

РОССИЙСКО-КОРЕЙСКИЕ ОТНОШЕНИЯ В РЕТРОСПЕКТИВЕ

UDC 94

Russian 1904–1905 newspapers about Russian-Korean relations and Korean envoy Lee Beom-jin*

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The article introduces new information about the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905, which can be gleaned from publications of the Russian press during this period. Newspaper articles about military operations of the Russian army troops on the Korean peninsula, as well as about the situation in Korea in general, change of Korean foreign policy, etc., are especially valuable. Russian newspapers of 1904–1905 contain new facts proving that the Korean peninsula was an important military theater of operations during the Russo-Japanese war. Currently, the Republic of Korea is paying special attention to the first Korean envoy who permanently resided in Russia, Lee Beom-jin (1852–1911). Russian newspapers from 1904–1905 reopen new pages in the history of his life and activities in St. Petersburg. With the help of Russian journalists from that time, who often visited the Korean legation in St. Petersburg, the modern reader has the opportunity to learn more about the Korean envoy by reading his interviews, which were previously not known to the global scientific community.

Keywords: Russian-Japanese war, Korea, envoy, interview, Lee Beom-jin.

Introduction

Recently, the Republic of Korea is actively working on searching for new materials on the history of the struggle for independence from Japanese colonial rule. Imperial Russia was one of the places where resided Korean fighters for independence.

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The first official envoy of the Korean Empire to Russia, who permanently resided in St. Petersburg, Lee Beom-jin (이범진; 1852–1911) became a person of special attention of the government of the Republic of Korea. In this context it is very important to discover new primary sources describing his life in Russia as well as historical background of his activities, especially in the field of Russian-Korean relations.

Up to the present time, the main attention of researchers has been drawn to historical archives, while periodicals were often remained behind the sphere of their attention. However, the author of the paper has succeeded in discovering a series of new materials in Russian periodicals about Korea and Korean patriots. These are articles and interviews published during Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905).

One of the reasons for the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War was the confrontation between these two countries for their influence in Korea. Also partially military operations between the Russian and Japanese armies took place on the Korean Peninsula. That is why in the first half of 1904 Russian newspapers published various kind of information about Korea. This information can be divided into the following groups: 1) general information about Korea; 2) Russian-Japanese military operations on the Korean peninsula; 3) the process of increasing of Japanese influence in Korea; 4) interviews with Korean envoy Lee Beom-jin.

The interviews with Lee Beom-jin are the most important part of the newly discovered primary sources because they give a huge amount of new information about the Korean envoy including new drawings and photos depicting him. The most part of these newly discovered interviews were published in a book [1] by the author of this paper in 2016. But after 2016 the author of this paper has discovered some new materials which will be presented in this paper for the first time.

General information about Korea and Russian-Korean relations

Now, at the beginning of the 21st century anyone can find sufficient sources of information covering history, culture etc. of any country of the world.

But in the 19th century — beginning of the 20th century the information about region studies was not easily available. There were a lot of informational “white spots”. Korea was one of those regions. Partially it can be explained by the self-isolation policy conducted by Korean monarchs until 1876, when the first “modern type” (unequal) Korean-Japanese Ganghwa treaty was concluded.

At that time the world attention to Korea was often triggered by tragic events that occurred on the Korean peninsula. They were always resulted in a rise of various publications describing Korea.

The first event of that type that brought attention to Korea in the Russian mass media at the end of 19th century was the China-Japanese War (1894–1895). The second tragic event was the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Struggle for influence in Korea between Russia and Japan became one of origins of the war. In early 1904 Russia has regarded Korea as a possible ally who can support Russia in the war. That is why since beginning of the 20th century, when tensions around Korean peninsula grew higher, Russian newspapers have published a series of articles, describing “the present situation” in Korea.

Now these Russian newspapers became a primary source of information describing life and politics of Korea in 1904.

Why are they important? Korea has a big number of her own newspapers and archival materials representing Korea at the beginning of the 20th century. That is true. But the question is in the point of view and methods of information selection and presentation. The foreigners' perception of Korea and the native self perception differ. Sometime the eyes of foreigners can catch something really important, not well perceived by local population.

