

**THE KOREANS THROUGH A PRISM
OF THE SOVIET-JAPANESE RELATIONS
(1920 – 1930)**

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I. Introduction

For 150 years of their life in Russia Koreans went through a complicated course of development. They took an active part in liberation of the Soviet Far East from invaders, did farming in the Far East, Kazakhstan, Middle Asia and other regions of the Soviet Union. They suffered a lot from the Stalin regime (1930 – 1950) and some of them are still affected by its consequences. Today Koreans are scattered all around the territory of Russia and the CIS, which happened against their will. Nevertheless, the history of the “Russian” Koreans forms a perfect whole with the history of Russia and the Korean ethnic minority is an integral part of the multinational Russian population.

This report is devoted to the most complex and tragic period both for Russia and Korea – a period from 1920 to 1930. For Russia it was the time of the 1-st World War, the Great October Revolution, Civil War, and War with Interventionists, postwar devastation, and emergence of the Soviet state. For Korea it was the time of Japanese colonial rule, March 1-st Independence Movement,

toughening of Japanese colonial yoke, independence movement inside the country, and forced migration of Korean people.

In order to make an objective review of 1920-1930 liberation movement we need to touch upon the international situation of the neighbor states to Korea, which played a great role in the fate of Korean people. Those states are the USSR, Japan and China.

It is common knowledge that one of the main tasks of Japanese invaders to the Soviet Russia (1918 – 1923) was the liquidation of armed Korean resistance in the Soviet Far East. In order to achieve this aim the Japanese took all possible measures: military suppression, economic influence – support, stimulation and direct bribery of Koreans.

The Japanese also used all kinds of provocations to incite conflicts between Russians and Koreans showing good knowledge of the “sore places” in their relationships. At that time Japanese officials popularized the theory of “Pan-Asianism” – an ideology of solidarity of the peoples of Asia and used it extensively in regard to Koreans. The purpose of this ideology was to incite ethnic discord between Russians and Koreans and their further alienation. Another method to achieve their aim was the policy of moral degeneration of certain classes of Korean community and its erosion from within.

II. The basic part

2-1. The Soviet-Japanese relations after signing of the Beijing convention of 1925

The early years of the Soviet Union were marked by major political changes in the Far East. In order to promote international contacts “The Soviet-Japanese Basic Convention” was signed on the 20th of January 1925. The treaty contained a number of concessions granted to Japan by the Soviet Union for the sake of

mending the countries' relations and stabilizing the situation in the Russian Far East¹.

One of the most important provisions of this document was the mutual obligation to deny the presence of any groups or organizations hostile to the other Party. This provision enabled the Soviet side to persecute Russian royalists on the territory of Korea and other Asian countries (China). On the other hand, the same provision could be used against the activists of Korean organizations on the territory of the Soviet Union who were openly hostile to Japan and took an active part in the fighting for independence.

It is well known that liberation movement was violently suppressed by the Japanese both in Korea and in the Far East. The strengthening of Japanese military rule and mass persecution of Korean nationalists forced them to go underground, transfer the bases of their operation abroad (China, the USSR), and seek for help and support there. The Communist International, which at that time promoted communist ideas practically all over Europe and Asia, helped them a lot.

The members of the underground were engaged in propaganda of communist ideology and establishing ties with local communists. Most of them were trained in the Communist University of the Toilers of the East and then secretly sent to Korea or China.

With the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and other foreign countries the attitude of the Soviet leaders towards the members of the Communist International was changing. The deputy minister of the People's Commissariat for Foreign affairs L.M. Karakhan repeatedly reported to G.V. Chicherin that Japanese demanded to exclude the members of the Comintern from the process of negotiations. The Japanese had issues with the Comintern. In particular they demanded to stop any struggle against Japan. Upon signing the Convention the Japanese frequently warned the staff of the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs that they would break all diplomatic relations if the Soviet

¹ Ref.: <Moscow – Tokyo. The Kremlin's policy and diplomacy. 1921 – 1931> Collection of documents, 2 vol., Moscow, 2007.

Union supported any activities against Japan. According to L.M. Karakhan, the Japanese government agreed to admit to negotiations only those organizations which were supported by the government and only those participants who were government servants².

Thus, the Soviet government was forced to disclaim officially any involvement with the Comintern in order to mend diplomatic relations with Japan.

And that was the reason why the Soviet authorities banned the ordinary congress of Korean residents of the USSR. Moreover, the Korean Union was put under stringent control by authorities, and in 1926 it was dismissed. Professor of the Institute of Oriental Studies Hon Kim Pio was the chairman of the Union.

Moscow offered Tokyo to go further and conclude a non-aggression pact. The purpose of such pact was to secure the Soviet Union from armed conflicts with Japan. The Soviet government was very well aware that Japan planned to take hold of China, which at that time was rent by civil war.

The Soviet leaders still cherished the idea of international communism and supported their Chinese comrades, whereas Japan supported another Chinese group led by Marshal Zhang Zuolin, the warlord of Manchuria.

In his diplomatic relations with Japan Stalin adopted conciliatory policy both in economic and political spheres. The USSR made great efforts and concessions to avoid an international conflict with Japan, whereas in home policy these concessions resulted in repressions.

2-2. The Role and importance of the Memorandum of General Tanaka (1927) for the Korean people in the USSR

The notorious “Tanaka’s memorandum” (1927) played an important role in the history of pre-war relations between the USSR and Japan. Tanaka was a Japanese general, prime-minster and the minister of foreign and colonial affairs. This document was a key milestone in the process of militarization of Japanese

² <Moscow – Tokyo. *The Kremlin’s policy and diplomacy. 1921 – 1931*> 1st vol. P. 326 – 327.

political public sphere and economics, aggravation of expansionism in foreign policy, which in the end resulted in the emersion of a hotbed of the Second World War in the Far East and later led to war in the Pacific Ocean.

However, “Tanaka’s Memorandum” is of great interest for the Russian history in terms of the role it played in mobilizing the soviet people to resist the Japanese threat and in justifying the ever increasing Stalin’s repressions against his own people, including Koreans living on the territory of the USSR.

Tanaka’s Memorandum³ was introduced to Emperor Hirohito for his approval on July 25, 1927. It contained conquest plan of Mongolia, China and later – the USSR. But Japan still considered the USA to be its main opponent.

