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POWER POLITICS IN KOREA AND ITS
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POWER POLITICS IN KOREA AND ITS IMPACT ON KOREAN FOREIGN
AND DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, 1882-1907

A DISSERTATION

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POWER POLITICS IN KOREA AND ITS IMPACT ON KOREAN FOREIGN
AND DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, 1882-1907

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INTRODUCTION

Korea has existed as an autonomous state for most of its 4,000 years by virtue of the control or intervention of its powerful neighbor, China. Whenever the power of China was not sufficient to protect the autonomy of Korea, another nation, generally Japan, would try to gain a foothold in the Korean kingdom. Until 1895, the international status of Korea was largely determined either by Chinese supremacy or by rivalry between China and Japan.

Japan terminated China's claim to control over Korea as a result of the Japanese victory in the Sino-Japanese War. However, Japan was then challenged in its control of Korea by Russia. The rivalry between Japan and Russia ended with the defeat of Russia in the Russo-Japanese war. Japanese control of Korea was thus firmly established.

The international relations of Korea have been primarily the record of her relationship with the neighboring powers, namely: China, Russia and Japan. The peninsula of Korea has been a determining factor in the course of Far Eastern International relations which had assumed large proportions before the outbreak of the European war in 1914. Korea has affected world politics to a greater extent than most westerners are aware. Therefore modern Korea's international relations can be best understood by studying her relations with China, Russia and Japan from the events leading up to the Sino-Japanese war to the year 1907 which marked virtual "annexation" of Korea by Japan.

This thesis primarily attempts to examine Korean foreign and domestic affairs during the struggle between China and Japan for the

possession of Korea, the diplomatic and military struggle between Russia and Japan for the coveted prize, and the supremacy in the Far East that Japan won by her victory in the Russo-Japanese war. Subsequently, this thesis examines comparatively the Chinese, Russian and Japanese methods of diplomacy in the attempt to establish their supremacy in Korea, and analyzes the reason for the failure of Korea to preserve her independence.

Korean relations with other foreign powers, especially the United States, are covered in order to present the necessary terms of reference for the position of the Korean court's attempt to regain her independence.

In the preparation of this thesis Korean sources which obviously reflect Korean views, are used abundantly. Therefore it would seem wise to explain that this is somewhat an "unbalanced" study in terms of giving equal attention to the national sources of the several protagonists in Korea. Some sharply controversial questions have been necessarily discussed, and this thesis can not reasonably anticipate immunity from the criticisms of those who will differ with it. The author can only say that he has sought to be fair and just. Any one who tries to keep in the middle of the rather tortuous road that runs between those who regard the Japanese as a model people and those whom regard them as "varnished savages", and between those who assert that the Korean are "afflicted saints" and those who assert with equal vehemence that they are "the most contemptible people on earth", must expect to be assailed from both sides.

One apologetic note toward my fellow countrymen, the Koreans must be offered. Alexis de Tocqueville stated in the Preface to his The

Old Regime and the French Revolution:

I have not shrunk from wounding the feeling of individuals and class (nor from) affronting certain opinions and ancient loyalties, laudable though these may be. In so doing I have often regret but never any qualms of conscience, and I can only hope that those who may be inclined to take offense at anything in this book will realize that its author has aimed at honesty and impartiality.

Sharing the feeling of Tocqueville, it is hoped that sufficient new information is contained herein to justify its presentation.

A careful evaluation of each event in the thesis will, it is hoped, permit one to form a more accurate judgment and sophisticated interpretation of Far Eastern international politics, which have now attained a magnitude that renders them of even more profound significance to the world.

A final word concerning utilization of Far Eastern language source materials is necessary. The author has translated Korean and Japanese sources materials. With few exceptions, the customary rule is followed of presenting oriental names with the family name first (that is Kim, Ok-kyun instead of Ok Kyun Kim).

I wish to express my sincere appreciation to Professor Rufus George Hall, Jr., my major adviser, who in addition to the invaluable suggestions and time afforded to this dissertation, has made my graduate work a busy, stimulating and rewarding experience. My thanks also go to Professors John Paul Duncan, Percy Wilson Buchanan, Oliver Earl Benson and W. Eugene Hollon who read this dissertation and helped in the preparation of this work. I also want to express my appreciation to Professor Park Hyuk-byong at Song Kyun Kwan University, Seoul, Korea who rendered vital and prompt service to my frequent and often unusual request for source materials in the preparation of this work.

In actual writing I have benefited much from the patient and critical reading of the manuscript by Professors C. D. Batchler and Homer Nicholson. I wish to acknowledge my appreciation to both of them. I also want to express my gratitude to Sue Nichols for typing the final copy.

POWER POLITICS IN KOREA AND ITS IMPACT ON KOREAN FOREIGN
AND DOMESTIC AFFAIRS, 1882-1907

CHAPTER I

SINO-JAPANESE RIVALRY, 1882-1894

Factional Struggle Within the Korean Court

The factional struggles within the Korean court clearly definable as early as 1882 were of two kinds. One of them involved the personal rivalry between Queen Min and Tai Wen Kun¹, the Regent for the King. The other was between the conservatives and progressives. Both factions engaged in a political struggle for the control of governmental power. These factions were sometimes intermingled as the occasion demanded but their main objective was to maintain political supremacy over the country.

Tai Wen Kun, father of the King, attempted to be the real ruler. The Queen, a woman of natural ability and of imperious will, had gathered about her a faction which was wholly inimical to the plans and tactics of the Regent.

When the King was twenty-two, Tai Wen Kun retired as Regent in 1873. The Queen's brother, Min Sung-ho, was appointed as Prime Minister.

¹Tai Wen Kun may be translated "Prince-Parent". Born in Seoul on January 22, 1811. He died on February 22, 1898. He served as a Regent for King Ko Jong, his son, during the latter's minority. Tai Wen Kun was a man of strong nationalism and was extremely anti-foreign in his foreign policy. In 1886, Tai Wen Kun selected Queen Min as his daughter-in-law believing the Min family had no desire for political power in the court. He was only following the tradition of isolationism which had been handed down ever since the virtual destruction of Korea by the Hideyoshi-led Japanese invasion of 1592-98.

Through the Queen's influence, the Min faction came into power. With the utmost celerity, all government high positions were occupied by members of the Min faction of their sympathizers.²

Tai Wen Kun had been obliged to witness impotently the changes that had taken place in the policy of his country, but had given up none of his old prejudices nor his confidence that Korea could still hold her own against the "barbarians of the West". The new departure was incredible to him; still more incredible to him was the Queen, who was mainly responsible for this departure and who had brought it about, not from any patriotic sense of the welfare of the country, but as a lever for procuring the favor of the King and acquiring office for the members of her own family-the Min.

The Queen's faction was opposed to the most cherished prejudices of the Regent. They favored the growth of Roman Catholicism and the policy of listening to China's advice in the matter of foreign relations. The extreme opposition of the Regent to all reforms and to the opening of the country to foreign intercourse naturally inclined his rivals in that very direction, and it was directly through the Min faction that the policy of non-seclusion was inaugurated. The Regent opposed it to the end. The Queen was standing solidly for what she conceived as progress in favor of opening up the country to the civilizing influence of the West, and her faction were the first to take the lead in all innovations. The steps had to be slow for Korea was not ready to

²Seoul National University Historical Research Room, Kuksa Kaisul. ("Lecture on Korean National History") (Seoul, Duk-Hung Su-Rim, 1947), p. 581. The young King's imperial name is Ko-jong, twenty-sixth King of the Yi Dynasty, whose queen is Queen Min.

inaugurate sweeping innovations. But in Seoul a faction arose which was determined to force the Koreans to an extreme policy of reform based on Japan's Meiji Restoration. This faction was composed of court officials not members of the Min family.

Some leaders of this radical faction, such as Pak Yong-hyo, So Kwang-bom, Kim Ok-kyun, Hong Young-sik had studied in Japan and had witnessed the sweeping changes there. The Japanese were naturally in full sympathy with these young extreme radicals, then known as the Progressives, who grew restive under the slower methods of the Mins. As the King was not completely under the domination of the Min family, he looked with considerable complacency upon the efforts of the radicals to introduce reforms independently of the Min faction. The plans of reform presented by the Progressive leaders met with a favorable hearing from the King.³

As the reform plan succeeded, the power of the Min gradually waned, not because the latter disliked the idea of reforming Korea but because the Progressive faction was achieving the reform and would naturally attain more and more power at court as success crowned its efforts. It was at this point here that the difficulty began. The personal element was present in full force, and this was the rock on which the reformation of Korea split. For with the Min faction, as a whole, questions of national policy were entirely secondary to the preservation of the ascendancy which they had gained. The Min faction

³C. N. Weems, (ed) Hulbert's History of Korea (London; Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1962), Vol. II, pp. 217-218; Nam-son Chai, Chuson Yoksa ("The History of Korea") (Seoul; Tong Myungsa, 1945), pp. 100-101.

also came to realize that the Japanese were bent upon putting power into the hands of radicals. In pure self-defense, the Min faction decided to turn to China for support. From this point, the Min faction became not the Progressive but the Conservative.

In the meantime, the Japanese encouraged a band of young Korean Progressives, who were highly patriotic and who believed that Korea could make the same progress which Japan had achieved, to form a company of Korean soldiers, to be drilled by Japanese officers. This body of men who were selected from Yang Ban (the nobility class) was drilled by Japanese instructors. These soldiers were treated much better in the matter of food, pay, clothing and living quarters than were the 3,700 members of the regular Korean army whose pay was usually two or three months in arrears, and who for a similar period did not receive a grain of rice. There were angry mutterings against the Japanese drilled soldiers who were being treated so much better than the regulars. When the King was advised of this matter, he ordered that a month's allowance of rice be given out to the discontented regular army.⁴ This work was assigned to Min Kyom-ho, the overseer of the government finances, and he in turn transferred the matter to his subordinate officials, who apparently sold the rice and with the proceeds purchased a large quantity of sand which they doled out to the hungry soldiers.⁵ Discontented

⁴Yi Dynasty Court, Ilson Rok ("Daily Records of the Office of Royal Palace Historians") 1882-1896. Reserved for Seoul National University Library. June 1, 1882. Hereafter cited as Ilson Rok.

⁵Ibid., June 3, 1882.

with this mistreatment from government officials, the soldiers congregated in various places and determined that since they must die in any event they would rather die fighting than starving. On the night of July 23, 1882, they arose in revolt.⁶

This military revolt is better known as Im-O Kun-ran ("Im-O Military Revolt") in Korea because it broke out in the year of Im-O. The Min family was the main target of attack. Several of the, including Min Kyom-ho, were killed and others fled. The palace was invaded, and Queen Min was saved by a trick, for she was carried out on the back of one of the regular army, Kim Chong-hyun who claimed she was his sister. She escaped to a country retreat. A party of rebellious soldiers killed the Japanese military instructors. The Japanese Legation was burned and several Japanese were killed; for the Japanese were believed to be the cause of the reform which brought about the plight of old-style soldiers. The Japanese minister Hanabusa escaped to Chemulpo (Inchon) and thence to Nagasaki.⁷

The rebellious soldiers the ex-Regent restored to power. Upon his return Tai Wen Kun appealed to the angry soldiers to return to their living quarters and urged them to maintain order and peace. Tai Wen Kun, thinking that the hated Queen was dead, proclaimed national mourning in her honor. However, it was postponed until the body of the Queen was found.⁸

⁶ Ibid., June 6, 1882.

⁷ Ilsonk Rok, June 9, 1882. See also Chang Do-mu, Im-O Kunran kwa Kapsin Chongbyun ("Im-O Military Rebellion and the Political Change of the Year of Kap-Sin") (Seoul; Dok-Hung So-Rim, 1927), pp. 42-45. Queen's uncle, Minister of War, was assassinated by angry soldier.

⁸ Chung-chang Mun, Kunse Ilbon yi Choson Chintu-sa ("The Records on Japanese Aggression to Korea") (Seoul; Seoul National University Press, 1964), pp. 166.

Tai Wen Kun enjoyed a brief triumph. Instigated, no doubt, by his emissaries, the military revolt expelled the Min faction as well as the radical Progressives. Since the hated Queen was supposed to be dead, some fondly believed that the good old days had returned. The victorious Tai Wen Kun declared a policy of "Korea for Koreans", terminated all reform laws and disbanded the new army units. He reestablished Korean isolationist policy with respect to foreign influences. When Count Inouye arrived at Chemulop (Inchon) on 5 August, 1882, he began negotiations for the payment of an indemnity. But the ex-Regent put him off, and practically refused to negotiate; so Inouye returned to Japan.⁹

The escaped Queen and her faction were desperate. Queen Min sent a strong representation to Peking demanding protection, and pointed to Tai Wen Kun as the guilty party. Li Hung-chang, Senior Grand Secretary of the State of China, realizing that unless China acted now, she must forever forfeit her claim to suzerainty over Korea, dispatched a force of 3,000 to put down the rebellion. This action caused the conservative Min faction to turn unreservedly toward China and consequently gave the latter occasion for beginning a series of encroachments upon Korea's practical independence which culminated in the Sino-Japanese war of 1894-1895.

The Chinese generals seized Tai Wen Kun and sent him to China for three years. The disappearance of Tai Wen Kun brought the Min faction back to power. Queen Min herself returned to Seoul with a Chinese

⁹Ibid., pp. 168-169.

escort.¹⁰ The Japanese were now able to settle their claims with Korea, for the Korean government under the restored Min faction agreed to pay an indemnity to Japan for the Japanese killed during the military rebellion. The Treaty of Chemulpo was signed on August 30, 1882 by the Japanese minister Hanabusa and the Korean representative, Kim Hong-jip. Under this treaty Korea agreed to the following five articles:

1. Punish the rebels who killed the Japanese.
2. Pay an indemnity of 500,000 Yen to the bereaved.
3. Pay 500,000 Yen over a period of five years to cover the physical damage done to Japan.
4. Permit the stationing of Japanese soldiers to guard the Japanese Legation.
5. Make an official apology to Japan by sending a high-ranking Korean official.¹¹

The Chinese, by virtue of the fact that they had acted as the Queen's deliverers, now had a firm hand on the Korean government. Through Chinese influence, P. C. Von Mollendarff, an official of the Imperial Maritime Customs of China, was invited to establish a customs service in Korea and to act as a general advisor to the Korean Foreign Office. In addition the Chinese generals were made councillors of the

¹⁰ Ilson Rok, July 25, 1882. The Chinese generals invited Tai Wen Kun to a banquet and to inspect their ships in Inchon. There was one ship, in particular, to which they called his honorable attention. They begged him to go abroad and note the wonders of the apartments below. The Regent went. Once below, he found the door shut. Sin Ki-sok, "Tai Wen Kun ui Kuchi Sokhoe - Chungkuk ui Taehan Kansup ui Ilchol" ("A Study of Kidnapping and Release of Tai Wen Kun by China - An Aspect of China's Intervention of Korea"), Chongchi Hak, I. No. 1 (April, 1905, pp. 27-33).

¹¹ Carnegi Endowment of International Peace, Korea; Treaties and Agreements (Washington; Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 1921), pp. 6-5. The Korean government sent Park, Yong-ho, as envoy extraordinary to bear a message of apology to Japan.

Board of military affairs of the Korean government, and Ching Shu-tang, in assuming his duties as commercial agent, posted a notice in Seoul which read in part as follows:

I wish to inform the people that I have received the appointment of Commissioner for China to manage the Commerce of Korea - whereas Korea has been dependent upon China since the time Kichi was appointed King of Chosen, several thousand years ago, and people . . . have been wonderfully obedient to our existing dynasty . . .

Therefore, the Chinese government has issued trade regulations benefitting Korea; and I hope the merchants and citizens will appreciate this fact, and obey these regulations, that harmonious feeling may exist between China and Korea, especially as Korea is a dependency of China.¹²

In the foreign affairs of Korea, China disclaimed all influence, and thus pursued a double course. On the one side, she openly avowed her duty and intention to maintain the King of his throne. On the other, she left to him the control of his foreign relations and the entire responsibility for whatever obligations he might incur to foreign powers.

In their revulsion against the policies of Tai Wen Kun, the returned Queen's faction made some tentative motions toward the reformers. Judge O. N. Denny, formerly American Consul General in Tientsin was invited to act as adviser to the foreign office. Teachers were invited from the United States and General Dye, a veteran of the American Civil War, to drill the Korean Army.¹³

¹²Quoted in Frederick M. Nelson, Korea and the Old Orders in Eastern Asia (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1945), p. 165.

¹³Byong-do Lee, Kuksa Daikwan ("The Records on Korean History") (Seoul; Paik-Yong-Sa, 1954), p. 657.

For the moment it looked as if Korea had embarked upon a successful career as a member of the Family of Nations. Min Yong-ik, nephew of the Queen, was sent to America with a commission to study Western civilization,¹⁴ and if Korea could have been left alone, without foreign rivalries and interference, all might have gone well. However, the growing factional struggle between Conservative and Progressive again invited foreign interference.

The influence of the Queen over the King was all-powerful. When her old enemy, Tai Wen Kun was removed from the political scene all the offices in the state were once more filled by her relatives. All their sympathies were with the old civilization of China and the reformers who had come back from Japan, who were members of rival families to the Min, could find no outlet for their abilities and aspirations. By the beginning of 1884, the Conservative and Progressive element were clearly differentiated - with the Queen and her relatives on the one side, with a platform of conservatism and the friendship and protection of China, and the reformers on the other, with the platform of Progress, which would gradually enable Korea to stand alone, and friendship with Japan.

The presence of a strong body of Chinese influence made it necessary for the Progressives to seek Japanese support of like character in order to carry out their plans. The leaders of the Progressive party communicated with the Japanese and reached an understanding that Japan should back them in their attempt to destroy Chinese influence and retain

¹⁴Ibid., p. 658.

Korean independence.¹⁵ The Progressive leaders thereafter met frequently with the Japanese to plan the uprising for December 4, 1884. The first important conference was held at the residence of Pak Yong-ho with the presence of Secretary Shimamura representing the Japanese Legation in Korea.¹⁶ At this conference, they agreed to stage a coup d'etat on the day when the new post office was to open, December 4, 1884.

On the evening of December 4th, the foreign envoys, several high officials of the government, members of both factions and the Chinese generals were invited to attend a banquet to celebrate the inauguration of the postal service. The Japanese minister had excused himself on the plea of ill health.¹⁷

The dinner began at an early hour, about six o'clock, and about seven o'clock a fire alarm was sounded as a pre-arranged signal by the Progressives. A house immediately in front of the post office was in flames. Min Yong-ik, the nephew of the Queen, going out to observe was attacked by assassins, but instead of being killed as was intended, was only wounded.¹⁸ All was in confusion. The foreign and domestic guests

¹⁵Ok-kyun Kim, Kapsin Ilrok ("The Records of Year of Kapsin" or "Kim Ok-kyun Diary") (Seoul; Seoul National University), Sept. 14, 1884. Kim Ok-kyun was a leader of the Progressive faction, the other leaders were Pak Yong-ho, So Jai-pil, and So Kwang-bom. They had been in Japan and were deeply impressed by Japanese modernization. See also, Young-yi Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchon ("Short Biography of Yun Chi-ho") (Seoul; Choson Kidokkyo Kamviwon, 1932), p. 42.

¹⁶Kapsin Ilrok, November 4, 1884. See also, Chang, Imo Kunran kwa Kapsin Chongbyun, p. 367.

¹⁷Mun, Kunse Ilbon yi Choson Chintu-sa, p. 215; Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchon, p. 42.

¹⁸Dr. Allen, the first American Presbyterian Missionary treated Min Young-ik so well the King and his court became friends of the missionaries from then on.

hastily dispersed. The two leaders of the conspiracy, Kim Ok-kyun and Pak Yong-ho, then went to the Japanese Legation to make sure of the readiness of the Japanese.

They were greeted by the Japanese Legation Secretary, Shimamura, who showed them the Japanese troops lined up and waiting for the order to march. Assured of Japanese support once more, the two Progressive leaders hastened to the palace, being joined on the way by other Progressive leaders, So Kwan-bom, Hong Yong-sik and many others. Entering the royal presence, they informed that the Chinese had caused trouble in the city and were going to take possession of the King's person, and that he should hasten to a place for safety. Kim Ok-kyun asked the King to send to the Japanese minister asking for protection, but the King refused. However the Japanese minister with some 200 troops was already in the palace.¹⁹

Kim Ok-kyun then obtained the King's seals and made out orders, as if direct from His Majesty, for a number of Conservative leaders to come to the palace.²⁰ The summons were sent in the early morning of December 5, 1884, to the Conservative leaders, Min Tae-ho, Min Yong-muk, Cho Yong-ha, Han Kyu-jik, and Yi Cho-yun. They were seized and assassinated as soon as they arrived at the palace. These murders were committed without the knowledge of the King. Following the liquidation

¹⁹ Kapsin Ilrok, October 18, 1884. Japanese writer, Tabohashi gives strong pro-Japanese view saying that Japanese troops arrived at palace after Japanese minister received King's message asking for protection. Kiyoshi Tabohashi, Kindai Nissen Kankei no Kenkyu (Study of Japanese-Korean Relations in Modern Time") (Chosen Sotokufu, 1940: 2 Vols.) I, p. 926.

²⁰ Mun, Kunse Ilbon Yichoson Chimto Sa, p. 218.

of the pro-Chinese, Min faction leaders, the government was reconstructed so as to include all the leaders who had participated in the coup.²¹

The Progressive coup looked as if it had been successful up to this stage, but the Chinese regarded it differently. General Yuan Shih-kai,²² after expiration of a three hour ultimatum to the Japanese to evacuate, made a military attack upon the palace. The Chinese force outnumbered the Japanese seven to one. The Japanese fell back and on December 6, forced their way out of Seoul to Inchon and escaped to Japan, taking with them the Korean Progressive leaders who had survived the fighting.²³

These events signed the death warrant of any hope of reciprocity between Japan and Korea.²⁴ The Queen's party rested in the hands of its Chinese friends, and all plans for reorganization and reforms of a

²¹In the new cabinet, Yi Chae-won and Hong Yong-sik were made Prime Ministers, Pak Yong-ho General-in Chief, So Kwang-bom Minister of Foreign Affairs, Kim Ok-kyun Minister of Finance, and So Chai-pil Lieutenant General. See Mun, Kunse Ilbon yi Choson Chintu-sa, p. 219.

²²Yuan was sent to Korea as "Resident-General" to supervise the Korean government after the mutiny of 1882 in Seoul. He was a dominant figure in Korea until 1894, when he fled to Peking. In 1913 he was elected the first president of the Republic of China.

²³Kapsin Ilrok, December 6, 1884. The Korean Progressive leaders landed in Japan, expecting that they would be received like heroes, and that they would return with a strong army to fight the Chinese. But the Japanese Foreign minister told them that Japan was not going to war with China over the matter. "We are not ready to war with China yet" he said. See Tai-won Min, Kapsin Jongbyun kwa Kim Ok-kyun (The Kapsin Revolution and Kim Ok-kyun) (Seoul; Kukje Munwha Hyophue, 1947), pp. 246-249.

²⁴The Coup d'etat of December 1884 (Korean call as Kapsin Jongbyun) failed because the Progressive leaders as well as Japan were impatient and anxious to achieve their aim in haste. See Percival, Lowell, "A Korean Coup d'etat," The Atlantic Monthly, November, 1886, pp. 599-618. This writer takes the Japanese view by holding that the Japanese minister at Seoul was most reluctant to cooperate with Korean Progressives in the coup d'etat.

national scope were held in abeyance.

The next ten years witnessed a battle of wits in Korea between Japan, China and Russia, with China holding the best cards, until 1894. None of the three was ready for war, but while both China and Russia were contemptuous of Japan, it was the latter alone who tightened her belt and made ready for the fray.

Japan proceeded to settle her claims with China for damages inflicted by the Chinese troops. In this effort, the Japanese failed to attain their objectives. The situation became more complicated and the strained relations between China and Japan were temporarily relieved when China and Japan signed a convention at Tientsin in which it was agreed that both nations should withdraw their troops from Korea. Should any "grave disturbance" "of great moment or concern to China or Japan, occur which might of necessity call for troops from the outside for the suppression thereof," each nation before sending such troops, should give due notice in writing to the other. This convention came to be known as the convention of Tientsin.²⁵ The agreement pleased the Min faction because it removed their fear of a possible return of the pro-Japanese Progressive leaders to Korea under Japanese armed support.

The rule of the Min faction with Chinese support was one of notorious mal-administration. The selling of office, the tyranny of local officials, and exorbitant tax burdens on the people were commonplace.

²⁵ Tongni Kyosop Amun ("Ministry of Yi Dynasty Foreign Affairs), Tongni Kyosop Amun Ilgi ("The Yi Dynasty Foreign Ministry Archives), 1882-1896, Reserved for Korean National Library, Seoul. April 18, 1885. Although both China and Japan withdrew their troops in compliance with this treaty, Chinese superiority in Korea was maintained.

As a consequence, several armed rebellions ensued in the provinces.

Of these, the uprising by a religious sect called the Tonghak was the most serious one.

The Tonghak Rebellion

From 1893 to 1894 the Tonghak Society became a major political factor. This secret Society had a strong continuity as a religious order and was active in achieving social equality. One of its major aims was to restore the ideal condition in Korean traditional order and clean up the corrupt officials and eradicate all foreign influences. The creator of the Tonghak Society was Cho Che-u, who accepted from Confucianism the concept of the Five Great Relations,²⁶ from Buddhism the law for cleansing the mind and from Taoism the law for cleansing the body. Finally, from Catholicism, he took important organizational elements.²⁷

The basic doctrine of Tonghak is the thesis that "Man is Heaven." Cho Hae-wol (1829-1898), the second leader of Tonghak likened a weaving girl to Heaven at a loom. He said that the children's cry is the voice of Heaven. Since man is heaven, all men are lofty and equal. Disdaining men by men is against the will of Heaven. He emphasized "Serving men as one serves Heaven." He further maintained that all men should

²⁶The five relationships are: ruler and subject, father and son, elder brother and younger brother, husband and wife, friend and friend. All of them except the last involve the authority of one person over another.

²⁷Chi Y. Oh, Tonghak Sa ("History of Tonghak") (Seoul; Hapmun Sa, 1946), p. 32. Tonghak in Korean means "Eastern Learning". Cho Che-u founded this religious sect in Kyongsang Province in 1859. In 1865 Tonghak was banned by order of the government and the religion went underground. See also C. N. Weems, Korean Reform and Independent Movement, 1881-1898 (Ann Arbor; Michigan University Press, 1954), p. 37.

be revered with equality and without discrimination. He advocated love and forgiveness over falsehood, and fairness and righteousness over arrogance of authority and superiority. This theory was developed into the doctrine that there is nothing in the every day life of human beings which is not the heavenly way and that there is nothing in the universe but the facsimile of Heaven. He said "every matter and every thing is Heaven." This means that "Heaven is nourished by what is Heaven." One can see that reverence to Heaven, to man and to matter are one and the same thing. This doctrine is not merely a scholar's theory but the voice of the people emanating from experience in actual life. Cho Hae-wol was by no means a scholar. To perceive the way is to know oneself-that "I am the Heaven and Heaven is I." To serve the Lord of Heaven is to understand him. He emphasized that one should "develop one's own Heaven" by way of self-consciousness. The Tonghak seeks neither salvation after death nor eternal life in the world to come. Since man is Heaven, its ideal is to realize a paradise on earth.²⁸

Tonghak was a revolutionary religion founded on a nationalistic concept stimulated by the spirit of Korean independence from any foreign power. Its idea was the destruction of the traditional belief in the supremacy of China. With Chinese superiority eliminated, there would be no alternative for Korea except to become both politically and philosophically independent. The Min faction and Progressives

²⁸Do-ha Lee, (ed) Chondokyo Chankon Sa ("The Records of Tonghak Religion") (Seoul; Chongsimri Won), 1939, II, pp. 6-7.

tended to rely on support by foreign powers to achieve their political supremacy and thereby compromised the independence of Korea. But the Tonghak movement was a genuine Korean independence movement not characterized by reliance on foreign influence or support.

The pressure had mounted in the Tonghak Society to taking action on their social and economic grievances as well as to demand the expulsion of foreigners. The corruption of the Min faction's administration, which was intensified by a heavy tax program, led the Tonghak leaders to determine that their Society ought to be mobilized publicly to clean up government and protect people. Moreover, the increasing foreign influence stimulated the leaders to reemphasize the importance of preserving traditional Korean values.²⁹ In essence, Tonghak contained a seed of nationalism or, more specifically, national consciousness.

The unity of the Tonghak membership and its wide-spread support alarmed the Min faction. In 1892, the government sent a high-ranking Royal Inspector, Cho Pyong-sik, to put down the Tonghak movement in the southern provinces. Inspector Cho tracked down Tonghak members, arrested and murdered the Tonghak followers, and plundered their property. In March, 1893, Tonghak leaders determined to make a direct appeal to the King for the purpose of gaining royal recognition supporting and championing national solidarity.³⁰ At the end of March, 1893, fifty

²⁹ Sun-kun Lee, Hankuk Sa ("History of Korea") (Seoul; Young-dan Hakhai, 1964), pp. 12-14. See also Do-ha Lee, Chondokyo Changkon Sa, II, pp. 46-49.

³⁰ Kuksa Pyunjip Wuiwon Hae ("National History Editorial Committee"), Tonghakran Kirok (Records of Tonghak Rebellion), (Seoul; 1959), p. 116. Hereafter cited as Tonghakran Kirok.

representatives of Tonghak entered Seoul and presented before the palace gate, with pathetic ceremonies, a petition that their sect be tolerated. Their appeal was refused, and they were driven away by the King's order.³¹

Denied a hearing by the King, the Tonghak leaders gave full support to a physical revolt against the government. Late in April, 1893, a mass meeting was held, and on April 25, the mass assembly passed a resolution to launch a civil war. Its purpose would be to drive corrupt officials out of the government and to expel the foreign influence. Peasants made up the majority of this meeting.³²

Alarmed at the formidable aspects of this mass meeting, the government sent a civilian official, Oh Yung-jung, to the southern province for the purpose of persuading the Tonghak leaders to disperse their followers and settle their grievances by peaceful means. The leaders flatly rejected the emissary. In Seoul, the pro-Chinese cabinet proposed to the King that China be asked to give military aid against the Tonghaks,³³ but the King overruled the proposal and decided to use Korean troops only. The King ordered Oh Yung-jung to give the Tonghaks one more chance to disperse their forces. On May 16, 1893, Oh Yung-jung

³¹Ibid., p. 117.

³²Tonghakran Kirok, pp. 118-120. In March, 1893, threatening placards were fastened to foreigner's gates in Seoul inveighing against the Christian religion and warning all foreigners to leave the country at once. See U.S. Department of State, Papers relating to the Foreign Relations of the United States, 1894, Apr. 1. pp. 809. Hereafter cited as Foreign Relations. See also, Sang-gi Kim, Tonghak kwa Tonghakran ("Tonghak and Tonghak and Tonghak Rebellion") (Seoul; Taesong Chulpansa, 1947), pp. 57-58.

³³Hyon Hwang, Maechon Yarok ("Records of Maechon"), National History Material Series, No. 1 (Seoul, 1955), p. 132. Queen Min indicated that the Tai Wen Kun was again making a bid for power through Tonghak leaders.

presented an ultimatum in the name of the King. If the mobilized Tonghaks were not disbanded by May 19, the forces would attack them. The Tonghak leaders acceded to this demand and dismissed their assembled followers on May 17.³⁴

However, the Tonghak leaders passed an extremely nationalistic manifesto which read in part:

Chinese, Japanese and Western rebels and thieves are now introduced into the very bowels of our land and anarchy has reached its zenith. Just look around on the capital under present condition. It is the lair and den of barbarians. Our three thousands millions of people in the Eastern Kingdom are now all in the grasp of wild beasts, and our ancestral home of 500 years duration will shortly witness the disaster of dispersion and dismemberment. Alas for charity, patriotism, prosperity, prudence, filial piety, brotherly love, loyalty, and faith! What has become of them all at the present time.

We who number several millions have sworn to the death that we will unite in one common effort to sweep out all foreign rebels and bring them ruin in our sage desire to render to our country the fidelity which even a dog will show his master, and we humbly hope that every one, within one common solution, will combine their efforts and will select loyal and patriotic gentry³⁵ to assist them in supporting the wish of the country . . .

In the meantime, it was reported that many thousands of Tonghaks were collected at the town of Po-eun in the eastern part of Chung-chong Province, and that their numbers were daily increasing. Every day brought fresh rumors of their strength, and amongst Koreans there was much alarm. Although almost without arms, the Tonghaks were said to be nonetheless regularly drilling, and to have professed their

³⁴ Oh, Tonghak Sa, pp. 83-94.

³⁵ Quoted in Spencer J. Palmer (ed.) Korean American Relations, Documents pertaining to the Far Eastern Diplomacy of the United States (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1963), Vol. II, pp. 315-316.

intention of marching on Seoul. They erected a wall about their encampment, in the center of which was a large flag with the inscription "Down with the foreigners. May the right flourish!" They declared that they had no fear of the soldiers who might be sent against them as the soldiers, instead of attacking, would join them.³⁶

The next significant move of the Tonghak force was the work of Chon Bong-jun. He was one of the radical members in the Society. He gave the down-trodden peasants hope and new life in the midst of the awful night of ever-increasing official corruption and oppression. In February, 1894, Chon led about a thousand of his Tonghak followers in an attack on Kobu county breaking into the small arsenal attached to it. The Tonghaks virtually controlled the entire county and were gaining power in the Cholla Province.³⁷ The King issued a decree condemning Tonghaks as rebels on February 15. Eight hundred troops under the command of Hong Ke-hung, most trusted general of the Queen, were sent to Cholla Province. The Hong troops met the Tonghak forces and were defeated.³⁸ It was rumored that over half the Hong's troops fled before the encounter. When the Tonghaks moved into Chon-ju City, capital of Cholla Province, the danger seemed to threaten the whole country. General Hong signified his inability to cope with the

³⁶ Tonghakran Kirok, pp. 129-132.

³⁷ Oh, Tonghak Sa, pp. 251-253. According to N. Katswiku, Nikkan Kappo Hi-Shi ("The Secret History of Japanese Annexation of Korea"), Japanese aided the Tonghaks and had a "blood alliance" with Tonghaks leaders, Chong Bong-jun. But it is doubtful to agree with N. Katsuiuku's view. Tonghaks were strictly nationalist, with strong anti-foreign ideology.

³⁸ Oh, Tonghak Sa, pp. 116-119.

situation. Then it was that the Min faction at the Court, instigated by Yuan Shih-kai, Chinese Resident-General in Seoul, recommended that the King call Chinese military help. By this time, the King, discouraged by the success of the rebellion in the South, asked Chinese aid,³⁹ reversing a decision of a year earlier.

