

# Perceptions of China Threat in Russia and Russian-Chinese Relations

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Although ties between Russia and China have a much longer history, a comprehensive image of China began to emerge in Russia in the 18th century. However, until the mid-18th century China was not seen as any kind of practical military or political threat to Russia. Russia was too strong, China was too distant, and so occasional clashes between Russian and Chinese forces in the Far East for the time being were not seen in Russia as a major problem. However, in Russian intellectual circles, especially among those intellectuals who believed in an European model for Russia (so called *Zapadniki*, or Westernizers), China (sometimes as a part of a more generally understood Orient) began to play the role of a symbolic cultural antipode and a challenge for Western civilization.

This image played a role in Russian internal political discussions and was greatly influenced by the Enlightenment view which divided the world into the progressive West and the stagnant East. During the 18th century the official Russian view was that Russia itself was an enlightened European country which was bringing civilization to the East. This view continued to develop in the writings of the 19th century Westernizers. They usually argued that China did not have a civilization or culture in the real, European sense, and that it was politically and socially stagnant. One of the first to use the image of China in this way was a major Russian oppositional thinker, Aleksandr Gertsen (Alexander Herzen). Gertsen surely was familiar with many Russian and European works on the East. It seems that most of his knowledge about China came from the works of John Stuart Mill, especially his *On Liberty*. Gertsen picked Mill's view on China as a stagnant oriental society and used it for his own purposes, namely to prove his idea that the bourgeois Europe had come to the limit of its development and was plunging into “Chinese” fruitless tranquillity. Gertsen agrees with Mill's view that Europe was heading to the dominance of conglomerated mediocrity which “hates everything that is sharply defined, original, outstanding: it imposes a common level upon everyone” and subscribes to Mill's prediction that if this tendency persists “Europe... will

<sup>2</sup> In Gertsen's view, if Europe is unable to get rid of “the Chinese decay,”<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Alexander Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1968), Vol. 3, pp. 1080-1081.

the fate of Rome can befall it. In this case Russia will play the role of the new barbarians and form the new civilization, because despite its insufficient culture and the oppressive autocracy it shows its great vitality and spiritual force by producing from time to time such “paladins forged out of pure steel from head to foot” as were the aristocratic revolutionaries of December 1825.<sup>4</sup>

The threat of evolution into a Chinese-type society becomes a threat of invasion in the writings Russian Christian philosopher Vladimir Solov'ev. China puzzled Solov'ev since it absolutely did not fit into his concept of history. Solov'ev believed the Western-Christian civilization to be the center of the world progress and saw the solving of Russia's problems in reunification of Orthodoxy with Catholicism. For Solov'ev, China, which was neither Catholic, nor Orthodox and, unlike other non Christian parts of the world, resisted Christian influences, stood outside the world's civilization. The very title of Solov'ev's book, *China and Europe*, published in 1890, in which he analyzed differences between the two cultural areas, implied that for the author Russia was part of Europe while China was not. Solov'ev contrasted China the entire culture of which grew from the “absolutism of paternalistic power”, with the progress of the world civilization based on Christianity and the Western principle of “individual activism.” World progress does not need Chinese culture which “with all its solidity and material wholeness turned out to be spiritually sterile and useless for the rest of humanity. It is good for Chinese themselves but it did not give the world a single great idea or a single everlasting and unconditionally valuable creation in any field.”<sup>5</sup> Solov'ev acknowledges a single achievement of Chinese civilization: a strict social order. But this achievement is something that he fears most. Solov'ev disapproves of the “Sinification” of Europe, by which he means the growth of popularity of those principles which he connects to Chinese culture. Among them are “love only one's own, value only one's own” which become popular in Europe and “reject the ideal of the ecumenical Christianity as an idle Utopia.” “Chinese” materialism and a cult of physical force rejects Christian ideals of justice and universal love. In Solov'ev's view, the growing Sinification of Europe takes away “our inner strength in the future clash of the two cultural

<sup>6</sup> In this clash Europe can survive only if it stays faithful to Christian ideals and is able to avoid the destructive consequences of progress by combining progress with order.

Towards his later years Solov'ev became even more pessimistic about the ability of Europe, and especially Russia to withstand the pressure from the East and to maintain the Christian behests of love. The threat from the East is described by Solov'ev in his famous poem *Pan-Mongolism* which draws and apocalyptic picture of the destruction of Russia as a result of an invasion of Eastern barbarians:

...From Malaysian waters to the Altai mountains,  
Chieftains from the Eastern isles  
At the walls of rebellious China  
Gathered their hosts.

Like innumerable locusts  
And like them insatiable,  
Protected by the occult power,  
The tribes head north.

O Russia! Forget your former glory:  
The double-headed eagle is smashed,  
And yellow babes play  
With rags remaining from your flags.

Submitting to trembling fear and terror,

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<sup>3</sup> Alexander Herzen , “Ends and Beginnings: Letters to Turgenev”, in Herzen, *My Past and Thoughts*, Vol. 4, p.1699.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 1722.

<sup>5</sup> V.S.Solov'ev, *Sobranie sochineniy* [Selected Works] (St.Petersburg: 1901-1908), vol.6, p. 126.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, p.136.

Who could forget the commandment to love...  
And the Third Rome lies in ashes,  
A fourth will never be.<sup>7</sup>

Solov'ev envisages the death of Russia as a part of European civilization which departed from its genuine Christian foundations in the same way as did "The Second Rome":

When in the corrupt Byzantine  
The holy altar cooled down  
And commoner and prince, priest and king  
All renounced the Messiah.<sup>8</sup>

Over the time Solov'ev and his followers were changing their opinion about the role of China in the fatal union of Eastern tribes. In *China and Europe* Solov'ev regarded China to be the main threat and the core of the East while seeing Japan as a pro-Western force. In his later work, *Three Conversations*, obviously, impressed by the growth of Japanese ambitions and especially by its success in the war against China, he speaks about a future united Sino-Japanese attack at the West.<sup>9</sup> In his vision of the world's future, Japan, after conquering Korea and China, forms a united Pan-Mongol Empire. As a result of the Japanese invasion a Japanese dynasty succeeded the Manchurians in China. The united Sino-Japanese empire created a huge and powerful army with Chinese and Japanese soldiers under the instruction of Japanese officers. This army conquered first Russia and then the entire world. Only after about fifty years was "the new Mongolian yoke" over the world was overthrown by a general European rebellion.

The ideas of *Pan-Mongolism* were developed by many Russian poets and writers of the first half of the 20th century: Valeriy Bryusov, Vyacheslav Ivanov, Aleksandr Blok, Maksimilian Voloshin and others. Although the revolution made many of them think of Russians themselves as the new Asian barbarians destined to destroy the Western civilization, the starting point of this theory and its images — which played important role in Russian literature, thought and political theories of the 20th century — was Solov'ev's original image of China and its culture.

Among the authors, who continued developing Gertsen's and Solov'ev's themes about a Chinese threat in the beginning of the 20th century, was a writer and poet, Dmitriy Merezhkovskiy. Merezhkovskiy used the image of China attacking what he called "positivism" (and by which he meant utilitarian materialism) of European civilization.<sup>10</sup> Like Gertsen, Merezhkovskiy believed that China was ruled by mediocrity. However, he thought that China had never experienced any kind of progress, not even in distant past, and in this way his approach was closer to Solov'ev's and that of the European Sinophobes. He believed that, "the spiritual basis of China, the teachings of Lao Zi and Confucius, is a perfect positivism, a religion without God.... There are no mysteries, no depths and breaks through to the 'other worlds.' Everything is simple and flat. An indestructible common sense, an indestructible positivism. There is only what there is, and nothing else. Nothing else has to be thought of."<sup>11</sup> In Merezhkovskiy's view, the example of Chinese positivism warned Europe of the coming threat. Europe was following the Chinese path, it had become overwhelmed by positivism. He warned:

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<sup>7</sup>Pis'ma V.S. Solov'eva (pod redaktsiey E.L.Radlova) [V.S.Solov'ev, Letters, ed. E.L.Radlov] (St.Petersburg, 1911), pp.336-337.

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> Vladimir Solov'ev. *Tri razgovora* [Three conversations] (New York, 1954), pp. 193-195.

<sup>10</sup> D. S. Merezhkovskiy, *Polnoe sobranie sochineniy* [Complete Works], vol.14, (Mowcow, 1914), p. 7.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p.8.

