

Soviet Union and Korea

: 1920s-1930s

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논문 요약

이 논문은 1920~1930년대 소련-조선 관계의 여러 측면에 관해 논의한 글이다. 조선의 식민지 상태로 인한 소련과 조선간 공식적인 외교관계의 부재 및 일본 당국이 인위적으로 조성한 장애에도 불구하고 양국간의 접촉은 교역을 포함한 다양한 수위에서 전개되었다. 조선의 상황은 소련 언론에서 널리 취급되었다.

소련 쪽에서 이들 접근은 주로 조선인민의 반식민지 투쟁에 대한 동조 및 연대, 그리고 빨치산 그룹을 포함한 조선해방운동에 대한 각종 지원으로 나타났다. 본 논문은 한국임시정부, 천도교 그리고 공산주의자 등 조선의 독립투사들과 소련의 관계를 조명하였다. 또한 조선 빨치산 그룹에 대한 소련의 지원을 살피고 있다. 즉, 일본의 억압에 의해 그들은 피난처와 지원을 찾아 소련 영토로 퇴각하여 재무장 후 다시 반식민지 투쟁으로 복귀할 수 있었다.

소련 극동은 조선해방운동의 배후 기지였다. 그러나 스탈린의 억압과 조선인 강제 이주가 소련과 조선인민의 결속에 부정적인 영향을 끼친 것은 분명하다.

주제어 : 소련, 조선해방운동, 코민테른, 일본식민주의, 천도교, 한국임시정부, 조선공산당

I. Introduction

In the 1920s-1930s Korea occupied an important place in the Soviet Union's foreign policies. Inter-state relations did not exist as Korea was a colony of the Japanese, but no effort of the Japanese invaders could succeed in stopping the interest of the two neighboring countries towards each other and block bilateral contacts. Of importance were a long tradition of good neighborly relations and, primarily, the Soviet Union's active solidarity with anti-colonial struggle of subjugated nations, especially and naturally, the ones as close as Korea.

Two crucial events within the period under review may be defined as temporal borders of the two stages of Soviet-Korean relations of that epoch. First was the signing in 1925 of the Basic Convention on Major Principles of Bilateral relations between USSR and Japan (the Beijing Soviet-Japanese treaty). Thanks to this treaty the relations between Soviet Union and Japan improved for some time and, accordingly, the possibilities for Soviet-Korean contacts also grew. Considerable facilities for those contacts were provided by the opening, in the same year, of the Soviet General Consulate in Seoul. The second event was the invasion of Manchuria by Japan in 1931 which was the start of Japanese aggression in Asia. As a result Soviet-Japanese relations rapidly deteriorated to come to military conflicts at the Khasan Lake (1938) and the Mongol river Khalkhin Gol (1939). This grave aggravation of tensions was extremely harmful for Soviet-Korean relations but could not totally block them.

II. Trade relations

Shortly after the end of civil war in the Russian Far East (1918–1922), trade relations between the two countries were revived. Korea was a colony then and therefore all commercial operations from its side were carried on under control and with participation of colonial authorities and the Japanese capital. However, the nascent Korean national capital was active too. In Soviet custom documents Korea was denoted as an independent trade partner. In 1926 a Soviet Trade Mission was established there.

The Soviet Union supplied coal and coke, oil, timber, fish and other foodstuffs to Korea. Korea's exports to the USSR consisted of small ships and boats, paper and allied items, pharmaceutical and technical raw materials, salt and cattle. Exchange of goods was mainly carried on in the form of causal deals. Only fish, seafood and other foodstuffs had been supported by the USSR to Korea on a regular basis for a certain period of time. The exports were small indeed: from the USSR it reached the maximum 16639 tons in 1925–26, from Korea—86 tons only in 1926–27.¹⁾ From the Korean side trade with the USSR almost ended after 1928, perhaps due to the prohibition by the Japanese administration. Soviet Union continued supplies to Korea up to 1938, the Khasan Lake conflict.

1) *Vneshnyaya torgovlya SSSR. Statisticheski sbornik. 1918–1966 (Foreign Trade of the USSR. A Statistical Collection, 1918–1966)*. Moscow: Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1967, pp. 925–938.

III. Solidarity and Relief

In the 1920s–1930s much attention was focused in the USSR upon the situation in colonial Korea, the struggle of its people for national liberation. Hundreds of articles and other pieces of information were published on this subject in Soviet journals and newspapers. Most of them condemned the Japanese colonial regime and disclosed the real meaning of demagogical “reforms” carried out by the Japanese in Korea after the suppression of the March First Movement, 1919.

