

THE KOREANS' MIGRATION TO THE RUSSIAN FAR EAST AND THEIR
DEPORTATION TO CENTRAL ASIA:
FROM THE 1860s TO 1937

by

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THESIS ABSTRACT

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From the early 1860s Koreans appeared in the Russian Far East. Beginning in 1864, Koreans who received approval of the Russian authorities had begun to establish Korean villages in this region. During the 1860s and 1870s, the Russian government favored the Koreans' immigration into this area in order to develop the inhospitable lands in the Far East. After the 1880s, Russia's contradictory tendencies of accepting the Korean immigrants or prohibiting them coexisted. Nonetheless, Korean immigration continuously increased until the mid 1920s. The number of Korean immigrants reached approximately 200,000 in 1937. During September and November of 1937 all Koreans living in the Far East were deported to Central Asia because of the potential suspicion that they would serve as spies for Japan.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Russia's colonization of its Far East formally started after 1858. Russia had obtained the Amur region in 1858 and the Maritime region (the Primorsky region) in 1860, having signed the Treaties of Aigun and Peking with China. Since that time, Russia had begun to share the border with China in the Amur region, and with Korea in the Maritime region. As Russia struggled with colonizing the Far East, in particular the Maritime region due to its inhospitable environment, Koreans had appeared near the Russian-Korean border.

From 1864 Korean immigrants noticeably increased and began to settle down into the Ussuri region which belonged to the Maritime. The number of Korean immigrants increased from 131 people in 1864 to about 200,000 in 1937. About 99 percent of the total Korean population living in the territories of Russia was concentrated in the Far East; among these, 90 percent inhabited the Ussuri region adjacent to the Russian-Korean border.

During the 1800s, the repressive political and economic conditions in Korea, coupled with Russia's need to develop the Far East, facilitated the Koreans' migration. In the 1900s various political events began to affect the Koreans' migration. While escaping from the desperate conditions of their homeland for a better life in Russia, most Koreans continued to suffer from difficulties just to survive there. The main causes of Koreans' difficulties were the challenges in obtaining their own land and Russian citizenship. These problems were connected because those who had no Russian citizenship were not allowed to own land. In reality, in the mid 1920s about 50 percent of the Korean population in the Far East had no land or owned less than 1

dessiatine of land.

The political tension between Japan and the Soviet Union also negatively affected the Soviet regime in dealing with the Korean issue. The fact that most Koreans were concentrated in the border areas continuously irritated the Soviet regime. The Soviets were concerned that the Koreans would help Japan to perform operations against the Soviet regime. This concern led to the elimination of the Koreans from the border areas.

This thesis will cover the migration history of Koreans into Russia from the 1860s to 1937, focusing on the history of the Koreans' migration into the Russian Far East and their deportation to Central Asia. Why did Koreans abandon their fatherland and migrate into the undeveloped territories of Russia? What factors attracted Koreans to move into Russia? How did Koreans live in Russia? How did the tsarist and Soviet governments deal with the Koreans? Why were Koreans deported from the Far East to Central Asia? This thesis examines each of these questions in turn.

Chapter I offers an overview of the history of the Koreans' migration into the Far East. This chapter analyzes the historical background of the Korean migration into the Far East, how the migration developed, and what factors facilitated or deterred it. In addition, the chapter examines where Koreans came from, what kinds of jobs they engaged in, and what their lives were like in their new land.

The first Koreans' migration, under approval of local authorities, started in 1864. While the overall trend of the Koreans' migration spans from the 1860s to the 1930s, in reality the Korean' migration continuously increased into the mid 1920s. After the mid 1920s the Korean' migration was officially prohibited by the Soviet Union's immigration policy. In addition, the collectivization of agriculture caused the massive outflow of Koreans from the Far East. Nonetheless, during the 1920s and

1930s the number of Koreans in Russia steadily remained around 200,000 people.

The various sources show a little different figure regarding the size of the Korean population. However, the difference between the sources is minor, and therefore, does not prevent an estimate of the overall tendency of population changes of Korean immigrants. This thesis uses sources provided by the Russian and Soviet governments. For reference, the various sources are attached as an appendix.

Chapter I pays close attention to the political and economic factors involved in the changes of the Koreans' migration. In particular, this work will explore how the historical events which took place in Russia, Korea, Japan, and China affected the Koreans' migration. The Russo-Japanese War, the annexation of Korea by Japan, the First World War, the Soviet revolutions, the Russian Civil War, and the intervention of foreign countries in the Far East all affected, either negatively or positively, not only the Koreans' migration, but the immigration policies of the tsarist and Soviet governments.

In this first chapter the process of the Koreans' migration is divided into three stages. The first stage reaches from the 1860s to June 1884 when Korea and Russia concluded the Treaty of Friendship and Commerce. The second stage begins in 1884 and finishes in 1917. The first and second stages belong to the tsarist government. The third stage deals with the issues that were prominent from 1917 to 1937. According to scholars, this stage is divided into four or five parts, focusing on the historical events related to both Russia and Korea. For example, the Russo-Japanese War (1904-05) and the annexation of Korea by Japan (1910) define the stage in more detail.¹ However, in relation to the overall tendency of the Koreans' migration, this stage is more simplified.

¹ A.T. Kuzin, *Perekhod Koreitsev Dalnego Vostochnye predely Rossiiskogo gosudarstva* (Iuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 2001). He divided the history of Korean immigration into five stages.

It is well known that most Koreans came from the northern parts of Korea. In reality, about 90 percent of the Korean immigrants were from these areas. Approximately 80 to 90 percent of the Koreans engaged in agriculture, and the rest of the population worked in the various industrial fields, including the gold-fields, mining, metallurgy, and so on. Of particular note, Koreans first introduced rice farming into the Far East in 1905 and developed it dramatically not only in this area, but in Central Asia.

While Chapter I explores the development of the Koreans' migration and Koreans' lives in Russia, Chapter II examines the effects of the immigration policy of the tsarist Russian and Soviet governments on Koreans. In the first stage of the Koreans' migration from the 1860s to the 1890s, the immigration policy of the tsarist government was initiated by the local authorities. The geographical distance of the Far East from the center made the central government indifferent to local affairs. Therefore, the immigration policy on Koreans heavily depended on the personality and private views of the local governors. After the 1900s, as the political and economic significance of this area was growing, the immigration policy became to be affected by the central government.

While under the tsarist government the immigration policy on Koreans was sometimes favorable and sometimes negative, the immigration policy of the Soviet regime steadily showed negative and repressive tendencies. Under the Soviet regime many political events occurred which threatened the security of the regime. Therefore, its immigration policy had to be very passive, and the Koreans' immigration was officially prohibited.

During the Soviet regime, the Koreans living near the Russian-Korean border were viewed as dangerous elements since the Soviets thought Koreans could be useful

operatives for Japanese espionage. Therefore, the question of how to resettle the Koreans from border areas to other regions took priority in the Soviet government's policy. In reality, the plan for the Koreans' resettlement was crafted twice during the mid 1920s and early 1930s. According to the second plan, about 88,000 Koreans were to be resettled to Khabarovsk. The plans were only partially implemented, and as a result about 2,750 Koreans were resettled. The resettlement revived in a different form in the deportation of 1937.

Finally, Chapter III describes the history of Koreans' deportation to Central Asia. This chapter traces the factors that led to their tragic deportation, how Koreans were informed of their deportation, and how they were transferred to their new destination. In addition, this chapter examines how the central government implemented the deportation and how the local government prepared to accept Koreans.

In 1937 all Koreans living in the Far East were deported, and their number reached about 172,000. Koreans were informed of their situation only days before their deportation. It was assumed by scholars that the deportation was caused by the Soviet regime's suspicion of Koreans' potential espionage for Japan. Japanese invasion in Manchuria in 1931 and the creation of the puppet government "Manchukuo" in 1932 escalated the tension between the two countries. In July of 1937, Japan began to invade China.

The Soviet regime recognized that the Far East was de facto at war with Japan. The Koreans were viewed as dangerous elements since they could be utilized as Japanese spies. As a result, in August 1937 the decree on deportation of Koreans was issued, and this operation finished in November 1937. Besides political concerns,

some scholars² insisted that economic reasons also influenced the Soviet regime's decision to deport the Koreans. The argument was that for purposes of bringing rice farming to Central Asia and developing that region, the Soviet regime would carry out forced mass deportation. There was, however, weak evidence to back up this argument.

In reality, it is difficult to believe that the Stalinist government deported mass populations within such a short period of three months merely to remove potential threats. Except for political implications, some reason should exist to cause the deportation. Given the fact, however, that the Soviet regime had a similar experience in 1935, the mere political implications could explain the deportation. As Germany's threats increased in the western border, Germans and Poles were easily removed and transferred into Central Asia.

Koreans were informed only days before their deportation that they would be moved to somewhere in Central Asia. According to the decree on 21 August, only Koreans living near the border areas were first deported starting at the end of September. However, as a new decree was adopted on 28 September, the deportation was expanded to all Koreans living in the Far East. As a result, about 172,000 Koreans were deported to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and to other republics in Central Asia.

Most Koreans were not allowed to carry sufficient amounts of food and were forced to leave their belongings behind. Koreans were loaded into wagons and transferred into Central Asia. During the transference which lasted one to two months, they faced the real possibility of death due to lack of food and medications. When they arrived in their destination, they realized that they were in a desperate situation.

² Chae-mun Yi, *Tongtoui diaspora* (Taegu: GyungBuk University Press, 2007). Kho Song-moo, *Koreans in the Soviet Central Asia* (Helsinki: Finnish Oriental Society, 1987).

Because the local governments were unprepared to accommodate them, the Koreans were forced to search for accommodations and food for themselves. The catastrophic situation continued in 1938.

CHAPTER II
THE MIGRATION OF KOREANS TO THE RUSSIAN AND SOVIET FAR
EAST: FROM THE 1860s TO THE 1930s

1. Migration of the Koreans

1.1. The First Phase: 1860 to 1884

The history of Korean migration to the Russian Far East coincided with that of Russia's colonization in this area. As Russia concluded the Treaties of Aigun in 1858 and Peking in 1860 with China, Russia obtained the Amur and Ussuri regions which before had belonged to China. According to these treaties, Russia started sharing a border with China in the Amur region, while sharing a border with Korea in the Ussuri region.³

Recognizing the need to colonize these areas by new settlers, between 1859 and 1860 the Russian government first transferred the Cossacks from the Transbaikal area into the Amur and Ussuri regions. As a result, in 1862 twenty-three Cossack settlements were formed in the Ussuri region, and seventy-five in the Amur region. The number of Cossack settlers reached 5,000.⁴

The Cossacks were given substantial benefits as initial settlers. Above all, they were given 197.7 dessiatine (one dessiatina = 2.7 acres) of land per household in exchange for carrying out army service as guards of the border areas.⁵ Since the Cossacks lacked experience in agriculture, however, less than 1 percent of their lands

³ Chae-mun Yi, 129.

⁴ Erich Thiel, *The Soviet Far East* (New York : Fedric A. Praeger, 1957), 134.

⁵ Haruki Wada, "Koreans in the Soviet Far East, 1917-1937," in Dae-Sook Suh, ed., *Koreans in the Soviet Union* (Hawaii Honolulu: Center for Korean Studies of the University of Hawaii, 1987), 28.

were cultivated.⁶

Along with the relocation of the Cossacks, the Russian government had prepared to resettle European Russians to the Far East. On 27 April 1861, the Russian tsarist government enacted a law to encourage and expedite the migration of the Russian peasants into the Amur and the Maritime Provinces (the Primorskia Oblast).

According to the law, not only Russians but foreign immigrants were also granted various benefits from the government as new settlers. Based on the law, the new settlers in these areas were granted 100 dessiatine of land per household and were exempted from conscription for ten years and taxation for twenty years, on the condition that the transportation cost was to be paid by the settlers themselves.⁷

Between 1862 and 1863 the first group of Russian migrants consisting of thirty-two families first moved into the Ussuri region. Subsequently, with support of the 1861 law, until 1882 about 14,000 Russian emigrants settled in several regions of the Russian Far East.⁸

The figure, however, did not satisfy the expectation of the Russian government. The geographical barrier and long distance from European Russia to the Far East served to slow down the inflow of emigrants.⁹ In particular, the number of Russian emigrants into the South Ussuri region was insignificant for colonizing this area.¹⁰

The unfavorable living conditions and the inhospitable soil conditions served as the main barriers to attracting Russian emigrants into the Ussuri region. From 1863

⁶ John Stephan, *The Russian Far East* (California: Stanford University Press, 1994), 63.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 64.

⁹ Thiel, 135.

¹⁰ A.I. Krushanov, *Istoriia Dalnego Vostoka SSSR* (Moskva: Nauka, 1991), 232.

to 1870 only 2,274 Russian peasants migrated to the South Ussuri area, and between 1871 and 1882 the number of immigrants decreased to 622.¹¹ The Posyet district belonging to the South Ussuri area, in particular, had much worse conditions and people who first landed in this area fled to other areas such as the adjacent Lake Kankha and Ussuri River.¹²

Coinciding with Russia's colonization of the Ussuri region in the 1860s, the Korean immigrants moved into this region. The first contacts of the Russian border authority with the Koreans took place naturally. After the Novgorodski post was established in Posyet Bay in 1860, which shared the Russian border with Korea, it was recorded that the Koreans, crossing the frozen Tumen River had begun contact with the Russian border authorities.

According to the record of P.A.Gelmersen, who visited Posyet Bay in May 1864 and surveyed the Koreans' migration into this area, "Cherkavski, head of Novgorodski post, kept good relations with the Koreans, and therefore, the Koreans, crossing the Tumen River, had brought livestock to sell to the border authorities. In addition, the Koreans even suggested that if the Russian government permitted our families to settle down within the Russian border area, we would look for people who wanted to immigrate to Russia."¹³

The first mention of the Koreans' immigration to the Russian border areas was recorded in the letter written on 30 November 1863 by Lieutenant Rezanov who was in charge of the Novgorodski post, replacing Cherkavski. This letter was sent to Kazakevich, military governor of the Maritime region.

¹¹ B.D. Pak, and N.F. Bugai, *140 let v Rossii* (Moskva: IB RAN, 2004), 18. B.D.Pak, *Koreitsy v Rossiiskoi Imperii* (Moskva: 1993), 18.

¹² Pak and Bugai, 18.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 19. P.A. Gelmersen was staff-Lieutenant of General-Headquarters.

In the letter, Rezanov asked Kazakevich whether to permit Korean families to migrate into Russia, reporting that five or six houses had been constructed by Koreans near the Tizinhe River which was 15 versta (1 versta = 1,067m) away from the frontier post; about 20 Koreans wanted to move into these houses.¹⁴

In response, Kazakevich approved acceptance of Koreans and ordered on 4 April 1864 as below:¹⁵

- 1) to take all measures to defend the security of the settlers into Russia;
- 2) to treat the Koreans based on the Russian laws, unless they violated its laws.

Prior to receiving the answer from Kazakevich, Rezanov first of all gave the Koreans permits to settle down in this area after February 1864. They were considered the first permanent Korean immigrants, with the approval of the Russian authority. By the autumn of 1864 about 140 Koreans immigrated and formed the settlement in the South Ussuri area, which was called Tizinkhe and was viewed as the first Korean village. After 1864 the Koreans had begun to form new Korean settlements, named Yanchikhe and Sidimi which were located in the Posyet area.¹⁶

It is reasonable, therefore, to calculate that 1864 was the year when the first group of Korean immigrants settled in the Russian Far East. Even before 1860 the Koreans appeared in the Posyet region and “raised grains like millet and harvested kelp along the Primorye coast.”¹⁷ However, they were not considered permanent

¹⁴ Ibid., 19.

¹⁵ Ibid., 19.

¹⁶ Ibid., 21.

¹⁷ John Stephan, *The Russian Far East* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1994), 74.

immigrants in that they did not aim at settling there.

The initial immigrants who during the 1860s came to the Russian Far East were mainly peasants residing in the northern part of Korea. They fled to the Russian Far East to avoid the economic difficulties caused by famine, punitive taxation, and tyranny of government officers and landowners. Another reason that provoked the Koreans to migrate to this area was the geographical proximity between the Far East and the northern part of Korea. The Tumen River which crossed the Russian-Korean border, furthermore, was so shallow that it did not prevent the Koreans from passing through the border.

