself with paramount influence in Korea. The advantage, however, was not followed up, and in the next twenty-seven

41. Tyler Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia (New York: Macmillan Company, 1922), p. 478.

42. George N. Curzon, Problems of the Far East (London and Bombay: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1896), p. 177.

43. William L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism: 1890-1902 (New York and London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1935), p. 397.

months three agreements were signed between Russia and Japan. The contents of the agreement do not manifest an aggressive intent on the part of Russia.⁴⁴ After 1898 Russia was content to concern herself with Manchuria, and we have seen that Witte wanted expansion to take place "naturally" without precipitating events.

There remains the question of the Yalu concession and the Russian coaling station at Mesampo on the southern tip of Korea. The latter was acquired as a private Russian enterprise to serve Russian ships as they made the passage between Vladivostok and Port Arthur. When the Russo-Japanese War broke out, there were eleven Russians at Mesampo, including the women.⁴⁵

The Yalu timber concession was first granted to a Vladivostok merchant in 1896 when the Korean King was a guest of the Russian legation, but it was not until April of 1903 that exploitation was commenced, and then only in a very small way.⁴⁶ But the guiding spirit of this exploitation was Bezobrazov, a chauvinistic and adventurous man with poor judgement who had ingratiated himself with Tsar Nicholas II. He so ingratiated himself, in fact, that the Tsar consigned to him

44. See MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China. The Agreements were: Waeber-Komura (May 14, 1896); Lobanoff-Yamagata (June 9, 1896); and Rosen-Nissi (April 25, 1896).

45. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 230. There were 202 Japanese at Mesampo at the time.

46. Tyler Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War (Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1949), pp. 139-140.

a significant sum of money to use as he saw fit to improve the Russian position in the far east. A part of this sum went into the Yalu concession. Thus, the Tsar, and by implication the Russian state, became an unofficial part of the concession. To make matters worse, the beginning of exploitation at the concession coincided with further Russian hedging in the promised evacuation of regular troops from Manchuria. Nevertheless, it must be recognized that in imperialistic context the actions of Bezobrazov on the Yalu were entirely proper.⁴⁷ The trouble was that his interviews and his ejaculations to the press while he was in the far east were chauvinistic and on the level of grand strategy. And most important, he left the impression that he was the direct agent of the Tsar, whereas he was actually unofficial and not directly connected with the state at all.⁴⁸

All this was no doubt unfortunate under the uneasy circumstances, but at any rate, by the first of September of 1903, Bezobrazov was definitely out of favor. At this time the Tsar, in a conversation with General Kuropatkin, referred to him as a "mustard plaster" that should be discarded when it has accomplished its purpose.⁴⁹ Not a brilliant remark, but it is significant. And by October and November of the same year, the Yalu concession had lost all state support from the Tsar down to the Viceroy of the Far East, Alexeieff, and was

47. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 212.

48. Ibid.

49. Ibid., p. 222.

thereafter purely a private venture amounting to very little. This concession and the Mesampo coaling station were the only Russian interests in Korea at the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War.

Now the "Bezobrazov group" would include, among others, Admiral Abaza, and the Viceroy, Admiral Alexeieff. It has been supposed that this group led Russian policy in the far east from the decline of Witte to the beginning of the war with Japan.⁵¹ This is not entirely true. We have seen that Bezobrazov fell from grace before the war, and that Alexeieff turned away from the Yalu enterprise. But the most important fact is that the wait-and-see plan of retrenchment agreed upon by the previously alluded to committee in April of 1903 was the policy which Russia followed and that this plan was agreed upon by all of the ministers present, which included the more cautious Witte and Lamsdorf as well as Admiral Abaza of the "Bezobrazov group." It follows that this policy was not a result of the group, and other than that, it was not an aggressive policy.

There is no intention here to maintain that Bezobrazov and his fellows had no effect upon the far eastern situation, and the matter will be attended to in its proper place with

50. Ibid., p. 237.

51. In December of 1902 Bezobrazov probably stood very high with the Tsar. The latter had just received a report from Witte in which he was displeased. See Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 208. Several writers, however, fail to recognize that Bezobrazov in turn suffered a decline before the war. See Dallin, The Rise of Russia in Asia.

some detail. Suffice it to say here that the group contributed to the general confusion of the Russian situation in the far east, popularized among many ministers an uncalled for optimism, and contributed to the decline of Witte without whose leadership the railroad-economic system suffered. Further, their chauvinistic utterances, and especially those of Bezobrazov himself, contributed to the tensions of the times. It is no less true, however, that they did not alter the basic Russian policy and that their adventure in Korea amounted to insignificance in the material and military sense.

In a conference of March 26, 1903, Witte warned that "... having reached the shores of the Yellow Sea under the jealous eyes of several foreign powers, we must halt our forward movement and entrench ourselves in our present position."⁵² And if one looks behind the chaotic facade of deplorable Russian instruments of policy, there one will find Russian interests, indeed, entrenched in Manchuria. It is, of course, against this position that the "several foreign powers" must react if they react at all. Either that, or they are thinking of a preventative war.

Albert Beveridge in his book, The Russian Advance,⁵³ thinks of Manchuria as being the "fag-end of the earth." However that may be, it had assumed a very important position for Russia. In efforts to bring the geographical configuration of

52. Witte, Memoirs, p. 119.

53. Albert J. Beveridge, The Russian Advance (New York and London: Harpers and Brothers Publishers, 1904), p. 67.

their nation into conformity with political and economic aspirations Russian statesmen had found the task difficult within the confines of the Tsar's domain. We have seen that the left bank of the Amur failed of development, and that the link to the Pacific remained very weak. Reacting to this adversity, it was later decided that the last link must pass through Manchuria, so that Russia finally developed her trans-continental proportions not entirely upon her own soil. It is quite clear that with the construction of the Chinese Eastern Railroad Russian power in the far east depended upon a firm grasp of Manchuria. The Manchurian rail net meant for Russia passage to the Pacific and to the warm water ports of the Liaotung peninsula. The great interest of Russia in Manchuria is understandable. It became a necessity not totally unlike the relation between Great Britain and the sea.

It is this Russian interest in Manchuria that comes into conflict primarily with those of Britain, Japan, and the United States. The conflict, however, is not actual but almost purely potential. It becomes necessary, then, to briefly define the interests of the other powers, and finally, to arrive at a judgement on their relationship to Russia in Manchuria.

Britain had something of a jump on the other imperialistic powers in the nineteenth century. She entered the industrial revolution ahead of them, and, since Trafalgar, had been the unquestioned leader in naval power. It is, in fact, an understatement to say simply that she led. Britain had been instrumental in opening China for trade in her search for new markets. In the early nineteenth century trade had been difficult,

however, for the Middle Kingdom declared it had no need of "barbarian" goods, that it possessed in abundance all things worthy of a civilized society. The English, on the other hand, did not possess tea in abundance, and yet were coming to regard it as a necessity.⁵⁴ This naturally made for an unfavorable balance of trade. But then the English hit upon opium, which India produced in abundance, and in turn soon made it a necessity for many Chinese. The Chinese Government ultimately clamped a prohibition on this article of trade and Britain had to resort to war.

This Opium War was brought to a successful conclusion by the British in 1842, and trade between the two nations was put on a more regularized basis. Britain was also awarded Hong Kong as a base for trade and sea power. In due time the terms of trade were further clarified and expanded, and more territory adjacent to Hong Kong was secured by the British. In the meantime, 1834, the East India Company had been replaced by private merchants, a fact which actually required more state involvement by way of protection.

Trade grew rapidly after this, and the most important development was the introduction of woolens into China. By 1845 China was Britain's third largest market for this article, and seventy-two per cent of China's imports came from either Britain or India.⁵⁵ Further, by 1858 twenty per cent of the

54. Stanley R. McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 48.

55. Ibid., p. 52.

Indian Government's revenue was derived from the opium trade
 with China.⁵⁶

Britain also had a great advantage in the base at Hong Kong. So long as the Middle Kingdom, out of its feeling of superiority, would only give over trade when force was applied, the British with Hong Kong were in the best position to apply it.⁵⁷

Britain also used this base to discourage other powers from securing a rival base between Hong Kong and the Sea of Japan. China was not actually closed to trade but rather to further territorial acquisition.⁵⁸

Following this general course of coercion the British led in opening more and more of China to trade, and in 1856 were before the gates of Peking along with the French. After the subsequent war, an Englishman, Sir Robert Hart, was placed at the head of the Chinese maritime customs. Starting at Canton and Hong Kong, the British had followed the coast of China around and north to the capital, opening ports for trade as they proceeded. Indeed, by 1894 Britain was in a paramount position in China. Out of 23,632 ships that cleared Chinese ports in the year preceeding, 19,365 flew the Union Jack.⁵⁹ This amounted to eighty-five per cent of China's trade carried in foreign ships. Further, Britain accounted for fifty-five per cent of all China's trade.⁶⁰ In 1896 the figure was

56. Ibid., p. 53.

57. Hudson, The Far East in World Politics, p. 53.

58. Ibid., p. 54

59. McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy, p. 71.

60. Ibid.

seventy-five per cent.⁶¹ But the most exciting aspect of this trade was its potential, in spite of the already great return. If, for example, the per capita figure of the China trade could be increased to only half that of the existing Japanese figure, the total value of British imports into China would be enormous.⁶² Suffice it to say that the China trade became a matter of great importance to Britain.

It is understandable that the British in their advantageous position would gravitate to the most productive and populous region of China. This was the great Yangtze Valley, and it became the British sphere with Shanghai serving as the main port. In those days of free trade it was not called a sphere, and indeed there was equality of opportunity of sorts. But the economic strength of Great Britain allowed her to establish herself with considerable security and there was the Royal Navy to protect her interests from military encroachment. In time, however, Britain was forced to declare her sphere. On February 13, 1898, China gave assurance that no territory in the Yangtze Valley would be ceded to any power.⁶³ This included Britain, but by nature of her commercial supremacy she was already in a dominant position.⁶⁴ Later, in 1899, there was a further clarification of British interests. This was a

61. Ibid., p. 145.

62. Ibid.

63. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, pp. 105-106.

64. McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy, p. 173.

compromise rail agreement with Russia concerning concessions and construction of railroads in the Yangtze valley and Manchuria.⁶⁵ The one power agreed not to build in the other's sphere.

These steps towards defining a sphere of interest and influence were embarrassing to the British. Free trade was all but sacrosanct in England, and, indeed, it had served the nation well. But the prevailing circumstance of international tension and pressure seemed to require a change if Britain was to maintain her place. At any rate, the Duke of Devonshire soon thereafter made a distinction that eased troubled minds.

As to the ordinary operation of trade, we hold that we are entitled to the utmost of our power to maintain our rights to the principle of equal opportunity for all. But as to enterprises, or the development by capital proceeding from other countries, Lord Salisbury has pointed out that absolute equality is not possible in such cases because it is not possible that different persons can have the same concession in the same place.⁶⁶

It did not matter that the argument was falacious.

The British sphere, then, developed in the Yangtze valley, although her interests were also considerable to the south in the vicinity of Canton and Hong Kong. Other than this, England secured Weihaiwei on the Shantung peninsula during the scramble for concessions in the late 1890's. This, however, was a reaction to Russia's occupation of Port Arthur and had no economic potential. The Shantung peninsula was the German

65. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, pp. 204-205.

66. Duke of Devonshire, Speech, Autumn, 1898, cited by Hudson, The Far East in World Politics, p. 43.

sphere so that Weihaiwei had no hinterland. It was thought that the base would balance Russian power at Port Arthur, and that the proximity of British sea power might further encourage the Chinese to resist Russian demands.⁶⁷ So far as Manchuria and Korea were concerned, British interests were next to nil, although there were various pleas for the territorial integrity of both from time to time.