There was hardly an event in the liberation struggle of the Korean people that missed the reflection and solidarity of the Soviet press. Thus, the June 1926 mass demonstration in Seoul was reported by “Pravda” newspaper in five major articles plus eight ones on the subsequent trials of the participant patriots. One of these articles quoted from the court speech by the celebrated freedom fighter and Communist leader, Pak Hon-yong, who spoke on behalf of all accused: “We are the representatives of Korean proletariat which fights to death against you. What kind of trial can it be between the fighting parties? We know the sentence before it's pronounced. It will be ruthless class revenge. Why then is this comedy of the trial after you have revenged enough beating us up in jail with bamboo rods and torturing us with needles? Down with the court hypocrisy!”²⁾

The Soviet support for the liberation struggle in Korea was expressed in the form of various mass meetings. For a few years such meetings

2) *Pravda*. 16 February 1928.

had been held in commemoration of the March First Movement. Many Korean freedom fighters, persecuted by Japanese police, found refuge in the USSR. Among them were Pak Hon-yong, Yo Un-hyong, Kim Kyu-shik and other celebrated persons. Wholeheartedly welcomed in the USSR, they accumulated new experience and returned home to continue their struggle.

Concrete assistance to the Korean liberation movement was carried on through the organizational network of International Red Aid (in Russian abbreviation MOPR). Through its publications MOPR widely circulated information about the struggle of Korean people and repressive policies of Japanese colonizers. MOPR units, present almost everywhere in the USSR, organized public functions and meetings of solidarity with the Korean freedom fighters, raised funds to help political emigrants and their families; a part of collected money was transported to Korea where similar units existed. Some succeeded in sending messages of sympathy and solidarity to the prisoners.

The friendly attitude of the Soviet people to the Koreans was manifested most visibly in 1925 when Korea became a victim (in July) of a disastrous flood. The Soviet press reported the calamity and its grave consequences in detail. The Soviet people responded to the appeal of public organizations to raise funds for the victims. By October 1925, 65 thousand rubles were collected and sent to Korea through Red Cross.³⁾ The sum may look small if one forgets that it had been collected by the people who had recently survived World War I and civil war. Fund raising for Korea continued afterwards too. Korean

patriots had to press upon the Japanese administration to make sure the collected sums reach those in need.

Soviet aid to the flood victims in Korea did not pass unnoticed. "Pravda" published the following abstract from the "Choson Ilbo" newspaper: "There are enough rich and powerful countries in the world who speak on sympathy with the oppressed. But only the workers' and peasants' state of the USSR, which the bourgeois world misses no chance to slander upon, responded to our disaster. 3-4 years ago, when news came to Korea that Russian peasants were dying in thousands from hunger,⁴⁾ we were unable to not only offer them material support but even express, due to well-known circumstances, our sympathy with them. Now Russian workers and peasants are first to come with moral and material support to Korean peasantry. Only there, in the USSR, people live who not in words but in deeds feel sympathy with the oppressed and help them" (Italics in the original.-Yu. V.).⁵⁾

It has to be noted that before 1929, especially after the above-mentioned Soviet-Japanese Convention had been signed in 1925, the Japanese administration allowed some Soviet journals and books to be brought to Korea. They were, to be sure, subjected to strict censorship. Publications suspected of "Bolshevik propaganda" were immediately confiscated. Nevertheless, some Soviet publications could reach Korean readers (there were Koreans who knew Russian) and inform them about the USSR, its internal and foreign policies.

Despite censorship limitations, the patriotic press in Korea sometimes

3) *Pravda*. 09 October 1925.

4) The reference is to the mass hunger in the Volga area and other regions due to crop failure in 1921.

5) *Pravda*. 09 October 1925.

published objective materials on Lenin, October revolution of 1917 in Russia, Soviet successes in building new society. “Tong-a Ilbo”, for instance, in an article cited data on Soviet economic achievements. It characterized Soviet foreign policy as correct and peaceful which resulted in the recognition of the USSR by capitalist countries. The article reminded its readers about the defeat of foreign intervention in Russia in 1918-22 and warned about the futility of new attacks on the USSR since it had a trusty ally-proletariat in other countries of the world.⁶⁾

Naturally, the Korean press was especially interested in the life of Koreans in the USSR. In February-March 1926 ten issues of “Shidae Ilbo” featured a big story informing that Koreans, like other previously oppressed peoples of Russia, now enjoyed real freedom and equality.⁷⁾ In July of the same year “Tong-a Ilbo” published, in four issues, a story on “Koreans in Siberia”, mainly based on Soviet press information on the life and labor of Korean population.⁸⁾ Materials of this kind were observable in other Korean newspapers and journals too.

