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1920–1930s

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**RAILROAD TECHNOCRACY,
EXTRATERRITORIALITY,
AND IMPERIAL *LIEUX DE MÉMOIRE*
IN RUSSIAN ÉMIGRÉS' MANCHURIA, 1920–1930s***

The Bolshevik Revolution in Russia and the Russian Civil War that ensued generated two types of movements in Manchuria, in Northeast China. One was a demographic movement, the flight of Russian refugees into the region. The other was political and juridical, consisting of initiatives taken by the Chinese republican government to claim territorial sovereignty over Manchuria, and to overturn the unequal treaties signed with the now-defunct Russian imperial state. Both movements revolved around the Chinese Eastern Railroad (CER), the final stretch of Siberian railroad that was built by the Russian state two decades before the revolution.

Arriving in Manchuria, a significant number of the refugees, in particular, railroad engineers and other technical professionals, helped retain Russian control in running the railroad. This control served to maintain the CER concession zone as a destination of emigration from Russia, just as the

* I would like to thank the anonymous reviewers of *AI* for their comments; the participants of the Heidelberg University conference “Daily Life and Urban Spaces in Northeast Asian Border Towns” – in particular Frank Grüner, Susanne Hohler, and Sören Urbansky – for their critique and support; and Ilya Gerasimov for his much appreciated editorial input.

Chinese government began to undertake sweeping administrative reforms aimed at “recovering” its sovereignty in the part of Manchuria dominated by the CER. Focusing on one group of refugees, the railroad engineers, technical specialists, and other professionals whose work and writings concerned the CER, this essay explores how their activities and their conceptions of history, progress, and civilization helped shape the identity of Russian émigrés in Manchuria.

Recent works regarding Russians in Manchuria in the post-1917 period have tended to follow one of two major strands of approach. One is to treat the experience of the Russians through the lens of emigration, and the other, to consider Russians as interlocutors and foils in Chinese efforts to assert the Chineseness of Manchuria. The first derives from a revision of the Soviet historiography that condemned emigration as counterrevolutionary; in this historiography Manchuria emerges as a “nest of white guards” and the setting of anti-Soviet intrigues.¹ Replying to charges of emigration as betrayal and casting a different light on émigrés, studies in this group, many of them published in perestroika and post-Soviet Russia, focus on the émigrés’ preservation of their cultural identity and Russianness in an alien land.² An offshoot of the approach that takes emigration as the central analytical lens defining Russian experience, and mirroring the post-Soviet studies’ privileging of cultural endeavors as a marker of Russianness, a number of post-1990s Chinese local histories of the region inhabited by Russian émigrés likewise highlight the cultural output of the Russians.³

¹ For Soviet works on emigration in general that contribute to this historiography, see, for example, G. F. Barikhnovskii. *Ideino-politicheskii krakh beloemigratsii i razgrom vnutrennei kontrevoliutsii (1921–1924)*. Leningrad, 1978; and V. V. Komin. *Politicheskii i ideinyi krakh russkoi melkoburzhuaiznoi kontrevoliutsii za rubezhom*. Kalinin, 1977. With regard to China in particular, see V. V. Sonin. *Krakh beloi emigratsii v Kitae*. Vladivostok, 1987. E. P. Taskina offers the image of a nest of white guard schemers as a view of the city Harbin, the center of Russian Manchuria, that her memoir refutes. E. P. Taskina. *Neizvestnyi Kharbin*. Moscow, 1994. P. 5.

² See, for example, Taskina. *Neizvestnyi Kharbin*; V. F. Pecheritsa. *Dukhovnaia kul’tura russkoi emigratsii v Kitae*. Vladivostok, 1999; N. L. Gorkavenko and N. P. Gridina. *Rossiiskaia intelligentsia v izgnanii: Man’chzhuriia 1917–1946 gg.* Vladivostok, 2002; and L. F. Goverdovskaia. *Obshchestvenno-politicheskaia i kul’turnaia deiatel’nost’ russkoi emigratsii v Kitae v 1917–1931 gg.* Moscow, 2004.

³ See Li Shuxiao. *Deiatel’nost’ kharbinskoi pravoslavnoi eparkhii // Dal’nii Vostok Rossii – Severo-vostok Kitaia: Istoricheskii opyt vzaimodeistviia i perspektivy sotrudnichestva*. Khabarovsk, 1998. Pp. 172–174; Li Yanglin (Ed.). *Seriia literatury russkikh emigrantov v Kitae*. V 5 tt. Harbin, 2002, as cited in N. E. Ablova. *KVZhD i rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae: Mezhdunarodnye i politicheskie aspekty istorii (Pervaia polovina XX veka)*.

Motivated perhaps by an intent to salvage the vanishing signs of Russian presence in this region, these new local histories are in their turn a revision of their predecessors' insistence on interpreting Russian influence in Manchuria in terms of imperialism and "economic robbery."⁴ On the issue of Russian and Chinese interaction, the new Chinese local histories tend to stress cooperation between "Russian emigrants" and the "Chinese people."⁵ This emphasis on cooperation echoes the celebration of the "mutual enrichment" of Russian and Chinese cultures by a perestroika-period Soviet study on Russian emigration, and the ceremonial appeal to the "friendship of the peoples" of the Soviet era this celebration of mutuality recalls.⁶

Unlike the perestroika and post-Soviet literature on emigration, whose primary sources are mainly Russian, from either émigré or Soviet collections, works following the second strand of approach tend to incorporate substantial, if not a predominant amount of Chinese primary documents. Unlike both the Russian studies and the recent Chinese local histories, these works tend to take as a given that Imperial Russia's rule of Manchuria was colonial.⁷ While it is difficult to decide to what extent Imperial Russia's expansion was colonial in character, given the imperial state's highly varied methods and conceptions of integrating and governing frontier regions,⁸

Moscow, 2005. Pp. 23, 44. For an early and still transitional Chinese work in this turn to celebrate Russians' cultural contribution, see Chang Huaisheng. *Haerbin jianzhu yishu*. Harbin, 1990. This is a photo album of Harbin's architecture, much of which was Russian-built, and to which the author refers as the "historical cultural legacy created together by the Chinese and foreign peoples." Ibid. P. 9.

⁴ For a publication on "tsarist capital's economic robbery of Harbin," see Zhu Shengping. *Di-e ziben dui haerbin de jingji lueduo* // *Haerbin shizhi* (Harbin Historical Annals). 1986. No. 2. Pp. 97-102; on "imperialist capital's invasion and its influence on the rise and fall of Harbin's national businesses," see Teng Yingwu. *Diguo zhuyi jingji ruqin dui haerbin-shi minzu shangye xingshuai zhi yingxiang* // *Haerbin shizhi*. 1986. No. 4. Pp. 38-46.

⁵ See Jiao Lianglun. *Kratkii ocherk o russkikh emigrantakh, prozhivavshikh v Kharbine s 1917 po 1932 g.* // *Dal'nii Vostok Rossii – Severo-vostok Kitaia*. P. 287.

⁶ G. V. Melikhov. *Man'chzhuriia dalekaia i blizkaia*. Moscow, 1991. P. 267; as cited by Thomas Lahusen. *Dr. Fu Manchu in Harbin: Cinema and Moviegoers of the 1930s* // *South Atlantic Quarterly*. 2000. Vol. 99. No. 1. Pp. 144-145. Lahusen speaks of Melikhov's vision of "mutual enrichment" as a kind of nostalgic celebration of Manchuria that is also a "sublimation of a very Soviet type of 'friendship of the peoples.'"

⁷ See Blaine R. Chiasson. *Administering the Colonizer: Manchuria's Russians under Chinese Rule, 1918–1929*. Vancouver, BC, 2010; and James H. Carter. *Creating a Chinese Harbin: Nationalism in an International City 1916–1932*. Ithaca, NY, 2002. P. 14.

⁸ Andreas Kappeler, for instance, characterizes Russia's eastward expansion, ranging from the Caucasus to the Russian Far East, as colonial, but not its westward expansion. Kappeler. *The Russian Empire: A Multiethnic History* / Trans. Alfred Clayton. Harlow,

the importance of the colonial aspect of Russian rule in Manchuria is less ambiguous. Adeeb Khalid's distinction for the Soviet period – between colonial states' "*perpetuation* of difference between rulers and the ruled," and the "modern mobilizational states [that] have tended to homogenize populations" – might seem inapplicable in the context of Imperial Russia, where difference was already perpetuated by the still operative estate system.⁹ But his emphasis on the perpetuation of difference remains valuable as an identifying characteristic of colonialism, particularly in situations where new modes of differentiation were created. This was the case of Russian rule in Manchuria, where imperial Russian administrators incorporated the model of European treaty ports and implemented measures segregating "Europeans," a rubric referring to Russians, from "natives," referring generally to the Chinese.¹⁰ The works of this second group are therefore justified in recognizing the colonial background to the post-1917 Chinese nationalism and Chinese claims to sovereignty that colored their encounter with Russians. But, engaging more with Chinese republican-era views of Manchuria than with Russian perspectives, this second group of works does not train its attention on the condition of emigration that shaped Russians' identity.

Parallel to these studies, which do not take up emigration as a critical lens of analysis, the post-Soviet Russian works on emigration do not acknowledge the colonial aspects of the Manchurian space created by Russians, and consequently do not address how these aspects might have framed émigré perceptions of their place in Manchuria.¹¹ In short, while both deal

UK, 2001. Ch. 3, 5. With regard to Russian rule in the Kirghiz steppe and peoples in the eastern part of the Russian Empire, Dov Yaroshevski, by contrast, suggests that this rule was more integrative than colonial. Dov Yaroshevski. *Empire and Citizenship* // Daniel R. Brower and Edward J. Lazzerini (Eds.). *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917*. Bloomington, IN, 1997. Pp. 58-79.

⁹ Adeeb Khalid. *Backwardness and the Quest for Civilization: Early Soviet Central Asia in Comparative Perspective* // *Slavic Review*. 2006. Vol. 65. No. 2. Pp. 232-233. On the estate system, see Gregory L. Freeze. *The Soslovie (Estate) Paradigm and Russian Social History* // *American Historical Review*. 1986. Vol. 91. No. 1. Pp. 11-36.

¹⁰ Chia Yin Hsu. *Frontier Urban and Imperial Dreams: The Chinese Eastern Railroad and the Creation of a Russian Global City, 1890s–1917* // John Randolph and Eugene M. Avrutin (Eds.). *Russia on the Move: Essays on the Politics, Society and Culture of Human Mobility, 1850 – Present*. Champaign, IL, forthcoming.

¹¹ When it does come up, as in the following example, the characterization of Manchuria as a Russian colonial space is rejected. See Ablova's objection to Li Meng's description of Harbin as a "product of colonialism." Ablova. *KVZhD i rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae*. Pp. 23-24, 43; Li Meng. *Kharbin – Produkt kolonializma* // *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*. 1999. No. 1. P. 101.

with Russians in Manchuria, these two strands of recent literature do not quite engage each other. Yet the melding of emigration with postcolonial predicament in shaping émigré identity cannot be ignored, as it was this overlapping that made Manchuria unique among the destinations of Russian emigration, on the one hand. On the other, this overlapping also made the postcolonial situation in Manchuria confounding for Chinese nationalists, as those they saw as their former colonizers, having become refugees and powerless as political actors, expected nevertheless to retain a “predominant and enlightening role” with respect to the Chinese.¹²

This essay is thus an attempt at bringing together these two approaches, and aims at drawing out the ways the intersection of the émigré and postcolonial conditions set the limits and possibilities for Russian self-definition and Russian and Chinese interaction. For the Russian émigré professionals, these limits and possibilities reflected how their experience of displacement, exile, and statelessness was also amalgamated with a sense of entitlement and agency; and how, invoking familiar ideas of Russians’ civilizing mission in Asia for legitimizing their claim to the role of Manchuria’s modernizers, they also arrived at new visions of global ordering. The essay argues that in challenging Chinese nationalists’ sovereignty claims, Russian émigré engineers and émigré professionals promoted a vision of commercial globalization propelled by the CER’s civilizing mission that bore the imprint of the railway’s imperial planners. Promoting a technocratic ideal centered on the railroad, the émigré engineers countered Chinese claims of national sovereignty and political modernity by emphasizing an economic modernity unlimited by national boundaries. Reclaiming Russians’ former privileged status in Manchuria on the basis of technical expertise, the émigré railroad engineers in effect substituted for the defunct imperial state, thereby enabling the continuation of the colonial order established before.

I use the term “technocracy” to refer to the ideals and visions of not only trained professionals such as engineers, but also of those with an *intelligent* background – writers, researchers, educators – who based their views on knowledge that they believed was scientific and rational, particularly when these views concerned the management of economic life. By the 1920s, the idea of technocracy has come to be associated with that of scientific management, which was in turn an extension of Fordism and Taylorism’s preoccupation with labor productivity and technological efficiency. This

¹² Lahusen. *Dr. Fu Manchu in Harbin*. P. 145. This is Lahusen’s interpretation of the way Melikhov, historian and former émigré, remembered the Russian–Chinese relationship he experienced as a member of the émigré community.

iteration of technocratic attitudes was embraced across Europe, including Soviet Russia, in efforts to emulate the American industrial and economic success.¹³ In adhering to similar attitudes, the émigré specialists were part of this broad movement to enact industrial modernity through rational management. Their articulation of technocratic visions was inflected in a way that was specific to their situation, however. Focusing more on harnessing productive forces and implanting efficient economic practices at the frontier, than on analyzing time-and-motion studies on the shop floor, the émigrés' version of rational management both grew out of their self-image as civilizers of the Manchurian frontier and presaged the transition of the discourse of civilizing mission to the developmentalism of modernization theories advocated in the postcolonial period following World War II.¹⁴

Articulating their technocratic vision, the émigré engineers and professionals also made Manchuria, the CER, and the railway concession into what Pierre Nora calls *lieux de mémoire*, "sites of memory," where imagined continuity substituted for profound disruptions.¹⁵ At these sites, the old imperial regime was imagined by the émigrés as still persisting in spite of revolution in Russia and the abolition of Russians' extraterritoriality in China. Key to perpetuating the illusion of continuity were the maintenance of some aspects of the colonial status that many Russians enjoyed before 1917, and the remembering of Imperial Russia as part of the technologically "civilized" world that justified this status. The émigrés' creation of these imperial *lieux*

¹³ See Charles S. Maier. *Between Taylorism and Technocracy: European Ideologies and the Vision of Industrial Productivity in the 1920s* // *Journal of Contemporary History*. 1970. Vol. 5. No. 2. Pp. 27-61. Maier refers to the enthusiastic Soviet reception of scientific management from Lenin onward (Pp. 50-51). Kendall E. Bailes's work suggests that the Stalinist terror campaign launched against engineers and "bourgeois specialists" in the late 1920s could be seen as a countermeasure to, and reflection of, the prevalence of support for technocratic trends among Soviet technical professionals and party leadership. Kendall E. Bailes. *The Politics of Technology: Stalin and Technocratic Thinking among Soviet Engineers* // *American Historical Review*. 1974. Vol. 79. No. 2. Pp. 445-469.