The Chinese are perfect yellow-faced positivists; the Europeans are still imperfect white-faced Chinese.... Here is the main “yellow peril” — not outside, but inside; not in the China’s coming to Europe, but in Europe’s going to China. Our faces are still white, but under the white skin there already flows not that previously thick, scarlet, Aryan blood, but a more and more ‘yellow’ blood similar to the Mongolian inchor. The shape of our eyes is straight but the look is beginning to squint, to narrow. And the straight white light of the European day is turning into an oblique “yellow” light of the setting sun of China or the rising sun of Japan.<sup>12</sup>

As a result of Sinification, Europe had lost its religious depth and could only wait for a defeat in a future conflict with China. Until recently China lacked the technological side of positive knowledge, but the example of Japan showed that the mastering of technology was only a matter of time. Europe was able to defeat China when it was able to oppose bad Chinese cannons with its superior ones and these victories were wrongly perceived in Europe as triumph of culture over barbarity. But when the gap in the quality of weapons disappeared it appeared that Europe, after loosing its genuine Christian spirit, had nothing else to demonstrate its cultural superiority over the barbarians. Merezhkovskiy saw the way out in the revival of true faith: “Japan defeated Russia. China will defeat Europe unless Europe itself experiences a great spiritual revolution which would turn upside down the very basis of its culture and would allow it to oppose the cannons of the positive East not only cannons of the positive West but also something real and genuine.”<sup>13</sup> This real and genuine is the Christian faith. Merezhkovskiy concludes that: “Not against the Christ, but with the Christ — to freedom. The Christ will liberate the world, nobody but the Christ. With the Christ — against slavery, *petite bourgeoisie* and caddishness. The Coming Cad will be defeated only by the Coming Christ.”<sup>14</sup> In Merezhkovskiy’s view, Chinese necrosis was a fearful and great lesson for “European Chinese” — those positivists and utilitarianists who for the sake of their comfort “are trying to cut, cripple and limit a human essence, to squeeze it into the Procrustean bed of benefit and calculation, to cut the wings of its ever-rebellious fiery Psyche and transform it into a virtuous, submissive and creeping creature.”<sup>15</sup> Thus, formally basing his arguments on Gertsen, Merezhkovskiy arrives to a very different conclusion. His remedy for the *petite bourgeoisie* domination is not a social revolution which, in his view, would make no difference because it itself would be based on positivist ideas. Social measures alone could change the situation for the better, only a religious and spiritual revival would be expedient.

### ***The rise of the fear of the Chinese influx into the Russian Far East***

By the end of the 19th century China became not just a theoretical, but an acute political problem for Russia. The rapid development of the Russian Far East, which was greatly stimulated by the building of the Trans-Siberian railway — including the portion which went through China’s territory (the Chinese Eastern Railway), the acquisition of “an area of the right of way” for the Railroad and the emergence of several Russian settlements including the city of Harbin in this area, the deployment of the Russian troops in Manchuria during the boxer rising, and the creation of a Russian port naval base in Port-Arthur — all these measures were taken partly out of strategic concerns. It was thought that if Russia does not penetrate further into China, other world powers would get there first and undermine Russia’s position. Surely, the military threat from a weak China at that time was not believed to be real, unlike that from Japan. But in various circles of the Russian society there existed another fear: Chinese ethnic expansion and Sinification of Russian territories.

The greatest fear of an ethnic “China threat” naturally concerned the Russian Far East which only in 1860 was finally confirmed as Russian territory and where many Chinese (as well as Koreans) were settling as contract laborers or without authorization. In a report on his journey to the Far East in 1867-1869, the famous Russian explorer Nikolay Przheva’skiy already suggested some administrative measures in order to limit the Chinese population of

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<sup>12</sup> Ibid., pp. 9-11.

<sup>13</sup> Ibid.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., p. 39.

<sup>15</sup> Ibid., p. 59.

the Ussuri region, including a census of Chinese settlers and a tax on land owned by them. In the view of the Russian explorer, these measures would make the Chinese see themselves as subjects of Russian Empire and possibly limit the influx of new settlers from Manchuria or even cause some of them return to China.<sup>16</sup> An author of a 1901 report on the situation at the Far East, I. Levitov, wrote: “Look at the Amur, the Ussuriysk kray and the Maritime oblast and generally at the territory between the Baikal and the border with Manchuria, we can easily observe that there is very little Russian there. The Russian element in that territory is an insignificant handful of people among the dominant mass of the yellow-skinned.” Levitov feared that “the wave of the yellow race” will flood Russia.<sup>17</sup>

The government reacted to such worries. The government of Petr Stolypin, for example, approved measures guaranteeing Russian peasants certain privileges and advantages in order to stimulate Russian migration to the Far East. While these measures were adopted as a part of Stolypin’s policy aimed at weakening communal use of land in Central Russia and encourage the development of private land ownership, strategic considerations also played important role. Speaking on the Far East at the State Duma in 1908, Stolypin argued that:

nature does not tolerate emptiness... Our distant and stern border territory is at the same time rich, rich with gold, wood, fur, and vast spaces good for agriculture. And under these circumstances, gentlemen, having a densely populated country as our neighbor, this border territory will not stay deserted. The foreigner will penetrate into it unless the Russian comes there before him, and this penetration has already begun. If we are lethargic, the area will become saturated with alien saps and when we awake it may already be Russian in name only.<sup>18</sup>

As a result of these measures Russians were gradually settling in the Far East. From 1900 to 1908 172 thousand peasants from the European part of Russia moved to the Russian Far East.<sup>19</sup>

In addition, the government also adopted some measures against immigration. A 1910 law banned the hiring of foreign nationals for public works. However, the number of Chinese in Russia continued to grow, and workers were still hired by private companies. Between 1910 and 1914, the Chinese population of the Russian Far East grew to 80-100 thousand, the majority of them residing in the Maritime and Amur regions. The number of Korean and Japanese residents also grew.<sup>20</sup> According to the official statistics, in 1916 the total population of Vladivostok was 88, 576 people, of whom 28, 770 (about one third) were Chinese. The Main Chinese Trading Society was an influential city institution and the city authorities even created the so-called “Chinese police” — a special police department which fought crime among the Chinese population, and employed several ethnic Chinese officers.<sup>21</sup>

Many public figures of the time criticized government measures against immigration as ineffective. For example, in an article *Chinese in the Ussuri Region* a well-known writer and explorer of the Far East, V.K. Arsen’ev, once again attracted the attention of the government to what he called “the yellow domination.” Arsen’ev called for consisted measures to protect the Russian population. He believed that “competition of our *muzhik* [here: peasant] with a

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<sup>16</sup> N. Przheval’skiy, *Puteshestvie v Ussuriyskom krae* [A Journey through the Ussury Region] (St. Petersburg, 1870), p. 92.

<sup>17</sup> I. Levitov, *Zheltaya Rossiya* [Yellow Russia] (St. Petersburg, 1901, pp. 24 and 37.

<sup>18</sup> P.A.Stolypin, *Rechi v Gosudarstvennoy Dume* (1906-1911) [Speeches at the State Duma, 1906-1911] (Petrograd, 1916), pp.132-133.

<sup>19</sup> Mikhail Nosov, *Rossiyskiy Dal niy Vostok i Kitay* [Russian Far East and China]. Paper presented at a seminar “Problems of Security and National Identity in the Post-Soviet Space” (Moscow: Moskovskiy Tsentr Karnegi, 1995), p. 9.

<sup>20</sup> G.K. Tkacheva, “Immigranty na Dal’nem Vostoke Rossii v 20--30-e gody’ [Immigrants at the Russian Far East in the 1920s and 1930s], *Vestnik DVO RAN*, 1997, No.5, p. 99.

<sup>21</sup> Aleksey Buyakov, “Kazhdyy kitaets mechtal stat’ politseyskim,” [Every Chinese Wanted to Become a Policeman], *Vladivostok*, 19. 04.1996, p. 9.

Chinese worker is out of the question and therefore the government authority should have provided assistance to Russian settlers.”<sup>22</sup>

### ***The split between the two communist giants and the revival of the fear of China in Russia***

After the creation of the Soviet Union relations with China played an important role in Moscow's foreign policy. However, until the split with Communist China in the 1960s China was not perceived as a major threat. Some clashes with the weak army of Northeastern warlords over the ownership of the China-Eastern Railway took place in the late 1920s. However, this army (called by official Soviet propaganda “white-Chinese”) were seen at the time as part of the worldwide struggle between the progressive pro-Communist and regressive anti-Communist forces which did not represent China as a whole. In 1937, Stalin cleansed the Russian Far East of its Korean and Chinese population (most Koreans were moved to Kazakhstan and Chinese sent back to China). There was no official explanation for this action, and in view of other similar actions by Stalin's leadership, one should think that its aim was to get rid of a potential “fifth column” in a possible war with Japan. China itself, with most of its territory occupied by Japan could hardly be seen as a threat at that time.