The press publishing favorable reports on the USSR and revolutionary changes there and thus making it possible for the readers to critically re-assess the situation in their home country were persecuted by Japanese administration. Nevertheless, the truth about the USSR reached the Korean public. From the end of the 1920s-beginning of the 1930s, against the background of strengthened colonial regime and its anti-Soviet course, such publications had been decreasing in

6) *Tong-a Ilbo*. 01 January 1926.

7) *Shidae Ilbo*. 26 February 1926.

8) *Tong-a Ilbo*. 24-27 June 1926.

number. In 1940, as is well known, publication of Korean newspapers was stopped.

Apart from the press, important source of bilateral information were personal impressions. Many Koreans succeeded in visiting the Soviet Far East as seasonal workers, fishermen, etc., and witnessed the changes that had been taking place there. Back home, they shared their impressions. Some Soviets also visited Korea with different purposes and published their experiences.⁹⁾ Publications, written and oral impressions helped to preserve the invisible threads of mutual interest and good-neighborhood that connected people of the two countries.

IV. Political Contacts

The Soviet Union never limited itself to moral support of the Korean liberation movement and took whatever possible measures to help it. During the civil war and resistance to foreign intervention in Russia the cooperation appeal from the emigrant Korean Provisional Government, created in Shanghai after the March First Movement, was received favorably. Yi Tong-hwi, one of the first Korean Socialists and for some time prime minister of this government, was inclined towards cooperation with Soviet Russia. With this purpose he sent there his closest associate, Han Hyong-gwon who managed to pass through

9) See *Koreya glazami rossiyan (Korea in the Russian Eyes)*. Vol. V of the series “Rossiiskoye koreevedeniye v proshlom i nastoyashchem” (Korean Studies in Russia: Past and Present). Moscow: IVRAN, 2008.

the war-ravaged country and reach Moscow to be received most respectfully. Leading Soviet newspaper “Izvestia” informed about his arrival under the telling title “The Envoy of Revolutionary Korea”.¹⁰⁾ Han Hyong-gwon was invited to the session of All-Russia Central Executive Committee, the topmost organ of state power in Russia of that epoch. There he made a felicitation speech on behalf of the Korean Socialist Party and revolutionary government of Korea.¹¹⁾ During the talks with Soviet representatives he briefed them about the origins of the Korean Provisional Government and character of its policy. Han Hyong-gwon also asked for official recognition of the government by the USSR as well as for financial loan and mapping a joint plan of anti-Japanese struggle in case of open war between Russia and Japan. Another suggestion was to organize a military school in Irkutsk to train commanding officers of Korean revolutionary army.¹²⁾

The requests of the Korean Provisional Government were taken into consideration and the Soviet side began to work out measures for implementation. However, soon enough the situation changed drastically. In May 1921 leadership in Korean Provisional Government came into the hands of Syngman Rhee’s associates who categorically rejected any cooperation with Soviet Russia and allied themselves with the USA. Han Hyong-gwon was recalled from Moscow and his agreements with the Soviet authorities were cancelled.¹³⁾ As a result, the contacts

between the Korean Provisional Government and the USSR, capable of good perspectives, were broken at the very beginning which had born no fruit for either side. Nevertheless it would be wrong to consider Han Hyong-gwon’s Moscow visit as a complete failure. 600 thousand rubles in gold were sent through him and this, one may assume, was of a considerable value. This was apart from 4.4 million rubles sent at the same time by another network to support the nascent Communist movement in Korea.¹⁴⁾

An important event in the history of Soviet-Korean relations in the 1920s-1930s was the attempt of Korea’s most popular religious and political organization, Chondogyo, to secure Soviet support for its anti-colonial struggle. The underground Central Committee of this organization secretly sent its representative, Choe Don-hwi, to Manchuria and Soviet Far East to study the opportunities for the Chondogyo activities there. During his stay in the USSR Choe Don-hwi facilitated the contacts between Chondogyo and international revolutionary networks like Comintern and Krestintern,¹⁵⁾ securing Soviet assistance to Chondogyo.