At the beginning of 1904, before beginning of the Russo-Japanese War, some Russian newspapers presented both surveys about Russian-Korean relations and situation in Korea in general. Thus, 11 days before the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War, on January 16, 1904 the "Peterburgskaia gazeta" (the "Petersburg newspaper") has published a refutation of news borrowed from the "Peking and Tients Times" telling that Russia and Korea allegedly concluded a secret agreement on Russian help for modernizing Korean army [I, p. 2]. The author of the article with the pen-name "Russkiy" ("Russian") explained that this [fake] news was originated from the events of 1897, when Russian officer Putyata taught Korean troops in Seoul. The important thing is that Russian reader could get an impression that Korea could be potential ally of Russia.

On February 11, 1904 "Peterburgskaia gazeta" in the article "Fortifications of Pyongyang" [II, p. 2] has described ground military facilities of the city trying to evaluate its capabilities to resist expected attacks of the Japanese. On February 14, 1904 the same "Peterburgskaia gazeta" has presented a general description of Pyongyang [III, p. 2], because at that time many war news were connected with Pyongyang where Russian troops had military clashes with the Japanese army.

The most interesting information about Korea of the beginning of the 20th century was published in a series of articles by various authors in a Russian central newspaper "Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti" ("Saint-Petersburg News"). The author with the pen-name P. Petrovskii has prepared the following series under the title "**Chaosian — Morning Clarity**":

- February 20 (March 3), 1904¹. (No 49, p. 2). "People-1".
- February 21 (March 4), 1904. (No 50, p. 2). "People — 2".
- February 22 (March 5), 1904. (No 51, p. 2). "Historical Sketch".

The same "Sankt-Peterburgskie Vedomosti" on March, 1904 has published an article by "M. B." titled as "Korea, Koreans and American influence" [IV]. This article may have a special interest for research about history of American influence in Korea, which starts long before 1945. The No 163 of the newspaper gives a brief survey of Korean armed forces. Its title is "Korean warriors. A fluent characteristic" [V, p. 2].

Another very influential newspaper "Novoe Vremia" ("New Time") in February — March of 1904 has published a large series of sketches about Korea by a well-known journalist, Orientalist and a member of the newspaper editorial board — Sergei N. Syromiatnikov (1864–1933). The title of the series was "Korean Etudes". The "Korean Etudes-1" was first published in "Novoe Vremia" on February 14 (February 27), 1904 and the last article of the series (No 4) has come out on February 20 (March 4), 1904.

So, Russian newspapers of the 1st half of 1904 gave the following type of general information about Korea and Russian-Korean relations.

Social, cultural, economic situation, ethnographic description of Korea by beginning of the 20th century.

¹ Two dates in the newspaper are given simultaneously according Julian and Gregorian calendars.

Description of military capabilities of Korea.

Reviewing Korea in terms of its potential alliance with Russia in the Russo-Japanese War.

Already in early summer of 1904 Russian press gradually loses focus to Korea, because after the defeat of the Russian troops near the Amnok-gang River at the end of April — beginning of May, 1904, the main theater of military ground operations of the Russo-Japanese War was concentrated in Manchuria, China. So Korea has lost its significance for Russia as a springboard for military operations.

Russian-Japanese military operations on the Korean peninsula

Russian military collisions with Japanese

Until lately, narration of history of Russo-Japanese War missed detailed information and description of Russian military operations on the Korean peninsula². The first Korean researcher who has covered Korean peninsula battles during Russo-Japanese War was Dr. Park Jong-hyo, but he has not presented detailed description of Russian military actions on the Korean peninsula [2].

Russian newspapers of 1904–1905 can give a huge amount of information which can fill this lacuna.

Already on February 10 and February 11, 1904 one of the newspapers has published information that Russian troops were seen in Anju being ready to move to Pyongyang. At the same time Japanese troops were also seen being dispatched between Seoul and Pyongyang too [VI, p. 3]. The same date the same newspaper on the page 3 also published a note about Russian troops in “Kasan”, near the river Cheongcheon-gang (청천강). The first military collision between Russians and Japanese were reported to be on February 13 (26), 1904 [VII, p. 4].