The third reason Koreans were attracted to this area was that they came to know through the Russian border authorities about the benefits offered by the law enacted in 1861 to encourage emigration into the Far East.¹⁸ Risking their lives, the Koreans began to rush into this area. At that time, the Korean government prohibited crossing the Russian border and, if people were captured by the government, they would be executed according to the Korean law.¹⁹

The Korean government took a very negative stance on the immigration of its people to the Russian Far East. As the number of Korean immigrants rapidly increased between 1863 and 1864, the Korean government requested the Russian government to send the Koreans back to Korea. The Russian side refused the request of the Korean government since Russia well understood that if the Koreans were returned, they were sentenced to death. The Koreans also desperately resisted their

¹⁸ A.I. Petrov, *Koreiskaia Diaspora na Dalnem Vostoke Rossii* (Vladivostok: DVO RAN, 2000), 60.

¹⁹ T.Z. Pozniak, *Inostrannye Podannye v gorodakh Dalnego Vostoka Rossii* (Vladivostok: Dalauka, 2004), 55.

return to Korea.²⁰

Contrary to the position of the Korean government, the Russian government was in the position to support the Koreans' immigration to the Ussuri region. In November 1864, Korsakov, Governor-General of Eastern Siberia ordered Kazakevich, governor of the Maritime region, to ensure that the local authority secured the Korean immigrants and provided them with special food, given the importance of the immigration into this area and the strong inclination of Koreans to settle.²¹

By 1866 the number of Korean immigrants reached 546 people. The first census of Korean immigrants was carried out on 1 January 1867 by F. F. Busse by order of the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia. According to the census, in 1867 the total number of Koreans who settled in the South-Ussuri area was 999 people (185 families).²²

During 1867, 500 Koreans and another 150 families crossed the border without the authorization of the Korean government and settled in both the Yanchikhe and Vladivostok areas. The land located on the right side of upstream of the Suifen River was allotted to the Korean immigrants.²³

As the number of Korean immigrants increased, the Russian authority took appropriate measures to control the Korean settlers in the South Ussuri region. On 13 August 1866 Korsakov instructed the governor of the Maritime region to introduce the following regulations:²⁴

1) The Koreans who lived in the South Ussuri region were to be controlled by

²⁰ Chae-mun Yi, 130.

²¹ B.D. Pak, *Rossia i Koreia* (Moskva: IB RAN, 2004), 81.

²² *Ibid.*, 81.

²³ Pak and Bugai, 25.

²⁴ Pak, *Rossia i Koreia*, 82-83.

the head of the Novgorodskii post;

2) Every village which consisted of more than 10 households should select one representative and two advisers;

3) The representatives should be instructed by the head of the post. They were also to be given the right to punish the people who violated the rules and to handle minor matters within the Korean villages.

Along with the increase of Korean immigrants, the Korean government began to strengthen the surveillance over the border areas. Regarding the policy of the Korean government on the Korean immigrants, the famous Russian explorer Przhevalskii, who visited the South Ussuri region during 1867-1869, mentioned in his book that “the Korean government tried to stop the migration by all means available, executed people caught crossing the border, and refused to hold any official contacts with the Russian government.”²⁵

On the other hand, in the 1860s the policy of the Russian government on Korean immigrants was consistent and favorable. Due to lack of Russian emigrants in this area, and despite the protest of the Korean government, the Russian authority was willing to support the Koreans in settling in the Russian Far East where the living conditions were so bad that the Russian settlers easily abandoned and left this area.

Even the governor of the Maritime region, Kazakevich, suggested that Russia allow the Koreans to register for status as Russian peasants, given the fact that Russia and Korea had no treaty, and therefore, Russia itself could allow Koreans to have Russian citizenship without the consent of Korea.²⁶

²⁵ Ibid., 84.

²⁶ Ibid., 177.

In response to this suggestion, Korsakov issued the following regulations prepared in 1864.²⁷

- 1) There was no treaty between Russia and Korea to regulate the migration issue of the Koreans. However, according to Russian law, the Russian authority could not deny the people who wanted to be Russian citizens.
- 2) The Koreans who migrated to Russia were to be secured by Russian law.

Despite the effort of the Korean government to discourage the migration, the number of Korean immigrants consistently increased throughout the 1860s. According to Przhevalskii, in 1867, 1,801 Koreans (995 men and 806 women) lived in the three Korean villages of Tizinkhe, Yanchikhe, and Sidimi. In addition, the description of Przhevalskii on the life of Korean immigrants showed that the majority of Koreans came from the northern part of Korea, and they raised 18 horses and 398 pigs, and cultivated 395 dessiatine of land.²⁸

The years of 1869 and 1870 were recorded as large migration years for the Koreans. The flooding of the northern part of Korea caused bad harvests and desperate famine. Several thousand Koreans were forced to leave their fatherland in search of newly opened land in order to survive. As a result, between June and December of 1869, approximately 6,500 Koreans moved into this area.²⁹

Among new Korean immigrants, two-thirds had no food for themselves. The Russian authorities provided them with emergency food including 4,000 pud (1 pud =

²⁷ Ibid, 178.

²⁸ Pak, *Koreitsy v Rossiiskoi Imperii*, 22.

²⁹ Chae-mun Yi, 136-7.

16.38 kg) of rye and 2,000 pud of wheat flour and grain.³⁰ The Russian authorities, however, were irritated by the deteriorating situation, and began to recognize that the massive inflow of the Korean immigrants might cause economic and political uncertainty in the area.³¹

Regarding the mass inflow of Koreans, after visiting the Ussuri region, Przhevalskii suggested that the migration be stopped temporarily or that the Koreans be resettled to the Suifen River, Lake Khanka, and Amur regions which were far away from the Russian-Korean border. He also expressed his concern about the Koreans maintaining strong emotional ties with their fatherland, and suggested that the Korean immigrants should be put among Russians so that they would be easily russianized by learning the Russian culture, language, and customs.³²

From 1869, new Korean immigrants started to settle into the basins of the Suifen and Suchan rivers. By 1872 the Koreans formed a total of 13 Korean villages in the Suifen, Khanka, and Suchan districts within the South Ussuri area, where a total of 3,473 Koreans (1,850 men, 1,623 women) lived and cultivated 1,190 dessiatine of land.³³

- 1) Suifen district: Tizinkhe, Yanchikhe, Sidimi, Peresheyek, Timukhe;
- 2) Khanka district: Korsakov (280 Koreans), Putsylovka, Krounovsk, Sinelnikovka (93 people), Pokrovka (490 people), Kazakevichevka(490 people);
- 3) Suchan district: Piankov, Vasiliev.

³⁰ Pak and Bugai, 29.

³¹ Pak, *Rossia i Koreia*, 86.

³² Wada, 26.

³³ Pak and Bugai, 36-37.

While the Korean immigrants first settled in the Ussuri region in 1864, the first Korean settlement in the Amur region was formed only after 1871. After visiting the South Ussuri area in 1870, Sinelnikov, the newly appointed Governor-General of Eastern Siberia, decided to resettle Koreans who recently moved into the Ussuri region to the Amur region.

Based on this decision, in 1871 103 Korean families (431 people) migrated to Blagoveshchenko. The Koreans received 100 dessiatine of land and there formed a new Korean village called *Blagoslovennoe*. It was regarded as the first Korean village established in the Amur area.³⁴

The reason that Sinelnikov relocated the Koreans to the Amur region with the offer of substantial benefits to the Koreans could well be explained by the letter sent to Sinelnikov on 9 January 1870 by Stremoukhov, director of the Asian department of Ministry of Foreign Affairs. In the letter, Stremoukhov pointed out that, even though Russia welcomed Korean immigrants to settle in the Far East, it would be undesirable to have most Korean immigrants concentrated on the border areas.³⁵

The Russian government felt a certain burden due to the Korean migration issue. The first relocation of Korean immigrants from the border area to other areas was likely carried out under political considerations. The issue of relocating the Koreans from the border area into inland areas within the Ussuri region or other provinces like the Amur region continuously revived whenever the Russian government viewed the Korean migration as problematic.

The transferring of Korean immigrants into the Amur region caused concern among the Chinese border authority since the place where the Korean immigrants

³⁴ Ibid., 33.

³⁵ Pak, *Rossia i Koreia*, 86.

were transferred was close to the border area with China. The Chinese border authority asked the Russian authority to return the Koreans. Its request, however, was rejected by the Russian government. Gorchakov, Minister of Foreign Affairs, delivered the instruction to Sinelnikov that the Koreans need not be transferred because there was no treaty among Russia, China, and Korea.³⁶

Nonetheless, the number of Korean immigrants increased throughout the 1870s. According to the census on the Korean immigrants carried out in 1878 by order of Frederiks, the new Governor-General of Eastern Siberia, 6,142 Korean immigrants inhabited the South Ussuri area where twenty Korean settlements were formed. In the Amur region, in 1879 624 Koreans lived in the village of Blagoslovennoe.³⁷ In total, by the end of the 1870s there were twenty-one Korean villages with 6,766 people in the Ussuri and the Amur region.

Accepting the Korean immigrants into the Russian Far East during the 1860s and 1870s positively affected the local economy. The agricultural industry rapidly developed and its productions exceeded the expectation of the Russian authority. Even in 1870 grain prices in the South Ussuri area dropped due to overproduction of grains. Some grains such as oats and barley were no longer imported from China after 1874. In addition, the Koreans were mobilized to construct roads, houses, and bridges.³⁸

Russian historian V. Vagin, in his article titled “Koreans in Amur,” perceived that the Koreans would be very useful for the Russian economy because they were industrious, tidy, humble, and obedient. He stated that it would be harmful for Russia to view Koreans only as a simple labor force working to serve Russia’s agricultural

³⁶ Ibid., 88.

³⁷ Pak and Bugai, 38-39.

³⁸ Ibid., 41.

and economic interests, and stressed that Russia should view the presence of Koreans as favorable for Russian politics.³⁹

1.2. The Second Phase: 1884-1917

In the 1880s a certain tendency of the Russian government to restrict the Korean migration appeared. On the one hand, the Russian government attempted to lay the legal foundation to regulate the Korean immigration into the Russian Far East. Finally, on 25 June 1884 Russia and Korea concluded a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce, by which the diplomatic relations of the two countries were established. The status of the Korean immigrants was clarified by the treaty.

As a result, during the 1880s the rate of Korean immigrants slowed down. The Russian government also considered the positions of Korea and China since Korea and China strongly opposed the Russian government allowing the Koreans to settle in the border areas within the Russian Far East.

On the other hand, in order to attract Russians into the South Ussuri area which the Koreans densely populated, the Russian government had earlier issued the South Ussuri Resettlement Law on 1 June 1882. The law targeted the Russian peasants who lived in the southern part of European Russia. According to the law, the settlers were entitled to receive 15 dessiatine of land per person with a maximum 100 dessiatine per family, plus, five years of tax exemption, and free tools, construction materials, and agricultural implements. Unlike the 1862 law, the transportation from Odessa to Vladivostok was paid by the government.⁴⁰

Thanks to the resettlement law, between 1883 and 1885 about 4,710 Russian

³⁹ Pak, *Koreitsy v Rossiiskoi Imperii*, 56.

⁴⁰ Stephan, 65.

peasants from European Russia moved into the South Ussuri area. These mostly poor peasants were given the land and credited a maximum 600 rubles per family from the national fund to be paid off in 33 years.⁴¹ In addition to this group, the group of voluntary immigrants which consisted of rich peasants settled in the Ussuri region. Their number reached 1,474 families (8,998 people) from 1884 to 1900.⁴²

The total Russian population in the Maritime province increased from 8,385 people in 1882 to 66,320 people in 1902. During the same period, the number of Korean immigrants in the Maritime Province increased only from 10,137 people to 32,380 people.⁴³ The rate of increase of the Russian population overwhelmed that of the Korean population.

In 1907 the number of Russian peasants who arrived in the Far East from Ukraine, Siberia, and central Russia reached 243,000.⁴⁴ The Russian settlers, however, had difficulty in adapting to the inhospitable environments of the Far East, and about 15 percent of Russian settlers who settled in the Maritime region abandoned their allotments and returned to European Russia or left for other hospitable lands, while 7.5 percent of Russian settlers in the Amur region left this area.⁴⁵

The main feature of Korean migration in the 1880s was that various classes of Koreans began to join the line of migration. In fact, while during the 1860s and 1870s the Korean immigrants were mainly peasants, in the 1880s merchants and simple

⁴¹ Pak and Bugai, 47.

⁴² Ibid., 47.

⁴³ Ibid., 47.

⁴⁴ Stephan, 65.

⁴⁵ Chae-mun Yi, 132.

laborers began to constitute one part of the Korean immigrants.⁴⁶

The gradual increase of Korean immigration was attributed to the needs of the Russian government to develop not only agriculture but the mining industry. Since the Koreans had special skills in rice farming and also were very diligent and industrious, they made a significant contribution to the agricultural sector in the Maritime Province. In fact, about 90 percent of the Korean immigrants engaged in agriculture.⁴⁷

Contrary to the previous Korean migration, the 1880s, 1890s, and 1900s saw many Korean political refugees move into the Far East. The Japanese expansionism into Korea began to strictly suppress Korean activists who fought against Japan.

The political situation in the 1890s and 1900s fostered the Korean migration into Russia. The number of Korean immigrants in the Maritime region in 1902 almost doubled that of Korean immigrants in 1891 (see Table 1).

Table 1: The Number of Korean Immigrants in the Maritime Region⁴⁸

Year	Koreans
1891	12,857
1898	23,000
1899	27,000
1902	32,380

In the early 1900s there were 47 or 48 Korean villages in the Far East. Only in the Maritime Province were 32 Korean villages formed, and among them 31 villages were concentrated in the South Ussuri district. Of 32 Korean villages in the Maritime Province, 22 villages belonged to the Posyet area, 4 to the Suifen area, 2 to

⁴⁶ Ibid., 61.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 149.

⁴⁸ Pak, *Koreitsy v Rossiiskoi Imperii*, 74.

the Upper-Ussurisk area, 3 the Suchan area, and 1 to the Sofisk area.⁴⁹

In addition to the Maritime Province, Korean villages were established in Khabarovsk, Blagoveshchenko, and Blagoslovennoe of the Amur region. In Blagoslovennoe, the first Korean village of the Amur region, Korean immigrants increased from 431 people in 1872 to 1,100 in 1895. They all were baptized and obtained Russian citizenship in 1889 regardless of their ability to speak the Russian language. They were considered the example of successful russification.⁵⁰

While the Korean immigration of the 1800s was caused mainly by economic reasons such as famines and starvation, between 1900 and 1910 the political situation in Korea served as the main reason for the Korean immigration. As Japanese repression toward Koreans increased, the Koreans were forced to abandon their fatherland and move into the Russian Far East, adjacent to Korea.

From the 1900s Japan began to strengthen its influence on Korea's internal affairs. On the one hand, Japan severely repressed political activities of Koreans opposed to Japan in order to accomplish complete control over Korea. On the other hand, Japan confiscated land and properties from Koreans to facilitate Japanese immigration into Korea. As a result, many Koreans, including the elite group, were forced to leave Korea and settle in the Russian Far East, where the power of Japan was limited by the authority of Russia.

Between 1906 and 1910 the number of Koreans increased from 34,399 people to 50,965⁵¹ (see Table 2).

⁴⁹ A.T. Kuzin, *Perekhod Koreitsev v Dalnevostochnye Peredely Rossiiskogo Gosudarstva* (Iuzhno-Sakhalinsk, 2001), 47-48.

⁵⁰ Wada, 26.

⁵¹ G.N. Kim, *Istoriia Immigratsii Koreitsev* (Almaty: DaiK Press, 1999), 164. Pak, *Koreitsy v Rossiiskoi Imperii*, 105. Pak showed in 1910 that there were 51,052 Koreans living in the Maritime

Table 2: The Increase Rate of Koreans Living in the Maritime Province 1906-1910

YEAR	RUSSIAN KOREANS	FOREIGN KOREANS	TOTAL
1906	16,965	17,434	34,399
1907	16,007	29,907	45,914
1908	16,190	29,307	45,497
1909	14,799	36,755	51,544
1910	17,080	33,885	50,965

● Note: G.N. Kim made this table, based on the report of Unterberger, Governor-General of Priamurskii Krai.