After the creation of the People's Republic of China right until the 1960s the PRC was seen as the Soviet Union's best friend. Only after the death of Stalin did the relations between the two countries to worsen. By the end of the 1960s, China in Soviet's official view turned into a bitter enemy, and Moscow leadership began to think about a possibility of an outright war with its former ally. Fears about a war with China became especially acute after the 1969 border clashes during which hundreds of people were killed on both sides. From that time on, official Soviet theorists began to view China as an “instigator of a new world war” and a large Soviet military group was deployed in the Russian Far East.

The fear of a war with China was not just propaganda. There are numerous indications that in the late 1960s - early 1970s the idea of a China threat spread throughout Russian educated society. Official propaganda heavily influenced the views of many Russians — some of whom began to rethink 19th century fears in a new context. The fear of Chinese military threat and viewing China as a strong militarized power, which was at any time prepared to intrude into underpopulated areas of Siberia and the Soviet Far East, became commonplace among Soviet intellectuals not necessarily sympathetic to the Kremlin authorities. Independent opinion polls were not conducted in the Soviet Union at that time and it is hard to express the intensity and popularity of these feelings in precise figures. However, there are some indirect indications of their role. For example, these views were expressed not just in official propaganda materials, but also in the banned writings of many dissidents which were not affected by censorship. According to a dissident historian, Roy Medvedev, the danger of total war with China at the end of the 1970s “alarmed Soviet dissidents and occupied an important place in their thinking, as well as in their letters and articles.”<sup>23</sup>

One representative document of this kind is an essay *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984* by a dissident historian Andrey Amal'rik. Amal'rik's manuscript was disseminated in Moscow in 1969, the year of the armed clashes at the Sino-Soviet border, and was later published abroad. Amal'rik is remembered today for his prediction that the collapse of the Soviet Union would result from the dissatisfaction of the new educated middle class — which the government was deliberately creating in order to develop the science and technology necessary for maintaining a strong military force. However, it is not often mentioned that, in Amal'rik's view, the Soviet Empire would be finished as a result of a coming war with China. Amal'rik begins his analysis with a comparison of the Chinese experience to that of the Soviet Union. He points out that “China has lived through revolution and a civil war and, like

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<sup>22</sup> As quoted in V.Trubin, “Istoricheskie korni migratsionnoy situatsii v dal'nevostochnom regione”[Historical roots of the migration situation in the Post-Soviet space], 19.09.1995, Moskovskiy tsentr Karnegi, Moscow, 1995, p. 11.

<sup>23</sup> Roy Medvedev, *China and the Superpowers* (Oxford: Basil Blackwell, 1986), p. 51.

ourselves, has made use of Marxist doctrine to consolidate the country.” In line with the theory of the domination of traditions, he stressed that in China “as in our country, the further the revolution developed, the more Marxist doctrine became a camouflage which concealed nationalist and imperialist aims.”<sup>24</sup> As a result of the imperialist character of the policy of the two countries, in Amal’rik’s view, they could never become true allies, but only pretended to be for tactical reasons. He states that “True, there was a time when the Chinese People’s Republic and the Soviet Union may have given the impression of being allies, especially since they paid homage to one and the same ideology. However, the absolute antagonism of their national-imperialist interests and the conflicting character of the internal processes in each country... quickly put an end to any pretense of unity.”<sup>25</sup> Amal’rik argued that “the relentless logic of revolution is propelling China toward a war which the Chinese leaders hope will solve the country’s difficult economic and social problems and secure for China a leading place in the modern world.” In such a war “China will be seeking national revenge for the centuries of humiliation and dependence forced on her by foreign powers.” It will also seek to solve her problems of extreme overpopulation, hunger and an agriculture “that needs extensive rather than intensive development and requires acquisition of new territories.”<sup>26</sup>

Amal’rik was not the only dissident who envisioned a future Sino-Soviet war. Anti-Communists of non-Westernizing persuasion were also worried about a future war with China, although their sympathy was on the Russian side. In his “Letter to the Soviet Leaders” written in 1973 Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn, who did not share many of Amal’rik’s views, agreed with his analysis of a possible scenario and consequences of a Sino-Soviet war. In his view, a Russian-Chinese war would be in many ways similar to the Vietnam War and like it would last a minimum of ten to fifteen years, “and, incidentally, will run almost exactly along the lines forecast by Amal’rik, who was sent to his destruction for what he wrote instead of being invited to join the inner circle of our advisors.” Solzhenitsyn predicted that the “war with China is bound to cost us sixty million souls at the very best — all our finest and purest people are bound to perish.” As a result even the very last root of the Russian people “will be extirpated”.<sup>27</sup> In Solzhenitsyn’s view, this result was inevitable because of the nature of the enemy, which is described very much in line with existing popular and official stereotypes of China and Chinese people. In Solzhenitsyn’s view, there were two main reasons for the war with China. One is “the dynamic pressure of a China one million strong on our yet unexploited Siberian lands,” the other, ideological differences. He argued: “For the next half-century our only genuine military need will be to defend ourselves against China, and it would be better not to go to war with her at all. *No one else on earth* threatens us, and no one is going to attack us.”<sup>28</sup>

Solzhenitsyn’s letter caused a discussion among non-official writers and activists who in 1974 compiled a collection of articles entitled *What Awaits the Soviet Union?* The Chinese threat was a major theme of most of the articles included.<sup>29</sup> A comment by a nationalist-dissident, L. Borodin, sounded even more alarming. He argued: “Who in Russia... has not experienced in his heart an alarming feeling that emerges when one hears the word “China”. Few years ago Amal’rik discovered (for himself) the Chinese threat. He simply was not aware of Vladimir Solov’ev, Maksimil’an Voloshin and others, who expressed this feeling of alarm towards China long time before the “advanced ideology” became dominant in Russia. Today we know this threat by touch. A duty of everybody who cares about Russia (regardless of what future one sees for it) is to do their best to prevent a catastrophe (regardless of if this

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<sup>24</sup> Andrei Amalrik, *Will the Soviet Union Survive Until 1984?* (New York and Evanston: Harper and Row, 1971), p. 44-45.

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 48-49.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 46.

<sup>27</sup> Aleksandr I. Solzhenitsyn, *Letter to the Soviet Leaders* (New York, Evanston, San Francisco, and London: Index on Censorship, 1974), p. 15.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 35.

<sup>29</sup> Medvedev, *China and the Superpowers*, p. 52.

catastrophe would be fatal or not). It is in this sense that Solzhenitsyn's proposals regarding reasonable development of Siberia are realistic."<sup>30</sup>

It can be seen that while dissident writings of the 1970s were directed against Communist authorities, their understanding of the situation in China was greatly influenced by the stereotypes of the official Soviet and Chinese propaganda. Themes of Chinese military threat, of a possible Chinese advance towards Moscow, and descriptions of the fanaticism of the Red Guards and of the border clashes spread widely in Soviet literature and art. Many authors who stood very far from officialdom paid tribute to these feelings, or recorded them in various ways. Among them were unofficial singers Vladimir Vysotskiy and Aleksandr Gorodnitskiy, and a leading film director Andrey Tarkovskiy whose main character in the movie *Zerkalo* (Mirror) during a critical illness (among other critical moments of his life) remembers scenes of the Red Guards trying to storm the Soviet border (as shown in an official Soviet news bulletin).

The image of China in dissident and non-official works reflects the mood that existed in the 1960s and 1970s among the Soviet intellectual elite. Naturally, Communist party officials were not immune from these feelings. For example, Academician Georgiy Arbatov, who at the time worked for the Communist Party Central Committee Department of Socialist Countries, acknowledges that although later, on the basis of new information, he understood that neither China nor the Soviet Union planned a military attack on each other in the 1960s, "we lived with the fear and danger of a military conflict... We faced a combination of real political threats and our fear and ignorance of what was going on in China. This pushed our diplomatic crisis onto center stage in the minds of both politicians and the public."<sup>31</sup>

All the above examples show that the Soviet-Chinese conflict had a profound impact not only on the world-view of the Soviet ruling elite, but on Soviet intellectuals as a whole. Moreover, perhaps for the first time in the history of Russian-Chinese relations, the awareness of the danger of having a vast, densely populated and a hostile neighbor in the East reached the depth of public opinion not only at the border areas but all over the country. Abstract elite fears of the early years of the 20th Century in a new form penetrated various strata of the population.

