The Russian ‘Shanghai Service’ in Korea, 1904-05

Dmitri B. Pavlov

Doctor of History, Professor, St. Tikhon’s Orthodox University (Moscow), dpavlov2003@mail.ru

Introduction

The history of the Russo-Japanese war in 1904-05 spawned a huge historiography. Professors Kim Wonsoo (Kim Wonsoo 2004; Ким Ён Су 2004; Kim Wonsoo 2005, 2011), Choi Dukkui (Choi Dukkui 2004) and the present writer (Павлов 2005b; Павлов 2005c) have specially analyzed it in a series of articles published in Korean, English, Russian and Japanese and examining the Korean and Russian historical research on the war. In the modern Russian historiography the ‘Korean’ aspect of the war became a subject of the studies by Boris Park (Пак 2004) and Igor’ Lukoianov (Лукоянов 2008), especially the Korean problem in the cause of the prewar Russo-Japanese negotiations as well as the state of the Russo-Korean relations during the war itself, including personal correspondence, between the two Emperors. Whereas Lukoianov and Bella Park are mostly engaged in the Russian politics towards Korea, Boris Park is mainly interested in the Korean state of affairs per se.

Boris Park, though having stated that the pro-Japanese ‘Il’chinkhoe’ society in 1904 managed to call more than 200,000 adherent peasants, still alleged that “the Russian defeat at war with Japan was estimated by all the Koreans as a national calamity” (Пак 2004 374, 473). An American historian Andre Schmid (Schmid 2002) is the first in the Western historiography who produced a survey of the Korean public media of 1904-05. According to him, after the declaration of the Korean neutrality at future war in January 1904, the local nationalist and patriotic newspapers launched the theme of the nation’s friendly relations with both belligerents. At the onset of the war, they welcomed Japan as a leader and defender of the yellow races as opposed to the Russian aggression, and finally, after the establishment of the Japanese protectorate, expressed deep frustration by the Tokyo’s “betrayal of the yellow nations’ solidarity” (Schmid 2002, 28-54, 91-95, 160-167). The only Korean paper, which after the Japanese occupation could afford “scathing articles” about Japan, was the TaeHan maeil sinbo, owned by a former reporter for the London Daily Chronicle, an Englishman Ernest Bethell, who enjoyed “the largest audience” in Seoul and the “outstripped influence”. Being frequently reprinted in other Asian newspapers, its reports effected “the growth of anti-Japanese sentiment” (Schmid 2002, 53, 166). Schmid gives also a brief review of the Japanese politics in the occupied Korea.

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1 The article is written thanks to the support of the Russian Foundation for the Humanities (RGNF), project No 10-01-00502a.
2 His daughter's recently published article (Park Bella 2005) contrary to its title is devoted to the prewar Russian and Japanese policy towards Korea exclusively.
The cause of the war action on the Korean territory itself was investigated by a group of Russian military historians (Ростунов 1977) in the 1970s, by Park Chon-hyo (Пак Чон Хэ 1997) in the 1990s and by Boris Park after him.

In the present paper I would like to draw attention to one of the barely known aspects of the Russo-Korean relations of the war years, namely, the activities of the Russian state top secret body, dubbed ‘the Shanghai Service’, in Korea in 1904-05.3 Park Chon-hyo, having devoted a special chapter of his book to the Russian reconnaissance in Korea in 1904-05, does not even mention it, saying that its founder, Alexander I. Pavlov just headed the diplomatic office of the Russian Manchurian Commander-in-Chief throughout the war (Пак Чон Хэ 1997, 209-210). In Russian historical writings, Alexander I. Pavlov as a diplomat is mentioned occasionally, but his activities during the war 1904-1905 are always dealt with briefly and are not accorded the attention that they should have been (Сергеев 2004, 86; Волохова 2005, 170-176).

