

旅俄華僑史簡述（1850's-1920's）

拉林 (Alexander G. Larin)

摘 要

在俄羅斯中國移民社團的歷史，可能是所有有關中國移民中最不為人瞭解的。然而，居住在這個國家的中國人曾留下生動的歷史。在俄國的中國移民是唯一居住於國外歷經共產制度統治的族群。在困苦的環境下中國移民展現特殊的特質，例如努力工作、團結凝聚力、堅毅及冒險、具有彈性及果斷、堅持固有傳統文化及隨遇而安等。

近年來由於各種檔案的公開，給予學者專家第一次機會，能較為全面評估華僑在俄國的情況。

本人就上述題目已完成了初步的研究，寫的論文包括下列的部分：

一、沙皇時代的華僑：俄國的原始漢族居民；隨時增漲的中國移民；華僑對遠東經濟發展的貢獻；華僑公共團體；沙皇政府對華僑的政策；第一次世界大戰與華工。

二、革命與國內戰爭時期的華僑：外人於戰爭中的犧牲，中國政府保護它的華民；被拉入革命者；反「革命傳染」而鬥爭；華僑公共團體一階級鬥爭的主體與對象。

三、華僑於蘇聯：剝奪資產是一條自新社會的道路；新生活的兩面；好轉與鎮壓；華僑公共團體的終結。

CHINESE IMMIGRATION IN RUSSIA, 1850's–1920's

Alexander G. Larin*

Introduction

This paper is the first attempt to reconstruct the history of Chinese immigration in Russia by drawing on Russian and Chinese archives and publications.** The Chinese community made a considerable contribution to the process of development in Russia's Far East, preserving a high degree of independence from the authorities of imperial

* Senior researcher, Institute of Far Eastern Studies, Russian Academy of Sciences.

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Russia. The Chinese Diaspora had to fight for survival during the revolution and Civil War. The plight of those who were hired during World War I was particularly hard for they found themselves out of jobs and with no prospects of going back home. Many of the Chinese were directly involved in the hostilities. Under Soviet government Chinese immigrants together with Soviet citizens equally shouldered the burden of “the building of socialism,” Stalin’s repression, and lived one life with the Soviet people.

Chinese immigration in Russia is probably the least researched area of the story of Chinese emigration though that Chinese Diaspora was not the least numerically strong Chinese community in developed capitalist nations. It was only recently, when the Russian archives opened their doors to researchers and Russian and Chinese archival materials could be examined together, that it became possible to gain an understanding of the life of several generations of Chinese in Russia. Regrettably, the documents and publications available to us fail to recreate the past in its entirety: they are often fragmented, biased or not reliable enough, even if viewed together. Yet they provide a most valuable source of information.

The paper should be seen as an extension and a follow-up to my article,^① “Chinese immigration in Russia : the Contribution of Chinese Immigrants to the Development at Russia’s Far East.”

This paper consists of three sections: the history of Chinese immigration prior to the February and October revolutions in 1917; during the two revolutions and the Civil War; and under Soviet Government. It deals almost exclusively with Chinese in Russia’s Far East where most of those immigrants concentrated; most of sources are concerned with this region. It is not our intention to look into the history of the small number of Chinese who studied in the Sun Yat-Sen University in Moscow: that was a very separate branch whose life had few common points with the mainstream Chinese immigration, and a separate field of study.

① A.G.Larin, “Chinese Immigration in Russia (The Contribution of Chinese Immigrants to the Development of Russia’s Far East).” *Newsletter for Modern Chinese History*, 1993, No.16, Taipei, Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History.

Imperial Russia

The Initial Chinese Population and the Constant Growth of Immigration

The sparsely populated areas along the left bank of the Amur and the right bank of the Ussuri passed to Russia under a series of Russo-Chinese treaties concluded in 1858–1860. In addition to the small local tribes the area was inhabited by the Manchu and Khan. (In Russia, the name Chinese applied either to the Khan alone or the Khan and Manchu together.). The Chinese community's social composition was pretty heterogeneous: agriculturalists, hunters, gold miners, ginseng gatherers, runaway serfs, and even exiled criminals. A. Panov estimated that at the time the Peking Protocol was signed, the Ussuri Territory numbered 2 to 3 thousand Chinese, including 872 settled people, and 300 fanzay (houses). 10,500 settled Manchu, a sizable population by the then standards, inhabited the area between the Amur and the Zeya.^②

The Russo-Chinese treaties said nothing about the Chinese citizenship in Russia, in other words, those people remained the Chinese emperor's subjects. Furthermore, most of them were outside Russia's jurisdiction. Firstly, under the 1858 Aigun Treaty, the Manchu living beyond the Zeya were to be "left for eternity in the former places of residence, under the control of the Manchu government, so that the Russian residents do not cause them offense and aggravation." (Interestingly, the area was inhabited by other peoples apart from the Manchu. The Russian geographer and traveler Shrenk later discovered that there were also Chinese and Daur.^③ Apparently, the authors of the Aigun Treaty had no time to establish exactly what nationalities lived in the area between the Amur and the Zeya.) Second, the Ch'ing government regarded

② A.A. Panov, *Zhyoltyi vopros v Priamurie* (The Yellow Problem in Amur Region.), St. Peterburg, 1910, p. 8,9

③ See P.P. Shimkievich. "Sovremennoe sostoyanie inorodtsev Amurskoi oblasti i basseina Amguni" (Aborigenes of the Amur Region and the Amgun Basin. Contemporary State). *Priamurskiye Vedomosti* (Amur Region News) No. 65, 1895.

escaped Chinese as being outside the Russian courts' jurisdiction and insisted that those of its subjects who committed crimes in Russia be extradited. To the Russian administration's regret, those criminals easily bought their freedom and went back to Russia.

There were no Russians at that time in the area: under the Nerchinsk Treaty (1698) they had left the Cis-Amur region long before the events described here.

The 1858–1860 treaties did not stop the migration from the south across the Amur and the Ussuri. The border was not guarded and it was only in 1869 that the Ussuri Cavalry Hundred was formed. It was able to establish control only over a small portion of the border. Then, until the signing of the Peking Treaty in November 1860, the land to the east of the Ussuri was considered the two states' joint property.

Being interested in developing the territory, overall the Russian government showed a benevolent attitude toward arrivals from the neighboring countries and tried to induce them to stay as colonists. In 1862, the governor-general of Eastern Siberia Korsakov requested Russian diplomats to intercede with the Chinese authorities “to provide the Chinese subjects banished to the South-Ussuri Territory means of leading family lives” in order to improve the condition of “this hard working and developed class of the population.” The 1861 Rules allowed both Russian nationals and foreigners to settle in the Amur and Maritime Territories; they were given parcels of government-owned land and exempted from any taxes for 20 years.^④ In those conditions the inflow of migrants from China kept growing from year to year: they would find good opportunities to apply their skills there.

The new stage of Chinese immigration began in the late 19th century when the development process gave rise to a strong demand for labor at a time when Russian migration proceeded at an extremely slow pace: fewer than 3.5 thousand Russian

④ On the Russian Government's policy toward Chinese immigration in that period see: “Ministry of Home Affairs. On Conditions of Settling of Foreign Subjects into the Amur, Zabaikalsk and Irkutsk Regions. Project. History and Contemporary Situation.” The Archives of Russia's Foreign Policy (ARFP), Pacific Section (PS), No.770, folio 160.

settlers lived there in 1875.

The first group of Chinese laborers, some 150 people, were brought under contract from the Chihli and Shantung provinces in the mid-1870s. Major construction projects were later to become the main employers of Chinese labor: the Transsiberian railway and the Vladivostok port. Private companies followed the example of government-owned enterprises in hiring Chinese workers. Chinese were employed as servants on a massive scale.

Until the late 1870s the Russian government was sharply critical of the import of Chinese coolies to the USA and Latin America, equating it with slave trade. Prospective Russian ship-owners had to sign a pledge not to ship coolies. Economic interest finally prevailed and only some of the Russian consuls attempted, to the best of their ability, to prevent the overcrowding on ships that carried the “live cargo,” Chinese coolies traveling to Russia in search of employment.

The following numbers illustrate the growth of the Chinese population in Russia. The 1897 census indicated that 57,000 Chinese lived in Russia, including 41,000 in the Far East. According to official statistics, in 1910 there were over 115,000 Chinese in the Far East, which experts believed the actual number to be 150,000.^⑤

One should bear in mind that a compact group of Manchu and Chinese (more than 16,000) left the Zeya area for China during the Boxer Uprising. China's government began to demand in 1907 that the Russian government allow those people to come back arguing that they owned the land there and left their residences temporarily, expecting to come back later. The Russian government blocked their return invoking the Aigun treaty which “does not grant China any rights to the said territory” and stating that after their exodus “the Manchu population forfeited any title to the land occupied by it on the Russian bank of the Amur river that were already granted to Russian settlers.”^⑥

By some estimates, in the work season the number of Chinese would grow 1.5 to

⑤ V.V.Grave, *Kitaitsi, koreitsi i yaponsi v Priamurie*. (Chinese, Koreans and Japanese in the Amur Region). St.-Peterburg, 1912, p. 21, 349.

⑥ ARFP, Chinese Section (CS), No.1142, folio 17,18,23,27 e.a.

2 times. (The number of Koreans and Japanese was substantially smaller: 37.5 and 4.5 thousand respectively.)

Chinese laborers, mainly young people, would be driven to Russia and other countries by the lack of land and unemployment, in search of employment. By keeping their expenditures extremely low they managed to save 150 to 300 rubles in the period from March to December, which was 2 or 3 times more than they could earn back home.

Immigrants would mainly come from Shantung and Chihli, and later from Manchuria. Laborers would be hired through Chinese or Russian contractors who advanced them money to pay their fares. The largest hire center was Chifu. From there the laborers would travel by sea to Vladivostok. Other groups would reach Russia via Manchuria, mainly through Harbin, by rail, river boats, or even, on foot.

Although the inflow from China was quite intensive in the early 20th century it was much smaller than the movement of settlers from Russia that had the government's considerable support. In 1910, the Far Eastern provinces numbered 1.2 million Russian subjects, mainly ethnic Russians, with the Chinese accounting for 10 to 12 percent of the total population. Yet their economic contribution was substantial, far greater than their place in the region's demographic picture.

On the other hand, they created a whole complex of economic, political and social problems for the Russian government.

In my earlier paper (on the subject) outlined the content and significance of the Chinese diaspora's economic activity and condition in the Far East. Below we just recall the main points.

One. Construction, gold and coal mining, coastal sailing, and land cultivation were supported largely by Chinese labor. The Chinese dominated, and in some localities monopolized small retail trade and hawking.