This document among other things covers the issue of Korean immigration. The part devoted to it is entitled “Motivation and Protection of Korean Immigrants”. It states that the number of Korean immigrants in Manchuria and China increases due to the wealth of the country (China) and favorable conditions created for immigrants. According to Giichi, over a million of Korean immigrants resided in the three eastern provinces of China at that time.

Tanaka’s plan was to bring their numbers up to two and a half million in Manchuria and Mongolia and urge them to riot if necessary. This would give Japan an excuse to bring troops in Manchuria under the pretext of suppressing Korean revolt.

According to the plan, The Eastern Colonial Administration and the South Manchuria Railway Company were to render Koreans economic and financial assistance. Japanese authorities planned to develop the natural resources

³ Lota V.I. <Mission impossible: Military Intelligence in Russian and in the Far East in 1918 – 1945>, Moscow, 2008. P. 580 – 598. Note: To the present days the question of Tanaka’s Memorandum existence remains a matter of dispute in Russian, Chinese and Japanese historiography. Japanese officials have always denied the authenticity of the published Memorandum. For many years Tanaka’s Memorandum has been the evidence of Japanese aggression. It was included under №169 in the set of documents for the Tokyo International Military Tribunal for the Far East (trial of the Japanese war criminals in 1946-1948) on the initiative of the USA. The memorandum was regarded as the Japanese plan for the conquest of Eurasia and claiming world supremacy. Apparently, the disputes over the Memorandum will continue, as it is rather a political issue than a historical one. In our research we find it expedient to review one aspect of the Memorandum related to Koreans. Modern historiography allows us to analyze the transformation of foreign policy relations between the USSR, Japan and Korea, which was annexed by Japan in 1905 and remained its colony until 1945. The USSR couldn’t remain passive in that situation.

and economy of Manchuria and Mongolia on the backs of Koreans. At the same time they sought to monopolize everything they could. Further, General Tanaka points out that “the influx of Koreans to these territories is of immense economic and military importance, and the Emperor’s government must support it by all means. Korean immigration opens new prospects for the development of the Empire”⁴.

The treaty signed at the Washington Naval Conference⁵ guaranteed the territorial integrity and sovereignty of China and proclaimed the “Open Door Policy”. As a result, the previous Lansing–Ishii Agreement, which acknowledged “special interests of Japan in China”, was abrogated.

Thus, General Tanaka very much counted on Koreans in the conquest of Manchuria and Mongolia. Among other things he noted: “Our only chance to restore our positions in Manchuria is to bring there several million Koreans. Fortunately, the number of immigrants is increasing as well as their capital investments. There is a reasonable chance that we succeed in reclaiming our privileges in Manchuria and Mongolia as stated in the Lansing-Ishii Agreement. In legal terms it won’t be a breach of any international obligations⁶...».

This document reveals that Japanese authorities deliberately created unbearable living conditions for Koreans in order to force them to immigrate. Later Japan planned to use Koreans as stooges. Their actions put the Soviet government on guard. The increasing influx of Korean immigrants to the Soviet Far East made them uneasy. Since 1926 the guarding of the Soviet borders was intensified and unwarranted entrance was unalterably prohibited to foreigners in order to stop Korean immigration.

⁴ Lota V.I. <Mission impossible: Military Intelligence in Russian and in the Far East in 1918 – 1945>, p. 580 – 598.

⁵ **The Washington Naval Conference** was held in Washington D.C. from 12 November 1921 to 6 February 1922. The Conference was attended by the USA, Great Britain, China, Japan, France, Italy, Belgium, the Netherlands and Portugal. Soviet Russia was not invited to the conference and, therefore, Russia did not accept the treaty signed at the Conference. The Washington Treaty guaranteed the territorial integrity of China and proclaimed the “Open Door Policy”.

⁶ Lota V.I. <Mission impossible: Military Intelligence in Russian and in the Far East in 1918 – 1945>, p. 580 – 598.

2-3. The Comintern – the head of the national liberation Movement in Korea

The Soviet intelligence and the Comintern agencies sent Soviet Koreans to Korea to form underground resistance groups on its territory. They had no staff problems as long as the majority of Koreans in Russia supported the Great October Revolution. Being committed communists they were burning with a desire to free their Motherland from Japanese colonialists and local capitalists.

However, with the strengthening of Joseph Stalin's power in 1920 – 1930 the balance of international and national interests of the Soviet Union in the activities of the Communist International grew unsteady. All the foreign communist parties were subject to the Bolshevik ideology and operating control by the Soviet Communist Party. In conditions of absolute domination of the Soviet Party and power contest between Lenin's heirs, foreign communists, including Koreans, became the hostages of this contest. All attempts of the members of the Communist International to save the gains of the revolution and change the organization and principles of the Moscow section of the Communist International failed⁷.

On the contrary, the laws of the game established by the Soviet Party prevailed. Attempt to introduce the system of collective management in the Communist International failed as much as it failed in the Political Bureau of the Soviet Communist Party. The Communist International authorities joined the baiting of Russian oppositionists. Under such circumstances each foreign communist party, including the Korean communist party, had to expose and expel their own followers of Trotzky and Zinoviev⁸.

Published materials related to this issue show that by the end of 1920-s international activities of the Communist International often impeded the foreign police of the USSR, especially the relationships with their main opponents – Great

⁷ Ref.: <*The Soviet Communist Party, Comintern and Korea. 1918 – 1941*>. Moscow, 2007.

⁸ Vatlin A.Y. <*The Comintern: ideas, decisions, lives*>. Moscow, 2009. P. 127.

Britain and Japan. Since that time these contradictions began to affect the members of the Communist International and were subjected to political repressions.

The interest of the Soviet state in Korea is revealed in the letter of L.M. Karakhan to G.V. Chicherin dated February 15, 1925. The letter is devoted to the implementation of the Beijing treaty provisions. The letter states that establishment of a consulate general in Seoul is the issue of immense political importance to the Soviet Union as long as it will give access to “Korean affairs”. However, there will be no opportunity to pursue the Soviet policy in Korea, as it may damage the relations with Japan. Further, L.M. Karakhan notes that a future consul will have to be flexible and prudent, because “all living Korean rebels” will elbow their way into Soviet consulate all at once. The mission of the Soviet consul in Seoul was, therefore, “to give no cause for protests to Japan and at the same time maintain good relations with Korean community”⁹.