The 'Shanghai Service': origin, tasks, 'zone of responsibility', personnel

The 'Shanghai Service' was founded two months after the war began, in early April 1904, by a personal order of Emperor Nicholas II on the initiative of his Viceroy in the Far East, Admiral Evgenii I. Alekseev. The immediate reason of its emergence was because of the weakness of ordinary Russian Far-Eastern reconnaissance bodies, which was the direct consequence of the prewar underestimation of the future enemy and lack of information about it. The newly founded organization's main task was to gather all kinds of secret information about Japan and its armed forces, not only in Japan itself, but also in Central and Southern China, Korea, South-East Asia and the Netherlands East Indies (Indonesia). At the theatre of war and adjacent territories, the 'Shanghai Service' was intended not to replace the army intelligence, but to amplify its activities and to some extent revise its information.

While carrying out its chief objective, the secret service was engaged in the covert 'guidance' of the South-Chinese and Korean press in a manner favorable to Russia (among secretly subsidized was the above mentioned Ernest Bethell’s bilingual Korea Daily News published in Seoul); directed the work of Russian consuls and its own agents; worked in creating diversions in the rear of the Japanese army; took part in the large-scale operation of safeguarding the Russian 2nd Pacific Ocean squadron on its long sailing from the European waters to the Far East; secretly supplied contraband with the blockaded Port-Arthur and so on.4 In order to carry them out, the 'Shanghai Service' was given a budget of tens of millions of rubles. One direction its activities took was the moral, organizational and financial support of the anti-Japanese public mood and the partisan movement in the Korean peninsula. The mass discontent with the heavy-handedness of the Japanese and their overt infringements of Korean sovereignty allowed the 'Shanghai Service' to expand its intelligence work and subversive activities there. Its chief target was still the Japanese occupational forces.

Viceroy Admiral Alekseev, having special confidence in, and sympathy with, a former navy officer Alexander Pavlov who was well known to him, insisted him to lead the newly founded secret service. Its headquarters were located in Shanghai, where its leader stayed “privately” and half-covertly, up to November 1905, nominally holding the post of the “Russian Minister to Seoul, temporarily staying outside Korea”. Two or three minor officials permanently shared with him the Shanghai whereabouts. Pavlov’s secret contacts with the Korean Emperor were carried out via his aide-de-camps I Khya-Kiun and Khien San-gen, who lived in Shanghai5 - the secret code for direct telegraph contact with Petersburg he had provided Kojong with before leaving Seoul in February 1904 disappeared in a conflagration which destroyed the emperor's palace in April 1904 (needless to say that since then Korean telegraph had long been under complete Japanese control). Because of it,

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3 The present article is a revised and supplemented version of my previous publication on the subject (Pavlov 2007).
4 On the 'Shanghai Service' activities outside Korea see: Павлов 2004, глава 4; Павлов 2005а, 53-73.
5 AVPRI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 2978, l. 117об. - A secret telegram from A.I. Pavlov to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Shanghai, 28.7/10.8.1904.
during the Russo-Japanese War Kojong’s messages to Nicholas II to a large extent were passed on via the 'Shanghai Service'.

As the 'Shanghai Service' as a secret body was created in the war time only, it never had an officially approved list of its staff members. Its permanent personnel included diplomats who had previously served at the Russian mission in Seoul as well as civil servants of the Russian-Chinese Bank from the Ministry of Finance and a good number of secret agents of various kinds, mainly foreigners. In Korea, Pavlov's collaborators and secret informers were patriotically-inclined Koreans, be they Korean or Russian subjects, as well as western Europeans – servicemen, diplomats, school-teachers, journalists, businessmen, travelers, and Catholic missionaries. Koreans, to a big extent, were engaged in the so-called “short-range”, or “army intelligence”, whereas western secret collaborators mainly submitted information of the strategic importance, thus occupied with the so-called “distant intelligence”.

The appearance of Pavlov and his colleagues in Shanghai did not go unnoticed by the local Japanese secret service, run by the Consul-General in Shanghai Odagiri Matsunosuke, a man, described by one of the regular collaborators with the Russian service (a civil servant at the Ministry of Finance, L.V. von Goyer) as “a person of unusual capabilities and rare education”. Each Russian civil servant had his own “special watcher” assigned to him. “The Japanese are forever on my tail” wrote the head of the 'Shanghai Service' to the Minister of Foreign Affairs in July 1904, “they are obviously trying to get to the bottom of what I'm doing here, but it is clear that they cannot get any positive corroboration to support their suspicions”.