However, it was almost impossible to do an annual count of immigrants, and therefore, various sources showed different figures. A. M. Kazarinova who carried out the census on the Koreans in the South Ussuri region between 1906 and 1907 pointed out that the number of Koreans living in the Maritime region might reach 60,000 in 1908.⁵²

Except for the Maritime region, only a small number of Koreans inhabited in the Amur and Transbaikal provinces. In 1910 about 1,538 Koreans lived in the Amur region, and 378 Koreans lived in Transbaikal Province.⁵³ This figure well demonstrates that most Koreans were concentrated on the border areas close to Korea.

After 1910, when Korea was annexed by Japan, not only Korean peasants who were deprived of their land by the Japanese Land Exploitation Policy, but also the members of the upper classes, businessmen and many political figures who led the independence movement in Korea, began immigrating to Russia. In addition, the fact that the Russian-Korean border was almost open facilitated the Korean migration.

From 1911 to 1914, the number of Korean immigrants increased only from

region.

⁵² G.N. Kim, 164.

⁵³ Ibid., 165-6. Pak, *Koreitsy v Rossiiskoi Imperii*, 105-106.

57,289 to 64,309.⁵⁴ Even during the First World War, the number of Korean immigrants into the Russian Far East continued to increase.

Between 1915 and 1917 the number of Koreans living in the Far East increased from 72,600 people to 84,678. Of this number, about 87 percent (74,079 people) lived in the rural areas, indicating that most Koreans continued to engage in agriculture. Although some Koreans left Russia to avoid conscription into the Russian army, the tendency of population increase persistently continued throughout 1910s.⁵⁵

Concerning the number of Koreans, however, it was argued that Koreans already numbered approximately 100,000 in 1917 in the Far East.⁵⁶ The difference between the real number and the registered number could be explained by the fact that the Koreans were reluctant to register with the Russian authorities, and the number of Koreans who stayed illegally might reach almost 30 percent of the total number of Koreans.⁵⁷

Throughout the 1910s the issue of obtaining Russian citizenship annoyed the Korean immigrants. The number of Koreans who became Russian citizens did not improve noticeably. While in 1910, of 50,965 Koreans only 17,080 obtained Russian citizenship, in 1914, of 64,309 Koreans only 20,109 succeeded in gaining Russian citizenship.

In other words, two-thirds of the Korean immigrants were regarded as foreigners and among them a substantial amount was presumed to be staying illegally with no documents to prove their identity. This situation served as the main factor in

⁵⁴ A.T. Kuzin, *Perekhod Koreitsev*, 44.

⁵⁵ G.N. Kim 167.

⁵⁶ Pak, *Koreitsy v Rossiiskoi Imperii*, 131. Pak even insisted that if including the number of the Korean soldiers who joined in the First World War and still remained in the European Russia, the actual number of Korean immigrants exceeded 100,000 in 1917.

⁵⁷ Wada, 31.

unsettling the Korean society in Russia.

In fact, non-naturalized Koreans suffered substantial discrimination, compared to the Russian citizens. They were not allowed to have land and were limited in their search for work due to their status. They were forced to work as tenant farmers or lower wage labors. They had to pay 50 percent of their yields as land lease fees to the landowners. In addition, they suffered various taxes such as a residential tax or oil and fuel taxes.⁵⁸

The Cossacks were placed on the top rank of the social hierarchy in the Far East since they were first granted huge lands from the government. Not cultivating the allotted lands, the Cossacks simply leased their lands to the Koreans who could be hired at the cheapest wage. The Russians were also given the land from the government when they migrated into the Far East⁵⁹ (see Table 3).

Table 3: The Size of Land Allotted to Settlers in the Far East

Nationalities	Size of the Land given by the Government
Cossacks	197.7 dessiatine
Russian immigrants (1862-1900)	100 dessiatine
Russian immigrants (after 1901)	15-45 dessiatine
Korean (Category 1)	15 dessiatine
Korean (Category 2-3)	0

- Note: Only Koreans who settled in the Blagoslovennoe in 1871 by the Russian government were given 100 dessitine of land per household.

1.3. The Third Phase: 1917-1937

During the period of 1917 to 1922, the 1917 Russian revolutions and the Japanese intervention in the Far East between 1918 and 1922 affected the Korean

⁵⁸ N.F. Bugai, *Chaeso Hanindul ui sunansa*, translated by Choi Jong woon (Kyongido: Sejong Youngguso, 1996), 7.

⁵⁹ Wada, 28.

population not only in the Far East but in the whole of Russia. Ironically, dangerous circumstances attracted the Korean immigrants to flee into Russia. In order to fight against Japan, Korean partisan groups entered the Far East. The Russian Koreans also joined the Red Army to support the Soviet Bolshevik regime.

The Bolshevik regime provided material support to the Korean independence movement, recognizing that the support from the Korean side would be useful and important in defeating the Japanese troops and the White army. The Korean immigrants established the Korean National Union and systematically collaborated with the newly born Soviet government. This mutually favorable atmosphere contributed to the increase of Korean immigrants.

After the 1917 Russian October revolution about 100,000 Koreans were supposed to inhabit the whole of Russia: in the Maritime Province, 81,825 people; in European Russia, 7,000; in Western Siberia, 5,000.⁶⁰ Two-thirds of the Koreans were likely to have no legal status.

During the Russian Civil War, the inflow of the Korean immigrants into the Far East began to increase. The reasons for the increase of Korean immigrants could be explained by several causes: First, the political and economic condition in Korea worsened and continuously compelled people to leave the country. Second, the Korean migration to the Manchuria region decreased due to the increase of Japan's suppression in this area, and therefore Koreans' immigration was concentrated on the Far East. Third, for the Koreans the Far East was considered to still have potential to provide land and work for Koreans.

Another realistic reason to attract the Koreans was the increased demands for rice. During the period of the presence of Japanese troops in the Far East from 1918 to

⁶⁰ G.N. Kim, 168.

1922, the demand for rice rapidly grew, and this situation offered work to Korean immigrants and laborers. In fact, rice farming was first introduced into the Far East by Koreans in 1905. The size of the rice fields in the Maritime Province increased only from 300 dessiatine in 1919 to 10,000 dessiatine in 1923. Almost 90 percent of rice farming in this area was performed by Koreans.⁶¹

According to the materials provided by the Far Eastern Revolutionary Committee on the Korean problem, in 1923, about 120,982 Koreans lived in the Maritime Province, of whom 103,482 lived in rural areas. Among Koreans, the peasants constituted 80 percent of the total Korean population. About 5 percent were laborers, and 5 to 7 percent were considered the intelligentsia. About 10 percent belonged to the urban bourgeoisie. Among the peasants, 5 percent were considered Kulak. In addition, about 90,000 Koreans were concentrated on three *uezd* (districts): Posyet, Suchan and Nikolsk-Ussurisk, constituting 80 percent of the whole Korean population⁶² (see Table 4).

Table 4: Koreans Living in the Rural Areas of the Maritime Province in 1923

Raion, Uezd	Russian Koreans	Foreign Koreans	Total
Posyetskii	14,371	13,610	27,981
Nikolsk-Ussuriskii	7,621	28,354	35,975
Suchanskii	2,302	19,342	21,644
Spasskii	2,896	4,294	7,190
Olginskii	14	2,199	2,213
Imanskii	1,848	1,402	3,250
Khabarovskii Uezd	2,091	3,138	5,229
Totals	31,143	72,339	103,482

⁶¹ Wada, 35.

⁶² G.N. Kim, 172.

In 1923, according to another source, 106,817 Koreans inhabited the Maritime Province. Koreans constituted 17 percent of the whole population in this area. Among Koreans, 34,559 people were naturalized and 72,258 were regarded as foreigners.⁶³

In early 1924, there were 457 Korean villages in the Maritime Province where 70 Korean rural soviets (local governing councils) were formed.⁶⁴ In mid 1924, 105 Korean rural soviets were established, and in 1925 the number increased to 122.⁶⁵

Between 1923 and 1926 the number of Koreans living in the Maritime region increased from 120,982 to 168,009. Of 168,009, 123,000 Koreans lived in the Ussuri region.⁶⁶ In 1926, only in the Vladivostok district were 164 Korean villages formed. Also in 1926, it was first recorded that 87 Koreans were registered in Central Asia: 42 in Kazakhstan, 36 in Uzbekistan, 9 Kirgizstan.⁶⁷

In 1929, the special survey on the number of Korean immigrants living in the Vladivostok district was carried out by the instruction of the Far Eastern Regional Committee. According to this survey, about 150,795 Koreans were counted living in this area.

However, some sources showed significantly different figures. Walter Kolarz insisted in his book titled “*The Peoples of the Soviet Far East*” that when illegal or unregistered Korean residents were included, in 1927 about 250,000 lived in the

⁶³ Wada, 32-33.

⁶⁴ N.A. Trotskaia and others, *Koreitsy na Rossiiskom Ddalmnevostoke (1917-1923), dokumenty i materialy* (Vladivostok: Izdatelstvo Dalnevostochnogo universiteta, 2004), 11.

⁶⁵ G.N. Kim, 175.

⁶⁶ Wada, 34.

⁶⁷ G.N. Kim, 180.

Soviet Union.⁶⁸ Another source claimed that as of 1925, about 250,000 Koreans lived in the territories of the Far East, with 50 percent living in the Vladivostok uezd.⁶⁹

Given the situation that the Russian authority's control over the entry and exit of Korean immigrants was insufficient, and above all Koreans' reluctance to register with the Russian authorities, the census could not be regarded as 100 percent accurate, but this figure seemed not to be overly exaggerated. The Russian officers themselves confessed that 14 to 30 percent should be added to the surveyed figure to arrive at the real figure.⁷⁰

Throughout the 1920s the issue of granting Russian citizenship to Koreans was still not decided. On 25 October 1922 the Far Eastern Revolutionary Committee, which was formed right after Japan withdrew its troops from the Far East, began to review the Korean issue, creating the new department in 1923. The process of granting Russian citizenship to the Koreans, nonetheless, developed slowly.

In 1923, of 6,000 Korean applicants who wanted to get Russian citizenship only 1,300 received it. In 1924, 4,761 made application for Russian citizenship; of them, 1,247 Koreans succeeded. In 1925, of 3,265 Koreans who made application for citizenship, only 2,200 received it.⁷¹

In the 1930s no noticeable change of the number of Korean immigrants appeared, attributed to the fact that the Soviet regime strengthened its guard of the border areas not only with Korea but with China and Manchuria. In addition, the

⁶⁸ Hidesuke Kimura, "Korean Minorities in Soviet Central Asia and Kazakhstan," in Dae-Sook Suh, ed., *Koreans in the Soviet Union* (Honolulu: Center for Korean Studies of the University of Hawaii, 1987), 86-87.

⁶⁹ U-khe Yi, and En un Kim, *Belaia Kniga o deportatsii koreitskogo naseleniia Rossii v 30-40kh godakh* (Moskva: Interpaks, 1992), 127.

⁷⁰ G.N. Kim, 171.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, 180.

political situation caused the Soviet regime to take unfavorable measures on the Korean issue. Official records showed that the number of Korean immigrants reached 195,000 in 1935, and dropped to 172,500 in 1937.⁷²

Throughout the 1930s, the political situation in the Far East worsened due to the heightened tension between Japan and China, and between Japan and Russia concerning Japan's invasion of Manchuria and the issue of ownership of the Chinese Eastern Railway. These conditions affected the decision of the Soviet government to prohibit further Korean immigration into the Far East.

2. Who were the Koreans? And What were the Economic and Social Conditions of Korean Immigrants in Tsarist Russian and the Soviet Regime?

The Koreans who migrated from Korea into the Russian and Soviet Far East were mainly peasants, primarily from the northern part of Korea. According to the record provided by the Korean government, of those who immigrated from Korea to the Far East between 1910 and 1921, 90.7 percent came from the Northern provinces of Korea such as Hamgyung Nam-Buk Do, Pyungan Nam-Buk Do and Hwanghae Do, while immigrants from the remaining regions of Korea constituted less than 10 percent. This ratio reflects the geographical proximity of northern Koreans to the Russian Far East.⁷³

The Koreans' initial migration into the Far East was made overland. In contrast, for the migration from the central and southern parts of Korea sea routes

⁷² Kuzin, *Perekhod Koreitsev*, 53.

⁷³ Chae-muni Yi, 139.

were used, from Chongjin and Pusan in Korea or Kobe in Japan to Vladivostok.⁷⁴

Most Koreans moved into Russia in order to escape suppression under Korea's feudal system and the small ruling classes, and also to escape to Japan's invasion in Korea. However, the Koreans' economic and social conditions in Russia were not different from those they experienced in Korea since most Koreans in Russia were not given Russian citizenship and therefore they were not entitled to own land. In 1923, of 16,767 Korean households only 2,290 (13.7 percent) owned their land.⁷⁵ The Koreans who did not own land were forced to rent the land from the Cossacks and Russians.

By 1917, the lands in the Far East were concentrated in the hands of the Cossacks and the Russians, with their holdings being 15 to 44 times greater than those of Koreans (see Table 5).

Table 5: Land Ownership of Russians, Cossacks, and Koreans in 1917 (unit: dessiatine)⁷⁶

	Number of households (ratio, %)	Good quality of land (ratio, %)	Size of land per household (ratio, %)
Cossacks and Russians migrated before 1900	18,787 (32.91)	1,269,300 (71.11)	67
Russians after 1900	21,112 (36.98)	489,700 (27.43)	23
Koreans	17,192 (30.11)	26,100 (1.46)	1.5
Total	57,091 (100%)	1,785,100 (100%)	

In comparing the size of land ownership in the Far East in 1923, while the Cossacks and Russians owned 16.5 and 10.5 dessiatine of land per person respectively,

⁷⁴ Kho, *Koreans in the Soviet Central Asia*, 27. Pak, *Koreitsy v Rossiiskoi Imperii*, 104.

⁷⁵ Wada, 51

⁷⁶ Chae-mun Yi, 226.

Koreans owned only 1 to 1.5 dessiatine of land per person.⁷⁷

As the number of naturalized Koreans grew, the land problems of Koreans slightly improved. Although the ratio of Koreans who owned land highly increased, about 50 percent of the Korean population still owned less than one dessiatine of land. Since about 80 to 90 percent of the whole Korean population was engaged in the agricultural sector, the land problem seriously limited the development of the Korean society in Russia (see Table 6).

Table 6: Ratio of Land Ownership Between Russians and Koreans in 1924⁷⁸

	Ratio of land ownership of Koreans	Ratio of land ownership of Russians
no land	11.5%	12.5%
less than one dessiatine of land	36%	12.3%
1 to 2 dessiatine of land	26%	
2 to 4 dessiatine of land	18.9%	24.9%
5 to 7 dessiatine of land	5.5%	31.4%
more than 7 dessiatine of land	1.5%	17.1%

Besides agriculture, Koreans engaged in mining, transportation, and work in the gold-fields. The number of Korean laborers who worked in the mining industry increased significantly from 400 in 1891 to 6,200 in 1906. However, Koreans who worked in the gold-fields decreased from 5,865 people in 1906 to 150 in 1910. This unexpected decrease was due to the policy launched by Unterberger, who regarded Koreans' inclination to settle down in Russia as dangerous.⁷⁹ Also, notable was the

⁷⁷ Ok-cha Chong, *Rosia, Chungang Asia hanin ui yoksa* (Kongki-do: Kuksa Pyonchan Wiwonhoe, 2008), 165.

⁷⁸ Chae-mun Yi, 229.

⁷⁹ Chong, 28-29.

fact that the number of Koreans who worked in the mining industry in the Amur region dropped from 30,000 in 1907 to 1,300 people in 1924, while the number of Chinese mine workers increased during that time to 19,300 people.⁸⁰

During the Soviet regime, Koreans increased their participation in political activities. After the February Revolution of 1917, Koreans established the Russian-Korean Central Union. The Koreans were divided into two groups in the beginning; one supported the Provisional government and the other favored the Bolshevik regime. While the rich peasants and merchants supported the policy of the Provisional government and even the White Army, most Koreans supported the Bolshevik regime since they hoped that the Bolshevik regime would give more benefits to landless Koreans.