China promptly responded, and feeling perfectly safe because of her newly built navy and German drilled troops, proceeded to violate the Li-Ito Convention of Tientsin and dispatched 2,000 Chinese troops to Korea on June 7.⁴⁰ Then the Chinese government sent the Japanese Legation in Peking a memorandum which included the following words: "It is in harmony with our constant practice to protect our tributary states by sending our troops to assist them. General Weh has been ordered to Cholla Province to restore the peace of our tributary state."⁴¹ Thus, in plain words, China by force of arms reasserted her ancient claims to suzerainty over Korea as a vassal state.

On June 1, 1894, just five days before the first Chinese detachment embarked at Tientsin for Korea - a large Korean government force surrounded the city of Chonju and made an historical proposal to Chon Bong-jun. The commander of the government force, in the name of the

³⁹Hwa-an ("The Yi Dynasty Court Repository on Korea-China Relations") (Seoul; Korean National Library), Vol. XXIX, February 16, 1894; Tonghakran Kirok, p. 166.

⁴⁰Il-an ("The Yi Dynasty Court Repository on Korean-Japanese Relations") (Seoul; Korean National Library), Vol. XXVIII, June 7, 1894.

⁴¹The Japanese Archives in Korea (The 1894-1910 Series, Photographed for the Hoover Institution, Stanford University), Vol. XXVII, No. 158, pp. 167-168. Hereafter cited as J. A. (Korea).

King, informed Chon that Chinese forces were about to move into the country and that this was no time for Koreans to be fighting each other.⁴² If the Tonghak forces would evacuate the city, the King would undertake to see that neither the Chinese nor any other foreigners remained in the country. The essential patriotism of the whole Tonghak order was reflected in the fact that Chon accepted this appeal for national unity, transferred the city to the government troops and moved toward the south.

The Chinese troops had not helped in the suppression of the Tonghak. Meantime, it became known that the Japanese were also sending troops to Korea, and the Korean government, fearing trouble, asked the Chinese to leave. This the Chinese promised to do, but because 500 Japanese marines landed at Chemulpo (Inchon) and came to Seoul on June 10, the Chinese held their troops where they were. On June 13, 800 Japanese soldiers came to Seoul and relieved the marines. These soldiers had arrived at Chemulpo and along the road to Seoul, at certain points they threw up earth works, while they left a guard at the ferry near Seoul and at other important places along the Seoul road. Later, on June 16, 3,000 additional Japanese troops landed in Chemulpo.⁴³

There was no longer any reason for foreign troops to remain in Korea. The Chinese had come to put down the Tonghaks, and the Japanese had come ostensibly to protect their nationals. With the

⁴²Lee, Hankuk Sa, pp. 100-101; Foreign Relations, 1894, App. I., p. 20.

⁴³Tongni Kyosop Amun Ilgi, June 10, 13, 16, 1894; Foreign Relations, 1894, App. 1, p. 20.

Tonghak problem solved by the patriotism of Tonghaks, the King asked both forces to leave at once.⁴⁴

China agreed to leave, rejecting a Japanese proposal that they participate in a Korean-Chinese-Japanese Commission to supervise the financial, administrative and military reform in Korea. The Chinese reply pointed out that the Tonghak rebellion had already been settled, that China would not interfere in the Korean internal administration, and that Japan had no right to do so because Japan recognized the independence of Korea.⁴⁵

In spite of Japanese minister Otori's assurance to the foreign representatives that the purpose of Japanese troops in Seoul was only to protect the Japanese Legation and property, the real purpose was to oust the traditional Chinese supremacy in Korea. It was then that the idea of reforming the Korean government and removing the anti-Japanese Min faction was proposed. The Secretary of the Japanese Legation, Sugimura, sent a memorandum to the Tokyo government asking his government to use the occasion to extend Japanese power, carry out a revolution against the Min faction, and enforce reforms. The memorandum, sent from Sugimura on June 13 to Foreign minister Mutsu read:

1. Through our action in this occasion we must suppress

⁴⁴Tongni Kyosop Amun ("Ministry of Yi Dynasty Foreign Affairs"). Tongni Kyosop Tongsang Samu Amun Ilgi (The Diary of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs & Trade of the Yi Dynasty), 1882-1886. Seoul. Vol. XXXX, June 14, 1894.

⁴⁵Kuksa Pyunjip Uiwonhoe ("National History Editorial Committee") Sokum Chongsa ("The Diary of Kim Yun-sik") (Seoul; 1958), p. 313. Kim Yun-sik was Foreign minister of Korea from 1894-1896.

the pretensions of the Chinese in Korea, reduce the power and influence of the Chinese over Korea in the future, and secretly increase our power.

2. Arouse a revolution within Korea, remove either the Min faction or the neutrals from the government.

3. When matters are settled, we must attain agreement with the Chinese government and advise the Korean government to carry out internal reforms under the allegation that the Korean government has not been able to subdue the insurgents and hence has disturbed the neighboring nations.⁴⁶

The Japanese government, on June 22, declared its intention to carry out the reforms alone, and on June 23, ordered that 8,000 troops at Inchon should march into Seoul. Japan clearly formulated her policy to oust Chinese influence from Korea by means of force, if necessary. At this point, Japan had come to the conclusion that she could never assume her proper place in the Family of Nations until she had demonstrated her ability to face and defeat China.

On June 27, 1894, the Korean government sought to end the deadlock by requesting the Western representatives in Seoul to offer the friendly offices of their governments to the withdrawal of Chinese and Japanese forces from Korea. For this purpose, the Korean government sent an identical note to the British, French, American and Russian ministers in Seoul which read in part:

. . . at this moment the troops of the two nations, namely China and Japan, are in occupation of Korean soil. The first by invitation, to aid in quelling a rebellion; the other without invitation . . . The necessity for the presence of both of these has now ceased. The Chinese authorities are now willing to remove their troops from Korean soil, provided Japan will remove hers. But Japan refuses to remove her troops until the Chinese have been removed, and neglects to entertain any proposition for simultaneous removal of both.

⁴⁶Chong-sik, Lee, The Politics of Korean Nationalism (Berkeley; University of California Press, 1963), p. 39.

The presence of a large army in time of peace is a menace to the peace and integrity of Korea. Korean government respectively submit to the Foreign representatives and their governments will use their friendly offices ⁴⁷in affecting an amicable solution of the present situation.

The British, French, American and Russian representatives in Seoul jointly requested the Chinese and Japanese to simultaneously withdraw.⁴⁸ But the Chinese refused to go until the Japanese did, and the Japanese refused to go until reforms had been introduced which would clear the political atmosphere and give some semblance of truth to the fiction of Korean independence. The Korean government was thrown into consternation when on June 25, 1894, the Japanese minister Otori demanded that a declaration be given the next day by the Korean Foreign Office, on whether Korea is a tributary of China or not.⁴⁹ The following answer was given: "Korea being an independent state enjoys the same sovereign right as does Japan and that in both internal administration and foreign intercourse Korea enjoys complete independence."⁵⁰

On June 28, 1894, the Japanese minister Otori had an audience with the King and presented the following five points of reform: (1) Reform the central government and the local government system and select personnel from all classes and families. (2) Reform the financial system and cultivate the resources in the country. (3) Readjust the laws, reform the judicial system, and bring about impartial trials.

⁴⁷ Tongni Kyosop Tongsang Samu Amun Ilgi, Vol. XXXX, June 21, 1894.

⁴⁸ Foreign Relations, 1894, App. I, p. 38.

⁴⁹ Sokum Chongsa, pp. 316-317.

⁵⁰ Kyo, Chong, Hankuk Kenyon Sa (Later Year of Korean History), National History material Series; No. 5. (Seoul, 1957), I, p. 84.

(4) Suppress the insurrections within the country and establish necessary military preparation for the maintenance of order. (5) Firmly establish the educational system.⁵¹

The Korean government refused to accept these reforms, arguing that Korea could not accept the Japanese reform proposal because it was clearly an interference with internal affairs, and instead made a demand that Japan withdraw their troops.⁵² Japan ignored the Korean demand and further demanded of the Korean government that the Chinese troops be withdrawn immediately; because Korea was an independent state, the Chinese were not justified in sending their troops "to safeguard a traditional tributary state".⁵³ When the Korean government replied that it was in the process of negotiating with the Chinese for withdrawal of their troops, minister Otori answered that the reply was unsatisfactory, and threatened to carry out reform by means of force.⁵⁴

It was on July 19, 1894, that a great change came in Korea. On this day Otori received definite permission from Tokyo to use "oppressive means" in Korea and Yuan Shih-kai left Seoul for Tientsin. Yuan Shih-kai's silent withdrawal from Korea can be explained by his fear of the Japanese. At this time he was not only diplomatically helpless, but there was a rumor that the Japanese troops were about to attack the Chinese Legation. Yuan's withdrawal clearly marked the rise of Japanese influence and fall of Chinese influence in Korea.

⁵¹J. A. (Korea), XXVII, No. 396, pp. 586-591. Otori, before this demand was made on Korea, frankly reported to foreign minister Mutsuoku that he would "force" reforms. Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchon, p. 73.

⁵²Lee, Hankuk Sa, p. 195.

⁵³J. A. (Korea), XXVII, No. 422, p. 652.

⁵⁴Ibid., No. 423, pp. 627-628.

On July 23, the Japanese troops broke into and took possession of the palace, humiliating the Korean sovereign, and later seized the King and crowned prince as "prisoners." The pro-Chinese, Min faction was driven out of the court and the ex-Regent, Tai Wen Kun, was induced to take over the government.⁵⁵

On July 24, a council of State was formed with Kim Hong-jip⁵⁶ as its president and Otori himself as its advisor. This was called the new government of Kap-oh (or 1894) and was composed of pro-Japanese Progressive faction. In the meantime, Japan informed China that the sending of more troops to Korea would be considered as an act of war. Ignoring Japan's threat, China ordered her troops in Manchuria to cross the Yalu River. Having chartered the British ship, Kowshing, the Chinese filled it with reinforcements and sent it to Inchon. On July 25, the Japanese Navy sank Kowshing in the harbor of Inchon. Three days later the Chinese government acknowledged the outbreak of hostilities, and on August 1, 1894, both Japan and China declared war.⁵⁷

Thus Japan determined to pursue an imperialistic policy toward Korea while China followed a policy of maintaining the status quo. The weakness of the Korean government created the pattern of the struggle for power primarily as one between Japan and China.

⁵⁵ Lee, Hankuk Sa, p. 207; Tai Wen Kun was reluctant to take over the government. At the desire of the King the ex-Regent agreed to take power with a stipulation that the Japanese should not interfere with Korean affairs; Hwang, Maechon Yarak, pp. 145-146. See also Won-chul Lee, Wangkung Sa ("Records of the Royal Palace") (Seoul; Kuwang Sil, 1948), p. 25; Kim, Yun Cho-ho Sunsang Yakchon, p. 74.

⁵⁶ Kim Hong-jip was a man of a strong personality and progressive tendencies, altogether a valuable man for the emergency since he had the entire confidence of the Japanese.

⁵⁷ Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchon, pp. 74-75.

The End of Chinese Influence

Japan's declaration of war, stated in part as follows:

. . . Korea is an independent state . . . It has, however, been China's habit to designate Korea as her dependency, and openly and secretly to interfere with her domestic affairs . . . We in virtue of the treaty concluded with Korea in 1876, and looking to possible emergencies,⁵⁸ caused a military force to be sent to that country.

On August 20, 1894, Japan recognized Korea's independence in her alliance with Korea against China. It was an offensive and defensive alliance which read as follows:

Article I. The object of alliance is to maintain the independence of Korea on a firm footing and to promote the respective interests of both Japan and Korea by expelling Chinese soldiers from Korean territory.

Article II. Japan will undertake all warlike operations against China, both offensive and defensive, while Korea will undertake to give every possible facility to Japanese soldiers regarding their movement and supply of provisions.

Article III. This treaty shall cease at the conclusion of a treaty of peace with China.⁵⁹

In reality, by this forced alliance, Korea was to give every possible aid to Japan to defeat China.

The modernized Japanese soldiers took Pyong-yang⁶⁰ on September 15 and ended the war on land. On September 17, the greatest naval engagement of the war took place off the mouth of the Yalu River, and

⁵⁸Korea; Treaties and Agreements, p. 9.

⁵⁹William W. Rockwill (ed), Treaties and Agreements with or Concerning China and Korea 1894-1904 (Washington: Government Printing Office, 1908), p. 429; J. A. (Korea), XXVII, No. 706, pp. 337-338. This treaty was signed between Japanese minister Otori and Korean Foreign minister Kim Yun-sik.

⁶⁰"A Visit to the Battle of Pyong-yang," Korean Repository VII, (1895), pp. 10-14.

after a battle of four and a half hours of fighting, Japan won the battle. In Seoul, meanwhile, various reforms had already been put into action, and a new pro-Japanese government was set up on December 7.

Tai Wen Kun was prominent in the government; the well-known strength of his personality did much to give stability to the new regime. The pro-Chinese Queen retired from active participation in politics for the time being. The new cabinet chosen was pro-Japanese. They called themselves Progressive. Kim Hong-jip was appointed as prime-minister, and all cabinet members were appointed by permission of the Japanese.⁶¹ It was evident that Japanese influence was overwhelmingly predominant in Seoul, since the government had committed itself to the policy of selecting Japanese advisers for its various departments.

The month of October saw the Chinese driven across the Yalu and a measure of order restored on Korean soil. It also saw the resurgence of the Tonghak in the southern provinces. The Tonghaks seeing that the Chinese and Japanese were occupied by the war, took the occasion to re-enforce their attempts to expell the Japanese controlled government in Seoul.⁶² About two hundred Japanese troops aided the government forces, and at every point the government troops were successful. A large number of Tonghak leaders were killed.⁶³

By the end of 1894, the scene had shifted violently. Gone was the Chinese suzerain claim, the arrogant Chinese Resident-General Yuan

⁶¹Sokum Chong Sa, p. 202.

⁶²Oh, Tonghak Sa, p. 263.

⁶³Lee, Hankuk Sa, pp. 378-379.

Shih-kai, the Chinese merchants who had been so strong in Korea. Japan had almost completely dominated Korea's government during the hostilities, and she was prepared to reap the benefits of her success in increasing her control over the economic and political affairs, not of China but of Korea.

In Japan, meanwhile, the war brought a strong national unity, and on February 1, 1895, the House passed unanimously a resolution to vote any amount of appropriations needed for the prosecution of war.⁶⁴

But by this time the war virtually ended with Japanese victory. Realizing China's military defeat, as early as October, 1894, Li Hung-chang attempted to bring about a collective mediation, and Mutsu, the Japanese Foreign minister, by January, 1895, completed a draft treaty of peace in order to prevent the possibility of intervention by a third power.⁶⁵ At the same time, Japan still continued to prepare for war. On January 8, Ito, Japanese Prime-minister, urged that Japan should take up military and diplomatic matters first and leave all other things for later.⁶⁶

The desire for peace in China was strong by March, 1895. Before this time England, in October, and America, in November, 1894, attempted to mediate for peace. Li Hung-chang left Tientsin on March 14, and arrived at Simonoseki on March 19 for a peace mission. On March 20, Li met Ito; and an attack by a Japanese assassin injuring Li in the face helped bring about a quick armistice. On April 1, Ito presented

⁶⁴Tatsuji Takeuchi, War and Diplomacy in the Japanese Empire (Garden City; Doubleday & Co., 1935), p. 113.

⁶⁵Tatsuji, Takeuchi, War and Diplomacy in the Japanese Empire (New York; Doubleday, Page & Co., 1935), p. 127.

⁶⁶Mitori Kamatsu (ed.) Ito Ko Jen Shu (Works of Prince Ito), (Tokyo; Association of Prince Ito, 1928), II, p. 32.

Japan's peace terms to Li. On April 9, Li presented counter proposals. After some disputes over the peace terms, on April 17, Li and Ito finally signed a peace treaty. This is called the Treaty of Shimonoseki, the first article of which read:

China recognize the full and complete independence and autonomy of Korea, and in consequence the payment of tribute and the performance of ceremonies and formalities by Korea to China, in derogation of such independence and autonomy, shall wholly cease for the future.⁶⁷

The other important provisions of the treaty included: (1) China's cession of the Liaotung peninsula, Formosa and the Pescadores; and (2) China's payment of an indemnity of 200,000,000 taels.⁶⁸

When the news of the declaration of independence reached Korea there was a great rejoicing among the cabinet members, and "the largest and most brilliant entertainment" was given to the foreign diplomatic corps by the Korean government.⁶⁹ It is highly questionable whether Korea's independence dated from the day when the Shimonoseki treaty was signed. Japan already recognized Korea's independence when she forced the treaty of 1876 at Kwang-hwa. Since then the western powers namely; United States, England, France, Germany and Russia, also recognized the independence and sovereignty of Korea in their treaties. The independence of Korea was an accepted and established fact by the nations, Japan being the first. The fact that Japan restated the independence of Korea in 1895 indicates her ulterior aim in recognizing the independence of Korea but for her future scheme in that country. It is

⁶⁷ Korea; Treaties and Agreements, pp. 11-20.

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Korean Repository, VII (1895), pp. 235-237.

clear that Japan's repetition in recognizing the already recognized independence of Korea meant not to recognize it but to destroy it. The later Japanese policy in Korea supports this assumption.

The impact of the Sino-Japanese War on international relations in the Far East and on the world was significant, but it was particularly so on the fate of China and Korea. Although some of the peace terms were dropped in China's favor,⁷⁰ the war demonstrated the weakness of China. Within a few years after the treaty of Shimonoseki, China was forced to make leases, concessions, and "spheres of interests or influences" to European powers. As Korea, her position of "younger brother" to China ended forever, and she became a stake of Russo-Japanese imperialism. As for Japan, she received almost everything she could expect at that time. As a Japanese historian later said:

The Sino-Japanese war gave Japan everything for which she had contended especially the independence of Korea as against Chinese claims of suzerainty and the recognition of Japan on the basis of equality with the powers. It was Japan's first challenge to the powers and her first bid for world recognition.⁷²

Japan did not receive such a big gain from the war as the above quotation might seem to indicate. As early as September, 1894, after the battle of Yalu, China attempted to solicit the intervention of a third power, and she was advised to come first to terms directly with Japan. By March, 1895, Russian Czar Nicholas became anxious to extend his influence to Manchuria and Korea.⁷² Russia's policy at this time

⁷⁰This refers to the restoration of Liaotung Peninsula to China through the Russian, French and German intervention.

⁷¹Quoted in Roy H. Agaki, Japan's Foreign Relations, 1542-1936 (Tokyo; The Hakuseido Press, 1937), p. 10.

⁷²Ki-suk Sin, Tongyang Uekyo Sa ("The Records on the Oriental Diplomacy") (Seoul; Tongku Munwha Sa; 1948), p. 368.

was being formulated by her finance minister, Count Serge Witte, who believed that the preservation of the status quo in Manchuria would work to the advantage of his country. In April, Russia proposed that France, Germany, and Great Britain advise Japan to restore the Liaotung peninsula⁷³ to China in the interest of peace.

France was ready to support the Russian proposal under the obligations of their Dual Alliance; moreover, France was anxious to claim a reward from China in the form of concessions in the southern provinces, adjacent to Indo-China. Germany was eager to join the intervention for different reasons. She sought diversion of Russian energies to Asia to relieve pressure on her own frontiers and to isolate France in Europe. And Germany like Russia and France, was also ready to ask favors from a prostrate China. The British government was becoming friendly to Japan. To her, Japan was a check on Russian expansion, and she preferred to see Japan rather than Russia dominant in Korea and South Manchuria. However, Great Britain did not oppose the intervention because she feared that a strong stand might jeopardize her position in Europe.

On April 23, 1895, only six days after the signing of the treaty of Shimonoseki, the representative of Russia, France, and Germany in Tokyo presented to the Japanese Deputy Foreign minister identical notes which read:

. . . the possession of the peninsula of Liaotung claimed by Japan would be a constant menace to the capital of China, would at the same time render illusory the

⁷³ Liaotung peninsula constitutes a little strip of Manchurian territory, jutting out into the sea between the Bay of Korea and the Gulf of Chihli, with Port Arthur and Dairen, it is the most strategic stronghold in China and the key to the Far Eastern situation.

independence of Korea and would henceforth be a perpetual obstacle to the permanent peace of the Far East. Consequently the government of Russia, France and Germany advise Japan to renounce⁷⁴ the definite possession of the peninsula of Liaotung.

Japan at this time had no force to meet the tripartite intervention, nor did she have any power to turn to for help. Therefore it was decided to yield to the three powers.⁷⁵ On May 5, Japan informed the three powers that she accepted the recommendation and renounced definitely the possession of the Liaotung peninsula,⁷⁶ and on May 9, she received the congratulations of the three powers for acting in the interest of the general peace.⁷⁷ A feeling of militarism began to rise in Japan as a result of the belief that force only can be met with force. To the Japanese the intervention was a bitter pill to swallow, but it was also a blessing in disguise because it forced them to realize the imperative need for rapid progress and preparation to take revenge on Russia. The Russian-initiated tripartite intervention was the real beginning of Russo-Japanese rivalry in the Far East, and Korea, freed from traditional Chinese vassalage, became the principle stake of this contest for the next ten years.

⁷⁴Quoted in A. M. Pooley (ed), The Secret Memoirs of Count Tadasu Hayashi (New York; The Knickerbroker Press, 1915), p. 85.

⁷⁵Opinions among the ruling circle in Japan were divided. Ito was for an international conference that would consider the matter of Liaotung, while the Foreign minister Mutsu was for acceptance of the three power's demand.

⁷⁶In the face of superior and overwhelming forces Japan gave way, receiving in lieu of the territory an additional indemnity of 30,000,000 taels.

⁷⁷Takeuchi, War and Diplomacy in the Japanese Empire, pp. 117-119.

CHAPTER II

RUSSO-JAPANESE INFLUENCE AFTER SINO-

JAPANESE WAR, 1895-1897

Japanese Active Interference and Assassination of Queen Min

The Korean government, suffering from the double shock of losing the support of China after the Sino-Japanese war in 1895, and of being exposed suddenly to the forces of western power politics and imperialism, fought a desperate and losing battle for her independence. Korea was to be involved in the conflicts of the modern diplomatic policies and power politics of states under the western system. Under the alternative domination of stronger neighbors, she was to be merely a tool for the execution of the international policies of these contending states, Japan and Russia.

The administration was corrupt. Factional strife within the circle of the court that was rooted in the precedents of centuries, weakened the government. Into this situation, an expanding Russia found scope for implementing an active policy in Korea especially when Japan moved ahead too rapidly in her attempt to gain control over the Korean government.

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, had arisen from conflicting wishes of the belligerent powers regarding Korea. China asserted traditional suzerain rights over the peninsula Kingdom, and the interests of Japan made Korea's effective independence imperative. As a result of the war both recognized the independence of Korea. However, Korea

lacked material strength which rendered her real independence impossible. From the Japanese point of view, Korea's strength could be secured only by a thorough reform of her administration and financial and legal system, which had sunk into a state of unspeakable corruption and decay. Japan seemed to be left with the task of building Korea and of reforming the national institutions of the Korean people whose political training in the past seemed to have made them practically impervious to such an effort. Perhaps no work more delicate and more liable to blunder and misunderstanding could befall a nation than that of setting another's house in order where the necessity for changes were not even recognized.

The Japanese minister, Otori, entered into the enforced reform program. He induced the King to appoint a council of seventeen members empowered to pass reform measures,¹ and this body issued a series of remarkable reform decrees, called in toto the Kap-oh Reform:

Article I. Henceforward the year from the establishment of the dynasty is to be the date on all official documents within the Kingdom and without.

Article II. The agreements with China shall be altered and ministers plenipotentiary shall be sent to the various powers.

Article III. The distinction between patrician and plebeian rank shall be done away and men shall be selected for office according to ability, without distinction of birth.

Article IV. The system of superiority of scholar class over the military shall be abolished, and a form for mutual salutation shall be established according to the rank.

Article V. The law which renders the family and

¹Chong, Han-kuk Kenyon Sa, I, p. 88; Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchon, pp. 74-75.

connections of a criminal liable to punishment shall be totally abrogated. The offender only shall be punished.

Article VI. The adoption of a child shall be permitted only when a person does not have any child from his legitimate wife or concubine.

Article VII. Early marriages are strictly forbidden. A man must be twenty years old and a woman sixteen before they can marry.

Article VIII. Widows of high or low estate shall be permitted to marry as they please.

Article IX. The law authorizing the keeping of official or private male or female slaves shall be abolished and it shall be forbidden to buy or sell any person.²

These reforms were definitely revolutionary and too drastic a change from the centuries-old Chinese way of life in Korea. The forced reforms carried within them the seed of their own failure. In addition to these articles of political and social reform, there was an economic reform which included: (1) The adoption of silver and copper for money; (2) a new system of monetary units; (3) centralization and uniformity of the financial system; (4) establishment of banks; and (5) uniformity in measure and weight, etc.³ All these reforms were forced on the Korean government by Japan, and it was "only a pretext" for Japan's aggressive action in Korea. Of this Morse has stated:

In the Japanese-Korean treaty of 1876 Japan had imposed on Korea the assertion that Korea was an independent state; and at no time, surely, in the history of the world have such drastic reforms been imposed on an independent state. The reform of Korea was, however, only

²Kuk-sa Pyun-chip Yi-won Hae (National History Editorial Committee, Kap-oh Sil-ki ("True Records of the Year of Kap-oh") (Seoul, 1958), July 3, 4, and 11, 1894.

³Kap-oh Sil-ki, July 17, 1894.

a pretext. Japan was resolved on aggressive action in order to establish her position among the nations, and especially, to transfer from China to herself the pre-dominant position in Korea.⁴

These reforms had little effect outside of Seoul, where provincial magistrates disregarded the order of the King, saying he was a helpless Japanese prisoner. Japanese minister Otori had built his tactical machinery for putting through reforms but he was convinced that the ex-Regent was not to be trusted. Tai Wen Kun was interested in power and preserving Korean tradition rather than Japanese enforced reform programs, and there was growing rivalry between the progressive faction and Tai Wen Kun. Otori's failure to reconcile these two rivals was brought to the attention of the Tokyo government. Otori was recalled and Count Inouye Kaoru was newly appointed to Seoul as a Japanese minister.⁵

Count Inouye, one of the foremost of the statesmen who created the new Japan, arrived at Seoul on October 20, 1894, and practically administered the government in the King's name. There were Japanese controllers in all the departments, the army was drilled by Japanese instructors, a police force was organized and clothed in Japanese uniforms, a council of Koreans was appointed to draft a scheme of reform. Count Inouye as Japanese adviser had the right of continual access to the King, and with an interpreter sat at the meeting of the pro-Japanese cabinet. Japanese ascendancy was increasingly apparent in new appointments, regulations, abolitions and reforms. Count Inouye claimed that

⁴Hosha B. Morse, The International Relations of the Chinese Empire 1894-1911, (3 Vol., London; Longmans, Green and Co., 1918), I, p. 20-22.

⁵Lee, Han-kuk Sa, pp. 296-297.

Japan's purpose was to reform the administration of Korea, but he failed to mention that Japan's forced reform had violated Korea's sovereignty.

Count Inouye obtained from the King the pardon of Park Yong-ho and So Kwang-bom, who had been in exile in Japan since the emeute of 1884. Park and So were brought back from Japan and made Minister of Interior and Minister of Justice respectively.⁶ On January 5, 1895, Inouye presented a reform plan to the King which had been already approved by the pro-Japanese cabinet. The King accepted the following reform proposal:

- (1) All thought of dependence on China shall be put away.
- (2) The line of succession and rank in the Royal Family shall be clearly marked.
- (3) The King shall attend to public business in person and in consultation with his ministers, and the Queen shall not interfere in government matters.
- (4) The affairs of the Royal Household shall be kept quite distinct from the general government.
- (5) The duties of Ministers and other officials shall be clearly defined.
- (6) Taxes shall be regulated by law and additions to them are forbidden.
- (7) The assessment, collection and disbursement of the national revenue shall be in the hands of the Finance Department.
- (8) The expenses of the Royal Household shall be reduced, that the example may become a law to the other departments.
- (9) An annual budget shall be made out so as to regulate the management of the revenue.

⁶ Whang, Mae-chon Ya-rok, p. 217.

- (10) The laws governing local affairs shall be speedily revised in order that their various functions may be differentiated.
- (11) Intelligent young men shall be sent to Japan to study.
- (12) A method for the instruction of military officers and a mode of enlistment for soldiers shall be determined upon.
- (13) Civil and criminal law must be clearly defined and strictly adhered to and imprisonment and fines in excess of the law are prohibited.
- (14) Men shall be employed irrespective of their origin. Ability alone shall determine a man's eligibility whether in Seoul or in the country.

Inouye attempted to remove the Queen's share of political control and keep down the power of the Mins. The conservative faction opposed Japanese reforms which were basically a pretext to secure political and economic control of Korea. Another measure of Inouye's reform further antagonized the Yang Ban (nobility class). At this time the Conservative Queen Min supported a new pro-Russian political faction which had emerged out of the Tripartite Intervention. Japan had tried to drive the Queen out of politics. Her family had been proscribed, her bitter foe Tai Wen Kun had been elevated to power. Even the King had been used against her; in the Ancestral Oath, His Majesty had sworn that his wife would no longer figure in the political life of Korea.⁸ But that had not restrained Queen Min, who immediately resumed her political operation supported by the pro-Russian faction. Queen

⁷ Quoted in Weems, Hulbert's History of Korea, II, pp. 278-279.

⁸ Naegak Popche-guk Kwanbo-kwa ("Official Gazette Section, Legislation Bureau, Cabinet of Korea"). Kwan Bo ("Yi Dynasty Court Official Gazette") 1894-1910. Seoul, January 12, 1895.

Min's resistance against the Japanese was so strong that the Japanese government tried to compromise with her through Count Inouye who recommended a conciliatory policy toward Korea.⁹

Cleverest of the Queen's maneuvers was the one involving Park Yong-ho, a home minister. Exercising all her skills, the Queen separated Park from her father-in-law, then caused Park to break with the Japanese. Home Minister Park was constantly working with other members of the Cabinet, not only to see that improvements in taxation, general administration and facilities for public enlightenment were carried out, but also to provide against any Japanese influence which he considered fundamentally prejudicial to Korean independence. The Japanese under Inouye were finding that their schemes for effective permanent control in Korea were being opposed gradually by Park. Under the Queen's secret instructions, he had faced the conflict between Korean and Japanese interests and had chosen the former.¹⁰

The direct action which designed to expell Park out of office in

⁹K. Asakawa, The Russo-Japanese Conflicts: Its Causes and Issue (Boston; William and Co., 1904), p. 258. At this time there were two different policies held by political parties in Japan with regard to the Korean question; the radical policy advocated an immediate and complete overthrow of all opposition to the Japanese scheme in Korea; and the other was the moderate and conservative policy which had the same object of final absorption of Korea by pacific means.

¹⁰Weems, Hulbert's History of Korea, p. 283. See also, Lee, Han-kuk Dok-rip Un-dong Sa, pp. 141-142. The extreme misconduct of Japanese nationals in Korea - also promoted this move to overthrow Japanese influence in Korea.

Count Inouye himself had admitted: Japanese residents in Korea must be reformed. They are not only impolite, but often insult the Koreans. They are rude in their treatment of Korean customers and when there is some slight misunderstanding they do not hesitate to use weapons. Those who are not merchants, are still rude and violent.

Japan Gazette, June 29, 1895, quoted in Korean Repository, V. II, (1895), p. 310.

July came from Tai Wen Kun. In April, 1895, a new grievance incited Tai Wen Kun to a vigorous effort to get rid of the Home Minister. Tai Wen Kun's most beloved grandson, Yi Chun-yong, nephew of the King, was reported to have conspired with the Tong Hak members to depose the King, assassinate pro-Japanese cabinet members and assume the reins of power.¹¹ It was not clear that he had even connected with the plan, but the very fact that his name had been used in such connection was enough to send him into banishment on the island of Kyo-dong, off Kwang-ha.

This was a big political damage to Tai Wen Kun and a tremendous personal prize for Park Young-ho. It was Park who won the lasting gratitude of the King and Queen by exposing the machinations of Yi Chun-yong. Park's increasing association with the Queen, coupled with his growing popularity were the serious obstacles for the power of Tai Wen Kun.

Tai Wen Kun was determined that Park Young-ho should be expelled from the Cabinet. To this end he devised a scheme which with the probable sanction of the Japanese, seemed to promise success. He laid before the King grave charges of treason against Park, which though not believed either by the King or the Queen, convinced them that it would be impossible to shield him from probable destruction; for Tai Wen Kun would spare no pains to see Park put out of the way and it was evident that the Japanese would not take any strong measure to protect him. The Queen advised Park to escape before action could be taken on the charge of treason. He complied and forthwith escaped again to

¹¹Kwan Bo, March 29, 1895. "Report on Tai Wen Kun and Yi Chun-yong Conspiracy," J. A. (Korea), XXVIII, No. 208, pp. 78-79.

Japan.¹²

Thus Korea lost the service of one of the most patriotic Koreans. If the Japanese could have put Tai Wen Kun in the background and allowed Pak Young-ho to work out his plans on terms of amity with the Royal family, all the evils which followed might easily have been averted. It was this act of allowing Tai Wen Kun to carry out his scheme of personal revenge that caused the whole trouble; there has never been a time, before or since, when brighter hopes for Korea were more ruthlessly sacrificed.

To Japan the Queen was the greatest obstacle to the scheme of controlling the Korean government. After removing the Chinese obstacle, however, Japan was surprised to find that she had one more to liquidate. This time it was the Korean Queen. Queen Min is considered by many Korean historians to be the Elizabeth of Korea. She, like the illustrious Queen of England, had many personal shortcomings, such as vanity, love of flattery, extravagance and intolerance of opponents. But she was a woman of iron will, of intense patriotism, and of astute judgment. She firmly believed that the Koreans should manage their own affairs. She perceived instinctively that beneath all expressions of good will and official guarantee of Korean independence, Japan had ulterior designs with regard to Korea. She vigorously opposed the spread of Japanese influence as endangering Korean sovereignty.¹³

The Japanese Daily Advertizer, October 12, 1894 states:

¹²"The Downfall and Departure of the Minister of Home Affairs" Korean Repository, V. II (1895), pp. 268-270; Weems, Hulbert's History of Korea, pp. 283-284.

¹³Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchon, p. 84.

The Queen of Korea has always appeared to us as a personality even more noteworthy than her neighbor of Peking (the Dowager Tzu Hsi of China)----at any rate she has for many years exercised in the squalid Court of which she was the head, powers of mind and will--¹⁴a striking figure in any station and in any age."