Indeed, judged through Odagiri's reports to Tokyo, he was incapable of infiltrating his spies into the 'Shanghai Service', and was therefore forced to rely upon information gathered by external observation. The poor standard of Japanese intelligence on the activities of Pavlov and his colleagues is, to some extent, revealed by the almost complete absence of comparable documents in the Japanese archives.

All Pavlov's correspondence was top secret. He even enciphered his own name at the end of each report to the “top brass”, Manchurian Commanders-in-Chief (Generals Kuropatkin and Linevich), Viceroy Alekseev and the Foreign Minister Lamzendorf, who had the right to approve or disapprove every Pavlov's action and, in turn, submitted his dispatches directly to the Russian Emperor (who as a rule appended a standard “It is correct” instructions). From April to December 1904 alone, the 'Shanghai Service' sent more than 850 dispatches, and received and deciphered about the same number of replies. Part of them was devoted to the Korean state of affairs.

**Korea in the Russian command planning**

In order to grasp the very logic of the 'Shanghai Service' reconnaissance practices in Korea, a brief abstract on the Korea's place in the Russian military planning must be done.

Though in the Russian governmental and military circles adherents of Korean annexation were always present, the supreme military headquarters generally remained skeptical about the idea, estimating the peninsula as an undesirable theatre and occupation of the country and keeping a permanent control over it as an extremely costly, difficult and, consequently, excessive task. In summer 1903, the War Minister A.N. Kuropatkin reported for the tsar that

To occupy Korea, we need to utterly defeat the Japanese, for that purpose spending hundreds of millions of rubles and sacrificing the lives of tens of thousands of the Russian people… Keeping Korea under our domination, arranging roads, fortifications, naval ports, maintenance of a numerous army, navy reinforcement… as complications with Japan and European states over Korea are unavoidable, it would be such an enormous and costly task that it must be considered inappropiate for either Russian power or her interests.

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6 **AVPRI**, f. 143, op. 491, d. 1424, ll. 17-18. - An anonymous (but most likely belonging to L.V. von Goyer) 'Project of the Reconnaissance Activities at the Far East'. [Winter 1905/06].

7 Ibid, d. 2978, l. 117ob. - A secret telegram from A.I. Pavlov to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Shanghai, 28.7/10.8.1904.

8 **GA RF**, f. 543 (Tsarskosel'skii dvorets), op. 1, d. 183, ll. 10ob-11. - War Minister A.N. Kuropatkin's report to the Emperor. St.-Petersburg, 24.7.1903.
The same viewpoint predominated during the war itself in spite of the desire to render assistance to Korea and Emperor Kojong’s secret but insistent appeals (contrary to the officially announced neutrality of his country) “to send Russian troops as soon as possible to defend the country of the Japanese and remove them from Korea”.9 One of such requests by Kojong was secretly forwarded to Russia in August 1904 by the help of his aide-de-camp Captain Park Yu-fun. At that time the Korean Emperor suggested the Russian troops should attack Genzan first, planning himself that after the city was won he would escape to the French mission for the sake of “personal safety” of his own. Shortly before that (in July 1904) he informed the Russian Emperor of his covert preparations for a “general uprising” of his subjects against the Japanese.10

Contrary to that, the Russian command avoided sending large units to Korea, limiting itself by local action at the Northern regions of the country to cover the main Manchurian grouping as well as the force round Vladivostok that was initially estimated as secondary. In accordance with that, the main task of strategic branch of the ‘Shanghai Service’ was the clarification of the amount, equipment, armament, personnel, supplies and goals of the Japanese troops planned to be sent to Korea, and that of the short-range one – the same concerning the enemy forces having already been located on the peninsula, as well as places of their landing, subsequent movements and ways of communication.

