

Japanese in Harbin in the Early 20th Century. Russian-Japanese Relations During the Early History of the Chinese Eastern Railway

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Abstract

The article is devoted to the problems of Russian-Japanese relations on the Chinese Eastern Railway at the initial stage of its history. Workers from Japan were not invited to build the road, but the Japanese were already among the first settlers in the city of Harbin, founded in 1898 by the Chinese Eastern Railway Society. After a short break caused by the Russo-Japanese War, bilateral relations were quickly restored. In 1906, as the Russian troops withdrew from Manchuria, the Japanese began to return to the Chinese Eastern Railway. Since 1907, Japanese officials, entrepreneurs, cultural and sports figures from Japan began to take an active part in the socio-political, economic, and cultural life of the city of Harbin. It was here that the first “Russian-Japanese Society” was created. The Japanese in Harbin were mainly employed in such areas as trade, medicine, entertainment, and domestic service.

An important component of bilateral cooperation was cooperation in the railway sector. Due to the tradition and the inaccessibility of sources, the history of the Japanese population of Harbin is poorly studied in Russian historiography. The purpose of the research is to restore the historical picture and identify the problems of the Japanese presence in Harbin and the Russian-Japanese interaction on the Chinese Eastern Railway in the period between the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War. The study was carried out on the basis of materials from the periodicals of Harbin, with the involvement

of materials collected in the archives by the researcher of the Chinese Eastern Railway E. K. Nilus.

The information and analytical materials published in the newspapers *Harbinskii Vestnik* (*Harbin Bulletin*), *Harbin*, *Novaya Zhizn'* (*New Life*), and *Man'chzhurskii Kur'er* (*Manchurian Courier*), especially advertising, allow one to get an idea of the composition of the Japanese community, the occupations of the Japanese and some problems of Russian-Japanese relations in 1906–1914. The study of development of the Chinese Eastern Railway by the Japanese, their coexistence and cooperation with the Russians in Harbin will expand knowledge of the history of the Chinese Eastern Railway and achieve a more complete and objective picture of the history of Russian-Japanese relations in the 20th century.

Keywords: Japanese in Harbin, history of the CER, history of Russian-Japanese relations, Harbin newspapers about Russian-Japanese cooperation.

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For half a century, from the late 19th to the mid-20th centuries, international and interethnic relations in the Far East were to a large extent defined by the construction and operation of the Chinese Eastern Railway and its legacy. Throughout the 20th century, Russian-Japanese relations were characterized by instability, drastic changes from friendship and mutually beneficial cooperation to confrontation and bloody military conflicts. Mutual interest and respect were formed due to the fact that, since the end of the 19th century, representatives of the two nations interacted with each other a lot, had the opportunity to get to know each other closely, gain experience of cohabitation and cooperation.

The Chinese-Eastern Railway was a major contact zone of Russian-Japanese cooperation. The first Japanese settled in Harbin almost immediately after the founding of the city at the end of the 19th century, and, after the end of the Russo-Japanese War, they gradually became one of the largest and most active ethnic communities on the Chinese Eastern Railway. The Japanese lived and worked side by side with the Russian and Chinese population, becoming an organic part of Russian Harbin in Northeast China. But the negative consequences of Japanese aggression against China and the 1945 Soviet-Japanese war led to a loss of interest in the historical experience of Russian-Japanese cooperation in Harbin. Nevertheless, the history of Russian-Japanese relations, as well as the history of the Chinese Eastern Railway proper, cannot be at all complete without such an important theme as the Japanese population of Harbin at the beginning of the 20th century.

The problems of the Japanese population on the Chinese Eastern Railway at the initial stage of the history of the railway are mentioned in general works on the history of the Chinese Eastern Railway and Russian Harbin. In the 1920s, a generalizing study *Historical Review of the Chinese Eastern Railway. 1896–1923* was published. However, this work does not raise the problem of the Japanese presence in Harbin, although some facts are indicated. For example, E. K. Nilus writes that the “Yaponskaya [Japanese] Street” received such a name because “some Japanese enterprises appeared here for the first time” [Nilus 1923, p. 138]. In addition, this study presents statistical data, according to which the total population of the Exclusion Zone of the Chinese Eastern Railway in 1907 was 48,870 people, including 160 Japanese [Nilus 1923, p. 621].