In August 1924 Choe Don-hwi presented to the Soviet government his project of agreement between the USSR and Chondogyo to the effect that the Soviet side was to supply the future People’s Revolutionary Army of Chondogyo with arms and munitions, food and means of transport, assign some gold mines to the logistical provision of the Army and deploy experienced military specialists as instructors, train commanding officers, etc. At the same time, as per the project, the

10) *Izvestia*. 17 July 1920.

11) *Vlast truda*. 02 July 1920.

12) Pak B. D. SSSR, *Komintern i Koreiskoye osvoboditelnoye dvizheniye. 1918-1925 (USSR, Comintern and Korean Liberation Movement, 1918-1925)*. Moscow: IVRAN, 2006, pp. 77~81.

13) *Ibid*, pp. 88~93.

14) *Ibid*, p. 174.

15) Krestintern-abbreviation for Peasants’ International, international revolutionary organization which operated in 1923-33 and fought for the rights of peasants.

People's Revolutionary Army was supposed to be fully independent and not subjected to any kind of Soviet control.¹⁶⁾

This project of agreement was unacceptable for the Soviet government. It was not fully sure of the seriousness of the Chondogyo leadership's intentions as well as in its real capabilities. In addition, signs became observable of the Chondogyo leadership shifting from anti-colonial struggle and turning to national reformism. The project did not envisage any obligations and responsibilities from the Chondogyo side. The Soviet state, recovering from the disastrous consequences of two wars and foreign intervention, entered the process of recognition by major capitalist states. Implementation of the agreement suggested by Chondogyo could provoke a new war with Japan which was absolutely inadmissible. Thus the project was rejected.

However, the contacts with Chondogyo continued. In 1928 Choe Rin, the long-time Chondogyo leader, visited Moscow at the invitation from the All-Union Society for Cultural Relations with Foreign Countries (in Russian abbreviated as VOKS). He, along with other Korean delegates, was received with warm hospitality. He met Soviet Koreans and held talks with his hosts on regular exchange of publications between VOKS and Chondogyo.¹⁷⁾

V. Assistance to Guerillas

Most attention was focused in the USSR upon the Korean people's armed resistance to Japanese invaders. This was especially enforced in the 1930s, when Japan captured Manchuria (1931) and invaded Central China (1937). Japan used Korea as a springboard for aggression against continental Asia, including the Khasan Lake conflict with the USSR in 1938.

Soviet press published lots of information about the activities of Korean guerilla groups in North Korea and Manchuria. For instance, "Pravda" twice reported in 1937 about the Korean guerillas' capture of Pochonbo.¹⁸⁾ Among the guerilla leaders the Soviet press especially highlighted Yang Se-bon, denoted as "commander of the Korean People's Revolutionary Army". His contacts with the Communist Party of Manchuria and China were stressed.¹⁹⁾

An important and interesting paper by V. Rappoport "Guerilla Movement in the North Korean Regions," published in 1937, contains vast information on the situation in colonial Korea and the Korean liberation movement, especially in its guerilla form. Describing guerilla groups in North Korea, V. Rappoport wrote: "the group of Kim Ni-chen is especially significant. Its members are extremely brave. They usually fulfill the most dangerous missions. Their attacks are well-prepared, quick and precise. Two heavy machine-guns allow the group to withst

16) Pak B. D., Ibid, pp. 132~134.

17) *Tsentralni gosudarstvenny arkhiv Oktyabrskoi revoliutsii* (Central State Archive of October Revolution). Fund 5283. List 2. File 32. Sheet 127; List 4. File 33. Sheets 114, 115.

18) *Pravda*. 08 June 1937; 10 June 1937.

19) U-pi. *Vooruzhennaya okkupatsia i natsionalno-revolutsionnoye dvizheniye v Manjurii* (Military Occupation and National-Revolutionary Movement in Manchuria.-*Tikhii okean* (*The Pacific Ocean*)). No. 1, 1934, p. 70.

and large-scale skirmishes with the Japanese army. For a whole year the Japanese have been chasing the Kim Ni-chen group without any success. The group comprises around 300 men. It operates in the provinces of South and North Kankyo (Hamgyong-Yu. V.).²⁰⁾ The author's opinion is that Kim Ni-chen may be one of the pseudonyms of Kim Il-sung.