In April 1918 the Koreans reunited to establish the single Korean organization named All Russian Korean National Association, which was renamed as the Korean National Council in 1919. Under the leadership of this organization Koreans fought against the White Army and Japan. Besides this organization, many Korean partisan armies fought for the Soviet regime. However, after 1922, when the Bolshevik regime took complete power in the Far East, the Koreans' political and military organizations which were supposed to be involved in carrying out anti-Japanese activities were closed. This measure came in response to Japan's protest that the Korean organizations in the Far East organized armed resistance against Japan. In contrast, the number of Korean Communist members reached 372 people in 1929, and Komsomol members numbered 6,258.⁸¹

In 1920s the economic conditions of the Koreans were not improved. One

⁸⁰ Chae-mun Yi, 196-8.

⁸¹ Wada, 37.

letter written by A. F. Tsai on 25 December 1922, asked for material assistance for the Korean society and explained the economic situations of Koreans. According to this letter, about 200,000 Koreans lived in the Far East, among them 50 percent owned land; in reality this consisted of only two to three dessiatine of land, even though they were entitled to a minimum of 15 dessiatine of land. In addition, most Koreans suffered in their efforts to develop rice cultivation due to lack of irrigation and seeds.⁸²

Those who did not own land suffered double pains since they not only had to pay the rental fees, but governmental taxes as well, even though they were foreigners. Further, they had to buy tickets to remain in Russia, at 12.5 rubles per family. Rental fees varied from 47 rubles per one dessiatine to 70 rubles according to regions. In the worst cases, rental fees increased in one year from 9 to 10 pud of rice per one dessiatine to 15 to 20 pud.⁸³

Despite these adverse conditions, Koreans contributed to the significant development of the agricultural sector in the Far East. In particular, rice cultivation rapidly increased throughout 1920s, from 8,196 hectares in 1925 to 17,855 hectares in 1929, while harvest of rice rose from 23,114 ton in 1925-26 to 45,765 ton in 1928-29.⁸⁴ However, during the process of the collectivization, rice cultivation decreased to 4,200 hectares in 1933.⁸⁵ The yield per hectare dropped from 3,000 kg to 1,300 or 1,400 kg.⁸⁶ This change demonstrates that many Koreans left the Kolkhoz because

⁸² Yi and Kim, 48, TsGAOP (Tsentralny Gosudarstvenny Arkhiv Oktiabristoi Revoliutsii), F. 1318.

⁸³ A.T. Kuzin, *Dalnevostochnye Koreitsy: zhizn i tragediia cydby* (Iuzhno-Sakhalinsk: Lik, 1993), 52-57

⁸⁴ Pak and Bugai, 226.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 227.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 227. Yi and Kim, 17.

about 90 percent of the rice cultivation in the Far East was handled by the Koreans.

Besides rice farming, Koreans were engaged in sericulture. Sericulture started to be practiced by Koreans between 1916 and 1917. In 1925 and 1926 when the Soviet regime imported, respectively, 300,000 and 1,200,000 mulberry trees from Korea, sericulture was rapidly developed. The number of households engaged in sericulture increased from 100 households in 1929 to 10,200 households in 1933.⁸⁷ Also, Koreans first introduced soybeans into the Far East. The acreage devoted to soybeans was expected to reach 80,000 hectares in 1937, compared to only 300 hectares before the First World War.⁸⁸

In addition, the number of Koreans who worked in the fishery cooperatives reached 5,000 in the early 1930s.⁸⁹ After the collectivization, a substantial number of Koreans moved out of the Kolkhoz and became urban laborers. Furthermore, as a result of receiving a high education, the number of professionals such as teachers and officials gradually increased. In 1932 the first Korean drama theater was created and six Korean magazines and seven newspapers were published in the Korean language. As a result, several hundred Korean artists, journalists and writers began to flourish.⁹⁰

⁸⁷ Pak and Bugai, 228.

⁸⁸ Yn Gieng Be, “*Uchastie Koreitsev v pazbitii ekonomiki Dalegovostochnogo regiona (20-30-e gody XXv)*”, in N.F.Bugai and others, eds., “*1937 god Rossiiskie Koreitsy*” (Moskva: IB RAN, 2004), 153.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 154.

⁹⁰ Syn khva Kim, *Ocherki po istorii sovetskikh Koriitsev* (Almata: Nauka, 1965), 174-175.

CHAPTER III

COMPARISON OF THE IMMIGRATION POLICIES OF THE RUSSIAN AND SOVIET GOVERNMENTS ON KOREAN IMMIGRANTS

1. Imperial Russia's Policy: 1860 - 1917

While the colonization of Siberia and the Transbaikal regions had already begun in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, that of the Far East started only in the mid 1800s. Several events precipitated this colonization. In November 1856 the Maritime Province as a new territorial unit was established. This province, subordinated to the governor-generalship of Eastern Siberia, was the first step for the Russian government to develop the Far East.

The further step was to conclude the treaties of Aigun and Peking. According to these treaties, which were signed with China in 1858 and 1860 respectively, Russia was conceded the Amur and Ussuri regions. In addition, based on the Peking Treaty the Russian-Korean border was first established in the South Ussuri region.

During the 1860s the development of the Far East was determined by the initiatives of the local authority. The geographical distances from the center and lack of accumulated information on the Far East limited the interest and control of the Russian government over this area.

Initially, the Russian authorities had planned to colonize the Far East by using Russian peasants and foreigners. The first law encouraging emigration into this area was enacted in 1861. The idea of attracting the Russian peasants, however, failed due to geographical barriers and the long and difficult transportation route from European

Russia to the Far East.⁹¹

The weakened will of the Russian government also served to discourage the plan to colonize this area. The lukewarm position of the central government over the issue of colonization of the Far East gave the Governor-General of Eastern Siberia full power in deciding the problems in these areas. As a result, Russia's policy on Korean immigrants was inconsistently developed and depended heavily on the personalities of the governors who administered these areas, rather than on the opinions of the central government.

In the 1860s, while the inflow of Russian emigrants into the Far East slowly progressed, the number of Korean immigrants noticeably increased in this area. For the first time, it was desirable for the Russian government that the lands which were never inhabited be developed by small groups of Korean immigrants. In particular, the Russian government positively evaluated that Korean immigrants should settle in the Ussuri region and actively colonized this area since this region was regarded as the most inhospitable area, and most Russian were reluctant to settle there.

The first acceptance of Korean immigrants in 1864 was viewed as successful. As the number of Koreans who wished to immigrate to Russia increased, the local authority began to plan to colonize wilderness areas near the Korean-Russian border by utilizing Korean immigrants. The Russian authority thought that Korean immigrants would be useful laborers and important sources of cheap labor for the development of cities, as tenant farmers who worked for the Cossack and Russian communities, and as food providers for the Russian army.⁹²

Contrary to the initial immigration of Koreans during the 1860s, 1869 and

⁹¹ Erich Thiel, *The Soviet Far East* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1957), 25.

⁹² Pak and Bugai, 22.

1870 were recorded as the years of mass inflow of Korean immigrants. During those two years about 5,700 poured in the Maritime region. This huge influx of Koreans alarmed the Russian local authority to take measures against the mass immigration. The local authority began to understand that the excessive influx of Koreans might cause not only political disputes with the Korean government but economic problems in this area. They were concerned that if the Russian-Korean border areas were densely occupied by Korean immigrants, the lands for future Russian immigrants to this area might be insufficient.⁹³

A military governor of the Maritime region, Prugelom, suggested that on the one hand, the Korean immigration should be controlled and limited, on the other, new Korean immigrants should settle in the areas distant from the Russian-Korean border such as the basin of the Suifen and Refu rivers. This suggestion was supported by Korsakov, governor of the Maritime province.

The Russian government shared these perspectives with the local authorities. Stremoukhov, director of the Asian department of People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs expressed opinions of the Russian government on the Korean problem in his letter addressed to Sinelnikov, Governor-General of Eastern Siberia, on 9 January 1870 as follows:

It was welcomed that the Koreans settle in the area designated by the Russian government. However, if the settlements of the Korean immigrants were formed near the Russian-Korean border areas, the Korean and Chinese governments might misunderstand the situation. The Korean settlements should be formed among the Russian villages to help assimilate Korean

⁹³ Pak and Bugai, 31.

immigrants, instead of concentrating the resettlements near the border areas.⁹⁴

In addition, after visiting the Ussuri region during 1869 and 1870, Przhevalskii suggested in his book published in 1870 that the Russian government suspend the acceptance of Korean immigrants or resettle Koreans into the Amur region. He also stressed that since the Koreans maintained strong spiritual ties with their fatherland, they were not likely to be assimilated.⁹⁵

In fact, these suggestions were incorporated into the immigration policy of the local authorities on Koreans. In 1870 Sinelnikov decided to resettle about 500 Koreans who already had settled in the Ussuri region, into the Amur region. In 1871, 103 Korean families (431 people) were sent to Blagoveshchensk and formed the first Korean village named Blagaslovennoe in the Amur region. They were given 100 dessiatine of land as Russian peasants, accepted the Orthodox religion, and finally were naturalized in 1889.⁹⁶

Contrary to the arguments that the Korean immigrants be limited or resettled the inland area or the Amur area, V. Vagin supported the favorable policy on the Korean immigrants and criticized the Koreans' resettlement into to the Amur region. In his article titled "Koreans in Amur," published in 1875, Vagin described the Koreans as follows:

The Koreans revered virtue and the Korean women were very virtuous.----

They were favorable for Russians and eagerly tried to learn the Russian

⁹⁴ Pak, *Rossiia i Koreia*, 86.

⁹⁵ Pak, *Koreitsy v Rossiiskoi Imperii*, 55.

⁹⁶ Wada, 26.

language and become intimate to Russians.⁹⁷

The resettlement of Korean immigrants into the Amur region where Russia and China shared the border caused a protest from the Chinese border authority. China requested that the Russian authority return Korean immigrants to Korea. The Russian government refused the Chinese request because there was no treaty between Russia and Korea and between Russia and China which prescribed the return of Korean immigrants.⁹⁸

All in all, even though concern over the massive inflow of Korean immigrants grew among the government officials, the position of the Russian authorities during the 1870s was that they did not completely stop the Korean immigrants; rather, they persistently allowed the Koreans to settle in the Maritime region. The reasons for the Russian government's tolerating Korean immigrants was attributed to the fact that the Russian authorities thought the Korean immigrants satisfied Russia's national interest, rather than damaged it. This stance revealed that the Russian government still needed to attract more people to develop the Far East.

By the late 1870s several problems began to be noticed by the Russian government. First of all, the rapid increase of Korean immigrants worried the Russian government that it would lose control over the Koreans. Another problem was that the government lands were occupied by Korean immigrants with no approval of the Russian government. These circumstances compelled the Russian government to regulate the Korean immigrants by concluding the treaty with Korea.

In 1880, the Russian government tried to contact the Korean border authority

⁹⁷ Pak and Bugai, 52.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 35.

to negotiate the issue on the Korean immigrants. Russia's attempt, however, was refused by the Korean side.⁹⁹ The Korean side simply explained to the Russian side that its government prohibited further contact with Russia.

At that time, Korea was adopting its closed-door policy and concluded no treaties with foreign countries, except for China and Japan. However, Korea was forced to open its door by the repression of great powers such as America, Britain, and Germany. Between 1882 and 1883 Korea concluded treaties with those countries, with the mediation of China and Japan.

In fact, Russia did not want any foreign powers intruding into Korea. Recognizing the suzerainty of China in Korea, Russia considered that it would be to Russia's benefit if Korea remained independent from other foreign countries, except for China. However, China viewed Russia and Japan as powerful threats to its suzerainty in Korea, and actively worked to establish Korea's diplomatic relations with Western countries to deter their influence in Korea.¹⁰⁰

As a result, in 1882 Russia began to prepare the establishment of official relations with Korea. The main issues which Russia wanted to address with Korea included the border problems, trade, and the status of Korean immigrants. Prior to a meeting with Korea, K.I. Veber¹⁰¹ was sent to the Ussuri region in order to check the living conditions and economic conditions of the Korean immigrants in that area.

Veber described in his report that due to famine, flooding, and bad harvests about 6,000 Koreans had moved into the South Ussuri region, and that the Korean

⁹⁹ Pak, *Rossia i Koreia*, 92.

¹⁰⁰ Song, Kum-yong, *Rosia ui tongbuga chinchul kwa Hanbado chongcha* (Seoul: Kukhak Charyowon, 2004), 74, 80-81.

¹⁰¹ Veber was Consul General of the Consulate General of Russia in Tenzin, China, and signed the 1884 treaty with Korea. From 1885 he was appointed as the first Russian minister of the Russian Legation in Korea.

immigration was not to be stopped, because if these immigrants were returned to Korea they would be executed. Further, Veber pointed out that unlike the Chinese, Koreans were faithful and eager to settle down in Russia.¹⁰²

On 25 June 1884 Russia signed a Treaty of Friendship and Commerce with Korea. However, the issues concerning frontier trade and the Korean immigrants' legal status were not included in the treaty.¹⁰³ Then, Russia concluded another agreement with Korea on 20 August 1888 named "Regulation for the Frontier Trade on the River Tumen." This regulation also did not decide the legal status of the Korean immigrants. The Korean government considered Koreans its people, regardless of their Russian citizenship, and continuously requested Russia to return Korean immigrants into Korea and prohibit the Koreans from crossing the Russian-Korean border.¹⁰⁴ Worried that if Korean immigrants were transferred to Korea, they would be executed, the Russian government continued to reject the request.

Although Russia did not succeed in completely resolving Korean immigrants' problems, by establishing diplomatic relations with Korea Russia laid the foundation to regulate Korean immigrants in the Far East. On the other hand, the Russian government enacted the South Ussuri Resettlement Law in 1882 in order to facilitate the colonization of this area by Russians. These two measures taken by the Russian government aimed at limiting the increase of Korean immigrants in the Russian-Korean border region.¹⁰⁵

In the mid 1880s the issue of the Korean immigrants was at the center of the

¹⁰² Ibid., 84-85.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 93.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 153.

¹⁰⁵ Chae-mun Yi, 113.

discussion among government authorities. With the increase of Russian emigrants into the Ussuri region, the Russian government began to set a repressive policy toward Korean immigrants, with two important implications. The Russian government recognized the needs to take measures to eliminate unrest elements in the border areas caused by Korean immigrants and to prevent illegal occupation of government lands by foreign immigrants like Korean and Chinese people. In particular, the land problem was very sensitive since new Russian emigrants were secured to gain lands.

In order to discuss the issue of the Korean immigrants, governors' conferences were convened by Korff, the First Governor-General of the Priamur region,¹⁰⁶ twice between 1885 and 1886. The conference was attended by governors, government representatives and entrepreneurs.

The first conference decided that any further immigration of Koreans was prohibited and that the Korean immigrants previously settled in the border area were resettled into the inland area. The second conference reaffirmed the resolution passed by the first conference and defined the specific places of resettlement. For example, the Korean settlers inhabiting the South Ussuri area were forced to resettle into the Amur region. The Koreans who lived in the inhospitable areas such as Tizinhe, Yanchkhe, Sidimi, Fadash, Rezanova, and Adimi were excluded since these areas were considered inappropriate for the Russian immigrants to cultivate due to harsh weather conditions. In addition, the Koreans were to be prohibited from work in the gold-fields.¹⁰⁷

The important message which the second conference provided was that the

¹⁰⁶ Stephan, 55. In 1884 the Priamur Governor Generalship was established, separated from the Eastern Siberian Governor Generalship. The Priamur Governor Generalship included the Transbaikal, Amur, Maritime, and Sakhalin.

¹⁰⁷ Pak and Bugai, 49.

Koreans were regarded as unprofitable and even harmful since they illegally occupied the land. Further, it was proved that the Russian government had a negative attitude toward the Korean immigrants and was ready to carry out any discriminatory policy toward Koreans in the future.