Realizing the delicacy of their position the Soviet leaders, nevertheless, tried to help Korean communists in their struggle against Japan through Comintern. On the background of aggravation of relations between the USSR and Japan and the strengthening of military regime in Korea, the interest of the Soviet Union towards Koreans gradually waned. The ensuing events in Korea prove that Japanese authorities took all possible measures to prevent Korean population from any contacts with the Soviet consul.

2-4. Stalin terror and the Korean community in the USSR

In the June of 1926 Korean communists organized a demonstration in Seoul. As a result hundreds of people died and more than 160 people were arrested by the Japanese police, including practically all the leaders of the newly elected Central Committee of the Korean Communist Party and Young Communist League. Soon after that the Korean section of the Comintern was purged. Many of its members were expelled from the Party.

⁹ <Moscow – Tokyo. The Kremlin’s policy and diplomacy. 1921 – 1931> Vol. 1 P. 337 – 342.

These actions were regarded as an incentive for the breach of diplomatic relations between the USSR and Japan. On June 17, 1927 the People's Commissariat for Foreign Affairs received a statement from the Japanese Prime-minister Tanaka¹⁰, which pointed out the violation of Article 5 of Beijing Convention. In the document it was stated that Japanese government is well aware of the fact that Chinese, Korean and Japanese communists were financed and guided by the Comintern.

On June 22, 1927 the USSR People's Commissariat for foreign Affairs alarmed by this statement urgently issues an instruction for B.C. Dvoglevsky, who was then the USSR ambassador in Japan. Article 5 of the instruction states: "It is necessary to emphasize that the Soviet government has no information of any Soviet citizens engaged in any activities directed against Japan. And besides, the Soviet government cannot take responsibility for the actions of private Soviet citizens. As for officials, they are not engaged in such activities"¹¹.

The aggravation of the international situation for the USSR began with the incident in the Far East. The Kuomintang's government started repressions against Chinese communists. The Soviet embassy in Beijing was attacked. Stalin responded to the critical situation with repressions of foreign communist, including Koreans – 349 people. (Refer to the Diagram)

In the July of 1932 there occurred an incident indicative of the special attitude of authorities to Soviet Koreans. According to T.D. Deribas, who was then the Head of the OGPU in the Far East, an agent of Korean ethnicity called Lee was captured by Japanese and accused of sabotage on the territory of Manchuria¹². He confessed under examination that he was going to blow up several bridges together with three other Koreans by order of the Vladivostok branch of the OGPU.

When Joseph Stalin learned about it, he demanded from L.M. Kaganovich to punish those who were responsible for the operation: "Comrade Kaganovich! We must not ignore the fact of outrageous violation of the Central Committee's

¹⁰ <Moscow – Tokyo. The Kremlin's policy and diplomacy. 1921 – 1931> 2 vol. p. 132.

¹¹ Ibid. P. 133.

¹² <Stalin and Kaganovich. Correspondence. 1931 – 1936> Collection of documents. Moscow, 2001, P. 208.

instructions regarding the prohibition of any form of sabotage in Manchuria. Those Korean bombers seized there may draw us into a conflict with Japan. That's outrageous! Those who did that are the enemies of the Soviet state. I want you to find them and give them exemplary punishment. We must not tolerate this! Talk to Molotov and take draconian measures against the criminals from the OGPU and Intelligence (it is very likely that those gentlemen are the agents of our enemies). Show them that Moscow has enough power to punish traitors! With kind regards, J. Stalin”¹³.

The government of Japan called the USSR People's Commissariat of Foreign Affairs for clarification. The latter replied that the incident was a provocation and expressed hope that “Japanese authorities will take all possible measures to find those who try to destroy the friendship between Japan and the USSR”¹⁴.

The Japanese invasion to Manchuria in 1931 and similar incidents from the side of the Soviet government in relation to Koreans in the USSR caused a new wave of repressions among the Korean population in the Far East. Koreans were publicly accused of espionage in favor of Japan. 1521 people were arrested in 1931-1932. Most of them were civilians who lived on the border between Korea and Manchuria. (Refer to the Diagram) About 50% of those people were sentenced to death.

In the conditions of a powerful punitive system Korean communists tried to find ways for survival in the USSR. One of such ways was to make denunciation of potential opponents before they do it ¹⁵. The representatives of foreign communist parties in the Comintern bore responsibility for each political emigrant of their nationality. Any defeat in the revolutionary struggle affected the lives of the members of the Comintern.

¹³ <Lubyanka. Stalin and VCheka – GPU – OGPU – NKVD. January 1922 – December 1936> P. 808.

¹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁵ <The Soviet Communist Party, Comintern and Korea. 1918 – 1941> Moscow, 2007. P. 130, 340 – 344, 344 – 346, 548 – 551, 559 – 561, etc.

For instance, in the November of 1928 the party tribunal of the Far-Eastern Regional Control Commission expelled Khan Men Se (ХАН МЭН ШЕ) from the Soviet Communist Party for the violation of the Party resolutions on the group struggle. In the February of 1929 the “Pacific Star” published Khan’s open letter, where he admitted his mistakes and his violation of the Party discipline and asked the Party authorities to reconsider the decision of the tribunal¹⁶. After his repentance the Far-Eastern Regional Committee reprimanded Khan Men Se (ХАН МЭН ШЕ) severely and reinstated him to the Soviet Communist Party. However, in 1937 he was accused of espionage in favor of Japan.

In 1928, after the dissolution of the Korean Communist Party, Korean communists became the “communists without a party”. The majority of Korean members of the Comintern were restricted to travel abroad and their Party membership cards were taken away. The words of Park Ding Shoon (ПАК ДИНЬ ШУНЬ) from the statement submitted to the Eastern Secretariat of the Comintern Executive Committee give a good example of the Koreans’ position and morale: “As a result of the chronic crisis in the Korean communist movement many Korean communist emigrants (including myself) failed to legalize their position in the communist party of the country they live in. Personally I couldn’t join the Soviet Communist Party because I had no record of my membership in the Korean Communist Party and when I finally got it the party ceased existing”¹⁷.