The Japanese, disappointed with slow progress of their influence in Korea and blocked by the Queen in their desire to obtain a railway concession from Pusan to the Yalu River,¹⁵ recalled Inouye, their moderate minister to Seoul, and replaced him with Lieutenant General Miura as Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Korea. On his departure for Seoul politically and diplomatically immature General Miura stated of his future policy in Korea: "By profession a soldier, I have had no experience in diplomacy, I declined all their well meant offers" (the experienced diplomat's advice); "being content to rely on my own resources," (on the resources of a soldier); "I have a diplomacy all my own, which I propose to try in Korea, I believe that it is a fit place to try my own theory of diplomatic methods."¹⁶

On August 31, 1895, General Miura landed at Inchon and replaced Inouye on the following day. Upon his arrival at Seoul, Miura, as he expected, found the Queen's faction placing every obstacle in his way and the most powerful supporter of the Queen, Min Yong-whan, was sent

¹⁴Quoted in Korean Repository, II. (1895), p. 435.

¹⁵Seoul National University, Kuk-sa Kai-sul, p. 651.

¹⁶Quoted in Fred H. Harrington, God Mammon and the Japanese (Madison; University of Wisconsin Press, 1944), p. 263. General Miura was, withal, a strenuous man and is said to have considered the solution of the Korean difficulties merely a matter of prompt and vigorous action.

to the United States as Korea's minister.¹⁷

The Queen increased the personnel of her household, and restored many of her old extravagances so well remembered by the reformers. She had been further embittered by the sharp rivalry shown against her and the Min faction by Tai Wen Kun and his party. The Queen finally planned a coup d'etat, early in October, 1895, with a view to disbanding the soldiers trained by Japanese officers and replacing the pro-Japanese cabinet members with her faction.¹⁸ For a while it looked to the Japanese as if all their work and influence were to come to nothing. They had been blocked by the Queen. A crisis was imminent, and it was at this juncture that some of the Japanese in Seoul prepared plans to get rid of the Queen.

The new Japanese minister, Miura commenced immediately an anti-Queen and military diplomacy, supporting and establishing close relations with the Queen's enemy, Tai Wen Kun. The aged Tai Wen Kun asked Miura for assistance in effecting a radical change, and it was decided to grant it.¹⁹ Miura wished to strengthen the declining influence of Japan. Only one little "woman" stood in the way of both men's desires. Once she was liquidated, all must go well, they thought. On October 3, 1895, Miura; Sugimura, his first secretary; and Okamoto Ryunosuke, the Japanese adviser to the Korean Department of War, met in their Legation to decide upon their plan of operation. It was decided that the

¹⁷ Dong, Chon, Japanese Annexation of Korea: A Study of Korean-Japanese Relations (Ph.D. Diss., University of Colorado, Boulder, 1955), p. 175.

¹⁸ Queen's faction now turned to Russian power to expell Japanese influence from Korean Court. Lee, Han-kuk Sa, p. 458.

¹⁹ Korean Repository, III (1890), pp. 122-124.

operation was to take place only on condition that Tai Wen Kun definitely pledged himself to refrain from the actual administration of the country. Thus Miura secured from Tai Wen Kun a signed statement renouncing any claim to administrative power, in the event that success of the plot should make his faction predominant.²⁰ Tai Wen Kun was strongly anti-foreign but his personal rivalry against the Queen caused his cooperation with Japan.

Miura prepared plans to capture the palace, murder the Queen, and hold the King under Japanese control. Having no way of knowing of the Japanese plot, both the King and Queen seemed to feel safe from any attack. Miura had already brought over from Japan professional assassins, Soshi, to carry out the plot.²¹ On the night of October 8, 1895, Miura after consulting with his more experienced advisers at the Japanese Legation, engineered a coup d'etat in which a mob of Japanese Soshi, Korean adherents and members of the Kurentai²² and a Japanese army unit entered the palace and went at once to the royal apartments murdering the Queen and members of her family whom she had brought to power in the anti-Japanese struggle.²³

²⁰ Korean Repository III (1896), pp. 125-126. See Lee, Han-kuk Dok-rip Un-dong Sa, pp. 164-167.

This signed agreement between Miura and Tai Wen Kun was concluded at Tai Wen Kun's residence on October 7, 1895. This agreement further states: Kim Hong-jip (pro-Japanese) should be appointed as Prime-Minister to facilitate Japanese enforced reforms.

²¹ Hyo-jung, Yun, Pung-un Han-mal Bi-rok ("Secret Records on the Stormy End of Yi Era") (Seoul; Yadam Sa, 1931), pp. 132-135.

²² Kurentai in Japanese, meaning a special Korean army unit drilled and officered by Japanese. Korean call it as Hullyondae.

²³ Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchun, pp. 86-87; Eun-sik, Park, Hankuk Tongsa ("A Tragic History of Korea") (Seoul; Talsong Insoeso, 1945), p. 115.

The murder of Queen Min was according to the Korean official report, carried out in the following brutal manner:

In the early morning of October 8, 1895 the Japanese soldiers entered the Palace. They met at the front gate Korean guards and after killing the latter they went on. These Japanese Soshi, numbering about forty rushed with drawn swords into the private rooms, seizing all the palace women they could catch, dragging them round by the hair and demanding where the Queen was. This was seen by many, including Mr. Sabatin, a foreigner, connected with his Majesty's guard . . . After searching the various rooms, the Soshi found the Queen in one of the side rooms where she was attempting to hide, and catching hold of her cut her down with their swords . . . she was laid upon a plank, wrapped up with a silk comfort (used as bed-clothing) and taken out into the court-yard to a grove of trees not far distant in the deer park, and there kerosene oil was poured over the body and faggots of wood piled around and all set on fire . . . these Japanese Soshi . . . in order to make sure that they had done their work as ordered, took several of the women of the Court to the body and compelled them to identify it as that of Her Majesty . . . every precaution had been taken by the Japanese and the Korean traitors who were assisting them, to prevent Her Majesty Queen from escaping

Yi Kiung-chik (of noble blood and then Minister of the Royal House), . . . was killed with swords by the Japanese in His Majesty's presence. His Royal Highness, the Crown Prince, . . . was seized, his hat torn off and broken, and he was pulled about by the hair and otherwise maltreated. (Both the King and the Crown Prince however, were not "seriously injured.")²⁴

At about the time when the Queen was being killed, the Tai Wen Kun and Miura came into the palace accompanied by the Japanese soldiers and sought and obtained an audience with the King. At this audience, while still fearing of his life, the King of Korea was forced to sign three documents which read:

²⁴ A copy of the report prepared by Kwon Chae-hyong, Vice-Minister of Justice under pro-Russian cabinet, Kaeguk Obaek Sanyon Palwol Sabyon Pokoso ("Report of the August, 1895 Incident").

1. The Cabinet was thereafter to manage the affairs of the country.
2. Yi Chai-mium, who had accompanied Tai Wen Kun on his entrance into the palace, was appointed minister of the Royal Household.
3. A Vice-minister of the Royal Household was appointed.²⁵

When the King signed all these three documents, the Japanese troops were withdrawn from the palace. Thus the Japanese controlled the government as well as the Royal Palace including the Minister of the Royal Household. Tai Wen Kun became as a puppet of the Japanese and the King became a prisoner of the Japanese.

On the following day two proclamations were announced. The first proclamation stated that Tai Wen Kun was returned to inaugurate a change of cabinet. The pro-Queen ministers, Yi Pom-jim, and Yi Wan-yong were dismissed²⁶ and a full cabinet composed entirely of Japanese sympathizers were installed.

Then the second proclamation, signed by Tai Wen Kun himself which read in part:

I have now entered the palace to aid His Majesty, expel the low fellows, save the country and introduce peace. Every one should attend to their usual affairs and feel no alarm. Those who now interfere with me will have cause to repent it.²⁷

The palace gates were guarded by the mutinous Kurentai with fixed bayonets, who allowed a constant stream of Koreans to pass out. Very early in the morning, Mr. Walber, the Russian Charge d'affairs,

²⁵Kwan Bo, August 20, 1895.

²⁶Kwan Bo, August 22, 1895.

²⁷Ibid., August 20, 1895 Korean Repository II (1895), O. 389.

and Dr. Allen, the American Minister, came to the palace and sought audience with the King²⁸ but were told that the King was unwell and could not see them. They insisted, however, and succeeded in seeing the King, who told them that he still had hopes that the Queen had escaped, and besought their friendly offices to prevent further troubles. Immediately thereafter, these representatives paid a visit to the Japanese Legation to express displeasure and grave concern over the Japanese Minister's part in the shameful incident.²⁹

It soon became evident that the Japanese authorities in Seoul intended to deny any responsibility for the outrages committed. Despite the fact that the Queen had been murdered, the Japanese controlled Korean government issued an edict of deposition of the Queen, as if she was still alive, to the level of the lowest class.³⁰ The King refused to sign this edict; however, this edict was proclaimed by Tai Wen Kun.³¹ Miura and the pro-Japanese cabinet denied the crime committed and the new foreign minister, Kim Yun-sik said that not a single Japanese was present in the palace.³²

Miura stated in his dispatches to the Tokyo government that the origin of emeute was a conflict between Japanese drilled Korean troops, who desired to lay a complaint before his majesty, and the guards who

²⁸Lee, Hankuk Sa, p. 619.

²⁹J. A. (Korea), XXVIII, No. 359, pp. 494-495. Park, Hankuk Tongsa, pp. 180-182.

³⁰Kwan Bo, August 22, 1895.

³¹Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchon, p. 88.

³²Seoul National University, Kuk-sa Kai-sul 654.

tried to prevent their entrance into the palace.³³ However, when the news of the assassination of the Queen reached Japan, the Japanese government immediately denied all knowledge of and connection with the murder of the Queen. But the assassination of the Queen created such resentment among the Koreans and the foreigners in Korea that the Japanese government sent Komura, director of the Diplomatic Bureau, to Seoul to investigate the whole matter. The situation was so serious that soon Miura and the entire staff of the Japanese Legation were recalled and upon their arrival in Japan they were arrested and charged with the affair.³⁴ The fact of their arrest and trial was a distinct disclaimer on the part of the Japanese government that it was accessory to the Crime; and in spite of the utter inadequacy of the trial and its almost ludicrous termination, the Japanese government was not an official party to the crime, excepting in so far as the appointment of such a man as Miura can be called complicity.

But the vigorous action of the Japanese government in arresting Miura and putting him on court trial had a strong influence upon the course of events in Korea. The Korean public and the foreign representatives in Seoul were demanding that the murder of Queen Min should be investigated, and the responsibility for it placed where it rightly belonged. Russian, American, French and English representatives in Seoul were openly talking of not recognizing the new pro-Japanese Korean cabinet which was formed after the assassination of the

³³ Report on Palace Incident from Miura to Foreign Minister, Saion-ji, J. S. (Korea), XXVIII, No. 424, pp. 552-563.

³⁴ Lee, Hankuk Sa, p. 661.

Queen.³⁵ Accordingly, on November 26, the foreign representatives were invited to the palace, and it was announced in the presence of the King that the minister of war and the chief of police were dismissed.³⁶ On the following day the edict degrading the Queen was rescinded and the Justice Department tried and punished all guilty persons, except Tai Wen Kun.³⁷

A hearing by a Japanese Court which was held at Hiroshima fully established the undeniable fact that Miura initiated and organized the plans and gave the instructions to kill the Queen. The entire gang of conspirators including Miura was acquitted. The court then concluded that what happened after any of the accused entered the palace was so confused that it was unable to establish to adjudge anyone's guilts.³⁸

A "Copy of the Decision of the Japanese Court of Preliminary Inquiries", dated January 20, 1896, read:

The accused, Miura Goro, assumed his official duties as His Imperial Majesty Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary at Seoul on the 1st of September, the 28th year of Meiji (1895). According to his observations, things in Korea were tending in a wrong direction. The Court was daily growing more and more arbitrary, and attempting wanton interference with the conduct of State affairs . . . The accused felt it to be of urgent importance to apply an effective remedy to this state of affairs.

The decision arrived at on that occasion was that

³⁵ J. A. (Korea), XXVIII, No. 385, pp. 517-518.

³⁶ Kwan Bo, September 6, 1895. Cho Yi-yun, Minister of War, Kwon Yong-chin, Chief of police were of members of the mutineers who plotted the assassination of Queen Min. Cho and Kwon were the most ordinary men of inferior rank before Queen's assassination.

³⁷ Thirty Koreans were arrested and tried in Seoul Court, charged with participation in the murder of the Queen. Three were executed.

³⁸ Yun, Pung-un Han-mal Mil-sa, p. 146.

assistance should be rendered to the Tai Wen-kun's entry into the Palace by making use of the Kunrentai . . . the Japanese It was further resolved that this opportunity should be availed of for taking the life of the Queen, who exercised overwhelming influence in the Court. They at the same time thought it necessary to provide against the possible danger of the Tai Wen-kun's interfering with the conduct of State affairs in the future To this end, a document containing pledges required of the Tai Wen-kun on four points was drawn by Sugimura Fukushima . . . the Tai Wen-kun . . . gladly assented to the conditions proposed and also wrote a letter guaranteeing his good faith . . . Miura Goro further issued instructions to Umayabara Muhon, Commander of the Japanese Battalion in Seoul, ordering Commander of the Japanese to facilitate the Tai Wen-kun's entry into the Palace by directing the disposition of the Kunrentai troops, and by calling out the Imperial force for their support . . . Miura told them that on the success of the enterprise depended the eradication of the evils that had done so much mischief to the Kingdom for the past twenty years, and instigated them to dispatch the Queen when they entered the Palace With the Kunrentai as vanguard, the party then proceeded toward the Palace at a more rapid rate About dawn, the whole party entered the Palace thru the Kwang-hwa Gate, and at once proceeded to the inner chamber.

Notwithstanding these facts there is no sufficient evidence to prove that any of the accused actually committed the crime originally meditated by them For these reasons³⁹ the accused, each and all, are hereby discharged

In this report, the Japanese Court failed to mention what happened after the entrance of the assassins into the palace chamber because the motives to assassinate the Queen were established in cold-blood as the deliberately planned result of the conspiracy. But the conspirators who proceeded to the inner chamber to murder the Queen were discharged.

Japanese officials assumed virtual control in Korea, though they were careful to remain behind the scene. Tai Wen Kun remained at the King's side and resumed charge of affairs. But among the Korean populace

³⁹ "Official Report on Matters Connected with the Events of October 8th, 1896, and the Death of Queen Min," The Korean Repository, III (1896), 120-142.

there was deep dissatisfaction with the anomalous position of their King in the hands of what was popularly called "the Rebel Cabinet."

The Japanese attempt to minimize their responsibility and their unjust trial of the assassins failed to check the rising resentment of the Koreans against them. The Japanese had to abandon their aggressive policy in Korea; therefore they sent the former minister to Seoul, Count Inouye, to Korea in order to conciliate the resentful Koreans. On October 31, 1895, Inouye arrived at Seoul as a Special Imperial Envoy of Condolence to the King of Korea. Upon his arrival in Seoul, he called on American, Russian and English representatives and promised his willingness to expell Tai Wen Kun from power.⁴⁰ However, this was only a verbal conciliatory attitude toward foreign representatives.

The King, with the Crown Prince, was now a virtual prisoner in his own palace. There had been a small palace guard, loyal to His Majesty, under the command of the aged and infirm General Dye, but its number had been gradually depleted until when the palace was invaded by the Queen's assassins, it was contemptuously pushed aside and could do nothing. The King himself was in constant fear of assassination, and lived in such dread of poison that he secretly obtained from the home of an American citizen each day the only food that he dared to eat. The Japanese were lying low awaiting the subsidence of the storm of reproach which beat upon them from every side. Secure in the possession of their main objective, the killing of the Queen, they left everything in the palace to the care of their Korean henchmen there.

⁴⁰ Report from Inouye to Sai-on Ji, J. A. (Korea), XXVII, No. 425, pp. 562-564. Tai Wen Kun held an empty honor as a mere figure head.

The conservative faction, taking advantage of the popular resentment, gathered their forces to murder Progressive leaders and save the King from the "Japanese prison." On November 28, Yi Bom-jin, Yi Wan-yong and Yi Yung-young planned a counter-revolution to break into the palace and deliver His Majesty from the hands of the traitorous cabinet. This attempt failed because one traitor of the counter-revolutionary group secretly revealed the whole plan to the Acting Minister of Defence, O Young-jung.⁴¹ However, it reminded the Japanese of Korea's determination to resist her scheme in Korea.

Following this incident, (the Chun-sang Mun Affair) the Russians began to take an active leadership of the anti-Japanese party.⁴² On December 26, 1895, as a revenge on the Korean people, the Japanese forced on the King and the Cabinet the issuance of an edict against the wearing of top-knots which had long been a sign of Korean manhood.⁴³ This proved a good issue on which to arouse the people against Japan. In January, 1896 the Korean nationalists attacked the Japanese and the pro-Japanese Koreans in various provinces of Korea. This situation led

⁴¹Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchon, p. 94. Upon the failure of the plan, eight of the counter-revolutionarists were given asylum in the American Legation. American Minister Sill requested the use of American warship to convey them to safety but this request was denied by the American government.

⁴²Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchon, p. 95. Yun Chi-ho was one of the members of the anti-Japanese party and participated in Chun-sang Mun Affair.

⁴³Kwan Bo, November 14, 1895. The Top-Knot on the head of a Korean man was the traditional sign of his citizenship and manhood. A ceremony was held when the top-knot was raised, and Koreans were very proud of the custom. Therefore, when Yu Kil-jun, minister of Home Affairs of the pro-Japanese cabinet announced "the top-knot cutting ordinance", it stirred a great resentment among the people.

the government in Seoul to dispatch the majority of the palace guard to the areas of the uprising to put down the disturbances.

Taking advantage of this unguarded moment, Yi Pom-jin and Yi Wan-young, the leaders of the pro-Russian party, conferred with Carl Waeber, Russian Charge d'Affairs, and had him land 120 Russian marines from the Russian warship at Inchon on February 9, 1896. Russian marines with one cannon marched to Seoul reinforcing the légation guard.⁴⁴

⁴⁴J. A. (Korea), XXIX, No. 353, pp. 683-684; Mun, Kunse Ilbon yi Choson Chintu Sa, p. 523.

The King's Escape to the Russian Legation

Japan attempted to bring Korea under its rigid control, and at the same time to block every Russian move toward Korea. Japanese enforced reforms and the assassination of the Queen turned the Conservative faction toward Russia for the purpose of preserving Korean independence from the Japanese yoke. When the King of Korea escaped from the Japanese controlled palace to the Russian Legation, all Japanese attempts to control Korea had failed.

An aggressive Russian policy toward Korea was indicated when Alexis de Speyer arrived to take over the Russian Legation in Seoul on January 13, 1896. De Speyer had served as temporary head of the Russian Legation in Tokyo. He was a man of aggressive temperament who would replace the mild-mannered Waeber as Russian Charge d'Affairs in Seoul.⁴⁵ There was an immediate and obvious change in the tone which Russia assumed. From the very first, De Speyer showed plainly that he was sent to impart a new vigor to Russo-Korean relations because things had been developing too slowly. Accordingly De Speyer arrived on January 13, 1896, to take over the Seoul Legation and was actually the Charge d'affairs off the record on the Russian diplomatic list from February 13 to February 28 while Waeber received his credential for a Mexican post. But Waeber did not leave. With anti-Japanese Korean officials taking refuge at the Russian Legation and with considerable coming and going of secret messages between the palace and the Russian Legation,

⁴⁵Baron Rosen, Forty Years of Diplomacy (London; George Allen and Unwin Ltd., 1922), I., p. 126.

Waeber may have known for days in advance that the King would soon make an effort to become his guest.⁴⁶

The pro-Russian Korean leaders, such as Yi Bom-jin, Yi Young-yong and Yi Wan-yong had been secretly in contact with the Russian Legation and on February 10, 1896, Russian minister Waeber agreed to provide the King asylum at the Russian Legation.⁴⁷ Then Yi Bom-jin sent a secret letter to the King through a Palace woman informing the King that Tai Wen Kun and the Japanese were actively planning a plot to remove His Majesty from the throne and urged him to take refuge at the Russian Legation.⁴⁸

The frightened King immediately accepted this advice, and the plan was successfully carried out on February 11, 1896. The King and the Crown Prince arrived at the Russian Legation in the early morning and were at once received courteously. Yun Hyo-jung in his Pung-un Han-mal Birok ("Secret Records on the Stormy End of the Yi Era") gives a vivid description of how the King escaped the palace saying that:

"The King and Crown Prince left the Palace in closed chairs such as palace women used. Their escape was

⁴⁶ Lee, Hankuk Sa, p. 729.

⁴⁷ Whang, Han-kuk Kenyun Sa, pp. 193-194. Pro-Russian group had bribed the Russians by promising that they could change the situation and would lead Korea to serve Russian interests.

⁴⁸ "Report on Pro-Russian Yi Pom-jin conspiracy" J. A. (Korea), XXIX, No. 356, pp. 692-693.

According to the Secretary of the American Legation, Dr. Allen, when the King asked him whether it would be wise to seek help from Russia, he endorsed the proposal and brought the Russian minister to the House of a Korean Officer entrusted with the royal plan. Harrington, God, Mammon and the Japanese, pp. 288-289.

carefully planned. A number of similar chairs were carried in and out the several gates in order to familiarize the guards with the idea that they were paying many visits. The palace ladies also brought good food to the guards. Such acts of kindness naturally lulled their vigilance toward ladies chairs. So, when, early in the morning of February 11, two women's chairs were carried out by the attendants, the guards took no special notice."⁴⁹

Russian Charge d'Affairs Waeber was a close friend of the dead Queen and welcomed this opportunity for extending Russian influence in Korea. As it was the custom in Korea for the King to work at night and sleep in the morning, the members of the cabinet who resided in the palace did not discover the King's escape for several hours. For the pro-Japanese cabinet the situation had totally changed. Upon arriving at the Russian Legation, the King suspended the anti-top-knot ordinance, and declared his pro-Japanese cabinet members, Kim Hong-jip, Chang Pak, Yu Kil-jun, Chung Pyong-ha to be traitors.⁵⁰

The organization of a new cabinet was immediately carried out. No time was lost in issuing a royal edict justifying the necessity for taking refuge in a Russian Legation and promising to punish the real plotters of the Queen's assassination.⁵¹ This was posted on the gates

⁴⁹Quoted in Yun, Pung-un Han-mal Bi-rok, pp. 168-170. See also Hwang, Han-kuk Kenyun-sa, pp. 193-194.

⁵⁰The King's escape to the Russian Legation also aroused great unrest among the Japanese residents in Korea, who immediately sensed the blow to Japanese influence in Korea. Ito Hirobumi, Hisho Russian Gaiko-Hen ("Classified Documents on Diplomatic Relations of Japan") (Tokyo: Sobun-koku, 1935), III, pp. 109-111.

⁵¹Kwan Bo, February 11, 1896. The new cabinet was composed of pro-Russian and pro-American members. However, it was heavily pro-Russian; Park Chong-ho as Prime-Minister, Yi Wan-yong as Foreign Minister, Yi Pom-jin as Minister of Justice and Chief of Police. All these three ministers were the leaders of the pro-Russian faction.

of the Russian Legation and at various points throughout the city of Seoul. The city hummed with excitement. Later in the day, a second royal edict was issued, calling on the soldiers to protect their King, to cut off the heads of the chief traitors, and bring them to him.⁵² The ex-cabinet members, Prime Minister Kim Hong-jip and Chong Pyong-ha, Minister of Agriculture, were stoned to death by angry people. Another minister, O Yun-jung, was murdered at his country home and the Foreign Minister, Kim Yun-sik was exiled to Che-ju island.⁵²

The heads of the foreign representatives in Seoul paid their respect to the King, the Japanese minister, Komura being the last to do so. For Japan, thrown into consternation by the move of the King, this was the historical hour of her temporary defeat in international diplomacy. However, Komura mustered up some courage and urged the King to return to the palace. The King, disliking the restriction imposed on him by the pro-Japanese cabinet and having now been completely relieved from anxiety as to his personal safety, was in no mood to accept the cunning proposal. He refused. In fact, he remained in the Russian Legation during the following year conducting affairs of State from it, and consolidating the strength of the pro-Russian government.⁵³

Waeber gained much more for his country than his successors, the protectorate over the King's person being only one of his triumphs. In view of the King's trust in Waeber and the responsibility added to the Charge d'Affairs duties by the King's visit, the old hand was restored to the position he had never in fact relinquished.

⁵²Ibid., February 12, 1896.

⁵³Lee, Hankuk Sa, p. 737.

This liberation of the royal personage terminated at least temporarily the entire basis of Japanese influence in Korea built up since the Sino-Japanese war. The Japanese failure also intensified the hostilities of Koreans, who now not only hated the Japanese but regarded them with contempt. The anti-Japanese sentiment brought Koreans of the various classes closer to each other than they had been at any time.

To Russia this event was the crowning triumph of her policy in Korea. From the time that the King began residing at the Russian Legation, his hosts showed that they would put up with no interference with the liberty of the King and his freely chosen cabinet. However, it became apparent that Russia was at the same time taking advantage of her favorable position to advance her own interests.⁵⁴ From February, 1896, most of the Russian Pacific fleet was assembled at Inchon.⁵⁵ This fleet added up to 58,838 tons---only 70 tons less than that of Great Britain, the largest Pacific fleet.

On March 16, 1896, the King appointed Min Yong-whan as a Special Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to Russia for the coronation of the Czar. Ambassador Min was welcomed by the Russian Foreign Minister, Roanov with exceptional hospitality as a sign of Russo-Korean friendship.⁵⁶ While Korea's representative to Russia was receiving a warm reception, the Japanese were appealing to the

⁵⁴Lee, Cho-son Tong-rip Un-dong Sa, pp. 189-190.

⁵⁵The North-China Herald (Shanghai), LXI-XLXI, February 28, 1896, p. 331.

⁵⁶Kuk-sa Pyun-chip Yi-won Hae (National History Editorial Committee), Min Chung-chong Kong Yuko ("The Memoirs of Min Yong-whan") (5 Vols., Seoul, 1958), III, pp. 123-124.

King of Korea to return to the palace and condemning the Russian Minister in Seoul for his protection of the King.⁵⁷

During the festivities at the coronation of Nicholas II in St. Petersburg, May, 1896, the Korean Ambassador presented a request from the Korean King that the Tsar guarantee the safety of the King of Korea while he was residing at the Russian Legation and send military and economic aid to Korea.⁵⁸ The Russian Emperor interpreted this request as the establishment of a protectorate over the smaller country. The Russian ruler, inexperienced in international diplomacy, saw it as "nothing but a very proper acknowledgement of homage to his power and greatness" and was "utterly unsuspecting of any danger lurking under a promise of protection given by a great monarch to a humble ruler of a small and insignificant kingdom".⁵⁹

In reply to the Korean King's request, the Russian Foreign Minister, Lobanov negotiated with Ambassador Min. On May 28, 1896, Lobanov and Min signed an agreement which read as follows:

I. The King, during his sojourn in the Russian Legation, will be protected by the Russian guard. He may remain in the Legation as long as he himself shall deem needful and convenient. The Russian government may assure moral guarantee of his safety. The Russian detachment, now located at the Legation, shall remain there at orders of the Russian Minister, and in event of need, may even be reinforced.

II. For the settlement of the question of the instructors, there shall be dispatched to Seoul a Russian officer of high rank whom the Russian government will charge

⁵⁷ Lee, Hankuk Sa, p. 742.

⁵⁸ Min Chung-chong Kong Yuko, IV, pp. 326-327. See also Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sungsang Yakchun, pp. 105-106. Yun Chi-ho was an interpreter for Ambassador Min.

⁵⁹ Rosen, Forty Years of Diplomacy, I, p. 125.

entering with negotiations with Koreans on this subject-- the officer, first of all, be charged to occupy himself with the question of setting up a King's body guard. An equally competent person shall be dispatched from Russia for the study of Korea's economic situation and to ascertain the financial measures necessary.

III. The question regarding the sending of Russian advisers to cooperate with the Korean government is answered by the preceding point. The above-mentioned trustworthy persons will, under the direction of the Russian minister, serve as such advisers in the military and financial departments.

IV. The conclusion of a loan to the Korean government will be considered as soon as the economic situation of the country and the needs of the government shall have been ascertained.

V. The Russian government agrees to the amalgamation (of its overland telegraph line with the Korean) and will supply the assistance requisite to this undertaking.⁶⁰

During the King's residence at the Russian Legation, some of the progressive movement continued to work. The pro-Russian party in power had carried out several remarkable reforms without Russian enforcement. Needed reforms were carried through; torture was abolished in the courts; a concession was given to an American Company to construct a railway between Seoul and Chemulpo (Inchon); various schools were founded with many imported Western teachers. The other reforms were put into practice through royal edicts, such as careful control over government expenditure; employment of able foreign advisers; reorganization of provinces; better royal postal service; and a new Council of State was instituted. The Russian cared "more for substance than shadow," and that they did not force the reforms of 1896 as the

⁶⁰ Boris A. Romanov, Russia in Manchuria, 1892-1906 (Translated by Susan W. Jones, Ann Arbor; J. W. Edwards, 1953), p. 106. Korea Treaties and Agreement, pp. 81-109. See Lee, Han-kuk Sa, p. 750.

Japanese had done previously.⁶¹ The North China Herald (September 4, 1896) admired the Korean reforms of 1896 with saying that: "Reformation of Korea is advancing. The advance is quite slow, it is true, but quite solid."⁶²

The remarkable freedom of action enjoyed by the King during his residence at the Russian Legation came to be recognized generally by the Koreans. Russia now had taken the place that China formally occupied and so far had followed the old policy of China in leaving the King absolute freedom to deal with his affairs of state. It is, however, the fact that certain advantages were gained for Russia and for its French partner. In July, 1896 a mining concession near the Tumen River was given to Russia. In the same month the right to build a railway from Seoul to Uiju, across Yalu from Antung, was granted to a French syndicate.⁶³ On August 29, 1896, the Valadivostok merchant, Jules Bryner was given monopoly rights over the extensive forests of the Yalu and Tumen region.⁶⁴

On October 19, 1896, Colonel Poutiata, with other Officers arrived at Inchon in the same Russian warship which brought Ambassador Min to

⁶¹W. H. Wilkinson, The Korean Government (Shanghai; Kelly & Walsh Ltd., 1897), pp. 356-357. Some examples of Laws concerning reforms were Law No. I, "Organization of Courts of Law", dated March 25, 1896; Imperial Ordinance No. 37, "Function and Organization of local officials" etc.

⁶²The North China Herald, (Shanghai), LXI - XLXI, September 4, 1896, p. 632.

⁶³The French Syndicate worked under Russian direction.

⁶⁴Lee, Han-kuk Sa, pp. 780-781. See "Foreign Concessions and Their Development," Transactions of the Korean Branch of the Royal Asiatic Society of Great Britain (Seoul), VII (1916), Part I, pp. 273-274.

Seoul from Russia. Russia's dispatch of Colonel Poutiata's group, for the purpose of training a royal body guard and possibly additional troops, was based upon the Korean-Russian Agreement which was signed by Ambassador Min and Foreign Minister Lobanov. It was clear, however, that this initial contingent of Russian military instructors had come at the specific request of the King. The pro-Russian cabinet in power quickly expelled the Japanese military instructors and placed the newly arrived twenty Russian officers and Russian weapons were purchased from Valadivostok. A Russian language school was established in Seoul and all important government posts were occupied by members of the Pro-Russian faction.⁶⁵

⁶⁵Seoul National University, Kuk-sa Kei-sul, p. 656; Lee, Kuk-sa Tai-kwan, p. 469.

Japanese Compromise Policy with Russia

The Japanese at first regarded the Korean political change by the King's flight to the Russian Legation as a Russian plot successfully carried out at a very opportune moment, and a violent attack was made upon the government's foreign policy by the opposition party. But Japan did not take a strong policy in Korea although Japanese Prime Minister, Ito, was emphasizing a great Japanese colonization program on Formosa with Japanese people for its future development. Now the best thing to do in Korea was to retain the residue of her interest through a compromise with Russia.⁶⁶ As a result of this policy, Premier Ito, General Yamagata and Count Inouye, the proponent of a moderate policy in Korea, came to the conclusion that to prevent a clash of Russian and Japanese interests in Korea, Japan must come to an agreement with Russia.⁶⁷ Realizing that she was not yet ready for a trial of strength with Russia, Japan gave in and admitted the predominance of Russian interests in Manchuria, but she did ask in return clarification of the Russian position in Korea. Numerous efforts were made by Japan to come to an understanding with Russia both at St. Petersburg and Tokyo regarding the Korean issue.⁶⁸

⁶⁶ Mun, Kunse Ilbon yi Choson Chimtu Sa, pp. 531-532.

⁶⁷ J. A. (Korea), XXIX, No. 401, pp. 729-730. The Japanese commenced a new approach, i. e., diplomacy to regain what she had lost.

⁶⁸ Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Komura Gaikosi ("History of Komura Diplomacy") (Tokyo; Akadani Shoten, 1953), I. p. 82; Akagi, Japan's Foreign Relations, 1542-1936, p. 271.

On May 14, 1896, the representatives of the two powers in Seoul, Waeber and Komura, signed a protocol, commonly known as the Waeber-Komura protocol, which read as follows:

The Representatives of Russia and Japan at Seoul, having conferred under the identical instructions from their respective governments, have arrived at the following conclusions:

Article I. While leaving the matter of His Majesty the King of Korea and his return to the palace entirely to his own discretion and judgement, the representatives of Russia and Japan will friendly advise His Majesty to return to that palace when no doubts concerning his safety could be entertained. The Japanese representative, on his part, gives the assurance that the most complete and effective measures will be taken for control of Japanese Soshi.

Article II. The present cabinet ministers have been appointed by His Majesty of his own free will, and most of them held ministerial or other high offices during the last two years and are known to be liberal and moderate men. The two representatives will always aim at recommending His Majesty to appoint liberal and moderate men as ministers who show clemency to the subjects.

Article III. The Representative of Russia quite agrees with the Representative of Japan that in the present state of affairs in Korea, it may be necessary to have Japanese guards stationed at some places for the protection of the Japanese telegraph line between Pusan and Seoul, and that these guards, now consisting of soldiers, who will be distributed as follows: 50 men at Taiku, 50 men at Kaheng and 10 intermediate ports. This distribution may be liable to some change, but the gendarmes will afterward gradually be withdrawn from each place where peace and order have been restored by the Korean government.

Article IV. For the protection of the Japanese settlement in Seoul and the open ports against possible attack by Koreans, two companies of Japanese troops may be stationed at Seoul, one company not to exceed 200 men. These troops will be quartered near the settlements and shall be withdrawn as soon as no apprehension of such attacks could be entertained.

For the protection of the Russian Legation and

Consulate, the Russian government may also keep guards not exceeding the number of Japanese troops at these places, and which will be withdrawn as soon as tranquility is restored.⁶⁹

This agreement, though presumably a quid pro quo agreement, was in reality a Russian victory. Under Article I, the representatives of Russia and Japan were to advise the King of Korea to return to his own palace when no doubts concerning his safety could be entertained. This decision was to rest entirely upon the discretion of the King, but his presence in the Russian Legation naturally made him more likely to accept the Russian minister's interpretation of what would be the safe time.