### ***The use of the slogan of Chinese threat to socialism by the Communist Party conservatives***

Political stabilization and the beginning of economic reforms in China in the late 1970s-early 1980s created a new situation for Soviet China watchers. Official groups maintained that the new Chinese leaders merely continued Mao Zedong's anti-Soviet course, therefore remaining a threat. The indisputable leader of the official group was deputy head of the Department of Socialist Countries of the CPSU Central Committee, Oleg Rakhmanin. Rakhmanin's group was closely connected with the military industrial complex which had a vested interest in maintaining fears of a Chinese threat because it helped to insure permanent increases in defense spending. Authors who wrote according to the line of this group argued that Deng Xiaoping's economic and political reforms failed to change the anti-Marxist character of the Chinese regime. Major Rakhmanin supporters included his direct subordinates in the department, Mikhail Titarenko and Boris Kulik; a high ranking diplomat Mikhail Kapitsa who in 1982 was appointed deputy foreign minister; most of the China experts at the Institute of the Far East of the Soviet Academy of Sciences (IDV) headed by its long time (until his death in 1983) Director, Mikhail Sladkovskiy; an influential senior diplomat and academic Sergey Tikhvinskiy (who at the time headed official Soviet-Chinese Friendship Society) and others.

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<sup>30</sup> From Agurskiy (ed.), *Chto zhdet Sovetskii Soiuz*, p. 106. Quoted in Medvedev, "Kitay v politike SSSR i SSHA," p. 93.

<sup>31</sup> G.A. Arbatov, *Zatyanuvsheesya vyzdorovlenie (1953-1985 gg.): Svidetel stvo spvremennika* [Delayed Recovery (1953-1985): An Eyewitness Testimony], (Moscow, Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya, 1991), pp. 94-95.

They defined the new Chinese leadership's course not as "leftist" (as Mao's policy was usually labeled), but as "right-wing Maoist." In Soviet newspeak this meant that Chinese leaders were doubly wrong: first, by being rightists and deviating from the correct main-stream socialist course, second, by being Maoist — that is non-Marxist. The fact that Maoism was previously defined by them as a form of "leftism" was not seen as a contradiction. They argued that "the rightists in the Chinese leadership intend stubbornly to follow the old and trite rout of Maoism,"<sup>32</sup> that Beijing has entirely gone over "to the position of imperialism,"<sup>33</sup> and that "Maoists turned into the main instigators of the world war."<sup>34</sup>

For supporters of Rakhmanin, it was not the direction of Deng's "deviation," but the very fact of its existence that mattered. During the later years of Brezhnev's era, right deviation could even be considered more dangerous since, as a high ranking officer at the Main Political Department of the Soviet Army, General Dmitriy Volkogonov (who later changed his mind and became a close associate of president Boris Yel'tsin), once put it, "with the strengthening of the influence of monopolies in the economy and the growth of market tendencies there may emerge a danger of a restoration of capitalism in China."<sup>35</sup> Such an agreement between a military propagandist and communist party ideologists was not accidental: Rakhmanin's group in fact expressed the interests of the military-industrial complex. For internal political reasons Brezhnev was very sensitive about relations with the military. As Sergey Goncharov put it, "Soviet military leadership was extremely dissatisfied with the cuts in conventional weapons conducted by N.S. Khrushchev. Unfriendly acts of the Chinese side were a perfect pretext for 'compensating' former cuts by the build up of the troops deployed against China, and L.I. Brezhnev readily agreed to this measure."<sup>36</sup> Rakhmanin's group tried to prove that "Maoism by its own actions excommunicated itself from scientific socialism,"<sup>37</sup> i.e. that the PRC had seized to be a "socialist" country and therefore it was impossible to deal with it as with a socialist friend. These arguments were directed against normalization of Soviet-Chinese relations and against plans of reforms in the Soviet Union which could lead to demilitarization of the border and new cuts in military spending.<sup>38</sup> These practical calculations should not obscure the fact that some followers of Rakhmanin were Marxist hard-liners and sincerely believed that introducing of the market economy and pro-Western policy was an incorrect and dangerous course for "the socialist community" and for China itself.

The anti-Chinese group, however, lost its influence after Mikhail Gorbachev came to power and began his reforms. Gorbachev's leadership wanted to improve relations with both China and the West thus creating stable conditions for internal reforms, it also became interested in Chinese economic reforms experience. Gorbachev's 1989 visit to Beijing signified that the China was no longer perceived as a threat.

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<sup>32</sup> M.A. Il'in, *Pekin vrag mira, razryadki i mezhdunarodnogo sotrudnichestva* [enemy of peace, detante and international cooperation] (Moscow, 1982), p.6. According to an informal rule Soviet officials often used pseudonyms when writing on sensitive issues including relations with China. Some of them were disclosed by Gilbert Rozman in his: "Moscow's China-Watchers in the Post-Mao Era: *The China Quarterly*, June 1983, pp.215-241. In fact the author's real name were not a real secret, but were used so that their writings could cause Chinese reaction as official. M.A. Il'in was widely thought to be a pseudonym of Mikhail Titarenko.

<sup>33</sup> O.E. Vladimirov, M.A. Il'in, *Evolutsiya politiki i ideologii maoizma v 70-kh — nachale 80-kh godov* [Evolution of the politics and economics of Maoism in the 1970 and early 1980s] (Moscow, 1980), p. 21. According to Rozman, O.E. Vladimirov is a pseudonym of Oleg Rakhmanin.

<sup>34</sup> M.A. Il'in, *Pekin vrag mira, razryadki i mezhdunarodnogo sotrudnichestva*, p. 17.

<sup>35</sup> D.A. Volkogonov, *Maoism: ugroza voyny* [Maoism: a Threat of War] (Moscow, 1981), pp.85-86.

<sup>36</sup> S. Goncharov, "Ot Soyuzha cherez vrazhdebnost' k dobrososedstvu" [From a Union via Hostility towards Good Neighborhood], *Literaturnaya gazeta*, 4.10.1989.

<sup>37</sup> O.E. Vladimirov, M.A. Il'in, *Evolutsiya politiki i ideologii maoizma v 70-kh — nachale 80-kh godov*, p. 19.

<sup>38</sup> See more on this in Rozman, "Moscow's China-Watchers in the Post-Mao Era".

# ***The revival of the fear of China in the Russian Far East after the collapse of the Soviet Union***

## **1. The rise and fall of border trade**

At first, the normalization of Soviet-Chinese relations in the second half of the 1980s and the growing prospects for economic cooperation were met with great enthusiasm in the Russian border regions. Both local elites and the population in general hoped to take advantage of their close proximity to China, and to gain from the development of the border trade and direct contact with the authorities and businesses of neighboring Chinese provinces. This interaction flourished during the last years of the existence of the Soviet Union as a result of the elimination of visa requirements for business trips and other measures which, in effect, opened a border that had been closed for decades. Beginning in 1992, after a relevant bilateral agreement was signed, companies in the Russian Far East (RFE), with the approval of the local authorities, began to hire Chinese contract workers.<sup>39</sup>

However, this early enthusiasm soon changed to apprehension. There were several reasons for this growing skepticism: 1) after the first flow of Chinese goods was followed by the growth of imports from other countries, the population of the RFE began to appreciate the superior quality of Japanese, South Korean and American products and higher professionalism of businessmen from these and other countries; 2) the uncontrolled flow of Chinese traders and laborers, some of whom stayed in Russia for a long time or even settled there, revived the old fears in the under populated Far Eastern regions of the possibility of Sinofication of these territories; 3) local administrations, for internal political reasons, began a fierce campaign against the Russian-Chinese border agreement. Local media was filled with news and commentaries devoted to these problems, discussions of them were going on at all levels and every local politician had to formulate a clear position on them.

Dissatisfaction with the quality of Chinese goods and with the behavior of the Chinese traders to some extent came as a natural result of the broadening horizon of the local population. It was also fueled by the new freedom of the local press, which in search of commercial success began publishing numerous sensational stories. These included stories about mafia links of Chinese traders, Chinese poachers and smugglers, Russian traders taken hostage in China, arrests of Chinese citizens who illegally crossed the border, etc.<sup>40</sup>. While individual facts could have been true, all this information put together created an impression that the life in "good old times" when the border was closed was much more peaceful and less dangerous.