Korea developed as the sphere of vital interest for Japan. Since the reformation, beginning in 1868, she had been in the process of becoming a modern industrial state with the resultant growth in population and increased dependence upon trade and commerce on the mainland of Asia.⁶⁸ The agricultural base of Japan is not great, and more and more people were being absorbed into industry. Thus, there was a growing need for foodstuffs and raw materials as well as a market for manufactured goods. Korea served this necessary purpose for Japan.

But the economic interest was only part of the reason for Japan's growing preoccupation with Korea. The Kingdom also had great strategic significance.⁶⁹ Indeed, Korea was the ancient route of invasion, and in the late nineteenth century Japanese statesmen began to have fears. Three possibilities occurred to them: Korea might fall to a strong China; or to Russia; or to a weak China dominated by Russia. It was

67. McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy, p. 255.

68. Asakawa, The Russo-Japanese Conflict, pp. 9-10.

69. Hudson, The Far East in World Politics, pp. 81-82.

felt that in such cases the economic and strategic disadvantages would threaten the very existence of Japan as an independent nation state.⁷⁰

In any case, in spite of various set-backs connected with the Triple Intervention and with over-zealous reforms in 1896 which caused a serious reaction, the Japanese were supreme in Korea by the time of the Russo-Japanese War. In truth, her interests there far exceeded what was allowed by the agreements with Russia of the late 1890's,⁷¹ and by the end of 1903 there was little else Japan could hope for in Korea. The Fortnightly Review put it this way in January of 1904 when Russia and Japan were involved in the final negotiations leading to the war:

... It would appear almost as sensible to the Japanese to negotiate with Russia for a right to the control over Korea as it would seem to the British Government to carry on long and serious diplomatic pourparlers with France as to the British right to control Ireland.⁷²

The Japanese Minister of Foreign Affairs alluded to the same situation in a somewhat more definite manner in March of 1904.

Japan possesses paramount political as well as commercial and industrial interests and influence in Korea, which having regard to her own security, she cannot consent to surrender or to share with any other power.⁷³

70. Asakawa, The Russo-Japanese Conflict, p. 52.

71. Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, p. 102.

72. Alfred Stead, "The Far Eastern Problem," Fortnightly Review (January, 1904), cited by Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, p. 117.

73. Cited by Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, p. 100.

It will be noted that he is speaking in the present tense and that Russia had accepted this as an accomplished fact, at least for the time being.

The United States differs from Japan and Great Britain in that the nation did not come to possess a sphere of interest or influence on the mainland of Asia. But by the time of the Russo-Japanese War, America no longer had her back turned to Asia.⁷⁴ The United States' own trans-continental development had altered this, and it had resulted in the growth of population on the west coast and an increased trade with Asia. The acquisition of Hawaii and the Philippines was also a vital factor in American interests in mainland Asia, and the prospect of the Panama Canal played a part. Now so far as the mainland was concerned, the United States was primarily interested in the freedom of trade. Thus, the "open door" note of Secretary of State John Hay (although it was prompted by the British) was quite an accurate manifestation of the American position. That is, if American far eastern trade is not to suffer, the various powers actually entrenched in the far east must not erect trade barriers within their spheres. Likewise, the dominance of any one power in the east would threaten trade as well as pose grave strategical problems for the new American Empire.

In theory, of course, it was possible for the "open door" to work even within a sphere of interest, but in practice such was not likely to be the case.⁷⁵ The wealthy powers might

74. Ibid., p. 6.

75. Hudson, The Far East in World Politics, p. 112.

possess concession of such strategic value that freedom of trade seemed to be an unnecessary risk. A power of relative economic weakness such as Russia could not allow freedom of trade and maintain her sphere. Thus, the "open door" came after the fact and was more a policy of criticism than one of construction.

Now the reason for this brief look at the interests of the sea powers in the far east is to demonstrate one rather simple point. It is that the spheres of interests and influence of the powers did not conflict with that of Russia in Manchuria and that Russia did not possess any significant interest or influence that conflicted with those of the other powers. In fact, in the period just prior to the Russo-Japanese War the location of interest and influence was more clearly defined than before. The French sphere in Indo-China and the German sphere on the Shantung peninsula were not exceptions. It will be remembered that Britain and Russia had earlier arrived at an agreement defining their spheres in the Yangtze Valley and Manchuria. Further, Japan had invested her sphere in Korea while Russia had retired almost completely into Manchuria. The greatest conflict concerned the general principle of the "open door", but this was an imperfect instrument of policy to begin with, and the chief offender, Russia, held sway over a sparsely settled region that provided relatively slight incentive to the trading instincts of the various other powers.

It follows, then, that if one is to account for the international tension and violence of the times, it will be

necessary to look for causes other than an actual conflict of specific and established spheres of interest and influence. But the cause of violence is likely as not to be fear rather than any precipitous event of outstanding magnitude.

CHAPTER III

THE RUSSIAN MENACE AND THE SEA POWERS

Two aspects of the Russian position in the far east as it had developed since the time of Muraviev were clear: that even the more cautious Russian statesmen expected ultimately to dominate portions of China south of the Great Wall; and that, because of her relative economic weakness, Russia would not allow others equal commercial opportunities within any sphere she might obtain. Britain, Japan, and the United States found this significant, but it is not a sufficient explanation of the threat Russia posed. In the first place Russian power was something of an illusion, as the events of 1904-1905 would prove. Also, the threat from Russia meant different things to different nations and to individual statesmen. Finally, it is frequently very difficult to determine the importance of the Russian menace to a nation entangled in the web of imperialistic diplomacy. This is especially true in the case of Britain. The United States, and especially Japan, could sometimes at least look upon the Russian menace as a relatively isolated problem.

It is therefore necessary to consider the power relationship between Russia and the individual nations she threatened or appeared to threaten. Moreover, it is necessary to enter

into the question of degree. That is, how vital to the individual nations were the points threatened by Russia in the far east.

Russia and British Interests in the Far East

The Russian threat to the British Empire did not originate in the far east. It was a long-standing aspect of the two nation's foreign policies and had made itself manifest all along the periphery of Asia. In cases of conflict it had been common for the powers to use buffer states, and in a sense northern China became such a tool of power politics as the British moved into the south and the Yangtze Valley.¹ When, however, Russia began to move into Manchuria, and when other powers carved out specific spheres of interest and influence, the implementation of British policy became more problematic. Before this situation existed, Britain had behaved in the classical tradition of sea power and had done so with considerable success. This meant resisting, either directly or indirectly, the establishment of foreign bases of power near to the prize, China.

It will be remembered that in the Crimean War the British, along with their French ally, attacked Muraviev at the mouth of the Amur river. The operation was not a success, but it was nevertheless a clear attempt to keep Russia away from the coast and the open sea and to prohibit Russia from establishing

1. Tyler Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War (2d ed.; Gloucester: Peter Smith, 1959), p. 52.

a base nearer to the Yangtze Valley than was Hong Kong. As this proved too demanding, the British simply cut their losses and established a line of opposition further to the south.

Another interesting point of possible conflict concerns the renewed interest of China in Korea in 1882. Korea had been an ancient protectorate of China, but in the nineteenth century there had been no effort to exploit the precedent. Korea had been all but independent. It has been suggested, however, that the British were behind the Chinese move in 1882, and that it was essentially an anti-Russian tactic.² That is, Britain promoted and encouraged Chinese dominance of Korea out of fear that Russia might take advantage of that weak but so strategically located nation. Further, Korea would then have served as an extension of the north China buffer region.

Whatever the case may be, it is logical to suspect British implication in light of a subsequent event. The afore-mentioned Port Hamilton-Port Lazarev affair occurred in 1885, and the British occupied Port Hamilton in Korea upon the rumor that Russia was going to establish herself at Port Lazarev.³ Thus Britain did fear a Russian move in Korea, and she was desirous of holding Russia on the north Pacific littoral and of retaining Korea as something of a buffer state. In this affair Britain, with her much greater sea power, was not the least strained in

2. Tyler Dennett, Americans in Eastern Asia (New York: Macmillan, 1922), pp. 471ff. Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, p. 96. Dennett suggests that the British representative in Peking, along with Sir Robert Hart, were behind China's moves in Korea.

3. Supra, pp. 31-32.

discouraging a Russian advance to the south, but later, when Russia commenced to move south through Manchuria, supported by railroads, it was another matter.

Prior to 1894, Britain generally followed a policy indicated by the points of conflict mentioned above. That is, she endeavored to keep Korea as a vassal state of China and looked upon north China as a whole as something of a buffer state between her interests in the Yangtze Valley and the new Russian power in the far east established by Muraviev.⁴ On the whole the policy was a success. How could it fail? We have seen that the Russian position on the left bank of the Amur and in the Primorsk was innately weak and at the time constituted no overland threat that British sea power could not cope with. There seemed to be little to worry about. Before the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 the British were confident that China would serve as a deterrent to any Russian ambitions in the north, and since 1882 China had been reasserting her claim⁵ to Korea.

But this comfortable situation did not last. The Sino-Japanese War, the Triple Intervention, the Russo-Chinese Treaty with the Chinese Eastern Concession, and the Russian occupation of the Liaotung peninsula followed in rapid succession. Britain then found that the value of her sea power was severely limited by Russian overland transportation and expansion.

4. Stanley R. McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1931), p. 143.

5. Ibid., p. 102.

It would seem that the result of the Sino-Japanese War started the decline of Britain's position in the far east, and it would seem that Britain herself precipitated the difficulty. That is, she did if Britain was behind the reassertion of China in Korea and if it was primarily because of this that Japan made war on China. At any rate, Japan was determined that Korea be independent and went to war. Britain was opposed to such disruption because of her interest in China as a buffer, but expected Chinese victory anyhow.⁶ Partially modernized Japan, however, dispatched the "Chinese Colossus" with wonderful efficiency and thereby tore off a wing of British policy. Since China, by her defeat, had proved herself useless as an agent of British policy, or even as a buffer region, the British quickly left her side. But their greatest fear concerned with the war had been that China and Japan would both be so weakened that there would be no assistance in halting a Russian advance.⁷ Therefore, when Japan proved that she was an exception to the oriental lack of military prowess, it was with some relief that Britain welcomed her to the family of powers.⁸ Here was another agent to deter Russia and, so to speak, take the place of China. Further, Japan would keep Korea out of Russian hands as it had been hoped China would have done under the earlier policy. Indeed, the British were friendly enough to decline membership

6. Ibid., p. 83.

7. Ibid., pp. 105-106.

8. Ibid., p. 123.

in the Triple Intervention designed to deprive Japan of the spoils of war.

This switch may very well have been a mistake. It did lay the foundation for the later Anglo-Japanese Alliance, but at the same time, it drove China into the waiting arms of Russia.⁹ Russia had proved herself to be an expensive mistress in 1860, and she had experienced no change of heart over the years. In turn, the British rejection led to the Chinese Eastern Railroad concession which finally allowed Russia to escape the necessity of using the left bank of the Amur as her only passage to the far east and soon gave her a very strong sphere of influence in Manchuria. Thus, possibly for a second time, the British helped to precipitate a trend of events that weakened her position in the far east by strengthening that of Russia. There seems little doubt that had Britain not deserted China in her hour of need that nation would not have found it expedient to turn to Russia, and the afore-mentioned favors would not have been forthcoming. On the other hand, if one assumes that Russia could not have been stopped in any case, then the friendship of Japan was well worth the price.¹⁰ Further, Germany passed her first naval law in March of 1898, less than two years after the Chinese Eastern Concession. Japan would later indirectly assist Britain in meeting the threat of a new and enlarged German navy by

9. Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, p. 53.

10. McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy, p. 141, is convinced that the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was something of a triumph of British policy.

obviating the necessity of a large British fleet in the far east.