In July 1904 the Viceroy’s field staff began to plan military action on the Korean territory, but its total cost was estimated to be one million rubles (around $40 million today)11 – one third of the price of only one warfare day in Manchuria. In December 1904 the sum was nearly trebled, but the two third of it covered the cost of pack animals and vehicles, needed to be purchased, and the line-of-communication service equipment.12 Yet the Mukden defeat of February-March 1905 spelled the withdrawal of those plans together with the need to monitor the state of the Japanese troops near the Sino-Korean border.

In May 1905, a decision was made “to lessen surveillance of Korea, which has lost its significance, intensifying it instead on the South-Ussuri theatre” in expectation of the Japanese landing and attempts to siege Vladivostok.13 The emergence of this “Korean detachment” under the orders of Major General Anisimov at the end of June 1905 with a task to “keep restraining the Japanese along the Tumen river line”14 made the independent existence of the Korean scouts' unit of the 'Shanghai Service' in vain. Yet the “distant intelligence” provided by the 'Shanghai Service' was always of great value for the Russian command.

The 'Korean section' of the 'Shanghai Service'

The 'Korean section' of the 'Shanghai Service' started to be established as early as in April 1904, immediately after the service itself appeared. A plan of Pavlov, dispatched to the Viceroy, consisted of sending to the peninsula the former interpreter of his Seoul mission, Matvei Kim, and a group of Koreans, the former students of the Korean government-run Russian language school attached to the Russian mission in Seoul which had been run by a retired artillery Captain Nikolai N. Biriukov (by the beginning of the war, many of them found themselves on Russian territory placed in various military and civilian educational establishments). Pavlov insisted that both Biriukov and his Korean “alumni” must be put under direct command of the 'Shanghai Service' to work on the Korean

9 RGVIA, f. 846 (VUA), op. 16, d. 31898, l. 223-223 ob.
10 AVP, f. 143 (Kitaisski stol), op. 491, d. 58, l. 6-6ob. - A secret telegram from A.I. Pavlov to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs containing the text of a personal message from Kojong to Nicholas II. Shanghai, 2/15.7.1904 No 300.
11 RGVIA, f. 846, op. 16, d. 29397, l. 3. - A secret letter from the chief of the staff of the Manchurian army to the Commander-in-Chief. Mukden, 30.10.1904.
12 Ibid. l. 10. - A secret dispatch from the Commander-in-Chief General A.N. Kuropatkin to the War Minister in St.-Petersburg, Chinsiamutun', 16.12.1904 No 227.
13 RGVIA, f. 846, op. 16, d. 31898, l. 236. - A secret dispatch from the chief of staff of the Primur military district Lieutenant-General P.K. Rutkovskii to Colonel A.D. Nechvolodov in Khabarovsk. [Vladivostok], 22.5.1905 No 7.
14 RGVIA, f. 846, op. 16, d. 27184, l. 2.
territory “separately and independently from others engaged in similar operations”, 15 and this proposal gained complete support from the Viceroy.

The first attempt to collect secret information about Japanese troops facing the Russian detachment in North Korea was undertaken by the help of Matvei Kim. In mid-April 1904 Pavlov wrote to the Viceroy and the Commander-in-Chief of the Manchurian army:

Regarding the responsibility of finding reliable secret intelligence on the state of affairs in Korea, both in the area of military activity and in the capital … I intend to send Matvei Ivanovich Kim, a translator and Russian subject attached to the imperial mission in Seoul, to locations adjacent to the river Yalu. This reliable Korean, who has earned our unconditional trust, will be charged with the responsibility of establishing uninterrupted secret communications with the regional Korean authorities and Korean secret agents, who, in accordance with conditions agreed in advance in Seoul [with Kojong], may be sent to the Manchurian border on behalf of the Korean Emperor and of certain influential Korean dignitaries who are on our side. 16

At the end of April 1904, having received detailed instructions, a secret code, 500 rubles and ID which would permit him unobstructed access to the Russian side (and their cooperation and protection, if needed), Kim set off for Northern Korea via Mukden and Liaoyang. But after the defeated Tiurenchen battle (April 18/May 1 1904) the Russian troops had to leave the banks of the Yalu river, and Kim was sent back to the Priamur military district with a mission to continue organizing reconnaissance in the Korean territory. 17 After that, his traces disappeared, and the establishment of the 'secret communications with the regional Korean authorities' took another shape.