Gradually, the anti-Chinese feelings in the RFE grew into a major factor of societal life. Authors of numerous articles in the local press argued that the original enthusiasm about cooperation with China had long been substituted with disillusionment, that Russians were tired of turning a blind eye to their Chinese business partners and at the low quality of Chinese goods, that now Russians preferred products from other countries even though they were often more expensive, and that they could not put any more effort into persuading Chinese to fulfill the terms of contracts. An article in a Vladivostok paper with a typical title "The Love of Things Chinese has Past" argued that Russians had now acquired an allergy to everything Chinese.<sup>41</sup>

Far Eastern journalists and academics began to blame China for every deadly sin. They argued that in joint ventures the amount of capital invested by the Chinese was too small, that Chinese businessmen did not invest in the local economy, but rather in a

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<sup>39</sup> Mikhail Nosov, *Rossiyskiy Dal niy Vostok i Kitay*, p. 10.

<sup>40</sup> See, for example, L. Li, "Stop! Kontrabanda" [Stop! Contraband], *Krasnoe Znamya*, July 13, 1994, p.1; Larisa Beloivan, "Kitayskie brakon'ery otbyli na Rodinu" [Chinese poachers went home], August 9, 1994, p.1; Aleksandr Mal'tsev, "Kitayskiy narushitel' ubit v voskresen'e" [Chinese intruder was killed on Sunday], *Vladivostok*, November 28, 1995, p.1.

<sup>41</sup> Raisa Eldashova, "Lyubov' kitayskaya proshla" ["The love of things Chinese has past"], *Tikhookeanskaya zvezda*, April 21, 1991, p.1.

centralized manner transferred their profits back to China. They maintained that Russia lost millions by exchanging valuable resources for cheap food and consumer goods for which Chinese demanded unreasonably high prices, and in effect took of Russian businessmen's lack of experience. They criticized that the Chinese were interested only in immediate profit.<sup>42</sup> According to a widely shared opinion, the Chinese used the new opportunities of the open border and confronted Russian administrative chaos with a Chinese centralized system of managing trade and economic relations to drain out important resources such as timber, fertilizers, cement, coal, metals, and fish from the RFE. It was argued that Chinese businessmen managed to secure strong positions in the RFE market by dictating the prices for natural resources and goods, one-sided delivery conditions, and flexible customs policy. The new openness of the border was blamed for border trade characterized by "masses of people obsessed by free enterprise and directly involved in currency fraud, speculation and smuggling."<sup>43</sup>

## 2. The question of demographic expansion

One of the most important consequences of flourishing cross-border economic cooperation during the time of the open border was the growing Chinese presence in the border areas. This resulted in rising fears of Chinese "demographic expansion" among the local population. Local newspapers and even academic journals began publishing articles which argued that China, under the disguise of economic cooperation, pursued a deliberate policy of resettling its surplus population from its North-Eastern provinces to the RFE and Siberia. Allegedly, this policy is aimed at solving problems of unemployment and overpopulation at the expense of the Russian laborers. It is claimed that this policy is also intended to create conditions for claiming these territories, which according to the Chinese had previously belonged to China, some time in the future. To achieve this aim the Chinese supposedly use false tourist trips (during which they do not return to China but settle in Russia), fake invitations from Russian universities, and fake marriages in order to get resident's permits. It is claimed that Chinese authorities either on the provincial, or even ministerial level, adopted a program of establishing China-towns and Chinese villages in Russian territory. Further, Chinese joint ventures are claimed to be controlled by the Chinese secret service and the mafia (which was also thought to serve Chinese national interests) and supposedly use dummy Russian companies to buy up Russian businesses, real estate and land.<sup>44</sup> Far-Eastern specialists criticize virtually any cooperative project which would require Chinese presence on the Russian soil. The international project of creating a new development zone at Tunmenjiang where Russian, Chinese and North Korean borders meet (which was supported by many Moscow specialists) came under particularly strong fire in the Maritime kray, since, in the local view, its implementation would "significantly change the ethnic composition of the population of the kray", jeopardize Russian economic and political interests, "unavoidably leading to chaos and a loss by the Maritime kray of its Russian appearance."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>42</sup> See: Gilbert Rozman, *Russian Populist Reactions in 1993-94 to the Coming of the Chinese*, Paper presented to the conference "Recent Demographic Trends in Eastern Siberia: The Question of Chinese Immigration", December 12-13, 1994, Atlanta, Georgia, p. 9.

<sup>43</sup> See, for example, Vladimir Shcherbakov, "'Velikiy brat k nam tyanet ruki'" ["The Big Brother stretches out his hands towards us], *Vladivostok*, September 1, 1993, pp.1, 5.

<sup>44</sup> Shcherbakov, "'Velikiy brat k nam tyanet ruki'"; Rozman, *Russian Populist Reactions in 1993-94 to the Coming of the Chinese*.

<sup>45</sup> L.V. Zbrovskaya, "Proekt 'Tumangan' i ego vozmozhnye posledstviya" ["The Tunmenjiang project and its possible consequences"]. In *Kitay, kitayskaya tsivilizatsiya i mir [China, Chinese civilization and the world]* Proceedings of the IV conference (Moscow, IDV, 1993), Part1, p. 101.; See, also, Ludmila Zbrovskaya, "The Tumangang Project: A View from Primorie", *Far Eastern Affairs*, No.1, 1995, pp. 34-38.

Governor Nazdratenko severely criticized the project and lobbied against it.<sup>46</sup> Far Eastern demographers fear that the decrease in the population of the RFE which resulted from people's fleeing to central Russia to avoid economic and climatic difficulties after the elaborate system of hardship payments of the Soviet times collapsed, makes the region insecure. They point out that in 1993 the total population of the RFE was less than eight million and was steadily decreasing, while the combined population of the three neighboring Northeastern provinces of China exceeds 100 million and is growing fast. Since Chinese authorities are thought to encourage migration to Russia to solve their economic and social problems this situation is perceived as a threat.

Far Eastern newspapers often provide contradictory and obviously exaggerated figures of the Chinese population of the RFE (from tens of thousand to hundreds of thousand and even a million), which are usually not based on any reliable source. Real figures provided by the immigration service and border authorities are much lower and in any case the number of ethnic Chinese currently living in the RFE is nowhere near the number before 1937.<sup>47</sup> While during the years of border openness the number of Chinese residents in the RFE naturally increased, no reliable evidence that any official Chinese plan of Sinofication of the Russian border areas has ever been revealed. Even the best documented articles on "Chinese expansion" in regional, as well some central publications, usually refer to "some information" — dubious "data provided by Russian special services" (with no specific citation), certain Chinese secret documents (the existence of which cannot be verified), interviews with self-proclaimed members of the Chinese mafia, or articles in the Chinese press and academic journals which state that the use of Chinese contract workers and creation of Chinese rural settlements in the RFE could benefit the economies of both countries (which is surely true from a purely economic point of view).

A belief that China had adopted a state program of "Moving to the North" became broadly accepted in many of the border regions of Russia, both among elites and the broader population. According to one survey, sixty four per cent of the population of the Southern part of the RFE expressed fear of the Chinese expansion.<sup>48</sup> This rhetoric was used by some regional leaders seeking to improve their flagging popularity which was damaged by the deteriorating economic situation. In May 1994, the Khabarovsk kray governor, Viktor Ishaev, argued that "today a covert Chinese expansion in the RFE is being perpetuated, and it hurts and humiliates Russians." His colleague from the neighboring Maritime kray, Yevgeniy Nazdratenko, claimed that among Chinese who arrive to his kray there were "many criminals,

<sup>49</sup> An official document, issued by the Maritime administration in 1997, stated that the Russian Far East has always been a subject for the international expansion of neighboring countries, China being one of the most active expansionist. The authors of the document believe that there exist both objective and subjective reasons for Chinese expansion: the first are Chinese demographic and ecological problems which push the population towards free Northern lands, the second — the official Chinese policy of encouraging migration of Chinese population to the neighboring countries and the concept of strategic borders as different from geographic borders elaborated by Beijing. According to the document, every fourth Chinese who came to Maritime kray broke the law, "Chinese citizens

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<sup>46</sup> See: A.P.Derevyanko, *Rossiyskoe Primor'e na rubezhe tret'ego tysyacheletiya* (Vladivostok, Dal'nauka, 1999), 258.

<sup>47</sup> See: Vladimir Portyakov, "Are the Chinese Coming? Migration Processes in Russia's Far East", *International Affairs*, Vol. 42, No.1, January-February 1996, pp.132-147.

<sup>48</sup> V.L. Larin, "Rossiya i Kitay na poroge tret'ego tysyacheletiya: kto zhe budet otstavat' nashi natsional'nye interesy? Vzgl'yad s Dal'nego Vostoka." [Russia and China on the threshold of the third millennium: who will fight for our national interests? A view from the Far East], *Problemy Dal'nego Vostoka*, 1, 1997, pp. 24-25.