The modern historiography of the Japanese presence on the Chinese Eastern Railway begins with the publication in 1991 of the generalizing work of G.V. Melikhov, a native of Harbin, *Manchuria Far and Near*, which indicates the number of Japanese subjects recorded by the first census in the Harbin Exclusion Zone as 462 people [Melikhov 1991, p. 140]. However, the study contains inaccuracies and contradictory statements, for example, it says: “The first Japanese merchants appeared

in Harbin after the events of 1900” [Melikhov 1991, p. 190]. The work first indicates that the first Japanese temple in Harbin, built in 1901, was a Buddhist one and, later, that it belonged to Shinto.

In the studies on the history of Russian-Japanese relations, the issues of the Japanese presence on the Chinese Eastern Railway, as a rule, were not raised. For example, in the work of V. Molodyakov, devoted to the problem of railways in Russian-Japanese relations, much attention is paid to the history of Harbin, but the researcher does not raise the problem of the Japanese population on the Chinese Eastern Railway, indicating only the number of Japanese subjects in the Exclusion Zone of Harbin according to the 1903 census [Molodyakov 2006, p. 148]. In the study by A. N. Khokhlov, which is devoted to the problems of the Japanese population of the Russian Far East, there are examples of sending the Japanese from Harbin to the European part of Russia after the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War [Khokhlov 2010, p. 82].

In recent years, Russian historiography has seen works about the problems of Russian-Japanese cooperation on the Chinese Eastern Railway. However, the main focus of attention is on the post-revolutionary period of history [Yakimenko 2015, pp. 45–57]. But there are exceptions, for example, the work of the Moscow Japanese studies scholar A. M. Gorbylev speaks about the activities of a Japanese wrestling coach in Harbin [Gorbylev 2022, pp. 29–40]. Researchers from Khabarovsk, V. V. Gonchar and V. D. Povolotsky, are studying the presence of Japanese medics in the Far East [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023a, 2023b]. They write that there were eight Japanese on the Chinese Eastern Railway in 1898, but, in 1904, their number increased to one thousand people [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023a, p. 116]. The researchers claim that, on November 5, 1901, an organization of Japanese residents was created in Harbin, known as “Shōka kurabu, Shōkakai – Sungari Club” [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023a, p. 116]. Some statements require special explanation, for example: “Japanese sources note that the first Japanese settlers arrived in Harbin in May 1897” [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023a, p. 116]. But, as is known, Harbin was founded only in 1898 and, before that, there were no significant settlements in the Harbin area where the

Japanese could live. In addition, in the works of the Khabarovsk scholars, written on the basis of Japanese sources, the history of the first Japanese in Harbin is well shown, but the history of the return of the Japanese to the Chinese Eastern Railway after the end of the Russo-Japanese War is practically not touched upon.

Thus, the history of the Japanese in Harbin at the beginning of the 20th century remains almost unstudied. In the works on the history of Russian-Japanese relations, this problem is not raised. In modern historiography, articles have appeared that present only certain aspects of the life and activities of the Japanese in Harbin.

The poor study of the problem of the Japanese presence in Harbin at the initial stage of the history of the Chinese Eastern Railway is due to the limited and inaccessible source base. The most accessible and quite informative source on this topic is the periodicals. The introduction of the materials of the first Russian newspapers on the Chinese Eastern Railway into the scientific circulation will help to restore the historical picture of the appearance of the Japanese in Harbin and identify the problems associated with the Japanese presence in the capital of the Chinese Eastern Railway.