Britain was also indirectly involved in the events that left Russia entrenched on the Liaotung peninsula. The trend of events started as Germany developed an interest in far eastern imperialism and finally hit upon Kiaochow on the Shantung peninsula as a proper base for exploitation. In November of 1897 the murder of two German missionaries provided Germany with a pretext to occupy Kiaochow in spite of a degree of Russian resentment.¹¹ In March of 1898 a lease of Kiaochow and the Shantung peninsula was extracted from China.¹² In the meantime Britain had raised no objection to the German move,¹³ thereby giving her tacit consent. Should Britain have placed herself between Germany and Kiaochow, it was thought that the latter might have been pushed towards the Franco-Russian Alliance and into some sort of concerted action such as the intervention of 1895.¹⁴ There was nothing innately wrong with this reasoning, but the lease of the Shantung peninsula by Germany was the starting signal for the scramble for concessions

11. Mary Evelyn Townsend, The Rise and Fall of Germany's Colonial Empire, 1884-1918 (New York: The Macmillian Company, 1930), pp. 186-188.

12. John V. A. MacMurray (ed.), Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, 1894-1919 (New York: Oxford University Press, 1921), pp. 112-116.

13. Andrew Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, With Special Emphasis on the Causes of the Russo-Japanese War (Berkeley and Los Angeles: University of California Press, 1958), p. 96. McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy, pp. 196-198.

14. McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy, pp. 199-200.

in China in which Russia came out with the Liaotung peninsula and Port Arthur. By tacit consent to Germany's high-handed actions in the far east Britain lost any foundation for moral suasion with respect to the Russian lease of the Liaotung peninsula later in the same year. It will be remembered that with the occupation of the Liaotung peninsula the Russian position in Manchuria became potentially integrated. That is, by the construction of the South Manchurian Railway to join with the Chinese Eastern, and by connecting this rail net with the Trans-Siberian, a sufficient base existed for great Russian strength in the far east.

The British reaction to Port Arthur was rather weak under the circumstances. Lord Salisbury was convinced that it would take a war to drive Russia out, and this was out of the question.¹⁵ Thereupon it was decided that Britain must seek to balance this new Russian power.¹⁶ The result was the British occupation of Weihaiwei on the Shantung peninsula across the Gulf of Chihli from Port Arthur. Weihaiwei was not a good choice, but in fact, there was little enough to choose from by this date. In the first place, the Shantung peninsula was now a German sphere of interest and influence so that to obtain German agreement Britain had to renounce any intention to exploit the coal in the hinterland for her navy.¹⁷ This left Weihaiwei

15. Ibid., pp. 223-225.

16. Arthur J. Marder, The Anatomy of British Sea Power (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1940), p. 310.

17. Ibid., p. 311.

inadequate as a naval base. Other than this, the occupation did not really balance anything. Russia did not arrive on the Gulf of Chihli by sea, and was at the time busy investing in Manchuria largely by means of overland communications which a British naval base at Weihaiwei could scarcely alter.

The record of British opposition to Russia in this period might lead one to suspect a lack of understanding of the Russian menace. Moreover, the next British move with respect to Russia in the far east, the compromise agreement of April, 1899, concerning spheres of influence and interest, smacks of a certain amount of despair. That is, the agreement has the air of a device born of the lack of a positive method of opposing Russia, pronouncements of the British Government notwithstanding. Lord Salisbury did not reason the matter in this manner. He pointed out that there was no actual conflict of interest between Russia and the British Empire in the far east and observed that there would be greater spoils for both powers under conditions of cooperation.¹⁸ Lord Salisbury was correct. But in spite of his reasons for favoring the agreement of 1899, it must still be understood in light of the overall British policy in the far east. As such, it is another aspect of British efforts to contain Russia north of the Great Wall. From the time of Muraviev the British had followed a rather consistent policy of containment, albeit in various degrees of vigor. For a time the policy was generally successful, but as Russia began to develop modern overland transportation,

18. McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy, pp. 235-236.

there was less and less that British sea power could do to halt the Russian advance. British sea power was becoming somewhat impotent with respect to the far eastern problem.

But to return to the question of British understanding of the Russian menace, it would be a mistake to assume that misfortunes of British policy mean British ignorance of the implications of Russia's position in the far east. The fact that certain British moves in the east led to unfortunate results cannot be avoided, but the cure frequently proves worse than the disease in foreign policy. The truth is that the British had any number of able instructors in the far eastern problem, not the least of whom was Witte himself. Realization of the difficult position followed rather quickly as Russia expanded and developed her sphere. Thus British statesmen were confounded not so much from any misunderstanding of the threat from Russia, but from want of a method to meet it.

One of the more significant commentators on the British position in the far east was Lord Curzon, the Parliamentary Under-Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs. Lord Curzon drew attention to the impact of Russia's trans-continental rail development.

If the Trans-Siberian Railway will be a menace to Chinese territorial integrity, it will also generate a sharp competition with British Asiatic trade.... There are, therefore, the strongest a priori reasons in favor of a close and sympathetic understanding between China and Great Britain in the Far East.¹⁹

19. George N. Curzon, Problems of the Far East (London and Bombay: Longmans, Green, and Company, 1896), p. viii.

It has been noted that Great Britain gave up on China as a means to oppose Russia, but this takes no value from Curzon's warning. He realized the importance of the Trans-Siberian Railway and understood that Britain would require assistance of some sort in meeting the threat. It is well to remember that China might be normally expected to resist Russia as a matter of course; that is, simply for her own protection. Therefore, in China Britain had something of a natural ally in the far east, and for a while this allowed her to remain safely in "splendid isolation." Isolation had become almost institutionalized in the nineteenth century. This type of relationship was what Lord Curzon had in mind in reference to "a close and sympathetic understanding between China and Great Britain."²⁰ When, however, Britain left the side of China after the Sino-Japanese War, she found herself in a state of isolation indeed and was left with little but her own sea power to oppose Russia in the far east. There soon followed the Chinese Eastern concession and with it further instruction concerning the Russian menace, this time from one who had to be regarded as an excellent source: Witte himself. In January of 1898 the British ambassador reported the following to his superior after a conversation with Witte:

Producing from a carefully locked desk a map of China, the minister [Witte] proceeded to draw his hand over the Provinces of Chili, Shansi, Shensi, and Kansu, and said that sooner or later Russia would probably absorb all this territory. Then putting his finger on Lanchow, he said that

20. Ibid.

the Siberian Railway would in time run a branch line to this town.... He considered the lower part of China...would be beyond the reach of Russian expansion....²¹

The Chinese provinces mentioned by Witte lie south of the Great Wall, and the fear of such southernly expansion by Russia had been the raison d'etre of Britain's policy of containment. Any Russian expansion in the far east was to be opposed, almost as a matter of course, but so long as expansion took place north of the Great Wall it could be tolerated. This would not be in direct conflict with British interests. As Russia reached Manchuria, then, the possibility of further expansion involved the certainty of a direct conflict of established interests. This would actually have been a novel situation in the far east and one likely to precipitate war. At any rate, the power displacement in the far east was no longer fluid for Britain. At this point containment became more than a policy. It was a necessity, and the problem Britain faced was to meet this necessity with sea power, diplomacy, and without an ally. In the field of diplomacy Britain concluded the agreement with Russia in 1899 that defined their spheres, but it is wise to think of this as a Russian modus vivendi, for it would give her time to complete the rail net.

And how was sea power to meet the overland threat of Russia? British men-of-war could not sail the expanses of northern Asia, although this might not have seemed too remarkable

21. British Documents of the Origins of the War (London), I, 8. Cited by David J. Dallin, The Rise of Russia in Asia (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1949), p. 53.

in the nineteenth century. Wonders had been wrought by sea power; and although the Russians were advancing overland, Britain could certainly not have been accounted helpless. But the problem had become compounded. The truth is that in these closing years of the nineteenth century Britain could no longer maintain a superior fleet in the far east without slighting security closer to home.²² The Russian menace took on an added significance with this situation, but again there were those who had an understanding of it, and in fact, a possible solution. In a speech of May 19, 1898, the Colonial Secretary, Joseph Chamberlain, said:

History shows us that unless we are allied to some great military power, as we were in the Crimean war, when we had France and Turkey as our allies, we cannot seriously injure Russia, although it may also be true that she cannot seriously injure us.... If the policy of isolation, which has hitherto been the policy of this country, is to be maintained in the future, then the fate of the Chinese Empire may be, probably will be, hereafter decided without reference to our wishes and in defiance of our interests.²³

The international alignments of the times and the strong naval building programs of other powers seemed to compel Britain to either enlarge her navy seriously or seek an ally to ease her far eastern position.²⁴ As an ally for Britain Chamberlain²⁵ had Germany, and possibly the United States, in mind.

22. Marder, The Anatomy of British Sea Power, p. 311.

23. Speech by Joseph Chamberlain, May 13, 1898, cited by Geoffrey F. Hudson, The Far East in World Politics (2d ed.; London: Oxford University Press, 1945), p. 120.

24. Marder, The Anatomy of British Sea Power, p. 312.

25. McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy, p. 269.

Englishmen still had grave doubts concerning the value of an alliance with an oriental nation such as Japan in spite of the logic behind such an arrangement. At any rate, Chamberlain had penetrated one aspect of the Russian menace: the British Empire was certain to require assistance if it was to successfully meet further Russian overland expansion in the far east.

In 1900, with the Boxer Rebellion and the subsequent Russian occupation of Manchuria with regular troops, the Russian menace appeared with greater clarity than ever before. It was only logical to expect that Russia would take advantage of the presence of her regulars to further her cause, and certainly she would do so in conflict to British interests. The Quarterly Review summed up the situation in this pessimistic tone:

Down to recent years the position of England as the dominant power at Peking was unquestioned. We were the first in the field; we possessed the bulk of the trade and we held command of the sea by which alone access to China could be obtained. What was still more important the colonies of Hong Kong and Singapore and all the coaling stations in route were in our hands, so that no hostile fleet could approach China except with our good will. But with the approaching completion of the Siberian Railroad and the massing of Russian troops on the Manchurian border, the situation has undergone a radical change. Russia has a frontier coterminous with China for some three thousand miles and can exercise an influence on China against which our sea power, however unquestioned, is of slight avail.²⁶

These commentaries on the Russian menace display a considerable degree of understanding on the part of the British, as well as a considerable amount of apprehension. But it is well to recall that Russia had not in any significant way encroached upon any

26. The Quarterly Review (January, 1900), 11, cited by McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy, pp. 150-151.

other power's sphere. Nor, as it turned out, did she have serious intentions of doing so. Therefore, the cause of this alarming comment was the pure potential of Russian expansion and not actual Russian penetration into the British domain. The truth is that British weakness created by the method of Russian overland expansion was more responsible for the Russian menace than any positive action resorted to by Russia. That is, Russia had made a menace of herself not entirely by creating power where there had been none, but by avoiding power where it was almost supreme. Thus the British entertained fears through their new understanding of the limitations placed upon sea power, and to make matters worse, the unquestioned dominance by Britain of all the seas was now in doubt.

The points of British weakness and the absence of any actual conflict of specific interests are supported by the afore-mentioned agreement of 1899 that defined the Russian and British spheres. First, the agreement indicates that Britain was forced to accept Russia's position in spite of the fact that Manchuria was the source of the menace. Second, the agreement indicates that Britain had no interest in Manchuria, potential or actual, of her own, and that she had no unalterable objections to Manchuria simply being a sphere of interest and influence. Article one of the British note to Russia reads as follows:

Great Britain engages not to seek for her own account, on behalf of British subjects or of others, any railway Concessions to the north of the Great Wall of China, and not to obstruct,

directly or indirectly, applications for rail Concessions in that region supported by the Russian Government.²⁷

The absence of specific conflict is further supported by the attitude of Joseph Chamberlain. Even before the spheres agreement, Colonial Secretary Chamberlain, while discussing a possible alliance with Germany, had maintained that it would not be directed towards removing Russia from her sphere in Manchuria.²⁸ That is, the potential alliance might be used to discourage Russia from implementing a larger policy, but it would not be designed to initiate action against the Russian sphere.

It is sometimes assumed that with the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance in early 1902 Britain, aware of her difficult position in the far east, renounced her rather passive policy of trying to contain Russia without the real physical means of accomplishing the end; that she cut her losses and hired a mercenary force, so to speak, to push Russia back to the north, all for the price of holding the ring for Japan. This is not entirely true, and the idea is most likely a result of the logic of such an alliance rather than the actual conditions involved in the conclusion of the alliance. "Look at those two island kingdoms, Great Britain and Japan. Are they not like the two eyes in the face? If they could only see

27. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, p. 204.

28. McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy, p. 269.

together."²⁹ They did see together for a time, and the result was spectacular and successful. Russia was pushed back. But this success of the alliance indicates more clarity in British policy making than was the case, for it is by no means certain that British statesmen expected a war with Russia to follow.

It is first necessary to recall that from March of 1898 through 1901 Britain looked to Germany for an alliance rather than to Japan, and the United States were considered as well.³⁰ Britain understood that the threat from Russia, among other problems, recommended an alliance to her, but she did not recognize that Japan was the most logical prospect. It is therefore safe to assume that the logic of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance did not dominate British policy makers. There remained, even after the conclusion of the alliance, those who doubted the military prowess of any Asiatic nation. Soon after the Sino-Japanese War, Captain John Ingles, R. N., the last British adviser to Japan, returned to his country full of glowing reports on the Japanese Navy and Japanese sailors. Ingles was generally disbelieved. It was difficult for Englishmen to understand how a nation just emerging from medievalism could be accounted a great power and a worthy ally for the British Empire.³¹

29. Bertram F. Algernon, The Garter Mission to Japan (London: Redesdale Press, 1906), p. 29, cited by Chang Fu-Chung, The Anglo-Japanese Alliance (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins Press, 1931), p. 51.

30. Marder, The Anatomy of British Sea Power, p. 428.

31. Hector C. Bywater, Sea Power in the Pacific: A Study of the American-Japanese Naval Problem (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin Company, 1921), p. 139.

But the important point is the logic of alliances considered and consummated: that of the proposed alliance with Germany, and the alliance with Japan that ultimately led to direct action against the Russian menace.

If the British problem was to be mitigated, a potential ally would have to, first, relieve pressure on the Royal Navy, and second, provide the possibility of military deployment against Russia. With respect to the British naval problem, Germany could have relieved the pressure. Her building program was of great concern to the British Government, and while an alliance surely would not have removed all fears, it would certainly have improved Britain's strategic position. Therefore, so far as the naval problem is concerned, an alliance is the important element rather than a specific alliance with any predesignated nation such as Japan.³² It should also be noted that there were Englishmen who favored an alliance with the United States rather than Germany or Japan, but it was generally recognized that the idea, even if appealing, was astoundingly problematical.³³

But, of course, the problem ran deeper than the vicissitudes of sea power. No matter how strong the Royal Navy might be in the far east, it would still be limited as an effective deterrent to Russian overland expansion. Hence, the

32. William L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism (New York and London: Alfred A. Knopf, 1935), p. 782. This is Langer's view, but it should be noted that an alliance seems to him to be all that mattered even with respect to the potential conflict of land powers. This seems doubtful, and I think the idea should be limited to the British naval problem.

33. René Albrecht-Carrié, A Diplomatic History of Europe Since the Congress of Vienna (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1958), p. 229.

second requirement for Britain's potential ally: that she could threaten Russia upon the land and so contain her north of British interests in the orient. Again, an alliance with Germany would have met the requirement. As Joseph Chamberlain expressed it, Russia was clearly a menace to all powers that had an interest in the China trade, and certainly to Germany with her sphere of interest on the Shantung peninsula.³⁴ He allowed it was the clear duty of Britain and Germany to come to an agreement concerning the unappropriated area of China south of Manchuria, and having done so, draw a line across which Russia should not venture on pain of reprisal.³⁵ This would actually have amounted to an Anglo-German combination to counter the Dual Alliance of France and Russia. It was expected that such a combination would cause Russia to remain within her sphere in the far east and that she would do so without resort to war.³⁶ Had such an alliance become a reality, it would have been intended as a continuation of the British policy of containment, at least in the far east.

It must be that British statesmen were thinking of containment, because they were certainly unwilling to offer Germany such an enticement as was likely to cause that nation to risk war with Russia. And France, of course, would have been involved through her alliance with Russia. War over the far eastern problem was a possibility, however, and should

34. McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy, p. 269.

35. Ibid., p. 267.

36. Ibid.

Germany have allied herself with Britain such a war would have been fought in Europe. It is ludicrous to expect that Germany, assisted by British sea power, would have transported an army to northern Asia to localize a war with Russia when the western border of the latter's empire was coterminous with that of Germany. Indeed, Germany might well have fared better than she did in World War I, but she did not want such a conflict. Further, any chance of concluding an Anglo-German alliance was made unlikely by anti-British feeling in Germany arising out of the latter's disapproval of British treatment of the Boers.³⁷ But probably the most fundamental point is that Germany was quite content to see Russia engaged in Asia, whereas Britain would expect assistance from an ally in meeting the Russian threat. Certainly the Kaiser frequently gave direct encouragement to Russian expansion in the far east,³⁸ and it is just as certain that Joseph Chamberlain would have expected Germany, as an ally, to resist the Russian threat in the far east.³⁹ Chamberlain was Colonial Secretary at the time and was given a carte blanche by the British Government in 1898 to attempt to secure an alliance with Germany.⁴⁰ His efforts continued off and on through 1901.

37. Albrecht-Carrié, A Diplomatic History of Europe, p. 229.

38. Isaac Don Levine (ed.), Letters of the Kaiser to the Tsar (New York: Stokes, 1920), pp. 99-100.

39. The Royal Institute of International Affairs, Political and Strategic Interests of the United Kingdom, an Outline (London, New York, and Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1939), p. 215.

40. Albrecht-Carrié, A Diplomatic History of Europe, p. 228.

But to return to the German policy of encouraging Russia in Asia, one of the methods of implementing it was by direct communication between the Kaiser and Tsar Nicholas II. An excellent example is a letter of January 1904. Consideration of an alliance had passed, but the letter is nevertheless a clear indication of the Kaiser's interest in the matter.

To us here on the Continent this Hypocrisy (sic) and hatred [that with respect to Britain and the Russian menace] is utterly odious and incomprehensible! Everybody here understands perfectly that Russia, following the laws of expansion, must try to get at the sea for an iceless outlet for its commerce... it is evident to every unbiased mind that Korea must and will be Russian. When and how that is nobody's affair [!] and concerns only you and your country. This is the opinion of our people here at home and therefore there is no excitement or "emballement" or war roumère (sic) or anything of that sort here. The sure end that Korea will once be yours is a foregone conclusion here like the occupation of Mandshuria (sic), hence nobody troubles themselves about it here.⁴¹

It has been pointed out that Russia had no pre-war plans of going into Korea, and there is no way to measure the influence of the Kaiser on Tsar Nicholas II. Nevertheless, the blessings of Germany in the far eastern expansion were of primary importance, and behind these blessings was the fundamental problem with respect to the logic of an Anglo-German alliance.

The truth is that German policy had followed a somewhat conflicting course. Besides encouraging Russia in the far east, she also developed interests there for herself. There is the matter of the lease of the Shantung peninsula, which did not please Russia, but perhaps of greater importance is the

41. Levine, Letters of the Kaiser to the Tsar, pp. 99-100.

fact that as the Kaiser was giving moral support to the Tsar, the German nation was at the same time working hand in hand with Britain as the main economic rival of Russia in the far east.⁴² Therefore, Germany was able to please no one completely and did not see either part of her policy finally succeed.⁴³ So far as Great Britain was concerned, this situation manifested itself most clearly in the denouement of the agreement Germany and Britain did make in October of 1900. This vague note concerned the mutual protection of the territorial integrity of China under the then prevailing circumstances of rebellion,⁴⁴ but upon the later suggestion that it was time to act on the agreement Germany declined, in March of 1901, on the grounds that Manchuria was not precisely a part of the Chinese Empire.⁴⁵

All this suggests that an Anglo-German alliance at this time would have been logical only in expectation of world war and of Britain being drawn in with the Triple Alliance, and not as a means to solve Britain's naval problem and to contain Russia in the far east. Germany did not want a general war, had little to gain from an alliance with Britain, and was irritated by the Boer War as well. In fact, the German foreign office simply, and correctly, interpreted British overtures

42. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 109.

43. Hudson, The Far East in World Politics, p. 96.

44. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, p. 263.

45. Albrecht-Carrié, A Diplomatic History of Europe, p. 231.

as a sign of British weakness. Britain had to make an alliance with someone she could help, and the Japanese nation was such a one.

For Japan the Russian menace was more direct than it was in the case of the British, and for Japanese statesmen it amounted to a problem the solution of which was a necessity. But in so far as direct action against Russia was contemplated, there remained the fear of another Triple Intervention, or something of that nature. More specifically, Japanese statesmen feared a conflict with Russia in which the Franco-Russian Alliance would become active. A war with Russia might be profitable, but a war against these allies would certainly end in disaster. For Japan, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance signed on January 30, 1902, solved this problem. It provided that Britain would hold the ring for Japan in case of war.

If, . . . any other Power or Powers should join in hostilities against that ally, the other High Contracting Party will come to its assistance, and will conduct the war in common, and make peace in mutual agreement with it.⁴⁷

The Alliance also declared that the "High Contracting Parties" would, if possible, maintain the peace in the far east,⁴⁸ but it was clear that they would do so in their own interests. Therefore, the Alliance can be interpreted as a continuation of the policy of containing Russia so far as Britain was concerned.

46. McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy, p. 267.

47. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, pp. 324-325.

48. Ibid., p. 324.

Perhaps Britain had no intention of going to war in spite of the hard fact that the Alliance provided for such an eventuality. But in any case, an alliance had become necessary for Britain. The limitations, and later the relative weakness of British sea power have been alluded to in some detail, but it was probably another issue that became the deciding factor for Britain with respect to the Alliance. This was contemplation of the possible sequel to a potential combination of Japan and Russia.

Such a combination was clearly not out of the question. Opinion in Japan was split. Many important figures in and out of the Japanese Government favored an agreement with Russia rather than constant opposition and possibly war. No less a figure that former Premier Ito was of this persuasion,⁴⁹ and in fact, he made considerable progress toward such an agreement. This could have ruined Britain's position in Asia. It seems certain that Russia and Japan in concert would have dominated the far east and that Russia would also have then been free to⁵⁰ apply pressure in Afganistan, Persia, and the near east. To this possible combination British statesmen could add an ambitious Germany that had just passed a second naval law in June of 1900 and an unfriendly France still smarting somewhat⁵¹ from the Fashoda crisis of 1898. It therefore appeared urgent

49. Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, p. 56.

50. Ibid.

51. Ibid., pp. 56-57.

for Britain to ally herself with Japan.

But perhaps the fundamental point for this study is not to be found in the intricacies of policy making. It is perhaps to be found in the fact that upon signing the Anglo-Japanese Alliance Britain passed leadership in the far east to Japan and, therefore, temporary dominance to Japan after her victory over Russia in 1905.

In fact, the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was a recognition of the decline of British power and position in the far east. British sea power remained indispensable to Japan for a time, but the days of leadership and dominance were gone. And the point must not be lost that it was not Japanese power that precipitated this misfortune, but rather the Russian menace out of Siberia and Manchuria which Britain could not see her way clear to meet with the power at her disposal. Under the then prevailing circumstances of international power politics Britain was forced to pass leadership to a power that could meet the threat from Russia. As it turned out, that power met the threat successfully. It is excellent to hold the balance of power, as Britain did between Japan and Russia, but if the balance has to be applied, the final result may well prove to be exclusion.

52. Marder, The Anatomy of British Sea Power, pp. 428-429. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, p. 783. McCordock, British Far Eastern Policy, pp. 85-86.