Late February — early March (according to Julian calendar) showed the most intensive military activities of the Russian army in the northern part of Korea. Thus the newspaper “Slovo” (“The Word”) reported on February 20 (March 4) about Russian-Japanese battle near Pyongyang [VIII, p. 2]. On March 1 (March 14) the same newspaper gave information about Russian Cossacks in Korea [IX, p. 1] (Fig.1).

“Peterburgskaia gazeta” reports dated by March 4 (March 17), 1904 informed about battle between 300 Russians and 200 Japanese near Pyongyang which ended with the “victory of Russians” [X, p. 2]. The same article of the newspaper denied any information stating that Russians have left the territory of Korea and moved to their base on the right bank of the Amnok-gang river.

“Peterburgskaya Gazeta” on March 10, 1904 presented quite interesting information that from time to time Russian cavalry crossed the Amnok-gang river into Korean territory for military raids [XI, p. 2]. On March 18 (31), “Birzhevye Vedomosti” (“Stock Exchange News”) published a small report about “battle near Jeonju” [XII, p. 3].

² The first professional reference to Korean newspapers in the context of Russian military activities on the Korean peninsula was made by Korean researcher Dr. Jo Jae-gon [3]. But in his monograph he mostly concentrates on losses caused by Russian or Japanese armies. He does not describe in detail the chronology of Russian military operations in Korea.



Атака казаками японского передового отряда в Корею.

Fig. 1. Russian Cossacks attacking Japanese in Korea³ [IX, p. 1]

As presented above, one can see only some selected examples of how the Russian press at the beginning of 1904 has described some military operations undertaken by Russian troops on the territory of the Korean peninsula. Of course, these selected records can not give a complete picture of events. However, they can be a good reference point for the search of primary sources, which will help to recreate the complete chronicle of this part of the Russo-Japanese War that unfolded on the Korean peninsula.

Russian encounters with Koreans. Koreans as No more friends of Russia

Although most of the Russian newspapers stopped publishing information about Korea after May 1904, the two of them, the “Peterburgskaia gazeta” and the “Birzhevye Vedomosti” continued to publish articles about Korea. The first one presented many interviews with Lee Beom-jin, the Korean envoy to Russian Empire. The second one gave some special news which now seem to be unknown by many experts.

“Birzhevye Vedomosti” on May 13 (26), 1904 (No 243) has informed that Russian Cossacks of Transbaikal horse artillery troops seized the city of Kyeong Seong (supposedly, Seoul). The same newspaper dated May 19 (June 1), 1904 (No 253) published a small article under the title “Our Cossacks fled **Korean** troops”. It has reported that Cossacks made a camp near Hamheung city where they had a victory over **Korean** armed forces and that Koreans are sending military units from Pyongyang and Seoul to Gensan (Wonsan) to preempt potential Russian advance there [XIII, p. 1].

³ All the photos published in the present article are made with the permission of the library by the author and belong to the author.

One can suppose that narrations about military clashes between Russians and Koreans are some kind of mistake or misprint. Supposedly, the word “**Koreans**” could be used instead of the word “Japanese”. But in the same newspaper, No 294, (July 10 (28), 1904) and in the No 317 (July 23 (July 6), 1904) one can find another two articles under the title “Koreans in the ranks of the Japanese army” (both with similar titles).

Thus, newspaper publications in late May and early June of 1904 have led a reader to the idea that Korea is no longer an ally of Russia.

In addition, Russian newspaper articles which have described strengthening of Japanese influence in Korea also often wondered which of the belligerents Korea will join — Russia or Japan?

The process of increasing of Japanese influence in Korea

Russian perception of Korea as an ally continuously transformed since the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War from January 27 (February 9) 1904 until summer of 1904.

One day before the full-scale beginning of the Russo-Japanese War, on January 26 (February 8), 1904, the very influential Russian newspaper “Novoe Vremia” (“New Time”) has published a big article describing the history of increasing of Japanese influence in Korea since the last third of the 19th century [XIV, p. 3].

On February 6 (19), 1904, ten days after the Russo-Japanese War began, the Russian newspaper “Slovo” (“Word”) has published a small article where it has informed about the seizure of Korea by Japan and the fact that the Emperor Gojong escaped to the French legation but soon returned back to his palace [XV, p. 1].