Under Article III, Russia acknowledged that it was necessary for the Japanese to maintain a force of two hundred "gendarmes" along the Japanese telegraph line from Pusan to Seoul, but this was less than the three companies of infantry which previously were deployed along this line.

Under Article IV, Japan was allowed to maintain two companies of soldiers in Seoul, one in Pusan and one in Wonsan, for the protection of her settlements---each not to exceed two hundred men. Russia had the right to have a corresponding force for the protection of her legation and consulates. In view of the great disparity of Japanese and Russian interests in Korea, this article meant that Japan must reduce her forces, whereas, Russia had Japan's consent to increase hers. Furthermore, Article I practically represented an admission of the Japanese complicity in the coup of October 8, by including the provision that: "The Japanese Representative on his part, gives the assurance

⁶⁹ Korea; Treaties and Agreements, pp. 21-22; J. A. (Korea), XXIX, No. 458, pp. 789-792.

that the most complete and effective measures will be taken for the control of the Japanese Soshi."⁷⁰

On July 3, 1896, Lobanov and Li Hung-chang, a Chinese Representative, signed a fifteen year defence alliance which provided that "in the event of any aggression directed by Japan against Russian territory in Eastern Asia, or the territory of China or that of Korea" the two contracting parties should "support each other reciprocally with all the land and sea forces they may be able to dispose of at the moment," and that neither one should make peace without consent of the other.⁷¹

It is true that Russia was not playing an open game with Japan. This is clearly shown by comparison of the Russian promise to Korea, with the Russian agreement with Japan---the Yamagata---Lobanov protocol of June 18, 1896:

Article I. The Japanese and Russian governments should, with the object of remedying the financial embarrassments of Korea, counsel the Korean government against all unnecessary expenses and to establish an equality between expenditure and revenue. If, as a result of the reform which should be considered indispensable, it should become necessary to have recourse to foreign debts, the two governments should of a common accord, render their support to Korea.

Article II. The Japanese and Russian governments should try to abandon to Korea, in so far as the financial and economic situation of that country should permit, the creation and the maintenance of an armed forces and of police organization of native subjects, in proportion sufficient to maintain internal order without foreign aid.

Article III. With a view to facilitating communication with Korea, the Japanese government shall continue to administer the telegraph lines which are actually in its possession.

⁷⁰Asakawa, Russo-Japanese Conflict, pp. 262-263.

⁷¹William L. Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902 (New York: Alfred A. Knopff, 1936), I. 404.

Article IV. In case the principles above expounded require a more precise and more detailed definition, or if in the future other points should arise about which it should be necessary to consult, the Representatives of the two governments should be instructed to discuss them amicably.⁷²

This agreement had come because the strong militarist group of Japan, and particularly its leading statesmen such as Ito and Yamagata, thought that a direct understanding with Russia could and should be reached.⁷³ On the other hand, Russia could not hope to compete with the Japanese forces in the Far East until the Trans-Siberian Railway was completed. It was therefore essential that the Russian government come to some sort of temporary agreement with Japan about Korea. Japan sent Yamagata to the Coronation ceremonies at Moscow with the handsomest offer the Japanese ever made. He proposed to Russia that they divide Korea at the thirty-eighth parallel of latitude---the northern part to be a Russian sphere, the southern part (with the capital, Seoul) a Japanese sphere.⁷³ But Yamagata's proposal was rejected on the ground that Russia had recognized the independence and integrity of Korea. The real reasons for this decision were probably these three: In the first place, Lobanov may have feared complications with England and the United States. In both countries there was a strong sentimental and religious interest in Korea. Secondly, southern Korea, which was to be abandoned to the Japanese, was the most developed and the richest part of the country, and from the strategical and naval viewpoint, was of very great importance. Russian naval men had been trying to decide upon the port in

⁷²J. A. (Korea), XXIX, No. 478, pp. 815-818. Text in Korea; Treaties and Agreements, pp. 23-24.

⁷³Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Komura Gaikosi, I. pp. 82-83.

Korea that would best meet their needs. Curiously enough, there seems to have been little mention of Wonsan. Naval men were rather partial to Masampo at the southern tip of the Peninsula, and for that reason would have opposed the relinquishment of all influence in the south. Thirdly, the Russians desired the independence of Korea and hoped eventually to be able to lay their hands on the whole country and therefore objected to a premature division of the inheritance.⁷⁴ As Count Lamsdorff said in a later memorandum: "The fate of Korea, as a future integral part of Russian Empire by forces of geographical and political conditions, had been determined upon by us."⁷⁵

Had both parties intended to observe the conditions of the protocol, it would have signified for Japan that Russia had renounced separate counsels and aid to Korea in military and financial spheres; for Russia, that the integrity and independence of Korea, and the equal interests of both contracting parties in supporting it, had been confirmed; and for Korea, existence "in position of equilibrium on the point of a needle." However, the efficacy of the protocol can best be known by the fact that sometime later, the Russian government stated that the limitation of loans to "mutual accord" was invalid, as Russia had a previous agreement with Korea, which was unaffected by the protocol.⁷⁶

It has been pointed out that Japan compromised reluctantly with Russia in Korea for she was not ready to meet Russian power by armed clash. Then why did Russia "cooperate" with Japan? What was the real

⁷⁴Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, 1890-1902, I. p. 405.

⁷⁵Romanov, Russia in Manchuria, p. 105.

⁷⁶Nelson, Korea and Old Orders in Eastern Asia, p. 236.

factor in her foreign policy formulation toward Korea? Russia recognized her vital interest in Korea, and this interest could have been carried out following the assassination of the Queen and the King's flight to the Russian Legation. But Russian primary interest in Korea (1896) was to secure the independence of Korea in order to check the Japanese advance northward. Russia intended to make the conquest of Manchuria as her main diplomacy.⁷⁷ However, Russia did establish her ascendancy in Korea and it was her not Japan that counted in 1896..

It is to be noted that in these two Russo-Japanese Agreements both Russia and Japan recognized the independence of Korea, but these were done without consultation with the Korean government. Korea, most affected nation in these agreements was not even officially informed of these agreements until March 2, 1897. When the Korean government did receive the official note from the government of Japan, Korean Foreign Minister, Yi Wan-yong, wrote to the Japanese Foreign Minister:

I must call your attention to the fact that as my government has not been party to these agreements, its liberty of action, as an independent state, can not be restricted by these provisions.⁷⁸

⁷⁷ Seoul National University, Kuk-sa Kai-sul, pp. 653-656.

⁷⁸ Korean, Treaties and Agreements. pp. 23-24. Note of the Minister of State of Foreign Affairs of Korea (Yi Wan-yong) to the Minister of Foreign Affairs of Japan, March 2, 1897. These Agreements, Waeber-Kimura and Amagata-Lobanov were a clear impairment of Korean sovereignty.

CHAPTER III

RUSSIAN ACTIVE INTERFERENCE AND ITS FAILURE

Russian Aggressive Interference with Korean Government

The Russian commitment which first demanded attention was a proposed loan to Korea. In June, 1896, the French offered a loan to the Korean government. Despite the fact that the two powers, Russia and France were allied, Lobanov sounded an alarm and advised the Korean government not to enter into any major financial transaction with France until the arrival of the Russian financial official.¹

As the first step in that direction, an official of the Russian government was hastily dispatched to Korea to investigate the situation. The man chosen was Witte's factotum, Pokotilov. His many communications with St. Petersburg during the summer of 1896 emphasized the necessity of Russia's acting without delay. On his first meeting with the Korean King, that Potentate asked for a loan of three million yen with which to repay Japan, so that the Queen could be buried without using Japanese money. At the same time, rumors predicted the opening of a Korean bank with British help.² Pokotilov, having found Korean finances in a poor condition, decided that temporarily they could be let alone, but that they should be placed under a Russian adviser. In the early part of November, 1896, he left the Korean capital.

¹Lee, Hankuk Tongrip Undong Sa, pp. 326-327.

²Romanov, Russia in Manchuria, p. 109.

In November, 1896, the Russian Foreign Minister began to move. On November 11, he submitted the charter of a Russo-Korean bank to examination by the cabinet's Financial Committee. He also agreed, in principle, to the Russo-Chinese bank making a loan to the Korean King whenever it became opportune, with one condition---that the Korean custom revenue was to come under a Russian financial representative. At the same time, he requested the Korean minister of Foreign Affairs, Yi Wan-yong, to direct every effort toward activating such a move.³

Meanwhile, the Russian Naval Department was looking for an ice-free port in Korea and was seriously considering Masanpo.⁴ In January, 1897, Witte, Russian Finance Minister, was still dallying over the idea of a Russian financial adviser for Korea and urging Waeber to get a pledge of full support for the adviser from the King.

On February 20th, 1897, the King of Korea with the Crown Prince left the Russian Legation for their new palace perhaps because he was disillusioned with Russian economic ambitions or because he had seen the Russo-Japanese agreements which mutually guaranteed independence of Korea. The King, however, expressed his obligation to the "friendly spirit of the Russian government and his appreciation of the hospitality of the Russian minister, and proclaimed that his country was again in peace".⁵ The Russians did not limit the personal freedom of the King nor did they protest the establishment of the new palace. Taking

³Romanov, Russia in Manchuria, p. 110.

⁴Masanpo is one of the best harbors in the Southeast Korea. In the Spring of 1895, Nicholas II said: "Russia absolutely needs a port which open throughout whole year." "This port must be located in the Southeast of Korea." Quoted in Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, I, p. 172.

⁵Kwan Bo, February 20, 1897.

Taking advantage of the King's return to the new palace, the Japanese in April attempted to gain the King's friendship through the Emperor of Japan.⁶ But the King's warmed friendship continued with the Russians.

On September 26, 1897, K. A. Alexeiev arrived in Seoul as a financial adviser to the Korean government and began slowly to gain full financial understanding of the peninsula, and to lay the foundations for a Russo-Korean bank and for telegraphic connection between the two countries. The guards at the King's new palace and the training of the Korean army were under the supervision of Russian military advisers.⁷ Thus Russian influence in Korea by September became definitely supreme.

The Japanese interest in Korea was an economic penetration as the Japan Times, a leading Japanese newspaper stated: "No one can doubt that the prevention of a hostile occupation of the Korean peninsula is of absolute necessity to Japan in carrying out her program of peaceful expansion in the domain of Commerce and Industry".⁸ Japan was particularly concerned with the activities of the Russian military advisers in Korea, and she demanded that Russia withdraw them from Korea. To this the Russian government in 1897 replied to Tokyo saying, "Russia sent military advisers to Korea at the request of the King of Korea, and therefore we could not refuse the request of the ruler of a country with whom we have diplomatic relations."⁹

⁶Korean Repository, IV (1897), p. 159.

⁷Independent (Seoul), September 26, 1897.

⁸Quoted in Dong, Chon, Japanese Annexation of Korea, p. 208.

⁹Quoted in A. M. Pooley, The Secret Memoirs of Count Tadasu Hayashi, p. 278.

The Russians however, did not attempt to obstruct the plans of the nationals of the Western powers in Korea. The Korean government appointed Mr. Stripling, a British subject, as an adviser to the Police Department. A mining concession was granted to a German syndicate, an American was put in charge of a normal school; Dr. Brown, a British citizen, continued to direct the work of the Finance Department, and the work on the Seoul-Inchon Railway was pushed vigorously by an American syndicate.¹⁰ The Russians merely followed the Chinese policy to retain her power in Korea without exercising it.

Of the action of the pro-Russian government in appointing non-Russian foreigners to important posts of government and in granting concessions to western powers, it may be interpreted that the Korean government realizing Russian ambition was determined to retain her independence by skillful manipulation of foreign interests.

The Russian control over the Korean military establishment proceeded faster than its domination of finance and general administration. As late as November, 1897 an effective Russian hegemony had not been developed as far as the expansionists desired or as might reasonably be expected from the unequivocal program which Labanov evidently laid down in his agreement with Ambassador Min in St. Petersburg.

The position of the aggressivists surrounding the Tsar was strengthened by the fortuitous presence of Alexis de Speyer in Tokyo as temporary head of the Russian Legation. He exerted his greatest influence on the

¹⁰ Mun, Kunse Ilbon yi Choson Chintu Sa, pp. 533-535.

formulation of Russia's aggressive policy in Korea.¹¹ According to Baron Rosen, De Speyer was "one of those young diplomatic hopefuls who are always ready to recommend to their government forward policies in the hope of thereby acquiring credit for patriotism". Thus says Rosen "this particular young gentleman proceeded to propose unilateral Russian action directly contrary to the cautious course which was urged by the later Minister, Hitrovo, in Tokyo".¹² De Speyer "kept assuring the Foreign Department in his reports--which were much relished in high places--that it was perfectly safe to go ahead with any plans we might wish to put through in Korea."¹³

De Speyer, new Russian Charge d'Affaires in Seoul had served as temporary head of the Russian Legation in Tokyo from July, 1896, to August, 1897. While he was in Tokyo, he managed to influence Russian policy toward Korea--even more than he did later during his months as head of the mission in Seoul. He was a man of aggressive temperament who had replaced the mild-mannered Waeber as Russian Charge d'Affaires in Seoul. There was an immediate and obvious change in the tone which Russia assumed. From the very first, De Speyer showed plainly that he was sent to impart a new vigour to Russo-Korean relations as things had been going too slowly. His plan seemed to include control of the Korean army, acquisition of the timber, the mineral and railroad enterprises, domination of Korean finance and Russian naval bases at Deer Island off Pusan.¹⁴

¹¹Rosen, Forty Years of Diplomacy, p. 142. Minister Waeber was a moderate realizing that an aggressive Russian policy would antagonize Koreans.

¹²Ibid.

¹³Ibid., p. 143.

¹⁴Ibid., pp. 143-146.

By the end of September, 1897, he had persuaded the King to appeal to Russia for military protection and for a secret agreement that Russia would send a substantial number of troops to Seoul to guard the King and his palace. Under his active diplomacy, the royal guard and five battalions of the Korean infantry (numbering about 3,000) came under Russian instruction.¹⁵

On October 2, 1897, in a private audience with the Korean King, De Speyer demanded the immediate appointment of K. A. Alexeiev as Custom's Administrator. A month of negotiations followed. The Korean Foreign Minister Yi Wan-yong pointed out that MacLeavy Brown's contract had several years to run, but De Speyer angrily replied that this was no answer, as Alexeiev had been sent by the Imperial Russian government at the request of the Korean ambassador to St. Petersburg to assume control of the Korean Financial Department. De Speyer, in ominous tones, indicated that if Alexeiev were not assigned to his duties, he would report to the Russian Emperor. The frightened King decided that it would be "reasonable" to employ Alexeiev.¹⁶

On October 24, 1897, De Speyer excitedly demanded Brown's ouster and Alexeiev's employment, and an answer or an Imperial audience within twenty four hours. Meanwhile, Alexeiev had managed to round up evidence of Brown's self-interest in handling of revenue received from customs.

¹⁵Independent (Seoul), September 30, 1897.

¹⁶The Korean Repository (October 18, 1897), V., p. 33. Alexeiev is not to be confused with Admiral Alexeiev, Commander-in-chief of Russian Naval Forces in Pacific Water.

The Korean Custom and Treasury was under the charge of Brown, a British and an experienced member of the Chinese Custom Service. His contract was run until December, 1900.

The Korean Foreign Minister, who still refused to sign Alexeiev's contract, was forced to resign in favor of Cho Pyong-sik. Cho finally signed the pact with De Speyer on November 5, 1897.¹⁷ Finally, Brown was dismissed; but he refused to leave. The terms of Alexeiev's employment as "Chief Adviser and Chief Superintendent of Customs" were: control and supervision of all Korean financial matters and recommendation of a new Chief Commissioner who was to be subordinate to him.¹⁸

Commenting on this turn of events, the Korean Repository said: "Some months ago Korea gave Russia a gun, now she has handed her purse to Russia!"¹⁹ and the Independent attacked the appointment of Alexeiev as an illegal action of the new Foreign Minister,²⁰ Cho Pyong-sik.

The British policy in Korea at this time was concerned with expanding its commercial interest and England was determined to protect her own interest in Korea. The dismissal of Brown by Russian pressure seems to have antagonized England greatly, and the power alignment over Korea (1897) appeared to be England and Japan against Russia.²¹

Thus in the delicate balance of power between Russia and Anglo-Japanese alignment there was an opportunity for Korean government to pursue a more independent policy. On October 12, 1897, the King of Korea proclaimed himself Emperor of Taihan Cheguk²² ("Great Han Empire").

¹⁷The Text of the Cho-De Speyer Agreement is found in The Independent (Seoul), November 10, 1897.

¹⁸Weems, Korean Reform Movement, p. 391-392.

¹⁹Korean Repository, IV (1897), p. 434.

²⁰The Independent (Seoul), November 7, 1897.

²¹Asakawa, Russo-Japanese Conflict, pp. 274-276.

²²Kwan Bo, October 12, 1897. King Yi Hyeung assumed the title of Emperor.

This was an attempt to put himself on equal status with the monarchs of Russia, China, and Japan and free Korea from foreign interference. Russia, Japan and all treaty powers with Korea recognized the imperial title of the Korean ruler. On the same day, the Emperor of Korea issued the following Royal Edict.

. . . . The future of the Empire has been transferred to a solid rock and prosperity has replaced anxiety and worry. The establishment of independence and maintenance of freedom are solely due to the merciful help of Heaven and the continuation of our glorious Koreans. We will endeavor to do what is right and proper for our country hereafter, and we trust our subjects will renew their loyalty and patriotism in helping us to carry out our aim. Our hope is that every citizen in the land will consider the country's interest first before thinking of his private affairs. Let us²³ all join our hearts to preserve the integrity of our Empire.

In the next month, Russian influences received a setback when a squadron of ten British warships arrived at Inchon and restored Dr. Brown as supervisor of the Korean customs, a position which he had, in fact, never relinquished. Alexeiev remained as Brown's subordinate. Hulbert writes the following account of this incident:

When it became evident that a scarcely concealed plan was on foot to oust a British subject from the Korean Finance Department, Great Britain, by concentrating war vessels at Inchon, caused the Russians to alter plans temporarily.²⁴

Russia, however, was determined to maintain her dominant position in Korea. Russian Finance Minister Witte told the German ambassador to the Czar on November 13, 1897:

To let Japan into Korea now meant to make a Russo-Japanese war inevitable, and to relinquish the financial management of Korea and lose along with it the specially

²³ Kwan Bo, October 12, 1897.

²⁴ Homer B. Hulbert, The Passing of Korea, (New York; Doubleday & Co., 1906), p. 158.

protected position of the Russian bank, these obviously meant the opening of²⁵ Korea's door wide, primarily to Japanese influence.

When Pusan harbor had been opened in 1895, MacLeavy Brown marked off a portion of Deer Island as having better water than the mainland. In August, 1897, however, Waeber selected twenty acres on the island, lying partly within the area marked off by Brown, as the location for a Russian coaling station. Since Japan had a concession of the same character there, and both powers enjoyed the same privilege in the chosen harbor, no doubt Russia believed no objection would be raised to the accommodation. However, Great Britain, Germany and the United States all protested, claiming part of the disputed territory. But Cho Pyong-sik, the Korean Foreign Minister, asserted that there was no legal document proving its reservation.²⁶

In December, 1897, five ships of the Russian Asiatic Squadron arrived in Chemulpo and made a show of force. De Speyer, backed by Admiral Doubassov, temporary Far Eastern Commander-in-Chief for Admiral Alexeiev, again brought up the matter of Deer Island. The Korean officials remained reluctant.²⁷ On January 25, 1898, the Russian gunboat, Sivoutch, arrived in Pusan harbor, and its officers proceeded to stake out and plant trees on the chosen acreage. The land belonged to Japanese citizens who protested; the officers yielded to the Japanese Consul three days later when agreement was reached that the trees would reimburse the owners for use of their land.²⁸

²⁵ Romanov, Russia in Manchuria, p. 149.

²⁶ Independent (Seoul), August 18, 1897.

²⁷ Ibid., December 10, 1897.

²⁸ Ibid., January 20, 1897.

De Speyer, in a diplomatic countermove, demanded 280,000 square meters of island for Russian settlement in Mokpo and Chinnampo, which had only 900,000 meters set aside for each of the general foreign settlements. This demand was withdrawn shortly following a few diplomatic courtesies. But the Koreans now began to manifest ill feelings toward the Russian demand for Deer Island. Even Russia's old friend, Cho Pyong-sik, was reluctant to comply, and was forced out as Foreign Minister in favor of Yi To-chae, who was compelled to introduce the Russian request in the Korean Council of State, but immediately thereafter, absented himself pleading sickness.²⁹ The Russians attempted to reshuffle the cabinet and demanded appointment of an acting Foreign Minister who would approve their concession. Under Russian pressure an Acting Foreign Minister, Min Chong-muk, who would favor the Russian demand, was appointed.

On February 25, 1889, Acting Foreign Minister Min deciding to dispense with the approval of the Council of State, sent a note to De Speyer apologizing for delay in granting the concession and expressing his hope for better Russo-Korean relations. The entire Korean Council of State resigned in protest to Min's arbitrary action on the ground that it had been given no chance to participate in the deliberations which led to the Acting Foreign Minister's decision to grant the concession; but the resignation was not accepted by the Emperor.³⁰ The Foreign Minister, Yi, asked to be dismissed as incompetent, but the Emperor

²⁹ "Deer Island Episode," Korean Repository, V. (1898), pp. 109-113.

³⁰ Independent (Seoul), February 26, 1898.

would go only so far as to accept Acting Foreign Minister Min's resignation, leaving Yi in office. De Speyer then applied pressure on the Emperor by threatening to withdraw the Russian advisers. He thus succeeded in having Min returned to office as Minister of Foreign Affairs.³¹

On February 38, 1889, the Russo-Korean Bank opened its doors. A Russian managed the mint in Inchon. The combination of these circumstances provoked Dok-rip Hyup Huai ("Independence Club")³² to action. The Independence Club then sent a letter to the Finance Minister, asking if it were true that the Korean Finance Department had taken the government's money from two Korean banks and deposited it in the Russo-Korean bank, authorizing that bank also to collect and disperse all government revenues. At this time, the Council of State tried to resign for the third time in protest to De Speyer.

On March 7, 1898, indignant over the anti-Russian feelings that were mounting among the Koreans, De Speyer sent to the Korean government an ultimatum accusing the government of ingratitude and demanding that a decision be made within twenty-four hours as to whether further Russian assistance was needed. The ultimatum ran as follows:

Recently I have been informed that there exists a deplorable condition of affairs in Seoul: Many idlers among your

³¹Independent (Seoul), February 28, 1898; Chong, Hankuk Kenyon-Sa, I, pp. 176-177. Even though there was a veiled Russian ultimatum, the manifestation of Korean independence led by the Dok-rip Hyup Huai, prevented the Russians from obtaining land on Deer Island. Korean Repository, V, (1898), p. 159.

³²So Jai-pil organized a political party called Dok-Rip Hyup Huai ("Independence Club"). This advocated independence and sovereignty of Korea. Hereafter referred to as the Independence Club.

people, claiming to be gifted politicians, create disturbance by opposing Russian interests. This state of affairs naturally causes great surprise to my Imperial Sovereign, the Emperor of Russia. At the request of your Imperial Sovereign and your government, the Russian government had sent military instructors to drill the soldiers and to guard the palace, and an adviser for your financial department. This action, on the part of my government, plainly indicates Russia's intention of helping your country as a neighbor and her desire to strengthen your government. But your government did not seem to appreciate the importance of Russia's action at the time and now your government freely prevents Russia from accomplishing the advantages and beneficial results for your country which she intended. The present attitude of your government is so plain that Russia cannot endure this condition much longer. Therefore, my Emperor has graciously ordered me to report fully to your Emperor and inquire of your government definitely whether Korea still desires to be benefited by Russian help or not, and if the military instructor and finance adviser are not considered necessary by your Emperor and your government, my government will make some other arrangement according to the circumstances, but your government must maintain your³³ independence in the future according to its ability.

On March 10, 1898, the Independence Club held Korea's first mass meeting, demanding that De Speyer's offer to withdraw the Russian advisers be accepted. The Korean Emperor, urged by the Club, agreed to accept the Russian offer saying, "your officials have accomplished their work, and it is convenient for us to have them relieved from our service. I feel grateful to you for suggesting the idea of relieving these officials."³⁴

Upon receiving his Majesty's reply, De Speyer told the Korean Foreign Minister, sarcastically, that his government was glad to learn that Korea could maintain her independence without further

³³Quoted in "Right about Face" in Korean Repository, V. (1898), p. 113.

³⁴Korean Repository, V. (1898), pp. 114-116.

assistance from foreign advisers and that the Russian advisers would leave Korea.³⁵ The Emperor was so pleased that he wanted to send an ambassador to St. Petersburg to thank the Tsar for his consideration, but Russia promptly announced that such plenipotentiary would not be received.³⁶ On March 16, 1898, De Speyer ordered the Russian experts to return to Russia. On April 12, N. Matiunic relieved De Speyer in Seoul and on April 27, the Russo-Korean Bank was closed, and Korea seemed to become really free and independent of foreign countries. On March 7th the Tsar's government "congratulated Korea on having reached a point where they could dispose with" foreign advisers. This Russian action "provoked the most favorable comment."³⁷ Quoting the Moscow Gazette (March 21, 1898) the North China Herald said: "Russia was about to retire from Korea and would henceforth consider Korea beyond her sphere of interest."³⁸ "This event", remarked the Korean Repository, "was the first time in the history of the Yi Dynasty when the Emperor of Korea became really free from outside influence."³⁹

The haughty and self-righteous diplomacy of De Speyer could not have impressed the Korean Court favorably. At any rate, Russian dominance thus collapsed, partly because of Russian errors of judgement but mainly because of the rise of a genuine Korean independence movement manifesting the patriotic spirit of the Koreans.

³⁵ "Russia in Korea", The Saturday Review LXXXV (April 23, 1898), p. 549; Chong, Hankuk Kenyon Sa, I, pp. 210-212.

³⁶ "Russia in Korea", The Saturday Review LXXXV (April 23, 1898), p. 549.

³⁷ Korean Repository, V. (1898), pp. 116-117.

³⁸ Korean Repository, V. (1898), p. 158.

³⁹ Korean Repository, V. (1898), p. 158.

The Rise of the Dok Rip Hyup Huai ("Independence Club")

The Independence Club was formed by the Young progressives in 1896 following the King's escape to the Russian Legation. A leader of the young Korean progressives was So Jai-pil, a naturalized citizen of the United States. In 1884, he joined Kim Ok-kyun in the emeute against the Min faction. When the emeute failed, he was exiled to the United States where he received the degree of Doctor of Medicine at George Washington University. He was invited by the Korean government to be advisor to the Privy Council in early 1896. He succeeded in introducing many constructive reforms.⁴⁰

So Jae-pil was interested in liberalism and democracy, which he thought could be realized in Korea through enlightened reforms and popular education. "The main purpose of my return," he said "was to educate the people and cultivate leadership." He also wished "to establish a completely independent Korea".⁴¹ He did not propose that the independence of Korea should be maintained by any new rejection of contact with foreign governments and people. He advocated the vital need of foreign assistance in education and in industrial development. But such aid should always contribute to the fundamentals of the platform: "Korea for Koreans." The gradual though steady development of Korean resources with Korean capital, as far as possible under

⁴⁰To-tae, Kim (ed.), So Jai-pil Paksa Chaso-jon ("Autobiography of Dr. So Jai-pil") (Seoul; Sunonsa, 1949), pp. 149-162. So Jai-pil was of noble birth and belonged to the generation of young Koreans who came into contact with western ideas in 1870's.

⁴¹So Jai-pil Paksa Chaso-jon, p. 198. Soon after his return to Korea the King offered the post of Foreign Minister in the pro-Japanese cabinet. But he declined.

foreign tutelage should be done. The speedy translation of foreign textbooks into Korean that the youth could have access to the great things of history, science, art without having to acquire a foreign tongue: and long life to His Majesty, the King.⁴²

However, some of his innovations interfered with the private schemes and privileges of the conservative cabinet ministers. They informed the Emperor that So Jai-pil was not a servant of his but a servant of the Korean people, which at that time was regarded as a treason against the King.

Therefore, So Jai-pil decided to serve Korea as a private individual. On April 7, 1896, he started both the first Korean newspaper and English newspaper in Korea, known as Dok-rip Sinmun (The Independent). The paper fearlessly advocated reform, independence of Korea, and supported every effort to promote good government which could make a strong and free Korea.⁴³

In addition to his newspaper work, So Jai-pil organized a political party. This party, Dok Rip Hyup Huai ("Independence Club") had an original membership of approximately thirty persons, including both high-ranking government officials and civilians.⁴⁴ On November 21, 1896, the party constructed an Independence Arch in Seoul to replace the gate of Welcoming and Blessing, where Korean Kings for centuries, had

⁴²Weems, The Korean Reform and Independent Movement, 1881-1898, p. 231.

⁴³So Jai-pil Paksa Chaso-Jun, p. 213.

⁴⁴The Independent (Seoul), July 4, 1894. Among them were: An Kyong-su, the Minister of Police Affairs; Yi Yun-yong, the Minister of Finance; Yi Wan-young, the Minister of Foreign Affairs; Yi Chae-yun, mayor of Seoul.

greeted the envoys from Chinese Emperors.⁴⁵ The erection of such an Arch also impressed the people with the reality of the independence of their country. The club opposed foreign intervention in Korean affairs, and advocated instead adoption of a sagacious policy on the part of the government designed to strengthen the country through its own efforts. They emphatically opposed the delegation of the country's military and financial affairs to foreign advisers.⁴⁶ The objectives of the Club could be best explained by the following passage from the memorandum which the Club presented to the Emperor on February 20, 1898:

We, Your Majesty's humble servants desire to state that two important factors constitute an independent and sovereign state, namely; first it must not lean upon another nation nor tolerate foreign interference in the national administration; second, it must help itself by adopting a wise policy and enforcing justice throughout the realm. The power of establishing these two great principles had been invested to your gracious Majesty by Heaven above. Whenever this power is destroyed there is no sovereignty.

The object of erecting the Independence Arch and organizing the Dok Rip Hyup Hwai by your humble servants is to reverence your Majesty's August throne and to strengthen the hearts of the people in order to maintain our dynasty and the independence of our nation.⁴⁷

As indicated previously, its fundamental aim was to make an independent and strong Korea that could stand alone before the world. The members of the Club were also interested in social and material development of the nation as well as its independence. Some of these objectives to quote So Jai-pil, were:

to discuss matters concerning national improvements and customs, laws, religions and various pertinent affairs

⁴⁵ So Jai-pil Paksa Chaso Jon, p. 213.

⁴⁶ Leaders of Independent Club attacked Russia's interference with Korea's military, diplomatic and financial affairs.

⁴⁷ Independent (Seoul), February 20, 1898.

of foreign lands. One of the main objectives of the Club is to create public opinion which has been totally unknown in Korea until lately. The Dok Rip Hyup Hoi is really the center of distributing useful information. It is therefore more of an educational institution than a political wigwam as is supposed by some. These weekly meetings⁴⁸ produce wonderful effects upon the thoughts of the members.

When Russia's power in Korea became evident and her demands for concessions increased, the Club held public meetings in Seoul and drafted a letter to the Emperor vigorously attacking the Russian ambitions and the concessions made by the Korean government. The younger members of the Club led by Yun Chi-ho, Lee Sung-man (Syngman Rhee) continued their radical activities. Street meetings continued, some anti-Russian handbills were posted. Anti-Russian feeling mounted rapidly among the population in Seoul.⁴⁹

When the Russian minister De Speyer submitted an ultimatum accusing the Korean government of ingratitude and demanded to know whether further Russian assistance was needed, the Club welcomed this opportunity to hold a mass meeting to urge that the Emperor dismiss the Russian financial and military advisers.⁵⁰ The Emperor yielded and dismissed the Russian advisers.

On August 3, 1898, the Emperor came to the conclusion that he would like to have a foreign body-guard. C. R. Creathous, American adviser in the Korean Justice Department was sent to Shanghai to find

⁴⁸Independent (Seoul), March 13, 1898. See also "Dok Rip Hyup Hoi (Independent Club)" Korean Repository, V. (1898), p. 286.

⁴⁹Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchon, p. 189.

⁵⁰Chong, Han-kuk Kenyun Sa, I, 212. About 8,000 persons attended the mass meeting in Seoul manifesting anti-Russian sentiment. Chong was one of the radical group within the Independence Club. His book is one of the best sources on the Club's activities.

the personnel for the Emperor's body-guard. Thirty men of various nationalities were recruited and they arrived in Seoul on September 15th.⁵¹ This move caused intense excitement and resentment and the Club was in the fore-front of the protest that was made on the grounds that the presence of foreign body-guards for the Emperor suggested weakness of the independence of the nation. Again, the Emperor yielded to popular clamor and dismissed the newly arrived foreign body-guard.⁵²

On September 20, 1898, the Club held another mass meeting to which representatives of all classes were called. The following articles were formulated and presented to the cabinet for imperial sanction:

1. Neither officials nor people shall depend upon foreign aid, but shall do their best to strengthen and uphold the Imperial power.

2. All documents pertaining to foreign loans, the granting of concession, in fact every document drawn up between the Korean government and a foreign party or firm, shall be signed and sealed by all ministers of the State and the president of privy council.

3. Important offenders shall be punished only after they have been given a public trial and ample opportunity to defend themselves.

4. To his majesty shall belong the power to appoint ministers, but in case a majority of the cabinet disapproves the Emperor's nominee he shall not be appointed.

5. All sources of revenue and methods of raising taxes shall be placed under the control of the Finance Department, no other department or officer being allowed to interfere therewith; and the annual estimates and balances shall be made public.⁵³

Several of these measures strike directly at the powers which

⁵¹Independent (Seoul), September 15, 1898.

⁵²Kwan Bo, September 25, 1898.

⁵³Weems, Hulbert's History of Korea, p. 319; T. H. Yun, "Popular Movement in Korea", Korean Repository, V. (1898), pp. 465-569.

had been held for centuries by the Emperor himself and it cannot be supposed that His Majesty would listen willingly to the voice of the common people when they demanded such far reaching innovations. In such a country as Korea the clearly announced statement of the common people as to their wishes carries with it the implication that they have come to the point where they are ready to make revolution if their demands are not complied with. On the 5th of November the Emperor ordered the carrying out of these five articles.⁵⁴

The increasing influence of the Club was feared not only by the conservative Korean officials but by some of the Foreign representatives, such as those of Japan and Russia, who did not relish seeing Korean public opinion become aroused against foreign influence.⁵⁵ The Club played an important role in the actual success of governmental reform, the withdrawal of Russian financial advisers and military instructors from Korea. The activities of the Club was a genuine Korean independence movement characterized by self-reliance rather than reliance on foreign support or influence.

⁵⁴Independent (Seoul), November 5, 1898.

⁵⁵Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchun, pp. 118-119.