¹⁴ The genealogical connectedness of colonial discourse and practices to those of post-1945 developmentalism has been explored in, for example, Henry Bernstein. *Modernization Theory and the Sociological Study of Development* // *Journal of Development Studies*. 1971. Vol. 7. No. 2. P. 147; Rajni Kothari. *Rethinking Development: In Search of Humane Alternatives*. Delhi, India, 1988. P. 143; Timothy W. Luke. *The Discourse of Development: A Genealogy of Developing Nations and the Discipline of Modernity* // *Current Perspectives in Social Theory*. 1991. Vol. 11. No. 2. P. 274; Arturo Escobar. *Encountering Development: The Making and Unmaking of the Third World*. Princeton, NJ, 1995.

¹⁵ Pierre Nora. *Between Memory and History: Les Lieux de Mémoire* / Trans. Marc Roudebush // *Representations*. 1989. Vol. 26. Pp. 7-24.

de mémoire was thus constitutive of a new identity that answered to their condition of statelessness. For some, the new identity shaded into an anticipation to reformulate extraterritoriality as a supranationality that would supersede the sovereignty claims of anticolonial nation-states. Performing this new identity, the émigrés in time – from inhabiting the real place onto which these abstracted sites were projected – came to experience Manchuria and the CER as what Nora terms *milieux de mémoire*, “real environments of memory,”¹⁶ where an everyday life evolved unselfconsciously. Upon these “real environments” yet another set of émigré *lieux de mémoire* would be constructed – in the form of memoirs and reminiscences, for example – when Manchuria as a locus of Russian communities ceased to exist. This essay is mostly concerned with the making of the CER and Manchuria as sites of memory of Imperial Russia, and with the ways technocratic visions intertwined with Russian postrevolutionary self-image in the making of these sites. The essay also briefly refers to émigré *lieux de mémoire* of Manchuria, for such sites as personal reminiscences at times make more evident the sense of colonial entitlement that helped émigré Russians sustain Manchuria as a continuation of an idealized Imperial Russia.

The Setting

The Russian Civil War ended in Siberia in January 1920 with the fall of Admiral Kolchak’s Omsk government, and, in the Russian Far East, in October 1922 with that of the Priamur government based in Vladivostok. In each case, the defeat of the white forces was followed by mass flight from Russia into China, with large numbers of refugees traveling along the railway constructed by the Russian imperial government for the purpose of “penetrating” China two decades before.¹⁷ Russian refugees crossing into China often headed for the CER concession, especially Harbin, the railroad’s administrative center and the largest city in North Manchuria. By 1923, according to one account, the Russian population in the railway concession zone grew from around 200,000 in 1917 to about 400,000.¹⁸ A

¹⁶ Ibid. P. 7.

¹⁷ As in “pénétration pacifique.” See David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye. *Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan*. DeKalb, IL, 2001. Ch. 4.

¹⁸ Melikhov. *Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae (1917–1924 gg.)*. Moscow, 1997. Pp. 8, 58, 213. These may be somewhat rough figures, as another source lists the Russian population of North Manchuria in 1925 as 200,000. See K. Ocheretin (Ed.). *Kharbin-Futsziadian’: Torgovo-promyshlennyy i zheleznodorozhnyi spravochnik*. Harbin, 1925. P. 2.

small portion of North Manchuria's population of close to 12 million,¹⁹ the increase in their number nevertheless made Russians even more prominent within the concession zone.

The CER concession zone was created from the territorial right-of-way granted to the railroad along the full length of the line, which traversed the Chinese territory of Manchuria to connect the Siberian railway to Vladivostok. Because of the political jurisdiction exercised by the Russian state within its boundaries, the concession became a territory occupied by Imperial Russia, that is, a Russian colony. The Russo-Japanese War in 1905 retrenched Russian territorial ambitions in Manchuria, and divided the region into a Russian sphere of interest in the north, and a Japanese one in the south. Two years later the Qing government carried out administrative reforms to integrate Manchuria – called the “Eastern Three Provinces,” or the “Northeast” by the Chinese – more firmly with China proper.²⁰ From the Chinese perspective, these reforms laid the groundwork for restricting Russian and Japanese expansion. But in international politics, North Manchuria remained identified with Russia, because of the CER; and South Manchuria, with Japan, because of the South Manchurian Railroad, the section of the CER ceded to Japan in 1905.

Prior to 1917, the CER concession – a strip of land 220 feet wide except at the stations, where the land owned by the railroad bulged out to accommodate a town or a city – was in many respects a small replica of the Russian Empire, with the Russian railway administration performing the functions of a “state mechanism in miniature.”²¹ The concession was provided with its own security and police force, public schools, municipal governance regulations based on the administration of towns in the empire, and a court system following Russian laws.²² Harbin resembled a “fine Russian provincial town.”²³ The demise of the Kolchak government, which seemed

¹⁹ This was the number for 1921, the first time a total count of Northern Manchuria's population was attempted. North Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railway. Harbin, 1924. Pp. 10-11.

²⁰ Zhao Zhongfu. *Qingmo Donshansheng gaizhi de beijing* // Jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan (Taipei, Taiwan). 1976. Vol. 5. Pp. 313-335.

²¹ D. L. Khorvat. “Memoirs”. Manuscript in English translation. Ch. 7 // Hoover Institution Arvhies. Box D. L. Khorvat. P. 13.

²² Ibid. Ch. 7. Pp. 13, 15. For the Russian court system applied to the concession zone, see *Kitaiskaia Vostochnaia zheleznaiia doroga. Istoricheskii Oчерk. Tom 1 (1896–1905)* / Pod red. Kantseliarii Pravleniia Obshchestva K.V.zh.d. St. Petersburg, 1914. Pp. 43-44.

²³ Rosemary Quesed. “Matey” Imperialists? The Tsarist Russians in Manchuria 1895–1917. Hong Kong, 1982. P. 255.

the last likely successor state to Imperial Russia, gave the Chinese government an opening to overturn the Russian political and military control in the railway concession. The Chinese movement to “recover” sovereignty rights²⁴ – involving the assertion of Chinese jurisdiction over the concession – began in 1920.

The concern with who was to take control of the CER was not that of the Chinese and the Russians alone. The fall of the Imperial Russian government opened Manchuria up to a new positioning of the claims and interests of other global powers. The Japanese military saw the civil war as an opportune moment for expansion into Siberia and North Manchuria, and signaled its plan to intervene in the civil war by sending troops to Vladivostok in the spring of 1918.²⁵ Intent on preventing Japanese expansion, and on maintaining the open-door status of the Trans-Siberian railroad “and particularly the Chinese Eastern Railway,” the U.S. government followed suit and dispatched troops to Manchuria and Siberia, thereby engaging in the Siberian Intervention along with the Japanese.²⁶ The U.S. government further organized an international railway supervisory group in early 1919, the Inter-Allied Committee, which was directed by one of its specialized boards, the Inter-Allied Technical Board led by the U.S. railroad engineer John Stevens.²⁷ In its turn, the French government considered such “‘international’ solutions” to be efforts by the United States to assert its influence over the CER. Opposed as well to Chinese and Japanese attempts to take over the CER, the French sought to preserve its privileged place – thanks to French investment in the Russo-Asiatic Bank, the majority shareholder of the CER company – by supporting the scheme of the bank’s Russian directors to put the railway under French protection and continued Russian management.²⁸

²⁴ In works covering the Chinese perspective, Chinese claims to territorial sovereignty are generally referred to as the “recovery” of sovereignty rights. See James Carter. *Creating a Chinese Harbin: Nationalism in an International City 1916–1932*. Ithaca, NY, 2002. Pp. 94-95; and Li Jianmin. *Yan Huiqing yu tingzhi jue shiling daiyu* // *Jindaishi yanjiusuo jikan*. 1977. Vol. 6. Pp. 135-136.

²⁵ John Albert White. *The American Role in the Siberian Intervention* // *Russian Review*. 1951. Vol. 10. No. 1. Pp. 28-29.

²⁶ Betty Miller Unterberger. *The Russian Revolution and Wilson’s Far-Eastern Policy* // *Russian Review*. 1957. Vol. 16. No. 2. Pp. 37, 42; Woodrow Wilson, as quoted in: *Ibid*. P. 42; White. *The American Role*. Pp. 28, 30, 33-34.

²⁷ White. *The American Role*. Pp. 30-31.

²⁸ Michael Jabara Carley. *From Revolution to Dissolution: The Quai d’Orsay, the Banque Russo-Asiatique, and the Chinese Eastern Railway, 1917–1926* // *International History Review*. 1990. Vol. 12. No. 4. Pp. 730-731, 736, 748.

The U.S. objective to check Japanese expansion was apparently reached.²⁹ After Japanese troops withdrew from Siberia and the Russian Far East in 1922, as a result of Bolshevik victory in the civil war and U.S. pressure, according to David Wolff, the Inter-Allied Committee and the de facto authority behind it, the Technical Board, were dissolved.³⁰ But, acting as the railroad's supervisory body, the Technical Board was unable to obtain direct control over the CER employees and the railway's finances, despite Stevens's urging and the maneuvering of the U.S. secretary of state,³¹ nor was the Inter-Allied Committee empowered to take charge of the railway's operation, despite its mandate to keep the CER open for traffic.³² In the end, as Michael Carley notes, "the multitude of adversaries, each trying to contain the other," allowed the Russo-Asiatic Bank and its Russian board members to retain control over the CER.³³ This "multitude of adversaries" also permitted the Chinese government, as suggested by a contemporary commentator, to successfully insist on returning to the stipulation of the original construction contract for the CER – that the company's shareholders must be either Russian or Chinese – and on treating the CER as the concern of the Russo-Asiatic Bank and the Chinese and Russian governments alone.³⁴ This resolution of the contestations over the CER during the civil war period was the global context for the signing of the agreement between the Russo-Asiatic Bank and the Chinese republican government in October 1920, mentioned below.

Chinese troops entered Harbin in early 1920 to put down a general strike in the concession zone. Soon after, Chinese officials forced the CER's director, General D. L. Khorvat, to resign,³⁵ and dissolved the CER's Russian police force.³⁶ New border control measures were established. Until 1920, Russian subjects in the concession zone held only Russian passports

²⁹ This was John Stevens's view. See Wolff. *Open Jaw: A Harbin-centered View of the Siberian-Manchurian Intervention 1917–1922* // *Russian History*. 2009. No. 36. P. 355.

³⁰ *Ibid.* P. 357; White. *The American Role*. P. 31; Carter. *Creating a Chinese Harbin*. P. 107.

³¹ White. *The American Role*. P. 32; Chin-Chun Wang. *The Chinese Eastern Railway* // *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*. 1925. No. 122. P. 64.

³² See Chiasson. *Administering the Colonizer*. Pp. 99-100.

³³ Carley. *From Revolution to Dissolution*. P. 748.

³⁴ Frederick Deane. *The Chinese Eastern Railway* // *Foreign Affairs*. 1924. Vol. 3. No. 1. Pp. 151-152.

³⁵ See Carter. *Creating a Chinese Harbin*. P. 94; G. V. Melikhov. *Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae (1917–1924 gg.)*. Moscow, 1997. Pp. 82-83; and Peter S. H. Tang. *Russian and Soviet Policy in Manchuria and Outer Mongolia 1911–1931*. Durham, NC. Pp. 114-121, 136.

³⁶ *Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Empire (AVPRI)*. F. 301. Op. 818/II. D. 79. L. 24.

and permits issued by the CER.³⁷ As the concession zone adjoined Russian territory at the railway's eastern and western ends, Russian passports and CER permits allowed Russian subjects to enter the concession in Chinese territory without answering to the Chinese government. In 1920, the newly organized Chinese railroad police in the concession zone closed the CER passport office, and the Chinese foreign ministry – directing its message at Russians – announced the requirement for “foreigners” to apply for a Chinese entry visa, and its intention to conduct “strict examination” of passports and visas at the border.³⁸ To monitor the refugee flow from Siberia and Vladivostok, the Chinese government set up internment camps in the border town of Qiqihaer north of the CER line in 1920, and in Fengtian (also known as Mukden) in 1922, near the South Manchurian port of Dairen (formerly Dal’nii, when, until 1905, it was under Russian control).³⁹ According to an official Chinese view, these camps served to “assist and take in, or repatriate” Russian refugees.⁴⁰ Russian reports of these camps saw otherwise. One émigré account pointed to camp conditions that kept the interned in a state of “half-starvation”; Chinese complicity in aiding Soviet agents to repatriate refugees; and Chinese plans for mass deportation.⁴¹

The Chinese government declared its jurisdiction over Russian subjects living in China. A presidential decree issued in September 1920, ceased recognition of emissaries representing the Russian Provisional Government, and shifted to Chinese provincial governments the Russian consular jurisdiction that had governed Russians in China and the concession zone. Within the next year the Chinese government closed down Russian consulates and missions, sometimes by force.⁴² Two presidential decrees issued in October 1920, further mandated the subordination of Russian citizens to Chinese rule and Chinese law. To assume jurisdiction over the Russians in the concession zone, the Chinese central government reorganized the CER concession as an administrative unit in itself, named the Special Administrative Region of the Eastern Provinces (SAR), which took over formerly Russian-run units such as the police department, the railroad police, the business and municipal departments, and the court system. To ease the absorption of Russians under Chinese jurisdiction, the SAR court system, for example, provided

³⁷ AVPRI. F. 301. Op. 818/II. D. 79. Ll. 7, 11, 24-24ob.

³⁸ AVPRI. F. 301. Op. 818/II. D. 79. L. 15.

³⁹ Petr Balakshin. *Final v Kitae*. Vol. 1. San Francisco, 1958. P. 102.

⁴⁰ Li. Yan Huiqing. P. 134.

⁴¹ Balakshin. *Final v Kitae*. Pp. 102-103.

⁴² Li. Yan Huiqing. Pp. 129, 133, 137-139.

interpreters and allowed Russians lawyers to register with the SAR justice department and practice in the SAR's Chinese courts.⁴³ These actions, taken by the Chinese government to establish its jurisdiction over the concession zone, and over Russians subjects in China, marked the Chinese abolition of Russians' extraterritorial rights.⁴⁴ Together with Chinese efforts to acquire greater control over the CER, this first attempt at abolishing extraterritoriality constituted an important part of the Chinese sovereignty recovery movement in Manchuria.