Two. The living standard and social status of the majority of the Chinese diaspora were extremely low. The following points needs to be emphasized. Chinese laborers were cruelly exploited by both their Russian employers and Chinese contractors. Contractors were known to pay laborers only 10 kopecks out of the daily wage of

1.25 ruble set by the Russian employers.^⑦

The enlightened Russian intellectuals sincerely sympathized with the lot of Chinese laborers. It is clear from the essays and articles printed in the progressive press that their humanism did not distinguish between the destitute Russians and Chinese.^⑧

Three. The Russian administration's weakness in the Far East, for which the local Chinese community had little regard, and the Chinese dominance in some industries bred alarmist sentiment in the Russian government and among the ethnic Russians. The eminent military figure general Kuropatkin wrote in the early 20th century: "Historically, Russia and China moved toward each other in Siberia, until they divided the entire space between them... The current huge wave of emigration which is gushing with an ever increasing speed along our 900-versta long border, rolls over the border in its eastern part and blends, in the Cis-Amur and especially the Ussuri Territory, with the Russian population, creating for it competition in all types of labor. If the Russian-Chinese border were to be abolished and free movement of Chinese to Siberia were to be allowed, on an equal footing with the Russians, the Siberian provinces could be Chinesied within a short time, and the Russians would begin to move beyond the Ural mountains."^⑨

But the Russian government's intention to restrict activities of foreigners, primarily Chinese, in the Far East, to impose strict controls and eventually phase them out, took the form of small-scale, ineffective measures. To begin with, any limitation of Chinese and Korean labor would immediately translate into losses for the Russian industry and the Russian population. From the perspective of local businesses, the Chinese and Koreans were "the main labor element in the territory" and a ban on their employment would be "ruinous."^⑩

⑦ A.A. Panov, *The Yellow Problem...*, p. 56.

⑧ For example, see N. Matveev, "Kitaitsi na Kariyskih promislakh" (Chinese on Karian Plants). *Russkoye Bogatstvo* (Russian Wealth), 1911, No.12, p. 29–43.

⑨ A.A. Kuropatkin, *Russko-kitaiskiy vopros* (The Russian-Chinese Question). St.-Peterburg, 1913, p. 177–178.

⑩ For example, see ARFP, PS, No.770, f.112 (Report of the Chairman of Vladivostok Stock Committee, Approved by the Committee).

Secondly, the Russian government was afraid that by taking tough measures it would irritate China and complicate relations with it. Peking, which was highly interested in seeing to it that those who could not find employment in the country left, was acting pretty energetically. The Chinese government kept up a constant stream of complaints and protests against discrimination because Chinese immigrants were subject to a special passport duty that was fairly high (5 rubles in the early 20th century). St. Petersburg would point out that the measure was a forced one and the money was used solely to maintain order and improve sanitary conditions of the Chinese community. Indeed, the local authorities regularly submitted thorough reports on the expenditures to the central government.

Following the Russian promulgation of the 1910 law which prohibited employment of foreigners by government-owned enterprises, governor-general Chao wrote to his subordinates: "The Russians are violating the treaties. We shall lose good revenues... For the purpose of increasing the number of emigrating workers, issue the documents to those who apply at your bureau without any delays. Should the Russians apply restrictions on Chinese labor in disregard of international law, enter into diplomatic relations on a legal basis and do not think that we lack responses."^⑪

In describing Peking's stand, the commission of the Russian State Council that studied "the Yellow question" noted in 1910 that "China has jealously guarded the interests of its subjects and has demonstrated an ever increasing staunchness in international relations."^⑫

Chinese Societies

To a large extent, the Chinese Diaspora owed its survival in those inclement conditions to its cohesiveness, its distinct and highly efficient organization. In addition to various informal and close ties, including business ties, the Chinese employed every opportunity in Russia to create legal societies. Furthermore, they formed various

^⑪ ARFP, PS, No.770, f.16 (Letter of Military Governor Chao, March 4, 1912).

^⑫ ARFP, CS, No.2753, f.119

secret societies. The open societies were also involved in covert activities.

Aware of its weakness, the Russian administration needed the Chinese national organizations as auxiliary bodies for managing the Chinese populace. On the other hand, it treated the Chinese organizations with suspicion, as an alternative source of power in the territory. Its attitude was ambivalent: it allowed such societies, setting fairly strict limits on their activity, or closed them in light of specific circumstances.

The first "Chinese public governments" modeled on the Russian peasant self-government bodies were allowed in 1891 in Vladivostok, Khabarovsk and Nikolsk. Those governments were given the right to elect their governors, judges, to administer justice according to national customs, and so on. They were responsible for adjudicating disputes between their members, mediating between the local administration and the Chinese, gathering precise data on arrivals and departures of Chinese, and so on.

But in 1897 the Chinese public governments were closed: the Russian authorities were convinced they were actually a screen for the Chinese secret societies. Incidentally, the Chinese government was also displeased because it regarded them as an obstacle to its attempts to open its consulates earlier that year the Chinese government's commercial agent received permission to operate in Vladivostok. It had requested the Russian government to grant him considerable powers to administer Chinese subjects, including administration of justice. From the standpoint of the Russian authorities, meeting those requests "would be tantamount to opening a special Chinese kingdom in the territory," and they were turned down. Interestingly, among other things the Chinese representative requested that the Chinese public governments be abolished, their property and functions be transferred to him, and he be given the powers to appoint administrators.

The Chinese public governments were re-opened in 1906. They were headed by administrators sent over from Peking: that was the only way to cope with the huge mass of laborers who came to build the Ussuri railway. The Vladivostok commercial agency was soon (1906) transformed into a consulate that became the highest de

facto body of power for the local Chinese.

Very little was known in Russia about the Chinese secret societies. The Russian authorities got an insight into the nature of such societies when they got hold of the charter of a “gungyihui” society that was created, possibly, soon after the Aigun and Peking treaties.^⑬ The charter consisted of 36 rules - bans and penalties that regulated relations between its members and with the aborigines. As an example, the charter prohibited the shooting or taking all the clothes of an aborigine for debt. Yet even those rules softened the mores a little, and some of them were quite humane: never abandon any other member in distress, take care of the sick, do not steal, do not fight and so on.

Russian experts believe that affiliates of various Chinese societies were active among the Chinese immigrants and pursued socio-political goals: to awaken the national sentiment, to stimulate reform and so on. Some even ventured a conjecture that the affiliates paid dues to the center and money for noble causes was obtained by acting as “hu-feis.”

Chinese societies received a powerful impetus with the formation of the Republic of China which took greater care of its citizens' interests abroad than the government of imperial China. The republic's government began to encourage the establishment of self-governing bodies and closer ties between emigrants and their native country. Its policy was welcomed in the immigrant community.

“Our state is now called a Republic, the consul is fervently calling upon us to realize: it is impossible in contemporary world to take care of one's interests without getting together in societies. We want to create here a Commercial Society like in Vladivostok, Khabarovsk and Nikolaevsk,” wrote Chinese from Imahe.^⑭ “Under the Ch'ing officials were far from merchants, the government had no time to deal with our petitions. Now the Republic has been created, there are at least one hundred

⑬ I.I. Petelin, *Kitaiskoe obshchestvo “gun-i-huei” v Ussuriiskom krae* Chinese Society ‘gungyihui’ in the Ussury Region. Vladivostok, 1909.

⑭ Foreign Affairs Archives (FAA), Taipei, Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, Doc.03-32/318-(1), 21.02.1913, From the Consulate in Vladivostok.

thousand Chinese in Russia, and it is everybody's duty to defend the sovereignty and expand trade," echoed their compatriots at the Selenga gold mines.^⑮

Chinese societies began to grow in far eastern towns and settlements. Some were set up in the form of "general associations" with a network of branches. Of course, being the most literate and influential, the trade and industrial elements played a decisive role in those societies; yet the societies looked after the interests of the lower strata, at least in regard to their relations with the external world. Some societies clearly stated this in their charter.^⑯

The tasks recorded in those charters included mutual assistance, settlement of disputes between members, assistance to the Russian authorities and police, protection from "Red Beard Bandits," dissemination of literacy. By pursuing those goals, even on a limited scale, the societies helped maintain law and order in the territory.

Following registration with the local authorities, the societies were registered in Peking through the consuls: in the Foreign Ministry and the Ministry of Industry and Trade (later in the Ministry of Agriculture and Trade). The Foreign Ministry often inquired the authorities of border provinces, as well as the Ministry of the Interior, about their opinion, on Chinese citizens in Russia. The charter of a society, its name and the composition of elected bodies had to go through the registration process. Annual reports on activity and financial reports were also sent to Peking. The societies' chairman and deputies received their mandates from Peking.

All that was done in secret from the Russian authorities that received only fragmented information on that side of the societies' life. In 1910, a Vladivostok censor A. Zankovski, who had worked for ten years as the Russian secretary of the Chinese Society of Mutual Assistance, submitted a memorandum to the minister of the interior outlining the society's secret ties to China, including extensive commercial relations that went far beyond its approved charter. He also noted that the society had arrogated to itself the right to settle disputes between non-member Chinese and

⑮ FAA, Doc. 03-32/318-(1), 30.08.1911, A Letter from the Society "Kung-yi-hui" in Selenga.

⑯ Ibid.

had thus become “a state within a state.”^{①⑦}

The arrogation of judicial powers was convincingly proven by facts: the Chinese never went to Russian courts to settle their disputes. Circumstantial evidence convinced the Russian side that Chinese entrepreneurs used legal and secret societies to harmonize their trade interests, remove competition, and set monopoly prices. Yet no signals about the Chinese societies' illegal activity could change the status quo: the Russian administration was not strong enough to control such activity. Suffice it to say that lower level administrative bodies often referred cases involving Chinese to Chinese societies and accepted their opinion.

On the other hand, the framework set by the Russian authorities for the societies was too narrow. Why wouldn't Chinese - foreign nationals- register their societies in China? Why would a Chinese go to a Russian court whose laws he does not know and whose language he does not understand?

Suspicion led to prohibition that was sometimes excessive and unenforceable. The response to bans was greater secret activity which in turn bred more distrust.

Chinese Labor During World War I

World War I sharply boosted the demand for labor in Russia. It was needed primarily to build railways and other construction projects, mine coal, and to fell trees. The “Yellow danger” was quickly forgotten, the Council of Ministers lifted the ban on the hiring of foreigners by government-owned enterprises in the Far East, then allowed to use them in Donbass and later for the construction of the Murmansk railway, and so on.

Large-scale contracting of labor unfolded in China pretty quickly.^{①⑧} Contractors started in Manchuria, then went to Northern China (Inkou, Yantai), Shanghai and even Sinkiang where they looked for workers to build the railway in Semirechie.

^{①⑦} ARFP, PS, No.759, f.42.

^{①⑧} For a thorough analysis of recruiting workers in China, mainly for European countries, see: Chen San-ching, *The Chinese Labour Force in the First World War*. Taipei, Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, 1986.

The contracting was done by Russian and Chinese go-between companies. As an example, a company called Yicheng undertook to send 20,000 laborers to fell trees in Smolensk province.