One of the first periodicals in Harbin was the newspaper *Harbinskii Vestnik* (*Harbin Bulletin*). The newspaper was published in Russian by the commercial section of the Administration of the Chinese Eastern Railway since 1903. In an early 1907 issue of this newspaper, one can find such articles as “The Numbers of Japanese in Harbin”.¹ Another newspaper used as a source in our study is *Novaya Zhizn'* (*New Life*). Its history begins with the founding of the newspaper *Vestnik Vostoka* (*Bulletin of the East*) in 1907 by the editorial staff of the newspaper *Novy Krai* (*New Land*). But soon *Vestnik Vostoka* under the editorship of L. O. Leventzigler was transformed into a daily newspaper *Novaya Zhizn'*, which was published until 1914. We also used as a source the “progressive, literary, illustrated newspaper” *Man'chzhurskii Kur'er* (*Manchurian Courier*), as well as the newspaper *Harbin*. As an additional source, we

¹ *Harbin Bulletin*, January 5, 1907, p. 2.

have drawn on the draft typewritten materials prepared by the former staff officer for assignments under Horvat, E. K. Nilus, for the second volume of the *History of the Chinese Eastern Railway*, which are stored at Stanford University. The photographs taken in Harbin at the beginning of the 20th century are an interesting source as well. Today, these photographs can be found both in various funds and collections, as well as on the pages of modern publications [Abelentsev 2022, p. 19].

The first Japanese came to the city of Harbin, founded by the Russians in 1898 in Northeast China, at the end of the 19th century. However, there were no Japanese among the first builders of the Chinese Eastern Railway. The administration of the Chinese Eastern Railway did not attract Japanese workers for construction work in Northeast China. This was done on the basis of the experience of using the Japanese in the construction of the Ussuri railway and for political reasons. According to a report, “the most important inconvenience of the Japanese workers is that this energetic people, who have clearly expressed hostility to us, under the guise of workers, will send to us the most educated and trained representatives of their own, who will comprehensively study our land, its means, ways in it, get acquainted with our armed forces and will be well aware of our weaknesses” [Zavetnaya mehta imperatora 2011, pp. 106–117].

The Japanese appeared in Harbin even before the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War. Far Eastern researchers V. V. Gonchar and V. D. Povolotsky, referring to later sources, claim that eight Japanese lived on the Chinese Eastern Railway in 1898 [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023a, p. 116]. In addition, these researchers cite examples when the Japanese received permission to practice medicine in Harbin in 1899–1900. According to G. V. Melikhov: “In July 1901, the first Japanese Buddhist temple in Harbin was built on the 7th Staropristanskaya Street, which thus predetermined the future name of this street – Yaponskaya [Japanese]” [Melikhov 1991, p. 147]. However, the reference books published in the 1920s do not list a single Japanese temple on Yaponskaya Street [Ves’ Kharbin... 1926, p. 111]. In November 1901, in Harbin, as the researchers point out, an organization of Japanese residents was created, known as

“Shōka kurabu, Shōkakai – Sungari Club, Sungari Society”, according to which, in 1902, 506 Japanese lived in Harbin [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023a, p. 117].

The development of Japanese migration in Harbin was interrupted by the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905. G. V. Melikhov writes: “Just before the beginning of the war, Japanese entrepreneurs, abandoning their property, hastily left Harbin” [Melikhov 1991, p. 190]. The Japanese who remained on the Chinese Eastern Railway were sent to Vladivostok or deported to Siberia and European Russia.

The Russo-Japanese War ended with the signing of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty on August 23 (September 5), 1905. According to the Agreement on Manchuria signed in December 1905 between Japan and China, 16 cities of Northeast China, including Harbin, were to be opened to international trade. In 1906, work was carried out to open the Consulate General of Japan in Harbin, and, at the end of the year, the Russian Tsar approved the staff of the Japanese mission [Nesterova 2023, pp. 67–79]. After the withdrawal of Russian troops in early 1907, Harbin became a city open to foreigners, including the Japanese. Thus, neither from Russia nor from China there was no longer any obstacle to the return of the Japanese to the Chinese Eastern Railway passing through Manchuria.

Immediately after the end of the war, as the Russian troops withdrew, Japanese representatives launched their activities in Northern Manchuria. An article published in early 1907 in the newspaper *Harbinskii Vestnik*, titled “Japanese Quartermasters in North Manchuria,” says that the Japanese who came to the vicinity of Harbin “buy up huge batches of wheat, oilcake, and beans».² The newspaper indicated that four Japanese lived in the town of Beilingzi, and six Japanese lived in Hulancheng.