Extraterritoriality, Europeanness, and Race

Extraterritorial rights in China, first acquired by the British through treaties concluding the Opium Wars, removed from Qing jurisdiction the citizens or subjects of the nations that signed similar treaties with the Qing government. By these rights, "foreigners" in China, nationals of the treaty nations, were exempt from "local" jurisdiction.⁴⁵ In 1919, Chinese delegates at the Paris Conference argued for the abolition of extraterritorial rights on the basis of the legal and constitutional reforms that were implemented by the Chinese Republic – for these reforms promised to, in the words of an early statement on this issue, "bring [the Chinese] judicial system into accord with that of Western nations."⁴⁶ As presented in the Paris Conference and elsewhere, the abolition of extraterritoriality depended on the implementation of local judicial reforms deemed adequate by the treaty nations.⁴⁷ With regard to the CER concession, from the Chinese perspective, what the imperial Russian state established was an arrangement amounting to "a transfer of sovereign rights" that exceeded extraterritoriality. Going beyond the police force and consular court allowed in foreign concessions, the Russian state maintained a special frontier military force, and set up a

⁴³ Ekonomicheskoe Biuro KVzhd (Ed.). *Osobyi Raion Vostochnykh Provintsi Kitaiskoi Respubliki*. Harbin, 1927. Pp. 9, 12; P. V. Vologodskii. *Vo vlasti i v izgnanii: Dnevnik Prem'er-ministra antibol'shevistskikh pravitel'stv i emigranta v Kitae (1918–1925 gg.)* / Prepared by Semion Lyandres, Pavel Tribunskii, and Dietmar Wulff. Riazan', 2006. Pp. 296, 337, 367; Melikhov. *Rossiiskaia emigratsiia*. P. 93.

⁴⁴ Ekonomicheskoe Biuro KVzhd (Ed.). *Osobyi Raion*. P. 11; P. V. Vologodskii. *Vo vlasti i v izgnanii*. Pp. 296, 337, 367; Melikhov. *Rossiiskaia emigratsiia*. P. 93.

⁴⁵ Westel W. Willoughby. *Foreign Rights and Interests in China*. Baltimore, MD, 1920. Pp. 18–20; V. K. Wellington Koo. *The Status of Aliens in China*. New York, 1912. P. 155.

⁴⁶ Willoughby. *Foreign Rights*. Pp. 75–76.

⁴⁷ For justifications of extraterritoriality and its abolition in Japan and Korea, see Alexis Dudden. *Japan's Colonization of Korea: Discourse And Power*. Honolulu, 2005.

court system tied to Russian courts.⁴⁸ “Exercis[ing] a political jurisdiction which had not been conceded by the Chinese Government,” the Russian state – acting through the CER Company and the municipal assemblies of the railway zone – claimed “political control over all persons” in the concession, Russian and Chinese subjects, as well as “the nationals of the other Treaty Powers.”⁴⁹ Given the Chinese view that extraterritorial treaties were no longer justified, and that Russians, in addition, abused treaty terms, the military and policing actions taken by the Chinese republican government in the railway zone were understood by the Chinese as part of the recovery of its sovereignty.

Many Russians saw the military and policing side of this recovery campaign as transgressions against the railway’s social order. Between 1919 and September 1920, before the consulates were closed down, Russian consular officials filed numerous reports on the “excesses (*bezchinstva*) of Chinese subjects (*poddanykh*).”⁵⁰ These reports described Chinese troops commandeering Russian-owned buildings; disarming Russian troops; and, on one occasion, stopping a Russian train from Omsk for inspection.⁵¹ Underscoring the Chinese troops’ lack of discipline, and suggesting that many Chinese soldiers were former bandits, the reports complained that Chinese soldiers mistreated Russian passengers, swindled the Chinese, and confronted Russian railway personnel brandishing weapons. The presence of these soldiers and their behavior, in short, rather than keeping order, only served to spread “terror” on the railroad.⁵²

With regard to Chinese judicial reforms, Russians often saw Chinese efforts to replace the railway zone’s Russian court system as proof of Chinese ignorance of international law, and evidence against the abolition of extraterritoriality. P. V. Vologodskii, a former prime minister of the Kolchak government who fled to Harbin in 1920, and a lawyer by training, described the October decrees as “completely absurd,” as they “contradict the principles of ... a correct judicial system.” According to a CER legal adviser named Gartung, the SAR court system was staffed by people who took bribes.⁵³

⁴⁸ Willoughby. *Foreign Rights*. Pp. 213-214, 298, 306-307. On the courts see *Kitaiskaia Vostochnaia zheleznaia doroga. Istoricheskii Oчерk*. Pp. 43-44.

⁴⁹ Willoughby. *Foreign Rights*. Pp. 298, 305.

⁵⁰ See AVPRI. F. 301. Op. 818/II (General’noe Konsul’stvo v Kharbine 1919–1920). D. 60 (O *bezchinstvakh* kit. *poddannykh*).

⁵¹ AVPRI. F. 301. Op. 818/II. D. 60. Ll. 1-3, 32.

⁵² AVPRI. F. 301. Op. 818/II. D. 60. Ll. 35-36.

⁵³ Vologodskii. *Vo vlasti i v izgnanii*. P. 295; Gartung’s view is conveyed in: *Ibid.* P. 350.

More than ten years after the institution of the SAR courts, another former member of Kolchak's government depicted the Chinese legal system as "primitive and inept," and Chinese practices in criminal investigation as incompetent.⁵⁴ Doubtful of the quality of the Chinese court's interpreters, Russian litigants often hired their own, according to a Chinese newspaper report.⁵⁵

Despite these complaints, Russians did use the SAR courts, and Russian lawyers practiced in the SAR court, among them Vologodskii. After a successful defense of his client, Vologodskii acknowledged the attentiveness of the chief justice and the competence of the interpreter, although he continued to see something absurd in the Chinese court, finding aspects of the trial he attended "Gogolesque" and "operetta-like."⁵⁶ Looking back, a former Harbin resident sees in the SAR court system a "sincere adaptation ... to the needs of the Russian population." He praises it for employing foreign legal advisers, for allowing foreign lawyers to represent defendants, and for becoming, as a result, "the best [court system] in China."⁵⁷ Judging from this range of reactions, Russians' contempt for the SAR courts was perhaps shaped less by how well these courts worked than by the loss of a privileged "foreigner" status that carried widely accepted racial and civilizational meanings.

According to its nineteenth-century proponents, extraterritoriality consisted of the guarantees of the personal rights that were recognized by law in Europe and the United States, but could only be secured through treaty provision elsewhere.⁵⁸ As explained by one of the first theorists of its application to China, Caleb Cushing, a U.S. diplomat, extraterritoriality was originally the rule for all states in their intercourse with foreign states. With European states developing into modern ones, there emerged among them a "common law of nations" founded on "respect for individual rights," according to Cushing. This common law replaced extraterritoriality in Europe. But, outside Europe and the Christian states it spawned, extraterritoriality remained "a rule of international law," as a study on Cushing put it.⁵⁹

⁵⁴ I. I. Serebrennikov and A. N. Serebrennikova. *Kitai i russkaia emigratsiia v dnevnikh I. I. i A. N. Serebrennikovykh, 1919–1934. Tom 1: "Poka zhe my schastlivy tem, chto nichego ne ugrozhaet nam..."* / Prep. by Amir A. Khisamutdinov. Moscow, 2006. Pp. 348, 350.

⁵⁵ Eren susong yun zidai fanyi // *Binjiang Shibao*. 1921. No. 1. P. 6.

⁵⁶ Vologodskii. *Vo vlasti i v izgnanii*. Pp. 349, 366–67.

⁵⁷ Melikhov. *Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae*. Pp. 93–94.

⁵⁸ Hamilton Fish, U.S. secretary of state, as cited by Koo. *The Status of Aliens in China*. P. 209; Willoughby. *Foreign Rights*. P. 19.

⁵⁹ Caleb Cushing, as quoted by Koo. *The Status of Aliens in China*. Pp. 148, 153.

Examined through extraterritoriality, both the notion of the “law of nations” and that of its equivalent, “international law,”⁶⁰ reflect an emphasis on civilizational standing, and the premise that not all countries were capable of participating in this international community on the same footing as the European nations. As Alexis Dudden shows, international law was defined “from its inception” by its European and American “encoders” to be “a domain exclusively practiced by nations that had achieved a certain level of civilization.”⁶¹ In Cushing’s view, as in that of other theorists on the topic, the geographical “limits of Christendom” were the jurisdictional limits of international law, outside of which was “the great part of Asia and Africa.” To these places, because of “the sanguinary barbarism of the inhabitants, or ... their phrenzied bigotry, or ... the narrow-minded policy of their governments,” Christians could gain access only “by force,” rather than by consent.⁶² China had “a high degree of civilization,” Cushing allowed. But it was a civilization “different from ours,” marked by the nonrecognition of the law of nations: there, “nothing ... corresponding to our laws of nations, is recognized or understood.”⁶³ Making this assessment, Cushing repeated the views of the first British envoys to China half a century before, who found in China an “utter ignorance or at least disregard, of the law of nations as understood in Europe,” and anticipated those of an American diplomat half a century later, who defended extraterritoriality in China on the grounds that “Chinese laws and their method of enforcement were repugnant to the sense of equity of foreign Powers.”⁶⁴

By the reasoning of their framers, international law and extraterritoriality defined a community of nations that was “civilized,” Christian, and European. But the boundaries of this community and the status of individual nations could change. As international law was intended for setting the rules of “our intercourse with all nations of the globe, whatever may be their religious faith,” according to an early theorist, Henry Wheaton, it also pointed to the possibility that this community would come to include non-Christian countries. “It may be remarked,” Wheaton noted, “that the more recent intercourse between the Christian nations in Europe and America and the

⁶⁰ See Dudden. *Japan’s Colonization of Korea*. P. 35.

⁶¹ *Ibid.* P. 35.

⁶² Cushing, as quoted in Koo. *The Status of Aliens in China*. P. 152. For the view of other theorists, see Dudden. *Japan’s Colonization of Korea*. P. 36.

⁶³ Cushing, as quoted in Koo. *The Status of Aliens in China*. P. 150.

⁶⁴ Lord Macartney and Lord Amherst, as quoted in: *Ibid.* P. 150; Charles Denby. *Extraterritoriality in China* // *American Journal of International Law*. 1924. Vol. 18. No. 4. P. 669.

Mohammedan and Pagan nations of Asia and Africa indicates a disposition, on the part of the latter, to renounce their particular international usages and adopt those of Christendom.”⁶⁵

Such was the case of Japan. In 1882, the French legal adviser to the Japanese government pronounced the reformed Japanese legal codes the basis for removing “all plausible grounds, even pretexts, for Extraterritoriality.”⁶⁶ During the Sino-Japanese War of 1894 to 1895, after finding in the Japanese military conduct a “disposition and the main ability to observe western rules concerning war,” an Oxford legal scholar declared Japan to be “a rare and interesting example of the passage of a state from the oriental to the European class.”⁶⁷ By 1903, extraterritorial treaties signed with Japan were allowed to lapse by the European and U.S. signatories.⁶⁸ Subsequent to the spectacular confirmation of the Japanese “passage” signaled by Japan’s victory in the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese government joined the European and American states that obtained extraterritorial jurisdiction in China.⁶⁹

Japan’s passage to the “European class” was first framed by the terms of international law, but this passage resonated beyond these terms. A 1925 Russian handbook of commerce and industry in Harbin, for instance, counted the Japanese population in North Manchuria as part of the region’s “European” population.⁷⁰ At the same time, the pliability of the concept of Europeanness applied to Japan demonstrated that, if passage into the “European class” was possible, so was passage out of it.⁷¹ Perhaps sensing the precariousness of Russians’ inclusion in the community of Europeans, Vologodskii decried as “insulting to Russians’ dignity” a 1923 Chinese republican decree that made the death sentences permitted by Chinese law applicable to Russians. He saw as the “most insulting of all” that Russians alone “of the foreigners”,

⁶⁵ Henry Wheaton, as quoted by Dudden. *Japan’s Colonization of Korea*. P. 36.

⁶⁶ Boissanade, as quoted in: *Ibid.* P. 109.

⁶⁷ John Westlake, as quoted in: *Ibid.* P. 70.

⁶⁸ Latter, as cited by Koo. *The Status of Aliens in China*. Pp. 188-189.

⁶⁹ Willoughby. *Foreign Rights*. Pp. 303-304, 310.

⁷⁰ Kharbin-Futsziadian’: *Torgovo-promyshlennyy i zheleznodorozhnyi Spravochnik*. Vol. 2. According to this handbook: “The European population in North. Manchuria is made up mainly of Russians (around 200,000 people); the second place belongs to the Japanese.”

⁷¹ At the level of everyday life, Ann Stoler has shown the loss of whiteness among poor Europeans to be a persistent concern of European colonial societies in Asia. See Ann Laura Stoler. *Race and the Education of Desire: Foucault’s History of Sexuality and the Colonial Order of Things*. Durham, NC, 1995.

meaning citizens of the treaty states and “even the non-treaty states”, were subject to this decree.⁷²

European, American, and Japanese observers sympathized with Russians on the issue of extraterritoriality, calling the Chinese Republic and the SAR’s efforts to establish jurisdiction over Russians “barbarous,” and Chinese treatment of Russians “uncouth and brutal.”⁷³ At the same time, many saw in this situation a new racial order in which Russians were deprived of the juridical and civilizational attributes of Europeanness. A Japanese diplomat, writing in 1922 of the “inefficiency and corruption of the Chinese administration,” and the “brutality and extortion” faced by Russians in the SAR, saw in the Russians “a proud race ... now dominated by the very people whom it had lorded it over.”⁷⁴ The U.S. consul in Harbin, George Hanson, reported in 1923 that, motivated by “newly awakened nationalism” and insisting on governing Russians, the Chinese contravened the “principles of justice and humanity accepted by the entire civilized world,” and imposed “their own backwardness” on the “the cultured and educated Russians.”⁷⁵ This new order prompted an American journalist, Frederick Simpich, to remark that “nowhere in all the East – since the early days of Treaty Ports and extraterritorial privileges – have yellow men ever ruled over whites, with the power of arrest and punishment.” But in the “East” exemplified by the city Harbin, “for now the yellow man rules over the white ... whites work for yellows.”⁷⁶

If Simpich found in Harbin a curious and possibly welcome sign of “the beginning of racial amalgamation,”⁷⁷ other commentators saw in Russians’ plight a threat to the privileged status of Europeans in general. Signed by “Anglo-American,” an article in a Russian-published English-language

⁷² Vologodskii. *Vo vlasti i v izgnanii*. P. 418. The nontreaty states Vologodskii referred to were Czechoslovakia, Poland, Lithuania, and Finland. The treaty states referred to included Britain, France, Japan, United States, and Italy. Germany and Austria were excluded after their defeat in World War I. See Walter H. Mallory. *The Passing of Extraterritoriality in China* // *Foreign Affairs*. 1931. Vol. 9. No. 2. P. 349.

⁷³ Peking and Tientsin Times. 1920. October 30; quoted in Carter. *Creating a Chinese Harbin*. P. 108.