In the steps of respectable companies shady dealers and con men rushed to China to fill a vacuum. "Wild" competition sprang up, including hijacking of parties of laborers and shipping them to other destinations. Russian and Chinese contractors colluded to cheat on the laborers. (Russia was not an exception here. French contractors were pretty unceremonious too.) The new enormous labor market obviously did not look after the interests of the laborers.

Accordingly, the government of the Republic of China took a number of measures to protect its nationals and ensure acceptable conditions of life abroad. Realizing the warring state could not disregard its position, it demanded that employment contracts be verified by the authorities on both sides. Illegal contracting, i.e. bypassing such verification, was strictly prohibited. The local administration was instructed to enforce the new rules there were more than enough people willing to circumvent them, including Chinese contractors. Documents were prepared to regulate the hiring such as the Regulations on Travel Abroad to Work, the Rules of Contracting and so on.

The Chinese administration examined the contracts pretty thoroughly. For example, it demanded that a Russian plant undertook to ship a worker back home upon termination of his contract or in the event of sickness, and not to dismiss them beforehand. It demanded that fines be reduced (e.g. for being absent for a working day to a daily wage); that the amount of damages for injury be clearly stated; the commission of contractors be reduced, and workers be provided with fire wood in the cold season, etc.¹⁹

Some of those demands were of a principled nature for the Chinese side and went beyond the purely economic concerns. Firstly, it wanted to send its commercial or

¹⁹ FAA, Doc. 03-32/324-(1), 25.07.1916, From Russian Embassy. A Draft Contract for Recruiting Workers in Yentai.

consular agents to places of concentration of Chinese laborers “skilled and experienced officials with the knowledge of the Russian language and capable of protecting their interests.” Driven by their mistrust of China, the Russian authorities reacted negatively to such proposals.

Secondly, the Chinese side insisted that Chinese workers be placed in the same conditions of works and given the same rights as Russians. For instance, in accordance with the Foreign Ministry’s instructions the Harbin daotai demanded that the following clauses be included in contracts: Chinese workers would be guaranteed protection by Russian laws, no special laws would be issued for them; a Chinese consul or commercial agent would be called if a Chinese worker was arrested, and so on. Unassailable from the present-day perspective on human rights, those demand of the Chinese side were unacceptable for the Russian authorities.

Thirdly, having stated its neutrality in regard to the warring states and not wishing to provide a pretext for charges of deviating from it, Peking remained consistent in its demand: Chinese labor should not be used for war-related works. That restriction was to be upheld by the content of contracts, to be controlled by the Chinese Foreign Ministry, and appropriate official assurances of the Russian side. Chinese diplomacy found that to be an important argument in answering Berlin’s protests that Peking violates its neutrality by allowing its workers to go to Russia and France.

The Russian authorities could not say a direct no to those demands. More than that, they were forced to give the assurance not only to central and local Chinese bodies but also to workers at the hiring centers: workers were afraid they could be sent to the front-line to dig trenches. Russian officials ascribed those sentiments to the efforts of German spies who disseminated panicky rumors and leaflets among the Chinese. Indeed, those things did happen, but it was incidental: it just added fuel to the understandable worries felt by those who was thinking of going to a warring countries.

In actual fact, Russia failed to meet the demand of the Chinese side. The Field Construction Administrations used Chinese labor extensively. Laborers were

hired mainly through go-betweens, but cases were known when officials of the Field Administration traveled to China to contract labor. Sometimes there were elements of the absurdities: not having received proper instructions, they would wear military uniform and produce mandates stating that their construction projects was of military importance.

The Chinese side's intention to ensure control and amendment of contracts through local bodies met with resistance of Russian authorities. The Harbin daotai attempted in 1916 to enforce his Foreign Ministry's instructions and delay the issue of passports to hired workers, the Russian consul general in Harbin wrote: "This is unacceptable for us. We demand that the issue of passports be unimpeded and not delayed by questions of the text of the treaties." He went on to say: "We have so far managed to avoid the delay thanks to the threats to cease issuing visas to Chinese merchants."²⁰

The friction between the sides in regard to labor migration was of secondary importance: the two sides were extremely interested in employing the Chinese labor. Accordingly, the flow of Chinese workers to Russia continued to grow. 7,212 workers, were contracted and went to Russia in 1915 through Harbin. 7,243 were shipped by June 1916, i.e. in six months.

Only a very rough estimate of the total number of Chinese laborers that went to Russia is possible. The Chinese embassy in Moscow²¹ put the number at 100,000 in 1916, the same number was quoted in subsequent documents of the Chinese Foreign Ministry. To substantiate his protest the German ambassador stated in 1917: "Starting last spring the governments of Russia and France contracted a large number of laborers in China to make up for the shortage of their own labor. For Russia, the number is 500,000, for France 50,000." A short while earlier he quoted a considerably smaller number of those contracted to go to Russia: just 50,000.²² The Chinese data

²⁰ ARPF, CS, No.3486, f.14, Information from the Consul General in Harbin on Recruiting Chinese Workers to Russia.

²¹ FAA, Doc. 03-32/324-(2), 24.10.1916, From the Embassy in Russia.

²² Compare FAA 03-32/326-(4), Doc. 23.02.1917, the Chinese Embassy in Germany, Supplement and 03-32/325-(1), Doc. 20.01.1917, Telegram from Ambassador Yen in

appear closer to the truth. For the sake of comparison, experts estimate that 150,000 laborers were contracted by France, which used the Chinese labor very extensively, and 50,000 in England.

In principle, contracts concluded with minimal control on the part of Russian and Chinese authorities were to ensure more or less tolerable existence for Chinese laborers. The contracts were to comply with Chinese laws and Russia's Rules of Hiring and Shipping of Workers of the Yellow Race. Under the Rules, workers were settled in barracks prior to departure, they were to undergo a thorough medical check-up, given food, a set of clothes and footwear. On route the workers were accompanied by translators, and agents of the contracting firm supplied food.

The working conditions can be illustrated by a contract concluded by the well-known firm of Drizin (Harbin) on shipping laborers to Kizel to mine coal.²³ The contract set a higher pay for work underground (70 kopecks underground and 60 kopecks on the surface), a work day of 12 hours, including a one and half hour lunch break. The workers were given free lodging with a certain quantity of food and coal. There could be not more than 10 holidays a year. A sick person would get a free ticket to the station (the railroad station in Manchouli) and 6 rubles. Those who completed their terms received bonuses of 25 and 50 rubles.

In practice however, the workers suffered not only from exhausting labor but various privations, arbitrary actions of bosses, and discrimination. Justice was impossible to achieve. Chinese laborers complained to their embassy, the Russian authorities had their version of events. The Chinese envoy informed the Foreign Ministry of a complaint from the Kizel coal mines: the Russian bosses created a Chinese police force and used it to beat up and torture Chinese laborers, driving people to suicide. The Russian consul general in Harbin asserted that the misunderstandings in Kizel were quickly settled and that the Chinese envoy described the case tendentiously to force the Russian side to open Chinese consulates and commercial agencies.²⁴

Germany. See also Li Chang-fu. *A History of Chinese Colonization*. Taipei, 1970 (in Chinese), p. 326.

²³ ARFP, CS, No.3453, Appendix.

²⁴ See footnote 20.

Regardless of how big the “coefficient of tendentiousness” was and no matter what actually happened in Kizel, it was obvious that the Chinese workers in Russia had to endure much suffering during that period. One indisputable proof: the great number of fleeing Chinese. Over 500 people deserted the 1st Field Construction Administration alone by the February 1917 revolution. The escaped (or dismissed) workers soon formed the bulk of what became known as “vagrant Chinese” people without any definite occupation and abode who eked a living by hawking or doing chance jobs.

At the beginning of the war martial law was introduced in St. Petersburg, front-line districts and some towns in the Far East, and the “vagrant Chinese” were extradited from there and localities along railways, as persons of suspect behavior. (“We do not understand their language, their place of residence is uncertain, and various misunderstandings can occur,” explained the mayor of Petersburg). Individuals and small groups (15 to 20 persons at the most) were driven away. Their total number is not large. But the geographical distribution is amazing, although the Chinese population was not dense: they lived in Petersburg and Moscow, Novgorod, Riga, Maikop and Simpheropol, Miletopol... Over that vast expanse, the Chinese who were found “of pernicious behavior or suspected of espionage” were shipped by administrative order or even under guard to provincial towns in internal Russia, beyond the Volga, to the Urals, and some were taken back to their country.

The operation was pretty complicated because the authorities sought to conduct it in the most civilized manner: fares were paid, allowances were given for the extradited persons, attempts were made to consider the complaints of abuses received from the Chinese embassy. All of that was done “for the purpose of maintaining the best neighborly relations with the friendly power, especially important during the current period,” said one of the documents.²⁵ Nevertheless, the procedure was, of course, pretty painful for the Chinese.

Russia's participation in the world war brought suffering not only to the Russian

²⁵ ARFP, CS, No.3330, f.12-18, A Letter of the Deputy Minister of Home Affairs to Governors and Mayors.

people but also to Chinese whose numbers increased substantially during the war.

Revolution and the Civil War

Victims of an Alien War

The policies of Russian authorities towards Chinese workers drastically changed after the abolition of Russian monarchy in 1917. In June 1917 the Provisional government halted deportation of Chinese workers “in the context of changes underway in Russian society” and in July 1917 it passed a decree putting an end to the importation of Chinese workers. Having received China’s diplomatic recognition, the Provisional government was ready to improve their living standards and help with their repatriation. Special bodies were set up to settle all problems relating to the use of “yellow labor.” It was believed that these bodies would work in close cooperation with China’s embassy and that they would pass over to the embassy contract copies, information on labor disputes, etc.

However, the Provisional government did not have time to translate its plans into reality. Neither had the Chinese Ambassador who reported to Peiping: “Drastic changes are underway in Russia, power is in the hands of the workers’ party. We should by all means take advantage of these circumstances and help our workers: organize inspections in the provinces, spot sick and dead people in every city or town, provide shelter and secure minimum living standards for them.”²⁶

Russia was being shocked by new developments. As a result of the October Revolution, Russia’s withdrawal from the war with the Axis, the civil war and production disorganization, tens of thousands of the Chinese became redundant. Due to wrecked transportation system and overloaded trains they could not repatriate and were in a sorry plight. Moreover, the Russian empire disintegrated into several

²⁶ Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History (ed.), *Historical Documents on Sino-Russian Relations (HDSRR), 1917–1919, Political Changes in Russia and Usual Diplomatic Exchanges (I)*, Taipei, 1960, Doc. 187.

parts divided by frontages, each with its own government. Nobody wanted to detain thousands of unemployed starving people but under the circumstances, in the view of extreme lack of financing, little could be done for them. Hence, their repatriation dragged on for years and took the form of separate actions.