As a result, the resolution was endorsed by Alexander III on 22 November 1886. The emperor clearly ordered the Minister of Foreign Affairs and Governor-General of Priamur to review the measures to prohibit future Korean immigrants from settling in the Russian-Korean border areas and to resettle previous Korean settlers into the inland areas.¹⁰⁸

These resolutions, however, were not carried out, with Russia' resuming the negotiations at the conclusion of the 1888 agreement with Korea.¹⁰⁹ Another reason that the resettlement of Korean immigrants was not realized was that the local government was reluctant to carry out the resettlement. They thought that it was possible to proceed only under the condition that a fund to support Koreans' resettlement would be established and the loss of properties of Koreans could be compensated. The most important reason for rejection, however, was their concern that if all Koreans were resettled into other areas, public works in their areas such as road construction and transportation would be damaged.¹¹⁰

Unlike the intention of the Russian government, the issue on the legal status of Korean immigrants was not reflected in the two agreements signed with Korea in 1884 and 1888. The basic position of the Korean government was that regardless of where the Koreans lived, they were Korean and were not to be Russian. Only the

¹⁰⁸ Pak, *Koreitsy v Rossiiskoi Imperii*, 71.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 69.

¹¹⁰ Pak and Bugai, 49.

1888 agreement decided that in order to cross the Russian-Korean border, both Russians and Koreans should carry passports with them.

As the work to legalize the status of Korean immigrants continued to be postponed, Korff decided in 1891 to place Korean immigrants into three categories: Those who immigrated to Russia before 25 June 1884 were included in the first category. Those who moved into Russia after that date belonged to the second category. The third category was temporary travelers who were limited to a maximum one-year stay and who needed to get a visa to stay.

While Koreans who were in the first category were entitled to obtain Russian citizenship and 15 dessiatine of land per household, those who belonged to the second and third categories had to leave Russia within the fixed period. The Koreans belonging to the second category had to dispose of their properties within two years and leave Russia. This decision, therefore, aimed at regulating and discouraging Korean immigrants, rather than laying the base to secure the legal status of the Korean immigrants. Delaying Russian citizenship to Korean immigrants well demonstrated what Korff's policy intended.

Contrary to Korff, however, his successors, Sergei Dukhovskii and Nikolai Grodenkov, performed the opposite policy regarding the issue of the Korean immigrants. Dukhovskii, who was appointed as Governor-General of the Priamru region in 1893, granted a grace period to the Koreans belonging to the second category, and also gave them the opportunity of naturalization. Grodenkov, taking office as Governor-General in 1898, permitted Koreans who had lived more than five years in Russia to apply for naturalization.¹¹¹ In addition, temporary residents were

¹¹¹ Wada, 27.

allowed to settle down in Iman, Khor, and Kii.¹¹²

In the 1900s two incidents occurred which affected the Russian government policy on the Korean immigrants. They were the Russo-Japanese War in 1904 and 1905, and the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910. While the defeat of Russia in the war with Japan negatively influenced the attitude of both the Russian government and the public, the annexation made the Russian government enact a positive policy on the Korean issue.

After Russia's defeat in the Russo-Japan War in 1905, Russian chauvinism and the notion of the Yellow Peril arose in the Far East.¹¹³ The atmosphere affected the Russian government. As soon as Unterberger was appointed as Governor-General of Priamur in 1905, he began to enforce a hostile policy toward Korean immigrants.

His view on Koreans was clearly described in his book published in 1900. According to his arguments, the Koreans could hardly be assimilated by Russian culture and customs and they would act as spies for Japan when war with Russia and Japan would break out again.¹¹⁴ He was not only opposed to the russification policy of Grodekov, but also was hostile to the Korean immigrants themselves. He viewed Koreans as more dangerous than Chinese since Koreans sought to permanently settle in Russia, unlike the Chinese.¹¹⁵ He also criticized the situation of Koreans who accumulated capital and began to lend it to Russians.¹¹⁶

Unterberger enforced several anti-Korean policies during his tenure: First, the

¹¹² Chae-mun Yi, 132.

¹¹³ Kwang-gyu Yi, and Kyong-su Chong, *Chaeso Hanin: illyuhakchok chopkun* (Seoul: Cimmundong, 1993), 62, Stephan, 79.

¹¹⁴ Hwan Pak, *Rosia Hanin minjok undongsa* (Seoul: Tamgudang, 1995), 22.

¹¹⁵ Kwang-gyu Yi, 62.

¹¹⁶ Pak, *Koreitsy v Rossiiskoi Imperii*, 109.

Korean immigrants could no longer to obtain Russian citizenship; second, even naturalized Koreans were reinvestigated; third, regardless of their legal status, no Korean immigrants were allowed to rent government land; and fourth, Korean immigrants were not permitted to work at the fisheries and gold-fields.¹¹⁷

In response to the anti-Korean policy of the Russian government, a Korean society raised its voice of dissatisfaction with the Russian government's repressive policy. In particular, the Korean newspaper *Dae-Dong-Shin-Mun*¹¹⁸ carried stories describing the benefits of Koreans for Russia and explaining that the "Yellow Peril" was not based on realities because all Koreans felt antagonism against Japan.¹¹⁹

The anti-Korean policy of Unterberger, however, was changed by his successor, Nikolai Gondatti. Before taking office as Governor-General, Gondatti led an expedition which investigated the conditions of the Korean immigrants in the Far East during 1909 and 1910. The expedition refuted the opinions of Unterberger on the Korean immigrants, and concluded that the Koreans were viewed as "loyal, productive and assimilable."¹²⁰ In particular, V. Grave in the report of the expedition depicted the Koreans as follows:

The Koreans are useful elements for Russia....Their inclinations to settle down and their abilities to cultivate woodland bring nothing but benefits to the Russian state.... After Japan's annexation of Korea, their hostility toward Japan grew substantially.... So, Japanese propaganda toward Korean is not to

¹¹⁷ Pak and Bugai, 78.

¹¹⁸ Hwan Pak, 67. *Dae-Dong-Shin-Mun* was a unique Korean newspaper in the Far East. This newspaper was first published in 1908 and was closed in 1910. It strove to represent the Koreans' interest in Russia and to support the independence movement in Korea.

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 102-104.

¹²⁰ Stephan, 80.

be feared.¹²¹

The suggestion of the expedition was adopted by the government, and it led Gondatti to succeed the post of Unterberger. In fact, the argument that the Priamur region was colonized by “yellows” was overestimated, given the 1913 indications, according to which 66.84 percent of the land in the Priamur region was occupied by Cossacks, 32.96 percent of land was possessed by Russians, and less than 1 percent belonged to the Korean immigrants.¹²²

Concerning the proportion of population, moreover, the ratio of Russians overwhelmed that of Koreans. By 1917 about 748,300 Russians and Ukrainians lived in the Maritime region, while Koreans reached only 100,000. The massive inflow of Russian emigrants was attributed to the effect of the Stolypin’s land reform and completion of the Trans-Siberian railway.¹²³

Unlike the Russo-Japan War in 1905, the annexation of Korea by Japan in 1910 made the public sentiment more favorable to Koreans. The Russian press raised a sympathetic voice for Korean immigrants, aligning with the opinions of the expedition. Newspapers such as *Novoe Vremia* carried articles supporting the acceptance of Koreans as Russian citizens and favoring land distribution to the Korean immigrants.¹²⁴

Gondatti reversed the anti-Korean policy of Unterberger and began to launch favorable measures for Koreans. He helped the Koreans to obtain Russian citizenship,

¹²¹ Wada, 30.

¹²² Chae-mun Yi, 225.

¹²³ Pak, *Koreitsy v Rossiiskoi Imperii*, 106-107.

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 113-114, 116.

and tried to eliminate the resolutions initiated by Unterberger that barred Korean immigrants from working at gold-fields and other construction places. On 2 December 1910 the Council of Ministries permitted naturalized Koreans to work at the construction site of the Amur railway. In the following year even Koreans who made application for obtaining the Russian citizenship were allowed to work in the gold-fields.¹²⁵ During the First World War, as the demands for labor rapidly increased, the Koreans could work more freely in the mining, metallurgy, and construction industries.

1.2. The Soviet Policy: 1917-1937

The Russian Civil War and the intervention of foreign countries in the Far East, which took place between 1918 and 1922, heavily damaged not only Russians but Korean immigrants and Korean activists. Even though the Civil War ended and the Japanese troops withdrew from the Far East, the power of the Soviet regime was not likely to be enough to overwhelm that of Japan in the Far East.

The Soviet regime was forced to recognize the Japanese power in Northern Asia and the Soviet Far East. Regarding the Korean issue, the position of the Soviet government, therefore, was to not irritate Japan. After 1922, the Korean activist groups were disarmed by the Soviet regime. According to the request of Japan, several independence movement activists were arrested and transferred to Manchuria or Korea.

The ordinary Korean immigrants living in the territory of Russia, however, were secured by the Soviet regime. According to the law on the procedure of applying for Soviet citizenship, passed on 22 August 1921, the number of applicants increased

¹²⁵ Pak, *Koreitsy v Rossiiskoi Imperii*, 118.

from 11,589 people in 1922 and 1923 to 15,598 in 1923 and 1924. The number of naturalized Koreans gradually increased and the total number of Soviet Koreans reached 52,635 by 1926.¹²⁶

The Soviet government, nonetheless, began to review the Koreans' resettlement into the Amur region, following the Russian tsarist government. The first attempt was made in 1925 by the Far Eastern Revolutionary Executive Committee. Its decision was similar to that of the Russian tsarist regime. According to the resolution, the Koreans were to be resettled into inland areas of the Maritime region and the Amur region during the five years following 1927.¹²⁷ The background of the resolution by the Soviet regime was that the Soviet regime was also alarmed due to the continuous increase of Korean immigrants and illegal occupation of land by them.¹²⁸ Another reason for alarm was that after the enactment of the land law in 1922 the disputes between Russians and Koreans rapidly increased. The Russian landowners ceased to lend their land to the Koreans since the law compelled the landowners to till their land by themselves. Many petitions of Russian peasants concerning the Koreans were sent to the Soviet government. However, the first attempt was ineffective due to lack of administrative preparedness.

The Soviet government continued to question that the Koreans' immigration was encouraged intentionally by Japan. The conference held on 5 January 1926 and chaired by the People's Commissar of Foreign Affairs decided that the inflow of Korean and Chinese immigrants was a serious threat for the Soviet government, and it caused a lack of lands for the Russian emigrants, and therefore the influx of Asian

¹²⁶ Wada, 34.

¹²⁷ Chong, 167.

¹²⁸ Ibid. 167.

immigrants was to be deterred.¹²⁹

The second attempt at resettling the Koreans was commenced by the resolution of People's Commissariats on 28 January 1927. The resolution suggested that the Koreans no longer settle down in the Ussuri area and that those who had no land be transferred into the area of latitude 48.5° north of Khabarovsk and Blagoveshchensk, and that empty land be allotted to the Russian immigrants.¹³⁰

Based on the resolution from the center, the Far Eastern Regional Executive Committee passed the Five Year Plan on the resettlement of Koreans from 1929 to 1933 on 13 April 1928. According to the plan, foreign Koreans were to be sent from the Vladivostok district to the Kurdatsinsk and Sizinsk districts of Khabarovsk.¹³¹

The relocation plan appears below (see Table 7).

Table 7: The Number of Koreans who would be Resettled According to Years¹³²

Years	Numbers
1928-1929	1,229
1929-1930	5,000
1930-1931	19,297
1931-1932	28,619
1932-1933	33,604
Total	87,749

As it turned out, the plan was barely implemented. Between 1929 and 1930 only 2,750 Koreans were removed from the border areas, far below the target of

¹²⁹ Chae-mun Yi, 328.

¹³⁰ Ibid., 291.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Pak and Bugai, 233.

87,749 people.¹³³ The plan was not well prepared and the Khabarovsk authority refused to accept the Korean immigrants due to lack of funding to support the resettlement of Koreans.¹³⁴ Also, the collectivization which started in 1929 affected the implementation of the resettlement.¹³⁵

The protocol of the Executive Committee meeting of the Far East, held in December 1930, well described the view of the local government on the failure of the plan. Above all, the local government considered that the lukewarm response to the Koreans' resistance served as a main cause of failure of the resettlement. In addition, the government emphasized the need to propagate the social and political importance of this plan.¹³⁶

Along with the plan to resettle the Koreans, the measures to restrict the inflow of Korean immigrants into the Far East were taken by the Far Eastern Regional Executive Committee. In 1929 only Koreans who visited relatives, or who performed commercial activities as permanent residents, or who engaged in agricultural work for immigrants were allowed to enter the Soviet territory crossing the Russian-Korean border. The resolution which was passed on 10 October 1931 by the Far Eastern Regional Executive Committee strictly limited the entry of Koreans. Koreans who were invited by official Soviet channels were allowed to visit the Soviet Union. This measure was taken in response to Japan's attack on Manchuria.¹³⁷

The issue of establishing the Korean Autonomous Oblast in the Far East had a great impact on the Soviet Union's decision on Korean immigrants. This issue was

¹³³ G.N. Kim, 179. In 1929 1,408 people were transferred and in 1930, 1,342.

¹³⁴ Pak and Bugai, 287.

¹³⁵ N.L. Pobol, and, P.M. Polian, *Stalinskie deportatsii 1928-1953* (Moskva: Materik, 2005), 35.

¹³⁶ Yi and Kim, 52-53.

¹³⁷ Wada, 44.

first initiated by the East Department of Communist International in May 1924, which insisted that establishing the Korean Autonomous Oblast would attract Korean immigrants and pose pressure on Japan's colonized control over Korea.

This request was reviewed and rejected by the Soviet government in 1925. The reasons for refusal were that the Soviets felt the weakness of their political and military powers in the Far East and worried more about the Japanese' potential influence on the Soviet Koreans, rather than their influence on the Koreans who were under Japanese control. In addition, the Soviets were concerned about Japan's requests of ownership over the territories of the Far East which were densely inhabited by Koreans.¹³⁸ As a result, this atmosphere led to the Soviet policy of removing Koreans from the border areas.

Along with the Koreans' resettlement, the collectivization of agriculture, which took place from 1929 to 1933, heavily damaged the Korean society. While the Korean resettlement did not cause much effect in the Korean society due to its suspension, collectivization caused a massive outflow of Korean immigrants from the Far East. In particular, since almost 90 percent of the whole Korean population in this area engaged in the agricultural sector, the Korean community was damaged by the collectivization.

Three to four thousand Koreans were stigmatized as *kulak* (the rich farmer) and were deported to special camps.¹³⁹ In addition, from several thousand to fifty thousand Koreans apparently left the Soviet Far East to return to their homeland or to Manchuria. Even though no official record exists to prove the exact number, an

¹³⁸ Chae-mun Yi, 330-331.

¹³⁹ Kwang-gyu Yi, 73.

estimated 10,000 or more Koreans left the Far East.¹⁴⁰

It is meaningful to note how the Soviet regime applied the Piedmont Principle to the Koreans issue. The project of formation of the Korean Autonomous Oblast served as an important metaphor to prove the success of the Piedmont. Unfortunately, this project was finally rejected by the central government in 1925. Also, the prohibition of Korean immigration into the Far East reflected the Soviet regime's fear of Japan. As a result, the Soviet Union's abandonment of the Piedmont Principle caused the forced deportation of cross-border ethnic minorities both from the Soviet Western border and the Eastern border regions.¹⁴¹

However, there existed not only repressive but also moderate policies toward Korean immigrants in the 1930s. According to the Affirmative Action Program, the Korean national soviets, schools, and press were actively established. Compared with the time of Imperial Russia, the number of elementary schools opened in the Korean villages increased from 15 to 208 in 1929, and to 287 by mid 1935, accommodating 21,596 students. In particular, while there were no middle schools in Imperial Russia, by the 1930s, 52 middle schools had opened and accommodated about 6,000 students.¹⁴²

Moreover, three Korean pedagogical departments of technical institutes and one Korean-Soviet partisan school opened in the Far East. All materials and textbooks were published in the Korean language. In 1932 six Korean magazines and seven newspapers were published in the Far East. Among them, one newspaper, *Sonbong*

¹⁴⁰ Wada, 40. According to the record written by K. Toizuma, staff researcher of the Investigation Section of the South Manchurian Railway Company, 50,069 Koreans left between October 1929 and March 1930. Wada assumed that this figure seemed incredible but 10,000 or 20,000 might have left Russia.

¹⁴¹ Chae-mun Yi, 330-331.

¹⁴² Ibid., 37. N.F. Bugia and others, *Koreiitsi v SSSR, Materialy sovetskoi pechati 1918-1937gg* (Moskva: IB RAN, 2004), 299.

printed 10,000 copies every day.¹⁴³

All in all, during the 1930s, the contradictory Soviet policies deterred the political and economic developments of the Korean society, on the one hand, yet on the other hand these policies helped Koreans to conserve their national culture and tradition.