Suppression of the Progressive Reform Movement

The Conservative elite felt that they lacked sufficient physical power to oppose a popular uprising in support of drastic reforms led by the progressive Independence Club. Hence, temporary concessions were made with no idea of real compliance. This was immediately followed by measures designed for securing a counter demonstration. The instrument selected for this purpose was the old-time Peddler's Guild.⁵⁶ This was an extinct institution, but the name had survived, and the Conservatives used it to bring together large numbers of men who were ready for any sort of work that would mean pay.

The plot against the Club was masterminded by Cho Pyong-sik, the incumbent vice-minister of the State Council. Cho produced an anonymous letter alleging that the Club intended to proclaim a republic on November 13, 1898 and elect Park Chong-yang, the incumbent premier, as president; the vice-presidency and all cabinet appointments were to be filled by the Club officers. The Emperor soon yielded to the intrigue around him and on the basis of this letter the arrest of the leaders of the Club was ordered early on the morning of November 5. Seventeen were arrested and within a few hours an imperial order disbanding the Club was issued.

Its first president, Ahn Kyong-su, escaped to Japan, viciously charged with complicity in the murder of Queen Min. Yi Wan-young, who replaced him in the presidency, was bought off with an appointment as

⁵⁶ It held a truly feudal relation to the government, often preparing the roads and escorting officials on their journeys, acting as detectives, and forming militia according to occasion.

a provincial governor. Yun Chi-ho, (and last) president of the Club was awakened in the middle of the night by a police detective who came to arrest him. Pleading for a few moments of privacy in which to dress, he escaped and fled to an American missionary school, Pai Jai Hak Dang, where he was safe under the protection of the American flag.⁵⁷ The streets were crowded with police and soldiers with drawn bayonets. Edicts were posted branding the nationalist-reform leaders as traitors.

Instead of dispersing in compliance with the Imperial order the assembled Club members went in a body to police headquarters and asked to be arrested. This is a peculiarly Korean mode of procedure, the idea being that if put on trial they would be able to shame their adversaries and incidentally embarrass the administration, for the prisons would not suffice to hold the multitude that clamored for incarceration. A surging crowd was massed in front of the Supreme Court demanding the release of the prisoners who had been accused, as the anonymous placards announced, of conspiring to establish a republic! The popular feelings were too strong for the courage of the Peddler Guild and they remained in the background. The agitation continued until the authorities were either frightened into submission or, deeming that they had shown the Club a glimpse of what they might expect, released the arrested men.⁵⁸ But the Club interpreted this to be a vindication of its policy and attempt to follow up the defeat of the conservatives by demanding the

⁵⁷Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchon, p. 124.

⁵⁸Weems, Hulbert's History of Korea, p. 321. When attempts to persuade the demonstrators to leave were unsuccessful, the use of arms was considered. Foreign Minister Min Chong-muk asked the opinions of the British and American representatives in Seoul all of whom were appalled at notion. Ibid, p. 314.

arrest and punishment of the people who had played the trick upon their organization. As these men were very prominent officials and had the ear of the Emperor, it was not possible to obtain the redress demanded. So the month of November was given over to popular demonstrations. Popular meetings were frequent but the crowd did not have the determination to come to a showdown with the government.

The Conservatives saw this and gauged the resisting power of the malcontents. The offensive tactics of the latter were confined merely to free speech and the Conservatives determined to see what they would do when on the defensive. Accordingly, on the morning of November 21st the Peddlers attacked the people who had gathered as usual to discuss the stirring question of the times. The people of Seoul City took side with the Club and fights ensued between them and the Royal Peddlers, supported by the government. Riots took place. In order to protect certain worthies from justice, the government came near plunging the whole city into anarchy and ruin.

On the 26th of November in the midst of this chaotic state of things the Emperor granted a great general audience outside the gates of the palace. The Emperor, in the presence of the representatives of the treaty powers and of officials, most graciously and solemnly promised to the people:

1. That the peddlers should be dispersed.
2. That the persons who manufactured the fabrications against the Club should be punished.
3. That the Club should be re-established again by Imperial decree.
4. That the Six measures so definitely and distinctively

promised by His Majesty should be carried out.⁵⁹

Again it was mere promise, calculated to bridge an actual and present difficulty. The members of the Club should have recognized this. The Emperor was surrounded by men inimical to a radical reform program, they had the support of the police and the army as well as the peddlers. The Club had not a single prominent representative in any really responsible and influential government office.⁶⁰ They simply had the precarious voice of Korean popular feeling to sustain them.

Having secured this public promise of the Emperor, the Club should have waited patiently to see what would happen. If then the Imperial promises were not kept they should have waited and worked for a time when public sentiment among the leading men would compel reform. The eventual downfall of the Club was not solely blamed upon the government. As Yun Chi-ho himself confesses, "The Popular meetings had gone beyond the control of the Club and the meetings, restarted on the 6th of December against sober advice, became careless and impudent. On the 16th of December the Privy Council recommended the recall of Park Young-ho⁶¹ from Japan. The popular meeting had the imprudence to endorse this action. The more conservative portion of the people revolted against the very mention of the name. Suspicion was excited that the popular agitations had been started in the interests of Pak Yong-ho and they instantly lost sympathy of the people."⁶²

⁵⁹The Independent (Seoul), November 26, 1898. T. H. Yun, "popular movement in Korea," Korean Repository, V. (1898), p. 468.

⁶⁰When the Independence Club actively delved into the political sphere, most of the moderates (those with government positions) withdrew from membership. Chong, Han-kuk Kenyun-Sa, I, pp. 398.

⁶¹Pak Yong-ho attempted to overthrow the government in 1895 and had been exiled in Japan. Lee Sung-man (Syngman Rhee), young radical leader of the Club proposed that all the political exiles in Japan be pardoned and that Pak Yong-ho be named as chairman of Privy Council.

⁶²Quoted in Weems, Hulbert's History of Korea, pp. 323-324.

The government seized this opportunity and ventured to use violence in dispensing a handful of men who attempted to continue the fruitless demonstrations. The enemies of the liberal and progressive party had used this opportunity to the fullest extent, and when it was seen that the Club movement had at last been deprived of its strongest support, the popular voice, its enemies came down upon it with cruel force.

In spite of voluble promises to the contrary large numbers of the reform party were arrested. Its remaining leaders scattered and took refuge in foreign compounds. And thus came an end to a political party whose aims were to modernize and strengthen the nation and at the same time to maintain the independence of the Korean Kingdom.

As in Japan, positive and successful reform was possible only from the top. The Korean government, like the Chinese, made a few concessions and promises to the advocates of reform, but grudgingly and only under pressure. Every opportunity to eliminate the source of the pressure was sought by the ruling elite. Therefore, the task of governing Korea was solely left to self-righteous and often corrupt conservatives who fancied that their rule might be perpetuated through the manipulation of international rivalries.

An appraisal of the international status of Korea from the Sino-Japanese War to the turn of the century reveals that she had now entered fully into the Western state system and renounced completely her allegiance to an international order founded on Confucian principles. However, there was the almost helpless physical condition of the nation---a nation corrupt, underdeveloped, archaic, and buffeted about by the stresses of modern power-politics.

But conditions were generally good and, from 1898, Korea enjoyed

comparative prosperity, and there were undoubted signs of progress. Many foreigners were doing business in the country, more schools were started, the army was supplied with modern weapons, and drilled along modern lines, native newspapers flourished, and Korea entered the World Postal Union.⁶³

Since there was no single foreign overlordship, a tendency toward Confucian statism appeared. Being only recently released, however, from the status of a nation traditionally under the hand of a stronger power, Korea gave little evidence of an ability to control her own affairs properly. Since the Emperor had divested himself of his Japanese and progressive advisers in 1896, the Korean government had become more and more conservative, tending toward the administration on the Confucian pattern, rather than that of the west.

⁶³Seoul National University, Kuksa Kai-sul, pp. 432-433; Major Herbert H. Austin, A Scamper Through the Far East (London: Edward Arnold, 1909), p. 176.

CHAPTER IV

RUSO-JAPANESE DIPLOMATIC COMPETITION, 1899-1904

The Nishi-Rosen Protocol

The Russian loss of her influence in Korea was due to a large extent to the active nationalistic movement of the Independence Club. But this was not the only reason. By this time, Russia had become more concerned with her position in Manchuria than in Korea. In order to facilitate her advance in Manchuria, it was necessary for Russia to avoid conflict with the powers, particularly with Japan. What Russia had at this time in mind was the leasing of Port Arthur and she decided to buy off the Japanese by making concessions in Korea.¹

On March 27th, 1898, Russia obtained from China a lease of Liaotung Peninsula where the harbor of Port Arthur and Dairen are located.² This Russian move was directed toward Japan as a demonstration of her supremacy in the East. Russia leased Port Arthur after Germany had leased Kiaochow Bay including the city of Tsingtao,³ but her lease of Port Arthur led England to seize Wei-Hai-wei.⁴ The Japanese government

¹Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, II. p. 471.

²John V. A. MacMurray, Treaties and Agreements with and concerning China (2 Vols.; New York: Oxford University Press, 1921), I. pp. 119-212.

³Ibid., pp. 112-118.

⁴Great Britain was opposed to any alienation of Chinese territory, and when Russia leased the Liaotung peninsula, the British sought a counter-weight and leased Wei-hai-wei in Shantung Province for as long a period as Port Arthur would remain in the Russian possession. Convention for the Lease of Wei-hai-wei between Great Britain and China signed on July 1, 1898.

was indignant over the Russian move, and it became necessary for Russia to pursue a conciliatory course with Japan, which Count Witte explained.

(In order) to pacify them (England and Japan) we obligated ourselves to build a free commercial port, in the vicinity of Port Arthur. This failed to satisfy the Japanese. Fearing a clash with that country we were forced to yield ground to it in Korea. We withdrew our soldiers and military instructors from that country and we recalled our counsellor to the Korean Emperor, who in a short time had acquired complete influence over the finance of the country.⁵

Japanese Foreign Minister Nishi, quick to take advantage of the weak diplomatic position of Russia, proposed to Rosen, Russian Minister in Tokyo, that an agreement be made which would help to avoid interference by Japan with Russian policy in Manchuria, and by Russian with Japanese policy in Korea. Japan also, unprepared for a trial of strength with Russia, returned to her previous policy of conciliation in order to safeguard her vital interests in Korea.

Rosen agreed and forwarded the Japanese suggestion to his government. Russian Foreign Minister, Lobanov's reply was delayed, but when it arrived, it said only that Russia could not declare Korea outside her sphere of influence. The matter was allowed to rest. But since something had to be done to allay Japan's excitement with regard to Russia and Korea, Rosen was allowed finally to negotiate.⁶ The resulting agreement, more favorable to Japan than Russia, was signed in Tokyo on April 25, 1898, and subsequently this agreement became the basis for the lengthy negotiations preceding the Russo-Japanese war.⁷

⁵ Abraham, Yarmolinsky, The Memoirs of Count Witte (Garden City; Page & Co., 1921), p. 106.

⁶ Rosen, Forty Years of Diplomacy, pp. 157-159.

⁷ Asakawa, Russo-Japanese Conflict, pp. 271-272.

This agreement not only recognized the independence of Korea but it also included in the second article the desirable principles of the former agreement, and gave full recognition to the economic interests of Japan in the peninsula. The entire protocol read as follows:

Article I. The Imperial governments of Japan and Russia definitely recognize the independence and the perfect sovereignty of Korea, and mutually engage to abstain from all direct interference in the internal affairs of that country.

Article II. Desirous of removing all possible cause of misunderstanding in the future, the Imperial governments of Japan and Russia mutually engage, in case Korea should have recourse to the counsel and assistance of either Japan or Russia, not to take any measure regarding the nomination of military instructors and financial advisers, without having previously arrived at a mutual accord on the subject.

Article III. In view of the great development of the commercial and industrial enterprise of Japan, in Korea, as also of the considerable number of the Japanese subjects residing in that country, the Russian Imperial government shall not obstruct the development of the commercial and industrial relations between Japan and Korea.

Close examination of this agreement indicates that it put Russia and Japan on an equal footing of abstention, with the exception that Japan was given an economic free hand in Korea. Thus Russia recognized Japanese influence in Korea while Japan recognized Manchuria as out of her sphere by not opposing directly Russia's lease of Port Arthur and Dairen. This "exchange policy although it was not clearly defined in the protocol, constituted the Japanese Russian policy in 1898."⁹

The Nishi-Rosen agreement was favorable to Japan in two particular ways. Inasmuch as it signified a measure of Russian retreat, it gave

⁸ J. A. (Korea), XXXI, No. 164, pp. 182-184; Asakawa, Russo-Japanese Conflicts, pp. 271-272.

⁹ Akagi, Japan's Foreign Relations, p. 174.

the Japanese new stature and prestige. Also by recognizing Japanese interests it encouraged the further growth of Japanese economic projects, a factor which had accompanied political efforts since the opening of Korea.¹⁰ The Daiichi Bank had formed the core of economic development since its establishment in Korea in 1878. In the succeeding years its share in the economic life increased as it served in the role of a central bank of Korea, exercising its extensive powers through the promotion of business, the issuing of bank notes, the regulation of the coinage, and the collection of custom receipts.

By August, 1898, Japanese economic interests held a predominant place in Korea. More than three quarters of Korea's foreign commerce was carried on with Japan. Japanese merchants outnumbered any other foreign group and, settled largely in the towns, they controlled most of the shipping and the fishing industries along the coast. On August 21, 1898, Ito visited Korea, where he stated for a civilized and independent Korea:

The sole object of the Japanese has always been to assist Korea . . . to be a civilized and independent state. Japan's good wishes for Korean independence are all the more sincere and reliable because her vital interests are bound up with those of your country. A danger to Korean independence will be a danger to Japan's safety.¹¹

A month following Ito's speech (August 21), the Japanese obtained a concession for the Seoul-Pusan railroad and numerous other rights, such as mines, coastal fishing privileges, inland navigation, and whaling.¹²

¹⁰ Makoto, Hori, Nichiro Senso Zengo ("The Russo-Japanese War, Its Prelude and Aftermath") (Tokyo; 1940), pp. 18-21; Harrington, God, Mammon and the Japanese, p. 305.

¹¹ Quoted in Dong, Chon, Japanese Annexation of Korea, p. 243.

¹² Hung-su Kang, Chosun Tongnip Hyoltu Sa ("History of the bloody struggle for Korean Independence") (Seoul; Koryo Munwha Sa, 1946), pp. 17-21.

As a result of this Russo-Japanese division of the spoils in Korea, it was apparent that Korea was in the process of being divided into two spheres of influence: the Japanese predominant in the south and the Russians in the north. However, Russia soon returned to Korea to compete with Japan more energetically than ever.

The Renewal of Rivalry

With the coming of 1899 the existing compromise "exchange policy" of 1898 between Japan and Russia came to an end. Russo-Japanese rivalry in Korea was renewed with the arrival in Seoul of A. Pavlov of Russia and Hayashi of Japan as ministers early in 1899. A. Pavlov, had been Russian Charge d'Affairs at Peking before coming to Seoul. Prior to his arrival Russian influence in Korea had been declining somewhat. Pavlov had orders from his government to adopt a new policy of pure intrigue, and by maintaining in positions of power Koreans hostile to the Japanese, to harass and injure Japanese interests in every way possible.¹³

From this time on until the final rupture in 1904, Russo-Japanese interests in Korea constantly clashed, and unfortunate Korea was to suffer from aggressive demands and vigorous protests of these rival powers. Being caught between the two rival neighboring powers, Korea in 1899 attempted to neutralize herself through the help of a third power. Still regarding the United States as a possible guardian of Korea, the Emperor of Korea requested the American minister in Seoul to approach President McKinley. The American minister in Seoul, Allen, interviewed the President and the Secretary of State, Hay, but President McKinley

¹³Rosen, Forty Years of Diplomacy, pp. 216-219. The Nishi-Rosen Convention did not settle the Korean question. Russia remained intermittently active in Korea pressing demands for concessions on the government and trying to secure a port for her use. Japan worked feverishly to strengthen her position. Evidently, the two parties interpreted the convention differently. The Japanese thought that the convention had placed Korea at its disposal, but when it became obvious that the Russian government did not intend to leave Korea completely to Japan, the Japanese government began to strengthen its navy and army.

was not interested in the Korean problems.¹⁴

At this time, Japan had been preparing to meet Russia by force. Japan adopted an aggressive policy both in her diplomacy and armament to advance in Korea and to meet Russia. Russia, however, determined to secure naval ports in the peninsula, namely Masanpo and Chinhai Bay¹⁵ for she deemed the Korean peninsula indispensable to her commercial and naval purposes in the Far East and to the protection of her interests in Manchuria.

Even after the Deer Island affair ended in fiasco and the Russians obtained the Port Arthur lease, they still did not cease trying to acquire the port in Korea. On May 1, 1899, the port of Masanpo was opened for foreign trade. By the terms of the opening, a foreigner was permitted to buy land within a three-mile radius of the port. On the sixth day of May Admiral Makaroff, Commander of the Eastern Squadron of the Russian Navy, and Pavlov, with Colonel Stralbitzki, Russian military attache in Seoul, selected an area to be used as coal yards for the Russian Steam Navigation Company at a strategic point on the coast within the three mile limit. They did not, however complete the purchase, whereupon the Japanese quickly completed the purchase of the shoreline of the land that the Russians selected. On September 14, the Russian Charge d'Affairs informed the Korean government that, under the instruction of the Russian Foreign Minister, he would be obliged to take action in order to protect Russian interests if the Japanese

¹⁴Harrington, God, Mammon and Japanese, p. 322.

¹⁵Chinhai Bay is located in the extreme southwest of the Korean peninsula.

contract was not canceled. On October 4, again, he threatened to seize the land.¹⁶

As he attempted bribery and applied pressure on the Korean government, he seemed to be a true successor to De Speyer. Finally, on March 10, 1900, the Russian fleet arrived at Chemulpo with a show of force, and on March 18, 1900, Russia obtained the lease of less strategic lands at the port, with a promise from the Korean government that Kojedo Island near the harbor entrance would not be alienated. This action started a land race between Japan and Russia. In May, 1900, Russia tried to lease Tja-pok on the inner shore of Masanpo, but finding again that Japanese subjects had already leased it,¹⁷ finally acquired the lease of Pan-kumi upon the outer shore for the purpose of erecting a hospital, warehouse, and a recreation ground for the use of the Russian Navy.

The rivalry continued with both powers, growing increasingly aggressive, until March, 1901, when Russia failed to lease Chin-hai Bay. At this time, Russia ceased her efforts, although Japan continued her acquisition until October of that year.¹⁸

Russia tried again to have MacLeavy Brown removed from control of Korean customs. Together with France, she attempted to lend the Korean Emperor five million yen, to be guaranteed by "sympathetically managed customs," but this project was dropped in the face of violent opposition

¹⁶The North China Herald, (Shanghai: Vol. LXI-XCVI), September 4, 1899, p. 477.

¹⁷Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, II, p. 609.

¹⁸Asakawa, Russo-Japanese Conflict, pp. 276-278.

by the British Charge, Mr. Gubbins. On March 18, 1901, Russian pressure had induced the Korean Emperor to take over Brown's house, but strong British pressure was successful in having the house restored to him. On May 20, 1901 Brown was again forced to vacate his official residence as well as the customs office building, but was saved by an earnest representation made by the Japanese Minister, Harashi, to the Korean Emperor.¹⁹

The victories of the Japanese at Masanpo and Chinha Bay were of the utmost significance, preventing as they did the connection of Vladivostok with Port Arthur by the development of a naval fortress at the very door of Japan. The two rival powers also struggled for the whaling and fishing business along the Korean coast. And then rivalry further developed over the construction and control of Korean railroads. The line from Seoul to Wiju as well as that of from Seoul to Pusan were Japanese concessions.²⁰ Japanese influence in Korea was such that American Minister Allen in 1901 wrote from Seoul: "Japan will undoubtedly get this country soon", "I am working to perfect some American interests before Korea falls into Japanese control."²¹

In Russia, meanwhile, there appeared an aggressive move led by Bezobrazov, a retired captain of cavalry, who strongly advocated the restoration of former Russian influence in Korea by means of securing various concessions. The leaders of this movement favoured even the

¹⁹Ibid., pp. 278-279.

²⁰Lee, Hankuk Sa, p. 805.

²¹Quoted in Harrington, God, Mammon and the Japanese, p. 197.

annexation of Korea. In January, 1900, Bezobrazov thought of forming a semi-official Eastern-Asiatic industrial cooperation "for the purpose of exploiting the Korean forest" around the Yalu River.²² By 1901, Bezobrazov's plan was materialized and Japan was carefully watching Russian activity around the Yalu River. However, Witte on July 28, 1901, warned the foreign minister, Lamsdorff, against Russia's provoking trouble with Japan over Korea: " . . . an armed clash with Japan in the near future would be a great disaster for us Between the two evils, an armed conflict with Japan or the complete cession of Korea, I would choose the second".²³ It is not clear how much influence Witte exerted on Russia's foreign policy, but at this time the Russian government had no desire to establish friendly relations with Japan.

Russia's idea was to approach Japan with a proposal for the neutralization of Korea. Russia asked Japan if she intended to settle the Korean issue by direct understanding with Russia.²⁴

Japan's reply was an emphatic refusal. She stated flatly that she would not negotiate the question of Korea until the pre-Boxer situation had been restored in Manchuria. The Japanese drew a clear difference between the situation in 1898 and the present. At that time, Russia had just received the rights she had demanded in the Kuantung region of Manchuria. Having been granted by lease, these

²²Yarmolinsky, The Memoirs of Count Witte, p. 116; Romanov; Russia in Manchuria, pp. 267-278.

²³Yarmolinsky, The Memoirs of Count Witte, p. 117.

²⁴Romanov, Russia in Manchuria, p. 375.

rights were necessarily temporary in nature. The present situation, however, involved an occupation which had the appearance of permanence. Therefore, the Japanese government intended to postpone negotiations on the Korean question until Russian Military occupation of Manchuria had ended. Meanwhile, the Nishi-Rosen agreement of 1898, which had recognized Russia's lease rights in Kuantung and the predominant economic interests of Japan in Korea, was assumed by Japan to constitute an adequate safeguard for both nations.

The Japanese reply might have been interpreted as a virtual ultimatum. It stated frankly and unequivocally her general views and laid down specific guidelines for future policy which she followed closely during the coming years: Japan would not tolerate Russia's continued occupation of Manchuria; the questions of Manchuria and Korea were inseparably associated in her view; the recognition of Japan's predominant interests in Korea would be a precondition to any further consideration of the Korean problem; Japan's interests in Korea had in her view already received Russian approval in the agreement of 1898; and, by implication at least, Japan was determined upon a limitation of the Russian interests in Manchuria.

Japan continued her search for diplomatic if not military support for dislodging the Russian armies from Manchuria. The concerted protests which she had inspired from Great Britain, Germany, and the United States had served their purpose. In early March, 1901, she took the next step by announcing her determination to go to war with Russia if she could be assured that France could be restrained from joining in the conflict.²⁵

²⁵Lansdowne to Lascellers, March 8, 1901, "Communications to Baron Hayashi", Great Britain Foreign Office. British Documents on the Origin of the War, 1898-1914, (Vols. 2. London, 1927-1938), II, p. 41-42. Hereafter cited as Brit. Doc.

Japan's most effective diplomatic support, in view of the intended showdown with Russia, came from the Anglo-Japanese Alliance. The negotiations for this alliance were begun in April, 1901, when the Japanese Minister in London, Baron Hayashi, made some cautiously worded proposals suggestions to Lord Lansdowne, the British Foreign Minister.²⁶ Not until June, 1901, when the Ito cabinet was replaced by one headed by Katsura and, more particularly, after September, when Komura had assumed his post as foreign minister, was the coast clear to discuss an alliance with a real prospect of success. By mid-October, Japan had made definite and serious proposals which formed the basis for discussing the actual terms for an alliance.

Parallel with the early evolution of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, consideration continued to be given to following the pattern of the Nishi-Rosen agreement by seeking a direct understanding with Russia. Russia encouraged this by continuing to urge a settlement which would include the neutralization of Korea. This proposal was made in January, 1901, and it found Ito receptive.²⁷ This time the proposal was said to have come from Witte, the Russian Minister of Finance.²⁸

On November 25, 1901, the tempo of negotiations was stepped up with the visit of the Japanese statesman, Ito to St. Petersburg. He favored a direct agreement with Russia on the Korean problem. While

²⁶Landowne to MacDonald, April 17, 1901, Brit. Doc., II, p. 89.

²⁷Izvol'sky to Lamsdorff, Jan. 17, 1901, Krasni Archiv, as translated in the Chinese Social and Political Science Review: "On the Eve of the Russo-Japanese War (December, 1900-January, 1902)," pp. 125-139.

²⁸Romanov, Russia in Manchuria, p. 376.

in the Russian capital, he presented a series of proposals to the Russian Foreign Minister, Lamsdorff.²⁹ In November, 1901, Lamsdorff forwarded these to Nicholas II with his own parallel list, as a possible basis for agreement with Japan.³⁰

Both Ito and Lamsdorff agreed on the first proposal: "Mutual guarantee of the independence of Korea". For the second, Ito suggested: "Mutual obligation not to make use of any part of Korean territory for strategic purposes." Lamsdorff wanted: "Mutual obligation (or Japan promises) not to use any part of Korean territory for strategic purposes." On Ito's third proposal, "Mutual obligation not to resort to any military operations on the Korean coast such as might endanger a free passage through the Gulf of Korea." The Russian Minister concurred in principle suggesting only that it might be changed to read, "Japan promises". Ito's fourth proposal read as follows:

Recognition by Russia of Japan's freedom of action in Korea in political, industrial, and commercial respects as well as exclusive right of Japan to come to Korea's assistance with advice and action directed to helping her fulfill the obligation incurred by every well ordered government, including military assistance in so far as necessary for suppressing riots and every kind of disorder likely to endanger the peaceful relation between Japan and Korea.³¹

Lamsdorff would not consent to Japan's freedom of political action, but wanted Japan to obtain Russian agreement before advising Korea. Ito also inserted two additional proposals:

²⁹Hamada, Prince Ito, pp. 145-148.

³⁰A. Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, with Special Emphasis on the Causes of the Russo-Japanese War (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1958), p. 172.

³¹Langer, The Diplomacy of Imperialism, pp. 755-769.

In the case provided in the preceding article, Japan promises to send to Korea only the number of troops absolutely necessary and to recall her troops as soon as their purposes have been fulfilled. It is agreed, at the same time, that Japanese troops shall never cross the boundary, to be defined exactly of a district, in the future and situated along and close to the Russian border, and promises in no way to hinder Russia's liberty of action in these districts.³²

Ito and Lamsdorff agreed that this agreement, if reached, would replace all previous ones.

On December 2, 1901, Ito had a frank discussion with Witte. Witte admitted that it was Japan, not Russia, that had vital interests in Korea, but that Russia had to protect her Far Eastern railways. Ito repeated the agreements he had given Lamsdorff, and promised to guarantee Korean independence, and that no coastal ports would be built to menace Russia. Witte gave his approval of any agreement reached on that basis. But Lamsdorff proposed that if Japanese troops were to be allowed in Korea, the northern part of the country should be in any case remained unoccupied by them.

Neither government was willing to concede enough. On December 23rd, Ito gave a "farewell to Russia" speech stating: "I must confess that with your draft as the basis for negotiation, there do not appear to be any hope for concluding agreements which will have a real and lasting effect."³³ Ito had to contend with the hostility of a large group in the Japanese government which had no desire to reach accord with Russia. It was this group, which included Yamagata and Katsura, maintained that agreement with Russia would at best be a temporary expedient. It was convinced that Japan would eventually have to come to grips with

³² Ibid., p. 769.

³³ Hamada, Prince Ito, p. 159.

Russia and that, to prepare for this struggle, Japan should seek an alliance with Great Britain. On January 30, 1902, the Japanese government signed the Anglo-Japanese alliance with the advice of the privy council headed by Ito.³⁴

This event marked a turning point of Russian policy. To counter-balance the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, Russia and France, extended their old alliance to include the Far East, with the avowed intention of assuring the status quo, and thereby maintaining the peace and independence of China and Korea.³⁵

It is clear that throughout Ito's negotiations with Russia, Japan neglected most arbitrarily Korea's right to self-government. Consequently, Ito's moves in Russia were the studied tactics of scheming imperialists. In this matter both Russia and Japan were playing political football at the expense of Korea.³⁶ When Japan ignored Russia's desire for harmonious relations with her over Korea and concluded an alliance with England instead, Russia favored the neutralization of Korea. Alfred E. Buck, American Minister in Tokyo, in his dispatch, dated August 15th, 1902, stated:

. . . in recent conversation with Mr. Iswolsky, the Russian minister here, it seems to be probable that his Government will make a movement in the direction securing the cooperation of several powers in guaranteeing the inviolability of the

³⁴Brit. Doc., II, 114-120.

³⁵Korea: Treaties and Agreements, pp. 34-35. The Korean Emperor, at first, viewing the Anglo-Japanese and Russian-French understandings with misgivings, instituted a reform movement to allay the threat which these agreements portended for this country. However, he later came to view them as, in effect, neutralizing Korea and therefore making her position sure.

³⁶Lee, Hankuk Dongrip Undong Sa, p. 243.

Korean government.³⁷

Isowolsky hoped that the United States, Russia, and Japan would cooperate in the move toward Korean neutralization and then have the support of Great Britain, France and Germany also. But Japan, her purpose in Korea being to secure a supremacy in Korea, refused Russia's movement for a joint guarantee of Korea's territorial inviolability. It is significant that Japan advocated for Korea's independence and territorial integrity, but she was the first to refuse the Korean independence.

³⁷ Quoted in Treat, Diplomatic Relations between United States and Japan, 1895-1905, pp. 164-165.

The Final Negotiation

On August 28, 1896, the Emperor of Korea signed an agreement with a Russian merchant of Vladivostok for the exploitation of the forests along the Yalu and Tuman Rivers.³⁸ This concession, which at first seemed to be merely a commercial transaction, was, in fact, to become not only a powerful tool in the hands of Russian expansionists, but also a cause of much contention among the Russian court faction.³⁹

This appeared to be a solid commercial transaction, and one in which the Emperor would get substantial returns for his grant. But there was a certain absurdity in the fact that Russia (with two million square miles of Siberian forests) requested more from the Korean government. This was obvious to Japan and reinforced her feelings that Russia was preparing some sort of aggression against Japanese interests in Korea.⁴⁰

In November, 1897, Brinor, a merchant of Vladivostok who had secured Yalu timber concessions from the Korean Emperor, came to St. Petersburg seeking to see the concessions. He aroused the interests of Volia Liarski and Bezobrazov. In 1898, these two men approached the Grand Duke, Alexander Mikailovich, with the idea of persuading the Tsar

³⁸ This concession was granted by the Korean King during the time he was taking refuge at the Russian Legation. The concession was granted to Brinor for a period of 5 years. He was authorized to solicit capital for the enterprise and to form a Korean timber company with headquarters at Vladivostok and branches at Seoul.

³⁹ Rosen, Forty Years of Diplomacy, p. 24.

⁴⁰ Ibid., p. 25.

to obtain it as his personal property. As an added inducement, they tried to have a railroad run through the concession area. Though this failed, the Tsar agreed to investigate the territory. As a temporary measure, the Bureau of Emperor's Dominions bought the concession from Brinor and financed the investigation.⁴¹

Experienced investigators dispatched by the Court to Korea, spared no superlatives in describing the benefits to be derived by Russia from that concession. According to their testimony, the existence of rich gold mines was suspected in and around the Yalu district.

The Grand Duke, Alexander, head of the Yalu concession committee, thought the situation looked promising if carefully and tactfully handled.⁴² But the plans of his associate did not call for any such caution. The cabinet transferred the concession in a fictitious sale to Maticemin on the condition that it be transferable to a third person or company at any time under instructions from a minister of the Imperial cabinet.

As the five year limit for beginning work on the Yalu expired, Russia notified Korea on April 13, 1901, that she would exercise her option to extend the lease for twenty years. The Russian government chose to interpret the original agreement to include all streams draining into the Yalu, thus giving Russia control of a vast area. At about the same time, certain Russian diplomats attempted to extend the

⁴¹Valadmir Guroko, Features and Figures of the Past: Government and Opinion in Reign of Nicholas II (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1939), p. 260.

⁴²Alexander, Grand Duke of Russia, Once a Grand Duke, (New York; Farrar and Rinehart Co., 1932), p. 206.

Trans-Siberian Railway to the Korean border with a view to annexing Korean territory. This enraged the Grand Duke, Alexander, who resigned as head of the Yalu Committee, predicting that war would result from such schemes, and declaring that he wanted no responsibility for it. On April 23, 1901, the East Asiatic Company's statute was confirmed by the Committee; but this was a hollow gesture as shortly thereafter the company was dissolved for lack of capital.⁴³

Following the Russo-Chinese Treaty of April 1, 1902, Russia started to evacuate Manchuria, beginning at Mukden. But Admiral Alexeiev ordered this stopped.

The Yalu timber concession assumed more importance than ever and in order to support it and to seek other understanding in North Korea, Admiral Alexeiev sent mounted forces with guns to Feng-Huan-Cheng. At the same time, we allowed the operation in connection with the Korean timber concession to go on, despite the fact that this enterprise was striving to give it a political and military status contrary to instructions from St. Petersburg.⁴⁴

So long as Russia had held to her intention to withdraw her troops from Manchuria and to stay out of North Korea, there had been little danger of a break with Japan, but this move of Russia brought the powers "alarmingly near a rupture."⁴⁵ Alexiev sent 150 mounted rifles and a cossack regiment to Korea in order to support the Timber Company

⁴³ Alexander, Once a Grand Duke, p. 207. The East Asiatic Company had a political charter, under the Tsar's supervision directed toward development of the Russian principles and perhaps toward implantation of the Russian ideas in Korea.

⁴⁴ Kuropatkin, General, The Russian Army and the Japanese War, 2 Vols., (London; John Murray, 1909), I. p. 170.

⁴⁵ Kuropatkin, General, The Russian Army and the Japanese War, I, pp. 170-171.

against possible Japanese attack."⁴⁶

Furthermore, to assist the timber company, Pavlov had extended the Russian telegraph line from Possiet to Kiong-hung across the Tuman River. But on February 22, 1903, the Korean Foreign Minister, Park, ordered it removed. In the meanwhile, it was discovered that St. Petersburg had nothing to do with the building of the line which had recently been removed. In reprisal, Pavlov succeeded in securing the dismissal of Park from his post, but his demands for the right to reconstruct the line met with no success until April, 1904, when the line was extended from Wiju on the Yalu to Port Arthur and Harbin.