For instance, in May 1918 the Bolshevik government provided on the request of China's embassy 26 railway carriages for over 500 Chinese workers who were sent home via Siberia. The Ukrainian socialist government made a decision to finance several trains to Harbin which were to repatriate 1,000 - 1,500 Chinese workers each.²⁷ (We are, unfortunately, unaware if they managed to implement their plan).

Kolchak's government in Omsk, eager to win international recognition, gave its principle consent to assume the responsibility for the repatriation of Chinese workers but only those of them who had come to Russia on official contracts with recruiting companies and only after Russia's unification under Kolchak's authority when the government had the resources to do this. Meanwhile, its spokesman suggested studying the cases and preparing for repatriation: namely, to compile and check the lists of recruited workers and find for sure which of those on the lists were still in Russia. He turned down the proposal of China's foreign office to simplify the matter and merely repatriate to China as many people as there were on the lists. He also turned down another Peiping's proposal: to borrow money needed for repatriation from the Russian-Asian Bank or get it from the Chinese side as part of the "Boxer Indeminty". The authorities in Omsk merely agreed to discuss this idea after official recognition by Peiping.²⁸ Most probably, they took this position because Kolchak's government did not have sufficient control over the situation in its territory and was unable to organize repatriation of Chinese workers even if provided with funding.

According to the information available to China's Foreign Office, about one thousand Chinese merchants tried to go home from the Black Sea-side. Chu Shao-

²⁷ Wang Yu-chiun, *Introduction to the Sino-Soviet Relations. From Yurin to Joffe*. Taipei, Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, Special Issue, 1978, p. 519.

²⁸ For negotiations of the Chinese Government with the Omsk authorities see *HDSRR, 1917-1919, Political Changes...*(2), Taipei, 1960, Doc. 844, 863, 887, 906 e.a.

yang, a Chinese diplomat in Turkey, helped to repatriate 270 Chinese workers who had reached Turkey from Batumy.²⁹

About one thousand Chinese workers, mostly recruited to construct a railway in Murmansk, found themselves in the territory controlled by the British troops. The British commander-in-chief suggested bringing them to China via Europe. The chance to evacuate was given in the first place to those who could pay for their transportation (there were 60 of them) and those who at the time served in the so-called "British-Slav legion". (The legion was formed from "volunteers, mostly the Russian, who were ready to serve together with the allies to help sustain the Eastern Front until the Russian organized their own armies and educational facilities." There were 219 Chinese in the legion. They were used to guard the facilities or as auxiliary workers but, since the Chinese got British military ranks, the British were ready to take them home with the troops provided Chinese servicemen agreed to relinquish their ranks and, therefore, could be treated as private persons.) Towards April 1920 most Chinese were evacuated from Arkhangelsk and Murmansk to Britain and from Britain they went home in a roundabout way: some via Paris, some others via Canada. When the Red Army troops seized the northern ports 245 Chinese were still waiting for repatriation there.³⁰

Probably, the largest group of repatriates, 2,575 people, reached Harbin in March 1918.

Many Chinese workers tried to get out of Russia on their own. However, many of them failed to get home and stuck somewhere half-way in Omsk or Irkutsk. These Chinese lived in poverty, went begging and could not even make themselves understood in an alien language.³¹

Peiping believed that the government of Russia, as the employer-nation, had

²⁹ HDSRR, 1920. *Usual Diplomatic Exchanges*, Taipei, 1968, Doc. 201.

³⁰ FAA, Doc.03-32/327-(2), 20.12.1919, From the Embassy in Russia; Doc. 03-32/327-(2), 11.03.1920, From the Embassy in England; Doc. 03-32/328-(3), 30.04.1920, From Ambassador Shih in England; HDSRR, 1920, Doc. 163, 1055.

³¹ See, for example, FAA Doc. 03-32/328-(3), 20.12.1919, From the Consulate in Irkutsk.

to assume the expenses on the evacuation of Chinese workers. Requesting other countries to help with their transportation China's government assumed that Russia would reimburse these expenses later. China's foreign office developed a variant of repatriation on credit: it was to be financed by the Chinese government provided the funds were paid back in the future "when an official government is formed in Russia."³² However, these assumptions were absolutely groundless: the tsarist government had not officially assumed such responsibilities and, as mentioned above, out of the new authorities only Kolchak's government in Omsk took at least some interest in China's arguments while the recruiting companies had by then ceased to exist.

Hence, whatever the reasons may be, a lot of Chinese workers stayed in Russia and largely increased the numbers of its Chinese diaspora. According to the rough estimates of the Chinese Workers' Unions in Russia, in the mid-1920s there were 90 thousand homeless and unemployed Chinese in Russia's European provinces and approximately 30 thousand in the parts of Siberia controlled by the Red Army.³³

However, even more or less affluent, settled Chinese were in a sorry plight too. Exorbitant requisitions and all sort of "revolutionary taxes" were imposed on them. Their property was commandeered, their homes and production premises were requisitioned by decrees of local authorities in keeping with the extraordinary legislation of the martial law. Officials extorted money from them. They suffered enormous losses as a result of rouble devaluation and emission of local worthless paper money. They were simply robbed by all those who were armed: soldiers representing the authorities and bandits. They could be shot with perfect impunity by anyone, a Red Army man or a kazak, in the street or at home with a view to seizing their property. They suffered from heavy labor conscription. It is not by chance that, according to the information of the above-mentioned Union, by this period five thousand industrial entrepreneurs and merchants left Russia via Urga and

³² HDSRR, 1917-1919. *Political Changes...*(2), Doc. 887.

³³ FAA, Doc. 03-32/336-(1), From the State Administrative Council.

Kyahta.

In all fairness we should note that the Chinese in the territories occupied by German troops were in an equally sorry plight. They were first condemned to “penal servitude conditions” and in December 1918 lots of them were arrested and imprisoned. Many of those arrested starved to death in prison.^②

The Civil War period in Russia marked above all forcible policies of all authorities towards Chinese population, just like any other ethnic group. However, their violence had different shades, so to speak:

- all authorities requisitioned their property (people were actually robbed) to support the army and meet other needs of the war period;

- in the areas controlled by Soviet Government the authorities limited the activities of “exploiter elements,” i.e., strata with at least certain minimum prosperity. The authorities connived at the tyranny of petty executives to these strata and sometimes even encouraged it;

- the authorities launched campaigns for protection of public order, including campaigns against specific crimes within Chinese population, such as massive violation of the passport regime, campaigns against gambling and opium-smoking. The Bolshevik government seems to have been most active in these campaigns. Neither Kolchak nor other white generals had time or power to launch such campaigns.

Obviously, each of these forcible methods merits its own appraisal.

Territories controlled by the Red Army witnessed a paradoxical situation: greater violence as against much smaller discrimination. In the conditions of the civil war people in all the camps grouped by ideological or class and social criteria rather than by ethnic origin. But this tendency was most marked in the policies of Soviet Government which regarded the prevalence of class approach over the national one as one of its major ideological postulates. Back in June 1919 the Far Eastern Republic proclaimed that “the Chinese were equalized in rights with other foreigners,” annulled all passport restrictions and special taxes which had been imposed on the

^② See State Archives of the Russian Federation (SARF), Doc.130/3/174.

Chinese.³⁵ The same year Chinese citizens were allowed to put national flags on their houses. Indeed, in everyday life ethnic Chinese still suffered from discrimination which the authorities could not stop at once but they did not encourage it either.

Generally speaking, the Bolshevik policies towards the Chinese were quite flexible and depended on their overall economic line and relations with China. For instance, one of the Chinese diplomatic documents reads as follows: “The government of the Far Eastern Republic together with the Chinese Workers’ Union have promoted repatriation of our workers. It has not imposed soft paper money on the Chinese. Their homes are decorated with Chinese national flags with a view to protect them and show respect for Chinese visiting governmental officials. The government of the Far Eastern Republic has repeatedly demonstrated its benevolent attitude to our country.”³⁶

On the other hand, the Chinese who served in the Red Guards in Petrograd or State Political Police in Chita were just as notorious for their violence - no matter whether to the Russian or their compatriots - as their Russian colleagues.

In 1920–1922 the Provisional Priamursk (White) Government also declared that the Chinese were equalized in rights with other foreigners but its policies were inconsistent and superfluous: they merely touched upon the particular issue of passport restrictions and even these were first annulled and then reimposed.

Chinese Government Protects Chinese Emigrants

Sometimes the Chinese had even certain privileges due to their foreign citizenship. Their national flag protected them from massacres. The Chinese could turn to the embassy or consulate and with their help get some protection. For instance, according to the local press “there were repeated encroachments on the property of Chinese citizens in Khabarovsk area but due to the presence of the Chinese consuls these

³⁵ FAA, Doc. 03-32/356-(1), 10.07.1921, From the Consulate General in Vladivostok; *Dalnievostochniye Izvestiya* (Far Eastern News), No.81, 01.05.1918 (in Russian).

³⁶ HDSRR, 1921. *Usual Diplomatic Exchanges*, Taipei, 1973, Doc. 208, Supplement.

attempts were immediately suppressed.”^{②7} However, such effective protection quite often of temporary nature. For example, in 1921 the Amursk Regional People's Revolutionary Committee made an exception for Chinese merchants on the request of China's consul when it established fixed prices on the goods in the area. But shortly afterwards this exception was reversed because the Chinese merchants had inflated prices and “did not support rouble's stable exchange rate.”^{②8}

Generally speaking, China's government attached priority importance to the plight of the Chinese in Russia enveloped in the flame of the revolution and the civil war. In addition to embassy and consulate officers China's foreign office sent special emissaries with a view to inspecting the situation in different regions of Russia and determining the size of losses suffered by Chinese citizens. When all senior officers of China's embassy evacuated from Moscow together with the staff of the Entente embassies in January 1918 an agreement was reached with the Danish embassy that it would represent China's interests in Russia and in particular those of the Chinese diaspora. (The Danish embassy performed these duties till its evacuation from Moscow in December 1918 and upon evacuation Denmark charged these expenses on its bill to China).

The situation of Chinese emigrants in Russia was repeatedly discussed in China at the state level and negotiated in the course of its dialogue with the Far Eastern Republic (FER). Already at the first unofficial meeting November 30, 1920 China put forward a number of preliminary conditions for the establishment of trade relations with the FER in which the latter was extremely interested. For instance China demanded that the Russian side should:

“compensate Chinese emigrants in Russia for all their losses suffered due to the revolution, including losses from rouble devaluation;

- assume the responsibility for the protection of Chinese emigrants' lives and property and provide proper conditions for their commerce, travelling and life in

^{②7} *Nashe Slovo* (Our Word), 04.08.1921, Khabarovsk (in Russian).

^{②8} FAA, Doc. 03-32/363-(2), 03.10.1921, From the Consulate in Heihe.

Russia.”³⁹

Later, in the course of negotiations the Chinese side presented a detailed description of oppression and losses suffered by Chinese emigrants.