Since then, the main responsibility of the current reconnaissance work in Korea appeared to be laid upon the Biriukov’s “alumni”. Nine of them, all being volunteers, left Russia in May 1904 and up to July-August reached Novokievskoe 18 - the nearest Russian settlement to the Korean border furnished by a telegraph station, where Biriukov had been already waiting for them. Those were O An-sen (also known as O Oun-sek) and Ku Tak-sen (or Ku Tok-sen) from the Nizhnii Novgorod cadet corps; Khion Khion-gyn (also known as Khien Khon-kyn - the only one mentioned by Park Chon-hyo and Boris Park, who name him Khien Khon-kin or Hyon Khan-gyn) and Yon Se-nion (also known as Yun Om-piom or Yun Il'-pien) from the Chuguevsk cavalry institute; Kim Na-kun, Kang Khan-tak, Khan Ki-sou and one more student from the Kursk Academy (Real'noe Uchilische); Kim Pen-ok (also known as Kim On-ok), a non-professional lecturer in Korean from St. Petersburg University 19 and finally five graduates of the Kazan' theological seminary (Doukhovnaia Seminaria). The latter were sent as translators to the Manchurian army headquarters in Mukden.

Since the Russian troops by that time had temporarily cleared Korean territory, only one of Kazan' seminary graduates remained in the army and four others were dismissed (three of them soon became village school teachers in the Ussuriiski krai). The Korean 'alumni' accepted in business were provided with a monthly wage of 100-120 rubles (the equivalent of $3,700-4,000 today), which corresponded to the salary of a junior front-line officer. At the end of July 1904, the team of seven Korean 'alumni' headed to Korea as scouts, two remaining in Novokievskoe as Biriukov's translators. Before long, Hyon Khan-gyn, the former cadet of the Chuguevsk cavalry institute, formed a Yibyon unit in Korea (Пак 2004, 369).

15 AVPRI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 2982, ll. 143-1430b. - A top secret letter from A.I. Pavlov to the Viceroy in Mukden. Yingkou, 15/28.4.1904 No 70.
17 RGVIA, f. 846, op. 16, d. 29090, ll. 1-15 ob. - A secret report by the Intelligence section of the Manchurian army headquarters on its activities from the beginning of the war till October 1904.
18 Today Kraskino.
19 In spring 1904, not long before the departure to the Far East, the General Staff invited him to contribute to composing the Russian-Korean pocket phrase-book, later printed in twelve thousand copies and forwarded to the Far East. Kim’s fee made 150 rubles. - RGVIA, f. 400, op. 4, d. 321, ll. 148, 159, 162.
Emperor Kojong, while being under house arrest in his own palace, remained in contact with the outside world and was to some degree informed of both what was happening with the popular movement and the role Biriukov's 'alumni' played in it. “The Korean Emperor is asking about the ‘alumni’, where they are, which of them is with you, are they well, and are you pleased with them”, - enquired Pavlov of Novokievskoe on his request in September 1904. “They are well, are working diligently for the emperor and their motherland”, - replied Biriukov also in code. “Khan and Kan are with me, O Oun-sek is in Purieng, I Iun in Puksen, Khien in Novokievskoe, Ku in Tengsheng”.