<sup>49</sup> Nosov, *Rossiyskiy Dal'niy Vostok i Kitay*, p. 18.

No.5, 1995, pp. 24-25.

<sup>55</sup> See: “Soglashenie meshdu Soyuzom Sovetskikh Sotsialisticheskikh Respublic i Kitayskoy Narodnoy Respublikoy o sovetsko-kitayskoy gosudarstvennoy granitse na ee Vostochnoy chasti ot 16 maya 1991” [A Treaty between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and the People’s Republic of China on the Soviet-Chinese Border in its Eastern Part of May 16, 1991], in B.I. Tkachenko, *Rossiya - Kitay: vostochnaya granitsa v dokumentakh i materialakh* , p.357.

allowed Chinese to violate Russian security, fishing, and other rights. He noted that in private conversations Chinese officials were allegedly open about their aims: to end Russian presence at Ussuriy'skiy and Bol'shoy Tarabarov islands. He urged the Russian leader to reject the 1991 border settlement and to ban the Foreign Ministry from discussing any territorial questions connected to his kray without approval of the kray authorities and to work out new rules for Chinese ships in the Amur.<sup>56</sup> According to the treaty the "competent authorities" of both sides were to come out with specific sailing regulations. However, Ishaev believed they were too slow in doing that and at some point unilaterally introduced a system of authorization for Chinese vessels to sail along the Amur in the Khabarovsk zone. Governor Nazdratenko openly swore that he would never allow the transfer of the fifteen or so square kilometers of the Maritime land — agreed in the treaty — to China. Nazdratenko claimed that this transfer would deliver a serious blow to Russian interests and "breaks the balance of economic and political forces in the Asia-Pacific Region" because these very two pieces of land "make it impossible for China to build here a major port."<sup>57</sup> Therefore, according to Nazdratenko, "the transfer to the PRC the strategically important section of the border in the Khasan area means the consequent death of the Maritime ports and not a far off prospect of Russia's losing its

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The anti-Chinese stance of the regional administrations in the RFE results mainly from their anti-Moscow rhetoric. But the position of local leaders influence the local media and public opinion. The role of the defenders of local interests and the logic of a fight for the "territorial integrity of the region" made regional authorities adopt an increasingly xenophobic and anti-Chinese stance. Maritime and Khabarovsk press, obviously encouraged by the regional authorities, began describing possible catastrophic consequences which would result from the transfer of Russian land to China. It described Chinese as crafty opportunists who wanted to take advantage of the lack of patriotism of the leadership in Moscow. Many local industrialists and newspapers supported Nazdratenko's warnings that the transfer would give China an access to the sea and an opportunity to build a port and a railroad from the port through Kazakhstan to Europe, which would supposedly destroy the local RFE economics.<sup>59</sup> Some argued that the Chinese began the border talks only because they had this insidious plan in mind all along.<sup>60</sup> Others predicted that the demands for the fifteen square kilometers were only a prelude to reviving much greater claims which the Chinese government had never put aside. Khabarovsk authors especially feared that after obtaining the territories in accordance with the treaty, the China whose diplomacy was "traditionally full of craftiness," would immediately demand the large islands of Bol'shoy Ussuriyskiy and Tarabarov (which are controlled by Russia but claimed by China and which status was deferred in the 1991 treaty) and the city of Khabarovsk itself, since Chinese often call it "former Chinese city Boli."<sup>61</sup> A fear was expressed that any Russian concession to China would lead to territorial claims from other

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<sup>56</sup> Gilbert Rozman, "Turning Fortress into Free Zones," in Sherman W. Garnett (ed.), *Rapprochement of Rivalry? Russia-China Relations in Changing Asia* (Washington, D.C.: Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, 2000), p. 193.

<sup>57</sup> Yevgeniy Nazdratenko, "Radi nashikh potomkov" [For the sake of our descendants], in *Nekotorye problemy demarkatsii rossiysko-kitayskoy granitsy* [Some problems of the demarcation of the Russian-Chinese border] (Moscow: Nezavisimaya gazeta, 1997), p.4.

<sup>58</sup> "Nazdratenko schitaet demarkatsiyu sdachey territorii Rossii" [Nazdratenko believes demarcation to be surrender of Russia's territory], *Kommersant daily*, March 21, 1997, p.1.

<sup>59</sup> "Vse porty Dal'nego Vostoka mogut ostat'sya bez raboty" [All ports of the Far East may become jobless], *Krasnoe znamya*, March 16, 1995, p.1.

<sup>60</sup> Vladimir Rybakov, "U Kitaya v dolzhnikakh?" [Indebted to China?], *Vladivostokskoe vremya*, March 7, 1995, p.2.

<sup>61</sup> Georgiy Levkin, "Kitaytsam khochetsya plavat' pod oknami khabarovchan" [Chinese want to sail under the windows of the people of Khabarovsk], *Dal'nevostochnyy uchenyy*, No.12, June 12, 1995, p.9.

Russian neighbors.<sup>62</sup> Some articles expressed an opinion that to transfer to another country the sacred battlefields of the conflicts with Japan in the end of the 1930s and with China in 1969, with the graves and monuments to Soviet soldiers to another country, was a national disgrace.<sup>63</sup> Expressing the dominant mood of the kray elite, a Vladivostok newspaper concluded: "A transfer of land to another state is a national humiliation of all Russians and digging of an economic grave for all residents of the Far East with our own hands."<sup>64</sup>

#### 4. Far Eastern public opinion on China

It would be wrong to conclude that the attitudes towards China described above were unanimously accepted everywhere in the RFE and Siberia. They are often challenged by some local public figures, journalists, academics, businessmen who are interested in cooperation with China and Russian diplomats working in the Northeastern China. These people continue stressing the mutually beneficial character of Russian-Chinese economic cooperation and argue that Chinese trade fairs, new non-barter forms of trade, and new joint ventures are on the rise and play an important role in the regional economy.<sup>65</sup> They warn that as a result of an unreasonable approach to international cooperation, the RFE can be marginalized in the dynamically developing Asia-Pacific region.<sup>66</sup> They maintain that Chinese goods filled an important gap in the RFE market and, despite their poor quality, are cheap and affordable to people with lower incomes.

Despite massive anti-Chinese propaganda, the attitude of the population of the RFE toward Chinese and foreign immigrants in general is not entirely negative. In 1992, 80% of respondents in the Southern part of the Maritime kray agreed with the assertion that "it is not important what nationality my neighbor is, the main thing is that he should be a good person."<sup>67</sup> Despite some disillusionment in specific Chinese people, the image of China as a country in the RFE is still positive. In the same poll more than half of the respondents said that their general attitude towards China was "good", while only 13% admitted a "bad" impression.

The situation had not changed significantly by the end of the 1990s. During 1999 only a minority of respondents expressed concern about the influx of the Chinese. Even at the Far East where authorities and media had been inflating the Chinese threat for a long time the majority of the population generally is not hostile towards the Chinese. While few people even think that Chinese migrants can help Russia's economic development, many believe they played a positive role in the growth of local trade (see table 1).

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<sup>62</sup> Ivan Yegorychev, "Demarkatsiya granits ili peresmotr istorii" [Demarcation of borders or a revision of history], *Utro Rossii*, March 18, 1995, p. 3.

<sup>63</sup> See, for example: Yevgeniy Kul'kov, "Kogda Dzhen' Bao Dao byl Damanskim" [When Zhenbao dao was Damanskiy], *Vladivostok*, March 1, 1995, p. 7.

<sup>64</sup> "Vse porty Dal'nego Vostoka mogut ostat'sya bez raboty."

<sup>65</sup> See: Galina Romanova, "Russia and China: Natural Partners in the Russian Far East", *Vladivostok News*, July 22, 1994, p.2; July 29, 1994, p.2; and August 5, 1994, p. 2; Vladislav Verchenko, "Severo-Vostochnyy Kitay i Rossiya" [The Chinese North-East and Russia], *Vladivostok*, November 22, 1994, p.6.

<sup>66</sup> Vladimir Gnibida, "Primor'e riskuet okazat'sya v ATR ne u del" [Maritime kray risks to find itself out of business in the Asia-Pacific region], *Vladivostok*, April 4, 1996, p.10.

<sup>67</sup> Ye. I. Plaksen, "Integratsiya Primor'ya v ekonomicheskuyu strukturu ATR. Obshchestvennoe mnenie naseleniya i osobennosti vzglyadov rukovodstva" [Integration of the Maritime kray into the economic structure of the Far Eastern Region: Public opinion and the peculiarities of the views of the authorities], *Rossiya i ATR*, No.2 (4), December 1993, p.48.