Already on February 11, 1904 Russian newspapers have published information about Japanese plans to rule over Korea [II, p. 2]. The article mentioned above, gave an interesting reference to plans of American military command to send troops to Uiju city for protection American gold mining there (what meant potential participation of the U. S. in the Russo-Japanese War).

The next day (on February 12) a Russian reader could see a telegram from London reporting that Japanese envoy in Seoul proclaimed the Korean emperor deposed, and Korea annexed to Japan [VI, p. 3]. Of course, this “report” belonged to the category of rumors (fake news), rather than truth. But this statement was very important because it clarified Japanese plans in Korea and prepared the public for the future scenario, which was implemented six years later by signing the treaty on the annexation of Korea on August 22, 1910.

Already in March of 1904 Russian newspapers have demonstrated doubts as to which side Korea will play in this war — Russian or Japanese. This doubt, in particular, was expressed in publications of cartoons. One of them was entitled as “**Korean — I do not know, right, what kind of suit I need to wear**” [XVI, p. 5] (Fig. 2). The cartoon depicted a Korean standing in front of a shop window with a ready-made dress, in which were the costumes of Russian and Japanese servicemen.

Russian newspapers of that time quite often have used the power of cartoons image to show their view on the state of affairs in Korea. The cartoon published in “Peterburgskaia gazeta” on March 11, 1904 has shown a Korean Emperor who completely confuses even not knowing what to do and the cartoon published in the same newspaper on March 14, 1904 (entitled as “**Hands are short, not yet grown!**”) demonstrated Korea as a country which “now” (since March, 1904) was helping Japanese army to attack Russian Port-Arthur siege (Fig. 3).

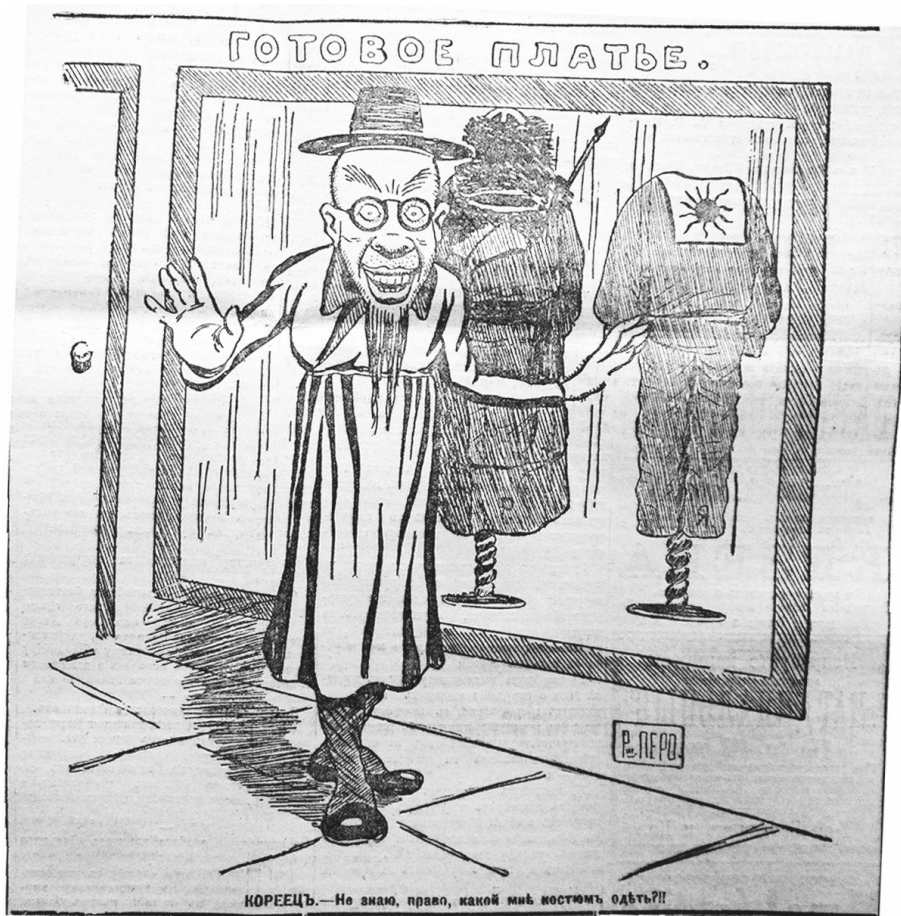


Fig. 2. "Korean — I do not know, right, what kind of suit I need to wear" [XVI, p.5]

ПЕТЕРБУРГСКАЯ ГАЗЕТА.