However, the FER spokesmen turned all these demands down. They said that the Chinese, like all other foreigners in the Republic, were reliably protected by law and refused point-blank to pay any compensation. Moscow confirmed the FER position: the People's Commissar (i.e. Minister) Krasin noted that he could not agree with China's conditions and that the Chinese in Russia “enjoyed complete equality in rights and freedom.”⁴⁰

Alongside diplomatic support, China's government continuously rendered financial assistance to its citizens in Russia. Here follow just a few examples. In August 1917 it borrowed to these ends 100 thousand silver roubles from the Russian-Asian Bank and gave the money to its ambassador in Russia.⁴¹ In January 1920 the Chinese military and diplomatic representative passed over to the Russian side five thousand poods (Russian Weight unit: 1 pood=16kg.) of flour on behalf of his government: 1,000 for kindergartens in Moscow, 500 for children in Petrograd and the other 3,500 for Chinese emigrants in Moscow, Petrograd, Samara and other Russia's European provinces.⁴²

In 1920-1921 Chinese consulates and public organizations of many Far Eastern cities started petitioning the Chinese government for troops, the Army or the Navy, to protect the lives and property of Chinese citizens. Such appeals were often sent on the eve of the withdrawal of Japanese troops or shortly after the advent of the Red Army. The appeals started coming from Vladivostok as soon as the early 1917. The Chinese wrote from Chita, Khabarovsk, Blagoveshchensk, Iman and

³⁹ HDSRR, 1920, *Usual Diplomatic Exchanges*, Doc. 201.

⁴⁰ Many impressive facts concerning positions of both sides on the issue of Chinese immigrants in Russia are collected in a pioneering monograph of prof. Wang Yu-chiun, *Introduction to the Sino-Soviet Diplomatic Relations. From Yurin to Joffe*. Taipei, Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History, 1978.

⁴¹ Wang Yu-chiun, op.cit., p. 512.

⁴² FAA, Doc. 03-32/369-(1), 19.01.1921, From Consul Chu in Irkutsk.

Nikolsk-Ussuriyskiy complaining of their sorry plight.

China's government did not remain indifferent to these appeals and sent military contingents to different Russian towns. We may assume that these measures were developed, inter alia, to meet certain political ends also: to oppose "the extremists" (the then brand name for Bolsheviks in China) and support ataman Semenov. Besides, on August 14, 1917 China declared war on Germany and thus joined the Entente while Russia signed the Brest-Litovsk peace treaty with Germany. Foreign observers noted that quite a few German, Austrian and Hungarian prisoners of war fought in the Red Army troops in Siberia and the Far East. In May 1918 China signed a agreement with Japan on joint defence from an enemy - meaning the Bolsheviks - by the Army and the Navy. Under the circumstances troops brought into Russia were to demonstrate Peiping's activity to its allies.

The largest military detachment must have been sent to Vladivostok in the late 1918 when the city was passing into the hands of the Japanese. It consisted of two infantry battalions, a cavalry company, an artillery company, a company of field engineers and a company of machine-gunners. All in all there were 1,600 servicemen plus 700 auxiliary personnel and a warship "Hairung."⁴³ In 1920 the gunboat "Yunchian" made a voyage in the internal waters: it brought a load of gold from Nikolayevsk-on-the-Amur to Vladivostok (the gold was paid to Chinese merchants for their goods sold to the Bolshevik authorities).⁴⁴

Judging by archival materials, Chinese troops did not participate in combat. They entered towns and cities without resistance, behaved with restraint, did not interfere in the fights of the contending parties. They guarded the consulates, maintained order in the districts inhabited by the Chinese, i.e., performed merely police functions. In the areas where there were no Chinese troops, the consulates and the public organizations tried to protect themselves on their own with the consent of Russian and Chinese authorities.

⁴³ HDSRR, 1917-1919, *March of Chinese Troops to Siberia*, Taipei, 1962, Doc. 469.

⁴⁴ FAA, Doc. 03-32/383-(2), 31.03.1922, From the Consulate in Vladivostok.

Soon the troops were withdrawn despite the requests of the local Chinese communities to stay longer and protect them, on the demand of FER authorities or even earlier with a view to avoiding by all means any conflicts with the Russian side.

In 1920 Chinese inhabitants of Blagoveshchensk and Khabarovsk tried to press China's government for sending gunboats to the area but in vain. The vessels needed a repair. Moreover, their appeal came towards the end of navigation and it was useless to keep the vessels in foreign ports in winter. The next year the gunboats started for the Russian ports but the FER government, informed of the manoeuvre, resolutely protested against their voyage from the Sungary to the Amur and the Chinese authorities refused their design.⁴⁵

It is difficult to judge if the use of military means to protect the Chinese population was after all efficient. However, we may assert that China's government did its best to protect the compatriots without conflicting with the Russian side. Chinese soldiers behaved extremely cautiously and emphasized their neutrality. It is not mere chance that Soviet historians have not mentioned China among interventionist nations while describing the period of the Civil War.

Involved in Revolutionary Developments

In contrast to the servicemen of the Chinese regular army many thousands of the Chinese in Russia were deeply involved in the civil war. It is noteworthy that most ethnic Chinese who took part in the armed struggle joined the ranks of the Red Army and Red partisan detachments. According to Soviet experts, there were thirty to forty thousand such Chinese. Chinese diplomats of the civil war period mentioned larger numbers: from sixty to seventy thousand.⁴⁶ The Chinese fought in all fronts. They made up whole detachments, companies, battalions and even regiments. It is

⁴⁵ HDSRR, 1920. *Usual Diplomatic Exchanges*, Doc. 410, 511, 516; FAA, Doc. 03-32/330-(1), 27.07.1921, From the Deputy Consul in Khabarovsk.

⁴⁶ Chou Lai-ying, *Uchastiye kitaiskikh trudiashchihsia v borbie sa vlast Sovietov* (Participation of Chinese Labourers in the Struggle for the Soviet Rule), Moscow, 1960, p.5 (in Russian); HDSRR, 1917-1919, *Political Changes...*(1), Doc. 898.

no mere chance that a Red Army soldier of Chinese origin was even described in Soviet literature.

Most Chinese were, of course, indifferent to politics and mostly concerned about barest necessities. Chinese workers brought to Russia during World War I cherished only one dream to get home. Such people were recruited either as a result of direct coercion or under the pressure of circumstances, simply not to die of hunger and cold in a foreign country. Some of them had been enlisted to work on the home front in the tsarist period and continued to serve after the change of Government. Among the enlisted Chinese there were adventurers and people with criminal history.

Some others joined the Red Army according to their convictions. In the areas occupied by the Whites the Chinese were still discriminated as second-raters without a gleam of hope in the future while the Red promised them "complete protection of their interests." The Decree on Land issued shortly after the October Revolution gave hope to the Chinese that they would also get land. But above all for the first time they felt that they were treated as equals and, of course, interpreted such policies as a confirmation of their belief that all other promises of the new authorities would be kept too. This hope was worth fighting for.

It is a different pair of shoes what they eventuated in the end.

Generally speaking the attitude of the Chinese revealed the same factors which eventually tipped the scale of the civil war in favor of the Red. If we oversimplify the matter we can define them as follows: tempting promises plus certain advances plus sweeping and ruthless terror against all dissidents.

It goes without saying that some Chinese sided with the Red due to Bolshevik propaganda which had been eloquently articulated back in the pre-revolutionary period and was based on comprehensive ideology. The Whites had neither such an ideology nor such a powerful propagandist machinery. Special Chinese and Korean sections were set up under the Far Eastern Bureau of the Central Committee and the Regional Party Committees in the Far East while international departments were set up under the Political Sections of the Peoples' Revolutionary Army. These institutions

were set the tasks of enlisting the Chinese and the Koreans in partisan detachments and popularizing communism among the Chinese and Korean population.^{④⑦}

However, had propaganda remained unsupported by concrete policies nobody would have yielded to it no matter how hard had Bolshevik agitators tried. There are quite a few facts proving that the Chinese, convinced that they were advocating the right cause, fought bravely in the ranks of the Red Army and partisan detachments and that the Chinese population supported their compatriots-partisans. It is a well-known fact that Chinese soldiers guarded Smolny, a palace in Petrograd which housed Lenin's government, and there was a Chinese company in the regiment of Latvian riflemen, an elite Guards detachment that guarded the Kremlin.

Relations among people in partisan detachments were, of course, complicated by strife and competition between their commanders and the Chinese were involved in these disputes. For instance, the Chinese consul in Blagoveshchensk informed his government of a conflict which resulted in the disarmament of two hundred Red army men of Chinese origin and urged China's foreign office to take care of them.^{④⑧} However, despite such clashes relations between the Chinese and the Russian in the Red Army were on the whole satisfactory.

The Whites, Kolchak and ataman Semenov, also tried to recruit the Chinese or coerced them to conscript but not so successfully: they had no arguments that could encourage the Chinese to side with them.

China's government considered the Chinese that served in any army as victims of wretched circumstances or deception (of course, with the exception of bandits) and resolutely stood out against using them as "cannon-fodder." It repeatedly demonstrated against such policies, turned for support to the ambassadors of the Great Powers but its protests were ignored.

Here follows a typical document on the matter, a telegram from the Chinese

④⑦ I. Babichev. *Uchastiye kitaiskikh trudiashchihsia v grazhdanskoy voine na Dalnem Vostoke* (Participation of Chinese and Korean Labourers in the Civil War in the Far East), Tashkent, 1959, p. 22, 63 (in Russian).

④⑧ FAA, Doc. 03-32/325-(5), 01.04.1920, From Consul Chi in Heihe.

embassy in Russia to China's foreign office: "According to secretary Li, he has recently had a meeting with the head of the Soviet Foreign Office's Far-Eastern department in Moscow and expressed his concern about the recruitment of the Chinese. His host replied that the enlistment should be limited but very many Chinese volunteered to join the Red Army and the government could hardly forbid them to do so... Secretary Li invited these workers to the embassy and openly discussed the matter with them. They burst into tears and said: "Can one forget his motherland? The point is that it is extremely difficult to find a job in Russia owing to the disturbance underway and we have no money to repatriate. We cannot make both ends meet and, therefore, have enlisted."⁴⁹

Similarly, the Chinese government did its best to prevent ataman Semenov from recruiting its citizens in the guise of workers. The Heilungchiang military governor reported to the foreign office: "With a view to executing Your instructions Chang, the commander of our troops in Manchuria, contacted ataman Semenov and the latter agreed to disarm the Chinese. But Semenov's British, French and Japanese advisers have well coordinated their efforts and I am afraid that this information may remain mere verbiage. It is expedient to contact the Russian ambassador..."⁵⁰ But the Omsk government (which the military governor had in mind) had absolutely no influence with ataman Semenov and all the time gave different but always evasive answers: sometimes it shifted the blame on Bolsheviks, some others asserted that Prime-Minister Duan believed it possible to make allowance for Semenov or promised that Kolchak would soon come to the Far East and work everything out.⁵¹ Not relying on diplomatic means any longer Peiping demanded that the administration of the frontier provinces should stop in a most resolute way any attempts of the Russian to recruit workers there.