In order to solve this problem a special commission was organized in the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party to facilitate the process of transferring the members of foreign communist parties to the Soviet Communist Party. Having reviewed the Park’s inquiry the commission offered him to apply on a common basis because his documents were out of date. Park reacted to this response in the following way: “I find this decision unacceptable as it makes me equal to the expelled or dropped out members, but I haven’t been expelled from the

¹⁶ <Pacific Star> Khabarovsk, February 6, 1929.

¹⁷ <The Soviet Communist Party, Comintern and Korea> P. 613.

Comintern and I've never got out of contact with the Korean communist movement”¹⁸.

The Russian State Archive of Social and Political History stores a folder (1933) with the personal records of 22 Korean communists regarding their transfer to the Soviet Communist Party. There are many well-known Korean internationalists among them, including Kim Dan Ya (КИМ ДАНЬ Я), Kim Dya Bom (КИМ ДЯ БОМ), Lee Bya Gin (ЛИ БЯ ГИН), Lee Goon (ЛИ ГУН), Tee Sun U (ТИ САН У), Maltsev (Нон До) (МАЛЬЦЕВ, ХОН ДОН) and others¹⁹. Most of them were transferred to the Soviet Communist Party in 1928-1929. However, they were expelled from it as a result of new inspections. In 1937 – 1938 – 10 people from that list were subjected to repressions²⁰.

In 1933 after major failures in Korea the leaders of the Korean communist movement Kim Yong Man (КИМ ЕН МАН), Kim Gyu Yer (КИМ ГЮ ЕР), Lee Sang Hee (ЛИ САН ХИ) and Tyan Dee Wong (ТЯН ДИ ВОН) were arrested by the USSR secret police on the charge of espionage and executed²¹.

The name of Chen Min²² was mentioned in the records of the Comintern Executive Committee dated 1934 in the list of the members who didn't pass the inspection. He was claimed to be “arrested by his neighbors” (i.e. by the secret police). Chen Min (ЧЕР МИН) was executed in 1938. The special register for suspicious people of the Comintern Executive Committee dated 1934 had 59 names²³. During our study we managed to trace the names of 33 Korean members of the Comintern.

In the atmosphere of total arrests and surveillance many members of the Comintern sought to go as far from Moscow as possible in order to survive. Those who had lost their job and means of support tried to vanish in the wide stretches of

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ <Russian State Archives of Political and Social History>. F. 17, Op. 98, case 6060 – 6082. (РГАСПИ. Ф. 17, оп. 98, д. 6060 – 6082)

²⁰ Ref.: <Koreans – the victims of political repression in the USSR. 1934 – 1937>. Vol. 1 – 12. (Корейцы – жертвы политических репрессий в СССР. 1934 – 1937. Кн. 1 – 12)

²¹ Ibid.

²² Ref.: <Koreans – the victims of political repression in the USSR. 1934 – 1937>. (Корейцы – жертвы политических репрессий в СССР. 1934 – 1937. Кн. 1 – 12)

²³ Ref.: <The Soviet Communist Party, Comintern and Korea. 1918 – 1941>. P. 35.

Russia as well. Generally their attempts were doomed to failure as long as foreigners were easily detectable among the masses of locals.

For instance, the personal file of Lee Wong Soo (Ли Вон Сю) in the Comintern records²⁴ shows that he was living in Moscow from 1924 to 1936 and working as an interpreter in the publishing company of foreign workers²⁵. After his resignation in 1936 he moved to the North Caucasus together with his family and became a rice grower in a Korean kolkhoz. During examination at the Stavropol secret police department Lee Wong Soo confessed that he had been a member of resistance in Korea and spent some time in a Japanese jail. However, that confession counted against him. He was named a fascist and a Japanese spy and sentenced to death²⁶.

Stalin wanted his subordinates to show him proofs of espionage in favor of the country the USSR was about to go to war with. Therefore, the repressions were directed at finding and convicting the whole groups of people who were said to organize counter-revolutionary actions against the Soviet government. The authorities were looking for an extensive network of counter-revolutionary organizations operating all over the country. For Koreans the network was supposed to start from the Far East and reach out for Moscow and Leningrad. In case “enemies” were found in Moscow, their accomplices had to be found in the Far East as well.

Let us set forth the investigatory records of the group headed by Park Yung Se (Пак Юн Се) and Mikhail Khan (Михаил Хан) as an example. They were accused of “creating a network” of illegal cells of the “Em-El-Dan” group in Primorye. Following the results of the investigation they were found to be the “agents of the Japanese political police” and convicted for the preparation of the

²⁴ <Russian State Archives of Political and Social History> F. 495, Op. 228, case 558, л. 2 – 8. (РГАСПИ. Ф. 17, оп. 98, д. 6060 – 6082)

²⁵ <Archives of the publishing company of foreign workers in the USSR («Progress») > Case of Lee Won Syu. (Архив издательства иностранных рабочих в СССР («Прогресс»). Дело Ли Вон Сю)

²⁶ <Archives of the Stavropol Region Federal State Security Service > Case № 26517. (Архив ФСБ Ставропольского края. Арх. дело № 26517)

military takeover and attempts to corrupt Soviet party organizations in the Far East²⁷.

This case caused massive arrests of Korean intellectuals, including 17 teachers of Korean educational institutions²⁸. Contacts of that “counter-revolutionary group” were found in Moscow and Leningrad. As a result, Yan Men (Lee Kang, Ли Канг), Fedor Ilych Park (Федор Ильич Пак), and Alexandra Khon (Александра Хон) were arrested in Moscow, while Kim Min Noo (Kim Dong Nen, КИМ ДОН НЕН), and Mikhail Vasilevich Kim (Михаил Васильевич КИМ), were arrested in Leningrad, and Nam Choru (Nam Iru, Нам Чору), Valentin Kim (Serebryakov, Валентин КИМ), Fedor Borisovich Park (Федор Борисович Пак) and others were arrested in Khabarovsk.