⁷⁴ K. K. Kawakami. *Japan’s Foreign Policy: Especially in Relation to China, the Far East, and the Washington Conference*. New York, 1922. P. 268.

⁷⁵ George Hanson to secretary of state, May 31, 1923 // National Archives and Records Administration (NARA). RG59. File 893.041/40; quoted in Carter. *Creating a Chinese Harbin*. P. 110.

⁷⁶ Frederick Simpich. *Manchuria: Promised Land of Asia* // *National Geographic Magazine*. 1929. Vol. 31. No. 4. Pp. 399-400.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.* P. 399.

paper warned: “it will be our turn next” if nothing was done to restore Russians’ extraterritoriality, as this would be the “natural” result of the Chinese “seeing white people daily flouted and maltreated.”⁷⁸ The U.S. consul Hanson, complaining that “foreigners are held in slight regard by the Chinese authorities,” concluded that the “loss of prestige on the part of Russians”, due to their “deplorable condition” of not having a Russian government to defend them, had led to the loss of “‘white man’s’ prestige.”⁷⁹ Adding to the “deplorable condition” of Russian refugees and the destitution many of them suffered, a retrospective Russian account surmised that this was “the first time the Chinese nation (*narod*) became aware that poverty, want, defenselessness, privation of rights, an existence of half starvation was not only the lot of the coolie ... that ‘white people,’ who until then it knew as powerful, wealthy, wallowing in luxury and comfort in the semi-palaces and villas of Shanghai, Tianjin, Qingdao, can also be the likes of Russian refugees.” Leaving “an indelible mark” in the “consciousness” of the Chinese, the author maintained, “the appearance of destitute Russian émigrés ended once and for all the myth of the power and prestige (*izbrannost*) of white-skinned people.”⁸⁰

Russians as Modernizers

Countering perceptions of Russian refugees as a threat to white man’s prestige was an image of Russians as the modernizers of Manchuria. It was one promoted by Russian émigrés whose work and ideas were associated with the CER, the railway that, as described by Simpich, stood at the center of “what Russia did for the Chinese.”⁸¹ This image presented the émigrés as the heritors of the imperial civilizing and modernization project in Manchuria, and as the builders of a new economic future for the region. Defining their place in Manchuria in relation to the CER, these émigré professionals, engineers, lawyers, and amateur researchers saw the railroad as an instrument of economic change that held the key to all aspects of Manchuria’s progress. In this way, these émigrés constituted a technocracy whose authority, founded on their knowledge and their status as experts, allowed

⁷⁸ Russian Daily News. 1922. September 26; quoted in Carter. Creating a Chinese Harbin. P. 113.

⁷⁹ Hanson. The Political Situation in North Manchuria in March, 1924. 1, encl. with Hanson to secretary of state, April 7, 1924 // NARA. RG59. File 893.00/5420; quoted in Carter. Creating a Chinese Harbin. P. 113.

⁸⁰ Balakshin. *Final v Kitae*. Vol. 1. San Francisco, 1958–1959. Pp. 101-102.

⁸¹ Simpich. *Manchuria*. Pp. 400-401.

them to undercut Chinese claims to the political jurisdiction of the former concession zone, and to contemplate a new defense of extraterritoriality based on economic grounds.

In October 1920, just after proclaiming its jurisdiction over former Russian subjects, the Chinese republican government signed a “joint-management” agreement with the Russo-Asiatic Bank. This agreement permitted the Chinese government to take “supreme control” of the railroad until there was an internationally recognized Russian state. The new accord reserved for Chinese citizens several top-ranking positions at the CER administration and CER Board, and stipulated that lower-ranking railway posts be evenly distributed between Chinese and Russians. Reflecting Chinese objection to the Russian imperial state’s use of the CER as a political instrument, the agreement prohibited the CER from engaging in political activities, limiting it to commercial functions.⁸² B. V. Ostroumov, a Russian engineer nominated by the Russo-Asiatic Bank, was appointed to replace Khorvat, the railroad’s director under the Russian imperial regime.⁸³

Ostroumov served as the CER’s director from February 1921 to October 1924, when he was, in turn, replaced by the Soviet appointee, A. N. Ivanov.⁸⁴ Under Ostroumov’s direction began a period of what one émigré author called the “renewal of the railway administration,” and another, the railroad’s “renaissance.”⁸⁵ In part, this “renaissance” was signaled by the CER’s promotion of the study of the region. The CER opened a research office in 1921, the Economic Bureau, which was devoted to compiling statistical, geographical, and sociological information on North Manchuria. This office soon published a dense survey of the region, *North Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railroad*, “the first [work] to give a full picture of the economic life of the region and the work of the railroad.”⁸⁶ In 1922 the Manchuria Research Society was founded. An association dedicated to the “scientific study of the local region,” its members consisted of CER manag-

⁸² Tang, *Russian and Soviet Policy*. P. 130; N. E. Ablova. KVZhD i rossiiskaia emigratsiia. P. 93.

⁸³ Tang, *Russian and Soviet Policy*. 136; K. M. Geishtor memoirs // Columbia University. Rare Book and Manuscript Library (RBML). Box. 1. Folder: Parts 1-8: “Kitaiskaia-Vostochnaia zheleznaia doroga s 1921 g. do 1935 g.”. P. 3.

⁸⁴ Ablova. KVZhD i rossiiskaia emigratsiia. Pp. 93, 158.

⁸⁵ I. Pavlov. Znanie kraia // *Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man’chzhurii*. 1923. No. 6-7. P. 12; Billi. “B. V. Ostroumov i A. N. Ivanov” in *Kommercheskii Telegraf*. No. 255. P. 6 // Columbia University. RBML. M. P. Golovachev Collection. Box 6. Folder “clippings 5.”

⁸⁶ Pavlov. Znanie kraia. Pp. 12-13.

ers and prominent business and political people in the area.⁸⁷ The publication of the Manchuria Research Society's journal, *Izvestiia Obshchestva izucheniia Man'chzhurskago kraia* (*Izvestiia OIMK* – Review of the Manchuria Research Society), was followed shortly by that of the Economic Bureau's journal, *Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man'chzhurii* (Economic Herald of Manchuria), which aimed at “illuminating questions of trade, industry, transportation, and finance.”⁸⁸

These modes of knowledge production fostered by the new railroad management established the CER as an information-gathering and scientifically run agency – like the Japanese-owned South Manchurian Railroad on which it was modeled.⁸⁹ The journals, manuals, research associations, and other similar endeavors affiliated with the CER constituted a public space that served as the context for performing the acts, linguistic or otherwise, that gave meaning to a particular discourse of Russian émigré identity. This discourse reconciled the émigrés to the political claims of the Chinese and, later, Soviet Russians, by diminishing the relevance of politics, and by focusing on the émigrés' centrality in Manchuria's economic development. In using the terms “public space” and “discourse,” I follow J. G. A. Pocock, who explains discourse as speech acts “modifying the status” of the hearers and speakers that at the same time either confirm or modify “the language structure” enabling the speech acts. These speech acts are also “performed upon,” that is, they become the basis of more such acts. “A context” is what Pocock calls “some [kind] of scheme or structure of relationships” giving a speech act “meaning and intelligibility,” which may be referred to “half-metaphorically” as “a space.” A public space, then, is “a space populated by a number of actors.”⁹⁰

This new discourse of Russian émigré identity asserted the continuity of the railroad's present with the imperial Russian past in the face of the historical break marked by revolution, and the epistemic break in racial ordering marked by the loss of extraterritoriality. The 1925 handbook on Harbin mentioned above marked as the starting point of Manchuria's historical transformation the arrival in 1898 of the first Russian surveyors and railroad

⁸⁷ The Manchurian Research Society, its aims, organization and activity // Review of the Manchuria Research Society. October 1926. P. 4; Nashi zadachi // *Izvestiia Obshchestva izucheniia Man'chzhurskago kraia*. 1922. No. 1. P. 2.

⁸⁸ Nashi zadachi // *Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man'chzhurii*. 1923. No. 1. 28 January. P. 1.

⁸⁹ Pavlov. *Znanie kraia*. P. 10.

⁹⁰ J. G. A. Pocock. *The Reconstruction of Discourse: Towards the Historiography of Political Thought* // *Modern Language Notes* (MLN). 1981. Vol. 96. No. 5. Pp. 959-960.

engineers to the site on which Harbin was built: “At this moment ... the history of the development and settlement of the most important economic and political center of North Manchuria – Harbin – is begun.”⁹¹ A 1923 article in *Izvestiia OIMK*, by A. Novitskii, linked the railroad to both the engineers and the visions of Imperial Russia, celebrating “those daring government people who 25 years ago firmly decided to connect the coast of the Pacific to the heart of Russia, those courageous engineers ... who carried on their shoulders all the weight of constructing a gigantic railway track across the unexplored empty frontier and of bringing it to a modern condition (*sovremennoe sostoianie*).”⁹² An earlier article in the same journal elaborated on the features of the “modern condition.” In Manchuria, a territory “cut off from the outside world” before “feverish (*goriachaia*) construction” took off with the arrival of the Russian railroad surveyors, there was no industry, trade, or “anything like a unified administrative organization,” according to the author, I. Mikhailov. “All this was created by the railroad,” he wrote, “which attracted to the region the people and capital that, together, established a local industry, trade, handicraft, a unified administration; organized the exploitation of forests and mines; and connected the region with China, Russia, and the world.”⁹³ Emphasizing the indebtedness of Manchuria’s present to the endeavors of Imperial Russia, Mikhailov called the railroad an “astonishing exception” among “colonial enterprises of the world”, for, rather than “exploit[ing] the region for the benefit of Russia,” the CER “always enriched it ... at the expense of Russia.”⁹⁴ Yet another article, published in *Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man’chzhurii*, presented this contribution to Manchuria’s development as a sacrifice on the part of Russia. The author noted that the railroad and a number of cities and village settlements were built “at the expense of the Russian treasury.” But, he added, referring to the Russo-Japanese War, “more than that: we were forced to pour [our] blood abundantly into the land.”⁹⁵

Enumerating the gains brought by the railroad, this discourse of émigré identity stressed “culture.” The 1925 handbook on Harbin, for instance, attributed to Manchuria’s Russians a “predominant role in the cultural and

⁹¹ Kharbin-Futsziadian’: Torgovo-promyshlennyy i zheleznodorozhnyi Spravochnik. P. 29.

⁹² A. Novitskii. K. V. zh. d. kak provodnik kul’tury // *Izvestiia Obshchestva izucheniia Man’chzhurskago kraia*. 1923. No. 3. June. P. 42.

⁹³ I. Mikhailov. Kitaiskaia doroga i krai // *Izvestiia Obshchestva izucheniia Manchzhurskago kraia*. 1922. No. 1. November. P. 7.

⁹⁴ Mikhailov. *Ibid.* Pp. 7-8.

⁹⁵ Pavlov. *Znanie kraia*. P. 9.

economic life” of the region.⁹⁶ “Culture,” in this context, was understood as encompassing not only high culture, but a wide range of activities made possible by economic development. Used in this way, culture was posited as the equivalent of civilization – the contrary condition of backwardness – and assumed to be European. Speaking generally of the railroad across the world “as the conduit of culture,” Novitskii, the contributor to *Izvestiia OIMK*, named as the “most backward frontier with respect to culture” the lands “to which no Europeans set foot.” Such lands were the “dry steppe without people,” and the desert “bare of any vegetation” that the railroad transformed into “populated localities covered by blooming oases,” and “connected to the centers of European culture.” For Novitskii, culture was the product of “the colonization of distant parts of Asia, Africa, and America.”⁹⁷ Turning to the CER, Novitskii pointed to the large and small cities that “were born” with the railroad; trade with European markets; the mining and exploration of local wealth; and the “profoundly fruitful cultural work” of “the immense population of the [CER] concession zone.”⁹⁸ Mikhailov, like Novitskii a contributor to *Izvestiia OIMK*, insisted that the CER played a “cultural role that cannot be neglected,” and took as examples of the railroad’s “cultural work” its agricultural laboratories and experimental fields; the technical education and the special courses it sponsored; and the associations of entrepreneurs it helped form.⁹⁹ For Novitskii, the culture brought by the railroad referred to the “cultural manifestations” that met “the needs of the European population” of the concession: the schools, libraries, educational and local studies circles, and the publishing of newspapers and books. “All these cultural manifestations” of the railroad had a reach beyond Manchuria, Novitskii proposed, for, “with fruit-bearing sinews,” these manifestations “are penetrating the organism of China,” serving as “the cultural awakeners of [China’s] life.”¹⁰⁰

Looking forward, émigré commentators saw a critical place in global trade for the railroad and North Manchuria, echoing the certainty of the CER’s progenitor, imperial finance minister S. Iu. Witte, when he proclaimed the “future potential” (*budushchnost’*) of the railroad in “international trade.”¹⁰¹

⁹⁶ Kharbin-Futsziadian’: Torgovo-promyshlennyi i zheleznodorozhnyi Spravochnik. P. 2.

⁹⁷ Novitskii. K. V. zh. d. kak provodnik kul’tury. P. 42.

⁹⁸ Ibid. P. 43.

⁹⁹ Mikhailov. Kitaiskaia doroga i krai. P. 8.

¹⁰⁰ Novitskii. K. V. zh. d. kak provodnik kul’tury. P. 43.

¹⁰¹ S. Iu. Witte in: B. B. Glinskii (Ed.). Prolog russko-iaponskoi voiny: Materialy iz arkhiva Grafa S. Iu. Vitte. Petrograd, 1916. Pp. 232-233.

The mission statement of *Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man'chzhurii*, printed in 1922, expected the scope for the railroad's activities to extend from the Far East to the "Far West": "Here we have interwoven not only the direct economic interests of such countries of the Far East as China, Japan, and others, but also the indirect ones – of the distant countries of the Far West (*Dal'nii Zapad*)," such as the United States, Great Britain, and France.¹⁰² Promoting the city, the 1925 handbook on Harbin promised that "in the future Harbin will be one of the major centers of the entire Far East, and its trade volume will increase with every year."¹⁰³ If Harbin's development was "bound in every way to the ... economic conditions of the region,"¹⁰⁴ it meant that the future of North Manchuria also pointed to prominence in global commerce. Attributing the "flourishing of the railroad" to the "economic order of North Manchuria itself," a 1926 piece in the paper *Kommercheskii Telegraf* (Commercial Telegraph) insisted that North Manchuria's march toward international significance had already begun. Thanks to the growth of exports and imports, and "the acceleration of the general tempo (*rost obshchago tempa*) of life with the increase of cultural centers" in the region, the author declared that in recent years "North Manchuria began to acquire an ever greater significance not only at the all-Chinese (*vsekitaiskii*) level, but also in the area of international interests."¹⁰⁵ Considering North Manchuria's relationship to China, another piece in the same issue of *Kommercheskii Telegraf* returned to the idea of the civilizing mission. The author believed that, endowed with a transportation network and rich natural resources, the region, unlike China, had the "independence of means" to realize its own mission. For this reason, according to the author, "Manchuria will have an extraordinary significance for China, which is striving to embark on the wide road of civilized humanity."¹⁰⁶

The émigrés interpreting the railroad's future contemplated the tasks at hand from the vantage point of the early 1920s. Ostroumov, it seems, appropriated the Chinese stipulation to limit the railroad to commercial

¹⁰² Nashi zadachi // *Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man'chzhurii*. 1923. No. 1. 28 January. P. 2.