Such an active stand of the government was accounted for, first, by its wish to

⁴⁹ HDSRR, 1917-1919, *Political Changes...*(1), Doc. 677.

⁵⁰ HDSRR, 1917-1919, *Political Changes...*(1), Doc. 303.

⁵¹ FAA, 03-32/325-(2), 22.04.1918; 03-32/325-(2), 23.04.1918, Negotiations of Chu Hao-
hsiang with Ambassador Ku in the Russian Embassy.

save the lives of the compatriots; second, by the concern that their involvement in the hostilities on some side would whip up anti-Chinese feeling of the Russian population, especially with the instigation of the other side. This concern was justified: indeed, there were some facts of such response by the population.

Public Organisations as Objects of the Class Struggle

Under the severe conditions of the Revolution and the civil war public organizations were of vital importance for the Chinese population: they allowed to arrange at least some self-protection from bandits and establish a system of mutual assistance. Under the extreme conditions some societies were reorganized and renamed, while some others merged to form new associations, including such big ones as the Commercial Society of Eastern Siberia. Chinese societies maintained steady contacts with China. Even elections to the Peiyang parliament were conducted through them.^{⑤②}

Alongside traditional societies headed by merchants and industrialists, this period saw the development of new public organizations in which the first fiddle was played by students and workers. In April 1917 a group of Petrograd students led by Liu Tze-rung (who came from a well-known family of tea-breeders settled in Russia) registered an organization called "The Union of Chinese Citizens in Russia." They set themselves the task of uniting workers, merchants and students. This association worked in close cooperation with China's embassy.^{⑤③} Its officers raised money to help those workers who lived in poverty, took up their cases with Russian authorities, helped them maintain contacts with the embassy of Denmark when, on China's request, this country assumed the representation of its interests in Russia in 1918.

Sweeping anarchy, characteristic of the period, touched upon Chinese societies too. Competition developed between the old and the new ones. For instance, in 1921 a certain Li Hung-cheng founded a Chinese Commercial Association in one of Vladivostok's districts although there had been already a city Chinese Society for

^{⑤②} FAA, Doc. 03-32/318-(3), 09.09.1922, From the Consulate General in Chita; 03-32/318-(3), 19.09.1922, To the Consulate General in Chita.

^{⑤③} HDSRR, 1917-1919, *Political Changes...*(1), Doc. 187.

Mutual Aid there. The two societies started rivalling and both appealed to Peiping accusing the other side of all sort of abuses. For example, Li accused Chang Dao-you, the chairman of the rival society, that he had made a deal with the former consul and on the consulate behalf had ordered 280 goods vans to deliver food aid to the local Chinese population and then had misused these vans in his own interests. Their strife was even more dramatic as at the time Chang was running for the Peiyang parliament. This conflict ended with Li's defeat. "Officers of Chinese police working for the Society for Mutual Aid, assisted by sailors from the Chinese cruiser anchored in the port of Vladivostok, arrested Li and some of his employees and brought them to the cruiser." Later, on Peiping's orders Li was brought to China "to be closely watched by the local authorities without the right to return to Vladivostok." His society was disbanded as an "extremist" one.⁵⁴ This example is interesting, inter alia, because it shows the extent to which Peiping regulated the life of Chinese societies as well as the control of the leadership of officially recognized societies over the common Chinese even if they were not their members.

However, the position of Chinese societies themselves was no longer stable. Beginning with 1921 completely new political organizations called Chinese Workers' Unions or Associations mushroomed in the Far East as the Soviet authorities consolidated and hostilities came to an end. The new workers' organizations were set up with the help of local authorities, maintained close contacts with them and were of marked pro-communist nature. Evidently, at first new central Soviet authorities must have decided to model party construction in the Chinese diaspora on the Russian. Here and there appeared a "Chinese Socialist Party" or a "Chinese Bolshevik Party." However, this line failed to yield the desired results and shortly afterwards the "parties" began to transform into workers' unions. Some unions published newspapers-leaflets of openly communist orientation emphasized by their characteristic titles "Socialist Iskra (spark)," "Chinese Workers' Pravda (truth)," etc.⁵⁵

⁵⁴ See FAA 03-32/334-(1,2); *HDSRR, 1921, Usual Diplomatic Exchanges*, part1.6, especially Doc. 444, 696.

⁵⁵ See, for example, FAA, Doc. 03-32/319-(1), 06.08.1921, From the Representative of the Chinese Commercial Society of the Amur Region; 25.08.1921, Meeting of the Head of

Documents which came to China's Foreign Office from Russia give us a vivid picture of the workers' unions' activities. According to the documents, their members were dregs of society: lumpens and former Red-Beard-bandits who often even headed the new organizations. They extensively practiced violence, and burglary and extorted money from the Chinese population enjoying both the support of the authorities (on whose behalf they conducted indiscriminate search in the community) and the help of Red army men (who even participated in the search). They quite often coerced their compatriots to join the union, extorting much money from them in the guise of entrance fees or membership dues. "They have more influence than the consul," noted the head of the Russian department in China's Foreign Office describing the activity of the workers' union in the Amur province.⁵⁶

It goes without saying that the most affluent section of Chinese emigration, merchants' associations, suffered most from the workers' unions. They tried to hire more or less reliable guards but the workers' unions and the local police (militia) disarmed and arrested them. Numerous complaints of Chinese trade societies and diplomatic representatives, their appeals to put an end to the abuse and ban workers' unions were neglected by the Russian side. The latter either ignored the complaints or found nothing illegal in the workers' unions' activities or tried to get off with empty promises to look into the matter. It always denied all accusations addressed to Russian authorities.⁵⁷

Most probably, Russian authorities did not merely connive at burglary and extortion, they viewed them in the general context of their policies. They believed that expropriation of affluent Chinese, even not sanctioned by the authorities, reestab-

the Committee on Russian Matters with A-ge-liao-fu (Chinese transcription of Russian name - A.L.)

- ⁵⁶ For many facts of the activity of the Workers Unions see FAA, Doc. 03-32/319, 03-32/320, for example, 03-32/320-(2), 30.06.1921, From the Ministry of Home Affairs; or 03-32/32-(3), 31.07.1921, From Heilungchiang Military Governor. See also footnote 30.
- ⁵⁷ See, for example, FAA, Doc. 03-32/319-(2), 03.10.1922, From the Consul in Khabarovsk; 04.07.1922, From Consul General Wang in Chita; 03-32/320-(3), 20.07.1921, From the Chinese General Commercial Society in Khabarovsk.

lished class justice. Besides, they tried in this way to draw the lower strata of Chinese emigration to their side and turn them into their social support. At least it is well-known that such were the policies of Soviet Government towards their own citizens.

However, it is doubtful that the Chinese workers' unions consisted only of criminals. It is no mere chance that some reports to the foreign office from Russian provinces mentioned that many Chinese had joined a certain Workers' Union or the "Red Party". Some joined the Union for the sake of privileges: the unions gave residence permits, trade and business licenses and even licenced gambling houses and opium dens. Some others were attracted to the unions by communist propaganda with its emphasis on equality: why should the poor die of hunger and frosts under severe Siberian conditions? "Property should be common. Let's take food or clothes as an example: all this should be equally divided to prevent the situation when one is full while the other starves, one freezes while the other is quite comfortable."⁵⁸

Anyway, workers unions grew ever more active and established contacts with one another. The Chinese administration in China's frontier provinces grew ever more concerned about their activities. Their concern was that these unions and Russian authorities which backed them would try to spread communist ideology and through it their influence to the Chinese territory. Such designs continuously turned the heads of their compatriots who had unexpectedly got some power and became adapts of the world revolution.

Peiping was concerned, inter alia, that "extremists" in the North could make a deal with revolutionary forces in the South and was carefully collecting all rumors on the possibility of this deal. The military governor in Heilungchiang informed Peiping: "The Northern-Amur Union of Chinese Workers is sending its emissar to Huanghe; he is leaving one of these days."⁵⁹ The consul general wrote from Blagoveshchensk: "A few students came here in summer from Shanghai with Sun Wen's instruction to

⁵⁸ FAA, Doc. 03-32/319-(1), 09.10.1921, From the Consulate General in Heihe. *Peifeng* (North Wind), 20.08.1921, No.2.

⁵⁹ HDSRR, *Usual Diplomatic Exchanges*, 1921, Doc. 682.

join the Association of Chinese Workers and publish a newspaper Northern Wind." The head of this Association has recently set up a new group with the membership of approximately 1,000 people. They are located in the areas along the frontier and the railroad. They have come in touch with bandits in our territory and are waiting for an opportunity to start acting. They spy on us and from time to time send their accomplices to different provinces to carry on propaganda for communism."⁶⁰

The concern of the Chinese administration proved to be wrong. Workers' Unions were, obviously, designed as a tool which allowed to spread the methods of class struggle to the Chinese emigration and help consolidate socialist system throughout the whole country. Their functions were limited to these ends: it was quite evident that any broadening of their functions under the circumstances was clearly doomed to dead failure.

Chinese Immigration in the USSR

Expropriation As a Road to the New Society

According to the 1926 census, 100,000 Chinese remained in the USSR after the destructive storms of the revolution and the Civil War.⁶¹ Most of them - over 70,000 - were concentrated in the Far East. Although their share in the territory's growing population dropped to 3.8 percent, they continued to play a considerable role in the economic development, especially in coal mining, transportation (loading and unloading). Since 1921 they became involved in the cultivation of opium poppy, an export commodity in Russia, and since 1924 they were employed in gold mining, an industry totally devastated by the war. Moscow can provide an insight into the

⁶⁰ FAA, Doc. 03-32/319-(1), 09.10.1921; From the Consulate General in Heihe.

⁶¹ Tsentralnoye Statisticheskoye Upravleniye SSSR. Otdel perepisy. Vsierossiyskaya perepis naseleniya. *Kratkie svedeniya. Vip.4. Narodnost i rodnoy yasik naseleniya SSSR* (Central Statistical Bureau of the USSR, Census Department, *All-Union Census of the Population. Brief Report. Issue IV*). Moscow, 1928, p. 40-41 (in Russian).

pursuits of the Chinese who were scattered in different towns and cities.⁶² 8,000 Chinese lived in Moscow in 1928, most of them from Shandong, 1,000 from Southern China. The “northern” Chinese were in the laundry business, knitwear, bakeries, some were engaged in petty hawking, others held no jobs. The “southern” Chinese specialized exclusively in leather goods: handbags, cases and so on.