¹⁴³ Kwang-gyu Yi, 75.

CHAPTER IV
THE DEPORTATION OF KOREANS FROM THE SOVIET FAR EAST TO
CENTRAL ASIA

1. The Prelude and Cause of the Deportation

1.1. The Political Situation in the Soviet Union

In the 1930s the Soviet government unleashed severe terror on its people. Under the passportization law, which was adopted in 1932, hundreds of thousands people were removed from the major cities such as Moscow and Leningrad. The arrested were regarded as undesirable and parasitical elements for the Soviet society and many of them were sent to the forced labor camps.¹⁴⁴

During the Great Terror of 1937-1938 about 3.5 million people were arrested; among them 1.5 million were imprisoned and 680,000 were shot.¹⁴⁵ In reality, this purge targeted the whole Soviet population, including not only high ranking government and party officers and NKVD employees, but also the rank-and-file Communists, former kulaks, and naturalized foreigners such as Koreans, Germans, and Poles. In the end, ordinary people fell victims of this massive purge.

Between 1935 and 1936, ethnic minorities who lived in the Soviet Western border regions were deported. The victims were Germans and Poles who inhabited the western part of Ukraine. In 1935 about 1,800 German and Polish families first were moved into the eastern part of Ukraine but, in 1936, 15,000 German and Polish families were finally deported to Kazakhstan in Central Asia.¹⁴⁶

¹⁴⁴ Nicolas Werth, *Cannibal Island* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2007), 14-16.

¹⁴⁵ Oleg Khlevniuk, *The History of the Gulag* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2004), 168.

¹⁴⁶ Terry Martin, *The affirmative Action Empire: Nations and Nationalism in the Soviet Union, 1929-*

The cause of the deportation was that the Soviet government feared Germany's expanded influence on Soviet Germans. Finally, the increased tension between Germany and the Soviet Union in the Western border regions and the Soviet regime's excessive anxiety over Germany forced the Soviet government to take irreversible measures.

While in the Soviet Western border regions Germany posed a threat to the Soviet regime, in the Soviet Far Eastern border regions Japan's aggressive expansionism threatened the security of the Soviet Union. Japan's attack on Manchuria in 1931 and the establishment of Manchukuo, its puppet government, in 1932 was understood by the Soviet government as Japan's plan to eventually target the Soviet Union to wage war.¹⁴⁷

At the 17th Party Congress in 1934, the issue of the threat of Japan became the center of the discussion. Stalin himself expressed that the Far East region was in a state of semi-war. In particular, the Anti-Comintern Pact which was concluded in 1936 by Japan and Germany sent a clear signal to the Soviet regime that Japan clearly saw the Soviet Union as its enemy.¹⁴⁸

In response to Japan's threat, the Soviet government accordingly took repressive measures in the Far Eastern border areas. Based on the 1936 petition made by the Far Eastern local authority, the new border regime in the Far East region was officially adopted in 1937 by the People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs. As a result, the Soviet regime increased its military strength to intensify its surveillance of

1939 (Ithaca and London: Cornell University, 2001), 330.

¹⁴⁷ Hiroaki Kuromiya, *The Voices of the Dead, Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 2, 126.

¹⁴⁸ S.E. Merritt, *The Great Purges in the Soviet Far East, 1937-1938* (PhD diss., University of California Riverside, 2000), 185.

the cross-border ethnic minorities and suspicious nationalities.

The tension in this area escalated due to the Chinese and Japanese War, which took place in July 1937. The war signaled the failure of Soviet diplomacy, - in its so-called status quo policy in the Far East. Having received Japan's offensive toward China as a sign of real threat, the Soviet regime began to realize impending war with Japan, which resulted in the regime deporting all suspicious ethnic minorities from the Far Eastern border areas, as it already had done in the Western border areas between 1935 and 1936.

As political insecurity in the Far East grew, the Soviet regime paid special attention to this region. Between 1935 and 1936, the members of the Communist Party and NKVD were investigated by order of the central government, and as a result, about 8 percent of party members were expelled from the party, and several dozen members of the NKVD were arrested due to connections with the Right-Trotskyist conspiracy.¹⁴⁹

Along with the start of the Great Purge of 1937-1938, in July 1937 the head of the NKVD of the Far Eastern region was replaced by Genrich Liushkov, who was known to be the main actor in carrying out the mass deportation of Koreans. From then on, a series of resolutions on the mass operation was passed by the central government. The resolutions sought to eliminate anti-Soviet elements. But the meeting of the chiefs of the regional NKVD convened by Ezhov between 16 and 18 July determined that the object of the operation included not only former kulaks, criminals, and White Guardists, but ethnic nationalities such as German, Poles and even *kharbinty*.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴⁹ Merritt, 151, 354.

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 151. Kharbinty were Russians who worked at the Chinese Eastern Railroad and returned

Another NKVD order No. 00447 issued on 30 July divided the groups of anti-Soviet elements into two categories: executed or deported. The quota for arresting people was set from above.¹⁵¹ Even though national contingents were included in the target of the operation, this did not mean from the beginning the removal of the whole population of the suspected nationalities from the Far Eastern border regions. Also, until July, no documents suggested that the whole population of Koreans would be deported to Central Asia.

Nonetheless, the decree on the Koreans' deportation was issued on 21 August 1937. From then until December of that year, all Koreans living in the Far East were removed from that area. As in the Western border case, the deepened conflicts between Russia and Japan in the Far East finally led to the mass deportation of not only Koreans, but Germans, Poles, and Chinese. Among them, Koreans constituted 90 percent of total deportees from this area. According to the official record offered by the government, between September and December of 1937, 172,481 Koreans were deported, while 2,500 were arrested and sent to labor camps or were shot.¹⁵²

1.2. The Offensive of the Soviet Regime toward Korean Society before the Deportation

During the collectivization between 1929 and 1933, about 3,000 to 4,000 Korean kulaks were deported.¹⁵³ In addition, burgeoning conflicts erupted between Koreans and Russians surrounding the land problem. Although the Koreans,

between 1935 and 1936 from Manchuria to the Far East, according to Russia's CER sale to Japan. They were suspected of having contact with the outside world, even though they were Russians.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 359.

¹⁵² N.F. Bugai, *Chaeso han in dul ui sun an sa*, 56. Until October, 171,781 Koreans were sent, and another 700 were in mid November.

¹⁵³ Kwang-gyu Yi, 73.

collaborating with the collectivization policy, participated in establishing the Korean collective farms, they continued to suffer from discrimination and a heavy burden of taxes, compared with the Russian collective farmers.

As a result, during the collectivization, ten to fifty thousand Koreans left the Russian Far East. Russian chauvinism began to revive in the Far East, and among Russians antagonism toward Koreans also grew. Numerous petitions of Russians requesting removal of Koreans from this region were sent not only to the local authorities, but to the central government and party organizations.

After collectivization, offensive attacks on Korean elites began to increase. In reality, from 1932 to 1937 several thousand Koreans were arrested as undesirable elements, or spies for Japan.¹⁵⁴ According to material in the KGB archives, between 1932 and 1934 six Koreans living in Moscow were convicted of alleged subversive, terrorist, and counterrevolutionary acts. Among them, three were sentenced to death but later were rehabilitated.¹⁵⁵

In 1935 a massive wave of arrests, targeting Korean elites in the Far East, swept the Korean society. About 2,000 to 3,000 Koreans were sent to the gulag and corrective labor camps, or were shot. Within the larger framework of the investigation of Communist Party members of the Far East, between 1935 and 1937 several Korean Communist Party leaders like Afanassii Kim and M. Kim¹⁵⁶ were removed from the party. While in 1926 the number of Korean Communist Party members reached 749 people in the Far East, in 1937 the number was presumably decreased.¹⁵⁷

¹⁵⁴ Yi and Kim, 22-23.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 22-23

¹⁵⁶ Afanassii Kim and M. Kim attended the 17th Party Congress as Korean representatives in 1934. They were accused of being spies for Japan in 1936 and 1937 respectively, and both were shot in 1938.

¹⁵⁷ Kuzin, *Dalnevostochnye Koreitsy*, 113.

In reality, from the mid 1930s, the Far Eastern authorities began to report to the central government regarding espionage acts by Trotskyist-activists and ethnic minorities, including Koreans and Chinese. Most of those who were convicted were sentenced to death. According to the report of the Military Tribunal on espionage, from 1935 to 1937 the number of Koreans sentenced due to espionage increased from 27 people to 45, while the number of Russians similarly sentenced decreased from 36 people to 11.¹⁵⁸

S. Kim who was deported in 1937 recalled that his father was arrested in 1935, even though he was a party member and did nothing harmful to the Soviet regime. S. Kim regarded his father's arrest as a prelude to the 1937 mass deportation.¹⁵⁹

At the plenary session of the Central Committee of the Communist Party held between February and March 1937, all participants discussed the danger of wrecking and espionage and agreed to intensify their vigilance against anti-Soviet elements. In a speech titled "Deficiencies in Party Work and Methods for the Liquidation of the Trotskyists and other Double-Dealers," Stalin underlined the conspiracy of internal and external enemies and warned that "the growing threat of capitalist encirclement is intimately connected with the problem of wrecking, sabotage and espionage."¹⁶⁰

1.3. The Causes of Deportation

The decree authorizing the Koreans' deportation was issued on 21 August.

¹⁵⁸ Merritt, 178.

¹⁵⁹ N.F. Bugai, *The Deportation of Peoples in the Soviet Union* (New York: Nova Science Publications, Inc, 1996), 27.

¹⁶⁰ Merritt, 247-248.

The deportation was swiftly implemented, and between September and November of 1937, 172,481 Koreans were deported. What factors caused the deportation of the Koreans? The answer lies in the essence of the Stalinist state. The Korean issue was not isolated from other incidents but was organically connected with them. Therefore, the Koreans' deportation must be analyzed within the framework of the Soviet politics. Scholars have discussed several causes as major factors in the deportation of Koreans to Central Asia: Soviet distrust of Koreans, preemptive measures against Japan's use of Koreans as spies, and economic interest, such as the spread of rice farming to Central Asia.

The Soviet regime clearly was apprehensive of the political situation in the Far East, worrying about the expansion of Japan's influence on that area and the possibility of Japan's use of Koreans as spies. From the mid 1930s, the Far Eastern border authorities reported that many Koreans, Chinese, and even White Russian spies sent by Japan to the Far East were arrested.¹⁶¹ In the second half of 1937, the local authorities and the NKVD continuously reported to the center that in the Far East Trotskyists and Japanese spies undermined the authority of the government organizations and that counterrevolutionary acts were also rampant.¹⁶²

In reality, many people including Koreans, Chinese and even Russians were prosecuted due to alleged rebellious acts and espionage not only in the Far East, but even in Kiev and Moscow. Among those who were arrested, many were arrested without specific evidence. After Stalin's death some cases later turned out to be arrests of innocent people.

Several examples can be found in the Far East and in Kiev of Ukraine.

¹⁶¹ Hiroaki Kuromiya, *The Voice of the Dead: Stalin's Great Terror in the 1930s* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2007), 127.

¹⁶² Bugai, *Cheaso han in dul ui sun an sa*, 44-45.

Afanassii Kim and Mikhail Kim were Communist Party members of the Far East. They both attended the 17th congress of the Communist Party. They were arrested in January 1936 and in April 1937, respectively, due to their espionage for Japan and their counterrevolutionary acts. The prosecutions of Afanassii Kim and Mikhail Kim were re-inspected by the Soviet Supreme Court in March 1989 and in April 1957, which cancelled the prosecutions because no evidence could be produced.¹⁶³

In Kiev, some records were found concerning several Koreans who were accused of engaging in espionage for Japan and holding membership in counterrevolutionary nationalist organizations between October and December 1937. The accused included Ben-shu Kim, El-bum Kim, Ivan Nikolaevich Ligai, Kogai Sen-un, and Ivan Spartsovich Kim, En-Ke Kim, and Don Bin Choi. They all first immigrated into the Far East, and then moved into Ukraine. Among them two were Communist Party members, one was a Komsomol member, and one was chairman of a rice collective farm. Given that only a few Koreans lived in Kiev, Ukraine, it was supposed that most Koreans who lived in Kiev were suspected, and many of them were actually accused of alleged espionage for Japan.¹⁶⁴

The Soviet press, in line with government policy, also carried stories regarding the espionage acts of Koreans and Chinese spies, and anti-revolutionary acts of Trotskyists. *Pravda*, in an article published on 23 April 1937, reported that the Japanese government inserted its Korean and Chinese spies into the Far Eastern Border areas and urged the Soviet government to take appropriate measures to deter their dangerous activities. The report well represented not only the concerns of the Soviet regime on the political situation in this area, but its intention to stage war

¹⁶³ Man-gil Kang, *Haesang ui yolcha rul tago: Koryoin kangje iju ku tonghan ui kil ul kada* (Seoul: Hangilsa, 1999), 62-65.

¹⁶⁴ Kuromiya, 128-140.

against foreign spies and counterrevolutionaries.¹⁶⁵

Stalin himself suspected Koreans of being spies for Japan. Genrikh Liushkov, who was appointed by Stalin as head of the NKVD in the Far East to carry out the deportation of Koreans in 1937, commented on Stalin's view on Koreans.¹⁶⁶

According to Liushkov, Stalin did not trust the Koreans at all, and said to him as follows:

It is necessary to clean up the army and its rear in the most determined manner from hostile spy and pro-Japanese elements. ...The Far East is not Soviet, there the Japanese rule. ...It was necessary in cleansing the rear to terrorize the Korean districts and the frontier so as to prevent any Japanese espionage work.¹⁶⁷

No disagreements can be found among scholars that the political relations of the Soviet regime with Japan had a huge impact on the expulsion of Koreans from the Far Eastern border areas. Russia's defeat by Japan in 1905 led to chaotic consequences in Russia and eventually led to the Russian revolution. The intervention of Japan between 1918 and 1922 directly threatened the security of the newborn Soviet regime. The Japanese assaults on the Chinese Eastern Railroad from 1933 and the Soviet Union's sale of this railroad in 1935 to Japan exposed the Soviet state's weakness in the Far East. Compared to the military and political power of Japan in this area, the Soviet Union was definitely at a disadvantage.

The Soviets had a residual fear of Japan because they had won no war against

¹⁶⁵ Bugai, *Chaeso han in dul ui sun an sa*, 46.

¹⁶⁶ Kuromiya, 126. Liushkov defected in 1938 to Japan and was killed in 1945. After his defection, he wrote reports on the 1937 deportation carried out in the Soviet Far East.

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 126.

Japan after 1905. Therefore, in anticipation of Japan's assault, they began to strongly suspect the Koreans of being not just potential, but actual spies of Japan.¹⁶⁸ As a result, the unfavorable geopolitical situation in this area and the Soviets' fear of Japan seemingly served as the main cause of the deportation.

In addition, the fact that almost 90 percent of Koreans were concentrated in the border areas concerned the Soviets and reminded them of the issue of establishing the Koreans' Autonomous Oblast in the Far East, which was rejected by the Soviet government in 1925.¹⁶⁹ In reality, the Koreans' concentration on the border areas was always recognized as a threat by the Soviet government and the Russian population, a threat which became known as the Yellow Peril. In the mid 1930s, "slogans such as Asia is a Yellow continent, or Asia for the Asians were spread in the Soviet border areas."¹⁷⁰

In contrast, another argument proposes that economic reasons served as one of primary factors in the deportation of Koreans. According to this argument, the Soviet regime intended to develop the deserted land of Central Asia to expand rice farming there. The practical plan was to deport the Koreans. In reality, in 1928, about 300 Koreans were invited to Kazakhstan by the People's Commissar of Agricultural Affairs. The main purpose of the visit was to ask the Koreans to hand down the methods of rice farming. As a result, from 1931, rice farming spread rapidly in Kazakhstan.¹⁷¹

In the mean time, from 1931 to 1933, about 1.7 million people were arrested

¹⁶⁸ Kho, 26.

¹⁶⁹ Chae-mun Yi, 285.

¹⁷⁰ Kho, 26.