We still do not have a clear idea of the reasons why in late autumn 1904 the Russian headquarters renounced the Korean volunteer corps formation with Captain Biriukov and his ‘alumni’ involved in the affair. Park Chon-hyo (Пак Чон Хё 1997, 214-216) and Boris Park's (Пак 2004, 370-371) arguments in this respect do not look persuasive. As a result at the beginning of the next year Korean 'alumni' still forming partisan detachments began to take unauthorized actions. In March 1905 a three hundred strong Korean guerilla unit was organized and headed by the former Kursk Academy students Kang Khan-tak and Khan Ki-sou who left for Puksen without the army headquarters permission. In connection with this scandalous incident Captain Biriukov was obliged to provide an explanation to the chief of staff of the Primorskaia oblast'. In April 1905, both defaulter (Kang Khan-tak and Khan Ki-sou) rejoined the team, but a former cadet Khieng, who was also revealed to be involved in the notorious affair, was dismissed as a “harmful element” and removed to Vladivostok under covert police surveillance.

The success of Biriukov’s “Korean team” stimulated the desire of the military headquarters to win it over to its own side. In March 1905, when the Viceroy had already left the Far East, the Primorskaia oblast’ defense Commander-in-Chief ordered to reassign it to Colonel Alexander D. Nechvolodov, still holding the post of the Russian military agent in Korea, and to relo cate Biriukov from Novokievskoe to Vladivostok. By spring 1905, his team was reinforced by other former 'alumni' included around twenty Koreans, among them four secret agents, twelve scouts, two translators, and a number of volunteers of the “Do the Duty” society. At the end of June 1905, they were subordinated to General Anisimov, who later on highly evaluated their activities.

Anyway the activity of the Korean ‘alumni’ in general was quite successful. At great risk to themselves, they carried out reconnaissance missions (for months at time) in Korea right up to the end of the war. “‘Alumni' justified yours and the Viceroy's confidence”, stated Biriukov still being in touch with Pavlov in a dispatch to him in September 8(21) 1905, interceding for their sending off to Russia. And they apparently would (in due time Pavlov insisted it to be done) to Vladivostok.

In addition to the Korean 'alumni', the 'Shanghai Service' also provided with detailed information on the activities of Japanese occupying forces in Korea through its own western European secret agents, above all the French. The gunboat Kersaint, stationerre of the French embassy in Seoul, visited Shanghai twice a month, and each time brought Pavlov letters from French diplomats whom he knew well from his previous posting – the trusted Viscount de Fontenay, Consul Bertaux and others working in the French mission in Seoul. On July 1 1904 de Fontenay himself turned up in

20 AVPRI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 2982, ll. 46, 39. - A secret telegram from A.I. Pavlov to N.N. Biriukov in Novokievskoe. Shanghai, 22.9.1904 No 607 and Biriukov's reply to Pavlov in Shanghai of 6.10.1904 No 35.
22 RGVIA, f. 846, op. 16, d. 31993, II. 50-53.
23 RGVIA, f. 846, op. 16, d. 31898, II. 73-74.
24 RGVIA, f. 846, op. 16, d. 31898, l. 46. - A secret report by Colonel A.D. Nechvolodov to the Primorskaia oblast’ defense Commander-in-Chief of 15.3.1905 No 6 with the instructions of General Andreev.
25 In Biriukov's transcription, agents: Ханкюнсу, Чехян, Чимпёнун, Чимпёнчён, Чанхён, Чехён and Чехёнчён; translators: Ханкюнсу и Хангъямъ; - Ibid., d. 31898, II. 86-86 ob. - A secret report by Captain N.N. Biriukov to the chief of staff of the Primorskii military district. Vladivostok, 9.4.1905 No 49/185.
Shanghai, and, while meeting with Pavlov, told him the latest news from Seoul. He also acquainted the head of the 'Shanghai Service' with the text of the latest personal message from Kojong to Nicholas II, which he handed to him at their last meeting with the request that it be passed to Petersburg. Pointing out the oppressive behavior of the Japanese, the Korean Emperor concluded the letter by underlining that “I firmly hope that, with the kind concern of Your Highness, and under the generous protection of Russia, the happiness and welfare of Korea will be guaranteed”.