The trial took place on May 27 – 30 of 1936. The convicts were sentenced to different terms of imprisonment in labor camps from 3 to 8 years according to Articles 58-4, 58-11 of the USSR Penal Code. Let’s refer to the archive transcripts of the convicts:

Yan Men aka Lee Kang²⁹, born in 1902 in Ton-Yeng (Korea), comes from a family of kulak peasants, incomplete higher education (finished two years’ study in the Beijing University), joined the Korean Communist Party. At the time of his arrest he worked as a journalist and research office in the University of the Toilers of the East. Resided in Moscow on 15 M. Bronnaya, apt. 106. Arrested on December 19, 1935 on the charge of “being the leader of a subversive counter-revolutionary organization”. Sentenced to 8 years of imprisonment in a labor camp by the verdict of the military tribunal of the USSR Supreme Court dated May 27-30, 1936, according to Articles 58-4 and 58-11 of the RSSR Penal Code. By the decision of the USSR Supreme Court military tribunal of September 22, 1956 the sentence of the military tribunal of May 27-30, 1936 was closed.

Kim (Serebryakov) Valentin Ivanovich³⁰, born in 1905 in Vladivostok, comes from a peasant family, higher education, nonparty, research officer in the University of the Toilers of the East. Resided in Moscow on 13 Khokhlovsky alley, room 307. Arrested on September 19, 1935 on the charge of “involvement in the anarcho-syndicalist counter-revolutionary group of young Korean communists”. Sentenced to 5 years of imprisonment by the military tribunal of the USSR Supreme Court according to Articles 58-4, 58-11 of the RSSR Penal Code on May 27-30, 1936. Rehabilitated by the military tribunal of the USSR Supreme Court on September 22, 1956.

Kim Min Noo aka Kim Dong Ken (Nen)³¹, born in 1904 in Ku-Ryeong village, Anben district, Hamchyeongnamdo region (Korea), comes from a peasant family, nonparty, teacher of the Japanese language in the Institute of Oriental Studies. Resided in Leningrad on 30 Gerzen St., apt. 24. Arrested on September 19, 1935 on the charge of “involvement in the anarcho-syndicalist counter-revolutionary group of young Korean communists”. Sentenced to 5 years of imprisonment by the military tribunal of the USSR Supreme Court according to Articles 58-

²⁷ <Koreans – the victims of political repression in the USSR> Vol. 4. P. 142 – 145. (Корейцы – жертвы политических репрессий. Т. 4. С. 142 – 145)

²⁸ Ref.: <Koreans – the victims of political repression in the USSR> Vol. 1 – 12. (Корейцы – жертвы политических репрессий. Т. 1 – 12)

²⁹ <Koreans – the victims of political repression in the USSR> Vol. 5. P. 143. (Корейцы – жертвы политических репрессий. Т. 5. С. 143)

³⁰ Ibid. Vol. 2. P. 30.

³¹ Ibid, p. 46.

4, 58-11 of the RSSR Penal Code on May 27-30, 1936. Rehabilitated by the military tribunal of the USSR Supreme Court on September 22, 1956.

Nam Choru aka Nam Iru³², born in 1903 in Kem-Sen-Chouk (Korea), comes from a peasant family, higher education, a member of the Soviet Communist Party. At the time of his arrest he resided in Khabarovsk on 40 Komsomolskaya St. At the moment of his arrest he was an economy instructor in Khabarovsk. Arrested on the charge of “participation in the counter-revolutionary organization” on October 5, 1935. Sentenced to 7 years of imprisonment in a labor camp according to Articles 58-4, 58-11 of the RSSR Penal Code on May 27-30, 1936. By the decision of the military tribunal of the USSR Supreme Court of September 22, 1956 the sentence was canceled for absence of a crime in the act.

Kim Mikhail Vasilevi³³, born in 1907 in Kedrovaya Pad village in Vladivostok Region, comes from a peasant family, higher education, alternate member of the Soviet Communist Party since 1932, doctoral student of the Hydraulic Technology Research Institute. Resided in Leningrad on 1a Instrumentalnaya St., apt. 4. Arrested by the military tribunal of the USSR Supreme Court on the charge of “involvement in the anarcho-syndicalist counter-revolutionary group of young Korean communists”. Sentenced to 4 years of imprisonment according to Articles 58-4, 58-11 of the RSSR Penal Code on May 27-30, 1936. Arrested for the second time in 1939. Served a term in Norilsk labor camp (Norilsk, Dudinka region). Worked in a geocryological station for the research of stability of structures built on permafrost first as an engineer and a later as a group leader, promoted to the station director in 1941. Rehabilitated by the military tribunal of the USSR Supreme Court on September 22, 1956.

Khon Alexandra Mikhailovna³⁴, born in 1902 in Khasan region of Primorye, comes from a peasant family, incomplete higher education, nonparty, student of the Moscow Institute of Oriental Studies n.a. Narimanov. Resided on the campus in Alexeevka town, block 5, entry 8, room 23. Arrested by the military tribunal of the USSR Supreme Court on October 20, 1935. Sentenced to 3 years of imprisonment on the charge of “involvement in the anarcho-syndicalist counter-revolutionary group of young Korean communists” according to Articles 58-4, 58-11 of the RSSR Penal Code. Rehabilitated by the military tribunal of the USSR Supreme Court on September 22, 1956.

The above-mentioned archive data show that the convicts were well-educated people: a teacher, a journalist, an engineer, research officer, a student.

Yan Men (Lee Kang) was a popular journalist. His articles devoted to grievous economic situation of people in colonial Korea were published in many journals of that period³⁵.

Kim Mikhail Vasilevich was a hydraulics engineer. He became an outstanding specialist in building piled foundations on permafrost. Later he was appointed the head of the Norilsk complex construction lab and became the laureate of the Lenin Prize³⁶.

The closed trials were simplified in 1936: the government issued the lists of people to be persecuted. Those lists were called “Stalin’s lists” and contained the names of people, principally members of the Soviet Communist Party, convicted

³² Ibid. Vol. 5. P. 80.

³³ Ibid. Vol. 2. P. 46; Vol. 4. P. 30, 133 – 177.

³⁴ Ibid. Vol. 2. P. 153.

³⁵ <Colonial Korea> Studying of Korean in Russia in past and future. Vol. 4. Moscow, 2007. p. 146 – 391.