The Russian Menace and the National Existence of Japan

In the case of Britain, fear of Russia was always applied to matters of empire and commerce, but in the case of Japan the very existence of the nation appeared to be at stake. Naturally, Japan, as she gained in power, was more apt to take direct action and was not dominated by ideas of containing Russia. Japan began her amazing rise to the position of a great power with the revolution of 1868, although she remained too weak to deal with the great powers of Europe for some time. In 1875, for example, the nation was unable to oppose Russia when the latter added Sakhalin to her empire. But the situation was not to remain so unbalanced. The progress of shipbuilding between 1870 and 1885 is a useful index to Japanese aspirations. During these fifteen years no less than 266 steamers were launched, besides many hundreds of schooners and junks.⁵³ Further, many more vessels were purchased from foreign shipbuilders, especially the larger warships of the Japanese navy. Thus, by 1894 Japan could make war against China and bring it to a successful conclusion, and ten years later she was able to defeat the much greater power of Russia.

The causes of these wars and the Japanese war aims involved point to the impact of the threat Russia appeared to present to Japan. But before turning to specifics it is well to consider the general problem; that is, the Russian menace and Japanese national existence. Perhaps the clearest general

53. Bywater, Sea Power in the Pacific, p. 135.

statement from the Japanese point of view was made by the historian Kanichi Asakawa, writing on the eve of the Russo-Japanese War:

... Russia, with Manchuria and ultimately Korea in her hands, would be able, on the one hand, to build up under exclusive policy a naval and commercial influence strong enough to enable her to dominate the east, and, on the other, to cripple forever Japan's ambition as a nation, slowly drive her to starvation and decay, and even politically annex her.⁵⁴

It will be noted that Manchuria is the key to the entire passage, along with, of course, Russia's overland rail expansion.

Actually, Korea is the primary concern, but the historian makes Manchuria the key by suggesting that should Russia be allowed to continue to build up her power there Korea will ultimately fall to her as if by a natural law. Does this mean that Japan had no interest in Manchuria for its own sake? Not entirely. There was the matter of Japan's growing need for trade and raw material arising out of the nation's rapid industrialization, as Asakawa said:

The meaning of all these protective and exclusive measures in Manchuria by Russia becomes plain, when it is seen that the complete control of the economic resources of Manchuria would give Russia, not only sufficient means to support Eastern Siberia, but also a great command over the trade of China and Japan. The latter country Russia might be able to reduce to dire distress, when necessary, by closing the supplies coming from Manchuria, upon which Japan will have to depend every year more closely than before.⁵⁵

54. Kanichi Asakawa, The Russo-Japanese Conflict, Its Causes and Issues (Boston and New York: Houghton Mifflin and Company, 1904), p. 52.

55. Ibid.

According to this, Japan would have been satisfied only if Russia would have allowed free trade, or the "open door" in Manchuria. We have seen that Russia was unable to do this because of her relatively weak economy. Therefore, the "open door" in Manchuria would have meant the end of Russian predominance there and the destruction of her route to the Pacific as it had developed under Witte. Should Russia have seen fit to satisfy such Japanese aspirations, it would have meant a retreat to the situation as it existed before the Chinese Eastern Concession.⁵⁶ But Russia would not make such a concession. The situation had reached an impasse. In the Russo-Japanese War, Japan attempted to break this impasse to her own favor, and in fact, was partially successful. But before turning to this conflict it is necessary to glance at the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895 in so far as it touches upon the Russian menace and the issue in Manchuria.

Generally, the causes of this war have been traced to three Japanese problems.⁵⁷ First, there was the matter of renewed Chinese interest in Korea along with the issue of Korean reform and the Tonghak rebellion. Korea was in a rare state of corruption and confusion, and the Japanese maintained that China was not interested in correcting the deplorable situation and probably was not even able to. For obvious commercial reasons, Korea could not be allowed to remain in

56. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 229.

57. Payson J. Treat, "The Causes of the Sino-Japanese War," Pacific Historical Review, VIII (June, 1939), passim.

its natural state. Hence, it was necessary to drive the Chinese soldiers out of Korea that Japan might effect proper reforms and put down the Tonghaks. The issue of reform is usually discounted as a pretext, and certainly the Japanese had more in mind than helping the unfortunates help themselves. Nevertheless, the presence of Chinese troops in Korea cannot be discounted as insignificant, and although their presence was tied in with the issue of reform, it must be recognized as a separate and real problem for Japanese interests.

Next, there was the domestic situation in Japan. There was pressure on the Japanese Government to settle the issue in Korea, and it has been argued that the Government went to war with China to prevent a revolution at home.⁵⁸ In truth, there was great pressure, and it cannot be completely discounted, but the argument was based primarily upon the ejaculations of the opposition press and can scarcely be taken at face value.⁵⁹

Finally, there is the matter of the Sino-Japanese War and the Russian menace. When Japanese troops were landed in Korea in 1894, the Trans-Siberian Railway was half completed. Therefore, it is frequently argued that Japan anticipated future Russian strength in the far east via the railroad and decided to secure her position on the mainland before the Russians had

58. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, pp. 172-173, argues that the causes of the war were to be found in the Japanese domestic situation.

59. Treat, Pacific Historical Review, pp. 156-158.

60

completed their task. Indeed, there is reason to credit this argument. In 1893 Yamagata, the military chief of the Japanese Government, warned the Emperor that upon the completion of the Trans-Siberian Russia would be in a position to make Mongolia, Manchuria, and possibly Peking itself, protectorates, and he advised that the nation act before the completion of the railroad.⁶¹ It is also known that sometime Premier, and always important, Marquis Ito kept a detailed account of the progress of the Trans-Siberian.⁶² Further, in 1895 Witte went on record officially as saying that the Japanese war aim was to forestall the potential Russian position in the far east, and other Russian statesmen with knowledge of the far eastern situation have since agreed with him.⁶³

The British Government also had information of this nature from its envoy to Japan who, in a report of March 26, 1898, agreed essentially with what Witte had said earlier, saying:

Whatever the ostensible reason for going to war with China may have been, there can be little doubt that the main object was to anticipate the completion of the Siberian Railway

60. Dallin, The Rise of Russia in Asia, p. 36. Hudson, The Far East in World Politics, p. 78. These, among others, agree that Japan went to war primarily to anticipate Russian rail expansion.

61. Francis Hilary Conroy, The Japanese Seizure of Korea, 1868-1910 (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1960), pp. 208-209.

62. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, pp. 55-56.

63. Ibid. Other Russian statesmen and diplomats were of this opinion as well. Among the more significant would be Baron Rosen. See Baron Rosen, Fourty Years of Diplomacy (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1922), p. 135.

and to prevent Russia from gaining free access to the Pacific Ocean.⁶⁴

One must assume that the envoy meant "free access to the Pacific Ocean" through Manchuria.

Finally, in the Treaty of Shimonoseki following Japan's victory over China, the Liaotung peninsula was ceded to Japan. This clearly indicated that the Japanese had more in mind than the issue in Korea. The Liaotung peninsula is actually barren and commercially valueless in itself, but it is of great strategic value with respect to both the Chinese capital and Korea. There can be little doubt, then, that Japan demanded the peninsula with the Russian menace in mind, but there can be just as little doubt that the peninsula would have been valuable in any case, such as that of a revitalized China. It is therefore dangerous to affirm that Japan went to war simply in anticipation of the completion of the Trans-Siberian Railway. One must recall that at the time of the war the Chinese Eastern concession was a thing of the future and possibly had not even been seriously considered. Russia was still north of the Amur. On the other hand, Japanese anticipation cannot be ignored, and such evidence as exists would seem to indicate that it was certainly one of several causes. At the very least, it became a war aim.

But if the Russian menace at this date was based primarily upon the logic of Russian railway expansion rather than any

64. British Documents of the Origins of the War, (London), I, 8, Report dated March 26, 1898, cited by Dallin, The Rise of Russia in Asia, p. 36.

actual penetration, it did not long remain in this potential state. In the Triple Intervention Russia manifested, indirectly, an interest in Manchuria, and with the Chinese Eastern concession an actual Russian sphere of interest was created. The Japanese anticipation of expansion was thus well founded. Finally, upon the occupation of Port Arthur, Russia not only laid claim to all Manchuria, but obtained in the most high-handed manner the region Japan had marked as her own just spoil of war. This was perhaps the most significant step so far with respect to Japan and the Russian menace. First, Japan might have been well disposed toward a partition of Manchuria with Russia retaining the northern portion, but with Japan entrenched on the Liaotung peninsula. Later negotiations suggest that this might well have been a possible solution to the problem of Manchuria. At any rate, such a solution by peaceful means was now apparently out of the question. Second, the fact that Russia deprived Japan of the Liaotung peninsula only to occupy it herself seemed to all levels of Japanese politics and society a classical miscarriage of justice or anything else accounted as noble.

This was a difficult period for Japan. She was isolated; and with the scramble for concessions, it appeared that the Chinese Empire might be partitioned without regard to her interests.⁶⁵ We have seen that opinion was split in Japan concerning the solution of this problem. A political faction

65. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 164.

led by Ito favored an agreement with Russia at the expense of Britain, whereas a faction headed by Kato favored an alliance with Britain at the expense of Russia.⁶⁶ In any case, both were agreed that Japan's isolation had to end, and the reason for this degree of solidarity was the Russian menace and the conviction that its existence required almost immediate action.

Still, the clarity of Russian ambitions in Manchuria notwithstanding, the Russian menace had not assumed its final form for Japan. This occurred between late 1899 and 1903. The first significant event was the occupation of Manchuria by regular Russian troops when the Boxer Rebellion spread to the north. It has been pointed out that the Russians had little choice in the matter, but it nevertheless was a threat to Japan. Japanese statesmen saw only a large and victorious Russian army as hostilities ended and one that certainly could be used to the detriment of Japanese interests. When the Russian army remained in the field even after all threat of rebellion was far removed, it was naturally assumed that Russia was considering⁶⁷ the implementation of a larger policy in the far east.

The next manifestation of the Russian menace, according to the Japanese, followed in the wake of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. This was a reaction of the Dual Alliance of France and Russia by way of a declaration directed toward the new combination in the far east. After agreeing with the high

66. Ibid.

67. Ibid., pp. 165-166.

principles expressed by Japan and Great Britain in their alliance, the Franco-Russian declaration commented upon the position of the other powers in this manner:

Nevertheless, being obliged also to take into consideration the case in which either the aggressive action of third Powers, or the recurrences of disturbances in China, jeprodizing the integrity and free development of that Power, might become a menace to their own interests, and the two allied governments reserve to themselves the right to consult in that contingency as to means to be adopted for securing those interests.⁶⁸

Understandably, there has been, and was, considerable debate as to the exact meaning of this declaration, but it could have meant that the alliance between France and Russia had been extended to the far east. In any case, the Japanese had to take this into consideration; and it clearly appeared to limit the advantages they had just obtained by the alliance with Britain. The Russian menace definitely had some form of international support, and no doubt Japanese statesmen recalled with fear and indignation the times of the Triple Intervention.

Another immediate result of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was the Russo-Chinese convention in which Russia agreed to evacuate Manchuria within three six-months periods.⁶⁹ This was the desired effect of the alliance. Indeed, the first evacuations were carried out on schedule, as we have seen, but in April of 1903 it was discovered that Russia had failed to evacuate Newchwang, and soon thereafter it was learned that Mukden,

68. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, pp. 325-326.

69. Ibid.

having once been evacuated, was now reoccupied. Russia, as we have seen, had adopted a "wait and see" policy by this date, having recovered from a pristine state of shock over the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and other difficulties in the east. But for Japan the threat of regular Russian troops in Manchuria was reasserted, and along with it came a direct show of bad faith on the part of Russia. Further, these events coincided with new work on the Yalu concession in Korea. It has been pointed out that this work amounted to little, and that the concession was not connected with the Russian Government at this time. Nevertheless, the work had a strong effect, occurring as it did when Russia was acting in bad faith. Also, the Japanese general public, and no doubt many politicians, were not aware of the slight extent of Russia's interest in Korea.

Finally, the creation of the Viceroy of the Far East by the Tsar appeared menacing to the Japanese statesmen. It has been noted that so far as the Russian situation was concerned the creation of this office did no more than complicate the chain of command and that there was no reason to fear it. But to the Japanese it seemed that the Tsar was clearing his administration for action. That is, for war; and Japanese statesmen attached great importance to the new Viceroy. The Imperial Order creating the viceroy is worth citing at some length.