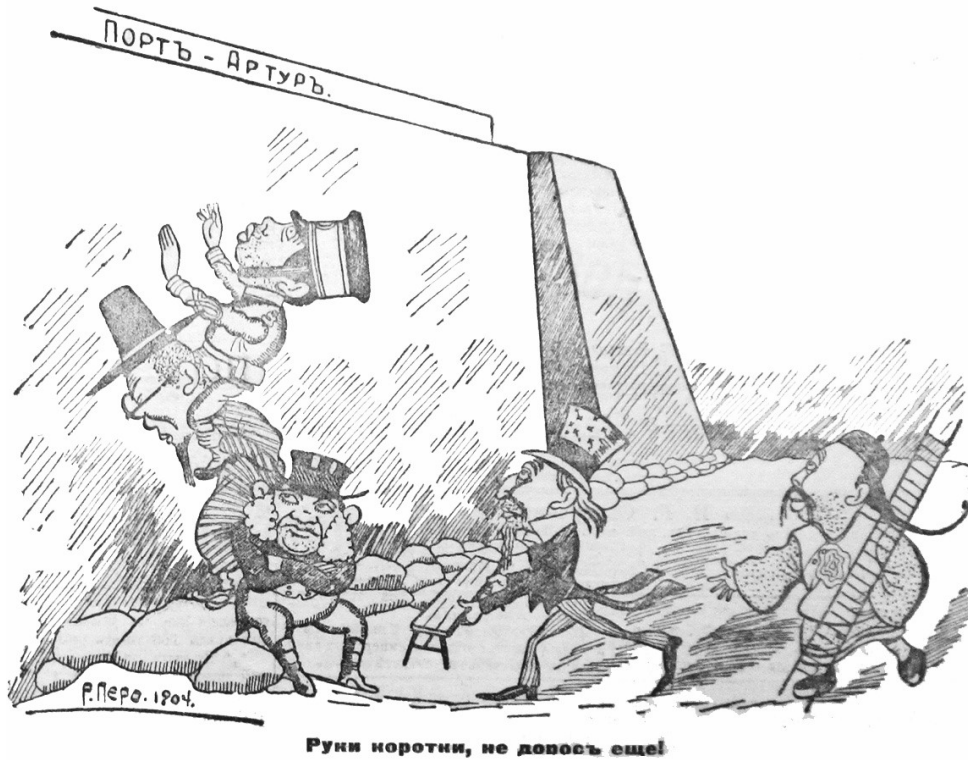


Fig. 3. "Hands are short, not yet grown!" [XVII]



Японский отряд на улицах Сеула идет арестовывать корейских министров, обвиненных в замыслах против Японии.

Fig. 4. "A Japanese detachment on the streets of Seoul is going to arrest Korean ministers accused of plotting against Japan" [XVIII].

In 1905 Russian newspapers has described Korea as fully controlled by Japanese army. Thus, one of the Russian drawings was demonstrating Japanese armed forces in Seoul, who "went to arrest dissenting Korean ministers" [XVIII] (Fig. 4).

Interviews with Korean envoy Lee Beom-jin

The vast majority of Russian newspapers published at the beginning of the 20th century has shown some interest in the figure of the "Korean prince" — the Korean envoy Lee Beom-jin — only after his tragic suicide on January 13 (26), 1911.

Before the time of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905), only short newspaper records, where the name of the Korean diplomat was mentioned, appeared on the pages of such official publications as the "Pravitelstvennyi Vestnik" ("Government Bulletin"). Therefore, it is obvious, that until recently Russian experts did not attempt to search for materials about the life and work of Lee Beom-jin in Russian periodicals of the 1900s (which were published before 1911).