The newspaper cited eyewitness accounts: “They walk around in full brand-new uniforms, despite the frost. They treat the Chinese with exquisite politeness. The entire population is delighted with them...

² *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1907, January 26, p. 3.

All of them speak quite fluent Russian and Chinese, and some have excellent command of English, German, and French”.³ The Exclusion Zone of the Chinese Eastern Railway became a transit territory for the Japanese going west. In February 1907, the *Harbinskii Vestnik* reported about the “geisha actresses”: “They are traveling by invitation from Russia to Moscow and Saint Petersburg, where they will perform in the operettas “Tea Flower,” “Geisha,” and others.⁴ In the cities along the way, including Harbin, they gave performances.

In late 1906, the Japanese began to return to the city of Harbin itself. In early January 1907, the newspaper *Harbinskii Vestnik* reported: “According to the statistics of the Harbin Diplomatic Bureau, within two months from the moment the Japanese were allowed to enter Harbin, 51 people arrived in the city with Japanese passports”.⁵ In the early spring of 1907, the newspapers reported: “The number of Japanese arriving in Harbin is increasing every day. Little by little, they begin to take over various crafts, becoming serious competitors to the Russians and the Chinese. In particular, there are many Japanese signs saying “hairstylist,” “watchmaker,” etc. However, one cannot see an abundance of Japanese shops, the number of which was much greater before the war than now”.⁶

Indeed, in advertisements from the beginning of 1907, one can find indications of the presence in the city of various Japanese workshops and consumer service enterprises, for example, a “Japanese laundry.” In the early January, the following advertisement was placed in a newspaper: “Japanese watchmaker, located in 10th Market Street, shop No. 247, accepting watches for repair. Hadate”.⁷ From the first days of their residence in Harbin, the doctors and the medical personnel of the hospitals opened by the Japanese were the most prominent part

³ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1907, January 26, p. 3.

⁴ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1907, February 14, p. 3.

⁵ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1907, January 5, p. 2.

⁶ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1907, March 27, p. 2.

⁷ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1907, January 6, p. 4.

of the Japanese community. In early 1907, the newspaper *Harbinskii Vestnik* wrote: “We hear complaints about the dirt and uncleanness of Japanese doctors practicing in Harbin. In particular, the two medicine men residing in the Market Street are distinguished by these qualities... They charge no less than a ruble for their advice”.⁸

In February 1907, the Consul General of the Empire of Japan, Kawakami Toshitsune (川上俊彦), began his work in Harbin. The Japanese representative demonstrated recognition of the Russian authorities in the Exclusion Zone of the Chinese Eastern Railway. E. K. Nilus noted that foreign consuls tried to ignore the Russian authorities in Harbin by all available means, and “only with the Japanese Consul General Mr. Kawakami did the Head of the Road immediately establish normal and friendly relations”.⁹ Perhaps this situation was due to the fact that the Consul General was a former secretary of the embassy in Saint Petersburg and a commercial agent in Vladivostok, with extensive experience in interacting with Russian authorities and business people. Siberian researchers cite the description of the Japanese Consul General presented in a Japanese magazine: “Although he is not very tall, he is a very resolute and active man; he speaks Russian and is very knowledgeable about all Russian affairs. He is very accessible in any relations one has with him. He is hard-working, has a bright mind and the gift of speech. He is able to charm his interlocutor and completely take possession of him. He is a revelry hero; he is successful with women and, in turn, has a soft spot for them. We believe Kawakami to be one of our outstanding diplomats” [Ivanov, Kuznetsov 2022, pp. 23–24]. Indeed, Kawakami Toshitsune was fluent in Russian, French, and English, and, in Harbin, he began to study Chinese. Kawakami Toshitsune worked in Harbin for several years, the Chinese Eastern Railway becoming a stepping stone for his

⁸ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1907, February 7, p. 4.