¹⁰³ Kharbin-Futsziadian': Torgovo-promyshlennyi i zheleznodorozhnyi Spravochnik. Pp. 31-32.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid. P. 32.

¹⁰⁵ Moskviiianin. "5 let politicheskoi zhizni S. Man'chzhurii" in *Kommercheskii Telegraf*. No. 255 // RBML. Golovachev Collection. Box 6. Folder "clippings". P. 5. The article dates from 1926 because it refers to the "civil war" that took place from 1925 to 1926, between Wu Peifu and Zhang Zuolin, as having begun "last year."

¹⁰⁶ "S. Man'chzhurii a i eia rol' v Kitae" in *Kommercheskii Telegraf*. No. 255 // RBML. Golovachev Collection. Box 6. Folder "clippings". P. 5.

activities. Upon assuming the post of the CER's director, according to a third article in *Kommercheskii Telegraf*, Ostroumov "placed a firm rule on rejecting the political role of the CER, and was the first to propose the slogan 'The CER is a commercial enterprise.'" ¹⁰⁷ The mission statement of the *Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man'chzhurii* admitted to the "exceptionally difficult time" the journal faced, the result of the Russian Civil War's end and the economic collapse of the Russian Far East. But it saw this time as opportune for a journal of its kind, because the "economic successes of the railroad" depended on giving priority to the "investigation of the economic life of the region," on the one hand. On the other – here the mission statement referred discretely to the refugee crisis that brought highly qualified professionals to the former concession zone – the journal would have among its contributors "the best local specialists in all the branches of economic and railroad technology." ¹⁰⁸ Made fiscally urgent by the loss of the Russian treasury's support, the move to turn the CER into a commercial enterprise had, by the account of an article in *Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man'chzhurii*, a precedent in the outlook of V. N. Kokovtsov, Witte's successor as finance minister. As conveyed by the article, Kokovtsov, visiting the CER in 1909, pushed for conducting the railroad's affairs "in an economic manner." Kokovtsov, according to the article's author Pavlov, urged the railroad to "go over over to a new order of things" to respond to the "severe circumstances" – that is, the severe conditions of economic imperatives – because "from this you [the railroad] have no recourse." The CER started "on the path foreseen by Count Kokovtsov" since 1921, Pavlov reported, calling Kokovtsov's address "prophetic words." ¹⁰⁹ Speaking for the CER's Economic Bureau, Pavlov listed among the railroad's tasks the development of the "productive forces of the region," the "maximal use of all the lines of the railroad," and "constant observation of economic life." ¹¹⁰ Mikhailov, writing on the CER's importance for Manchuria, defined the "commercial policy" of the CER as "attracting capital, technical knowledge, and skills" to the region, "creating permanent ties to the world market," and, sharing with Pavlov a focus on productivity, the "improvement of production methods." ¹¹¹

In these émigré writings, embracing the commercial "order of things" was understood as rejecting the "political," as the rule reportedly set down

¹⁰⁷ Billi. B. V. Ostroumov i A. N. Ivanov. P. 6.

¹⁰⁸ Nashi zadachi // *Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man'chzhurii*. Pp. 2-3.

¹⁰⁹ Pavlov. *Znanie kraia*. P. 9, 12.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.* P. 13.

¹¹¹ Mikhailov. *Kitaiskaia doroga i krai*. P. 8.

by Ostroumov admonished. The political, in this case, meant activities relating to partisan ideologies, involving state actors, and shaped by the pursuit of geopolitical and military interests, as opposed to activities directed by economic ideas and economic actors, in pursuit of commercial interests. An article in *Kommercheskii Telegraf*, referring to Khorvat's intrigues during the Russian Civil War, decried the railroad's management under Ostroumov's predecessor: "The preceding political squall led the previous administration down the path of political adventure, and the railroad – to an extremely sickened condition of political upheaval."¹¹² The present administration, then, according to these writings, was to rise above political upheaval. *Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man'chzhurii*, published by the CER's Economic Bureau, declared its task to be the study of the "questions of transportation in general, and those of the Far East – Russian and Chinese – in particular." The journal described this task as that of an "impartial, serious economic organ that is alien to party politics (*partiinnost'*) and political passions (*politicheskie uvlecheniia*)."¹¹³ Following this agenda, the Russian émigré professionals, specialists, and researchers working for the CER acted in the manner of a technocracy, in the sense that, in their view, technology and technical knowledge superseded political ideologies and other preferences not supported by science, and that, for them, the solution to any problem was presumed to be technological rather than political – based on objective criteria rather than subjective passions.

Émigré Engineer, Soviet Planner: Ostroumov and Ivanov

According to those who followed his career, Ostroumov was an "outstanding" director and a "person of exceptional energy" who "belonged to the best type of Russian engineer-builders."¹¹⁴ Unlike the state employees treating the CER as a "feeding trough" (*kormlenie*), who apparently staffed the railroad before the revolution, these commentators noted that Ostroumov "broke with the previous state-treasury (*kazenko-gosudarstvennyi*) point of view regarding the activities of the railroad."¹¹⁵ Finding the railroad in a state of "complete prostration and chaos" when he started as its director, Ostroumov "reformed [it] from

¹¹² Billi. B. V. Ostroumov i A. N. Ivanov. P. 6.

¹¹³ Nashi zadachi // Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man'chzhurii. P. 2.

¹¹⁴ Melikhov. Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae. P. 159; Billi. B. V. Ostroumov i A. N. Ivanov. P. 6.

¹¹⁵ Pavlov. Znanie kraia. P. 9; Moskvitianin. 5 let politicheskoi zhizni. P. 5.

top to bottom.”¹¹⁶ Imposing what an émigré memoirist, G. V. Melikhov, called “labor discipline,” Ostroumov dismissed a massive number of the railroad’s *starozhili* employees – those who arrived in the concession zone before the revolution, replacing them with “highly qualified” specialists of the “émigré intelligentsia.”¹¹⁷ The dismissals reduced the railway staff from 3,360 employees in 1920 to 2,375 in 1922.¹¹⁸ Ostroumov fixed and renovated the tracks, station facilities, and the rolling stock.¹¹⁹ He devised a “tariff policy” (*tarifnaia politika*) lowering transport fares to direct rail cargo toward inner China and the Pacific Coast. To connect the CER to the ocean, Ostroumov equipped – while the city was still under the control of the anti-Bolshevik Priamur government – Vladivostok’s Egershel’d harbor for high-volume ocean trade, thereby increasing the “export traffic to Japan, to the south [to China proper], to America, and to Europe.”¹²⁰ When Soviet victory over the Priamur government cut off the CER’s access to Vladivostok at the end of 1922, Ostroumov concluded agreements with the South Manchurian Railroad (SMR) (the section of the original CER ceded to Japan in 1905 by the Portsmouth Treaty) to send the CER’s cargo to the Pacific through the terminus-port station of the SMR, Dairen.¹²¹ But Ostroumov’s idea of connecting the CER to Vladivostok remained viable to its supporters. They hoped, as late as 1924, no doubt encouraged by the

¹¹⁶ Moskvianin. 5 let politicheskoi zhizni. P. 5. The description of the railroad as “chaotic” is confirmed elsewhere. Carley notes that by early 1920, the CER “was virtually bankrupt.” See Carley. From Revolution to Dissolution. P. 735. White refers to the disrepair of the CER’s rolling stock after 1917, and the “constant deterioration of the [railway] as a business enterprise” during the civil war. White. The American Role. P. 32. The United States invested about \$5 million in gold in the CER through the Technical Board, but about the same amount was owed to the CER for the transportation of Allied troops, canceling out the surplus capital gained by this investment. See Chin-Chun Wang. The Chinese Eastern Railway. P. 64; Deane. The Chinese Eastern Railway. P. 151.

¹¹⁷ Melikhov. Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae. P. 172; Geishtor memoirs // RBML. Folder 1-8. “KVzhd”. Ll. 4, 8.

¹¹⁸ Kratkii obzor raboty K. V. zh. d. v 1922 godu s tekhnicheskoi storony (po dan-nym Tekhnicheskago Otdela Pravleniia O-va K. V. zh. d.) // Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man’chzhurii. 1923. No. 20. May. P. 8.

¹¹⁹ Geishtor memoirs. Pp. 4-8; North Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railway. Pp. 438-439.

¹²⁰ Melikhov. Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae. Pp. 161-163; Geishtor memoirs. Ll. 4, 9. Harbin Stock Exchange Committee’s 1921 report, as quoted in N. Dobrokhoto. Torgovo-promyshlenniiia organizatsii: ob Upravliaiushchem Kitaiskoi Vostochnoi zhe-leznoi dorogoiu, Inzhener B. V. Ostroumov // Ekonomicheskii Vestnik Man’chzhurii. 1923. No. 6-7. 4 March. P. 6.

¹²¹ Melikhov. Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae. Pp. 164, 166, 168.

adoption of the New Economic Policy, that “when conditions [that] make it possible for private capital to operate” returned to the Russian Far East, “Vladivostok will once more occupy the position rightfully belonging to it as a port in the foreign trade of North Manchuria.”¹²²

To increase the “productive forces of the region,” as enjoined by the *Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man'chzhurii* (Economic Herald of Manchuria), the CER management under Ostroumov set up experimental farms for mechanizing agricultural production. The farms’ “agricultural laboratories” conducted investigations on breeding cattle, refining dairy products, and processing soybean, the predominant export of Manchuria.¹²³ To eliminate competition to the railroad, Ostroumov carried out a “struggle against carts” (*bor'ba s guzhem*)¹²⁴ – by setting railway fares to compete with the cheap cost of animal carts, and by building grain elevators to intercept the grain transported by these carts.¹²⁵ “A chain of North Manchurian grain elevators” was built, which, until late 1922, was to supply Vladivostok’s Egershel’d harbor, whose grain elevators, planned as the “last link” in the chain, were to be equipped for the “storage, mixing, and standardization of export grain and for their rapid and inexpensive loading on board steamers.”¹²⁶

Ostroumov’s reorganization of the railroad, despite the CER’s loss of access to Vladivostok, generated a sharp increase in the export of soybeans – the “Manchurian Gold” – and made the railroad profitable for the first time since its construction.¹²⁷ The Harbin Stock Exchange Committee found that the changes Ostroumov installed yielded “very good results within a year,” and continued to “enliven” export trade in the subsequent years. Ostroumov’s work, according to *Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man'chzhurii*, was likewise appreciated by the railway concession’s “trade and industry circles.”¹²⁸ The chief accountant of the CER, M. I. Stepunin, provided the

¹²² North Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railway. Pp. 280-281.

¹²³ Idem. Pp. 408-410. In 1909, soy products consisted of “almost 80 percent of all Manchurian exports,” according to David Wolff. Bean There: Toward a Soy-Based History of Northeast Asia // The South Atlantic Quarterly. 2000. Vol. 99. No. 1. P. 246.

¹²⁴ Melikhov. Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae. Pp. 164, 166, 168; Geishtor memoirs. P. 7.

¹²⁵ North Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railway. P. 381; George C. Guins, transcript of “An Interview Conducted by Boris Raymond” // The Regional Oral History Office. Bancroft Library. University of California. Berkeley, 1966. P. 248.

¹²⁶ North Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railway. P. 280.

¹²⁷ Melikhov. Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae. P. 159; Tang. Russian and Soviet Policy. P. 136; Geishtor memoirs. Ll. 4-5. The term “Manchurian Gold” appears in Geishtor; in Wolff. Bean There. P. 245, it is “the gold of Manchuria.”

¹²⁸ Dobrokhoto. Torgovo-promyshlennyya organizatsii. Pp. 6-7.

figures. Six million of the railway's 10 million-ruble debt was paid in two years. The railroad obtained a net profit by 1921, which increased more than threefold by 1923.¹²⁹ With regard to the money owed to the railroad's dismissed employees – the bonus and retirement payments promised them that amounted to almost 3 million gold rubles, *Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man'chzhurii* confirmed that Ostroumov paid this debt: "he acquitted the situation with honor."¹³⁰

Yet three and a half years after Ostroumov assumed his position as director, he was arrested by the SAR police on charges of embezzlement, and put on trial a year later. Although he was amnestied by the Chinese government, his removal from the CER was final.¹³¹ The abrupt, extralegal end to Ostroumov's term resulted, as N. E. Ablova shows, from a persistent demand made by the Soviet government for his arrest;¹³² it followed soon after Chinese recognition of the Soviet Union and the signing of the Chinese-Soviet treaties placing the CER under joint Chinese and Soviet management. Ostroumov's removal might also have been condoned by the Chinese officials frustrated by his interference with Chinese efforts to take control of the railroad and North Manchuria.¹³³ Rather than assessing explanations for Ostroumov's arrest, I will focus instead on Chinese reactions to Ostroumov and his reorganization of the CER, in order to highlight the continuities between Ostroumov's management of the CER, and that of his successor, the Soviet manager Ivanov.

Although the émigrés speaking for the railroad saw the CER's objective as transcending politics, they understood politics in a narrow way, as referring to the ideological differences that fragmented the Russian Empire and the Provisional Government. But the boundaries of what might be considered political in the broader sense, relating to biases that uphold uneven power relations, might well be preserved even as politics in the narrow sense are

¹²⁹ Ablova. KVZhD i rossiiskaia emigratsiia. P. 159; M. I. Stepunin. Finansovoe polozhenie Kitaiskoi Vostochnoi zhel. dor. v nastoiashchem i perspektivy budushchago // Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man'chzhurii. 1923. No. 6-7. 4 March. Pp. 8-9.

¹³⁰ N. V. Vodianskii. Dolzhnoe // Ekonomicheskii vestnik Man'chzhurii. 1923. No. 6-7. 4 March. P. 5. For the figure in gold rubles, see Stepunin. Finansovoe polozhenie Kitaiskoi Vostochnoi zhel. dor. P. 8.

¹³¹ Blaine R. Chiasson. Administering the Colonizer: The Chinese Takeover of Russian Harbin, 1920–1932 / Ph.D. Dissert.; University of Toronto, 2002. Pp. 280-281; Ablova. KVZhD i rossiiskaia emigratsiia. Pp. 158-159.

¹³² Ablova. KVZhD i rossiiskaia emigratsiia. Pp. 113-114, 160.