Although they were not USSR citizens, Chinese immigrants found themselves involved in the process of “the building of socialism,” with all its specific features. Like the Russians, they went through the New Economic Period (NEP), collectivization and industrialization, all the ideological campaigns that drove the people to seek out enemies in their midst and to work as intensively as possible.

Compared to the Civil War, life gradually became easier and more peaceful. Banditry was brought to naught, the authorities’ arbitrariness diminished, as well as the lawlessness of petty bosses. Still, like other nationalities, the Chinese found their situation in the USSR pretty complex. Not only because of the difficult post-civil war rehabilitation that started in a totally ravaged country.

True, the enemies of the new order were defeated and the dictatorship of the Soviets was installed across the vast country. But the ideology formulated by the new leaders essentially regarded the popular masses as nothing more than a building material for the creation of a new, unprecedented communist society of justice and prosperity, in actual fact, for the consolidation of their power and reproduction of similar regimes throughout the world. (We are not discussing now the differences between different theoreticians of socialism. All were united in this question.) Hence the social strategy of eliminating whole groups of population: “exploiting” strata that used hired labor - not only by requisitioning their property but also by physically removing them from society; the economic strategy of transforming the whole populace into a “labor army” of intensively working and low paid people (certain deviations were allowed during the short period of the NEP); the regime’s repressive nature. That was the only regime capable of: firstly, breaking down

⁶² SARF, Doc. 1235/123/35

the entire social structure; secondly, coercing the masses to work intensively in the absence of economic incentives; and thirdly, maintaining the siege atmosphere, which made the former two possible.

Not surprisingly, in the circumstances the stream of complaints and requests to the Republic of China's diplomatic representations in Moscow and the Far East never let up. (They are still the main source for our study).^{⑥③} An analysis of these materials throw light on the methods of pursuing that policy against Chinese. We shall limit ourselves sketching them out.

1. The refusal to restitute confiscated property. An enormous number of people saw their property confiscated for the benefit of the state on the basis of "revolutionary law." A new law of 1927 said: those whose property was confiscated prior to May 22, 1922 (i.e. the whole Civil War period) had no right to demand restitution. The rule applied to foreigners too; accordingly, all claims of Chinese nationals were automatically turned down.^{⑥④}

2. Direct alienation of tools and means of industrial production. That alienation was conducted on several occasions, over a long period of time, with the help of a sophisticated system of measures. Let us give but one example.

Title to property is given for the sake of developing the productive forces - that principle was applied during the NEP period. In 1927 the principle was invoked to adopt a resolution under which the state could take possession of any enterprise that was diverted from its original purpose. The authorities did not take the trouble (probably, deliberately) to make the resolution known to the public. Meanwhile a considerable number of Chinese went back to their native country in the mid-1920s because of the unfavorable business situation, leaving their businesses in the hands of representatives. They had no reason to doubt their title's immutability. Visits of

^{⑥③} In the Foreign Affairs Archives (Taipei, Academia Sinica, Institute of Modern History) documents of that kind occupy several sections: 03-32/326, 03-32/327 etc. and, besides, appear in small groups in many other sections.

^{⑥④} See, for example, FAA, Doc. 03-32/369-(2), 19.02.1927, From Representative Geng of the Consul General in Irkutsk.

commissions that formalized confiscation of grain or saw mills⁶⁵ came as a complete surprise for those people, most of whom were not very literate.

3. Land confiscation. Agrarian reform - egalitarian distribution of land - was carried out in some republics of the USSR in the late 1920s. Let us consider the example of the Kyrgyz republic.⁶⁶ It was inhabited by Chinese nationals - traders and agricultural hands. Up until 1923 they were allowed to buy land. Those workers would spend many years saving money to buy land, after that many adopted Russian citizenship. Most traders leased their land, often to their compatriots who would work the same plot for decades.

Following the reform, land was confiscated from so-called “non-working households,” and land above the set amount was taken away from “working households”. The confiscated land would be given to landless hired hands and tenants. A special governmental decree equated foreigners to citizens of the USSR. On average, a household was given 6.3 hectares of land. It should be stressed that confiscation meant not only confiscation of land as such but also a person’s fruits of labor: sowed crops and trees, buildings, agricultural implements.

The need to distinguish between “non-working” and “working” households opened up vast possibilities for arbitrary action. A case in point was Ismailov, a Chinese national living in the Turkmen republic.⁶⁷ All of his land was taken away from him in 1928 because his household was considered “non-working;” being a mullah, he was driven with his family from the aul(?). Ismailov complained to the USSR Central Executive Committee (CEC) that the decision was based on false evidence. Moscow decided that Ismailov was “himself an object of exploitation” and invited the local authorities to verify the facts. The outraged CEC of the Turkmen republic also charged Ismailov with “conducting agitation against the land and water reform and contributing to its failure” and reconfirmed its decision.

⁶⁵ See, for example, FAA, Doc. 03-32/335-(2), 20.02.1928.

⁶⁶ SARF, Doc. 1235/64/38, f. 1-3

⁶⁷ SARF, Doc. 1235/64/63, f. 10-13.

4. Gradual phasing out of private trade. In 1927, the Chinese consul in Irkutsk described the situation in the following terms: "This year the city has started to implement the policy of driving out petty private capital. The worker and peasant consumer cooperatives have been opening their affiliates in the most important locations, the state supplies them with capital and goods. They have an abundance of goods, the prices are moderate. Petty Chinese entrepreneurs and traders are being driven away step by step, the ground is moving under their feet. Over 20 establishments went out of business this year, the rest are breathing their last breaths."⁶⁸

5. The heavy tax burden that came down particularly strongly on the affluent classes. For example, the representative of the Republic of China in Vladivostok noted in 1924: "The economic situation in the far East and the whole series of onerous state taxes and local levies have placed the Chinese traders and industrialists in an impossibly difficult financial situation that reduces their commercial activity to seeking necessary means to pay these taxes and levies. Because of this the Chinese traders and industrialists find themselves unable to do business without losses, resort to large loans and finally go bankrupt."⁶⁹

In addition to the taxes the Soviet government started to issue annual state bonds that were placed among the more affluent sections of the public forcibly, depending on income. The system applied to foreigners as well. Attempts of the Chinese side to obtain exceptions or exemptions for its nationals were to no avail. The subscription was voluntary among the "have-nots," but one was in no position to refuse. The state bonds were supplemented by compulsory bonds of various defense societies, one-time collections for the construction of, say, a big aeroplane and such like.

By the early 1930s the policy left no "exploiting elements" among the Chinese population in the USSR. The state had taken over all private industrial enterprises with the exception of a small number of small enterprises; they were given to a specific

⁶⁸ FAA, Doc. 03-32/317(b)-(4), 07.07.1927, From Consul General Geng in Irkutsk.

⁶⁹ FAA, Doc. 03-32/360-(1), 16.07.1924, From Deputy Consul General Shen Tzo in Vladivostok.

form of cooperatives that were little different from state-owned establishments. The “kulaks,” i.e. the prosperous peasants, were “liquidated as a class”: they were stripped of their property and driven from their homes, including “the Chinese and Korean kulaks.” The remaining peasantry was denied title to land and forcibly united in collective farms, thus becoming virtual serfs. The tragedy experienced by the people, which extended to the Chinese community, was not without human victims.^⑩

The Two Sides of a New Life

The workers, the society’s progressive class in the parlance of the Marxist-Leninist theory, found themselves in a better position under the new regime as a class that exercised its “dictatorship.” In accordance with the ideology, workers received higher pay, especially in some leading industries, than the other strata; they also enjoyed some advantages. The ruling bureaucracy was buying their loyalty turning them into its social base.

The Chinese workers were no exception; it was no accident that the Communist ideology designated “internationalism” as “proletarian.” Those who were employed in the privileged industries (including, for instance, gold mining) where the state set higher wages were especially lucky. On the other hand, the state was forced to allow self-employment (small repairs and so on) and the population paid a good price.

That contributed considerably to improving the Chinese workers condition compared to the pre-Revolutionary period, to say nothing of the Civil War. The Chinese consul in Irkutsk wrote in 1927: “Speaking of the workers, the best example is shoe menders: they had heat in their homes and food. The workers at the Bodaibo gold mines are getting rich. This year they have started to form artels that set out one, after another. It is rumored that over 1,000 have become rich that way and many are returning home already”.^⑪

Yet the improvements in the quality of life in the 1920s did not extend to everybody

⑩ M. Golubovsky, *Leninskaya natsionalnaya politika v deistvii* (Lenin’s National Policy in Action). Khabarovsk, 1932.

⑪ FAA, Doc. 03-32/317(b)-(4), 07.07.1927, From Consul General Geng in Irkutsk.

equally. As was said elsewhere, there were jobless Chinese in Moscow in 1928. Those employed in laundries (that was the most widespread occupation) worked 12 to 14 hours a day in humid basements.

But highly intensive labor was a universal feature of that period and took the form of "mobilization" at state-owned enterprises.

It bears remembering that Russians toiled side by side with the Chinese in the same conditions, at the same rate and for the same pay. Before the October revolution, the tsar's officials, alarmed by the "flood of the yellow race" raised the question of gradually replacing "yellow labor." The Soviet government found its own recipe: it appropriated the "yellow labor" almost erasing the distinction between Chinese and Soviet citizens. The leveling applied to their rights, obligations and control of their social behavior. At the same time, it beefed up the control over the border with China.

No doubt, the positive side to the Chinese's new life was the establishment of equality of all nationalities and the end to discrimination. At least at the level of ideology and government policy, Chinese were elected to local and even central governments - the Soviets. True, they were purely decorative figures because the Soviets themselves were just an adjunct of the party bodies. But even in this case the Chinese were on a par with the Russians. The arrogant attitude toward Chinese on an everyday level, manifestations of racial enmity did occur, but they were condemned by propaganda. Li Hung-chang, a Chinese miner from the Far East and delegate to the 6th congress of the USSR Soviets, said at the congress: "Chauvinism, the inheritance of the tsarist times, exists in some places in the USSR. But Soviet government and the party are waging a resolute struggle against it."⁷²

Positive changes were not limited to national equality. High schools and secondary specialized schools with instruction in the Chinese, national theaters, clubs and sports societies appeared during the large-scale program of building the new state. The Chinese were encouraged to partake of culture. Furthermore that was almost

⁷² SARF, Doc. 3316/6/36, f.49.

compulsory (evening classes, subscription to newspapers and so on). About half a dozen papers were published in Chinese.

There is hardly any need to emphasize the importance of this work. For instance, according to Chinese cultural organizations, most Chinese living in Moscow were not very literate, did not speak Russian, did not know the laws, and as a result often fell victims to cheating and exploitation by more literate compatriots. Opium smoking was widespread in illegal dens.^{⑦③}

The Soviet government paid special attention to cultural and ideological work among the Chinese and Koreans who worked at gold mines. Additional funds were allocated to set up literacy centers, schools and hospitals, film projectors and gramophones were ordered, movies were translated into Chinese. Trained people were sent there, including people from the Communist University of the Workers of China and military schools, as political educators and administrators.^{⑦④}

That selection of cadre was not accidental. The Chinese spiritual life was put into a rigid ideological mold. Liquidation of illiteracy and absorption of culture were blended with ideological inculcation of the students. Political sessions were a mandatory attribute of every Chinese worker's life. The cadre for ideological work were trained by Soviet and party schools that offered instruction in Chinese.