⁹ *Hoover Institution Archives*. Archival Media. Evgenii Khristianovich Nilus. HE3290. C6N71. V. 2:3. *Russkie konsul'stva v Man'chzhurii* [Russian Consulates in Manchuria] (In Russian).

career growth. In the summer of 1910, Harbin newspapers wrote: “The Japanese Consul General in Harbin, Kawakami, is rumored to not stay here long. He was appointed Consul General in Moscow.”¹⁰ Later, he would also become the first Japanese ambassador to Poland.

The assistant to the Consul General was the Vice-Consul, and all the staff of the Consulate General were carefully selected. The Russian language was spoken by the secretary of the consulate Sugino Hotaro, the assistant secretary and the Chinese-language interpreter Furusawa Kokichi, the Russian-language interpreter Naito Kyuichi, and a student of the Orthodox seminary in Tokyo Igawa Julian, who worked as interpreter for the head of the police guard Hatsumi Okajima [Ivanov, Kuznetsov 2022, p. 24].

The rapid stabilization of Russian-Japanese relations in Manchuria was largely due to the interest of the Japanese in cooperation on the Chinese Eastern Railway. On the other hand, the emergence of a significant Japanese community in Harbin contributed to the development of Russian-Japanese relations. According to the research of E. K. Nilus, 160 Japanese lived in the Eastern Line of the Exclusion Zone of the Chinese Eastern Railway, where Harbin was located, according to the Land Committee of the Railway in 1907 [Nilus 1923, p. 621]. Khabarovsk researchers V. V. Gonchar and V. D. Povolotsky claim that “the number of residents in Harbin” in 1907 was 627 people [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023a, p. 122].

In February 1908, elections were held to the Assembly of Plenipotentiaries of the Harbin Public Administration. In addition to Russian subjects, only the Japanese participated in the elections, since only the Japanese consul supported this project. Researcher G. V. Melikhov claims that as early as in 1908 one Japanese person was elected to the Assembly of Plenipotentiaries of the Harbin Public Administration [Melikhov 1991, p. 201].

Medical workers were seemingly the most visible and active part of the Japanese diaspora. On the front pages of Harbin newspapers,

¹⁰ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, June 9, p. 2.

there were always advertisements of Japanese doctors and hospitals. In the spring of 1908, the newspaper *Harbin* published the following advertisement: “The Japanese Hospital of I. Osafune. New City... The apartment has comfortable beds...” and “Dr. S. Kubo’s Japanese Hospital. With permanent beds... New City”¹¹. In the Wharf area, there worked “Japanese Doctor S. Kaneda” and “Japanese surgeon Doctor Nakamura”.¹² In the spring of 1909, the following advertisement was presented on the pages of the newspaper *Harbin*: “Japanese Hospital of Dr. S. Murai. Daily reception at any time for internal, surgical, female, venereal, and other diseases. Specially cures ear, eye, nose, throat, and trachoma,” “Japanese Hospital of Dr. T. Mori,” “Doctors at the Imperial Japanese Consulate General in Harbin and Dr. Osafune, apt. No. 2, building of the Society of the South Manchurian Railway... New City,” “The Japanese Hospital of Dr. J. Narita. New City... Children’s, tuberculosis (consumption). Male impotence, Hemorrhoids... Venereal and other diseases”.¹³ Soon they were joined by “Dentist H. Matsuura...”¹⁴

On the pages of the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn’* (*New Life*) in 1909, in addition to the above-mentioned doctors and hospitals, “Dentist Ito Pan,” “Japanese Hospital of Dr. T. Shikata” featured as well.¹⁵ In addition to regular advertising, the following one-time ads appeared in the newspapers: “In the Japanese apothecary store of H. Umeda and Co. a medicine was received... the invention of the Japanese professor Fujimoto...”¹⁶ The Far Eastern researchers write: “In the report of the Japanese Consul General in Harbin, Kawakami Toshitsune, dated January 12, 1910, it was stated that 5 households of Japanese general practitioners resided in Harbin, represented by five men and two women. In addition, eight hired employees were involved in the

¹¹ *Harbin*, 1908, March 5, p. 1.

¹² *Harbin*, 1908, March 5, p. 1.

¹³ *Harbin*, 1909, April 9, p. 1.

¹⁴ *Harbin*, 1909, September 29, p. 1.