¹³³ Chiasson. Administering the Colonizer. Pp. 137-140; Ablova. KVZhD i rossiiskaia emigratsiia. P. 160.

transcended. In the context of relations among Russians, the émigrés saw themselves and the CER as rising above the divisions due to *partiinost'*. In the context of Chinese–Russian interactions, the émigrés, as Melikhov's memoir-history suggests, also saw, approvingly, Ostroumov's management as favoring Russians. As a Harbin resident who probably absorbed the views of his elders, Ostroumov's contemporaries, regarding the director, Melikhov portrays Ostroumov's actions as patriotic. Ostroumov, according to Melikhov, "[fought] by all available means to consolidate Russian influence ... in Manchuria," taking actions that "did not at all inspire enthusiasm from the Chinese side of the [CER] Board."¹³⁴

Chinese views of Ostroumov and the railroad's activities included frustration and resentment, expressed at times through high officials' comments, urban protests, and rural violence. The president of the Audit Committee supervising the CER, Cheng Han, complained in 1923 that Ostroumov did not submit the railroad's accounts to the committee, took on new enterprises without consulting others, and embarked on projects that presaged possible losses for the railway company.¹³⁵ A Chinese member of the Audit Committee saw Ostroumov's policy as benefiting the Russo-Asiatic Bank and the foreign firms in Manchuria at the expense of the Chinese.¹³⁶ Regarding the budget, the SAR took over the cost for the railroad's security guards, the court, and the postal and telegraph operations – previously absorbed by the railroad – while permitting the CER to continue to collect taxes from the former concession zone.¹³⁷ From the Chinese perspective, the SAR and the North Manchurian Chinese government's assumption of these functions – among the "political jurisdictions" of the former CER administration – contributed to the CER's budget gains. Yet, as Cheng observed, Ostroumov channeled the CER budget toward serving the Russians,¹³⁸ rather than the SAR and the regional population in general. Regarding the day-to-day work of the

¹³⁴ Melikhov. *Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae*. P. 172.

¹³⁵ As reported by Schurman. *Journey of the American minister to Harbin and over the CER* // NARA. RG59. M316. Roll 15. File 861.77 3233. 25 September 1923. Pp. 1-6; quoted in Chiasson. *Administering the Colonizer*. P. 138. Spelled Chen Han by Schurman, the Audit Committee president's name is written as Cheng Han in: *North Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railroad*. P. xv.

¹³⁶ A conversation reported by Geishtor: *Geishtor memoirs*. P. 23.

¹³⁷ As reported by Schurman. *Journey*. Pp. 1-6; quoted in Chiasson. *Administering the Colonizer*. P. 154. For a Russian estimate of the cost of maintaining these institutions see Stepunin. *Finansovoe polozhenie Kitaiskoi Vostochnoi zhel. dor.* P. 8.

¹³⁸ As reported by Schurman. *Journey*. P. 6; quoted in Chiasson. *Administering the Colonizer*. P. 138.

CER, Chinese participation at the administrative and technical-management level was made little more than nominal by the preservation of Russian as the only language for conducting the railway's business.¹³⁹ In addition, Cheng felt he was treated with disrespect by some of his Russian colleagues, and found Ostroumov's attitude toward the CER's Chinese engineers and administrators objectionable, as the director, Cheng believed, saw them as lazy, greedy, and unwilling to learn Russian.¹⁴⁰

Chinese "patriotic citizens," according to a Chinese historian, objected from the start the Chinese government's 1920 agreement with the Russo-Asiatic Bank, which stipulated the gradual recovery of the railroad's control by the Chinese rather than an immediate takeover.¹⁴¹ By 1924, popular Chinese discontent took a more organized, sometimes violent form. In March, provoked by the "obvious 'pro-Russian,' 'pro-émigré' activity of the director," a "Chinese mob" demonstrated against Ostroumov, according to Melikhov.¹⁴² In the same month, Chinese farmers "armed with spades" invaded the CER experimental farm at the Anta railroad station, destroying the flower beds, plowing up the sown fields, and threatening to set fire to the cattle barn. In May, Chinese farmers attacked other experimental farms, as well as farms held by Russians.¹⁴³

Under Ivanov, Chinese participation in the railroad's administration remained as marginal as it was under Ostroumov. The Chinese-Soviet treaty of May 1924, signed by the republican government based in Beijing, extended diplomatic recognition to the Soviet Union and set down the terms for the CER's joint management by the two countries.¹⁴⁴ This treaty replaced the arrangement made by the 1920 Chinese agreement with the Russo-Asiatic Bank, which was understood to be provisional until the recognition of a legitimate Russian government by the Chinese. The Soviet government then conducted separate talks with the de facto political power in Chinese-controlled Manchuria, the "Autonomous Three Eastern Provinces" based in Fengtian (Mukden) and headed by Zhang Zuolin. These talks concluded

¹³⁹ Geishtor, memoirs. Pp. 3, 13, 17.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid. P. 23.

¹⁴¹ Tang. Russian and Soviet Policy. P. 135.

¹⁴² Melikhov. Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae. P. 186.

¹⁴³ Letter to the American Minister in Peking, 24 April 1924 // NARA. RG59. M316. Roll 153. File 861.77 3449. 1 May 1924, and NARA. RG59. M316. Roll 153. File 861.77 3506, 4 June 1924; cited in Chiasson. Administering the Colonizer. Pp. 141-142.

¹⁴⁴ Bruce A. Elleman. The Soviet Union's Secret Diplomacy Concerning the Chinese Eastern Railway, 1924-1925 // Journal of Asian Studies. 1994. Vol. 53. No. 2. P. 470.

with a treaty signed on September 20, 1924, less than two weeks before Ostroumov's arrest.¹⁴⁵ The September agreement overrode the one signed with the Chinese central government, and "transferred full control of the Chinese share of the C.E.R. to Zhang Zuolin." The treaty terms "rewarded" Zhang by including a provision splitting evenly between the Fengtian and Soviet governments the profit to be made by the railroad.¹⁴⁶

With respect to the railway's management, however, the parity in staffing, and therefore control of the railway, stipulated by the September 1924 agreement did not diminish Russian dominance, due both to Soviet maneuvers and to Chinese acquiescence and inaction. Defined in the May 1924 agreement, parity meant that employment at the CER was to follow the "principle of equal representation between the nationals of the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and those of the Republic of China." This stipulation was amended in the September 1924 agreement by the condition that employment "shall be based in accordance with experience, personal qualifications and fitness of the applicants."¹⁴⁷ Following the new agreement, Soviet Citizens outnumbered the Chinese by three to two, 120 to 80, in the CER's upper management. Among the railway employees, the immediate administrative changes favored Russians even more. In 1924, under Ostroumov, those who were counted as Russian numbered 10,833, and those counted as Chinese, 5,912; under Ivanov, Russians went up to 11,251, and the Chinese, down to 5,556.¹⁴⁸ The imbalance in staffing was probably greater than these numbers suggest, as Russians tended to occupy skilled and professional positions, and the Chinese, less skilled ones.¹⁴⁹

Of the twenty-six committees and subcommittees that ran the railway administration, a 1929 Chinese work on the CER published in Nanjing showed

¹⁴⁵ Ostroumov was arrested on October 3 that year. Ablova. KVZhD i rossiiskaia emigratsiia. P. 93.

¹⁴⁶ Elleman. *The Soviet Union's Secret Diplomacy*. Pp. 471-475.

¹⁴⁷ Article V of the May 31, 1924 agreement, and September 20, 1924 agreement, as quoted by: *Ibid.* Pp. 475-476.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.* P. 476.

¹⁴⁹ This imbalance is suggested, for instance, by the student composition of the Russo-Chinese Polytechnic Institute in Harbin, founded by the CER. In 1924, 437 Russians and 8 Chinese were enrolled. Of the 22 graduating students studying railroad engineering from October 1924 to January 1925, all were Russian. See: *Russko-Kitaiskii Politekhnikeskii Institut k nachalu 1925 goda*. Gor. Kharbin. Pp. 243, 248 // Hoover Institute. N. P. Kalugin papers. Microfilm reel 1. Box 1. Folder 25. 1. 25-81, 1.25-86; and *Russko-Kitaiskii Politekhnikeskii Institut v gorode Kharbine na 1-go maia 1925 goda i ego pervye vypuski inzhenerov*, pp. 20-23 // *Ibid.* 1.25-59 to 1.25-62.

that over time Soviet officials directed twenty-four.¹⁵⁰ The president and vice president of the CER's board of directors were both Chinese. But the board hardly met, according to a 1925 newspaper account, perhaps because both were also government officials. The president "has never been in Harbin since he was elected and there is still speculation as to whether he will ever come," while the vice president, the paper continued, "is not likely to come to Harbin as he has several other jobs." As a result, "the General Manager [Ivanov] is personally responsible for all expenditure incurred during the current year."¹⁵¹

The shift to Soviet management at the railway was for many émigrés a disastrous turn of events marked by the arrest of Ostroumov, and by the rapid sovietization of the former concession zone that ensued. But this shift also induced some émigrés to rethink their position in two, potentially incompatible ways. One was to see in the rising regional power of Zhang Zuolin's government, based in the Manchurian city of Fengtian, the political arm of a state whose agenda to develop "the internal forces of N. Manchuria" might coincide with that of the CER. This attitude suggested a new acceptance of a Chinese state among some émigrés, and what perhaps made this Chinese state potentially acceptable was something that defined the CER as well – identification with Manchuria and with Manchuria's importance beyond the region.

Exemplifying this possible acceptance of collaborating with a Chinese state in Manchuria's development, a 1926 article in the émigré paper, *Kommercheskii Telegraf*, pointed out that the September 1924 treaty had enhanced Zhang Zuolin's capacity to challenge the Chinese central government in Beijing. Thanks to the Fengtian government's diplomatic and political successes, North Manchuria was now poised to acquire an "all-Chinese" significance, this article observed. "The leaders of the state life of the Three Provinces," the article opined, "took and will take part in the all-Chinese affairs," to carry out "tranquil and planned" reforms and strengthen the "pan-Chinese idea."¹⁵² Another article in the same paper, remarking on Fengtian's fight in the Chinese civil war that began in 1925, praised the "all-China scale" of the government's "new effort" to take control of China. The article predicted Fengtian's victory in the war. Like the other article in *Kommercheskii*

¹⁵⁰ Zhong-E Guanyu Zhongdonglu zhi Jiaoshe Shilie [A History of Sino-Russian Negotiations on the Chinese Eastern Railway]. Nanjing, 1929. Vol. 1. Pp. 20-21, as cited by Elleman. *The Soviet Union's Secret Diplomacy*. P. 476.

¹⁵¹ North-China Daily News. 1925. May 2; as cited by Gavan McCormack. *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China: China, Japan, and the Manchurian Idea*. Stanford, CA, 1977. P. 115.

¹⁵² S. Man'chzhuriia i eia rol' v Kitae. P. 5. See footnote 91 for date.

Telegraf, this one attributed Fengtian's new "political influence" to "the decision of the USSR to conduct diplomatic negotiations with [Marshall Zhang Zuolin]." The article further noted that "the influence which Mukden obtained in deciding all-Chinese questions" came also from the consolidation of its control over North Manchuria, accomplished through the "reconstruction," expansion, and "complete subordination to Marshall Zhang Zuolin" of North Manchuria's administrative system. Based on this assessment of its strength, the article was certain that for Fengtian, "all difficulties will be eliminated," and that, with their elimination, "the moment of the further development of the internal forces of N. Manchuria will come."¹⁵³

Another way in which the émigrés rethought their position, rather than emphasizing their place in Manchuria, was to stress the Russianness they shared with the new Soviet administration of the CER. With regard to how the railroad was run, many émigrés believed that certain critical continuities remained between Ostroumov and Ivanov. Of Ivanov, a former member of the anti-Bolshevik Siberian government and the railroad's chief controller under Ostroumov, G. K. Gins, recalls years later that the new director and his staff "supported and even increased appropriations for various cultural needs and educational institutions. They did not spare money for improving architecture" at the railroad stations and for the schools. The Soviet administration "tried to do everything possible which might be useful to the Russians and not to the Chinese" – despite being Soviet, Gins suggested – "because Russia remained Russia, but with another regime name."¹⁵⁴

Assessing the new administration, a 1925 article in *Kommercheskii Telegraf* observed: "Now at the back of the new people stand four letters: SSSR." The article mentioned some of the railway's new policies, including order no. 94, the decree prohibiting the employment of non-Soviet and non-Chinese citizens, aimed at forcing émigrés to adopt Soviet citizenship.¹⁵⁵ "Of course," the article acknowledged, the "new people" were "called ... to implement the general line of conduct," and "of course, order no. 94, the closing of churches, certain new policies in the schools, are completely natural and understandable." Nevertheless, the author offered:

¹⁵³ Moskvitianin. 5 let politicheskoi zhizni S. Man'chzhurii. P. 5.

¹⁵⁴ Guins. Transcript of "An Interview Conducted by Boris Raymond." Pp. 245-246, 250. For Guins's position at the CER, see Guins. Transcript of "Impressions of the Russian Imperial Government: An Interview Conducted by Richard A. Pierce" // Berkeley, CA. The Regional Oral History Office. Bancroft Library. University of California, Berkeley, 1982). P. v.

¹⁵⁵ See Chiasson. Administering the Colonizer. P. 116.

in what concerns the business apparatus of the railroad and its technical activity – the work of the new administration and, in particular, that of A. N. Ivanov – is irreproachable.

To speak in the words of Soviet papers, we have in the person of A. N. the best type of “economic planner” (*khoziaistvennik*) who, in spite of all his leaning to the left, was able in the course of a year to save, preserve, and use in the best way all those great possibilities that were prepared for him by his predecessor [Ostroumov].¹⁵⁶

Between Ostroumov and Ivanov, the author insisted, “there is something in common,” as shown by “the love for the CER shining through everywhere” under both directors’ management. When it came to “the interest of the CER,” the article concluded, both Ostroumov and Ivanov defended it “with all the force of their ability.” Thus, “this relation to all offspring of their work (*detishche*) unites and probably reconciles these two public actors (*deiateli*), in spite of all that divides them.”¹⁵⁷

Sovereignty and the “Rights of Humanity”

For the émigrés who identified with the railroad, the idea that both Ostroumov and Ivanov worked for the “interest of the CER” suggests another, that the railroad itself rose above selfish interests – “personal motives” – to represent a greater good. This greater good, as conceived by the émigrés, ranged from the interest of Manchuria to that of humanity as a whole, and reflected the conceit of the technocratic vision of rising above partisan interest.

N. V. Vodianskii, the president of the Harbin Stock Committee in 1923, praised the new railroad tariff policy set up by Ostroumov as “propitious (*blagodatel’noi*) not only for the railroad itself but also for trade and industry, and for agriculture in the region.” In Vodianskii’s view, Ostroumov was attentive to the “agenda (*ukazaniia*) of the trade and industry class (*klass*),” and, so long as it did not have a “personal motive,” implemented “all that has a generally beneficial (*obshchepolezny*) character.” Such was the character of the investment put into Vladivostok’s Egershel’d harbor, according to Vodianskii. He regretted the loss of the harbor owing to the Bolshevik victory in the Civil War, which he called “circumstances independent of the will of the engineer B. V. Ostroumov.” Nevertheless, Vodianskii was certain that, had these not been the circumstances, both the harbor and agriculture in this part of the Far East, covering the Primorskaia oblast,

¹⁵⁶ Billi. B. V. Ostroumov i A. N. Ivanov. P. 6.