On March 26, 1903, a conference was held to discuss the advisability of transforming the Yalu concession into a strictly commercial stockholders' company. Witte mentioned the potential international complications, but no one took a strong stand against this policy of transference to a commercial company. The new organization was called the Russian Timber Company of the Far East, and had a cabinet subsidy of 250,000 rubles.⁴⁷

In April, 1903, the Russian government informed the Korean government that "Baron Junburg would henceforth represent the interests of the timber syndicate in Seoul which would now commence its work upon the Yalu."⁴⁸ The original contract for the Yalu concession had nowhere mentioned the use of Yongampo, a point near the mouth of the Yalu.

⁴⁶Rosen, Forty Years of Diplomacy, pp. 213-214.

⁴⁷Gurko, Government and Opinion in the Reign of Nicholas II, p. 279.

⁴⁸Asakawa, Russo-Japanese Conflict, p. 291.

The agreement signed on July 20, 1903, between Cho Sung-hyup for the Korean government and Bojisco for the company, coming rather ex post facto, raised strong protest within the Korean government.

Construction work was begun in May, 1903. Additional structures were added over the summer, and at the same time, Russian troops were moved up close to the frontier on the Manchurian side of the river. Pavlov was accused by the Korean government of building a fort at Yongampo. He at first denied it, then had all traces of the fortification obliterated.⁴⁹

In the second week of June, four Russian war vessels under Admiral Stark made a visit to Chemulpo, obviously to support Pavlov. On the 11th, the Korean council of state decided that the Charge d'Affairs' conduct was contrary to Russian treaties, and the situation began to look ominous. Seeking a solution to the problem, Japan opened direct negotiations with St. Petersburg with regard to the relative position of the two powers in Korea.⁵⁰

In July, Pavlov further irritated the Korean government by setting up illegal telegraph lines between Wiju, Yongampo, and Antung in Manchuria. The Korean government tore down the wires; whereupon the Russians attempted to lay submarine cables. These were also removed by the Koreans.⁵¹ As negotiations on the lease continued, not only Japan, but both England and the United States protested strongly to

⁴⁹Romanov, Russia in Manchuria, pp. 267-278.

⁵⁰Lee, Hankuk Tongrip Undong Sa, p. 246.

⁵¹Lee, Hankuk Tongrip Undong Sa, p. 246.

Korea, requesting that Yongampo be opened to foreign trade. The court and the government disagreed sharply on this issue. The former was under Russian domination, but the latter was attempting to mitigate the terms of an earlier agreement.

On August 27, 1903, Pavlov remained at the foreign office from one to six o'clock in the evening, but the Korean Foreign Minister evaded a meeting and resigned.⁵² The Russian aroused no good will by remaining at Yongampo. In September the Russians further fortified the port, and erected a new telegraph line between Wiju, Yongampo, and Antung. Conditions worsened until October 23, when 500 Russian troops and two officers crossed the Tuman River into Korea, and a Japanese warship anchored near Yongampo.⁵³

Friction in the Yalu region had strained Russo-Japanese relations to the breaking point. Following the events of October, Japanese merchants and bankers in Seoul began calling in their money and refusing to make loans. Japan therefore sought to settle the tension in Korea through a direct negotiation with Russia. On June 23, 1903, the four principals of the Japanese cabinet and five privy councilors met before the Throne, and decided on the principles upon which negotiations with

⁵²Ibid, pp. 246-247.

⁵³J. A. (Korea), XXXVI, No. 401, pp. 452-458. Russia interpreted the Yalu Concession to embrace all streams draining into the Yalu River, thus giving her control of a vast area in Northern Korea. She therefore selected the favorable port of Yongampo, near the mouth of the Yalu River, as a shipping outlet for the timber it contained, although Yongampo was far removed from the actual forest area involved.

Russia should be opened.⁵⁴ Having thus formulated the policy to be pursued, Baron Komura, Japanese Foreign Minister, telegraphed the Japanese Minister at St. Petersburg, on July 28, as follows:

The unconditioned and permanent occupation of Manchuria by Russia would create a state of things prejudicial to the security and interest of Japan. The principle of equal opportunity would thereby be annulled, and the territorial integrity of China impaired. There is, however, a still more serious consideration for the Japanese government. That is to say, if Russia was established on the flank of Korea, it would be a constant menace to the separate existence of that Empire, or at least would make Russia the dominant power in Korea. Korea is an important outpost in Japan's line of defence, and Japan considers her independence essential to her own response and safety. Moreover, the political, as well as commercial and industrial interests and influence Japan possesses in Korea are paramount over those of other powers. These interests and influences Japan, regarding her own security, cannot consent to surrender to, or share with, another power.

The Imperial government, after the most serious consideration, has resolved to consult the Russian government, in a spirit of conciliation and frankness, with a view to the conclusion of an understanding designed to compare questions which, at this time, are the cause of their anxiety. In the estimation of the Imperial government, the moment is opportune for making the attempt to bring about the desired adjustment, and it is believed that failure of this opportunity⁵⁵ would result in no room for another understanding.

To this request made by Japan, Lamsdorff, on behalf of Russia, agreed to the negotiations which was exactly what Russia had desired.⁵⁶

⁵⁴"Decision of the Imperial Conference", June 23, 1903, Gaimusho (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan), Nihon Gaiko Monjo ("Japanese Diplomatic Documents"). (Vol. XXXVI-I, Tokyo, 1956-1960), pp. 1-4. Hereafter cited as Nihon Gaiko Monjo. This conference was attended by the following elder statesmen and cabinet ministers: Ito Hirobumi, Yamagata Aritomo, Inoue Kaoru, Prime Minister Katsura Taro, War Minister Terauchi Masatake, and Foreign Minister Komura Jutaro.

⁵⁵Komura to Kurino, July 28, Nihon Gaiko Monjo, XXXVI-I, pp. 8-13.

⁵⁶Malozemoff, Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881-1904, p. 238.

On August 12, Kurino submitted the first Japanese proposals as follows:

I. A mutual agreement to respect the independence and territorial integrity of the Chinese and Korean Empires, and to maintain the principle of equal opportunity for the commerce and industry of all nations in those countries.

II. A reciprocal recognition of Japan's preponderating interests in Korea and Russia's special interests in the railway enterprise in Manchuria, and of the right of Japan to take in Korea, and of Russia to take in Manchuria, such measures as may be necessary for the protection of their respective interests as defined; subject, however, to the provisions of Article I of this agreement.

III. A reciprocal understanding on the part of Russia and Japan not to impede the development of those industrial and commercial activities, respectively, of Japan in Korea and of Russia in Manchuria, which are not inconsistent with the stipulations of Article I of this agreement.

IV. A reciprocal agreement that, in case it should be found necessary to send troops by Japan to Korea, or Russia to Manchuria, for the purpose, either of protecting the interests mentioned in Article II of this agreement, or of suppressing insurrection or disorder liable to create international complications, the troops so sent are in no case to exceed the actual number required, and are to be forthwith recalled as soon as their missions are accomplished.

V. The recognition on the part of Russia of the exclusive right of Japan to give advice and assistance in the interest of reform and good government in Korea, including necessary military assistance.

VI. This Agreement to supersede all previous⁵⁷ agreements between Japan and Russia respecting Korea.

The same dispatch told Lamsdorff that the plan stated above was "presented for the consideration of the Russian government in the firm belief that it may be found adequate to serve as a basis upon which to construct a satisfactory arrangement between two governments" and

⁵⁷Asakawa, Russo-Japanese Conflict, p. 304; J. A. (Korea), XXVII, No. 10, pp. 7-12.

assured him that "any amendment or suggestion he may find it necessary to offer will receive the immediate and friendly consideration of the Japanese government." The project was called "little more than a logical extension and amplification of the principles already recognized by, or of conditions embodied in the previous engagements concluded between the two governments."⁵⁸

At first it appeared that Lamsdorff saw no difficulty except that of the Japanese railway to Manchuria. But Japan's control of Korea was distasteful to Russian Far Eastern policy, and soon new obstacles began to arise. On August 23, 1903, Lamsdorff suggested that the negotiations should be conducted in Tokyo. There followed some diplomatic exchanges between the two governments. Lamsdorff wanted the negotiations held in Tokyo instead of St. Petersburg in order to take advantage of Alexeiev's knowledge of local conditions. Komura objected on the ground that the negotiations were on the matter of principles, not local details, but Russia stood firm, and the Japanese were compelled to acquiesce.

In September, 1903, Alexiev telegraphed the Tsar that Japan intended to land troops either at Chemulpo or at the mouth of the Yalu; and if they did, he would attack the Japanese fleet. The Tsar replied that he did not want war against Japan.⁵⁹

On October 3, the Russian counter-note was received in Tokyo. The Russians demanded recognition by Japan of Manchuria as her littoral

⁵⁸ Asakawa, Russo-Japanese Conflict, p. 304.

⁵⁹ Gurko, Government and Opinion in the Reign of Nicholas II, p. 307.

"as in all respects outsider her (Japan's) sphere of interests" and excluded that territory from all other discussion in the agreement. In regard to Korea, the Russians ignored completely the open door clause of the Japanese suggestions; insisted on previous knowledge if Japan were to send troops to Korea; forbade the use of Korean territory by Japan for strategic purposes, particularly that part of the Korean coast which would menace the Straits of Korea; called for "mutual engagement to consider that part of Korea lying to the north of the thirty-ninth parallel as a neutral zone into which neither of the contracting parties shall introduce troops."⁶⁰

On the basis of Japanese and Russian proposals, Komura and Rosen negotiated and haggled, until, on October 30, 1903, Japan presented her irreducible minimum: Japan's rights in Korea which had been agreed upon were included, and her railway connection to Manchuria. Russia was granted free passage in the Korean straits, which Japan would not threaten. A neutral zone was suggested which would extend fifty kilometers on either side of the Korean-Manchurian frontier. Japan would recognize Manchuria as being outside her sphere of special influence for Russian recognition of Korea as being outside hers. Japan also agreed to recognize "Russia's special interests in Manchuria and of the right of Russia to take such measures as may be necessary for the protection of those interests." Also included was an agreement that neither power would interfere with "commercial and residential rights and immunities" previously acquired in each other's sphere of interests.⁶¹

⁶⁰ J. A. (Korea), XXXVII, No. 10, pp. 12-16; Rosen, Forty Years of Diplomacy, pp. 222-228.

⁶¹ Asakawa, Russo-Japanese Conflict, pp. 324-326.

This Japanese concession made certain steps in the direction of Russian ideas, but not enough. The Russian reply of December 11, conceded connection of the railway and deleted the clause requiring her previous knowledge of Japanese troops being sent to Korea, but otherwise remained firm on the earlier stand.

In the conference on December 15, 1903, with Grand Duke Alexiev and Lamsdorff, the Tsar decided not to give up northern Korea.⁶²

Komura was very unhappy about the Russian reply of December 11 and expressed his dissatisfaction in a note to Lamsdorff on December 23. His major complaint related to the exclusion of Manchuria from the agreement, but he also desired the deletion of the neutral zone clause.⁶³

The Tsar and Lamsdorff continued to make pacifying statements to Japan, but the Russian reply, which arrived in Tokyo on January 6, 1904, made no major concessions. It insisted that there be no strategic use of any part of Korea and demanded the continuation of the neutral zone, saying that this would eliminate misunderstanding and would resemble the zone between Russian and British possessions in Central Asia. If these were agreed to, Russia would approve a clause wherein Japan would recognize Manchuria as outside her sphere of interests, and Russia would agree not to interfere with the rights of Japan and other powers as under previous treaties with China-exclusive of establishment of settlements. The Japanese would not agree, and in their answer said: "further delay . . . will be extremely disadvantageous to the two

⁶²Gurko, Government and Opinion in the Reign of Nicholas II, pp. 284-285.

⁶³Asakawa, Russo-Japanese Conflict, pp. 330-331.

countries."⁶⁴ Later the same month, Japan accused Russia of sending troops to Korea.

The intent of Russia to violate accepted rights and interests was also stressed in notifying the United States. Komura instructed the Japanese minister in Washington, Takahira, to convey the message in these terms:

To Russia, whose development of commercial and industrial enterprises of Japan in Korea by an international compact as far as back 1898, this state of affairs must be better known than to any other power, and it cannot be a matter of surprise to her that Japan finds it impossible to acquiesce in an exceedingly abnormal and precarious condition which would inevitably result from Russia's remaining indefinitely in the flank of Korea, which is an important outpost of Japan's line of defence, and from the neutralization of a considerable territory of Korea comprising about one-third of the whole peninsula . . . ⁶⁵

Takahira was further instructed to emphasize the fact that Japan was contending with a determined opponent of all except Russia's own rights and interests in China and Korea. The measure of his success in conveying a sense of Russia's unyielding determination is found in an entry in John Hay's diary for January 5, 1904:

. . . it is evident that no attempt at mediation will do any good. Russia is clearly determined to make no concessions to Japan. They think that now is the time to strike, to crush Japan and to eliminate ⁶⁶her from her position of influence in the Far East.

The Japanese government now considered that the critical point had been reached. On February 3, the cabinet and privy councilors held a

⁶⁴ Ibid., pp. 337-339.

⁶⁵ Foreign Relation, 1903, p. 621.

⁶⁶ W. R. Thayer, The Life and Letters of John Hay, (2 Vols., Boston, 1919), II, p. 370.

conference, and again on the next day in the presence of the Emperor. On February 5, Komura wired Kurino, instructing him to send a telegram to Lamsdorff breaking off relations between Japan and Russia. The communication was to say that:

The Imperial government of Japan, having exhausted without effect every means of conciliation with a view to the removal from their relations with the Imperial Russian government every cause for future complications, and finding that their just representation and moderate and unselfish proposals made in the interest of a firm and lasting peace in the Far East are not receiving due consideration, and that their diplomatic relations with the Russian government have, for these reasons, ceased to possess any value--the Imperial government of Japan have resolved to sever those diplomatic relations.⁶⁷

The first reason listed for the diplomatic rupture was:

The government of His Majesty the Emperor of Japan regards the independence and territorial integrity of Korea as essential to the repose and safety of their own country, and they are consequently unable to view with indifference any action tending to render the position of Korea insecure. The obstinate rejections by the Russian government, by means of amendments impossible of agreement, of Japan's proposals respecting Korea, the adoption of which the Imperial government regards as indispensable to assure the existence of the Korean Empire and to safeguard Japan's preponderating interests in the peninsula; and the obstinate refusals of Russia to enter into an engagement to respect China's territorial integrity in Manchuria, which is seriously menaced by the continued occupation of the province, notwithstanding Russia's treaty engagements with China and her repeated assurances to other powers possessing interests in those regions--have made it necessary for the Imperial government seriously to consider what measures of self-defence they are called upon to take.⁶⁸

This wire crossed one from Lamsdorff to Rosen, acceding to Japan's

⁶⁷ Komura to Kurino, Feb. 5, 1904, Nihon Gaiko Monjo, XXXVII-1, pp. 92-95, 97-101.

⁶⁸ Asakawa, Russo-Japanese Conflict, pp. 342-343.

requests, and saying that Russia would make every possible concession in Korea, but would not want to see that country used for a strategic purpose against her.⁶⁹ But, by then, it was too late. The Japanese notes reached Lamsdorff at 4:00 P.M. on February 6. On February 8, the first naval engagement in Korean territory took place outside Chemulpo harbor. This initial attack was followed by a naval engagement at Port Arthur on the night of February 9.⁷⁰

The Russian declaration of war, issued on February 10, 1904, made no mention of the Manchurian issue, but stayed in strict conformity to the Russian proposals. It read as follows:

We proclaim to all our faithful subjects that in our solicitude for the preservation of peace so dear to our hearts, we have put forth every effort to assure tranquility in the Far East. To these pacific ends, we declared our assent to the revision, proposed by the Japanese government, of the agreement existing between the two Empires concerning Korean affairs.

The negotiation initiated on this subject was, however, not brought to a conclusion, and Japan, not even waiting the arrival of our last reply and proposals of our government, informed us of the rupture of the negotiations and of diplomatic relations with Russia.

Without previously notifying us that the rupture of such relations implied the beginning of warlike action, the Japanese government ordered its torpedo boats to make a sudden attack on our squadron in the outer roadstead of the fortress of Port Arthur. After receiving the report of our Viceroy on the subject, we at once commanded Japan's challenge to be replied by arms.

While proclaiming this our resolve, we, in unshakable confidence in the help of Almighty, and firmly trusting in the unanimous readiness of our faithful subjects to

⁶⁹ Gurko, Government and Opinion in the Reign of Nicholas II, p. 285.

⁷⁰ Asakawa, Russo-Japanese Conflict, pp. 344-345.

defend the Fatherland, invoke God's blessing of our glorious forces of the Army and Navy.⁷¹

The Japanese declaration of the same date, reiterated that country's view of the negotiations and placed blame for their breakdown on Russia.

The sections dealing with the Korean question stated:

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

With that object in view, by our order, made proposals to Russia, and frequent conferences were held during the course of six months. Russia, however, never met such proposal in a spirit of conciliation, but by her wanton delay, put off the settlement of the question, and by ostensibly advocating peace on one hand while she was on the other advancing her naval and military preparation, sought to accomplish her own selfish designs.

We cannot admit that Russia had any serious or genuine desire for peace. She has rejected the proposals of our government, the safety of Korea is in danger; the vital interests of our Empire are menaced. The guarantees for the future which we have failed to secure by peaceful negotiation, we can now only seek by an appeal to arms.⁷²

⁷¹Asakawa, Russo-Japanese Conflict, pp. 345-347.

⁷²Korea; Treaties and Agreement, pp. 52-53.

CHAPTER V

DEMISE OF THE KOREAN KINGDOM

Korean Neutrality and Japanese Violation

By the time of the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese war, Korea was definitely under Japanese economic influence. Japan practically monopolized the steam tonnage in Korean ports, increased her trade with Korea, encouraged Japanese emigrants, controlled the railways and prevented Russia from leasing Masanpo and Chin-hai Bay. Even in the Yalu timber concession, the Japanese were already there. The attitude of the Koreans during this period of the Russo-Japanese struggle was, as a whole, rational and consistent. What the Korean government wanted first of all was to be freed from both Russia and Japan. However, she found herself as "a shrimp between two whales."

What was the nature of the policy with which the Korean Emperor and his court attempted to devise to meet the exceedingly critical situation into which the country was being forced by the conflict going on between Russia and Japan? They declared a policy of strict neutrality toward the approaching Russo-Japanese conflict on January 23, 1904.¹ But the Japanese without Korea's consent established military stations every fifteen miles along the route between Seoul and Pusan. On January 24th, General Ijichi came to Seoul as military attache of the Japanese

¹The Korean Review, IV (1904), pp. 70-72; Korea, because of her lack of power, was unable to enforce this neutrality and later succumbed to Japanese pressure for support in the war with Russia. See also Lee, Hankuk Dongrip Undong Sa, p. 289.

Legation in Seoul, and asked the Korean government to clarify its stand toward Russia and Japan. On January 26th, the Korean Foreign Minister Yi Chi-yong, informed the Japanese Legation of her strict neutrality toward Japan, demanding the speedy withdrawal of Japanese military stations.²

The Japanese violated the neutrality of the Korean government by bringing military supplies to Korea on January 28th. On February 8th the Japanese informed the people of Seoul through posted notices that what Japan was about to do was dictated by motives of right and justice and that the property and personal rights of Koreans would be respected. At 4:00 P.M. the same day Japanese ships entered Inchon. This was immediately followed by the landing of her troops on Korean soil. Japan had never recognized the neutrality of Korea.³ On February 8, 1904, Lloyd C. Griscom, American Minister in Tokyo, reported:

. . . a few regiments have already been sent to Korea, enough to take possession of Seoul. There is no concealment made of the intention to make Korea into a Japanese Province. . . . Already strict secrecy is maintained, and the law prohibiting the publication of news bearing on such matters⁴ (military and naval activities) is being rigidly enforced.

Soon after the declaration of war, a large number of Japanese troops surrounded the palace. The Japanese Minister Hayashi Gonsuke proposed

²The Korean Review, IV (1904), pp. 83-85; Mun, Kun-se Il-bon Choson Chintu Sa, p. 542; See also, Lee, Hankuk Sa, p. 905.

³Because of this action and the declared neutrality of Korea, a great controversy arose over the legality of Japan's action according to international law.

⁴Quoted in Treat, Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Japan, 1895-1905, p. 196.

to the Korean government the conclusion of a treaty of alliance with Japan. Yi Chi-yong, Korean Foreign Minister, and Ku Wan-hi, his counsellor, were intimidated, but the Cabinet resisted the pressure for one week. Finally, they were induced to sign a protocol with Japan on February 23, 1904,⁵ by the terms of which Korea practically allied herself with Japan. The protocol consisted of six articles, which stated in part:

Article I. . . . the Imperial Government of Korea shall place full confidence in the Imperial Government of Japan, and adopt the advice of the latter in regard to improvements in administration.

Article II. The Imperial Government of Japan shall in a spirit of firm friendship ensure the safety and repose of the Imperial House of Korea.

Article III. The Imperial Government of Japan definitely guarantee the independence and territorial integrity of the Korean Empire.

Article IV. In case the welfare of the Imperial House of Korea or the territorial integrity of Korea is endangered by aggression of a third power of internal disturbances . . . Japan shall immediately take such necessary measures as circumstances require, and . . . occupy . . . such places as may be necessary from strategic points of view.⁶

On March 7, 1904, Marquis Ito Hirobumi, then President of the Japanese Privy Council paid a visit to Korea and, as a result, the Japanese Government in May, 1904 reached the following decisions:

⁵Park, Hankuk Tong-sa, pp. 155-156. When the protocol was signed, Yi Yun-in, vice-president of the Korean Privy Council, and several other high officials resigned in protest. Finance Minister Yi Young-ik, the chief opponent of the protocol, was abducted to the Japanese Legation on the day of signature. A Korean mob threw bombs into the houses of Yi Chi-yong and Ku Wan-hi to express their opposition to the Korean Japanese Alliance.

⁶Korea: Treaties and Agreements, pp. 36-37. This treaty was signed between Korean Acting Foreign Minister, Yi Chi-yong and Japanese Minister, Hayashi.

"(1) Korea should be made a Japanese protectorate at the proper time; (2) until the arrival of such an opportunity, Japan should strive to obtain practical results in giving political, diplomatic, and military protection and in developing Japan's interests in Korea. Both (the Prime Minister) Count Katsura (1847-1913) and (the Minister of Foreign Affairs) Baron Komura (1855-1911) feared the objection of the powers should Japan announce these decisions at once, especially in the face of the declared purpose of war against Russia, and so adopted a plan of a more gradual procedure."⁷

On June 17th, the Japanese requested the Korean government to open all uncultivated land and other natural resources to the Japanese.⁸ But the proposal raised such a storm of protest from Korea that the Japanese dropped the matter. The Koreans, meanwhile, organized Po An Hoi⁹ ("Society for the Promotion of Peace and Safety") whose objective was to defeat the Japanese purpose in Korea. The opposition of this society was so effective that the Japanese determined that it should be crushed. The Japanese police, on July 16th, broke up its meeting and arrested the leaders. Other Japanese raids were made upon the society and more of its members were arrested and its papers confiscated. The Japanese then warned the government that these attempts to stir up a riot must be put down with a stern hand and demanded those responsible for the

⁷Agaki, Japan's Foreign Relations, pp. 266-267.

⁸Seoul National University, Kuk-sa Kaisul, p. 663.

⁹Lee, Han-kuk Sa, pp. 906-967. See also Seoul National University, Kuk-sa Kaisul, pp. 663-665. It had among its membership some of the leading Korean officials. It held meetings at the Cotton Guild Center of Seoul and a good deal of excited discussion took place as to ways and means for defeating the aggression of Japan.

anti-Japanese memorials be arrested and punished. If the Korean government failed to comply with this request, the Japanese threatened to take the law into their own hands.

The agitation was not confined to Seoul, for leading Koreans sent out circular letters to all the country districts urging the people to come to Seoul to participate in a potent demonstration which should convince the Japanese of Korean determination to remain an independent nation. Many of these letters were suppressed by the Japanese police but in spite of this, the news spread far and wide and the society enrolled thousands of members in every province.

By the summer of 1904, Japanese influence in Korea was such that Walter C. Hillier in June of that year was quoted as saying: "Korean independence is promised to the world but it stands to reason that it will be an independence strictly under the control of Japan, who has Egypt before her as a model."¹⁰

The Japanese began to formulate a definite policy paving the way, gradually but safely for her ultimate goal to absorb Korea. The first move toward this goal was the Korean-Japanese agreement of August 22nd, 1904, which provided:

Article I. The Korean Government shall engage as financial adviser to the Korean Government a Japanese subject recommended by the Japanese Government, and all matters concerning finance shall be dealt with after his counsel has been taken.

Article II. The Korean Government shall engage as a diplomatic adviser to the Department of Foreign Affairs a foreigner recommended by the Japanese Government, and

¹⁰ Walter C. Hillier, "Korea: Its History and Prospects," Fortnightly Review, June, 1904, quoted in Dennet, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, p. 117.

all important matters concerning foreign relations shall be dealt with after his counsel has been taken.

Article III. The Korean Government shall consult the Japanese Government previous to concluding Treaties or Conventions with foreign powers and in dealing with important diplomatic affairs such as granting of concessions to or contracts with foreigners.¹¹

By this agreement Japan was permitted to control Korea's financial and diplomatic affairs including the control over granting of concession to foreigners. As a result of this agreement Megata Tanetaro, a Japanese, was given control over Korean finances and D. W. Stevens, an American in the service of the Japanese Foreign Office,¹² was appointed as an adviser to the Korean Foreign Office. The Japanese advisers were also appointed to the police and education departments of the Korean government. The other foreign advisers to the Korean government were gradually eliminated. Step by step, the administration was Japanized. The hand of Japanese control in Korea became heavier and heavier.¹³

By the end of 1904, Japan had secured "exclusive interests" in Korea. Her influence was preponderant in Korea and paramount in the palace. She controlled the railway from Pusan to Wiju, and had

¹¹ Korea: Treaties and Agreements, p. 37. Treaty between Japan and Korea signed by Japanese Minister Hayashi and Yun Chi-ho, Acting Foreign Minister of Korea.

¹² Assassinated in San Francisco by a Korean, Chang In-whan, March 23, 1908.

¹³ The Korean Review, IV. (1904), pp. 306-312. The Japanese military authorities in Korea decreed that Japanese time should be used for all public work, and they changed the names of the towns from Korean to Japanese. Numerous Japanese gendarmes were brought in and established themselves everywhere. They assumed control of all political activities. Anyone who protested against Japanese action was arrested and imprisoned.

established her own police force, post office, telephone, cable and wireless telegraph system. And to quote Hamilton:

Their interpretation of the laws of their own country, is corrupt. Might is right; the sense of power is tempered neither by reason, justice nor generosity . . . Transformation has taken place with transmigration . . . The Japanese became so aggressive in their treatment of the people that, had the choice of two evils been possible in view of these events, the Koreans would have preferred the Chinese.¹⁴

There was no attempt at concealment of the Japanese scheme to annex Korea and the news of Russian losses, soon indicated that Japan had come to stay. Only a diplomatic combination could force her to withdraw and prevent eventual absorption of Korea. Clutching at straws, the Emperor of Korea bid for that combination. He appealed to all powers counting most on the United States on the ground of the Korean-American treaty of 1882.¹⁵ But President Roosevelt ignored the plea stating that American interests in Korea were economic rather than political. During 1905, The United States recognized Japan's interests in Korea, in return for Japan's promise to stay out of the Philippines. Japan's ally, Great Britain, also approved Japan's intervention in Korea.

Having driven the Russians out of Korea and having brought the entire peninsula under its military control, the Japanese on April 1st, 1905, imposed another agreement on Korea, by which the control of postal, telegraph and telephone services of Korea was transferred to Japan. The preamble to the agreement said that the transfer was made because it

¹⁴Augus, Hamilton, Korea, (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1904), pp. 152-157.

¹⁵Korean-American Treaty of 1882 provided for "perpetual peace and friendship" and stated that, "If other powers deal unjustly or oppressively with either Government, the other will exert their good offices on being informed of the case, to bring about an amicable arrangement, thus showing their friendly feelings."

was found "expedient from the standpoint of the administration and financing of Korea to rearrange the system of communication (in Korea), and, by amalgamating it with that of Japan, to unite the two systems into one common to both countries."¹⁶

Thus, the Japanese by April, 1905, controlled Korean military, political and economic affairs, and in June the Shimpoto (the Progressive Party), led by Count Okuma, was able to demand for one of the peace terms:

. . . Korea is already under our protection and our actual power in Manchuria is recognized by the Powers. It is therefore reasonable to demand that Russia abandon her privileges in Korea and Manchuria and be prevented from interfering in our enterprises there . . .¹⁷

Furthermore, the Japanese government on June 26th presented a statement of her ambition in Korea for the information of the United States, which stated in part:

As this peninsula forms the natural outer zone of the defence of Japan, the Imperial Government believes it essential to their safety that their predominance there should be kept intact. The Korean administration continues to be a hot bed of intrigues, conspiracy and corruption, despite the best efforts of the Imperial Government to root out those evils; and therefore . . . it will be necessary to place Korea entirely within the sphere of the Japanese influence and to assume the¹⁸ complete control and direction of the destiny of Korea.

Here the Japanese government demanded "complete control" of Korea under the disguise of "the defence of Japan" and the reform of Korea. Japan

¹⁶ Korea: Treaties and Agreements, pp. 38-40.

¹⁷ Quoted in Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, p. 204. See Herbert Croly, Willard Straight, New York: The MacMillan Co., 1924, p. 165.

¹⁸ Treat, Diplomatic Relations between the United States and Japan, 1895-1905, pp. 245-246.

stated that she has defeated both China and Russia in an attempt to maintain "independence of Korea." But now Japan wanted to destroy the independence of Korea which she had guaranteed so many times. It is to be noted that the word "reform" reappeared in the Japanese rationalization of her Korean venture in place of the word "independence" of Korea. It is not necessary here to repeat how many times Japan professed the independence of Korea right down to the declaration of war on Russia and the protocol of February 23rd, 1904.

On August 13th another agreement was signed between Korea and Japan concerning the coastwise and inland navigation of Korea. The Japanese were permitted to navigate the Korean coasts and inland waters, and to lease land "for the purpose of building warehouses at the place where their vessels call".¹⁹ By this time, Japan's war with Russia was wearing to a close. Both parties were approaching a state of exhaustion. Russia's supply problem was almost insurmountable, and Japan was on the verge of bankruptcy.²⁰ If Russia had continued a slow retreat, shortening her lines of communications while lengthening those of Japan, the war may well have ended in a stalemate. Korea would have been pressured into the position becoming a buffer-state and peace would have been established on a rational basis.

But this was not to be. The Japanese-initiated peace negotiations were taking place at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, under President Theodore Roosevelt's good offices. Russia would not recognize Japanese victories saying: "Not an inch of land, not a ruble of indemnity."²¹

¹⁹ Korea: Treaties and Agreements, pp. 44-45.

²⁰ Yarmolinsky, The Memoirs of Count Witte, p. 150.

²¹ Ibid., p. 153.

Russia's delegate, Witte, bluntly told Komura, the Japanese delegate:
"There are no victors here and, therefore, no defeated."²²

Under the circumstances the choice of an American setting for the conference was unfortunate and unfair. Neither the American people nor the administration was "neutral" as between the two contestants.²³ So, when the inevitable deadlock occurred in the negotiations, the use of outside pressure to break the impasse became not only desirable but imperative, for collapse of the negotiations would be a reflection upon the diplomatic skill of the Roosevelt administration in having staged the affair on American soil. It was certain considering the existing temper of the American people and government, that such pressure would be exerted in Japan's favor rather than in Russia's.

Furthermore, it would have to be a secret understanding, since, as it later transpired, it involved the sacrifice of Korean independence and the removal of her legation from Washington. It also meant the abrogation of every Korean treaty with foreign governments. If such a proposition had been made publicly, the question would have been asked whether, if no treaty can be signed without the concurrence of the Senate, a treaty could be abrogated without its consent. It would have meant inevitable delay and perhaps a prolonged controversy. This, under the circumstances, would have been impractical. The negotiations could not be delayed weeks, perhaps months, while the matter was being threshed out in Congress. Something had to be done immediately.

²²Ibid., p. 153.

²³Winston B. Thorstein, "American Public Opinion and the Portsmouth Peace Conference", American Historical Review, LIII (Apr., 1948), pp. 439-445.

President Roosevelt, in the emergency, assumed full responsibility. He learned that the Japanese though reluctantly, would be satisfied with the reversion of the Liaotung Peninsula and all Manchurian territory to China and the cession of one half of the island of Sakhalien.

The only remaining question involved the disposition of Korea. Japan proposed that she be given a protectorate over that unhappy country, promising to preserve her dignity and independence. To this, President Roosevelt, on his own responsibility, agreed. Russia made no attempt to preserve her influence in Korea reserving her energy for the more important issue in Manchuria. Article II of the Peace Treaty, signed September 5, 1905, read:

The Imperial Russian government, acknowledging that Japan possesses in Korea paramount political, military and economic interest, engages neither to obstruct nor to interfere with the measure of guidance, protection and control which the Imperial government of Japan may find it necessary to take in Korea. It is understood that Russian subjects in Korea shall be treated exactly in the same manner as the subjects or citizens of other foreign powers. They shall be placed on the same footing as the subjects of most favored nations. It is also agreed that in order to avoid all causes of misunderstanding, the two high contracting parties will abstain on the Russian-Korean frontier from taking military measures which may menace the security of Russian-Korean territory.²⁴

By the provision of the treaty, Japan's preponderant influence in Korea was once more admitted. Between the two powers, --Great Britain and the United States-- which might have objected to Japan's absorption of Korea, the United States was eliminated as a factor by reason of her sympathy with Japan, Britain was eliminated by the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

²⁴Korea: Treaties and Agreements, pp. 46-55.

The Japanese drove the Russians out of Korea and by the Peace Treaty, Korea was arbitrarily awarded to Japan. Thus Japan's privileges were practically unrestricted in Korea. The Koreans were shocked by the news of the conclusion of the treaty. The Korean government protested the terms of the treaty stating, "the treaty of Portsmouth violated the law of nations on the ground that Japan and Russia concluded a treaty which awarded Japan Korean sovereignty without accord with Korean government."²⁵

²⁵Wangsong Sinmun, (Seoul), September 7, 1905.

Anglo-American Policy in Korea

With a free hand in Korea, Japan could now move toward her final step of the annexation. It has been pointed out in the Russo-Japanese war that both the United States and England became somewhat "friendly allies" of Japan, and that both recognized Japan's interests as being "paramount" in Korea at the close of war.²⁶

President Roosevelt's view of the Russians characteristically changed as they moved into the orbit of his established position in Far Eastern affairs. Before 1900, his feeling toward the Russian ranged from disregard to one of approval, considering them to be bearers of civilization to the Asian people of the empire. After 1900, however, his view underwent a change and he began to see them in an increasingly less favorable light as they appeared to menace the most important civilizing influence of British-American interests. When the Russians refused to honor their pledge to withdraw their troops from Manchuria, his opposition to them rose sharply and he remained committed against them throughout the Russo-Japanese war.