**Table 7 Attitudes towards the influx of Chinese migrants<sup>68</sup>**

<b>What do you see positive in the arrival of Chinese?</b>	<b>Moscow</b>	<b>Khabarovsk</b>	<b>Vladivostok</b>
Enlivened (local) trade	33,5	58,9	61,4
Can assist an economic boom in Russia	21,0	22,4	9,8
Good, hardworking people	13,5	6,0	0,8
Assist Russian economic collapse, export (Russian) currency, develop Chinese economy. Only cause problems	4,5	3,1	10,3
Could not answer	29,0	16,5	19,7

At the same time, the difference between Moscow and RFE residents' attitudes towards the Chinese leads the authors of the study to draw an alarming conclusion that "the more frequent and intensive the contacts of the local population with the Chinese, the less it is inclined to evaluate positively the migrants' character."<sup>69</sup> This conclusion is also backed by data showing that most Russians were less than enthusiastic about having a Chinese as their relative (see table 2) with residents of Khabarovsk and Vladivostok showing much more negative attitudes. The earlier 1992 study showed that the only 32% of the respondents in the Southern part of the Maritime kray thought "good" of the Chinese people, while 23% thought of them "negatively" and 38% were "indifferent".<sup>70</sup>

On the whole the opinion of the Chinese people in the Russian border areas is not high. The fact that people over sixty and supporters of the Russian communist party are most interested in the friendship with China, while younger people prefer South Korea, the United States, Japan and Germany<sup>71</sup>, shows that attitudes toward China in the region are still dependent on general ideology, but not on pragmatic considerations. It also demonstrates that China has not yet succeeded in persuading the most active and dynamic part of the Russian population that the PRC is developing market economy free of ideological agenda, and that cooperation with it can bring real profit.

### ***Current theories of China threat in Moscow***

The view that China is a major threat to Russia can be found not only in the Russian Far East. It has also penetrated some circles in the capital. This view can be found among representatives of different political groups and ideological trends in Russia who sometimes

<sup>68</sup> Vilya Gel'bras, "Predvaritel'nye itogi izucheniya problem kitayskoy migratsii v Moskve, Khabarovske, Vladivostoke i Ussuriyske (resul'taty anketnykh oprosoy)" [Preliminary results of the study of Chinese migration problems in Moscow, Khabarovsk, Vladivostok and Ussuriysk (results of answers to questionnaires)], in Moscow Carnegie Center, Carnegie Endowment for International Peace, *The Prospects for the Far Eastern Region: The Chinese Factor* (Moscow, 1999), p.35.

<sup>69</sup> Ibid.

<sup>70</sup> Larin, "Rossiya i Kitay na poroge tret'ego tysyacheletiya", pp. 24-25.

<sup>71</sup> Plaksen, "Integratsiya Primor'ya v ekonomicheskuyu strukturu ATR. Obshchestvennoe mnenie naseleniya i osobennosti vzglyadov rukovodstva", p. 40.

<sup>73</sup> Ibid., p. 10.

<sup>74</sup> See: Ye. Gaydar, *Gosudarstvo i evolyutsiya* [State and evolution] (Moscow: Evraziya, 1995).

<sup>75</sup> Yegor Gaydar, “Nashi priorityty” [Our Priorities], *Izvestia*, November 20, 1995.

<sup>76</sup> See: V.G. Gel’bras, *Aziatsko-Tikhookeanskiy region: problemy ekonomicheskoy bezopasnosti Rossii* [Asian-Pacific region: Problems of Russia’s economic security] (Moscow: Institut mikroekonomiki pri Minekonomiki RF, 1995), p. 43.

<sup>77</sup> Zasedanie Soveta po Vneshney Politike. “Problemy bezopasnosti, stabil’nosti i integratsii v ATR i interesy”. Materialy. [Meeting of the Council of Foreign Policy. “Problems of Security, Stability, and Integration in the Asia-Pacific Region and Russia’s Interests,” Proceedings, Moscow, November 15, 1994, p. 18.

<sup>78</sup> Ibid.

<sup>79</sup> A. Arbatov, “Rossiya: natsional’naya bezopasnost’ v 90-e gody” [Russia: National Security in the 1990s] *Mirovaya ekonomika i mezhdunarodnye otnosheniya*, No. 8-9, 1994, p. 15.

<sup>83</sup> To confront this danger, Dugin proposes to weaken China by supporting separatist movements and eventually to tear away Xinjiang, Tibet, Inner Mongolia and Manchuria thus depriving China of a base for a potential “dash at the North”.

Although such anti-Chinese moods in the federal government is rare, occasionally this or that leader in Moscow falls victim to it. The former Vice-Chairman of the Federation Council<sup>84</sup>, Vasilij Likhachev, seems to share some of Myasnikov’s views.<sup>85</sup> Construction

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<sup>80</sup> V.S. Myasnikov, *Dogovornymi stat yami utverdili...* [By the articles of the agreemened confirmed...] (Moscow: RIO Mosoblpoligrafizdat, 1996), pp. 413-9.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p.411.

<sup>82</sup> As quoted in: V.G. Gel’bras, *Aziatsko-Tikhookeanskiy region: problemy ekonomicheskoy bezopasnosti Rossii*, p.43.

<sup>83</sup> Aleksandr Dugin, *Osnovy geopolitiki. Geopoliticheskoe budushchee Rossii* [The fundamentals of geopolitics: Russia’s geopolitical future] (Moscow: Arktogeya, 1997), p. 360.

<sup>84</sup> The Council of the Federation - the other house of the Federal Assembly which members represent the Subjects of the Russian Federation. The constitution of 1993 does not state clearly how its members should be selected only providing that each Federation Subject (or part) is entitled for two representatives, one of the local executive and one - of the local legislature. In 1993-1995 the were

minister, E. Basin, describing the natural treasures of the Russian Far East, wrote in the official newspaper in 1995: "After opening up of this land the region can be made extremely rich. Chinese and Koreans were very fast in understanding this and they literally occupied our Far East. It looks as if soon they are going to declare it a sovereign narrow-eyed republic."<sup>86</sup> Former Russian defense minister Igor' Radionov once listed China among the "main potential enemies of Russia," while on another occasion called for "long-standing strategic partnership" with China, while announcing plans of military cooperation with the USA and Japan in the Far East, countries which Beijing regards to be a source of threat to its security.<sup>87</sup> Stanislav Govorukhin, a well-known film director and a Duma deputy who in 1995-1999 chaired Duma Committee on Culture and was a presidential candidate in 2000, wrote in his book:

There are already more than a billion Chinese. In the end their only hope for survival in historical perspective are us! Our natural resources, our territories. Already now we cede to them (only in the Maritime kray) one and a half thousand hectares of Siberian pine forests and fertile land - the so called "straightening of the border". The Damanskiy island<sup>88</sup> washed with our children's blood — is Chinese already! A real Chinese expansion is going on, a massive Sinification of the kray. How many Chinese do you think hang about in the Eastern part of our country right now? About a million! And this is according the most modest estimates. Meanwhile, if I am not mistaken, the entire Russian population from the Ural mountains to the Kamchatka is about 18 million. Let's estimate, how many years it will take so that the Chinese population exceed this number. And no war is necessary.<sup>89</sup>

In June 2000, the State Duma Committee on Federal Affairs and Regional Policy disseminated information on the situation in Amur oblast' which mentioned the alleged "'covert expansion' of the Chinese to the territory of the Russian Federation, including the Amur oblast'<sup>90</sup> Such views on China show that the idea of Chinese threat has its supporters in Moscow's academic community and in the government. But, although quite colorful, they do not represent the mainstream official Russian position and policy.

### ***China threat perceptions in Russia and Russian-Chinese Relations***

At present radical anti-Chinese feelings do not determine official Russian approach to China. On the contrary, the Russian leadership is actively working at developing cooperation with China both in political and economic areas. At a meeting in the Kremlin with Russian diplomats in July 1995, President Yel'tsin formulated the basic Russian position on China. He said "China is the most important state for us. It is a neighbor, with which we share the longest border in the world and with which we are destined to live and work side by side forever. On the success of our cooperation with China depends Russia's future. Relations with China are extremely important to us in global politics as well. If we can rely on the Chinese shoulder with our relations with the West, the West will be more considerate to Russia."<sup>91</sup> In April 1996,

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popularly elected, after 1995 local legislature and executive heads were also members of the Federation Council.