The complicated problems of administration in the provinces bordering the eastern frontier of the

70. Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, p. 140.

Empire induce us to be solicitous for the institution of the authority over those provinces.

In order to secure the pacific satisfaction of the urgent local requirements by the exercise of that authority and recognizing the necessity of forming a Special Lieutenancy to include all the Provinces now under the rule of the Governor General of Pri-Amur and Kuangtung Province it is decreed as follows:

1. The Imperial Lieutenant of the Far East is invested with the supreme (or high) power in respect to civil administration over those provinces and is independent of different ministries. He is also given the supreme authority regarding the maintenance of order and security in the localities appropriated for the benefit of the Chinese Eastern Railway. Due care and protection in regard to the interests and wants of Russian subjects in the neighboring territories outside the border of the Imperial Lieutenancy [the Yalu concession?] are also confided to him.⁷¹

In parts three and four complete military and diplomatic authority was given to the new Imperial lieutenant.

3. All diplomatic relations with neighboring powers in regard to affairs arising in those provinces of the Far East shall be concentrated in the hands of the Imperial Lieutenant.

4. The command of the naval forces in the Pacific and of all military forces stationed in the territories assigned to him is given to the Imperial Lieutenant.⁷²

Japanese concern is understandable. And it did not improve matters when General Alexiev was appointed as the Imperial Lieutenant. The general, although not so fanatic and impulsive as Bezobrazov, was not cautious in his opinions and statements concerning Russia's needs and rights in the far east.

Thus, by 1903 the Russian menace for Japan centered around such specifics as the occupation of Manchuria by regular troops

71. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, p. 122

72. Ibid.

and Russian failure to evacuate that region as agreed, the Franco-Russian declaration following the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, and finally, the creation of the Viceroy of the Far East. These specifics rested upon a foundation of fear and mistrust conceived in the novel method of Russia's overland expansion, in the potentials and possibility of a larger Russian policy, and in the reasonable presumption that no Russian sphere would know free trade. But it was nevertheless the specific fears that made of Japan a nation willing and prepared to go to war with Russia. It should also be noted that the threat from Russia was concerned with the position she held in Manchuria as developed by her railroad net across northern Asia and that any Russian threat to Korea was almost purely potential arising out of that position.

There followed futile negotiations between Russia and Japan in which both sides demanded more than the other was willing to concede. Both tended to revert, due to the tensions of the times, to their maximum demands. Also, the Russian Government (if it can be called that) was in such a state of confusion and disrepair that it could not express itself with any clarity of efficiency. There were several unaccountable delays in the transmission of messages even in this time of crisis. At any rate, Russia's position remained essentially the same, and war broke out quite naturally early in 1904. And it is in the Japanese declaration of war that the unequalled significance of Manchuria is most clearly expressed in its relation to Russian power and Japanese interests.

The integrity of Korea is a matter of constant concern to this Empire, not only because of Our traditional relations with that country, but because the separate existence of Korea is essential to the safety of Our realm. Nevertheless, Russia, in disregard of her solemn treaty pledges to China and her repeated assurances to other powers, is still in occupation of Manchuria, has consolidated and strengthened her hold on these provinces, and is bent upon their final annexation. And since the absorption of Manchuria by Russia would render it impossible to maintain the integrity of Korea, and would, in addition, compel the abandonment of all hope of peace in the extreme East, we determined in those circumstances to settle the question by negotiation, and to secure thereby a permanent peace.⁷³

Thus, as long as Russia remained in Manchuria, the menace to Japan remained, and Russia did not choose to retire through negotiation. War appeared to be the only solution.

The United States and Balance of Power in the Far East

The fact that the United States had become a part of the anti-Russian coalition was of great importance with respect to the coming Russo-Japanese War. Even before the Japanese had sent their army to the mainland they had obtained clear indications of a benevolent neutrality from the United States. Moreover, President Roosevelt intended to use American power to discourage intervention by other powers, thus making Russia's isolation in the far east virtually certain. In a letter to his friend Cecil Spring-Rice, dated July 24, 1905, he declared that:

As soon as this war [the Russo-Japanese War] broke out, I notified Germany and France in the most polite and discreet fashion that in the event of a

73. Japanese Imperial Rescript Comprising Declaration of War, February 10, 1904, cited by Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, pp. 145-146.

combination against Japan to try to do what Russia, Germany, and France did to her in 1894 sic; He means the Triple Intervention of the following year, I should promptly side with Japan and proceed to whatever length was necessary on her behalf.⁷⁴

Thus, the United States also reacted to the Russian position in the far east. But first, it should be recalled that Russia was generally not admired by Americans at this time in any case. Although the United States and Russia had enjoyed either relatively friendly or excellent relations throughout much of the nineteenth century, after 1895 the amity of the two powers descended rapidly.⁷⁵ This was certainly connected with the Russian push in the east, but it was also true that certain political and social aspects of the Russian state offended American senses. The autocratic form of government, persecution of Jews and opposition parties, etc., all conspired to turn public opinion in the United States against Russia.⁷⁶ This low opinion was shared as well by President Roosevelt.⁷⁷

The Russian position in the east itself seemed to threaten American interests two ways: first, there was the question of American trade and Russian expansion; and second, it seemed that Russia was destroying the balance of power in the far east as conceived by the Roosevelt administration.

74. Elting E. Morison (ed.), The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 1284.

75. Pauline Tompkins, American-Russian Relations in the Far East (New York: The MacMillian Company, 1949), p. 29.

76. Ibid., p. 22.

77. Morison, The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, p. 1035.

The matter of trade is not complicated. Drawing generally upon the same sources as Japan and Great Britain, the United States concluded that Russia was determined to make a great Pacific power of herself, and it was assumed that she would move as far south in China and Korea as possible.⁷⁸ Further, as this happened, those regions falling under Russian domination would be lost to free trade, and, since the United States had no sphere of interest in the orient, her far eastern trade would be ruined. It was also observed that the "Russian blight" would be cast over yet another portion of the world if Russia was allowed to expand. It has been previously noted that it was perfectly natural that the United States took the lead in the matter of the "open door." The British actually prompted the first circular note but hesitated to take the lead because they had recently compromised their position in free trade by recognizing spheres of interest and influence in the far east, including their own. Still, the British were anxious to discourage differential rail rates, harbor dues, etc., and were pleased with the response of the United States. The latter, of course, was lily-white out of necessity.

But so far as the Russian menace to trade was concerned, the "open door" did not appreciably mitigate it. Russia paid a certain amount of lip service to the note,⁷⁹ but, as we have seen, she could not permit significant concessions to free

78. Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, p. 118.

79. Ruhl J. Bartlett, The Record of American Diplomacy: Documents and Readings in the History of American Foreign Relations (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1959), pp. 411-412.

trade and retain dominance over her sphere in Manchuria. In this light the "open door" was a failure at the time, but it did tend to draw the anti-Russian coalition closer together. Secretary of State Hay's note suggested that all powers should "enjoy perfect equality of treatment for their commerce and navigation."⁸⁰ All the powers having important interests in the far east, with the very conspicuous exception of Russia, were able to follow in large measure the secretary's suggestion.

Finally, American commercial interests were very strong in Korea; greater than any other power with the exception of Japan.⁸¹ Competition between Americans and Japanese was keen in the first years of the twentieth century, but there was little or no antipathy between them. And, like the Japanese (and no doubt partially because of them), American capitalists feared Russian expansion into Korea and the ultimate destruction of their happy situation in commerce.

In the matter of balance of power in the far east, the United States' entrance into the anti-Russian coalition was suggested by President Roosevelt's general conception of American foreign policy. Soon after the Russo-Japanese War the President remarked that:

As long as England succeeds in keeping the balance of power in Europe, not only in principle, but in reality, well and good; should she, however, for some reason or other, fail in doing so, the United States would be obliged to step in at least

80. Henry Steel Commager (ed.), Documents of American History, Vol. II (2d ed.; New York: Appleton-Century-Crofts, 1962), p. 9.

81. Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, p. 104.

temporarily.... In fact, we ourselves are becoming, owing to our strength and geographical situation, more and more the balance of power of the whole globe.⁸² (My italics)

It was the President's view that Russia, in the early years of the twentieth century, was in the process of upsetting the balance of power in the far east. Hence, it was the duty of the United States to join the anti-Russian coalition. Late in the Russo-Japanese War when it seemed rather certain that Russia was to be defeated and perhaps driven back to Siberia, Roosevelt made a clear statement of his ideas.

Russia had far better make peace now, if she possibly can, and find her boundaries in east Asia left without material shrinkage from what they were ten years ago, than to submit to being driven out of east Asia. While for the rest of us, while Russia's triumph would have been a blow to civilization, her destruction as an eastern Asiatic Power would also in my opinion be unfortunate. It is best that she should be left face to face with Japan so that each may have a moderative action on the other.⁸³

"Ten years ago" would have found Russia north of the Amur and Manchuria independent of Russia's actual interests. It has been demonstrated that Russia had no foundation for great power in the far east at that time, and it seems safe to conclude that Roosevelt did not understand what an actual balance of power between Russia and Japan amounted to.

The truth is that the United States had another motive in the far east, and it was not unlike that of Germany. The United

82. Von Hermann Freiherrn Eckardstein, "Die Isolierung Deutschlands" (Leipzig, 1922), p. 175. The citation is from a conversation between Baron Eckardstein and Roosevelt, and is cited by Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, p. 1.

83. Morison, The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, p. 1230.

States had recently acquired possessions in Pacific waters of considerable extent and value. Now so long as Japan entertained herself on the mainland of Asia she would be no threat to America's possessions; but should Japan aspire to an island empire, the United States would be at a disadvantage in defending portions of her own empire, especially the Philippines. President Roosevelt put it this way:

So long as Japan takes an interest in Korea, in Manchuria, in China, it is Russia which is her natural enemy. Of course, if Japan were content to abandon all hope of influence upon the continent of Asia and try to become a great maritime Power she might ally herself with Russia to menace the American, the Dutch, or perhaps the English possessions in the Pacific.⁸⁴

Therefore, the United States tended to support an unbalance in favor of Japan to keep that nation from threatening American Pacific possessions, just as Germany tended to support an unbalance in favor of Russia to keep her out of a potential conflict in Europe. There can be little doubt that this situation prejudiced American policy in favor of Japan. In fact, the power displacement of Russia and Japan in the far east was much closer to a balance just before the war than it was after the Peace of Portsmouth. Even had Russia not been afflicted with revolution in 1905, the unbalance would still have existed. But of course, Russia was the menace at the moment. Japan was not, and the anti-Russian coalition of three great sea powers closed ranks almost as if by the natural naval laws of Admiral Mahan.

84. Ibid., pp. 1087-1088.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSION

The Russo-Japanese War was a series of defeats for Russia. France, Russia's ally, was not in a position to offer material aid, and Russia on her own was not capable of remaining in the field with either the Japanese army or navy. The Russian navy, although on paper it compared favorably with that of Japan, was largely obsolete and usually commanded by inexperienced officers. The far eastern squadron was decimated early in the war, and its remainder was blockaded. The "self sinking" Baltic Fleet, harassed by the British and by its own inadequacies, sailed gallantly around Europe and Africa to restore Russian prestige and to regain command of the eastern seas. Admiral Togo sank this fleet as it entered the Korea Strait at Tsushima.

The Russian army experienced a time of glory when compared with the deeds of the navy, but it too failed to achieve a victory. Like the navy, it had incompetent commanders, although the Russian private soldier proved to be tenacious, as usual. Further, there was constantly a critical supply problem as several of the previously alluded-to defects of the trans-continental communication route became manifest. First, the Trans-Siberian and Chinese Eastern Railways were of one track.

Even under the best of circumstances the rail system would have been strained to meet the demands of war, but as it was, confusion was all too common. Second, the Trans-Siberian did not extend around Lake Baikal so that everything had to be unloaded, transported across the lake, and reloaded.