President Roosevelt and Secretary Hay agreed that the Russians were untrustworthy. This produced a very unfortunate relationship in view of his future role as peace-maker. The Russian ambassador in Washington, Count Cassini, reported evidence of these poor relations to his government. Secretary Hay expressed this view in his diary on March 1, 1904:

²⁶ Whitney A. Griswold, The Far Eastern Policy of the United States, (New York; Harcourt Brace & Co., 1938), pp. 104-105.

Cassini came at three, stayed till five. His object was to hand me a memorandum from Russia which, like everything from that country, has a false bottom. He talked for an hour about American unfriendliness. I told him that the Japs were cleverer - they talked of our friendliness.²⁷

When Japan was fighting the Russians, President Roosevelt believed that "Japan was fighting the battle of America in Manchuria" and he was prepared to help Japan. As a "near ally", the United States appeared least likely to place obstacles in Japan's path and at the outbreak of war had assumed the protection of Japanese interests in Russia. The United States also had extended her good office to help several hundred Japanese to leave Russia.

When Japan landed her troops on Korean soil in the face of the proclamation of neutrality issued by the Korean government, the Emperor of Korea believed that the United States would "do something . . . to retain as much of her (Korean) independence as possible."²⁸ But President Roosevelt in his letter to Hay, dated August 28, 1905, said: "We cannot possibly interfere for the Koreans against Japan. They could not strike one blow in their own defense."²⁹ Since President Roosevelt knew that he could not prevent Japan's action, he realistically accepted the inevitable. However, on another occasion he had said: "To be sure, by treaty it was solemnly covenanted that Korea should remain independent."³⁰

²⁷ Thayer, The life and letters of John Hay, II, p. 374.

²⁸ Quoted in Harrington, God, Mammon, and the Japanese, p. 326.

²⁹ Roosevelt to Hay, August 28, 1905, E. E. Morrison (ed.), Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, (8 Vols., Cambridge, Mass., 1951-1954) IV, p. 112.

³⁰ Quoted in McKenzie, Korea Fight for Freedom, p. 101. However, President Roosevelt said: "Korea itself was helpless to enforce the

President Roosevelt apparently recognized America's future role in the Pacific when he stated: "I believe that our future history will be more determined by our position on the Pacific facing China than by our position on the Atlantic facing Europe."³¹ He was particularly interested in the maintenance of the balance of power in the Pacific and when Port Arthur and Mukden fell and Russia's Baltic fleet was almost annihilated at Tsushima, he began to fear Japan's over-expansion. The immediate significance of the Japanese victory to President Roosevelt lay in its bearing on the security of American interests in the Pacific area. American commerce in the Far East as well as possession of the Philippines was at stake and almost certainly in danger. While certain that a victorious Russia would "organize northern China against us", he was also fearful that, if the Japanese won out, it "may possibly mean a struggle between them and us in the future." His analysis convinced him that it would be unfortunate if Japan drove Russia completely out of eastern Asia, and that it would be of great benefit for the United States if a balance of force could be maintained between the two rival nations "so that each may have a moderate action on the other."³²

In order to reestablish a balance of power, designed to check Japanese over-expansion and protect the Philippines, Roosevelt wanted to bring an end to the Russo-Japanese War. Before the signing of the

treaty, and it was out of the question to suppose that any other nation, with no interest of its own at stake, would do for the Korean what they utterly unable to do for themselves."

³¹Quoted in Dennett, Roosevelt and Russo-Japanese War, p. 406.

³²Roosevelt to Lodge, June 16, 1905, Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, V, pp. 831-832.

Portsmouth treaty, Roosevelt felt that there must be not only an equality of military power between Russia and Japan, but a direct confrontation of the two nations on the mainland. This meant giving Japan freedom of action in Korea and leaving Russia some substantial interests in contiguous Manchuria. This would, at the same time, solve the problem of Korea's political instability, which, he would have agreed with the Russian and Japanese governments, was a disturbing factor in international relations.³³

By expressing his approval of Japan's Korean policy in an informal and largely noncommittal agreement, President Roosevelt was making an unfortunate bargain for Korea. The arrival of Secretary of War Taft in Tokyo on July 25, 1905, was a unique opportunity for both the United States and Japan to transact the important arrangements with complete secrecy. For even Lloyd Griscom, the American minister in Tokyo, was unaware that Taft was doing anything more than making a courtesy call on his way to the Philippines.³⁴

In conversations between Secretary Taft and Japan's Prime Minister, Katsura, Taft brought up the concern over the Philippines and also said that he believed Japanese suzerainty over Korea would contribute to lasting peace in the Far East. Katsura, in turn, disavowed any aggressive Japanese designs against the Philippines. Following this exchange of views on July 27, 1905, an "agreed memorandum" of the decision was drawn up, which some have called the "Taft-Katsura Agreement." Although

³³Dennett, Roosevelt and Russo-Japanese War, pp. 112-114.

³⁴Tayler Dennett, "President Roosevelt's Secret Pact with Japan," Current History, October, 1924, pp. 151. It was the United States that suggested to Japan the establishment of a protectorate over Korea.

the memorandum was not a formal agreement of any kind, it did embody President Roosevelt's ideas.³⁵ He cabled Taft that the conversations were absolutely correct and that "I confirm every word you have said."³⁶ In short, Roosevelt promised Japan that his government would not interfere with Japanese action in Korea in order to protect the Philippines.

The Taft-Katsura memorandum provided another step toward Japanese control over Korea. Roosevelt was cognizant of the concurrent Anglo-Japanese negotiations and, like the British, realistically accepted what could not in any case be prevented short of using force. "It is the reason", says a Japanese historian Agaki, "why President Roosevelt later gave a deaf ear to the Korean appeal."³⁷ But President Roosevelt failed to realize that Japan fought with Russia primarily to gain the control of Korea and not to guarantee the independence of Korea and China, and the American policy facilitated Japan's intention not to guarantee the Open Door but "to destroy their economic interest in the Far East."

In recognizing Japan's free hand in Korea, President Roosevelt in March, 1905, replaced H. N. Allen, American Minister to Seoul from 1897

³⁵ Agaki, Japan's Foreign Relations, pp. 272-273. Taft agreed that Japan's success in the war entitled her to extend sovereign control over Korea to the extent of preventing Korea from assuming troublesome international engagements as in the past.

³⁶ Roosevelt to Taft, July 31, 1905, Letters of Theodore Roosevelt, IV, p. 1293.

³⁷ Quoted in Dong, Chon, Japanese Annexation of Korea, p. 284. Syngman Rhee and Yoon Pyung-koo presented a petition to President Roosevelt to safeguard Korean independence by invoking the Treaty of 1882. President Roosevelt said, "I am glad that you have come to me. I would be glad to do anything I can in behalf of your country, but unless this petition comes through official channels I can not do anything with it." R. T. Oliver, Syngman Rhee (New York; Dodd Mead and Co., 1954), pp. 84-85.

to 1905. According to Allen, "to have some one in Seoul who would not be too friendly with the Koreans as to be unable to do his bidding."³⁸ Allen's successor, E. V. Morgan, however, did not stay in Seoul long because on November 24, 1905, America withdrew its legation from Korea.³⁹ Thus the United States became the first nation to recognize Japan's complete control over Korea.

The belief of the Emperor of Korea that the United States would save his country from falling under the control of the Japanese is one of the striking aspects of this period. And this Korean confidence was on the basis of the "good office" clause of the Treaty of 1882. However, it is important to note here that the term "good office" has a definite meaning in western international law. Under it, a third state may offer to bring about negotiation in an international dispute and yet avoid the charge of unfriendly intervention. Should the contending state accept this offer, the way is then open for mediation through the third state. The United States was therefore not bound to take cognizance of any condition in Korea until officially requested by the Korean government.

To Korea, however, the clause in the treaty with the United States did not appear to be merely a legal phrase subject to an interpretation. The United States was viewed as a nation having no territorial or political ambitions in Korea and who could be relied on to check those states that did have such ambitions. This impression was due, first, to the earlier actions of the United States, such as that in 1894.⁴⁰ In the

³⁸Quoted in Harrington, God, Mammon and the Japanese, p. 332.

³⁹Ibid., p. 333.

⁴⁰In the beginning of the Sino-Japanese War, the Korean king had

second place, the personal attitudes and sympathies of the American diplomatic representatives had given Korea the impression that the United States would save Korea from calamity. The Korean habit of mind viewed the United States not as bound legally to extend "good offices" in certain rigidly defined circumstances but, instead, as cast in the Far Eastern role of the "elder brother" of Korea. That is, to those who knew little of the legal implications of "good offices", the phrase was interpreted as meaning benevolent assistance in time of stress.

As to England, she had already recognized in the Anglo-Japanese alliance of 1902⁴¹ Japanese special interests in Korea in exchange for Japanese recognition of English special interests in China. When Japan defeated the Russians in 1905, the renewal of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance was revived. In this renewed treaty signed between the two countries on August 12, 1905, Great Britain recognized "the right of Japan to take such measures of guidance, control and protection of Korea as she may deem proper and necessary to safeguard and advance (her) paramount political, military, and economic interest in Korea." In return, Japan recognized British "special interests on the Indian frontier and the right to take such measures which she may find necessary

asked the good offices of the American government because the American government expressed her willingness to preserve the independence of Korea by "good office" clause of the Treaty of 1882.

⁴¹In the first Anglo-Japanese Treaty of Alliance signed on July 30, 1902, Japan united with Great Britain in declaring that the sole purpose of the Alliance was to preserve the status quo and general peace in the Far East, and that they were especially interested in maintaining the territorial integrity of Korea and China, recognizing Japan's special rights in Korea and English special rights in China.

for safeguarding her Indian possessions."⁴²

British Foreign Minister Lansdowne in his dispatch to the British Ambassador at St. Petersburg, dated September 6, 1905, frankly said:

"Korea, owing to its close proximity to the Japanese Empire and its inability to stand alone, must fall under the control of Japan."⁴³

The government of Korea strongly protested to the government of England, but being a victim of power politics, Korea accomplished nothing. Highly indignant over the case, Yi Han-yong, Korean minister at London, committed suicide. Before committing suicide, minister Yi stated: "Whatever measures were taken by the British in Korea ought to be agreed in full accord with the Korean government. The sovereignty of Korea was an international question; that this sovereignty could not and should not be cancelled out by a bilateral act on the part of Japan and England; that the principle of signing a treaty which violated the sovereignty of Korea was one that the entire Koreans could not approve."⁴⁴

Thus Korea was left alone without friend and powers to whom she might turn for help. The fate of Korea was now clearly decided. Korea would be absorbed by Japan. There was no longer any international obstacle in Japan's move in Korea. Therefore, Japan decided to take a definite move toward destroying the independence of Korea.

⁴²Korea: Treaties and Agreements, pp. 40-42. The renewal treaty was both defensive and offensive and required the military cooperation of both parties if either were attacked by even some other single power. This new agreement was to be valid for ten years.

⁴³Quoted in Dong, Chon, Japanese Annexation of Korea, p. 287.

⁴⁴Whangsong Shin Mun (Seoul), October 22, 1905. See also Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchon, p. 178; Seoul National University, Kuk-sa Kai-sul, p. 667.

The Korean Protectorate Treaty

In September, 1905, Hayashi, who had formerly been Japanese minister in Seoul, was sent to Korea as an Imperial Plenipotentiary to do the spadework for the establishment of a Japanese protectorate over Korea and to make recommendations for that purpose. His lengthy report to Foreign Minister Katsura, dated September 25, 1905, is rather revealing with respect to Japanese attitudes and intentions. Hayashi concentrated on the Korean court, describing the Emperor of Korea as being pro-Russian, anti-Japanese in the Russo-Japanese war and as having made attempts to contact Russians. His "various groups oppose each other to his profit." His "dream" was to be "Emperor-dictator". The Japanese financial adviser, says Hayashi, made a sincere effort, but ran into the Emperor's opposition. "Therefore it is very difficult to clean up the Court, but it is very important to do this if the evil roots in Korean politic are to be cut. If we can clean up the court and then cut off the weeds from the root, we can achieve success in improving government administration in Korea as a whole. Even though it necessitates the use of some pressure, we must get some Japanese officials into high place to watch the Emperor and reform the order of the court."⁴⁵

The leaders of the Japanese government intended to have their "improvement" without annexing Korea. And at this point the Japanese directed the whole Korean operation to Marquis Ito Hirobumi. When Ito as a Special Envoy of the Emperor of Japan, left for Seoul on

⁴⁵ Quoted in Hilary Conroy, The Japanese Seizure of Korea: 1868-1910, (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), p. 333.

November 5, 1905, the purpose of his mission was obvious to the Japanese press. The Jiji Shimpō (Tokyo) "hoped for something practical, such as a treaty of protection for Korea." The Kokumin Shimbun stated that "one of Ito's probable tasks was to consolidate the peculiar relations . . . between Korea and Japan."⁴⁶

On November 9, 1905, Ito arrived at the Korean capital on a special mission---to put relations between Japan and Korea on a new basis. He brought with him a message from the Meiji Emperor to the effect that he hoped the Korean Emperor would follow the direction of Ito, and come to an agreement with him, as it was essential for the maintenance of peace in the Far East that he should do so.⁴⁷ In the meantime, the Emperor of Korea was cognizant of the significance of the mission to Korea headed by a person of Ito's reputation. He therefore thought it wise to delay giving him a formal audience as long as possible under the pretext of being ill. On November 15, Ito was at last received in formal audience. He presented to the Korean Emperor demands which amounted to the establishment of a Japanese protectorate over Korea.⁴⁸

⁴⁶Chong-sik Lee, "Korean Nationalist Movement, 1905-1945" (Ph.D. Diss., University of California, Berkeley, 1961), p. 76.

⁴⁷Upon his arrival, Ito delivered to the Emperor of Korea an autographed letter from the Emperor of Japan which stated in part: I, the Emperor of Japan, hereby congratulate your majesty on the restoration of peace in the Far East, and in order that the friendly relations of our two nations shall become a degree closer, I hereby send my Special Ambassador. I also inform your majesty that I shall hereafter guard the integrity of Korea and the personal safety of the Imperial Household.

⁴⁸Gaimusho (Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan), Nihon Gaiko Nenpyō Narabini Shuyo Bunsho, 1840-1945, ("Diplomatic Chronology and Documents of Japan") (2 Vols.: Tokyo; Niho Kokusai Rengo Kyokai, 1955), I. pp. 233-234. The establishment of a protectorate over Korea was decided on April 8, 1905, long before the end of the Russo-Japanese

They provided that the Japanese Foreign Office in Tokyo was hereafter to handle the Korean foreign affairs; Japanese diplomatic and consular officials were to represent Korean interests abroad, that Korean envoys in foreign courts be recalled; and further that Japan would be represented at the Korean capital by a Resident-General with Residents in smaller towns. The Resident-General was to be the supreme administrator in Korea. The Residents in different districts were to have the powers of supreme local governors. In return, Japan was to guarantee "to maintain the security and respect the dignity of the Korean Imperial House."

The Korean Emperor and his cabinet ministers were aghast at hearing these unthinkable demands. The demands met a pointblank refusal. The gist of conversation between the Korean Emperor and Ito, as reported at the time, was as follows:

The Emperor said:

Although I have seen in the newspapers various rumors that Japan proposed to assume a protectorate over Korea, I did not believe them, as I placed faith in Japan's adherence to the promise to maintain the independence of Korea which was made by the Emperor of Japan at the beginning of the war and embodied in a treaty between Korea and Japan. When I heard you were coming to my country I was glad, as I believed your mission was to increase the friendship between our countries, and your demands have therefore taken me entirely by surprise.

To which Ito rejoined;

These demands are not my own; I am only acting in

war. This decision was later confirmed by another cabinet decision of October 27, 1905 in which it was decided that: 1) the protectorate should be established in early November, 1905; 2) Marshall Hasegawa Yoshimichi, commander of the Japanese army in Korea should be ordered to render "necessary assistance" to facilitate the plan; and 3) if the Korean government refused to agree, then Japan should unilaterally establish the protectorate.

accordance with a mandate from my Government, and if Your Majesty will agree to the demands which I have presented it will be to the benefit of both nations and peace in the East will be assured for ever. Please, therefore, consent quickly.

The Emperor replied;

From time immemorial it has been the custom of the rulers of Korea, when confronted with questions so momentous as this to come to no decision until all the Ministers, high and low, who hold or have held office, have been consulted, and the opinion of the scholars and the common people have been obtained, so that I cannot now settle this matter myself.

Said Marquis Ito again;

Protests from the people can easily be disposed of, and for the sake of the friendship between the two countries Your Majesty should come to a decision at once.

To this the Emperor replied;

To assent to your proposals would mean the ruin of my country,⁴⁹ and I will therefore sooner die than agree to them.

The conference lasted almost five hours but accomplished nothing.

Japanese minister Hayashi summoned Pak Che-sun, Korean Foreign minister to the Japanese Legation on the following day in an attempt to obtain the proposed treaty. Meanwhile, Ito summoned remaining cabinet members to his hotel (Sontaik Hotel in the suburb of Seoul) and asked their approval of the Japanese proposed protectorate treaty over Korea. The Korean ministers expressed their opinion saying, "Since Japan guaranteed the independence of Korea, we cannot yield our sovereignty."⁵⁰

Ito dismissed the meeting, accomplishing nothing. But the Japanese

⁴⁹ Quoted in McKenzie, Korea Fight for Freedom, pp. 89-90. McKenzie was the special correspondent of The Daily Mail (London) in the Far East.

⁵⁰ Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakjun, p. 182.

were determined to give the members of the cabinet no time to renew their strength. They were called again to the Japanese Legation at 2:00 P.M. on November 17 but again the conference had to adjourn without results.⁵¹

Kwon Chung-hyun, Minister of Agriculture, Commerce and Industry who participated in the conference later said, "On November 17, we (all members of Korean cabinet) were summoned to the Japanese Legation. Minister Hayashi demanded an immediate approval of the proposed protectorate treaty. Upon this terrible request, I told him that your request is a most grave matter to our country. Therefore we must ascertain Korean public opinion, so that we can not settle this matter ourselves. Immediately after my proposal, Hayashi angrily replied that you must come to a decision at once. At this moment, Ito accompanied with Marshall Hasegawa, the Commander of the Japanese Army in Korea entered the conference room and ordered us to go to the Palace to discuss this matter before the Emperor. We left the Japanese Legation at once and proceeded to the Palace."⁵²

Meanwhile, the Japanese army under command of Marshall Hasegawa had been making a great demonstration of military force around the palace. For days, they had been parading, fully armed, through the streets, in front of the Imperial Residence, and around the government buildings. Machine guns were in the streets and even field guns were brought out to command the strategic points of the city. They made feint attacks, occupied gates, put their guns in position,⁵³ and did

⁵¹Park, Hankuk Tongsa, pp. 205-206.

⁵²Quoted in Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakjon, p. 182.

⁵³Wangsung Shinmun, (Seoul) November 20, 1905. See also

everything short of actual violence to impress the Koreans that they were prepared to enforce their demands. All this kind of display had a sinister and terrible meaning to the Emperor and his cabinet Ministers.⁵⁴ They vividly recalled memories of the murder of Queen Min by the Japanese in 1895.

That night, before the conference resumed, Japanese soldiers, with fixed bayonets, entered the palace and stood near the royal apartment of the Korean Emperor. A rigid cordon of Japanese soldiers and gendarmes was thrown around the palace. Ito arrived at 9:00 P.M. for the conference, accompanied by Marshall Hasegawa, Minister Hayashi and other Japanese military police. A fresh attack was begun on the cabinet ministers. Ito demanded an audience with the Emperor. The Emperor refused on the ground that he was in great pain because of his very sore throat.⁵⁵

By this time, the courtyard of the cabinet chamber was filled with Japanese soldiers and the ministers in the cabinet chamber could hear the rattling of swords. This coercive atmosphere, after all, was not without effect. The ministers had fought for days and nights, and they had fought alone since Ito's arrival. Not a single foreign representative had offered them help. The conference scene gradually

Korean Daily News, (Seoul), November 20, 1905.

⁵⁴ Marshall Hasegawa was ordered to render "necessary assistance" to the success of Ito's plan. Nihon Gaiko Nenpyo narabini Shuyo Bunsho, 1840-1945, I, p. 235.

⁵⁵ Seoul National University, Kuk-sa Kaisul, p. 669. Ito made his way into the Emperor's presence and personally requested an audience. The Emperor said "please go away and discuss the matter with Cabinet Ministers." See also Wangsong Shinmun, (Seoul), November 20, 1905.

assumed the appearance of a street brawl. International courtesy was case aside. The Japanese shouted, "Agree with us be rich, or oppose us and perish," and thereupon Marshall Hasegawa drew his sword. "Cut us down if you dare" said Prime Minister Han, Kyu-sul. "We will show you," retorted the Marshall, and the Japanese military police officers dragged the Prime Minister away into a side room under Japanese custody.⁵⁶

Prime Minister Han withstood both the blandishments and the threats of Ito and Marshall Hasegawa. Koreans remember him best for the speech he is reported to have made when, in exasperation, Hasegawa half drew his sword in an effort to intimidate the Prime Minister into supporting the protection treaty. Turning to Ito, Prime Minister Han spoke as follows: "When you have placed us under something worse than the mouth of a cannon or at the point of a sword, how can your threats or your alternatives of life and death move me? When you are taking something more precious than my name, can you think that I care to let that name live?"⁵⁷

The rest of the cabinet members feared that the Prime Minister might really be killed. Minute after minute passed, and still the Prime Minister did not return. Then a Japanese military police officer reported

⁵⁶Park, Hankuk Tongsa, p. 208. See also, Kim, Yun Chi-ho Sunsang Yakchon, pp. 184-185.

⁵⁷Chun, Cho, Kankuk Shinmun Sa, (History of Korean Newspapers) (Seoul; Iljokak, 1960), pp. 123-126. See Hwang, Maecheon Yarok 349-351. According to Professor Ladd, who accompanied Ito and later published a strongly pro-Japanese account of the trip saying that there were no other Japanese guard or soldiers in attendance and no Japanese intimidation. George Ladd, In Korea with Marquis Ito, (New York; Charles Scribners, Sons, 1908), pp. 261-262.

to Marshall Hasegawa that "the Prime Minister was executed."⁵⁸ The frightened ministers could only see submission or sacrifice of their lives before them. "Nothing can be saved by our dying. The Japanese always get their way in the end,"⁵⁹ said Minister of Education Yi Wan-yong. At one O'clock on the morning of November 18, five of the ministers gave their consent to the treaty.⁶⁰

Thus at one o'clock P.M. November 18, 1905, the convention providing for control of Korean foreign affairs by Japan was signed. The convention read:

Article I. The government of Japan through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Tokyo, will hereafter have control and direction of the external relations of Korea.

Article II. The government of Japan undertakes to see to the execution of the treaties actually existing between Korea and other powers, and the government of Korea engages not to conclude hereafter any act or engagement having an international character, except through the medium of the government of Japan.

Article III. The government of Japan shall be represented at the Court of His Majesty, the Emperor of Korea, by a Resident-General who shall reside at Seoul primarily for the purpose of taking charge of and directing the matters relating to diplomatic affairs, and have the right of private and personal audience of His Majesty the Emperor of Korea. The Japanese government shall have the right to station Residents at the several open ports and such other places in Korea as they may deem necessary. Such Residents shall, under the direction of the Resident-General,

⁵⁸Hwang, Maechon Yarok, p. 352; Park, Hankuk Tongsa, p. 209.

⁵⁹Chong, Hankuk Kenyon Sa, II, pp. 173-174.

⁶⁰Park, Hankuk Tongsa, pp. 210-211. The ministers who gave their consent were: Park Che-sun (Foreign Affairs), Yi Wan-yong (Education), Yi Kun-tack (Defence), Yi Chi-yong (Home Affairs), and Kwon Chung-hyon (Agriculture, Commerce and Industry). The minister who withheld their consent were: Han Kyu-sol (Prime Minister), Min Yong-ki (Finance), and Yi Ha-yong (Justice).

exercise the powers and function hitherto appertaining to Japanese Consuls in Korea, and shall perform such duties as may be necessary in order to carry into full effect the provisions of this agreement.

Article IV. The stipulations of all treaties and agreements existing between Japan and Korea not inconsistent with the provisions of this agreement shall continue in force.

Article V. The government of Japan undertake to maintain the welfare and dignity of the Imperial House of Korea.⁶¹

Korea thus entered a new phase of existence. Heretofore, all the nations, who had at various times achieved predominance in Korea, had maintained the fiction that their functions were purely advisory. Japan had now overstepped this position and assumed direct control. The declaration of the Japanese government, accompanying the announcement of the Protectorate treaty, justified the move in her opinion by "the unwise action of Korea especially in the domain of her international concerns", and stated that:

The relations of propinquity have made it necessary for Japan to take and exercise, for reasons closely connected with her own safety and repose a paramount interest and influence in the political and military affairs of Korea. The measures hitherto taken have been purely advisory, but the experience of recent years has demonstrated the insufficiency of measures of guidance alone. The unwise and improvident actions of Korea, more especially in the domain of her international concerns, has in the past been the most fruitful source of complications. To permit the present unsatisfactory condition of things to continue unrestrained and unregulated would be to invite fresh difficulties, and Japan believes that she owes it to herself and to her

⁶¹ Korea: Treaties and Agreements, pp. 55-56; Foreign Relations, 1905, pp. 612-613. One often hears of a treaty concluded under duress. Nowhere else is there a better example in the 20th century than the case of this convention. This treaty was to be effective "until the moment arrives when it is recognized that Korea has attained national strength"---a new promise which Japan never showed any intention of fulfilling.

desire for the general pacification of the extreme East to take the steps necessary to put an end once and for all to this dangerous situation. Accordingly, with that object in view and in order at the same time to safeguard their own position and to promote the well-being of the Government have resolved to assume a more intimate and direct influence responsibility than heretofore in the external relations of the peninsula. The Government of His Majesty and the Emperor of Korea are in accord with the Imperial Government as to the absolute necessity of the measure, and the two governments, in order to provide for the peaceful and amicable establishment of the new order of things, have concluded the accompanying compact, the protectorate treaty⁶²

The Japanese authorities announced in Washington on November 20, that Korea had "voluntarily" entered into an agreement granting Japan a protectorate over the country and the American Government, apparently without consulting with Korea as to the truth of the statement, recognized the validity of Japan's claim.⁶³ Whatever may be the real history of the transfer thus made, of the means taken to secure the document, it is a historic fact that the governments of Europe and America were very prompt in withdrawing their legations from Seoul and in acknowledging Japanese supremacy in Korea.

Japan fought Russia to annex Korea, to satisfy Japanese chauvinism, to cripple the dominance of Russia in Manchuria whose hand stretched into the Korean peninsula, and also to replace Russian influence in Manchuria with Japan's own influence. After the war, therefore, the Japanese protectorate over Korea was the first phase toward final annexation. This true meaning of the Japanese protectorate has been

⁶²Foreign Relations, 1905, p. 613.

⁶³Ibid.

thus far made explicit.⁶⁴

Japan won the Russo-Japanese war. However, Japan wanted peace as much as Russia. If the Russo-Japanese war was a total war for Japan, it was a regional war for Russia; Japan sought to avoid any complications with Russia in the peace negotiations by exposing her further aggressive designs for fear of being frustrated again by another intervention by a coalition of powers.⁶⁵

Japan was very sensitive to the feelings of other Powers in her international politics, and this sensitivity became obvious especially after the Sino-Japanese war. For instance, when the earlier agreement concerning financial and diplomatic advisers for Korea was concluded with Korea on August 22, 1904, Japan made it clear that Article III of the agreement, which provided for Japanese supervision of Korean foreign affairs, was "not intended to place an impediment in the way of legitimate enterprise of foreigners in the sphere of commerce and industry"⁶⁶ Even in connection with the protectorate treaty, Japan promised to the other interested Powers to keep an "open door" in Korea and to uphold their existing treaties with Korea.⁶⁷ Also in his address to the members of the Constitutional Party, Ito pointed out the necessity of the Japanese government to act in accordance with

⁶⁴Mitoru Komatsu, Meiji Gaiko Hiwa, (Hidden Story of Meiji Diplomacy) (Tokyo; 1936), p. 344.

⁶⁵Ibid., p. 296.

⁶⁶Takahira to Adee, August 30, 1904, Foreign Relations, pp. 138-439.

⁶⁷McDonald to Lansdowne, in Brit. Doc. II, p. 132.

international sympathy. He said:

. . . It is not with regard to Korea alone, but with regard to the whole problem of the Far East, that nothing opposed to the sentiment of the powers should be done. No strong country whatsoever can march forward independently and at its own arbitrary convenience. If Japan, puffed up by her victories in war, should forfeit the sympathy of the powers,⁶⁸ she will be paying up for herself misfortune in the future.

To the gratification of Ito and his followers who favored gradualist diplomacy in regard to Korea, no foreign intervention ensued in the wake of the conclusion of the protectorate treaty. However, there had been some voices raised against Japanese protectorate moves by foreign residents in Korea and by the other Powers interested in Korean problems. And, the Japanese government for the moment had to be satisfied with the role of guidance in Korean affairs. Japan, by provisions in the protectorate treaty, left many problems in Korea unsolved; each time the knot of control was tightened, there followed fresh riots among the Koreans.

⁶⁸Wilson to the Secretary of State, February 13, 1906, in Foreign Relations (1906), p. 1028.

CHAPTER VI

KOREA'S STRUGGLE FOR INDEPENDENCE 1905-1907

Korean Reaction Against the Japanese Protectorate

The passive resistance of the Korean people to Japanese rule began soon after the signing of the Treaty of November 18, 1905. As the news spread throughout the country, the people of various districts assembled, particularly in the North, and started to march southward to die in front of the palace as protest against the Japanese enforced protectorate treaty. But many of them were stopped by the foreign missionaries who told them: "It is of no use dying in that way. You had better live and make your country better able to hold its own."¹

The Wangsung Shinmun, a leading Korean daily in Seoul, expressed the sentiment of the people in its editorial as follows:

When it was recently made known that Marquis Ito would come to Korea, our deluded people all said with one voice that he is the man who will be responsible for the maintenance of friendship between the three countries of the Far East (Japan, China and Korea) and believing that his visit to Korea was for the sole purpose of devising good plans for strictly maintaining the promised integrity and independence of Korea.

But, Oh! How difficult it is to anticipate affairs in this world. Without warning a proposal containing five clauses was laid before the Emperor, and we then saw how mistaken we were about the object of Ito's visit. However, the Emperor firmly refused to have anything to do with these proposals, and Ito should then, properly, have abandoned his attempt and returned to his own country.

Is it worth while for any of us to live any longer? Our people have become the slaves of others, and the

¹Quoted in McKenzie, The Tragedy of Korea, p. 138.

spirit of nation which had stood for 4,000 years, since the days of Tan-Kun has perished in a single night. Alas! fellow countrymen, alas!²

A number of leading officials, including all the surviving ex-prime ministers and more than a hundred men who had previously held high office under the Crown went to the palace and demanded that the Emperor should openly repudiate the treaty on the ground of Japanese violation of international law and to execute those five ministers who had acquiesced in it. The Emperor sought to temporize with them, for he himself feared that if he took too openly a hostile attitude toward the Japanese, they might harm him. The memorialists sat down in the palace building, refusing to move and demanding an answer. Some of their leaders were arrested by the Japanese police. The storekeepers of Seoul put up their shutters as a symbol of their mourning. The Japanese gendarmes descended on the petitioners and threatened them with mass arrest if they remained around the palace any longer. Thereafter they moved on to the street where they attempted to hold a meeting, but they were dispersed again by the gendarmes.³

Min Young-hwan, a former Envoy Extraordinary and Minister Plenipotentiary to the Tzar, Minister of War and Special Korean Ambassador to England, insisted that the convention was not legally concluded. He perceived the loss of both Korea's sovereignty and its dignity in this agreement. Just before committing suicide⁴ as a protest against Japan's

²Wangsung Shinmun (Seoul), November 24, 1905. See also McKenzie, The Tragedy of Korea, pp. 139-140.

³Lee, Hankuk Tongrip Undong Sa, pp. 246-265.

⁴Committing suicide is an oriental custom of passive resistance.

aggression and as a means of rousing the nation to regain its independence, Min wrote his "Farewell and Last Appeal to the People". In it he said in part: "It pains me to think that my twenty millions fellow Koreans shall perish in the coming struggle for existence

Although I die in the body, I shall not be dead in soul, and even after death I shall endeavor to assist you in your good efforts. Therefore exert yourselves to the utmost, redouble your natural power and strength, educate yourselves and restore our independence and liberty."⁵ Cho Pyong-se, ex-prime minister, also took his life as a protest. Several other statesmen did the same, while many others resigned. Foreign Minister, Park Che-sun, the last one to sign the treaty, was particularly angry with himself for having signed the treaty when he observed the universally unpopular sentiment against it; he tried to kill himself in front of Minister Hayashi, crying: "It is you who have made me a traitor to my country."⁶ Hayashi thwarted his attempt to commit suicide and sent him to a hospital for treatment.

However, suicides, resignations and lamentations were ineffective. The Japanese gendarmes commanded the cities and villages and they were supported by Japanese soldiers who were ready to impose their will by use of force if necessary. But unrest and discontent among the Koreans continued. Opposition to the Japanese was growing in strength. The so-called Uibyeong⁷ (the Righteous Army) constituted the core of the local

⁵The Korean Review, V. (November, 1905), pp. 427-428. See also "Min Young-whan", Ibid., VI. (Nov., 1906), pp. 406-412. Min Young-whan committed suicide on November 29, 1905.

⁶Hwang, Maechon Yarak, pp. 351-362.

⁷Uibyeong was organized by Korean Confucian leaders for the armed revolt against Japanese in Korea.

opposition and its major centers were situated in the southern provinces. Their significance in particular lay in the fact that all the opposition forces were led by former high government officials.

The first such revolt was led by Chai Ik-hyon who had been a provincial governor. Chai had submitted memorials to the Emperor admonishing against sloth and corruption in the government and warning of Japanese intrigue. Further-for he was widely respected as a Confucian scholar-he had sent letters regarding the same topics to his followers throughout Korea. The Japanese, therefore, called him a disturber of the peace and urged the Korean government to expel him.⁸ When the protectorate was established, Chai submitted two memorials to the throne, denouncing the five ministers who signed the Japanese protectorate treaty, and he also sent a long letter to the Japanese authorities denouncing Japan's aggression. Although closely watched by Japanese troops, he succeeded in gathering the followers in May 1906. These were joined soon by others. This group occupied several towns, and Chai's force numbered to several hundred. But the Uibyeong was quickly put down by the Japanese. Chai was arrested and was expelled.⁹

The Japanese government, in the meantime, consolidated her Resident-General's powers in Korea. The Japanese Imperial Ordinance No. 267, issued on December 20, 1905, provided the organization and functions of the Japanese Resident-General which read in part:

Article II. A Resident-General (Tokan) shall be

⁸Hwang, Maechon Yarak, pp. 224-226. Chai was expelled to Taima Island. Seoul National University, Kuk-sa Kai-sul, p. 674.