Regrettably, the Chinese life in Russia was burdened not only by the rigid control of their intellectual and social life but also by physical violence. Whole groups of people ascribed to the "exploiting classes," and not only them, were arrested and sent to China or - on an equal footing with Soviet citizens - to remote areas of the USSR. They were arraigned on standard charges of contraband, illegal crossing of the border, espionage, etc. Investigation and trial did not occur always, sometimes no charges would be made. Many were deported simply because they had no money to pay for a Soviet residence permit.

It is impossible, probably, to consider, that the accusations in all cases were

⑦③ SARF, Doc. 1235/123/35, f.6.

⑦④ SARF, Doc. 3316/42/16(1), f.20-21.

unfair. However, obviously it was not the aim of the Soviet authorities to separate criminals from innocent persons or punish criminals according to a degree of their crimes. Naturally, such situation opened wide opportunities for different abuses: arrests with the purpose to take possession of the property, false denunciations etc. Such examples in the Taiwan archival materials are estimated to be in many tens, if not in hundreds.

In October 1927 the Chinese consul from Blagoveshchensk stated: "The Soviet authorities in accordance with their economic policy treat Chinese businessmen severely. Here the Chinese are arrested and by the decision of Political Bureau in Moscow are deported to remote places, such as Narym and Arkhangelsk. For some of them, after having resubmitted their cases in Court under the request of Chinese officials, the deportation was replaced by transportation from the USSR. Our state does not treat the Russian emigrants in such a manner."^{⑦⑤} Half a year later he stated: "Today the arrested Chinese people are as follows: 360 in prison, 86 in militia, 120 in frontier guards. The authorities confiscated goods of 80 thousand yuans, not including that which was returned to the owners after the protests."^{⑦⑥}

Notable is the following episode: trying in any way to stop a wave of terror, the Government of the Chinese Republic, in its turn, in 1928 deported from Shanghai a large (700 persons) group of Russian emigrants, supplying them with tickets and money for their journey. It was not taken into account, however, that the government of the USSR treated their emigrants in a quite different way than the Chinese government did, namely as the "class enemies" and potential spies, and so was absolutely insensible to such measures. In the city of Vladivostok, Russian repatriates were met as enemies, they were searched and arrested.^{⑦⑦}

From time to time, the Soviet security service managed to fabricate more loud political cases. In 1925 it disclosed "a conspiracy," whose object was an attempt upon

^{⑦⑤} FAA, Doc. 03-32/332-(1), 06.10.1927, From Consul General Tsou in Heihe.

^{⑦⑥} FAA, Doc. 03-32/332-(2), 29.03.1928, From Consul General Tsou in Heihe

^{⑦⑦} FAA, Doc. 03-32/332-(1), 04.02.1928, From the Staff.

the life of the Japanese ambassador.⁷⁸ “The conspiracy” supposedly was organized by several Chinese, living in Moscow, including an officer of Chinese diplomatic representation. Suspected persons were arrested. The Peoples’ Commissar of Foreign Affairs (e.i. Foreign Minister) Chicherin announced that the information concerning the conspiracy was “exhaustively proven”. However no proof was presented, and after persistent efforts of Chinese embassy the arrested persons were discharged without any explanations and apologies.

The people were repressed even in spite of their sympathy to the Soviet Union. Thus, after the Canton events of December, 1927 the Soviet government took some of the emigrants from southern China, but in 1928 began to arrest them. The friends of the arrested peoples went for protection to the Chinese embassy. The Chinese diplomatic representative protested to the Soviet side. The answer was: “There are doubtful persons and even spies among these people, so we cannot leave them at large.”⁷⁹ In the 30s the political atmosphere in the country became more heated and absurd-like searching for spies developed. The authorities looked at the Chinese and Koreans with suspicion, especially in the Far East. Finally the Chinese and the Koreans were deported from their homes. The Koreans were exiled to Central Asia. The Chinese were supposedly exiled to the motherland, but before the deportation at least a part of them spent many years in Central Asia. One of the most experienced Chinese diplomats Mr. Ting Wei-tze’ told the author that in the 40s, when he served in the diplomatic mission in Alma-Ata, many Chinese lived in that city. However, they did not dare to visit the representation office, as the building was under constant surveillance by the Soviet security service.

The End of Chinese Societies

Involving the whole population of the USSR in the totalitarian system inevitably led to liquidation of any organizations, which were not subordinate to the overall

⁷⁸ FAA, Doc. 03-32/339-(2), 02.09.1925, From Mr. Chiun, Foreign Minister.

⁷⁹ FAA, Doc. 03-32/331-(1), 09.02.1928, From Charge d’Affaires Cheng in the USSR.

control by the new authorities. But within the Chinese Diaspora such organizations still remained.

During 1923 as a result of a short campaign all “class-alien” organizations of the Chinese emigrants: merchant societies, national unions etc., were closed,⁸⁰ first in Khabarovsk and Iman, and then in the whole Far East. Chairmen and deputy-chairmen of all these societies as well as many board members were arrested. They were generally accused of espionage, illegal storage and secret transportation of the weapon to Manchuria, and of smuggling and trading opium. Trials of arrested persons began. Simultaneously the Russian authorities withdrew documents and money resources from Chinese organizations, confiscated their property and took away their rooms.

The Chinese government resolutely protested against these actions, calling them arbitrary and requesting explanations. The Russian side rejected all of the protests and, in turn, accused “some Chinese consulates” of “having secret police who made arrests and assaults” and said that during searches in Chinese organizations weapon and opium were found. The Chinese side argued: the weapons were for protection from bandits, and the opium was for personal use. As for accusations of espionage etc., such accusations were wrong under the torture.⁸¹

The consul in Chita (where arrested members of Chinese societies from Khabarovsk and neighbouring places gathered) Mr. Franklin Chiu acted especially vigorously. He managed to meet with the chairman of the Far Eastern Revolutionary Committee Matveev and to protest to him, after which a part of the arrested persons was released after posting bond. He then brought these cases to the attention of the Chairman of the All-Union Central Executive Committee, M. Kalinin, who was in Chita at that time. The latter declared that the arrested persons need not to worry, there were no

⁸⁰ FAA, Doc. 03-32/323-(1), 30.03.1923, To the State Administrative Council.

⁸¹ See, for example, the exchange of letters between the Chinese Government and the Representatives of the Workers' and Peasants' Government about closing of the Chinese societies in Chita, Khabarovsk and some other cities: FAA, Doc. 03-32/322-(1), 18.10.1923; 03-32/322-(1), 22.01.1923; 03-32/322-(3), 08.02.1923; 03-32/323-(1), 27/28.03.1923.

serious charges against them, and he promised to give instructions to local authorities to release them as soon as possible.^②

During 1923–1924 the arrested leaders of Chinese societies were discharged one after another under the judicial resolutions. The trial proceedings were stopped, and the property and money were given back to them. It is likely that the reasons for this were not only vigorous actions of the Chinese diplomats but also shifts in Russian - Chinese relations towards normalization, which was marked at this time by the visits of Karakhan to Peking and Shenyang.

Did the Chinese societies actually participate in illegal activity? It is likely that some of them did. But inflating the cases, or fabrication, or even provoking them, followed by “disclosure,” were usual methods of Soviet security service. It is noteworthy that the case of Chinese societies in Khabarovsk and its neighborhood was initiated after the denunciation by the head of a hunghuz band who terrorized the inhabitants near the border line on Chinese territory and was said to have got weapons from the Soviet authorities. Despite their attempts to arrest him he lived freely in Khabarovsk. The Chinese consul pointed this out in his memorandum to the Russian authorities.^③

However it may be, after the rehabilitation of Chinese societies’ leaders, the societies themselves did not revive. It is very likely that the Soviet authorities feared that the societies could act in favour of the China side (Chang Tzo-ling). But even apart from this, no organizations out of full Soviet control could be allowed.

By the way, the opponents of Chinese commercial societies, communist-sponsored workers’ unions, did not outlive them for very long. The peak of the workers’ unions activity was All-Russian congress of the Chinese Workers held in Moscow on February, 1923. The Congress elected Lenin and Kalinin as Honorable Chairmen and sent telegrams to Zinoviev and to Trotsky as “a leader of armed proletarians of the whole world.” In accordance with the ideology of communist expansion it

② FAA, Doc. 03-32/323-(2), 04.10.1923, From Consul General Chiu in Khabarovsk.

③ Ibid.

was said in the telegram: "In the hour of call for battle, Chinese proletarians will consolidate their ranks and, if necessary, will be ready to change a plough for a bayonet."⁸⁴

The main question at the Congress was: who will have the right to represent the interests of the Chinese immigrants in Russia? Participants of the Congress demanded that these rights be withdrawn from Peiping's diplomats and be given to the Moscow Workers' Union. The Chinese representative immediately contacted with the Soviet Foreign Office and protested. The Foreign Office, evidently prone to the Workers' Union, answered that the official Russian-Chinese inter-state relations were not yet restored, and so the Chinese diplomat had no right to represent the interests of the immigrants.

Meanwhile delegates of the Congress held elections and elected a "consul" and a "vice-consul." The new "consul" Chang Young-kui was known to have appropriated pensions given by the Soviet Government for a group of immigrants from Chekiang. The "vice-consul" was an odious person as well. The Congress decided to ask the Soviet government to recognize the elected officials and demanded that Peiping approve their appointments.⁸⁵ Thus, an attempt was made to deprive Peiping of the right to represent the interests of Chinese emigrants and to place it under the auspice of the Soviet government.

The attempt failed, after which the Chinese Workers' Union was seen as useless in the field of foreign policy. As for other types of work, the Union was simply unable to accomplish them. During the revision it was found that "the Union's cultural-educational activity was not conducted almost at all." It was also revealed that the Union "illegally appropriated functions of inquest body, while not taking care of living conditions of the poorer part of Chinese immigration, etc."⁸⁶ The last

⁸⁴ See in FAA, Doc. 03-32/319(2), 31.03.1923, *Rabochaya Moskva* (Workers' Moscow), No.39 (311), 1923.

⁸⁵ See FAA, Doc. 03-32/319(2), 23.02.1923, From the State Administrative Council, and later documents in the brochure 319-(2).

⁸⁶ SARF, Doc. p.-1318/1/1267, f.1.

known document concerning this organization, “which consolidates all the Chinese proletarians in the vast territory of the USSR,” was a complaint of its chairman about the requisition of its space and lack of finances even for stationary.^⑧

^⑧ Ibid., f.12.