Pressed by the overwhelming enemy forces, the Korean guerillas in many cases chose to retreat into the Soviet territory where they were offered shelter and the opportunity to restore their fighting efficiency, get fresh armaments and then return to fight the invaders. Unfortunately, not all efforts of this kind were successful. In the memorandum on border violations in Far East (1933) the following tragic incident was reported: "On January 23 in the "Pogran-Petrovka" sector outpost near the border sign "R" the Japanese, chasing the Korean guerillas, used artillery against them; the Soviet territory was shelled too. In this area two Japanese military units, around 40 men, crossed the border and fired, already on the Soviet territory, guns and machine guns against the guerillas. Our border guard unit and the outpost headquarters were also under fire. The bodies of Korean guerillas slaughtered by the Japanese, shell craters and shell fragments were discovered on the spot".²¹⁾

However, quite a few Korean guerilla groups, hardly pressed by the enemy, found their way into the Soviet territory. B. G. Sapozhnikov,

20) Rappoport V., Partizanskoye dvizheniye v raionakh Severnoi Korei (Guerrilla Movement in the Korean Regions).-*Tikhii okean (The Pacific Ocean)*. No. 2, 1937, pp. 171~172.

21) *Pogranichniye voiska SSSR, 1929-1938 (Border Guards of the USSR, 1929-1938)*. Moscow: Nauka, 1972, p. 400.

a noted Soviet Asianist, was at the period under review in the Soviet Army in the Far East. According to his reminiscences, in February 1936 a group of Korean guerillas, around 60 men, broke through a heavy battle into the Soviet territory. The group was active in Manchuria, 60-70 km from the Soviet border. Their breakthrough was covered up by the Soviet border guards who fired to disperse the Japanese troupes. The guerillas were poorly dressed, their feet wrapped in rags, almost half of them were wounded and frostbitten. All of them were provided with necessary rest and medical assistance; the Soviet army supplied them with arms, munitions, clothing and footwear. In March-April, in groups of 2-3 men, the guerillas returned back to Manchuria to fight against the invaders".²²⁾

The Soviet Far East as a rear base for the Korean liberation movement was widely referred to in Kim Il-sung's memoirs "With the Century". He himself had been using Soviet territory as a retreat for quite some time. In October, 1940, Kim Il-sung, with a group of guerillas, went to the USSR, as he stated in his memoirs, being summoned by Comintern to a meeting of the commanders.²³⁾ On different occasions Kim Il-sung remembered the secret camp near Khabarovsk where he for the first time met his future associates, Kim Chaek and Choe Yong-gon.²⁴⁾ He returned to Korea along with his unit by the sea through

22) Sapozhnikov B. G., Iz istorii sovetsko-koreiskoi druzhby (From the History of Soviet-Korean Friendship).-*Osvobozhdeniye Korei Vospominaniya i statyi (Liberation of Korea. Reminiscences and Essays)*. Moscow: Nauka, 1976, pp. 164~167.

23) Kim Il-sung, *Memuary. V vodovorote veka (Memoirs. With The Century)*. Russian translation. Pyongyang: Izdatelstvo literatury na inostrannykh yazikakh, Vol. 8, 1998, pp. 93~95.

24) *Ibid*, Vol. 4, p. 210.

Vladivostok to Wonsan on the 19th of September, 1945.²⁵⁾ Kim Il-sung's stay in the USSR in 1940-45 had been for a long time hushed up in North Korea. Nor was it brought into the limelight by the Soviet historiography. Nowadays, as we see, the curtain of secrecy has been driven away, but the veracity of the information relevant to this matter still needs confirmation.

VI. Migration and Deportation

The Far East continued to be attractive for the Koreans from Korea proper and Manchuria who did not want to suffer from hunger, privations and colonial oppression at home. As is known, the large-scale migration of Koreans to the Russian Far East began as early as in 1864. This process continued in the 1920s-1930s. Many Koreans who came for temporary employment chose to stay there forever; they became full-fledged Soviet citizens and integrated into economic and cultural life of the Soviet peoples. Only in 1923-26 Soviet citizenship was granted to 12789 Koreans.²⁶⁾ Migration of Koreans to the USSR continued afterwards too. As was noted in June, 1937 by the "Tikhookeanskaya zvezda" newspaper from Khabarovsk, "nowadays we witness the increase of migration to the Soviet Far East by peaceful Chinese and Korean peasants from Manchukuo who are unable to bear the