The author of this article, taking into account the special attention paid to Korea by the Russian press during the Russo-Japanese War, decided to double-check the most popular Russian newspapers in the hope of discovering new materials. Such newspapers were "Slovo" ("Word"), "Vseobshchaia gazeta ("Universal Newspaper"), "Novoe Vremia" ("New Time"), "Sankt-Peterburgskie vedomosti ("Saint-Petersburg News"), "Peterburgskii listok" ("Petersburg Sheet"), etc.

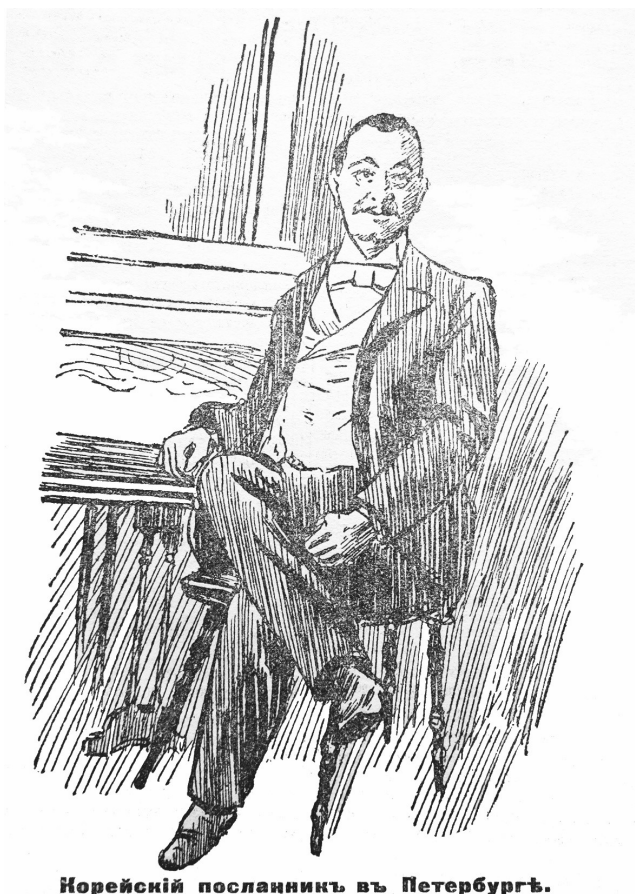
However, all of the viewed, except for the two, in spite of the fact that all of the newspapers described "current" situation on the Korean peninsula, they never turned to pay attention to the life of Lee Beom-jin in Russia (until his suicide in 1911).

“Peterburgskaia gazeta”

The only newspaper in the Russian capital, which had close relations with the Korean envoy, was the “Peterburgskaia gazeta” (“Petersburg newspaper”), which has published around 10 interviews with Lee Beom-jin during the entire period of the Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). The interviews’ authors included correspondents with the pen-names “Gr”, “Spectator”, “Passepartout” and “R”. The most of interviews with the envoy Lee Beom-jin belongs to “Spectator”.

Lee Beom-jin’s interviews which were published in the “Peterburgskaia gazeta” presented extremely important and previously unreported information about the Korean diplomat, touching upon such questions as [1, p. 60–82]:

- position of the Korean diplomatic mission on the issue of the Russo-Japanese War;
- the attitude of Korea to Russia and Japan;
- description of the location and interiors of the Korean diplomatic mission in St. Petersburg;
- detailed description of the Lee Beom-jin’s residence (dacha) in Novaia Derevnia (“New Village”) in St. Petersburg outskirts; an indication of the time when he permanently moved to his dacha residence;
- character traits of a Korean diplomat;
- a new drawing of Lee Beom-jin (portrait drawing) (Fig. 4);
- the envoy’s son Lee Wi-jong and his opinion on the situation in Korea;
- the life of the Korean diaspora in St. Petersburg.



Корейский посланникъ въ Петербургѣ.

Fig. 5. “Peterburgskaya gazeta”, February 15 (28), 1904. The sketch portrait of Lee Beom-jin [1, p. 68]

The interviews covering life of Korean diaspora in St. Petersburg at the beginning of the 20th century are extremely important, since they can serve as an impetus for starting research of the history of the Korean diaspora in European part of Russia before 1917 Revolution.