³⁶ <1938: Overcoming> Zapolyarnaya Pravda. July 1, 1958; <Norilsk biography> Zapolyarnaya Pravda. July 1, 1958; <A Story about Kim> Zapolyarnaya Pravda. August 5, 1983.

personally by J. Stalin and his close associates in Political Bureau of the Central Committee of the Soviet Party and sentenced to different penalties including execution in most cases.

383 lists contain 44.5 thousand names. We have found 116 Koreans in 27 lists arrested during the period from April 1, 1937 to September 12, 1938 in the following regions of the USSR: Altai, the Far East, Bashkiria, East Siberia, Irkutsk, Leningrad, Moscow, Novosibirsk, Orenburg, Sverdlovsk, Chita, Khabarovsk – the Far East railway.

14 Moscow lists include the names of 33 Koreans who were persecuted for political reasons. Most of them were former members of the Soviet Communist Party and the Comintern, enthusiasts of the communist movement.

Koreans found in death lists. Moscow³⁷

Stalin lists	Date of execution	Name	Penalty
List of 113 people. Presidential Archive. F. 3. Op. 413. P. 110 - 112	22.11.1937	Park Gennady Petrovich aka Park Sin Guu (Пак Геннадий Петрович, он же Пак Син Гю))	Death
»»_»	22.11.1937	Tsoi Shen U (Цой Шен У)	Death
List of 270 people. Presidential Archive. F. 3. Op. 24. Case 413. Page 251 – 260.	07.12.1937	Kim Cheong Sen aka Lee Sen Tai (Ли Сен Тай)	Death
»»_»	07.12.1937	Lin Da Shin (Лин Да Шин)	Death
»»_»	07.12.1937	Khan Nicolai Eremeevich (Хан Николай Еремеевич)	Death
List of 86 people. Presidential Archive. Op. 24. Case 413. Page 293-296.	13.12.1937	Ou Yan Shin (Ой Ян Шин)	Death
List of 163 people. Presidential Archive. Op. 24. Case 414. Page 3 – 9.	03.01.1938	Te Khun (Те Хун)	Death
List 107 people. Presidential Archive. Op. 24. Case 414. Page 220 – 224.	03.02.1938	Kim Dang Ya (Ким Дань Я)	Death
»»_»	03.02.1938	Kim Cher Sun (Ким Чер Сан)	Death
»»_»	03.02.1938	Lee Dzon U (Ли Дзон У)	Death
»»_»	03.02.1938	Liу Duуn Buak (Ли Дюн Бяк)	Death
»»_»	03.02.1938	Chen Min aka Se Cho (Чен Мин, он же Се Чо)	Death
List of 156 people. Presidential Archive. Op. 24. Case 414. Page 357 – 362.	03.02.1938	Venkov Mikhail Kuzmich (aka Ten Ken Chan) (Венков Михаил Кузьмич, он же Тен Кен Чан)	Death
»»_»	03.02.1938	Park Nicolai Afanasievich (Пак Николай Афанасьевич)	Death

³⁷ <Stalin lists> [web resource]. Access: <http://stalin.memo.ru/images/intro.htm> Date: 04.06.2009. (Сталинские списки. [Электронный ресурс]. Режим доступа: <http://stalin.memo.ru/images/intro.htm> Дата: 04.06.2009)

»»_»	03.02.1938	Yui Yi (aka Lyu Hwan Shin) (Юй И, он же Лю Хван Шин)	Death
List of 60 people. Presidential Archive. Op. 24. Case 415, Page 5.	05.03.1938	Park Din Shung Ivan Fedorovich (aka Choo Noo) (Пак Дин Шунь Иван Федорович, он же Чу Ну)	Death
»»_»	05.03.1938	Tzuu Petr Antonovich (Цзю Петр Антонович)	Death
List of 218 people. Presidential Archive. Op. 24. Case 415. Page 12 - 19.	05.03.1938	Shen U Sep Klimenty Petrovich (Шен У Сеп Климентий Петрович)	Death
List of 164 people. Presidential Archive. Op. 24. Case 415. Page 192 - 197.	28.03.1938	Voskov Anatoly Pavlovich (aka Lyu U Sang) (Восков Анатолий Павлович (он же Лю У Санг))	Death
»»_»	28.03.1938	Magai Varlaam Innokentevich (aka Ma Hen Men) (Магай Варлаам Иннокентьевич)	Death
List of 327 people. Presidential Archive. Op. 24. Case 416. Page 10-17.	19.04.1938	Ye Shin (Е Шин)	Death
»»_»	19.04.1938	Kim Dyu Van (Ким Дю Ван)	Death
»»_»	19.04.1938	Kim Dун Kimovich (Ким Дюн-Кимович)	Death
»»_»	19.04.1938	Kim Sugir (Ким Сугир)	Death
»»_»	19.04.1938	Park Nikifor Alexandrovich (Пак Никифор Александрович)	Death
»»_»	19.04.1938	Park Syuding (Пак Сюдинг)	Death
»»_»	19.04.1938	Soon Yan Nin (aka Kim Zhen Chi) (Сун Ян Нин, Ким Жен Чи)	Death
»»_»	19.04.1938	Hwan To Nyuk Konstantin Alexandrovich (Хван То Нюк Константин Александрович)	Death
List of 152 people. Presidential Archive. Op. 24. Case 417. Page 191.	10.06.1938	Kim Den aka Kim Deng (Ким Ден, она же Ким Денг)	Death
List of 208 people. Presidential Archive. Op. 24. Case 417. Page 238 – 245.	20.08.1938	Kim De Bom (Ким Де Бом)	Death
»»_»	20.08.1938	Lee Te (Ли Тэ)	Death
List of 340 people. Presidential Archive. Op. 24. Case 418. Page 3 - 15.	12.09.1938	Kim Fedor Dmitrievich (Ким Федор Дмитриевич)	Death
List of 66 people. Presidential Archive. Op.24. Case 418. Page 21 – 23.	12.09.1938	Lee Shoon Zo (Ли Шун Зо)	GULAG

Originally Korean members of the Comintern were different from the Soviet party establishment. Most of them were tried and true communists sent by their parties to work for the advance of the world revolution. Frenetic commitment to the communist ideology and devotion to the Soviet Union were among their most distinctive features. At the same time they were completely blind to the real situation in the country. Most of them failed to adapt to the Soviet mentality, for the rest of them it was rather a painful process.