⁹Hwang, Maechon Yarak, pp. 370-378.

appointed to the Residency-General. The Resident-General shall be of the Shin-nin rank. The Resident-General shall be under the direct control of the Emperor. With regard to matters appertaining to foreign policy, he shall make representations to the Emperor and ask imperial sanction through the Minister of State for foreign affairs and the Minister President of State, and with regard to all other affairs, through the Minister President of State.

Article XI. Besides the Resident-General there shall be appointed to the Resident-General, 1 (Chokunin), Director of Agricultural, Commercial, and Industrial Affairs, 1 (Chokunin of Sonin); Director of Public Affairs, 1 (Chokunin or Sonin); Police Inspectors, 2 (Sonin); Experts, 5 (Gishi); Interpreters, 10 (Sonin); Clerks, Police Sergeants, Assistant Experts, Assistant Interpreters

Article XXV. The Resident may ask the command of Imperial forces stationed in his locality to dispatch troops, if he deems such measure necessary for preserving peace and order; provided that there is no time to ask the Resident-General for instructions.

Article XXVI. With regard to such Korean local administrative measures as may be necessitated by obligations based on the treaty, Residents may, when they think the matter too urgent to allow time for reference to the Resident-General for instructions, directly cause the respective local Korean authorities to carry out the required measures, and render their reports to the Resident-General afterward.

Article XXVII. The Residencies shall be established at important places in Korea. The location of the Residencies and the extent of their jurisdiction shall be fixed by the Resident-General.

Article XXVIII. Each Residency shall have the following functionaries: Resident (Sonin), Vice-Resident (Sonin), Clerks (Han-nin), Police Sergeants (Han-nin), Interpreters (Han-nin). In addition to the above functionaries, Police Inspectors of Sonin rank shall be appointed to those Residencies wherever the Resident-General deems it necessary to have more than two Vice-Residents, one of the latter shall mainly deal with judicial affairs. The personnel of the Residency shall be fixed by a separate regulation.¹⁰

In addition, Article XXXVIII specified that "A police shall be attached to the Residency-General and each Residency," the size of the

¹⁰ Foreign Relations, 1906, pp. 1024-1026.

force "shall be fixed by the Resident-General." Also, the Japanese garrison forces were stationed in Korea under the jurisdiction of the Resident-General.¹¹

On close examination of these articles, it is clear that both the Resident-General and the Resident were given powers more than those which were stipulated in the treaty of November 18. Thus the Resident-General became a virtual dictator in Korea by Imperial Ordinance No. 267.

On December 21, 1905, Ito was appointed Resident-General of Korea. Ito had advocated a gradual policy toward Korea, and upon conclusion of the protectorate treaty, Ito gave an interview to the representatives of the press in Seoul in which he said in part:

Now that the new treaty between Japan and Korea is concluded, it is believed by many Japanese even that Korea has been given to Japan, and this rash belief has caused bad feeling and misunderstandings between the two countries. The most important point that I wish to impress upon you is that, although the new relations between Japan and Korea have now been definitely established by the conclusion of the protectorate treaty, the sovereignty of Korea remains as it was, in the hands of the Korean Emperor, and the Imperial House of Korea and Government exists as it did before. The new relations do but add to the welfare and dignity of the Korean Dynasty and the strengthening of the country. It is a great mistake to look upon the new treaty as a knell sounding the doom of Korea's existence as a Kingdom.¹²

On the eve of his departure for Korea to assume the post first Resident-General, Ito was by no means straight forward in his defense of Korea. He stated his policy, " . . . it will be the duty of the government of this Empire to take it upon itself in accordance with the

¹¹Ito before his appointment insisted that he as Resident-General in Korea should be given the authority of Commander-in-Chief in Korea. Without this unity of Command he threatened to refuse the appointment. Ito Ko Zenshu, I, pp. 313-316.

¹²Quoted in A. J. Brown, The Mastery of the Far East (New York: Charles Scribners Sons, 1921), p. 197.

protocol, but governmental corruption is of remote origin, and to reform it in a day is no easy task"¹³ Thus, Ito's policy regarding the administrative reforms in Korea resulted in a complete overhauling of the existing structure.

Ito also outlined his policy regarding the poverty of the Koreans saying; " . . . if it be neglected and no means devised for relieving it, this Empire will not only be violating its responsibility as protector of Korea, but will also itself suffer in the end."¹⁴ The protectorate treaty meant to Ito that Japan should promote the economic development of Korea. He likewise stated that the Japanese population should be absorbed by Korea.

However, the meanings and implications of Ito's policy statement surpassed the role of the Japanese in Korea as understood from the provisions of all the agreements between Korea and Japan which were effective at the time. His speech before the Constitutional Party clearly indicates this ambivalence of Japan's Korean policy. He stated that the Japanese enforcement of the protectorate over Korea was a final solution of the Korean problem and that the solution in reality, the realization of the community of interests between Japan and Korea, still belonged to the future. He also reminded the members of the Constitutional Party of the fact that Korea did not submit herself voluntarily to Japan, for the question of forfeiting independence was involved in the Japanese imposition of the Protectorate Treaty on Korea.¹⁵

¹³Foreign Relations, 1906, p. 1030.

¹⁴Foreign Relations, 1906, p. 1031.

¹⁵Foreign Relations, 1906, p. 1032.

The Korean Emperor with his Court group did not entertain the idea of sitting tight until the time of eventual Japanese annexation of his Kingdom. He saw clearly that he was really under the domination of the Japanese, and made his palace a center of intrigue against the Japanese to save his toppling nation.

The Emperor Appeals to the Foreign Powers

Like the majority of the Korean people, the Emperor was deeply displeased by the protectorate treaty Ito and Hayashi had succeeded in concluding with his country. The Japanese statesmen had been analyzed correctly: the conduct of foreign relations was the single most important power of the Emperor. With Korea practically defenseless before the Japanese army, the only way open to him - besides quietly submitting - was to seek help from outside.

The Emperor of Korea was aware of Japan's plan to establish a protectorate over Korea and, on October 20, 1905, a few weeks before the arrival of Ito, he sent a personal message of appeal to President Roosevelt seeking American assistance against the impending Japanese threat. The message was entrusted to Professor B. Hulbert, Dean of the Imperial Normal College in Seoul, the Emperor's trusted advisor. Hulbert arrived in Washington on November 17, 1905 and sought an interview with the Secretary of State Elihu Root, who was too busy to see him.¹⁶ Horace Allen, the former American Minister to Seoul, had earlier advised his government not to invoke the treaty of 1882 between Korea and the United States. The American minister in Seoul, E. V. Morgan, had sent a cable to Washington concerning Hulbert's intention, which was to demonstrate to Roosevelt that Korea was being treated "unjustly and oppressively by Japan" and to urge that the United States should endeavor

¹⁶ Homer B. Hulbert, "The Opening of Korea", The Voice of Korea (Washington D. C.), Vol. II, No. 26, January 5, 1945. Professor Hulbert was selected by the United States government in 1885 as one of three Americans to go to Korea, at the request of the Korean government, to engage in modernizing the Korean educational system.

to bring about a just settlement under the terms of the Korean-American Treaty of 1882.¹⁷

When Hulbert was finally allowed to present the message on November 20, the Japanese government had already formally notified Washington that Korea had been duly placed under the Japanese protectorate.¹⁸ The message of appeal from the Korean Emperor to President Roosevelt read in part as follows:

Ever since 1883 the United States and Korea have maintained friendly treaty relations. Korea has received many proofs of the good will and the sympathy of the American Government and people. The American Representatives have always shown themselves to be in sympathy with the welfare and progress of Korea. Many teachers have been sent from America who have done much for the uplift of our people.

But we have not made the progress that we ought. This is due partly to the political machinations of foreign powers and partly to our mistakes. At the beginning of the Japan-Russia war the Japanese Government asked us to enter into an alliance with them, granting them to use of our territory, harbours, and other resources, to facilitate their military and naval operations. Japan, on her part, guaranteed to preserve the independence of Korea and the welfare and dignity of the royal house. We complied with Japan's request, loyally lived up to our obligations, and did everything that we had stipulated. By so doing we put ourselves in such a position that if Russia had won, she could have seized Korea and annexed her to Russian territory on the ground that we were active allies of Japan.

It is now apparent that Japan proposes to abrogate their part of this treaty and declare a protectorate over our country in direct contravention of her sworn promise in the agreement of 1904. There are several reasons why this should not be done.

In the first place, Japan will stultify herself by such a direct breach of faith. It will injure her prestige as a power that proposes to work according to enlightened laws.

¹⁷ Morgan to Root, October 19, 1905, Foreign Relations, p. 623.

¹⁸ Foreign Relations, 1905, p. 626.

In the second place, the actions of Japan in Korea during the past two years give no promise that our people will be handled in an enlightened manner. No adequate means have been provided whereby redress could be secured for wrongs perpetrated upon our people. The finances of the country have been gravely mishandled by Japan. Nothing has been done towards advancing the cause of education or justice. Every move on Japan's part has been manifestly selfish.

The destruction of Korea's independence will work her a great injury, because it will intensify the contempt with which the Japanese people treat the Koreans and will make their acts all the more oppressive.

We acknowledge that many reforms are needed in Korea. We are glad to have the help of Japanese advisers, and we are prepared loyally to carry out their suggestions. We recognize the mistakes of the past. It is not for ourselves we plead, but for the Korean people.

At the beginning of the war our people gladly welcomed the Japanese, because this seemed to herald needed reforms and a general bettering of conditions, but soon it was seen that no genuine reforms were intended and the people had been deceived.

One of the gravest evils that will follow a protectorate by Japan is that the Korean people will lose all incentive to improvement. No hope will remain that they can ever regain their independence. They need the spur of national feeling to make them determine upon progress and to make them persevere in it. But the extinction of nationality will bring despair and instead of working loyally and gladly in conjunction with Japan, the old time hatred will be intensified and suspicion and animosity will result.

It has been said that sentiment should have no place in such affairs, but we believe, sir, that sentiment is the moving force in all human affairs, and that kindness, sympathy, and generosity are still working between nations as between individuals. We beg of you to bring to bear upon this question the same breadth of mind and the same calmness of judgment that have characterized your course hitherto, and having weighed the matter, to render us what aid you can consistently in this our time of national danger.¹⁹

In this urgent appealing letter, the Emperor admitted that "Korea

¹⁹Quoted in Congressional Records, 66th Cong; 1st Sess. (1919), pp. 6814-6815. See also, Korean Review, I, No. 7 (Sept., 1919), pp. 1-2.

needed help in reorganizing the government and was willing to see a joint protectorate of friendly powers formed". But he insisted that "if Japan alone were given such a foothold in Korea it would mean the total extinction of her independence."²⁰

President Roosevelt rejected the Emperor's appeal for help, and addressed the following reply to Secretary Root:

I have read carefully the letter of the Korean Emperor handed to you by Mr. Hulbert . . . I understand from you that the Korean representative here, so far as you know, is unacquainted with the existence of such a letter and that Mr. Hulbert understands that it is the wish of the Emperor that the existence of the letter should be secret and nothing said to anyone about it and particularly not to the Japanese. Of course, these facts render it impossible for us to treat the letter as an official communication, for there is no way in which we could officially act without violating what Mr. Hulbert says is the Emperor's wish, moreover, we have been officially notified that the Korean Government has made the very arrangement with Japan which, in the letter of the Emperor he says he does not desire to make. All things considered I do not see²¹ that any practical action on the letter is open to us.

The matter, however, was not so easily disposed of. On November 26, 1905, the Korean Emperor sent a cablegram to Mr. Hulbert, reading as follows: "I declare that so-called treaty of protectorate recently concluded between Korea and Japan was extorted at the point of the sword and under duress and therefore is null and void. I never consented to it and never will. Transmit to American government."²² On the same day the Korean Minister to France, Min Young-chan, then in the United States as "special envoy without credentials," called on Secretary of

²⁰ Congressional Records, 66th Cong; 1st Sess. (1919), pp. 6815-6816; Korean Daily News (Seoul), February, 1906.

²¹ Quoted in Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War, p. 304-305.

²² Oliver, Syngman Rhee, p. 75.

State, Root, related a similar story, and branded the treaty an invalid instrument. To the Korean, however, the refusal of the United States to become involved was made even more definite than it had been made previously to Hulbert, for in the meantime Secretary Root had received official notice of the agreement from the Korean legation in Washington and was informed that this agency had transferred its function and effects to the Japanese envoy there.²³ Said Secretary Root:

In view of this official communication, it is difficult to see how the government of the United States can proceed in any manner upon the entirely different view of the facts which you tell us personally you have been led to take by the information which you have received. It is to be observed, moreover, that the official communications from the Japanese Government agree with the official communications from the Korean Government, and are quite inconsistent with your information.

One important reason for the Japanese success in establishing a Protectorate over Korea was her careful efforts to secure the acquiescence of those major powers which might have raised any objection to her absorption of Korea. No Japanese action in Korea was ever undertaken without first testing the reaction of the major powers regarding the following claims: 1) Koreans were unfit for self government and 2) Japanese interests in Korea were of such importance that she was constrained to assume the responsibility of ruling Korea. Among the powers, for instance, the United States was so thoroughly won over by Japan that President Roosevelt deliberately refused to interfere when the Korean Emperor appealed to him for assistance.²⁵

²³ Foreign Relations, 1905, pp. 626-627.

²⁴ Ibid., pp. 629-630.

²⁵ Tyler Dennett, "President Roosevelt's Secret Pact with Japan," Current History, October, 1924, p. 20.

Subsequent to his unsuccessful attempt to appeal directly to the United States, the Emperor took every opportunity to send messages abroad protesting the Japanese enforced protectorate treaty. He managed sometimes to communicate with his friends who, though powerless, did their best to support his cause. Unfortunately his efforts were unsuccessful, for his Japanese captors always interfered.²⁶

The Emperor believed that if he could only assure the powers that he had never consented to the treaty robbing Korea of her independence, they would reestablish diplomatic relations with Korea. The foreign legations in Korea had been withdrawn and replaced by either consulates or consulates general since the signing of the treaty of November 18, 1905. The Korean Emperor hoped that the great powers would return their ministers to Seoul if they were informed of the truth about the forcible and fraudulent conclusion of the treaty. However, the appeal was a total failure.

The Resident-General Ito at last decided to clear various hangers-on in the court, for he reasoned that the major source of various intrigues lay with them. On July 3, 1906, about fifteen Japanese police under the direction of Maruyama, the Japanese adviser in the Korean police department, took charge of the court, allowing the passage only of those who possessed a pass issued by the Japanese authority.²⁷

²⁶Harrington, God, Mammon and Japanese, p. 233. The Korean Emperor enlisted the support of men such as Horace N. Allen, once American Minister in Seoul, to arouse public opinion in America in support of the Korean cause. The Emperor sent him \$10,000 to be used for the cause of Korean independence. Allen later returned the money, for he and his many friends could not move the Roosevelt administration.

²⁷Hwang, Maecheon Yarok, pp. 394-395; Taehan Maeil Shinbo (Seoul), July 4, 1906.

The Emperor thus became a virtual prisoner in his palace. Furthermore, Ito urged the separation of the affairs of the court and the affairs of government. This was designed to deprive the Korean Emperor of his prerogatives in public administration. The Emperor however withheld his approval and Ito was unable to implement his plan. And, rumors were still reported to the office of the Residency-General that the Emperor was communicating with foreign governments through means of secret agents and Koreans abroad.

When the Second Peace Conference convened at the Hague in the Summer of 1907, the Korean Emperor believed that the opportunity had come at last to strike a blow for Korean freedom. Secretly, he sent a three man delegation to the Hague Conference which was to open on June 16. The carefully selected delegates were Yi Sang-sul, former Vice Prime Minister; Yi Chun, ex-Judge of the Supreme Court; and Yi Wi-jong, former Secretary at the Korean Legation in Russia. Yi Sang-sul and Yi Chun had resigned in protest when the Protectorate Treaty was signed.²⁸ Amid great secrecy, these three men left Seoul on April 20 armed with a credential issued by the Emperor which read:

As the independence of Korea has been known to all the powers with which she has ever been in friendly relation, we have, for this reason, the right to send delegates to all international conferences which can be convoked for any purpose. But by the terms of the treaty of November 18th, 1905, which was extorted from us by force, the Japanese by menace and be a violation of all international equality deprived us of the right of direct communication with the friendly powers.

Not recognizing this act on the part of the Japanese, we desire hereby to appoint the official of the ex-Vice

²⁸ Cha-hu-Yu, Hai A Mil Sa ("The Hague Emissaries") (Seoul): Yagil Sojum, 1948), pp. 43-46. See also Lee, Han-kuk Dongrip Undong Sa, pp. 274-275.

Prime Minister, Yi Sang-sul, and Yi Chun, ex-Judge of the Supreme Court of Korea, and Yi Wi Chong, former Secretary of Legation at St. Petersburg, as Delegates Extraordinary and plenipotentiary to the International Peace Conference at the Hague, for the purpose of making clear to the representatives of the powers the violation of our rights by the Japanese and the danger which presently threatens our country; and also to establish between my country and the foreign powers the direct diplomatic relations to which we are entitled by the fact of our independence.

Considering the three gentlemen named above to be men of high ability and of proved fidelity, we appoint them as our full representatives to the Conference at Hague, in the conviction that they will faithfully serve us and the interests of the nation.²⁹

They went to Vladivostok, where they boarded the Trans-Siberian railway for St. Petersburg. They were later joined by Homer B. Hulbert, who left Seoul in May. They added Yi Wi-jong to the group in St. Petersburg and arrived in Hague on July 29, 1907. Upon arrival, they immediately went to see Count M. Nelidoff, Russian Chief Delegate and the Chairman of the Conference, and requested that the Korean delegation be admitted to the Conference. They showed him the credentials they had brought from the Emperor of Korea. Count Nelidoff, however, told them that it was not within the power of the Conference Chairman to decide whether to admit the Korean delegation or to add the appeal of Korea to the agenda and suggested that they might approach other delegates.³⁰ In spite of the disappointing manner in which they were first received, the courageous Korean delegation visited with and appealed to the delegations of the United States, Great Britain, and France. They also visited Dr. Van Tets, Foreign Minister of the

²⁹Yu, Hai A Mil Sa, pp. 57-58. See also, The Independence (New York) LXIII (1907), p. 425.

³⁰Lee, Hankuk Dekrip Undong Sa, pp. 274-277. Seoul National University, Kuk-sa Kai-sul, p. 677.

Netherlands, who had called the Hague Peace Conference. The Korean Delegation insisted that: 1) the Treaty of November 18, 1905, had never been approved or ratified by the Korean Emperor and therefore had no validity; 2) Japan consequently had no authority to control Korean foreign relations; and 3) Korea still had the right to send a delegation to any international conference, such as the Hague Peace Conference.³¹

However, the foreign powers, the United States, Great Britain and France refused to support the participation of Korean delegates to be recognized as Korea's official representatives to the Conference. Dr. Van Tets regretfully said to the Korean delegates that Korea had no legal validity to be admitted to the international conference, for the foreign powers recognized the Japanese protectorate treaty over Korea.³²

In the meantime, the alerted Japanese delegation was very active in obstructing the work of the Korean delegation. They spoke freely to other delegations to the effect that Korea had duly transferred to Japan the authority to conduct her foreign relations and that she was therefore in no position to send a delegation to the Hague Conference.³³

On July 5, 1907, Yi Sang-sul was allowed to present only the Korean petition to the Conference. The petition stated that on November 18, 1905, Japan, by force of arms, had compelled the Korean Minister of Foreign Affairs to sign, without the consent of the Emperor, a document giving Japan control of Korean foreign relations. Since the signature

³¹Cha-hu, Yu, Yi Chun Sonseng-chun ("Biography of Yi Chun") (Seoul; Tongbang Munhwa Sa), 1947, pp. 220-223; Park, Han-kuk Tong Sa, p. 246.

³²Lee, Han-kuk Tongrip Undong Sa, p. 246.

³³Yu, Hai A Mil Sa, pp. 64-75.

of this document had been extorted entirely by unjust violence, and since diplomatic relations between Korea and the foreign powers should not be interrupted save by her own will, the petition requested intervention by the members of the Conference and that admittance be granted to the Koreans to defend their rights and to expose the proceedings of the Japanese in Korea. The petition also pointed out: 1) Japan was deciding all political matters without the consent of the Korean Emperor; 2) Japan, relying on the strength of her army and navy, was exploiting Korea; and 3) Japan was destroying all existing laws and mores of Korea.³⁴

The official delegates were profoundly moved and decided to ascertain whether the Korean Government had actually sent the delegation for that purpose. When the cablegram reached Seoul, where all telegraph services were controlled by the Japanese, it quickly got into the hand of Ito, the Japanese Resident-General in Korea. He immediately sent a reply to the effect that the Korean government had never sent such a delegation. The Korean appeal was then officially rejected on the motion of the British delegate.³⁵

The Korean delegates did not leave, but adopted the alternative plan of attempting to arouse international public opinion in favor of the Korean cause. In this effort, they were aided by a prominent Dutch journalist, W. Stead, who permitted them to speak for hours before the International Press Institute (then meeting at the Hague). Yi Wi-jong spoke regarding the plight of Korea under the oppressive rule of Japan;

³⁴Yu, Yi Chun Sonsaeng-chun, pp. 220-227.

³⁵Ibid., pp. 238-240; Kang, Cho-son Dong-rip Hyol-tu Sa, p. 29. Ito had interrogated the Korean Emperor and secured a denial of all knowledge of the deputation and its action. The Emperor being a "prisoner of Japanese" was not at liberty to declare the truth as it might entail grave personal consequence.

his speech stirred a sympathetic reaction.³⁶

Although this mission failed, the Koreans thought repercussions were significant. The Korean attempt "surprised the world". The Japanese government was even more surprised and Resident-General Ito, who was directly responsible to his government for Korean affairs, was stunned at this turn of events.

³⁶Yu, Yi Chun Sonsaeng-chun, p. 241-242; The Independent (New York) LXIII (1907).

The Abdication of the Emperor

The news of the presence of the Korean deputation at the Hague Peace Conference caused much concern in Japan, and many discussions were held by Japanese statesmen, as to what action they should take. Count Okuma Prime Minister of Japan was said to have stated that if the Korean Emperor had authorized a scheme so lacking in common sense, he might properly be placed under restraint as not being right-minded. Count Inouye, former Japanese Minister at Seoul was of the opinion that the Korean Emperor should be brought to Japan where, seeing that country's advancement, he would voluntarily cease his unfriendly attitude toward Japan.³⁷

In the meantime, Ito presented a memorandum to the Korean Emperor criticizing his act of dispatching Korean delegates to the international conference without the Resident-General's consent, thereby harming Japan's prestige in the international society and bluntly warning that she might consider a declaration of war against Korea.³⁸ The Hague mission affair convinced Ito that he could no longer tolerate the Emperor of Korea. Ito sent a telegram to his Tokyo government stating that " . . . this kind of serious event happens because the protectorate treaty transferred the power only over foreign relations. In order to prevent further nuisance, we should control the internal administration

³⁷Ladd, In Korea with Marquis Ito, pp. 418.

³⁸Ko Kwon-san, Kinsei Chosen Kobosi (History of Rise and Fall of Modern Korea") (Tokyo: Koko Shoin, 1933), p. 216. See also Lee, Han-kuk Sa, p. 952. Ito notified the Emperor that his action was not only a violation of the Protectorate Treaty but also a hostile act that would justify Japan declaring war against Korea.

of Korea."³⁹

The Japanese possessed full control over Korea. The only obstacle to full exercise of this control was the Emperor, who, though powerless, yet continued to appeal to foreign powers. Now, however, the Japanese had sufficient excuses to remove him from the throne; and they easily accomplished this without having to take direct action. The Korean cabinet had been altered in May, 1907, and the cabinet ministers were nominated not by the Emperor but by the Resident-General, Ito. Thus, the cabinet of Premier Yi Wan-young, wholly Ito's tool, had been staffed with mostly pro-Japanese Koreans.⁴⁰

Ito instructed the cabinet of Yi Wan-young to recommend to the Emperor that he abdicate, lest Japan annex Korea at once.⁴¹ On July 19, 1907, the pro-Japanese cabinet ministers went to the Emperor and demanded that he should abandon the throne in favor of the Crown Prince to save his country from being conquered by Japan. The Emperor refused at first but finally, with all hope of foreign sympathy or help gone and with his own cabinet members urging his abdication, he weakened and at three o'clock in the morning of the 20th of July agreed to retire in favor of the Crown Prince.⁴²

The Crown Prince, twelve years old, feeble of intellect, and who

³⁹Midori Komatsu, Chosen Heigo no Rimen ("The Inside Story of the Korean Annexation") (Tokyo; Chugai Hyoronsha, 1920), pp. 30-31.

⁴⁰Seoul National University, Kuk-sa Kai-sul, p. 680.

⁴¹The Japanese sources concerning the abdication of the Emperor illustrate this in their insistence that it was not Ito but the Korean cabinet who forced abdication. See, Hilary Conroy, The Japanese Seizure of Korea: 1868-1910. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1959), pp. 351-353.

⁴²Lee, Hankuk Sa, pp. 954-955.

could be little more than a tool in the hands of his pro-Japanese advisers, was crowned as the new Emperor. The Japanese, having placed the imperial authority in such inept hands, were now able to secure without effort the imperial assent to vast new powers for the Resident-General, including veto power over all laws and the appointment of officials and, most important, the right to appoint Japanese subjects as officials of the Korean government. This new agreement, known as "the Convention concerning Administration of Korea" was signed on July 24, 1907, and read:

Article I. The Government of Korea shall act under the guidance of the Resident-General in respect to reform in administration.

Article II. The Government of Korea engages not to enact any laws, ordinance or regulations, or to take any important measures of administration without the previous assent of the Resident-General.

Article III. The Judicial affairs in Korea shall be set apart from the affairs of ordinary administration.

Article IV. The appointment of all high officials in Korea shall be made upon the concurrence of the Resident-General.

Article V. The Government of Korea shall appoint as Korean officials the Japanese subjects recommended by the Resident-General.

Article VI. The Government of Korea shall not engage any foreigner without the concurrence of the Resident-General.

Article VII. Article I of the protocol between Japan and Korea signed on the 22nd of August, 1904, shall hereafter cease to be binding.⁴³

When this treaty transferring the entire domestic administration

⁴³ Henry Chung, (Comp.), Treaties and Conventions between Korea and other Powers (New York: H. S. Nicholas Inc., 1919), pp. 221-223. This treaty was signed by Japanese Resident-General Ito and Korean Prime Minister Yi Wan-young. It placed in Japanese hands the actual functions of Korean government; Kwan Bo, July 27, 1907.

of Korea to Japan was signed, there was attached to it a secret memorandum which provided that: 1) Japanese were to be heads of all courts and prosecutors' offices in Korea; 2) all chiefs of police in Korea were to be Japanese; 3) the holders of all the second-highest positions in national and provincial governments were to be Japanese; and 4) the Korean army would be disbanded, except one battalion which was to serve as the palace guard.⁴⁴ As this was a secret agreement, the people were unaware of it. Therefore, when the new Emperor issued a rescript ordering the disbandment of the Korean army on August 1, 1907,⁴⁵ the Korean soldiers arose in a futile resistance against the Japanese.

Various innovations fortified Japan's position in Korea. The new regulations for the imperial household were promulgated on November 29. By these terms, two thirds of its offices were closed, a separate accounting bureau was set up for it, and access to the Emperor was possibly only through the Minister of the Household. A Japanese became the director of the police for the entire country, and in each province the police forces were under Japanese control. Toward the end of 1907, Ito, then in Japan, specifically denied that annexation of Korea was contemplated.⁴⁶ Nevertheless, Japan violated her repeatedly

⁴⁴Gaimusho, Nihon Gaiko Nempo Narabini Shuyo Bunsho, 1840-1945, pp. 276-277.

⁴⁵Kwan Bo, August 1, 1907. The Korean Army at this time numbered about 6,200 men.

⁴⁶Brown, Mastery of the Far East, p. 205. Japan annexed Korea officially on August 22, 1910. Many pro-Japanese writers present Prince Ito, who forced a Protectorate Treaty over Korea and prepared the annexation of Korea, as a very benevolent statesman whose preoccupation was the freedom and welfare of Korea. A Korean assassinated him at Harbin in 1909 and then annexation followed. According to this interpretation, Japan never desired annexation, but was forced to take this step because Koreans refused to follow reforms instituted by Japan.

expressed promise to respect the independence of Korea and virtually "annexed" the Kingdom of Korea by 1907. Thus Korea died as even a nominally independent nation.

This explanation ignores blindly the fact that the Katsura cabinet with the participation of Ito, had decided as early as May 1904 that Korea should be absorbed.

CONCLUSION

The geography of Korea was a vital factor in deciding the fate of Korea. Korea consists of the peninsula projecting from the mainland of Asia, and of 3,497 islands. It is separated from Manchuria by the Yalu River, and from the Maritime Province of the Soviet Russia by the Tuman River. On the east the peninsula is washed by the Sea of Japan and on the west by the Yellow Sea.

The area of Korea is 85,228 sq. miles, i.e., slightly larger than that of Utah. Her population numbered 20 million, some ninety per cent of whom were peasants living in the countryside. The national economy, though changing, was still semifeudal in character.

Lying in the center of the triangle of East Asia as a nutcracker between China, Japan and Russia, Korea reflects the political influence of her neighbors in the political geography of her buffer position in the Far East. Indeed, her geographical position had destined the country for trouble. If the Korean people have appeared stubborn in rejecting foreign overtures, a glance at their international relations reveal a pattern of interference by powerful neighbors.

The political institutions of Korea also influenced the fate of the Korean kingdom. Korea was in theory, a kingdom ruled by a King. In fact, the throne was occupied by do-nothing, besotted and utterly incapable sovereigns. The aristocratic families absorbed complete authority. The Korean monarchy was in a serious state of disintegration. The people could take no part in politics because the government was conducted by a factional bureaucracy in which only a small elite was

privileged to participate in the making or administering of political decision. Indeed, internal corruption and disunity has made Korea an easy prey to aggression at the same time that it has made political coherence difficult.

We find that in the fertile field for international intrigue, the struggle for power among the various factions in the Korean court sought the support of foreign powers. The tendency on the part of Korean factions to rely on foreign support was, in fact, an independence movement in a large sense. The factional leaders firmly believed that Korean independence could be maintained by skillful manipulation of international rivalries. However, the contending factions brought each other virtually to a standstill, at the cost of severe damage to both factions, disunity to the nation and to its leaders, and irreparable loss and hardship to the people. Furthermore, it openly invited the divide-and-rule technique by the powers.

For centuries the foreign relations of Korea had been limited to the sending of regular tribute missions to China. Korea closed its frontiers to all nations except China whose suzerainty it recognized. Korea maintained a rigid policy of seclusion hoping to retain her independence by isolation. At the end of the nineteenth century, when Korea was forced into the Western international system, Korean response to foreign contact had been handicapped. Within the protecting cocoon of the Chinese tribute system the Korean court was unprepared for outside relations and had acquired the habit of depending on the "big country."

Korea as a weak and small nation, surrounded by imperialistic powers, attempted to retain her independence by playing one power against

the other. However, this approach was unsuccessful in the long run because the Korean statesmen were ignorant of what was being discussed by the imperialistic neighboring powers about the fate of Korea; if Korean officials knew about the designs of the surrounding powers on Korea, they turned to another great power for help. Something like the old Confucian relationship with China seemed to have been contemplated, and the traditional mode of thinking remained dominant. The Korean officials should have realized that the time had come to modernize the country and strengthen Korean defenses. But the Koreans wished to find an easy escape by relying on what her "suzerain" or "protector" was willing to do for them. The delicate balance of power between Russia and Japan provided the Korean government an opportunity to pursue progressive policies toward reforming the country and strengthening its economic and military capability. It was likewise a tragic mistake of the Korean government to suppress the progressive movement which aimed at retaining genuine Korean independence by a program of modernization.

The Korean government registered her protest when the Japanese protectorate threatened to become permanent, but she failed to receive the needed support from the United States. Who is to blame for this? It is inevitable to point out that the weakness in Korea's foreign policy was based on the tradition of unilateral dependence on a "suzerain" power. The fact that Korea failed to free herself from this historical legacy is responsible for the weakness of her foreign policy.

It can be said without much argument that the weakness of Korea was an invitation for imperialism on the part of the surrounding powers.

However, foreign intervention provided the negative, yet the most powerful, symbol for the Korean independence movement led by the Tonghak, Independence Club, and the "Righteous Armies".

The American scholar in Korean affairs, George M. McCune made the following comment concerning Korean politics:

During the transition from traditional to modern times three important influences came to dominate Korean politics: (1) the strong historical and cultural ties which bound together the Korean people as a single unit contributed to an intense nationalism which led the Koreans to resist almost fanatically foreign domination despite the weakness of their government; (2) the extreme conservatism and factionalism which pervaded the social and political order delayed and hindered reform which might have modernized the country; (3) the ancient ties with China which were considered a safeguard for independence instead of a limitation upon sovereignty led the Korean government to look with favor upon a policy of reliance upon a stronger neighboring state. These three forces---nationalism, conservatism, and reliance upon an ally---emerged as domination characteristics of Korean policy

Korea, however, must not bear the entire responsibility for her tragedy. In international power politics, small nations have always owed their independence either to the balance of power, or the preponderance of one protecting power, or to their lack of attractiveness for imperialistic aspirations. It was inevitable that the international status of Korea be determined by the preponderance of Japanese imperialistic power.

If the powers had maintained a policy of non-interference in the affairs of the kingdom of Korea, her fate would have taken a different turn. The impacts of the power struggles by neighboring rival powers resulted in the loss of Korean independence. Japanese imperialism in particular advanced many arguments to justify her domination of that peninsula. These included self-defense, the modernization of Korea,

and the superiority of Japanese civilization. But none of these arguments stand the test of a close investigation of international morality and justice. It is the principle of justice that all peoples and nationalities should have the right to live on equal terms in liberty and safety with one another, whether they be strong or weak.

The tragedy of Korean experience in modern international relations emphatically proved that force is the instrument of achieving national interest. The exercise of indirect political control or territorial annexation is conditioned on the threat of force or its actual use. The preponderant military power of a nation proved to be the decisive factor in securing economic concessions as well as imposing cultural and political values on an alien nationality.

Korean experience and the actual nature of international power politics that took place in Korea have been evaluated. The question remains whether even with internal reforms and strong government Korea would have escaped Japanese take-over. If there were no power in the world at this time which possessed large enough interests in South Vietnam or sufficient conviction about the reign of law and order in international affairs to consider intervention at whatever cost, it is doubtful that South Vietnam could escape a communist take-over.

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