¹⁷¹ Ibid., 26, Chae-mun Yi, 289.

or died of epidemic diseases and starvations in Central Asia, and it resulted in severe lack of labor forces there. Therefore, the Soviet regime needed to transfer Koreans into Central Asia in order to complement the deficit of laborers.¹⁷²

There is no evidence to prove, however, that the Soviet government transferred the whole Korean population living in the Far East due to economic reasons such as the development of backward Central Asia. Given that the deportation was carried out in a very short period and the Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan authorities were informed only after the decision to deport Koreans, it is questionable to consider economic interests as one of the primary causes of deportation.

One can assume that there should be very specific reasons for the state's deportation of a massive population into other areas. However, under the Stalin regime mass deportation could be occur due to merely potential threats to the security of the Soviets.

Given the information accumulated to the present, we may conjecture that the Soviets' suspicion concerning the Koreans and excessive anxiety over external threats led to the Koreans' deportation. In other words, the deportation was taken as a preemptive measure to defend the Soviets from threats of Japan.¹⁷³ Just as a Germans and Poles living in the Soviet Western border area were deported between 1935 and 1936, Koreans also were removed from the border areas in the name of eliminating potential threats.

Regarding whether the Soviet regime had prepared in advance to deport Koreans, it is worth reviewing the resettlement plan designed between the late 1920s and the early 1930s. During this period, the Soviet regime attempted twice to resettle

¹⁷² Kho, 27. G.N. Kim, 190.

¹⁷³ Bugai, *Chaeso han in dul ui sun an sa*, 44. Bugai insisted that the forced deportation was only of a preemptive nature.

the Koreans residing in the border areas into inland areas of the Maritime region or the Amur region, Khabarovsk. These two plans resembled each other in that security issues prompted the Soviet government to take these repressive measures based on Russian xenophobia and policies of ethnic discrimination. Therefore, the deportation could be seen as an extension of this earlier resettlement.

However, clear differences exist between the earlier resettlement and the later deportation. First, the resettlement was proposed for political and economic considerations. The Soviet regime found it essential to remove dangerous elements in the border areas and secure lands for the Russian immigrants. Second, by resettling Koreans into more inhospitable regions, the Soviet regime planned to develop the devastated lands for productive use. The resettlement of Koreans was therefore viewed as a long-term plan.

In contrast, the 1937 deportation was implemented mainly for political reasons. Above all, the deportation began like lightning and was finished in three months. There was no communication or coordination between the central and local governments before the deportation. Only after issuing the deportation decree was the central government's order delivered to the Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan governments.

Therefore, the earlier resettlement plan could not serve as evidence that the Soviet regime had long envisioned the Korean deportation plan. Rather, it is more likely that the Koreans' deportation was carried out within the framework of the Great Purge. The emergency plan of the deportation toward all the suspected national ethnics living in the Far East was established just as the Great Purge began to target the national contingents as undesirable and suspicious elements in July and August of 1937.

In August of 1937, when Stalin met the chiefs of every level of the NKVD,

the issue of Koreans' deportation to Central Asia was discussed, and the specific order for the deportation was delivered to the chiefs of the Far Eastern Regional NKVD, including Liushkov who was newly appointed as a head of this region.¹⁷⁴

2. How the Deportation Proceeded

It is unclear that the mass deportation of Koreans was planned from the beginning of the Great Purges in mid 1937. Given the correspondence between local and central governments, one fact is that the scope of the Korean deportation plan was expanded by initiatives put forth by Ezhov, the People's Commissar of Internal Affairs and his loyal henchman Liushkov, the head of the Far Eastern NKVD.

On 18 August 1937 the central government's draft proposal on deporting Koreans into Central Asia was sent to the Far Eastern local authorities. Then, only Koreans living in twelve districts adjacent to the border areas were included on the deportation list. But, in the final resolution signed by Stalin and Molotov on 21 August 1937, the range of deportation regions was extended from twelve to twenty-three districts.¹⁷⁵

According to this Decree No. 1428-326ss, the purpose of the deportation was clearly defined as a preemptive measure in order to prevent suspected espionage of Koreans working for Japan. The decree included several important points. First, Koreans who lived in the border areas were to be sent to Central Asia, primarily to Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan, and the deportation should begin immediately and finish by 1 January 1938. Second, unlike the special settlers such as kulaks whose property was confiscated, Koreans were allowed to take their movable property and were even

¹⁷⁴ N.F. Bugai, *L.Beriia – I.Staliny: "Soglasno Vashemu ukazaniiu.."* (Moskva: AIRO-XX, 1995), 19.

¹⁷⁵ Martin, 334.

promised to be compensated for property left behind. Third, the decree allowed Koreans who wanted to return home to leave Russia, passing borders without obstacles.¹⁷⁶

In addition, the decree ordered repressive measures to quell any possible disorderly actions by Koreans. Based on the decree, Ezhov delivered special orders on 24 and 29 August to Liushkov. The orders gave local authorities specific instructions in terms of the deportation. Order No. 516 on 24 August prescribed that local authorities should count the exact number of Koreans, forbid Koreans to arbitrarily leave their villages for other regions, arrest all Koreans who were likely suspected of connection with any outside or anti-Soviet acts, and create *troika* in order to speed the process of prosecution of those convicted. Also, according the order, those who had connection with the Red Army, the NKVD, or the military industry were not allowed to cross the border.¹⁷⁷

Order No. 535 on 29 August directly addressed the deportation of those who worked at the security organization. First, Korean Communists, Komsomol and other intelligentsia were deported together with ordinary Koreans. Second, the Koreans serving in low ranks of the Army, border guards and military officers were fired from their post at once. Third, the passports of Koreans were confiscated by the chief commander of the echelons, and new passports were given after the deportation.¹⁷⁸

Between 9 and 12 September, the first group of Koreans, who lived in the border areas such as Spassk, Posyet, and West Khankai, were rounded up. Their

¹⁷⁶ Bugai, *The Deportation of Peoples*, 29.

¹⁷⁷ Yi and Kim, 70. Document published in archive.

¹⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 88.

number reached 51,299 people. According to Ezhov's secret report to Stalin,¹⁷⁹ the first group was transferred on 21 September 1937; among them 21,296 people were sent to Kazakhstan and 30,003 to Uzbekistan. On 24 September, another 24,000 Koreans began to be rounded up, and were to be deported between 24 September and 3 October. As a result, a total of 75,000 to 78,000 Koreans, or as many as 96,000 were to be deported, with about 25,000 Koreans still remaining in the Far Eastern border regions, including Vladivostok.

Ezhov's report had two important political implications. First, Ezhov suggested to Stalin that it would be dangerous and undesirable for the remaining 25,000 Koreans to stay in the Far East, because by living so close to the border areas and the marine base, they clearly would become spies for the Japanese. Further, the deportation number planned by Ezhov did not exceed a maximum 121,000 people. This number included the original 78,000 plus the additional 18,000 plus the remaining 25,000.

In response to Ezhov's suggestion, the Council of the People's Commissars adopted Resolution No. 1647-377ss on 28 September. The range of the deportation was extended to all Koreans living in the territories of the Far East.¹⁸⁰ Also, only during October, an additional 100,000 Koreans were deported.¹⁸¹

All in all, according to the secret report of Ezhov sent to Molotov dated 29 October 1937, a total of 171,781 Koreans (36,442 families) were already deported to Central Asia, among them 76,526 were sent to Uzbekistan and 95,256 to Kazakhstan. In addition, about 700 Koreans still remained in Kamchatka and Okhotsk, and they

¹⁷⁹ Ibid., 111. This report was supposed to be prepared between 24 and 27 September.

¹⁸⁰ Ibid., 80. TsGAOP(Tsentralnyi Gasudarstvennyi Arkhiv Oktiabrskoi revoliutsii), fond. 5446.

¹⁸¹ Chae-mun Yi, 280.

would be deported in the first of November.¹⁸² Within three months after the deportation decree was delivered to the local authorities, all Koreans living in the Far East were rounded up and transferred with 124 echelons to Central Asia. Even the number of deportees exceeded the number allowed in the plan.

The deportation was secretly implemented by the Soviet regime, in order to not expose the deportation of Koreans to the outside world. During the deportation, no Koreans were permitted to travel to other regions, and transportation and communications among the Korean villages were blocked.¹⁸³ Also, the local authorities disguised the deportation as a very practical plan, and never gave a forthright explanation to the Koreans. Therefore, it was natural that the Koreans understood the deportation in various ways.

Some Koreans thought that the Soviet regime was deporting them to Central Asia because there they would find more favorable conditions for agriculture, while others thought that they were sent to Central Asia because the Korean Autonomous Oblast was established there.¹⁸⁴ Some even thought that the deportation was a kind of agricultural resettlement, and that they would be sent to some regions not far from the Far East; hence they carried little food, sufficient for only a week or two. Moreover, some Koreans were told that they would be granted a tax exemption in their new settlements. Others were informed that if they did not resist, they could receive 370 rubles.¹⁸⁵

Moreover, since there was no advance discussion among Koreans on the

¹⁸² Bugai, *Chaeso han in dul ui sun an sa*, 56.

¹⁸³ Wada, 51.

¹⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁸⁵ Bugai, *Chaeso han in dul ui sun an sa*, 56.

deportation, and they were given only a short time to prepare for the deportation, the Koreans hardly knew what the deportation really was about. In reality, almost all Koreans were informed only one or two weeks in advance, or even a mere three days before the deportation, without being informed of their specific destinations.¹⁸⁶

According to the report of the Japanese secret organization, Kim Ki-hong, who lived in the Suchan district, was informed of the deportation on 2 October 1937. All the Koreans living in this village were ordered to finish their preparations for deportation by 8 October. Among them, 15 people who refused the deportation were sent to the border areas and were forced to leave Manchuria.¹⁸⁷

Jan Hak-bong, who was a student at the time of the deportation, remembered that Koreans gathered in the theater of Khabarovsk and there were informed of the deportation on 20 September 1937, and the deportation started on 25 and 26 September. The next day, 21 September, when he went to school, the school teachers were arrested. In addition, he was told that the whole Korean intelligentsia, including government officers, journalists, and writers, were arrested.¹⁸⁸

In the beginning, Koreans likely hoped that only those suspected of suspicious activity would be deported. In particular, those who were members of the Party, NKVD, Red Army, and military who eagerly showed their loyalty to the Soviet regime believed that they were excluded from the deportation lists. Therefore, some of them even actively helped the local authorities to carry out the deportation.¹⁸⁹ Despite their desire, however, the central government decided to deport all the

¹⁸⁶ Kwang-gyu Yi, 79.

¹⁸⁷ Wada, 50.

¹⁸⁸ P.G. Kim, and Sang hyon Pang, *Chaeso Hanin iminsa: Stalin i kanggje iju* (Seoul: Tamgudang, 1993), 15-18.

¹⁸⁹ Merritt, 440.

Koreans living in the Far East without exception. Korean soldiers and military officers were simply dismissed from their post and deported.¹⁹⁰ In addition, they were blocked from any opportunity to leave Russia.¹⁹¹

As a result, regardless of their loyalty or utility, all Koreans were forced into deportation, giving rise to strong discontentment among Koreans. Some records show the Koreans' mood upon deportation. According to Liushkov's report addressed to Ezhov on 4 September, some Korean communists and members of the Korean fishery kolkhoz "Deviaty val" expressed their dissatisfaction at a conference held on 2 September at the Reineik islands, that the deportation violated Stalin's constitution and the Soviets' nationalities policy.¹⁹² Another report of the Far Eastern NKVD on the atmosphere of the Korean society said that Koreans thought that the Soviet regime did not believe the Korean communists.¹⁹³ In addition, a Korean Communist Party member, Boris Kang, insisted that Korean Communists should not be deported but only non-party members should be deported.¹⁹⁴

There were no records to prove, however, that the Korean society organized any collective and intense protests on the deportation by the Soviet regime, for two reasons. First was the repressive measures taken by the Soviet regime. In reality, during the Great Purge of 1937 and 1938, any kind of protest was considered a counter revolutionary or anti-Soviet act, so the Koreans dared not resist the deportation. Second, the Koreans did not see the actual picture of the deportation and likely believed the empty promises offered by the Soviet regime.

¹⁹⁰ Kuzin, *Dalnevostochnye Koreitsy*, 284-286.

¹⁹¹ Merritt, 407.

¹⁹² Tleu Kulbaev and Apkadii Khagai, *Deportatsiia* (Almaty: Daneker, 2000), 58.

¹⁹³ Hui-yong Kwon, *Segye ui Han minjok* (Seoul: Tongirwon, 1996), 72.

¹⁹⁴ Merritt, 421.

Unlike the special settlers such as kulaks, Koreans were promised that the Soviet regime would reimburse them for their unmovable belongings, and would supply transportation and extra money for the transit. Although these promises turned out to be empty, they served to smooth the initial protests of the Koreans against the deportation and, prevent any disturbances.¹⁹⁵ The Soviet regime's intentional false propaganda served to alleviate the resistance of the Korean society against the deportation.

As a repressive measure to prevent any organized protests of the Korean society, based on the deportation decree, 2,500 Korean elites were arrested.¹⁹⁶ They were regarded as leaders of the Korean society: Communist Party members, Red Army officers, government officers, and intelligentsia. Along with Koreans, 11,000 Chinese, 600 Poles, several Germans, Latvians and Lithuanians, and a thousand Russian émigrés who were returned from Harbin after the Soviet Union's selling of the Chinese Eastern Railway.¹⁹⁷ The Stalinist regime's tactic was to first remove the leaders of the society prior to launching an offensive against the whole population.

Koreans began to be transferred by freight cars between September and November of 1937. The journey took one or two months to reach the destination of Central Asia. Most Koreans were not allowed to take enough goods for a one- or two-month journey. Although according to the deportation decree the Koreans were permitted to take even movable property like livestock, none of this was possible to take because the train could not accommodate even food and small items.

The memoir of a Korean woman, Park Ye-ji, well described the situation at

¹⁹⁵ Bugai, *Chaeso han in dul ui sun an sa*, 56.

¹⁹⁶ Kwang-gyu Yi, 79.

¹⁹⁷ Bugai, *Chaeso han in dul ui sun an sa*, 58.

that time:

In 4 October 1937 she departed and stayed one month in the train. She severely suffered lack of food, and ate nothing many days. Koreans were transferred with almost no medication and insufficient water.¹⁹⁸

In addition, there was no washroom in the wagon of the train. Koreans were transported under very bad sanitary conditions, which caused outbreaks of diseases which took a harsh toll on children and the elderly. One report sent to Ezhov on 16 November showed that fifty-six sick children were discovered in the echelon which arrived at Novosibirsk from the Far East on 15 November. Among them six died because the local authorities paid no attention to the children's conditions.¹⁹⁹ In some case, the bodies of those who died in transit were simply thrown out into the field, with no opportunity to dig a grave and bury them. It was reported subsequently that several thousand people died due to diseases, starvation, and train incidents.²⁰⁰

Korean families commonly were separated in the transport. Families which were part Korean and part Russian were entitled to not be transported. Yet when these families mistakenly were called, the mistake was not corrected and the Russian family members would submit to deportation in order to remain with their family. Although exact figures are not available, many suffered the emotional pain of separation from their families, an anguish which continued after they arrived at their destination. As Koreans who were separated from their families arbitrarily left the designated place,

¹⁹⁸ Ibid., 57.

¹⁹⁹ Yi and Kim, 115.

²⁰⁰ Kwon, 74. Kuzin, *Dalnevostochnye Koreitsy*, 126. Due to the train overturn which took place on 12 September, 21 people died and 51 were wounded.

many disturbances were caused in Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan.²⁰¹

The exact number of deported Koreans is controversial. According to the official figure given by the Soviet government, 172,481 Koreans were deported and 2,500 were arrested. However, some scholars refuted the official figures provided by the government, that between 1926 and 1927 about 250,000 Koreans, including the illegal residents, inhabited the Far East, and the number remained the same in 1937. Therefore, about 80,000 Koreans were sent to gulag labor camps or the corrective camps, or to some other locations.²⁰²

Also, Liushkov's secret report to Ezhov said that at the time of the deportation about 60,000 were arrested in addition to the 190,000 who were expelled. Of course, this figure included not only Koreans (175,065), but Poles (600), Germans (several hundred), Chinese (11,000), and party workers and military men (9,000).²⁰³ Still, all of these figures combined did not reach 250,000. Furthermore, according to the 1939 record of those populations imprisoned in the corrective labor camps, only 2,371 were Koreans.²⁰⁴

However, it does not seem reasonable that about 80,000 Koreans simply disappeared or that substantial numbers of Koreans were arrested and shot. The argument that 250,000 Koreans inhabited the Far East before the deportation did not consider any changes in the Korean population caused by the collectivization. At

²⁰¹ Bugai, *Chaeso han in dul ui sun an sa*, 55

²⁰² Yi and Kim, 26. He questioned the number of deported Koreans, based on the argument of Song-moo Kho, that before the deportation roughly 250,000 Koreans lived in the Far East. See Kho, 17-18.