Another distinctive feature of the Comintern members was that they were working under cover, which placed them in close quarters with intelligence agents.

Like secret service agents, the Comintern members couldn't abandon their organization spontaneously because they changed their mind. When a person agreed to join the Comintern he had to change his life dramatically. Usually the new members of the Comintern were given new names, and sometimes their names were used by the agents of the Soviet Intelligence³⁸.

Amid the common poverty in the capital of the USSR Korean communists were engaged in intellectual work and were well provided for. Most of them were well-educated, could speak three or more foreign languages. They were also getting extra earnings for publishing articles in the Comintern press and in the "Foreign Literature" journal, for translations and editorial work, for teaching in the Communist University of the Toilers of the East and other educational institutions.

Hopes to get any help from the USSR in the liberation of Korea and illusions about building an ideal socialist country were gradually dissolving, which led to frustration. It was caused both by social and political factors. Korean communists returning from Korea or China after completing their secret mission were closely examined, often accused wrongly and expelled from the Party. In 1937 – 1938 the majority of those involved in the struggle against Japan were convicted as "Japanese spies".

When Stalin came to power the attitude towards foreign communists changed for the worse. Authorities initiated massive search for spies, infiltrators and saboteurs. Thenceforth any foreign communist coming to the USSR had to renounce his home country and personal affections. He would have no other home but the USSR and no other party but the Soviet Communist Party.

III. Conclusion

³⁸ *Vatlin A.Y.* Op. Cit. P. 348. (*Ватлин А.Ю.* <Коминтерн: идеи, решения, судьбы> М., 2009)

According to statistics compiled by the KGB June 16, 1988 in the USSR from 1930 to 1935, were arrested 3,778,234, of which 786 098 people were shot ³⁹. From other sources it is known that from 1923 to 1953 had been arrested about 41 million people ⁴⁰, among them: 3 – 4 million people were arrested during collectivization in the 1930 – 1932; 3,3 million people affected by deportation.

An important role in which the nationality more and which is less affected in the years of Stalin terror, the population has played in the USSR. Regardless of a condition of diplomatic relations between the USSR with this or that country, than the more there was a quantity, the more appeared suspicions in its spies contamination, ⁴¹. Among the Korean population in the USSR political repressions has been subjected to 4-5% (9144 people) from a total number (199,5 thousand people), deported – 172 thousand people.

The size of population in different regions of the USSR correlated with the number of victims in those regions during the period of Stalin's terror. The more people there were the more likely there were spies among them regardless of international diplomatic relations. According to statistics, 4 - 5% of Korean population was persecuted for political reasons. According to the data of the Russian State Military Archive, there were 199 500 Koreans in the Soviet Far East in 1935 – 1936.

It seems probable that the difference between Table 1 (Ussuryisk Region – 66 100, Primorye – 88 400), Table 2 for Primorye (80 150) and Table 3 in Ussuryisk Region (44 231) indicates that many Koreans registered in regional authorities but lived elsewhere. On the other hand, it was hard to consider the people who crossed the border regularly.

³⁹ Литвин М. Litvin M <У источника At the source> М.: Сигналь, 1997. С. 564 - 575. М.: Signal 1997, p.564-575.

⁴⁰ <Исторический архив Historical Archives> 1993. № 3. С. 17. 1993.№3. p.17

⁴¹ О специфике национальных операций НКВД см.: Охотин Н., Рогинский А. <Из истории «немецкой операции» НКВД 1937 – 1938 гг.> // Наказанный народ. Репрессии против российских немцев. М., 1999. On the specifics of the national operations of the NKVD, see: Okhotin N., Roginsky A. <From the history of the "German operation" of the NKVD 1937 - 1938 years> // Punished people. The repression against the Russian Germans. М., 1999.

Table 1

Korean population in different regions of the Far East in 1935 – 1936⁴²

Region	Population
Zeisk	300
Amursk	4200
Jewish Autonomous Region	3600
Khabarovsk	30 500
Ussuryisk	66 100
Primorye	88 400
Nizhneamursk	3000
Sakhalin	3200
Kamchatka	200
Total with northern territories	199 500
Total excluding Sakhalin, Kamchatka and Nicolaevsk-na-Amure	193 100

Table 2

Korean population in Primorye⁴³

Regions	Population
Sovetsk	500
Terneisk	2500
Budennovsk	15 000
Shkotovsk	13 000
Posjetsk	17 150
Olginsk	5000
Soochansk	4000
Vladivostok	22 000
Artemovsk	1000
Total	80 150

Table 3

Population of the Ussuriysk Region⁴⁴

District	Population in 1937	Korean population in 1935 – 1936
Voroshilov city	66 652	No data
Voroshilovsky	30 831	19 700
Molotovsk	11 423	2808
Grodekovsky	10 144	2362
Khankaisky	20 136	1905
Spassky	54 960	6687
Chernigovsky	26 164	2737
Shmakovsky	35 419	1527
Ivanovsky	10 310	1460
Mikhailovsky	25 972	1050
Yakovlevsky	15 606	679
Khorolsky	17 907	-
Kirovsky	20 019	950
Chuguevsky	14 593	330
Anuchinsky	15 037	2036
Total	375 173	44 231

⁴² <Russian Military Archives> F. 33879, op. 1, case 115, p. 16. (РГВА. Ф. 33879, оп. 1, д. 115, л. 16)

⁴³ <Russian Military Archives> F. 33879, op. 1, case 115, p. 18. (РГВА. Ф. 33879, оп. 1, д. 115, л. 18)

⁴⁴ <Russian Military Archives> F. 33879, op. 1, case 115, p. 17. (РГВА. Ф. 33879, оп. 1, д. 115, л. 16)

The facts shown above prove that both states (the USSR and Japan) adopted certain attitudes towards Koreans and planned to exploit them according to their plans. Under such conditions Korean population became a kind of a “hostage” in the political games of the two powers.

In the USSR communists and members of the Communist Youth League were persecuted in the first place. In fact, all the leaders of the national Korean liberation movement were eliminated and the very idea of the liberation of Korea was drowned in the blood of repressions.

The preparation for the deportation of Koreans in 1937 took several years. It was thoroughly planned and carried out under the pretext of protecting the USSR from the Japanese aggression. By accusing all Koreans of “espionage in favor of Japan” Stalin tried to prevent the Japanese invasion.