¹⁵⁷ Ibid. P. 6.

the region to which Vladivostok belonged, and eastern Manchuria, which bordered Primorskaia oblast, would have been “distinguished by the great rapidity of their flourishing.”¹⁵⁸ *North Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railway*, the 1924 survey published by the railroad, presented the CER as a “pioneer railroad,” the “basis for the country’s progress” whose purpose was to “hasten progress” at “the most rapid rate.”¹⁵⁹ Like Vodianskii, the survey saw in Ostroumov’s management a universalist outlook. According to the survey, the railway administration upheld “an equal attitude toward all of its clients independently of nationality,” and promoted “the spreading of civilization” through the “maximum development of [necessary] efforts.”¹⁶⁰

Among the goals constituting the general good for which the CER strove, as professed by the railroad’s advocates, was “attention to the welfare and wellbeing of its employees.”¹⁶¹ As mentioned above, two-thirds of the railroad’s staff was Russian, of whom many were more likely than the Chinese to have mid- and upper-level positions. In this way, the term “employees” very likely denoted the railway’s Russian employees. A similar slide from the general to the particular occurred in the use of the term “the railroad population” to suggest everyone, when it meant Russians. A 1921 Harbin Stock Exchange Committee report credited the railroad’s new tariff policy for improving “the situation of the large railroad population.” When this population was further specified – as “the population of the concession zone of the city Harbin and of peasants” (*naselenie polosy otchuzhdeniia g. Kharbina i krest’ian*) whose “cost of living” was lowered by “the prices of the items of everyday need: meat, oil and dairy products (*zhiry*), sugar, and others”¹⁶² – the report made clear that it referred to Russians. The Chinese, as an earlier Russian work published in Harbin indicated, “do not slaughter cattle, do not prepare dairy products, and do not use milk.”¹⁶³

The railroad’s spokesmen were often frustrated by what they perceived as the lack of “culture” of the Chinese population. The “struggle against carts” aimed “not only to carry but also create freight” in the service of the railroad.¹⁶⁴ It was also calculated to assist the “foreign merchant” against

¹⁵⁸ Vodianskii. Dolzhnoe. Pp. 4-5.

¹⁵⁹ *North Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railway*. P. 408.

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.* P. 406.

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶² Harbin Stock Exchange Committee’s 1921 report, as quoted in Dobrokhoto. Torgovo-promyshlennyya organizatsii. Pp. 6-7.

¹⁶³ F. A. Iasen’kii (Ed.). *Chumnyia epidemii na Dal’nem Vostoke i protivochumnyia meropriiatiia Upravleniia Kitaiskoi Vostochnoi zheleznoi dorogi*. Harbin, 1912. P. 256.

¹⁶⁴ *North Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railway*. P. 408.

the Chinese, as the foreign merchant was “unaccustomed to cart transport,” did not know Chinese, and therefore had no access to the grain producers inland.¹⁶⁵ But, understanding this struggle as an effort to spread the knowledge commonly held in “cultured countries,” the railroad management saw resistance to it as a sign of the absence of development. The 1924 survey published by the CER noted that in “cultured countries,” arguing for the advantage of train transport “can only cause the reader to smile.” But in North Manchuria, because of the region’s “cheap labor, human as well as animal,” proving this advantage was “far from ... idle talk.”¹⁶⁶

The plan to build grain elevators was explained by the CER’s managers as a modernizing project that would replace subsistence farming. The grain elevators, Gins remembered, were to “raise the purchasing price for the producers,” the “Chinese peasants,” by holding grain until “the most profitable time for selling” in the world market; by cutting out the “middlemen ... who exploited peasants,” the Chinese grain merchants; and – Gins suggested, pointing to the “tribute paid by the merchants” to an official – by eliminating the collusion between the Chinese merchants and the local Chinese administration.¹⁶⁷ This plan in fact complemented the CER’s struggle against carts, as grain elevators were to be located for intercepting the soybean traffic heading to the ports by cart. So positioned, the grain elevators were to redirect the cart traffic from moving “parallelly [*sic*]” with the tracks and competing with rail transport, to “perpendicularly” to the tracks and delivering the “maximum usefulness to the railway”.¹⁶⁸ The 1924 CER survey pointed to the significance of the grain elevators for the SAR’s foreign merchants: changing cart traffic would shift the share of grain purchased for export away from “Chinese and Japanese trade organizations,” which made use of carts, in favor of “Russian and European firms.” Without grain elevators, these firms would be “compelled to abstain completely from engaging in export transactions” involving soybean purchase from the inland.¹⁶⁹ “The idea was very sound, and everybody who exported [soy]beans could win using elevators,” Gins recounted.¹⁷⁰ He dismissed, for “sound[ing] like an anecdote,” a letter from the Chinese governor-general of Qiqihaer that, as conveyed by Gins, asked that the

¹⁶⁵ Ibid. Pp. 381-383.

¹⁶⁶ Ibid. P. 381.

¹⁶⁷ Guins. Transcript of “An Interview Conducted by Boris Raymond.” P. 248.

¹⁶⁸ North Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railway. P. 380.

¹⁶⁹ Ibid. P. 276.

¹⁷⁰ Guins. Transcript of “An Interview Conducted by Boris Raymond.” Pp. 248-249.

CER “eradicate this idea for not letting people reserve their own opinions about this enterprise.”¹⁷¹

Yet a third site of contention between the Chinese and the railroad, and a locus of Russian frustration with regard to Chinese backwardness, was the railroad’s experimental farms, intended by the CER management for improving the region’s agriculture.¹⁷² From the Chinese perspective, the farms displaced numerous Chinese leaseholders to make way for dairy processing plants and other facilities favoring Russian farmers.¹⁷³ Responding to the Chinese attack on the experimental farm Anta, a Russian paper condemned the attackers for acting out of the “bad interests of the dark-minded mob”; for behaving as an “uncultured mob [that] believe[s] that [it] can disregard the laws with impunity and exercise violence”; and for “destroy[ing] the cultural economic work and all cultural legacy of the (CER) land department.”¹⁷⁴

Although the railroad management in fact worked to ensure that the benefits of its projects mainly accrued to the Russians, it perceived the CER as standing for the good of all. In the universalist civilizing and modernizing scheme envisioned by the Russian managers, Manchuria’s Chinese population – and the growing national consciousness that seemed to them to have motivated the protests – often represented a hindrance to progress. Given this background, some Russian émigrés’ proposal for a new juridical principle guiding international relations could be understood as a solution to this hindrance. This juridical solution returned to the question of national sovereignty and extraterritoriality confronting Russian émigrés in 1920, but interpreted the meaning of these terms according to a new framework delineating the “interest” of humanity and international cooperation.

Discussing the theory of sovereignty rights and extraterritoriality, an article in *Vestnik Man’chzhurii* (Manchuria Monitor), the journal of Manchuria Research Society’s Trade and Industry Department, published by the CER, presented various arguments for and against the Chinese government’s sovereignty claims. Regarding these claims, the author, M. Ia. Pergament,

¹⁷¹ Ibid. Pp. 248-249.

¹⁷² North Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railroad. Pp. 408-409.

¹⁷³ “Chinese Farmers at Anda Attack the Agricultural Experimental Station” in Sungari Daily News. 1924. 29 April // NARA. RG59. M316. Roll 153. File 861.77 3459. 5 May 1924; NARA. RG59. M316. Roll 153. File 861.77 3071 roll 153. 19 March 1923; both cited in Chiasson. Administering the Colonizer. P. 140.

¹⁷⁴ “A Sad Page” in *Russkii golos*. 1924. 13 April // NARA. RG59. M316. Roll 153. File 861.77 3439. 20 April 1924; quoted in Chiasson. Administering the Colonizer. P. 142.

a professor, mentioned the Chinese view that the Republic was a constitutional state with an independent court system, and that of a special U. S. envoy to China that the Chinese demand for national sovereignty was “that which indeed all the peoples of the world demand: the right to conduct its own affairs itself.”¹⁷⁵ Commenting that such national movements were also accompanied by “the feeling and mood of unambiguous hostility to foreigners,” Pergament turned to the objections “formulated by highly qualified foreigners.”¹⁷⁶

These objections identified the “political theory of national sovereignty” as one that “lived in the nineteenth century,” and pronounced the necessity of its replacement by a new theory based on an “indisputably higher category” of rights – “the rights of humanity.” The sovereign rights of individual states had already begun to “fade away” (*stushevyvat’sia*), Pergament asserted, noting in particular that the Soviet Union, “the most advanced regime ... [had] replaced the sovereignty of the nation (*narod*) by the [above-national] sovereignty of the proletariat.”¹⁷⁷ Signs of the “new spirit” regarding national sovereignty can be detected everywhere, Pergament offered:

innumerable international agreements defining the immense number of branches of human activities ... the Monroe Doctrine, the constitution of the Union of the Soviet Socialist Republics, the League of Nations, etc. – all this is but the manifestation of that new spirit which is penetrating the whole world, and which aims to place the common interests of humanity (*obshchie interesy chelovechestva*) higher than the interests of individual states, and the right of civilization, higher than the sovereign right of one or another state.¹⁷⁸

Pergament further pointed out that the Chinese themselves appealed “precisely to this new principle” when they demanded that opium and arms trade outside the Chinese border be stopped. These examples, according to the author, demonstrated “that there exists a consciousness” upon which a new theory of rights could be based, as this consciousness incorporated the idea that “above the sovereign rights of the state there are some other obligations of the state – as a member of the family of nations (*narodov*)”; and “that there exists a *common* interest and a *common* good of humanity.”¹⁷⁹

¹⁷⁵ M. Ia. Pergament. Noveishii obmen mnenii po voprosu ob eksterritorial’nosti v Kitae // Vestnik Man’chzhurii. 1925. No. 8-10. P. 2; Schurman, as quoted in: Ibid. P. 2.

¹⁷⁶ Ibid. Pp. 4-5.

¹⁷⁷ Ibid. P. 5.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ Ibid. P. 5. Emphasis in the original.

M. P. Golovachev, a professor of international law who taught in Harbin following his arrival in 1923,¹⁸⁰ questioned the rights of sovereignty from a different angle, denying not the importance of these rights, but the premise that every state was entitled to them. For Golovachev, the nineteenth century was not so much a past to be superseded by the twentieth, as Pergament saw it, but the source of such legal norms as the extraterritoriality underlying “the general system of positive international law.”¹⁸¹ Following on a century of momentous changes, Golovachev wrote in a manuscript on “extraterritoriality in China,” a demand arose in the twentieth century for a “new diplomacy” allowing international organizations to act alongside sovereign states.¹⁸² This demand was beginning to be fulfilled in Europe through the creation of such organizations as the League of Nations, but yet to be realized in the East. This was, according to Golovachev, the view of what he called the “international Pacific Ocean circles,” whose concern was the economic development of the Pacific basin.¹⁸³ Having set up the problem, Golovachev then proposed that the juridical basis of the “new diplomacy” desired by these circles could be found in the principle of extraterritoriality.

Golovachev explained extraterritoriality as an indispensable aspect of international law and an outgrowth of the “common interests” (*obshchie interesy*) and “international peaceful cooperation” that underpinned this law. It provided for the legal protection of the persons and property of “foreigners”, both individuals and organizations constituting legal persons, in a country where the “absence of civilization ... excludes the possibility of any organization of a legal system and [legal] life.”¹⁸⁴ Establishing a “state within a state” through the substitution of the local jurisdiction by a foreign one, extraterritoriality also placed “cultural obligations” on the foreign treaty state to “conduct itself according to moral principles” in its dealings with the “uncivilized countries” whose jurisdiction it overrode.¹⁸⁵ More importantly perhaps for the “international Pacific Ocean circles” for which Golovachev purportedly spoke, extraterritoriality was the legal principle

¹⁸⁰ M. P. Golovachev. A Personal History of Prof. Mstislav Petrovich Golovachev, Russian Emigrant // RBML. Golovachev Collection. Box 3. Folder: “Biographical materials.” P. 1.

¹⁸¹ Golovachev. *Eksterritorial’nost’ v Kitae* // RBML. Golovachev Collection. Box 1. Folder: “*Eksterritorial’nost’ v Kitae*”. P. 12

¹⁸² Ibid. Pp. 9-11.

¹⁸³ Ibid. Pp. 2, 9-10.

¹⁸⁴ Ibid. Pp. 2, 15.

¹⁸⁵ Ibid. Pp. 13, 15.

that allowed a treaty state to “enter into international relations” by imposing its own jurisdiction to “unilaterally protect the lives and property of its subjects.”¹⁸⁶ A “legal instrument in international life” for the “members of international relations,” that is, the states that adhered to international law, Golovachev suggested, extraterritoriality could also serve as a legal instrument for “international” nonstate entities like the Pacific Ocean circles, which could be set up as a “member of international relations” governed by the “new diplomacy.”¹⁸⁷

While Golovachev’s manuscript on extraterritoriality dealt with meta-historical themes and claimed to speak for the “international Pacific Ocean circles,” it can be read as a response to specific events affecting the CER: Ostroumov’s trial in the SAR court, and the 1924 Fengtian–Soviet agreement that shortly preceded his arrest. The trial provided unassailable proof to Golovachev that China belonged to the category of “uncivilized countries” defined in his manuscript. It showed that “the Chinese Court . . . ha[d] nothing in common with European legality”; and that the “entire proceeding” was both “illegal” and “a nonsense from a white man’s point of view.”¹⁸⁸ In addition to the trial, the “anarchy reigning in all Chinese outports [treaty ports]” at this time – thanks to the “paroxysm of exaltation of [Chinese] national feelings . . . and the desire for abolition of extraterritoriality [*sic*]” – convinced Golovachev of the necessity of preserving extraterritoriality, because this anarchy demonstrated “clearly . . . that no guarantees of personal rights and safety can be obtained in China” otherwise.¹⁸⁹

Referring to the Fengtian–Soviet agreement’s impact on the CER, Golovachev suggested that the railroad’s “future possibilities” had been undermined by the political interference that followed the agreement, and by the “collisions” due to the “contradictory socialist beliefs” of the Chinese and the Soviets.¹⁹⁰ Golovachev characterized them as “socialist,” apparently because both the Fengtian and the Soviet governments ignored guarantees of personal safety and property, and failed to protect the autonomy of the CER as a private company and legal person. To counter this erosion of the railroad’s “future possibilities,” the railroad must return to the “purely

¹⁸⁶ Ibid. Pp. 15–16.

¹⁸⁷ Ibid. Pp. 11, 25.