oppression from the new Japanese-Manchurian administration."²⁷⁾

In August, 1937 the Soviet government issued a decree of deportation of the Koreans from the Far East to Central Asia and Kazakhstan. It was made with the purpose of "blocking the ways for the penetration of Japanese espionage into the Far East area".²⁸⁾ In the 1990s, after the collapse of the USSR, some articles were published, mainly by the Russian Koreans, who denoted the deportation as "genocide policy" towards Koreans by the Soviet regime. This notion had nothing to do with reality. The USSR treated the Koreans neither worse nor better than other population groups. In the 1920s-1940s deportation of the groups of Russians and other peoples as a whole was actively practiced for different reasons. In particular, from the border areas of the USSR some ethnic groups were deported if members of the same group lived from the other side of the border. This was done perhaps to avoid the employment of the ethnic groups from the other side against the USSR. The Koreans were neither first nor the only one who experienced deportation. In 1935 Finns were deported from the Northwestern border areas, in 1936 - Poles from the Western border, in 1938-the Iranians from the South of Azerbaijan, and so on.²⁹⁾

The above-mentioned facts are by no means to deny that the 1937 deportation was, for the Soviet Koreans, not hard and insulting (especially due to the "Japanese espionage" motivation). No doubt, it could not but reflect negatively on the links between the Soviet

25) Ibid, Vol. 8, p. 553.

26) Kim Sung-hua, *Ocherki po istorii sovetskikh koreitsev (Essays on the History of Soviet Koreans)*. Alma-Ata: Nauka, 1965, p. 142.

27) *Tikhookeanskaya zvezda*. 21.06.1937.

28) *Po resheniyu pravitelstva Soyuzo SSR... (By the Decision of the Soviet Government...)*. Nalchik: El-fa, 2003, p. 129.

29) Ibid, pp. 183, 201, 357.

and Korean people.

VII. Conclusion

To conclude, it has to be noted that the history of Russo-Korean relations is over 130 years old. During this impressive historical period it witnessed a number of sub-periods, each distinguished by peculiar issues and modes of their solution, contradictions and specificities, ups and downs. The 1920s-30s are a sub-period of considerable significance. Some scholars view it as marginal and insignificant due to the absence of official diplomatic relations between the two. In this paper the author tried to oppose this understanding. No efforts by the Japanese colonial administration could block the friendly contacts between the peoples of the neighboring countries. These contacts were of no less significance than diplomatic ones. This fact is corroborated by a lot of historical evidence, only partially cited in my paper. More evidence is to come out as new archival material becomes available on Soviet-Korean revolutionary contacts, on Soviet support, through state and public channels, and of the Korean people's armed resistance against colonial oppression. This support, importantly, was not confined to Communists alone, as exemplified by the Soviet contacts with the Korean Provisional Government and Chondogyo. No doubt, archival materials of no less importance can be obtained from the Korean side as well. Regardless, there is every reason to assert that Soviet-Korean relations in the 1920s-1930s were of great importance and played

a considerable role in the emergence and development of the traditions of good relations between Russia and Korea.

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Izvestia.

Pravda.

Shidae Ilbo.

Tikhiy okean.

Tikhookeanskaya zvezda.

Tong-a Ilbo.

Vlast truda.

ABSTRACT

Soviet Union and Korea: 1920s-1930s

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This paper discusses aspects of Soviet-Korean relations in the 1920s-1930s. Despite the absence of official diplomatic relations between the USSR and Korea due to colonial status of the latter, as well as the obstacles created by the Japanese authorities, the contacts between two countries developed on various levels, including trade. The situation in Korea was widely discussed in Soviet press.

From the Soviet side these contacts were primarily manifested by sympathy and solidarity with the anti-colonial struggle of the Korean people and multi-dimensional Soviet assistance to the Korean liberation movement. The paper casts light upon the Soviet contacts with Korean freedom fighters like Korean Provisional Government, Chondogyo, and the Communists. It also discusses Soviet assistance to Korean guerilla groups-hard pressed by the Japanese, they could retreat to the Soviet territory finding shelter and necessary assistance and then, refreshed and rearmed, return to their anti-colonial struggle.

The Soviet Far East was indeed a rear base for Korean liberation movement. But Stalinist repression and deportation of Koreans from the Far East could not but tell negatively on the links between the Soviet and Korean people.

Keywords : USSR, Korean liberation movement, Japanese colonialism, Chondogyo, Comintern, Korean Provisional Government, Communist Party

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