Some kind of special attention to the person of the Korean diplomat among the editorial board of the “Petersburg newspaper” can be traced right after the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War. Below is a brief summary of the most interesting content of interviews which were discovered by the author of this paper [1, p. 60–82].

Emergency diplomatic correspondence between St. Petersburg and Seoul until the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War was conducted with the help of encrypted telegrams that were sent and received not directly, but through Japan.

According to the information of the Korean government, in the Russo-Japanese War, Korea intended to adhere to neutrality.

According to Lee Beom-jin, “Korea did not resist Japan’s invasion of Korea, because if it did, the Japanese would take up arms that could threaten the emperor” [1, p. 63].

The Koreans chose not to take up arms (that is, not to resist Japan), since Korea is a neutral state.

Lee Beom-jin expected that “soon” Russia would come to Korea and drive the Japanese away.

According to Lee Beom-jin, “one can expect” Russian-Japanese battles in Korea, which “will decide the outcome of the war” [1, p. 63].

St. Petersburg press considered Lee Beom-jin to be:

- “A representative of an aristocratic family”. Extraordinary Minister of the Korean Court.
- One of the most educated Koreans in their homeland.
- Not a Buddhist, but a follower of Confucianism.
- Lee Beom-jin could speak Korean, Japanese, Chinese. Also he could speak English (as he lived for a long time in England) and French. During official meetings he used services of an interpreter, a young Korean.
- Well adapted to Russian conditions. Lee Beom-jin said: “I managed to get a fairly large acquaintance in Petersburg and to gain common sympathy” [1, p. 67].

The description of the clothes worn by the envoy also indicates his perfect adaptation to the living conditions in Russia:

- “In most cases Mr. Ching-Pomm-Yi [Lee Beom-jin] wears a European dress. He dresses in general very modestly. In winter, it can be seen dressed in an ordinary lamb coat, in summer — in a soft black hat and a light “Ulster”. National Korean clothes are almost never worn” [1, p. 66].

While living in Russia, Lee Beom-jin spoke English; the translator of the envoy for unknown reasons translated from Russian into English, and not into Korean.

Lee Beom-jin did not believe that during the peace talks in Portsmouth the Japanese condition of protectorate over Korea would be accepted, he believed that the world powers won’t recognize the protectorate.

Lee Beom-jin did not believe that Korean missions and embassies would be closed.

On July 15, 1905 the “Peterburgskaia gazeta” published the *last interview with Lee Beom-jin* entitled as “In the Korean Embassy”. It had the following important information:

- Lee Beom-jin was familiar with the letter of the Japanese emperor to the Korean emperor Gojong, which contained an “advice to the ruler of Korea” “to accept the inevitability of submitting to the Japanese regime and not to give more passive resistance”, to cut back the army and recall foreign representatives of Korea abroad.
- Lee Beom-jin believed that the Korean sovereign, diplomats and the army would not obey this “advice” of the Japanese.
- “The future of Korea depends on the upcoming peace negotiations”, but Lee Beom-jin was “personally still convinced that Korea will in any case retain its political independence”...
- Lee Beom-jin was familiar with S. Yu. Witte⁴ accompanied him to the railway station when he was departing to America “as an old friend of his, and just wished him a happy journey...” [XIX, p. 2].

Reconstruction of the layout and decoration of the residence of Lee Beom-jin (1902–1905)

Plan of the Korean Legation

In 2017 a well-known researcher of Russian-Korean relations of the 19th and early 20th centuries Dr. Bella Pak has published a book about location of the Korean mission in St. Petersburg [4]. In this book, for the first time were presented plans of the apartments, where located the Korean mission and the private residence of Lee Beom-jin.

Since 1902 to 1905 the Korean legation was located in the downtown of St. Petersburg in Panteleimonovskaia (now Pestelia) street, house No 5. The diplomatic mission occupied the apartment number 6 (on the 4th floor). The private residence of the envoy, probably, was in the apartment number 7 (on the 5th floor). The Mission address, Panteleimonovskaia 5, apt No 6, is also indicated in an article of the “Peterburgskaia gazeta” [1, 78].

Nowadays the house at the Pestelia street, No 5 differs from what it was in 1902–1905. During the Soviet period many historical buildings in St. Petersburg (Leningrad) were repaired and the layout of the apartments was changed.