¹⁸⁸ Golovachev, on “the hearings of Mr. Ostroumoff’s case” // RBML. Golovachev Collection. Box 3. Folder: “Chinese Eastern Railroad”. Pp. 1–2

¹⁸⁹ Ibid. P. 1.

¹⁹⁰ Golovachev. “The Present Standing of the Railway” // RBML. Golovachev Collection. Box 3. Folder: “Chinese Eastern Railroad”. Pp. 11–12.

commercial role” it had assumed under Ostroumov,¹⁹¹ Golovachev argued, meaning presumably that the railway must rise above political agendas, and the political jurisdiction claimed by the SAR officials and the Soviet managers. Golovachev insisted that “the commercial principle” of the CER “must be upheld” for the railroad to maintain its “high standard of technical and economic standing”; to develop the wealth of neighboring territories such as Siberia, Mongolia, and the Russian Far East; and to realize the railroad’s potential in shaping the economic growth of the Pacific basin.¹⁹²

It can be inferred from Golovachev’s works that proposing extraterritoriality as the new legal instrument for international cooperation, he also envisioned endowing a new group of nonstate, one might say supranational, actors, such as the CER and the “international Pacific Ocean circles,” with the prerogatives at present assigned to sovereign states. Pergament and Golovachev differed in their political orientation. Golovachev was called the “Knight of the White Idea,”¹⁹³ while Pergament saw the Soviet Union as among the most advanced regimes of the world. But the solution they arrived at to confront Chinese sovereignty claims – reflecting the Russian émigrés’ experience of statelessness – converged, in that both authors imagined a new legal regime in which the importance of state sovereignty and membership in a nation-state would give way to that of new juridical formations representing “humanity” and “common interest.” Golovachev, in particular, indicated that this new formation could be a “purely commercial” enterprise with extensive transregional interests, or a conglomerate of international business circles, that could take the place of a state. The new legal regime thus conceived would, in short, be one in which émigré Russians could engage in shaping global development without the mediation of the state.

Imperial Lieux de Mémoire

However varied the manner in which Russian émigré engineers and professionals viewed their predicament in Manchuria and China, their view revolved around a self-definition that tied Russianness to technological modernity, knowledge production, and the position of a civilizing and modernizing agent. This self-definition was integral to their identification with the CER, and to their understanding of the railroad as a legacy of

¹⁹¹ Ibid. P. 11.

¹⁹² Ibid. Pp. 6, 11.

¹⁹³ M. V. Korzhenko. “Pamiati Professora M. P. Golovacheva” in Russian Life // RBML. Golovachev Collection. Box 6. Folder: “clippings 1.”

Imperial Russia that brought together their imperial Russian past and non-Soviet present. Pointing at times to an internationalist future that promised the rise of supranational organizations, this conception of Russianness was an invented identity that was made possible by the historical and epistemic disruptions signaled by revolution and the abolition of extraterritoriality. In serving to link the émigrés' past – one that was imagined as the source of their mission – to their present and their future, the CER functioned as what Pierre Nora would call a “site of memory.” According to Nora, *lieux de mémoire*, “sites of memory,” emerge because of a “consciousness of a break with the past.” Unlike the memory of *milieux de mémoire*, “real environments of memory,” which is drawn from “experience [that] still lived in the warmth of tradition,” the memory embodied by *lieux de mémoire* reflects a “fundamentally historical sensibility.” *Lieux de mémoire*, as Nora defines it, signal both a “break with the past” and the desire to reconstruct this past, thus making these embodiments of memory into “sites where a sense of historical continuity persists.”¹⁹⁴ Cast in the light of Nora's idea of memory and its distortion, historical sensibility, the CER was a “site of memory” that insisted on continuity with the past where there was in fact a rupture of continuity. As the CER was emblematic of other imperial Russian developmental endeavors at the frontier, so, for the Russian émigré engineers and technical professionals in Manchuria, not only the railroad but also the former railway concession zone, and other projects of frontier development left from the imperial period, were *lieux de mémoire* as well. That is, these were sites that, in the émigrés' perception, persistently embodied the continuity of the émigrés' present with the imperial past.

Nora describes the “historical sensibility” underlying the creation of *lieux de mémoire* as, in effect, a teleological time sense, for it is a tendency to project onto “that which has already happened ... as the fulfillment of something always already begun.”¹⁹⁵ For the émigrés, this historical sensibility pertained not only to the recent past but also to the future, as it projected onto the future – onto what was to happen – the fulfillment of the original event of the CER's construction, thereby linking the imperial past to a future of CER-centered international commerce. The break embedded in the émigrés' consciousness, the sudden end of the Russian Empire and of their previous life, was acknowledged in the remaking of the CER into a “purely commercial” enterprise transcending political differences. But this break was also denied through the consecration of the CER and its

¹⁹⁴ Nora. Between Memory and History. P. 7.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

ancillary projects as *lieux de mémoire*. In the register of personal and collective identities, the past that the émigrés sought to reconstruct through their sites of memory was that of the colonial order secured by the Russian imperial state; this colonial order guaranteed special privileges based on extraterritoriality, and conferred the status of Europeanness associated with extraterritoriality. Seeking to reconstruct this past without the backing of a state, the émigré professionals and technical specialists emphasized their standing as bearers of science and modernizers of Manchuria. Translating the differentiation of “Russians” and “Europeans” from the “Chinese,” established in the imperial period, into a divide between “foreigners” and the “local” population, the émigrés strove to ensure the inclusion of Russians in the category of “foreigners” in Manchuria. They did so in part by using the railroad to provide for many Russians an economic status commensurate with that of being foreign in a context where labor extraction practices often equated the local with the menial.

The CER was an émigré *lieu de mémoire* holding the memory of Imperial Russia. But it was also a place inhabited by Russian refugees and *starozhili* settlers. The everyday life that took hold there in turn became the “real environment of memory” upon which other *lieux de mémoire* were created. Thus, in time, the railroad itself, along with the Manchuria that the railroad appropriated for the émigrés, became the object of the memory reconstructed in another type of *lieu de mémoire* – émigré memoirs.¹⁹⁶ In this transmutation of the CER – from a site where memory of Imperial Russia was reconstructed, to becoming itself an object of memory reconstruction – can perhaps be discerned a trajectory of how the émigrés’ reinvention of their colonial past not only secured for them a way to reclaim their Europeanness but also provided a measure of stability and real privileges to many Russians in Manchuria.

Testifying to some measure of success in Russian émigrés’ re-creation of Manchuria as a preserve of the colonial order and Russianness inherited from Imperial Russia, a number of émigré memoirs, particularly those written by the émigrés associated with the CER and its professional and educational institutions, recall life in Manchuria as an idyllic existence.¹⁹⁷ According

¹⁹⁶ Ibid. P. 24.

¹⁹⁷ Lahusen notes that Harbin and Manchuria have long been the “domain of memoirs” by Russian émigrés, and that many among them have somehow found their experience in Manchuria “unforgettable,” as shown by the innumerable associations and gatherings – yet another kind of *lieu de mémoire* – they organized to remember their life in Manchuria. See Lahusen. *A Place Called Harbin: Reflections on a Centennial* // *China Quarterly*. 1998. Vol. 154. P. 401; and Lahusen. *Dr. Fu Manchu in Harbin*. P. 144.

to some of these memoirs, this life was characterized by a high standard and low cost of living, by a sense of importance the émigrés enjoyed as the people responsible for the CER, and by the flourishing of the cultural activities in the concession zone.

These memoirs sometimes portray the émigrés' life in Manchuria as reminiscent of that in Russia before 1917, and frequently as a life that had little to do with the majority of Manchuria's population. Melikhov's history of Manchuria, which doubles as a memoir, refers to the CER as the "main economic nerve" of the region that employed many Russian technical professionals. According to Melikhov, "the strong Russian economic position that was preserved here" from the prerevolutionary period brought to the former CER concession zone a "high concentration" of émigré intelligentsia – which in turn "ensured the corresponding high level of ... cultural life" among Manchuria's Russians.¹⁹⁸ Many railway employees had dachas across the river from Harbin, which they rented out in the summer, presumably to vacationing foreigners from other parts of China. "Life was as in a fairy tale," and "nowhere in the world was there a railroad like [the CER]," remembers K. M. Geishtor, an engineer working at the railroad from the 1920s to the 1930s.¹⁹⁹ Another former inhabitant of Harbin, Vs. N. Ivanov, writes of the city, and of China in the 1920s in general, as places that offered "exclusively favorable" living conditions to Russian refugees, "such conditions of which they could only dream" – for "all engineers, physicians, doctors, professors, journalists worked. All could do what they wanted."²⁰⁰ Simon Karlinsky, also a former resident of Harbin, asserts that Harbin "had been a Russian city all along," one that preserved "into the 1940s the high standard of living that typified Russia" prior to World War I. He acknowledged that there were "numerous Chinese shopkeepers, itinerant vendors, artisans and servants" in the city. But "it was *they* who had to learn to speak Russian," Karlinsky observes, identifying "the amusing Russo-Chinese pidgin called 'Moia-tvoia'" as Russian.²⁰¹ A graduate of Harbin's polytechnic institute, A. N. Kniazev, lists the social, cultural, and leisure activities that filled his student days in Harbin. Doing so, he marvels: "This time seems to me now like some unbelievable dream. How was time found for all this?" The

¹⁹⁸ Melikhov. *Rossiiskaia emigratsiia v Kitae*. Pp. 202-203.

¹⁹⁹ Geishtor memoirs. Pp. 8-9.

²⁰⁰ Vs. N. Ivanov. *Kharbin. 20-e gody* // E. P. Taskina (Ed.). *Russkii Kharbin*. Moscow, 1998. Pp.14, 19.

²⁰¹ Simon Karlinsky. *Memoirs of Harbin* // *Slavic Review*. 1989. Vol. 48. No. 2. Pp. 285, 286 (footnote 6).

reason, he offered, had to do with being Russian in Manchuria: “I explain this by our youth, good health, and, apparently, the inextinguishable desire (*neugasimoe zhelanie*) to embrace everything and to overcome everything: ‘After all we are Russians, and God is with us!’”²⁰²

As an object of memory reconstruction in émigré memoirs whose “love for the CER shined through” – to use the words of a contemporary commentary mentioned above, the railroad represented an alternative vision of Russians in China to that of refugees suffering from want. As a *lieu de mémoire* that recalled Imperial Russia as the font of technocratic expertise, the CER stood for one particular side in the contestation between two modes of temporality, and historical sensibility. One mode of temporality, upheld by Chinese nationalists, posited national sovereignty and national self-determination as the goal of progress. The other, invested in the CER by the railroad’s émigré advocates, envisioned “international cooperation” and globalized commerce as the endpoint of historical progress, and promoted a vision adumbrating the replacement of national states by extraterritorial and supranational organizations. Both politically inflected sovereignty claims and modernizing claims focusing on economic progress have embedded in them a racialized discourse based on civilizational terms of evolution toward self-determination and economic progress.²⁰³ Chinese elimination of Russians’ extraterritoriality undermined Russians’ identification as white and European. In response, Russian railroad engineers and other émigré professionals contested Chinese sovereignty claims by asserting the imperative of economic modernization, presented as a globalizing vision benefiting Manchuria and the Pacific basin, over the political agenda of national self-determination, shown by the émigrés as the expression of localized national interests. The émigrés’ claim to representing the modernity of a global scope reaffirmed Russians’ whiteness and Europeanness. This was because modernity at this time could scarcely be seen as anything other than the emanation of whiteness and Europeanness, even in Manchuria, where the rapid shifts in the colonial and international order made the fluidity of

²⁰² A. N. Kniazev. *Kak my uchilis’ // Russkii Kharbin*. P. 62.

²⁰³ For conceptions relating sovereignty claims to and civilizational evolution, see, for example, Dipesh Chakrabarty. *Provincializing Europe: Postcolonial Thought and Historical Difference*. Princeton, NJ, 2000, and Uday Singh Mehta. *Liberalism and Empire: A Study in Nineteenth-Century British Liberal Thought*. Chicago, 1999. For views on economic stages and civilizational evolution, see S. Iu. Witte’s work on Friedrich List in: S. Iu. Vitte. *Po povodu natsionalisma. Natsional’naia ekonomii i Fridrikh List*. 2-e izd. St. Petersburg, 1912.

the status of Europeanness – passage into it and passage out of it – more observable than elsewhere.

In their efforts to reclaim the Russian colonial past that cast Russians as civilizers, the émigré engineers and professionals were guided by what they believed were normative visions of modernity. It was the normativity of these visions that imbued the émigrés with the certainty of their place as Manchuria's modernizers. Yet what emerged in the Manchurian space shaped by their ideas and efforts, which turned out to be still harkening back to Imperial Russia while not quite anti-Soviet, and still colonial but at the same time verging toward a post-nation-state ethos that challenged the concept of national sovereignty, appeared to be a modernity that was hardly normative. This version of modernity was in part a result of the émigrés' attempts to address the disaggregation of modernity, whiteness, and national sovereignty that was emerging in the Manchurian iteration of the postcolonial condition.

SUMMARY

В статье Ча Инь Сю рассматривается ситуация в Манчжурии после Октябрьской революции и Гражданской войны, когда в регионе обозначились две тенденции. Одна состояла в появлении здесь большого числа российских беженцев, стремившихся на территорию, ранее принадлежавшую (на базе принципа экстерриториальности) Российской империи (обществу КВЖД). Вторая тенденция выражалась в китайском деколонизационном движении, целью которого являлось не только утверждение китайского суверенитета в Маньчжурии, но и изменение отношений власти – подчинения между российскими и китайскими подданными, сложившихся в системе КВЖД. В статье анализируются взгляды на социальное устройство, историю и прогресс представителей российской стороны конфликта – инженеров и других специалистов КВЖД, которые столкнулись с новыми вызовами с китайской стороны. Китайским требованиям национального суверенитета и ориентации на политическую модернизацию они противопоставили технократический идеал экономической модерности, способной преодолеть границы национального суверенитета. Ча Инь Сю выявляет связь этого технократического дискурса с постреволюционным восприятием России через создание новых “мест памяти” (в смысле Пьера Нора) – образов

прошлого, позволяющих конструировать воображаемую непрерывность на месте радикальных исторических разрывов. Как показано в статье, эмигранты жили иллюзией того, что имперский режим продолжает существовать вопреки произошедшей революции и отмене российской экстерриториальности в Китае. Ключевыми механизмами воспроизводства этой иллюзии являлось поддержание определенных аспектов статуса русских сотрудников КВЖД как колониальных чиновников, специалистов и культуртрегеров и восприятие имперской России как части “цивилизованного” – в смысле технологического развития – мира. Автор делает вывод, что имперское *lieux de mémoire*, созданное российскими эмигрантами в Манчжурии, было средством формирования новой идентичности, которая отвечала их безгосударственному существованию между двумя бывшими империями.