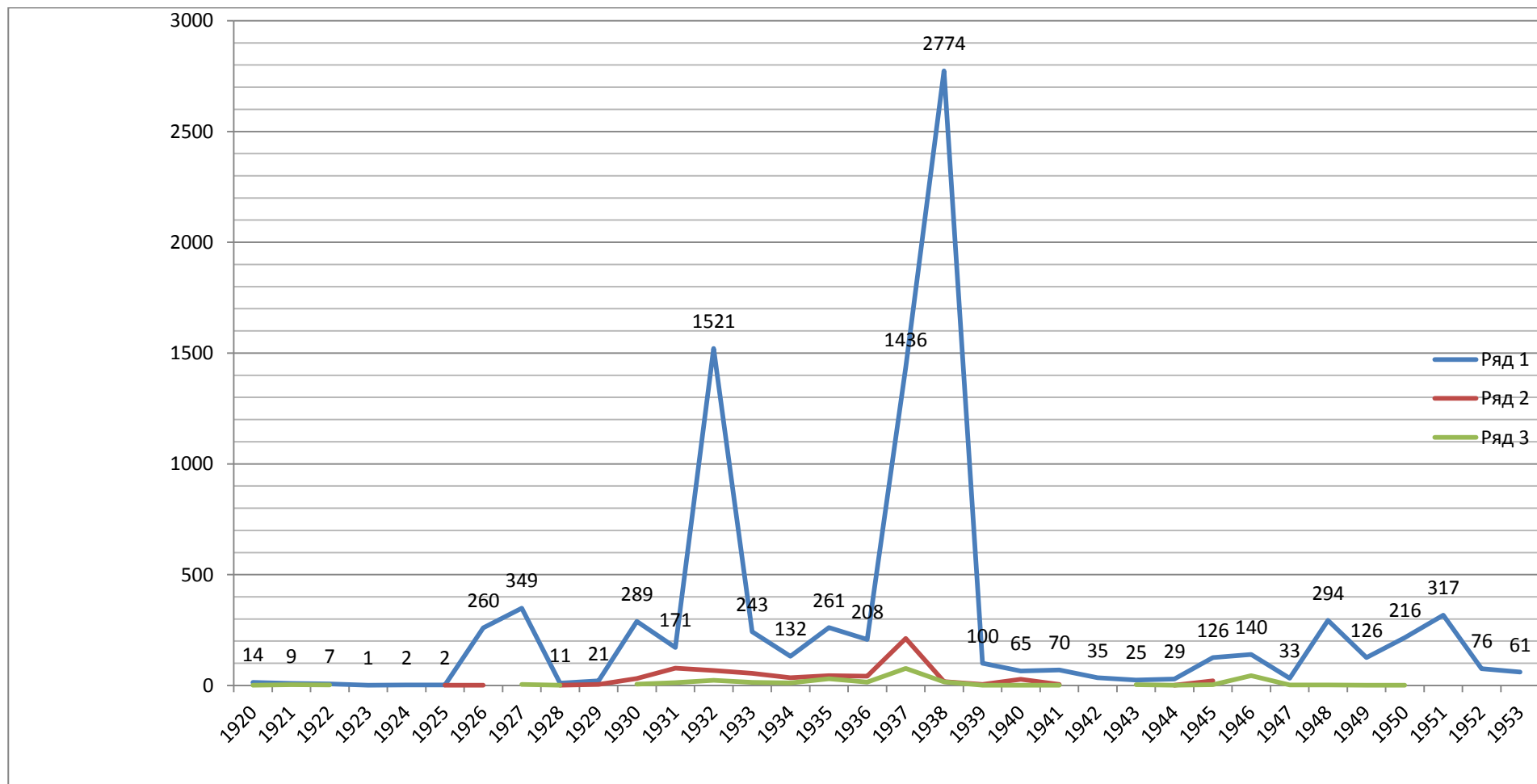
After the deportation in 1937 Koreans were isolated in Central Asia grasslands and lost all hope for returning to their homeland. Their hopes and dreams of independent Korea were hidden deep-down in their hearts. Yearning for the lost home and frustration arising from their inability to help their compatriots in Korea had a negative impact on the consciousness and national identity of Koreans in the USSR.

Chronology of repressions against the Korean population in the USSR

Years	Koreans (list of victims)	Koreans/ foreign nationals (according to Mozokhin)	Total
1920	14		14
1921	9		9
1922	7		7
1923	1		1
1924	2		2
1925	2		2
1926	6	254	260
1927	21	328	349
1928	11		11
1929	21		21
1930	64	225	289
1931	171		171
1932	246	1275	1521
1933	243		243

1934	132		132
1935	261		261
1936	208		208
1937	1436		1436
1938	2774		2774
1939	42	58	100
1940	65		65
1941	70		70
1942	35		35
1943	25		25
1944	29		29
1945	97	29	126
1946	140		140
1947	33		33
1948	22	139 / 133	294
1949	44	64 / 18	126
1950	29	41 / 20	216
1951	19	49 / 33	317
1952	17	34 / 25	76
1953	27	21 / 13	61
No data	65		65
Total	6385	2517 / 242	9144

- Sources: 1. <Koreans – the victims of political repression in the USSR. 1934 – 1938> Vol. 1 – 12.
2. Mozokhin O.B. <Right to kill: Extrajudicial powers of the State Security authorities (1918 – 1953)> Moscow, 2006;
3. <Lists of victims of political repressions> [Web resource]:
<http://www.memo.ru/memory/spiski.htm> Date: 08.06.2009.



Line 1 – Koreans persecuted for political reasons in the USSR; Line 2 – Koreans persecuted in Primorye; Line 3 – Koreans persecuted in Khabarovsk region.

Sources: 1. <Koreans – the victims of political repression in the USSR. 1934 – 1938> Vol. 1 – 12.

2. Mozokhin O.B. <Right to kill: Extrajudicial powers of the State Security authorities (1918 – 1953)> Moscow, 2006 (the excerpt is done by the author of the thesis);

3. <Lists of victims of political repressions> [Web resource]: <http://www.memo.ru/memory/spiski.htm> Date: 08.06.2009.