¹⁵ *Novaya Zhizn’*, 1909, January 1, p. 1.

¹⁶ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, February 2, p. 1.

Japanese medical institutions of Harbin, and one dentist also worked there” [Gonchar, Povolotsky 2023, p. 117].

One can also find advertisements of local Japanese stores on the pages of Harbin newspapers. For example, the Japanese store “Rising Sun” on Mostovaya Street, on the Wharf, advertised: “cloths for shirts, screens, albums, frames, and elegant metal products; napkins, mirrors, silk goods, and various Japanese items”.¹⁷ In 1910, the *Harbinskii Vestnik* reported: “This year, several new Japanese companies have appeared on the Wharf, opening wholesale warehouses of apothecary goods, tea, and various Japanese products, as well as beginning their retail sale”.¹⁸

Immediately after the end of the Russo-Japanese War, Japanese women returned to Harbin and began to work as nannies in Russian families. The photograph of the family of the head of the Harbin railway station, A. K. Krapivnitsky, taken in Harbin in 1908, depicts, according to the caption under the photo, “nanny Esi, a Japanese” [Abelentsev 2022, p. 19].

Japanese entertainers constantly worked in or visited Harbin. Newspapers placed the following advertisement: “On Friday (May 14) and Saturday (May 15), on their way to the Odessa exhibition, stopping in Harbin for only two performances, a Troupe of Japanese geishas. Japanese ballet. Under M-me Kikuyakko, with the participation of famous actresses of Japanese theaters”.¹⁹ The performances of the Japanese were not always successful. This is indicated by the following newspaper report: “The Japanese cinema on the Wharf, which at first attracted a lot of the Russian public with its films of exclusively Chinese and Japanese taste, is now empty. The Chinese are more interested in European cinema, and lately one can always see a few Chinese people in such theaters, visiting them with their whole families”.²⁰

¹⁷ *Novaya Zhizn'*, 1909, March 20, insertion sheet.

¹⁸ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, June 15, p. 2.

¹⁹ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, May 14, p. 1.

²⁰ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, January 16, p. 2.

Immediately after the Russo-Japanese War, Harbin became the most important place for Russian-Japanese cooperation. At the beginning of 1909, the newspaper *Novaya Zhizn'* (*New Life*) reported: "The head of the educational department of the Kwantung Governorate General, Takahashi, who inspected in detail the Harbin commercial schools, the trade school, and... elementary railway and city schools, as well as familiarized himself with the reports on the railway schools published by the educational department, stated in his written reviews that the educational institutions of the territory of the Chinese Eastern Railway are distinguished by the exemplary organization of their activities, and that, during the inspection, he learned a lot of new useful information".²¹ In the autumn of 1909, one of the most famous and high-ranking Japanese statesmen, Itō Hirobumi (伊藤博文), went on a "private trip to get acquainted with Manchuria" in order to "clarify the situation of Japanese interests in Manchuria".²²

Russian-Japanese relations were complicated by the assassination of Itō Hirobumi on the platform of the Harbin railway station in October 1909. Although the terrorist act was committed by a Korean and, obviously, was not directly related to Russian-Japanese relations, the event took place in Harbin, a place of active development of Russian-Japanese interaction and cooperation. However, E. K. Nilus asserted: "The true purpose of Ito's arrival in Harbin does not seem to be precisely established so far, apparently this meeting was supposed to be somewhat unexpected... It is very likely that the emerging friendly trend in mutual relations... would find its external expression through this meeting in the form of some special agreement...".²³ Thus, there is a high probability that the purpose of this assassination was to

²¹ *Novaya Zhizn'*, 1909, March 20, p. 2.

²² *Hoover Institution Archives*. Archival Media. Evgenii Kristianovich Nilus. HE3290. C6N71. V. 2:2. *Yaponiya i KVZhD* [Japan and the Chinese Eastern Railway]. P. 19. (In Russian).