Financial difficulties contributed to the Russian defeat as well. Witte was apparently convinced by early 1905 that peace was a necessity for Russia. In his Memoirs he affirms that by this time Russia's domestic finances had been completely exhausted, that there was not the slightest hope of floating either a domestic or foreign loan, and that the only expedient left was the issuance of paper money, which he was certain would have led to a complete economic breakdown.¹

But these are not the fundamental causes of the Russian failure. The army, the navy, and the financial system failed in large measure because of the corruption and inefficiencies of the regime which had descended to an incredibly low level. Further, the fundamental plans for both the new Russian far east and Manchuria had never been completed. Muraviev had hoped to provide the Russian far east with means of communication whereby it could ultimately become practically self-sufficient. His hopes were not realized, as has been demonstrated, and they were perhaps impossible dreams in any case. And Witte, with the construction of the rail net to the

1. Sergey Yulevich Witte, The Memoirs of Count Witte, ed. & trans. Abraham Yarmolinsky (Garden City, New York, and Toronto: Doubleday, Page and Company, 1921), p. 135.

far east and Manchuria, definitely expected to make Manchuria a self-sufficient base for Russian power in the far east and ultimately a portion of the Russian Empire. In both cases, the improved means of communication were not ends in themselves. They were tools designed to make the Empire a power in being in the orient in the sense that Japan was a power in the east. The idea was not to duplicate the British method of extending national power by the use of overland communication rather than sea communication, although this was essentially what happened. Instead, the final goal of Witte, and even Muraviev, was to make of Russia a trans-continental nation state in the true sense; one productive and alive from Europe to its eastern extremities rather than a state with its productive elements relatively concentrated and yet exercising a largely meaningless political control over a vast empire. In the case of Witte, as we have seen, reality fell far short of his goal. Hence, in the Russo-Japanese War, Russia could not depend upon the native strength of either Manchuria or her own possessions in the far east. It has been noted that she had to rely almost entirely upon her trans-continental rail system, and it did not suffice.

With what was apparently an utter failure of Russian arms, and, moreover, a failure inflicted by a relatively small power, many statesmen began to think of the late Russian menace in terms of an illusion. In June of 1905, just after the Baltic Fleet had been sent to its fate, President Roosevelt wrote in a letter to Cecil Spring-Rice:

Well, it seems to me [he observed] that the Russian bubble has been pretty thoroughly pricked. I thought the Japanese would defeat Rojestvensky [the commander of the Baltic Fleet]; but I had no conception... that there would be a slaughter rather than a fight, and that the Russians would really make no adequate resistance whatever. I have never been able to persuade myself that Russia was going to conquer the world at any timejustified in considering, and I suppose this particular fear is now at an end everywhere.²

This type of thinking seems a bit more comfortable than the facts of the situation warrant. In the first place, the "slaughter" of Russia was more apparent than real. Japan was bled white by the war,³ and by the time of the peace conference at Portsmouth found it expedient to back away from her maximum demands.

But of much greater importance is the issue of Manchuria and its relation to Russian power in the far east. Had Russia and Japan managed to arrive at an agreement over Manchuria and Korea, or had peace prevailed in the far east for some other reason, Russia would have had at least the chance to properly invest in her sphere, making it all but an organic part of the empire. In this case, Japan would have been fighting another far eastern power rather than a European power depending upon a long and difficult supply line.

The unequalled significance of Manchuria in the course of Russian far eastern history must be pondered in two ways. First, Manchuria has a geographical importance similar to that

2. Elting E. Morison (ed.), The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1951), p. 1233.

3. See Giichi Ono, War and Armament Expenditures of Japan (New York: Oxford University Press, 1922).

of Suez, Panama, and the Sea of Marmara.⁴ Each of the regions are vital to the communications of vast portions of the earth. In the case of Manchuria, its relatively easy topography and temperate climate make it the natural outlet for eastern Siberia and the only outlet without very great limitations. Muraviev thought that the Amur could be the egress, but we have seen that his work ended in failure. In large measure this failure was inevitable because of the natural limitations of the Amur valley and of Vladivostok as a satisfactory port. Writing in 1904 the Japanese historian Asakawa concluded that "Without Manchuria, Russia would be left enclosed in icebound Siberia, with no naval or commercial outlet during nearly five months of each year."⁵ With Manchuria, Russian railroads crossed easy plains, arriving at Vladivostok by a route some six hundred miles shorter than did the later Amur extension of the Trans-Siberian. Further, with Manchuria the railroad terminated not only at Vladivostok but at ice-free Port Arthur as well.

But discussion of the Manchurian issue should not be limited to this problem of communications. It is, of course, of great importance, but perhaps even greater is the base for power in the far east that Russia would have had with Manchuria. The limitations of the Amur and Primorsk regions have been demonstrated: insufficient potential for agriculture and too

4. Boris Bakhmetev, "The Issue in Manchuria," Slavonic Review, VIII (December, 1929), p. 305.

5. Kanichi Asakawa, The Russo-Japanese Conflict, Its Causes and Issues (Boston and New York: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1904), p. 48.

few raw materials for industry. The opportunity to make this region a powerful, self-sufficient and organic part of the empire did not exist in the first decade of the twentieth century. Manchuria, on the other hand, possesses in abundance those things lacking in the Amur and Primorsk regions. Moreover, Manchuria was sparsely populated in this period because the Manchus had restricted Chinese emigration to their fatherland until very late in the nineteenth century. Thus, population of the region by Russian slavics was not precluded by the existence of a large native mass. It is significant that, whereas the Russian rail concessions in the far east ran through sparsely settled regions, those of the other powers were directed towards and through the great population centers of China.⁶ This is indicative of a divergence in motive. Russia was seeking a feasible passage to the Pacific through a region she could dominate and ultimately annex. In truth, the "railway zone" created by the Chinese Eastern concession was all but Russian. Clause six stated that "The Company (i.e., Russia) will have the absolute and exclusive right of administration of its lands," and that the Company had the right to natural resources in Manchuria that were needed in the construction and maintenance of the railroad.⁷

We have seen, however, that the Manchurian enterprise was not an immediate success, that even under Witte, and in spite

6. Bakhmetev, Slavonic Review, p. 310.

7. John V. A. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China (New York: Oxford University Press, 1922), p. 76.

of the protection of monopoly, Russia was not able to tap the great potential Manchurian resources in a manner sufficient to cause the Trans-Siberian and Chinese Eastern to meet their cost of operation, much less the cost of their construction. Russia's relatively stunted economic structure was not equal to the task, and with the dismissal of Witte as Minister of Finance, the possibility of any significant economic gain was even more remote.

Thus the essence of the Russian plan was never carried out, and the Russo-Japanese War found only the means to the ultimate end (the rail system) in existence. Yet the ultimate goal was not impossible. To the contrary, it was even practical and quite feasible, and here was the Russian menace: to be a power, and the only power, in being on the mainland of the extreme east. And, given time, Russia might well have become such a power in spite of the criminal inadequacies of the then existing regime. The advantages she would have had are obvious, and the reactions of the sea powers to this foundation of the Russian menace are both interesting and enlightening. They further point to the importance of Manchuria.

It seems rather clear that the United States under the leadership of President Roosevelt did not understand the true significance of Manchuria in the conflict between Russia and Japan. We have seen that the President favored a balance of power between the two belligerents, and this seemed a sound enough policy. He wanted Japan to entertain herself on the mainland. But, he was willing for Japan to force Russia out of Manchuria, which, of course, she was finally able to do.

Thus the President did not appear to understand that without Manchuria Russia would simply not be a power in the far east, in which case there would be no balance. The sequel to this was that Japan, unquestionably aided by the twentieth century European wars and revolution in Russia, found it possible to remain on the mainland of Asia and build an island empire as well. This ultimately led to the Japanese attack on American Pacific possessions in 1941. Actually, President Roosevelt had misgivings about the potential Japanese position just before the talks at Portsmouth, but Russian power in Manchuria was already essentially destroyed.

This indicates that Japan did understand the foundation of potential Russian power in the east: military and economic development in Manchuria. We have seen a consistent preoccupation on the part of leading Japanese statesmen with Russian railroad building and with Russia's partial investment in Manchuria, and in the final analysis, a disinclination to compromise the issue with Russia. This was perhaps to be expected, but it has also been demonstrated that Japan had no significant interests in Korea. Russian encroachment in Korea could not have been the cause of the Russo-Japanese War. Rather, it was the potential Russian menace with its foundation in Manchuria that made of Japan a nation willing to risk a major preventive war in 1904. Further, although the Peace of Portsmouth did not completely exclude Russia from Manchuria, Japan all but annexed that region in 1932 and was not satisfied until Russia was forced to sell the Chinese Eastern Railroad in 1935. This (with China still weak) left Japan as the only

major power in the far east. The helplessness of the League of Nations when it objected to Japan's action in Manchuria should have surprised no one.

The conclusion must be that Japanese statesmen generally had a very keen understanding of the foundation of Russian power in the far east, realizing that if Russia could be excluded from Manchuria her own possessions in the Amur and Primorsk regions would not be a sufficient base for power in the east, and that in such a circumstance Japan would be left alone in the field. Japan's supporters in the war, Britain and the United States, were to suffer from this Japanese predominance in World War II.

Judging by her actions, it would seem that Britain was preoccupied with and understood best the implications of Russia's trans-continental communication system with respect to her own use of the seas. Britain understood that the Trans-Siberian and Chinese Eastern railways severely limited the value of her sea power as a means to protect her interests in the far east and as a tool of commercial dominance. We have seen Britain take active steps to meet this aspect of the Russian menace, coming out of isolation and finally concluding an alliance with Japan that was unmistakably directed against Russia. But in light of the circumstance of Britain's alliance-seeking described above, it would seem that she was still following her traditional policy of containment. Britain passed leadership in the far east to Japan upon the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance and cannot, therefore, be held directly responsible for the war that followed. Under British leadership

it is extremely doubtful that the far eastern situation would have resulted in war unless Russia had finally come out of Manchuria to encroach on the sphere of one of the allies.

Thus Britain, unlike Japan, was not dominated by fear of Russia's position in Manchuria but rather was maneuvering to meet the menace to her interests that Russia presented via northern Asia. The Anglo-Russian sphere defining agreement of 1899 certainly indicates that Britain had no fundamental objection to Russia being in Manchuria, so long as she stayed there. British interests were not damaged, and Britain might have fared better had Russia remained in Manchuria. It has been noted that with Japan in Korea and Russia in Manchuria there was something of a balance between the two. Had it been maintained, neither Japan nor Russia could have dominated the far east. But we have seen that Britain feared a combination of the two which would have presumably made her own position there untenable. This fear, among other things, encouraged her to make the alliance that ultimately led to the supremacy of one power in the far east.

In a very real sense, then, Britain did not have a very attractive choice in the matter. Her sea power had simply been out-flanked by Russia's trans-continental development; which problem was further aggravated at the time of the Japanese alliance by Britain's poor relations with other European powers and by the resultant necessity of keeping more of her fleet in European waters. Further, she did not have a strong base for land power in China such as she did develop in India. Consequently, Britain was preoccupied with the means

to Russia's end and looked upon it as a land-bound competitor of her sea power, as it certainly was intended to be. The question of whether or not Russia was becoming an actual power in the far east was, although important, after the fact. Britain herself was not an actual power in the far east, depending as she did upon the mobilization of national strength by the use of ships and seas. And Russia, the aspirations of Muraviev and Witte notwithstanding, was in much the same position by the use of trans-continental railways. It is important to note that neither power was in a position to interrupt the other's means of mobilizing national strength. Japan, on the other hand, was the only major power actually situated in the far east and was therefore in a position to interrupt the mobilization of either British or Russian strength. Since Russia was obviously attempting to become an actual power in the far east through her economic and military investment in Manchuria, Japan turned on her.