²⁰³ Michael Gelb, "An Early Soviet Ethnic Deportation: The Far-Eastern Koreans", *The Russian Review*, vo. 54 (July 1995), 391.

²⁰⁴ J. Otto Pohl, *The Stalinist Penal System* (North Carolina and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., 1997), 36.

least an estimated 10,000 to 20,000 abandoned the Soviet Far East.²⁰⁵ Further, although the deportation was based on Russian xenophobia and became an ethnically based operation, its purpose was not to physically eliminate the whole Korean population.

Still, questions remain concerning how many Koreans were allowed to return home or go across the border to Manchuria. The resolution of 21 August issued first by the Council of the People's Commissars and the subsequent internal instructions of the NKVD on 29 September²⁰⁶ expressed that the local authorities should not place any obstacles in the way of the Koreans' efforts to return home. If we look only at these regulations, it appears that if Koreans wished to return, they could do so.

However, those who wanted to leave Russia needed permission of the NKVD, and in practice only a few Koreans succeeded in moving out of this area.²⁰⁷ In addition, as the border incidents increased in 1937 between Japan and the Soviet Union, the number of border troops was strengthened. As a result, Koreans seldom passed through the border areas with their families.

Moreover, since the Soviet regime did not want the deportation exposed to the outside world, it did not easily allow the Koreans to gain freedom from the region. Therefore, under strict control of the NKVD, almost all Koreans supposedly were deported to Central Asia, except for the few who left early.

²⁰⁵ Wada, 40.

²⁰⁶ Pobel and Polian, 90.

²⁰⁷ Merritt, 407.

3. How Koreans Settled in Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan from November 1937 to Early 1938

Among Koreans who were deported from the Far East to Central Asia, 95,427 people were sent to Kazakhstan, and 74,500 to Uzbekistan. The rest of the Korean deportees were sent to the other republics of Central Asia or even to Stalingrad.

When Koreans arrived at the destination, most carried no money because they spent all of their money in transit. Also, although the resolution 1539-354ss issued on 8 September prescribed that the Koreans would receive 5 rubles per day during transference to their destination, and public sector workers would receive their last two weeks of wages as a retirement allowance after the deportation, only a few Koreans received money from the government before the deportation.²⁰⁸

To make matters worse, when Koreans arrived at their destination, there were no accommodations for them, nor was there any food for these settlers. The Koreans were forced to stay outdoors for several days. They lived under an open sky or in temporary shelters which they were able to cobble together.²⁰⁹ Since construction materials were not supplied, even by early 1938, the Koreans made underground shelters by digging out the earth. The underground shelters, which reached 50,000, well demonstrated the miserable conditions Koreans faced.²¹⁰ These inhumane conditions broke the Koreans' health and exposed them to rampant diseases. Between the period of deportation and 1938, 40,000 Koreans died, most of them children and

²⁰⁸ Yi and Kim, 76.

²⁰⁹ Ibid., 113-114.

²¹⁰ Kwon, 114.

the elderly.²¹¹ In 1938, the death rate of Koreans reached 4 percent, while that of children was almost 20 percent.²¹²

Although the central government ordered the local government to prepare the accommodations for the Koreans and provide them with needed goods, the necessary measures were not taken in a timely way by the local authorities. Various reasons included the bureaucratic problems, lack of preparedness and capital, and the local authorities' misuse of the capital allotted to the Koreans for settlement purpose. Evidence proved that the capital was misused by the local authorities. For example, money allotted for Koreans was spent for local kolkhoz or even Iranian settlers, who were transferred there later than the Koreans.²¹³

Another problem that afflicted Koreans was that they never were compensated for their property or belongings which they left behind. When the Koreans left the Far East, they were given some receipts from the Far Eastern local authorities for reimbursement in their new settlements. However, either the Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan authorities did not recognize these receipts, or the Far Eastern authorities simply denied the request of the Kazakhstan and Uzbekistan authorities to send money for reimbursement.²¹⁴

Moreover, many Koreans suffered from lack of employment. With the winter season kolkhoz members could not work, and those with white collar jobs and laborers were in even worse situations. The report of the Vice People's Commissar of Internal Affairs, Chernyshev, addressed to the vice Council of People's Commissars,

²¹¹ J. Otto Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR, 1937-1949* (Westport, Connecticut and London: Greenwood Press, 1999), 14.

²¹² Kuzin, *Dalnevostochnye Koreitsy: zhizny I tragediia sudyby* 136.

²¹³ Bugai, *The Deportation of Peoples*, 35.

²¹⁴ Bugai, *Chaeso han in dul ui sun an sa*, 101-102.

Chubar, on 5 November, well explained the Koreans' condition. According to Chernyshev's report, substantial numbers of Korean laborers and former public officials were unemployed, and their situations were worse than those of the kolkhoz members.²¹⁵

Besides the above mentioned problems, the placement of Koreans did not proceed smoothly. In some areas, the influx of Koreans exceeded the designated number. Some Koreans left without the approval of local authorities to look for their families or to find a more favorable place. The work of relocating Koreans according to their past jobs took much time. In the case of Kazakhstan, the relocation of Koreans was completed between March and May 1938.²¹⁶ Some Koreans were sent to areas which were located a thousand kilometers away from the places where they were temporarily settled. Most Koreans were relocated to agricultural and fishery kolkhozes. In some cases, new lands were allotted to Koreans, in order to raise rice.²¹⁷

After Koreans settled into Central Asia, they were not permitted to move outside that region until 1954 without approval of the authorities. Even though Koreans were deported as "administratively exiled," they were treated as special settlers.²¹⁸ After arriving at their destination, the Koreans received new passports bearing the sign of their residency limitation. Along with the residency restriction, Koreans were not allowed to join the Army and were barred from studying related national security issues such as science or technical studies. These kinds of stigma

²¹⁵ Pobol and Polian, 94. GARF (Gosudarstbenny Arkhiv Rossickoi Federatsii), F. P-5446.

²¹⁶ Chong, 198.

²¹⁷ Ibid., 213.

²¹⁸ Kwon, 78.

were attached to the Koreans for a long time.²¹⁹

²¹⁹ Pohl, *Ethnic Cleansing in the USSR*, 15.

CHAPTER V

CONCLUSION

This thesis has traced the history of Koreans' migration to the Russian Far East and examined how and why Koreans were deported from there to Central Asia. This history of Korean migration and subsequent deportation bears geopolitical importance for the Far East not only for Russia but also for Japan, China, and Korea. Reciprocally, the political and economic dynamics of this region helped to shape the Koreans' experience of migration and their deportation.

The history of Koreans' migration to the Far East has been comparatively well studied by scholars, including Soviet Korean historians. In contrast, studies on the Koreans' deportation were insufficient until the collapse of the USSR in 1991. As government archives have opened their classified documents, scholars have gained access to new information which reveals the true nature of the deportation.

Even though the history of Korean migration to the Russian Far East reveals some differences among the sources in the number of Korean immigrants, these discrepancies do not prevent the articulation of an overall trend of Korean migration and immigration policies of the tsarist and Soviet governments. Most sources have explained that the causes of the migration of Koreans to the Far East were due to both political and economic reasons. The maladies of the Korean feudal system afflicted ordinary people and as a result caused their migration into the Far East Area. Russia's initial interest in attracting foreign immigrants led the Koreans to settle in this region. Hence the poor political and economic situation in Korea and Russia's immigrant policy toward Koreans caused the number of Koreans to increase from several hundred in 1864 to approximately 200,000 in 1937.

Unlike the Korean migration history, the study of the deportation is more delicate because of its political complexities. Many sources which were published before 1991 delivered only piecemeal information on the deportation since scholars were limited in their access to the Soviet government archives. In contrast, after 1991, many secret documents which were now declassified offered new challenges to scholars to reveal the truths hidden behind the veil for almost 55 years.

According to newly opened materials, the facts surrounding who ordered the deportation, its background, and how the deportation proceeded began to be known to the public. The Soviet regime's suspicion of Koreans, the Great Purge of 1937 and 1938, and the growing war clouds in the Far East served as main causes for the Soviet regime's decision on the forced deportation of Koreans along with other suspected national contingents, including Germans, Chinese, Poles, and *Kharbintsy*.

The Great Purge of 1937 and 1938 which first attacked the high ranking officers of the Party, the NKVD, and military later expanded to target the whole population. The deportation of Koreans likewise expanded from the limited population living in the Far Eastern border areas to the whole Korean population living in the Far East. As with the Great Purge, in the process of deportation the extreme drive of local authorities to fulfill quotas designated from above served as the main cause of the broad expulsion of Koreans from the Far East.

Besides the political implications, some scholars also have discussed economic reasons such as the development of Central Asia and the spread of rice farming. It is assumed that the limited information on the deportation²²⁰ and the beliefs that the deportation could not be explained by only the Soviet regime's

²²⁰ Kho, in his book *The Soviet Koreans in Central Asia* published in 1987, assumed that the deportation was due to not only political but economic reasons.

suspicion on Koreans²²¹ led to their conclusions. It is worth noting that the Stalin regime could decide on mass deportation based only on the potential suspicion on its people. The most important thing, therefore, is to understand the Koreans' deportation within the political framework provided by the Stalin regime.

Also of interest is the correlation between the resettlement and the deportation. The book *Stalinskie Deportatsii 1928 – 1953* (Stalin's Deportation) put the Koreans resettlement of 1928 and 1932 in the first chapter of the Stalinist deportation.²²² Historian Terry Martin believed that the Korean resettlement would have been the first ethnic cleansing if it had been fully implemented.²²³ Although the resettlement was different from the deportation in that the resettlement basically proceeded on a voluntary basis, and the issue on the resettlement was more closely connected with the land problems in the Far East, nonetheless the resettlement plan affected the forced deportation both from the Western border areas in 1935 and 1936 and the Eastern border areas in 1937.

The deportation swept away the living social and cultural base which Koreans had constructed over 70 years. During the transference and immediately upon arrival at the new settlement, several thousands of Koreans died of epidemic diseases caused by bad sanitary conditions and physical exhaustion. Ineffective communication between central and local governments, inefficient bureaucracy, and the tendency to disdain human rights exacerbated the challenge of survival for the Koreans.

Still controversial is whether the Koreans were the object of extermination or simply were victims of resettlement policy or the Soviet war strategy. Norman

²²¹ Chae-mun Yi, strove to uncover specific reasons to explain the deportation.

²²² Pabol and Polian, 34-38.

²²³ Martin, 319.

Naimark considered the Korean deportation as a kind of genocide.²²⁴ Michael Gelb described that “the Koreans enjoyed comparatively decent treatment” since they were given the chance to sell their possessions and obtain better supplies than the kulaks.²²⁵ It is natural that those who suffered and barely survived the horrible deportation would regard the deportation as a kind of extermination of their lives. Obviously, Koreans’ experience could not be explained by any words, just like the experience of other nationalities and Soviet peoples who suffered from state terror and purge.

Finally, the Stalinist regime never consistently implemented its nationalities policy. Although ethnic minorities were encouraged to preserve their traditions, cultures, and languages, the Stalinist regime never allowed national minorities to have their own political consciousness nor to be politically independent, so as not to express any distinctive cultures which could undermine the Soviet unity. The 1937 purge of suspect nationalities such as Germans, Poles, and Koreans revealed that the nationalities policy of the Soviet regime was an illusion.

Nonetheless, the Soviet nationalities policies had some positive aspects in that they encouraged Koreans to preserve their national cultures and traditions. For example, there was a remarkable difference between the number of Korean schools during the tsarist regime and during the Soviet regime. The Soviet regime provided more favorable conditions for ethnic nationalists to develop their education, language, and culture.

The policy of the Soviet government to support the national schools and language was consistently carried out, after Koreans settled in Central Asia. The report of Ezhov addressed to Molotov in October 1937 suggested that the Peoples’

²²⁴ Norman Naimark, *Stalin's Genocides* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 2010), 80-98.

²²⁵ Gelb, 400.

Commissar of Education be placed in charge of establishing the networks of Korean schools. Another resolution decided by the Central Committee of the Uzbekistan Party in November 1937 ordered the establishment of new Korean schools and reinforced the number of Korean teachers.²²⁶

Fortunately, the Korean society adapted to the new environments and improved their economic conditions. Their contribution to the development of the agricultural sector in Central Asia was great, and many Korean kolkhozes were rewarded with the highest appraisal. Also, after Stalin's death, the restrictions such as the residency restriction and education limitations posed on Koreans were lifted, and more opportunity was given to Koreans.

²²⁶ Bugai, *Chaeso han in dul ui sun an sa*, 133, 138-139.

APPENDIX

THE NUMBER OF KOREAN POPULATION LIVING IN THE FAR EAST PROVIDED BY VARIOUS SOURCES FROM 1917 TO 1937

Year	The number of Korean Population in the Far East Area (Unit: people)	Sources
1917	1) 93,696 (among them, 81,825 lived in the Maritime region) 2) 100,000	Syn-Khva, Kim, 28-33. G.N. Kim, 168.
1923	1) 110,280 (among them, 96.4 percent lived in the Maritime region, 3 percent in the Amur region, 0.5 percent in the Transbaikal region) 2) 106,817 3) 110,480 4) 110,300 (among them, 106,500 lived in the Maritime region, of them 94,100 lived in the rural areas) 5) 120,982: only in the Maritime region	Yn Gieng Be, 192. Haruki, Wada, 33. A.T. Kuzin, 53. G.N. Kim, 171. 1923 census. RGIA DB. F. R-2442. Op. 1. D. 1501. L. 14ob. G.N. Kim, 172. GAKHK. F.P-61.Op.1.D.580.L.7-9
1924	1) 120,703 2) 120,000 - 130,000	A.T. Kuzin, 52 Yn Gieng Be, 193. This figure was mentioned by Khan Menshe who worked at the Korean department of the Far Eastern Committee. The official report of this department in March 1924 said that 120,000 Koreans lived in the Maritime region.
1925	1) 140,073 2) 114,885 3) 140,073	A.T. Kuzin, 52. Yn Gieng Be, 193. This figure was mentioned by V.E. Gluzovskii. Yn Gieng Be, 193. This figure was reported in an article of Korean newspaper "Avangard" in 1925.
1926	1) 168,009 (among them, 86.6 percent lived in the Vladivostok okrug) 2) 145,156 3) 170,000-180,000	A.T. Kuzin, 52. Yn Gieng Be, 194. This figure was cited by B.D. Pak Yn Gieng Be, 194. This figure was reported in the Japanese press.
1927	1) 170,000 (among them 150,779 lived in the Vladivostok okrug, and only 1,800 lived in the Amur region) 2) 170,000 -* 250,000	Yn Gieng Be, 194. Official statistic provided by the local government. Yi, Chae- mun, 129. This figure was suggested by Kolarz.
1928	1) 176,800	Yn Gieng Be, 195.
1929	1) 180,700 2) 180,000 3) 150,795 (*This figure was the number of those who lived in the Vladivostok okrug) -among them 138,267 lived in the rural areas.	Yn Gieng Be, 195. A.T. Kuzin, 53. G.N. Kim, 179.
1932	1) 199,500	A.T. Kuzin, 53. Chae-mun Yi, 129. GAKHK, F. P-

		2, op 11, d.233, ll.6-11.
1934	1) 200,000 – 204,000	Chae-mun Yi, 129. This figure was written in the report of Ten Iakov regarding “works of national minorities.”
1937	1) 172,500 2) 168,000	A.T. Kuzin, 53. Yn Gieng Be, 196. 1937 census.
1939	1) 182,399 (*This figure was the number of the whole Korean population living in USSR)	Yn Gieng Be, 196. 1939 census.

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