²³ *Ibid.* P. 14–15.

prevent the development of Russian-Japanese cooperation. E. K. Nilus described the farewell of the body of the assassinated Itō Hirobumi by the Japanese population of Harbin: "Before the departure of the train, a dense crowd of Japanese, calm, impassive, solemnly silent, gathered in front of the car where the body of the deceased lay".²⁴

During the terrorist attack in Harbin, not a single Russian was injured, but in addition to the mortally wounded Itō Hirobumi, several other high-ranking Japanese were wounded, including Consul General Kawakami Toshitsune. The Consul General was treated at the Central Railway Hospital of the Chinese Eastern Railway.²⁵

The Harbin "incident" did not lead to a deterioration of Russian-Japanese relations, including on the Chinese Eastern Railway. E. K. Nilus writes: "The favorable trend in relations with Japan was quickly restored, which, incidentally, found its expression in the formation of a special Russian-Japanese society in Harbin, which began its activities on May 2, 1910".²⁶ It was a public organization of the following sort. In an appeal to the population of Harbin, the initiators of the creation of the Society pointed out during the preparation for the opening of this organization: "Proceeding from these provisions, we, the undersigned, have decided to take the initiative to create a corresponding public organization in Harbin. Recognizing that one of the immediate and necessary ways to achieve the intended goal is the study of the Japanese language by Russians and the study of the Russian language by the Japanese, we consider the establishment of training courses and lectures in Harbin to be the first action of the planned organization, without prejudging its further program, which will be indicated by life itself".²⁷

Soon the newspaper *Harbinskii Vestnik* reported: "On Monday, April 26, the Japanese club in Harbin was visited for the first time by Russian guests, represented by the Presidium of the Russian-Japanese

²⁴ Ibid. P. 17.

²⁵ Ibid. P. 16.

²⁶ Ibid. P. 23.

²⁷ Ibid. P. 24.

Society. The club occupies an extensive space consisting of several halls. One of them is reserved for a school for Japanese children. The founders and members of the club consist of 30 persons in total, who are the elite of the Japanese colony in Harbin”.²⁸

Harbin newspapers described the opening of the Society as follows: “By 2 p.m. sharp, the halls of the stock exchange are filled with a large Russian audience. Prominent figures from the railway circles appear... A small hitch – there is not a single Japanese. The Japanese have been warned by their Russian friends that it is customary to be half an hour late to Russian meetings. The embarrassed Mr. Fuse is running through the halls and telephoning his fellows that the Russians are assembled and waiting. A quarter of an hour later, the Japanese arrived, all at once, more than fifty people”.²⁹ The draft charter of the Russian-Japanese Society was drawn up by the chairman of the City Council P. S. Tishenko and a well-known Japanese entrepreneur and public figure K. Fuse. The document said: “The Russian-Japanese Society in Harbin has as its goal the mutual rapprochement of the Russian and the Japanese peoples”.³⁰ Seven members each, from the Russian and the Japanese populations of the city, were elected to the Council of the Society. Natsuaki, Fuse, Gunji, Furusawa, Tsuji, and Takachi became members of the Council. The seat of the secretary of the Consulate General Sugino, who declined it, was taken by Kowayagi. The charter of the “Russian-Japanese Society in Harbin” was approved by the authorities of the Chinese Eastern Railway on May 31, 1910, simultaneously with the charters of the “Society of the Russian-Chinese Trade and Industrial Museum” and the “Society of Russian Orientalists”.³¹

In 1910, the first attempts by the Japanese to publish newspapers and magazines in Harbin were made. In the January issue of the *Harbinskii Vestnik*, there was a mention of “the journal *Northern*

²⁸ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, April 28, p. 3.

²⁹ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, April 13, p. 2.

³⁰ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, April 13, p. 2.

³¹ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, June 10, p. 1.