<sup>85</sup> Vassily Likhachev, "Russia-China Strategic Partnership," *Far Eastern Affairs*, No. .2 (112), 1997, pp. 39-40.

<sup>86</sup> As quoted in: V.G. Gel'bras, *Aziatsko-Tikhookeanskiy region: problemy ekonomicheskoy bezopasnosti Rossii*, p. 22.

<sup>87</sup> See: Igor' Korotchenko, "Igor' Radionov vystupil za sozdanie oboronnoy soyuza v SNG" [Igor' Radionov proposed creating a CIS defence alliance], *Nezavisimaya gazeta*, December 26, 1996, p. 1; Aleksandr Platkovskiy, "Generaly v Pekine raskusili igru Moskvu" [Generals in Beijing got to the core of *Izvestiya*, May 29, 1997, p. 3; Ivan Shomov, "Partnerstvo s prishchurom na Zapad" [Partnership with the West in Mind], *Segodnya*, March 25, 1997, p. 4.

<sup>88</sup> Island in the Amur river where the most violent border clash took place in 1969.

<sup>89</sup> Stanislav Govorukhin, *Velikaya kriminal naya Revolyutsiya* [The Great Criminal Revolution], (Moscow, 1995), p.10.

<sup>90</sup> See official web site of the Russian Foreign Ministry [www.mid.ru](http://www.mid.ru).

<sup>91</sup> "Yel'tsin daet ukazaniya diplomatam", in *Diplomatiya: nauka i praktika*, No. 4, 1995, p. 4.

during Yel'tsin's visit to China the two sides announced their desire to develop "a strategic partnership directed to the 21st century." As the former Russian president explained, the purpose of this partnership was to promote the emerging multipolar structure of the world and to oppose attempts of hegemony by one force in a new situation when "there are absolutely no controversial issues between Russia and China."<sup>92</sup> Since that time strategic partnership became an official policy recognized by both sides. Speaking in 2000 in Dushanbe at a meeting of the Shanghai Forum, a regional organization which includes Russia, China, Tadzhikistan, Kazakhstan and Kirgizstan, President Putin said that "China for us is really a strategic partner in all spheres of activity."<sup>93</sup> The same year Foreign Minister Igor' Ivanov, recognizing some problems in economic cooperation with China, said that "in the strategic sense we do not have problems and we do not envisage the emergence of such problems in the nearest future" and that "relations between Russia and China are on the rise."<sup>94</sup>

Recent opinion polls show that the majority of the Russian public also does not subscribe to the view that China presents a threat. According to a 2000 all-Russia survey, China was seen as the friendliest out of 12 countries, far ahead of the USA and even Ukraine (Belarus which is usually seen as the closest friend was not on the least). 52% of the respondents said relations with China were "friendly" and only 9% saw them as "difficult" (see table 2).

**Table 2. Opinion of Russias relations With Various Countries<sup>95</sup>**

Question: Do you consider Russia's relations with the following countries to be friendly or difficult?

country	Difficult (%)	Friendly(%)
China	9	52
France	13	42
Germany	16	41
Uzbekistan	15	39
Japan	18	39
Ukraine	31	35
Georgia	40	22
U.S.	48	20
Iran	24	19
Estonia	53	9

However, it would be wrong to conclude that perceptions ideas of Chinese threat do not play a role in Russian politics. They surely do play a major role in the RFE. During Yel'tsin's period the power of regional authorities was so strong that, as discussed above, they were able to take unilateral measures to change the border regime. On the whole their influence and their vigorous anti-immigration propaganda creates an atmosphere unfavorable for developing relations with China, and combined with inconsistent and convulsive actions of Moscow for a long time was creating a mess on the border issues.

<sup>92</sup> Izvestiya, April 26, 1996.

<sup>93</sup> Quoted in Igor' Ivanov, "Nashi vzaimootnosheniya svobodny ot emotsiy"[Our relations are emotions free], *Rossiyskaya Federatsiya*, No. 10 (155), July 2000, p. 3.

<sup>94</sup> Ibid.

<sup>95</sup> Source: Department of State. Office of Research. Opinion Analysis, March 14, 2000, p.4. The survey was conducted by ROMIR between January 29 and February 11, 2000.

Nevertheless, from the purely political point of view, Russia for the foreseeable future can only be expected to develop closer ties with China. Forces which see China as a threat, be it at the radical nationalist or radical Westernist edge of the Russian political spectrum, have few chances for coming to power. Nor can we expect a significant increase of their influence, unless an extraordinary political cataclysm happens in Russia. The power in the Kremlin is likely to be maintained by the supporters of the policy of balance between the West and the East.

But the problem of growing anti-Chinese feelings and distrust of the Chinese people in Siberia and the RFE should be taken seriously, especially in view of the growing autonomy of the Russian regions. Some scholars, both in Russia and abroad, tend to simplify the feelings in the Russian Far East about the Chinese “demographic threat.” They often see them as either completely instigated by the local authorities pursuing their own political agenda, products of the intrigues of the Russian nationalists, or as remnants of the traditional Russian political culture, an unenlightened approach of the people who do not understand the benefits of international economic cooperation based on free market relations.<sup>96</sup> However, as local opinion poles show, these feelings are related not to the traditional fear of the West which was largely confined to the Russian elite, but more to the recent history of Soviet-Chinese confrontation and to contemporary economic and political realities. The local authorities may fuel them but their position was in turn formed in a search for popular support and could not be possible without the growing popularity of anti-Chinese sentiments.

Anti-immigration feelings are not necessarily a feature of backwardness or traditional feelings. In fact, as most studies of nationalism show, ethnic awareness and ethnic hatred is a modern phenomenon. Anti-immigration sentiments are not at all unique in the modern world and exist mostly in the developed Western world where most immigrants from poorer parts of the world go. They exist and lead to serious disturbances in Germany (which, like Russia, used to invite Turkish contract laborers), in France (directed mainly against Arabs coming from the Southern Mediterranean countries and already resulted in growing popularity of the extreme right in the Southern part of the country); in the Western coast of the USA where it resulted in passing of some legislation aimed at limiting illegal immigration.

The idea of a “Chinese threat” as a part of a broader “yellow peril” is also not of Russian origin. In the end of the 19th century, fears of massive Chinese immigration spread in many places, especially in California and Australia.<sup>97</sup> Such feelings continued well into the 20th century.<sup>98</sup> Observers (including those in the United States) who recommend that Russia should loosen the control on the Chinese border in the interests of economic development do not see a contradiction between this proposal and the fact that the United States maintains a severe system of control on its Mexican border. There is a fear in those US states (which emerged on the former Mexican territory) that the Hispanization of its population could lead to problems and in an extreme case even to a territorial dispute. This situation is very similar to that in the Far East with the difference that while Russia is getting increasingly weaker while China is getting stronger, the United States can hardly lose its superior position in relation to Mexico and therefore Russian fears have much better grounds. Analyzed within a general historical and political context, the fears of the Russian population in the RFE look quite ordinary and natural and cannot be simply disregarded or ignored.

The Chinese side, which for its own reasons is also interested in a partnership with Russia, recently began to show more understanding toward the psychological problems

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<sup>96</sup> Such views were expressed, for example, by many participants of the conference on Russian-Chinese relations held at Carnegie Endowment for International Peace in Washington, DC on October 30, 1997.

<sup>97</sup> As quoted in: Patricia Buckley Ebrey, *The Cambridge Illustrated History of China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996), p. 252.

<sup>98</sup> See, for example, William F. Wu, *The Yellow Peril: Chinese Americans in American Fiction, 1850-1940* (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1982); Bill Hornage, *The Yellow Peril: A Squint at Some Australian Attitudes towards Orientals* (Dubbo, N.S.W.: Review Publications, 1976).

plaguing the relationship. It consistently explains that no central plan of Sinofication of Russian territories has ever existed and shows readiness to cooperate with the Russian authorities in preventing illegal immigration. During his visit to Moscow in February 1998, Chinese premier Li Peng made official statements confirming this position and called Chinese citizens who stay in Russia to adhere to Russian rules and emigration laws. Thus, there exist good grounds to believe that popular fears and distrust in the Russian border regions will have only limited influence on the overall development of Russian-Chinese relations. However, the pattern in the evolution of Russia's image of China has for a long time been that China threat theories became more popular at times when Russians think that their country is weak or is unable to develop its Far Eastern regions enough to withstand a challenge from China. If the current Russian leadership fails to stop the process of the country's weakening and to implement a strategy of development of the RFE, these theories may once again begin to make headway in Russia's practical policy.