In 1902 Korean legation occupied a big apartment No 6 with a hallway, public space and private (service) space with a bath and a kitchen. The public space consisted of the hall (walk-in closet) and the three big rooms: a secretary’s room, a reception room and a living room [XX, p. 3]. Besides the legation had three small rooms in the wing part of the house together with a bath and a kitchen with a pantry [4, p. 34–35]. Usually, in St. Petersburg apartments of the beginning of the 20th century these kind of small rooms were occupied by servants. It is hard to imagine that Lee Beom-jin lived in such small rooms. The apartment No 7 had 4 (5?) big rooms, a kitchen and a bath. The accommodation space there well suited to the high status of the Korean envoy.

If plans of restoring the Korean legation in St. Petersburg as a museum will be realized, it will be necessary to rebuild the interior of the three main public rooms of the apartment No 6.

⁴ Member of the Russian government, head of the Russian delegation at the peace talks with Japan in Portsmouth.

Public rooms and their purpose

According to the description of the Korean mission, made by “Spectator” and published in the “Peterburgskaia gazeta” on February 15 (28), 1904 the Korean legation in St. Petersburg had the following features:

“Today, the Korean embassy is located in one of the houses at Panteleimonovskaia street and occupies a fairly large and relatively not badly furnished apartment.

To the right of the living room is the secretary office of the embassy, in which the young lady works, rewriting papers on the typewriter.

To the left is the reception room, a small room, lined with bookcases.

Here the envoy talks with visitors, inviting them to sit down to the table standing at the middle of the room.

Probably, due to the established etiquette, Mr. Ching-Pomm-YI [Lee Beom-jin] rigorously invites to sit down his guests on small chairs, he himself sits in a large chair with a high back, resembling a throne” [XX, p. 3].

Furniture and decoration of the Korean Mission

On June 29 (July 12) 1905 “Peterburgskaia gazeta” has informed Russian readers that the owner of the apartment which was rented to the Korean legation at Panteleimonovskaia street No 5 is selling his furniture (because Lee Beom-jin has moved from this apartment to his summer dacha and then planned to rent another apartment in the downtown).

So, what was the furniture of the Korean diplomatic mission? The “Peterburgskaia gazeta” gives us the following information on this matter:

“Gilded furniture and cushioned furniture for living room; gilding and black mirrors; curtains; carpets; paintings; bronze; office furniture of oaks; incombustible safe; bedroom furniture set, dressing room set; mirrors; wardrobe; cupboards; writing desks, washbasins; beds; pillows; blankets; table dishes” [XXI, p. 2].

Of course, this list of furniture and household items does not give their detailed description. However, having an idea of what kind of furniture was in fashion in St. Petersburg in the early 20th century, it is possible to pick up the necessary interior details.

In addition, in the drawing (picture) of the Korean envoy published by the “Peterburgskaia gazeta” on February 15, 1904, one can see a grand piano evidently standing in the living room, and the design of the wooden chair on which Lee Beom-jin sits.

Conclusion

The period of the Russo-Japanese War, especially the first half of 1904, was the time when the Russian press in detail covered events from the Korean peninsula. In these publications one could learn general information about Korea of the late 19th — early 20th centuries, and get more detailed and specified knowledge about Korea, sometime very curious. For example, according to one of the Russian newspapers, in 1904 the Seoul garrison had only 257 officers, 12 guns and 276 horses. This kind of the specific information can be very interesting not only for Russian, but also for Korean or any foreign researcher.

The very detailed information about Russian military operations on the Korean Peninsula during the war years (1904–1905), as well as transformation of Russian per-

ception Korea, from a friend and possible ally to almost an enemy, is also quite new, interesting and important. Besides, Russian newspapers articles about Lee Beom-jin, the Korean envoy to Russian Empire, open unknown pages in the history of Russian-Korean relations. Until the end of his days (1911) Lee Beom-jin remained an invariable friend and ally of Russia, a patriot who did everything possible to preserve Korea's independence. Besides, publications of the Russian press of 1904–1905 can help in recreating the historical appearance of the Korean diplomatic mission in St. Petersburg which is necessary for construction a museum in the historical building where Korean mission located.

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