Not long before the Fontenay's arrival in Shanghai, Pavlov had become acquainted with the French director of the northern Korean railway, Lefevre, who would go on to provide him with important information on the condition of the Japanese expeditionary corps on the peninsula, the progress of the construction of new rail branches in Korea, the fortification of ports and coastal defenses, and the locations and contents of Japanese military warehouses. In January 1905, Pavlov reported to the Commander-in-Chief that 'a few Koreans disguised as Japanese' had made an attempt to set fire to Japanese food warehouses in Chemulpo, “but they were captured by the Japanese and immediately executed”.

Another Frenchman, Laporte, the chief of Korean customs at Chemulpo, informed Pavlov of Japanese shipments to the peninsula. Valuable intelligence on current affairs in Korea was also received from other collaborators – the French Bishop of Korea, an old stager of the French community in Seoul Martel (who moreover was appointed by Pavlov a concealed supervisor of the Bethell's Korea Daily News), a traveler and also French subject Jean Chaffanjon, a Belgian A. Delcoin, and a German subject teaching German in Seoul Bolyan. At the beginning of 1905, Pavlov's best secret agent in Japan, a correspondent for the French newspapers, L'Illustration and Figaro, Jean Balet, who had arrived in Seoul from Tokyo for a while, became acquainted with the head of the diplomatic chancellery of General Hasegawa Yoshimichi, the commander of the Japanese expeditionary corps, and was able to discover Japan's 'military programme' for Korea. As Balet put it, Hasegawa's next plans were as follows:

There would ultimately be three combined divisions under the command of this general. They would be in charge of an area comprising the whole of the Korean peninsula and the right bank of the Yalu river to the Mo Ten Lin crossing. The main forces would be concentrated on the coast from Genzan to Songjin and a number of fortified positions between Genzan and Pinyan (Pyongyang?). Until the situation in Mukden was clarified, Hasegawa's activities would be of a purely defensive nature.

Neither did Japan's movements of large-scale contingents to Korea in January and February (and again in April) 1905 escape the attention of the 'Shanghai Service', nor the subsequent arrival of less significant reinforcements. Moreover, the rumors the Japanese had been spreading (in Balet's opinion 'deliberately') that the newly arrived forces were to be assigned the task of attacking the Russian Far East were regarded from the very beginning as disinformation. “Personally, Balet treats stories of a campaign against Vladivostok skeptically”, reported Pavlov on February 21 1905, and “expresses his conviction that in any case such a campaign would not be undertaken unless the Japanese could achieve a decisive victory over our army at Mukden”.

Being armed with knowledge in this way, the Russian command was able to avoid scattering forces and instead to concentrate them on the situation at Mukden. As it turned out, Kuropatkin was unable to defend Mukden in any case; after a long and bloody battle the town surrendered. In their hurried retreat, the Russian forces abandoned their transport, including several carriages containing secret staff documents. These included, as the military itself admitted, codes and “information

28 AVPRI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 2972, ll. 139-140. - A secret telegram from A.I. Pavlov to the Minister of Foreign Affairs 2/15.7.1904 No 330.
29 AVPRI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 2980, l. 71ob. - A secret telegram from A.I. Pavlov to the command headquarters in Mukden. Shanghai, 22.1/4.2.1905 No 45.
30 Korean name - Ma Cheon Lyong
31 AVPRI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 64, l. 40. - A secret telegram from A.I. Pavlov to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Shanghai, 23.1/5.2.1905 No 47.
32 Ibid, l. 229ob.
concerning secret agents abroad and their activities”. It was believed that these documents had not vanished in the chaos of battle or been destroyed by fire, but had fallen into the hands of the enemy. Under such circumstances, Pavlov had to recall Balet from Japan and ‘freeze’ for a time other less important agents. However, secret intelligence on the situation in Korea up to the end of the war continued to reach Shanghai as regularly and in as much detail as it had been previously. One of the few available eyewitness’ descriptions of how the “Ulta Treaty” was concluded in Seoul on November 17 1905 also originates from one of the Pavlov’s secret agents in Korea.34