Thus, the Russian menace for Britain was not precisely the same as it was for Japan. The interests of the former were menaced by the development of the Russian land mass by rail construction, and the threat was certainly not limited to the far east. But the problem was that Britain could not directly meet this threat in the far east as she could have, for example, in India. Japan was menaced by Russia's Manchurian position. With Manchuria Russia would ultimately become a Pacific power, and it was assumed that as such she would threaten Japanese national existence. Without Manchuria Russia would be limited to a partial mobilization of her power by the use of rails and

would be quite weak on the Pacific because of the disadvantages of the Amur and Primorsk regions. Therefore, when Japan gained an ally as well as leadership in the far east in 1902, a confrontation over Manchuria became all but inevitable. British interests, by contrast, did not demand such a confrontation, only the containment of Russia north of the Great Wall.

The conclusion of the Russo-Japanese War by the Peace of Portsmouth of September, 1905, did not completely exclude Russia from Manchuria, in spite of Japanese aspiration and military superiority. It has been noted that Japan, financially exhausted, was forced to retire from her maximum demands, which included an indemnity, cession of Sakhalin, and the right to make "reforms" in Manchuria.⁸ Further, other powers, and especially the United States, were put on their guard by the extent of the Japanese victory and by the aspirations that nation revealed in the peace talks. Counsel of moderation was given to Japan. But, in spite of disappointment in some Japanese quarters, the fruits of victory were extensive. With respect to the mainland, Japan's all but complete control of Korea was made legal, and she inherited the lease of the Liaotung peninsula and Port Arthur, which included the South Manchurian Railroad.⁹ Russia was left with the Chinese Eastern Railroad and the "railway zone." At first glance it might appear that Russia was left with considerable residual strength in Manchuria, as the Chinese

8. Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, pp. 243-264.

9. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements With and Concerning China, p. 523.

Eastern had been the foundation of Russian plans there. On the other hand, improvements in the Japanese position largely destroyed the values of the railroad. First, the integrated Manchurian rail system included the South Manchurian as well as the Chinese Eastern. The former bridged the gap between the Chinese Eastern and Liaotung peninsula with its ice-free ports. It now came under Japanese control, leaving Russia with rail connection only to Vladivostok, which was far inferior to Port Arthur and frozen for around five months of each year.

But of greater importance is the fact that Russia had lost her virtual commercial monopoly in Manchuria. In Article III of the treaty

The Imperial Government of Russia declare that they have not in Manchuria any territorial advantages or preferential or exclusive concessions in impairment of Chinese sovereignty or inconsistent with the principle of equal opportunity.¹⁰

It has been noted that the relatively weak Russian economy could not successfully compete with the great powers involved in the far east under circumstances of "equal opportunity," and we have seen that Witte's long range plans for Manchuria and northern China had an essentially economic foundation. Even in pre-war times of exclusion the far eastern venture did not prosper, but it did have potential if Russia could manage to keep it tied to her own economy. This she did not manage, and the Chinese Eastern, and to a lesser degree the Trans-Siberian became relatively barren.

There is also the matter of Russia's strategical position

10. Ibid.

after the peace settlement. There was pressure, especially from Stolypin, to construct a new railroad around the bend of the Amur, thus placing it entirely upon Russian territory. It was argued that this would provide secure communication to the Pacific and obviate the absolute necessity of depending on the Chinese Eastern, which was precariously inviting to a potential Japanese flanking attack from their new position in southern Manchuria. Witte tells us that he was against this; that an Amur railroad was just as subject to a Japanese attack as the Chinese Eastern.¹¹ He was partially right. If significant power exists in Manchuria, no Russian line of communication from Lake Baikal to the Pacific littoral can be fundamentally secure.

The ultimate failure of Russia in Manchuria was made certain by World War I, revolution in 1917 and the following civil war, and by the fact that European conditions through most of the first half of the twentieth century left Japan with a free hand in the far east. It did not immediately follow the war with Japan. In fact, there was something of an economic revival in the Chinese Eastern concession after 1905, and a reassertation of Russian monopoly in northern Manchuria. Russia was actually sharing in a boom period there, although progress in the north fell far short of Japanese accomplishments to the south. Further, Russia and Japan arrived at several post-war agreements that temporarily stabilized the situation in Manchuria. They were not, however, destined to be final solutions.

11. Witte, Memoirs, p. 117.

But in spite of these encouraging events and progressive developments within Manchuria, Russia's position there remained fundamentally precarious, and the causes of this unfortunate situation are to be found in the peace settlement of 1905. Here the Russian hold on Manchuria was broken, and the ultimate exclusion of Russia was a logical sequel. In 1929 the de facto ruler of Manchuria, Marshal Chang Hsueu-liang, expelled Soviet people from the Chinese Eastern railway zone, although later in the same year a Russian military expedition repossessed it. This was but a foretast of things to come. In 1931 Japanese forces invaded Manchuria, and the Soviets were forced to offer the Chinese Eastern Railway for sale. The final agreement was made in March of 1935, and Japan became the owner by payment of an almost nominal fee. Thus the Russian bid to become a power in being in the far east had failed. Once again she found herself on the left bank of the Amur with all the innate disadvantages that involved.

Thus the settlement following the Russo-Japanese War, and the logical sequel of Japanese dominance to the exclusion of Russia in Manchuria, largely determined the present Sino-Soviet border east of Baikal. In spite of opportunities that existed after the Second World War, it has not been possible for Russia to regain Manchuria. The best Stalin could do after the war was to attempt to make northern China a satellite state, but, probably to Stalin's surprise, all China was soon unified by the Chinese communists, with a resultant position of power that has allowed them to follow their own star. Stalin did not actually have the opportunity to annex any portion of

Manchuria without creating problems of the first order.

There was, of course, the matter of American opposition, but perhaps of greater importance was the situation within Manchuria. By 1945 Manchuria was no longer sparsely settled and underdeveloped. It was by this time an organic part of China, and an attempt to convert it to an organic part of the Soviet Union would have presented problems the solution of which must be accounted exceedingly arduous at best. Thus, Russia did not have the opportunity in Manchuria in 1945 that she had had around 1900. The issue had been settled, and Russia had missed her chance.

The consequences are of the first importance. Russia has not become a power on the Pacific. The same innate disadvantages of the Amur and Primorsk regions that plagued Muraviev have seriously, perhaps decisively, hindered the Soviet Union. Much has been done in the last few decades by a Soviet Government determined to strengthen its holdings east of Baikal. The Amur branch of the Trans-Siberian has long been completed, and it, along with the rest of the road, has been double tracked. Strenuous efforts have been made to develop industry and agriculture, and with considerable success. Large scale migration of slavic Russians has been encouraged or demanded with significant results. Nevertheless, the Amur and Primorsk have remained less than self-sufficient, and their population has remained relatively small.¹² In truth, the population of the Soviet far east clings to the Trans-Siberian Railway and is to a great

12. W. A. Douglas Jackson, Russo-Chinese Border-Lands (Princeton: D. Van Nostrand Company, 1962), p. 105.

13
degree sustained by it. A few miles to the north of the Amur are frozen, mountainous waste lands. To the south of the Amur is Manchuria, which is now frequently called the "Ruhr of the Far East."

The relative weakness of the Soviet Union's position in the far east is perhaps more significant than is immediately apparent. Throughout all Russia's misfortunes of the early twentieth century, she did retain control over Outer Mongolia and Sinkiang, thus leaving central Siberia secure. In this vast region the continental development begun by Muraviev and Witte has been carried forward by the Soviets at a spectacular pace with the result that the economic and social center of Russia has shifted in a very pronounced manner to the east. This shifting will doubtless continue, and as it does, the Soviets will have greater and greater concern over their position on the Pacific.¹⁴ But at the same time the social and economic center of China has shifted: to the north and west, toward Siberia. Manchuria has become an especially important industrial region for China, having great natural resources and an agricultural base to feed workers.

It would appear, then, that economic expansion and social movement within Russia and China are on a collision course. Assuming that such movement will remain within the confines of the two nations, the matter is still likely to lead to a

13. Ibid., p. 18.

14. Robert J. Kerner, "The Russian Eastward Movement: Some Observations on Its Historical Significance," Pacific Historical Review, XVII (May, 1948), 335-348.

difficult situation. The Soviets will be concerned as Chinese strength shifts toward their weak but strategic passage to the Pacific, whereas the Chinese will worry about what the Soviets are doing, or intend to do, to improve their position in the far east. Thus, the failure of the Manchurian venture not only precluded the existence of great Russian power on the Pacific, but has also, with the rise of China, presented the Soviets with a geo-political problem of the first order.

In 1903 Witte had said with reference to Manchuria and Russia's potentials there:

... our chief aim is to see that absorption shall take place naturally, with precipitation of events, without taking premature steps, without seizing territory, in order to avoid a premature division of China by the powers concerned, which would deprive Russia of China's most valuable provinces.¹⁵

In a sense this is precisely what happened, except that China was so squarely in the middle she chanced to finally emerge with the prize once more in her possession. It is just.

15. Witte, Memoirs, p. 322.

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RUSSIA, THE FAR EAST,
AND THE SEA POWERS, 1847-1905

by

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Although the Russian state extended to the Pacific littoral as early as the seventeenth century, the Russian far east remained very sparsely settled, undeveloped, and largely forgotten for almost two centuries. From 1847 to 1860, however, the vigorous N. Muraviev was Governor-General of Siberia, and in this period extracted from China a new, more southerly, far eastern border running along the Amur and Ussuri rivers. Muraviev's fundamental purpose in obtaining this concession from China was to gain access to, and navigation rights upon, the Amur river. The Amur, flowing to the east from its source near Lake Baikal, would, he thought, provide a means of tying eastern Siberia together. Further, the Amur completed a river-portage system that extended from European Russia to the Pacific. Muraviev expected that with settlement, exploitation of mineral resources, and agricultural development Russia would actually become a power existing in the far east and would therefore have an advantage over sea powers, especially Britain, in dealing with the wealth of the orient. In the same period Britain had opened the China trade and built it up to an important level.

Muraviev's venture failed, however. The innate climatic and geo-political disadvantages of the new Russian far east proved to be decisive, and interest in the far east quickly lagged.

One of the main reasons for this failure was the matter of trans-continental transportation. Although the river-portage system across northern Asia had served Russia well, it could

not compete with modern navies and merchant marines. Thus Russia, with her social and economic center in Europe, was further away from the orient in terms of time and effort than was Britain. This fact was grasped by several important Russian statesmen, and in 1886 the Tsar ordered the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railway. But as the railway approached the region where Muraviev had failed, the Amur valley and Primorsk, it was decided, the opportunity presenting itself, to route the road through the easy and fertile plains of Manchuria, thus avoiding the climatic and technical disadvantages of the Amur route and making the total distance to the eastern terminus over 700 miles shorter. The Manchurian extension became the Chinese Eastern railway.

The Chinese Eastern was an excellent tool for economic and military penetration of China, and many Russian statesmen, led by Minister of Finance Witte, fully expected that Manchuria, along with a great chunk of northern China, would ultimately fall to Russia. This was expected because it was assumed that oriental nations would remain too weak to defend themselves and because the trans-continental rail system could operate effectively in spite of the hostility of European sea powers. This would allow Russia, in fertile and rich Manchuria, to become a power in being in the far east. She would, therefore, have a great advantage over imperialistic competitors which depended upon the mobilization of national strength through sea power. One of the Russian assumptions proved to be wrong, however. Japan made a dramatic climb to the status of great

power and defeated Russia in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905. Japan was supported by Britain and the United States, whose interests also appeared to be threatened by Russia.

Russia's hold on Manchuria was broken. The sequel was a final exclusion of Russia from Manchuria in 1935 when Russia was forced back to her position in the Amur and Primorsk regions. The same innate disadvantages that plagued Muraviev in the far east have continued to hinder the efforts of the Soviets. The Soviet far east has remained less than self-sufficient and relatively weak. Thus, the breaking of Russia's hold on Manchuria in 1905 determined the present Sino-Soviet border and has prevented Russia from becoming a power actually existing in the far east.