Manchuria, edited by Mr. Fuse”.³² In the handwritten work of E. K. Nilus on the history of the Chinese Eastern Railway, it is said: “From March 15, 1912, the newspaper *Vostok* began to be published. Its publisher was a Japanese Fuse, the editor was, first, P. M. Fedorov, and then Mr. Poletika. The newspaper did not last long and was closed by order of the authorities in 1915”.³³

Harbin remained attractive for various forms of cooperation. In particular, Russian railway workers exchanged experience with colleagues who came to the Southern branch of the Chinese Eastern Railway, which had been ceded to Japan and was called the South Manchurian Railway. Japanese railway workers came to Harbin for an internship. Some facts can be learned “thanks to” incidents and events that were covered in the local press. In February 1910, the *Harbinskii Vestnik* reported: “Yesterday in Old Harin, at the mill of Mr. Lobachev... a catastrophe occurred... Two people were killed by the explosion of a cauldron: a Japanese and a Chinese, and four were seriously wounded: a Japanese, a Chinese, and two Russians”.³⁴ Later, the newspaper gave more details: “At the time of the explosion, there were two Japanese from the South Manchurian Railway in the compartment, testing coal heating”.³⁵ Thus, after the Russo-Japanese War, close cooperation and exchange of experience was established between Japanese and Russian railway workers in Manchuria.

On the eve of the First World War, Japanese doctors continued to live and work in Harbin. In 1914, the following Japanese medical institutions were advertised in Harbin newspapers: “Experienced Japanese Masseur Takeda”, “Japanese Dentist Jen-tun-ya-sha”, “Japanese Dr. J. Narita”, “Japanese Dentist H. Matsuura”.³⁶ At that time, the network of Japanese

³² *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, January 5, p. 2.

³³ *Hoover Institution Archives*. Archival Media. Evgenii Kristianovich Nilus. HE3290. C6N71. V. 2:2. *Pressa* [Press]. P. 10. (In Russian).

³⁴ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, February 5, p. 3.

³⁵ *Harbinskii Vestnik*, 1910, February 6, p. 2.

³⁶ *Manchurian Courier*, 1914, November 8, p. 1.

ateliers and shops in Harbin expanded: “Japanese Ladies’ Workshop Kizuki,” “Japanese Tailor and Bamboo Workshop,” “Men’s Japanese Tailor Saki-take,” “Civilian Japanese Tailor Kioritsu,” “Japanese Banzai Store, Artificial Flowers, Postcards, and Other Japanese Goods”.³⁷

The appearance of Japanese martial arts masters in Harbin dates back to the pre-war period. Moscow Japanese studies scholar A. M. Gorbylev mentions “the teacher of Jiu-Jitsu Mr. Sigiura” and states: “In the Harbin police school, judo training was carried out in the interval from at least 1912 to 1916... During this time, it was not only a whole team of judo teachers which was formed here” [Gorbylev 2022, p. 35].

After the outbreak of the war in Europe, Russia and Japan finally became allies, and China later joined their alliance. Almost immediately after the outbreak of the war, Japan issued an ultimatum to Germany demanding the transfer of its colonies in China. The ultimatum was supported by the Japanese public. And in Harbin, even before Japan declared war on Germany, a mass demonstration of the Japanese took place in support of Russia and other Entente countries in their war against Germany. With the beginning of the First World War, a new stage in the Japanese development of the Chinese Eastern Railway began. It was characterized by the strengthening of the position of Japanese business in Northeast China, the growth of the number of Japanese enterprises and the Japanese population on the Chinese Eastern Railway, including in Harbin. The experience of the Japanese living and working in Harbin accumulated in the period between the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War allowed the Japanese community to successfully develop under the new historical conditions.

Thus, the Japanese presence in Harbin became an important factor in the socio-political, trade, economic, and cultural life of the Chinese Eastern Railway in the period between the Russo-Japanese War and the First World War. The Japanese in Harbin were engaged in such areas as trade, medicine, entertainment, domestic service, etc. Harbin became a place for the development of cooperation in the field

³⁷ *Manchurian Courier*, November 8, 1914, p. 4.

of public education. An important component of bilateral cooperation was cooperation in the railway sector. It is no coincidence that it was in Harbin that the first “Russian-Japanese Society” was created. It was the Japanese who, compared to the representatives of other countries, most consistently supported the initiatives and undertakings of the Russian authorities on the Chinese Eastern Railway. The experience of Russian-Japanese cooperation on the Chinese Eastern Railway contributed to the development of bilateral cooperation in all spheres and to the formation of allied relations between Russia, Japan, and China during the First World War.

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