Conclusion

It was only on 12(25) May 1906 that after having wrapped up affairs in Shanghai Pavlov was able to leave for his homeland via Vladivostok and Harbin. He took with him a new personal message from Kojong to Nicholas II, which Captain Khien San-gen had handed to him conspiratorially prior to his departure. With the expected international peace conference at the Hague just round the corner, the Korean Emperor once again was making an appeal for “gracious cooperation in reestablishing the independence of the Korean state”.35 As he had promised, Pavlov passed Kojong’s letter on to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in St. Petersburgh, but due to the conditions that prevailed at the time, Russia no longer had the power to alleviate Korea’s fate. However in 1906 with the help of Pavlov’s recommendations some prominent Koreans, who stayed in China and had strong reasons to avoid returning to the Japanese-run Korea (Prince Min Yun-ik, a nephew of the late queen Min, and General I Yon-ik, the former Minister of Finance, among them), managed to obtain Russian citizenship with the imperial permission “as an exception to the law”.36

For the most part of the Russo-Japanese War, to a great extent through the Pavlov’s ‘Shanghai Service’, Russian military and political leadership received detailed and reliable information concerning the numbers of Japanese forces in Korea, their positions and movements, their armaments and their state of training, the construction of military objects (railways, fortifications, warehouses) on the peninsula, the Japanese command plans, the state of Japanese-Korean relations and the mood among Korean ruling elite. Both available detailed accounts of the Intelligence section of the Manchurian army Commander-in-Chief headquarters covering the period from the very beginning of the war till August 31 1905 mentioned of the great value of the information provided by ‘Shanghai Service’. “Equity requires to state, that data obtained by Mr. Pavlov and ‘his collaborator, Ministry of Finance official’ Mr. Davyдов was specially notable for its reliability and interest”, reported the chief of the Section Major General Vladimir Oranovskii in the final account summing up the activities of the Russian military intelligence during the Russo-Japanese War.37 At the same time the ‘Shanghai service’ activity contributed to the maintenance of the Russo-Korean official relations in 1904-05 as well as to the anti-Japanese public mood and the partisan liberation movement on the peninsula, thus confirming its head’s prewar image constructed by the Japanese press as a bitter enemy of the Tokyo politics in Korea.

However, insufficient forces and the Russian military leadership's lack of initiative got in the way of this valuable information to be put to the use that it could have been. Obviously keeping in mind the ‘Shanghai Service’, General Oranovskii draw a conclusion that at the Far East Russia it

35 AVPRI, f. 143, op. 491. d. 2972, ll. 6-7. - A letter from A.I. Pavlov to the chief of the 1st Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. St.-Petersburg, 6/19.7.1906 No 106.
36 Ibid, ll. 42, 76, 77. - Letters from A.I. Pavlov to the military governor of Vladivostok Major General V.E. Flug (Shanghai, 16/29.3.1906) and to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs (Shanghai, 25.12.1905/7.1.1906).
37 RGVA, f. 846, op. 16, d. 29090, l. 16-36oeb. - Major General V.A. Oranovskii's secret account on the activities of the Manchurian army Commander-in-Chief headquarters' Intelligence section. Godziadan', 1/14 October 1905.
would need a single and united body of “distant” intelligence, operating in Japan, Korea and China simultaneously. Similar was the main idea of von Goyer, Pavlov’s closest assistant, in his project mentioned above. Neither suggestions of that kind were adopted yet.

Nevertheless, the 'Shanghai Service' reports represent a useful piece of information on the Korean history. Yet most of them still remain unknown to the academic communities.

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38 Pavlov himself at the end of the Far East conflict, blamed with a large-scale financial misleading, was deprived of the possibility to summarize his Shanghai experience.
Based on primary archival sources, this article explores the activity of the Russian top secret state body dubbed ‘The Shanghai Service’ in Korea in 1904-1905. It investigates its origin, tasks, ‘zone of responsibility’, personnel, ways of obtaining and transferring information about Japan and the Japanese expeditionary corps in Korea, and its significance for the Russian headquarters. The activities of the 'Korean section' of the ‘Shanghai Service’ are specifically accentuated.

► KEY WORDS: Russo-Korean relations, Russo-Japanese War, Russian "Shanghai Service", Russian reconnaissance practices in Korea