

The 1905-7 Russian revolution seen from Korea : Korean periodicals debate revolutionary Russia

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Abstrak

This essay examines the perceptions of Russia's 1905 revolution in the Korean periodicals of the time. The revolution drew significant interest in Korea for a variety of reasons. First, Russia was at war with Japan, so the revolution could decisively influence the result of that war and, consequently, the fate of Korea. Second, constitutionalism was a popular topic of debate in Korea. The Russian revolution was seen as a part of the worldwide struggle constitutionalism, and as proof that the shift to constitutionalism was a worldwide trend. Third, the Russian revolution involved a struggle for either autonomy or self-determination by a variety of minorities inside the Russian Empire. Such a struggle was met with natural sympathy in Korea, given the country's own precarious position with between the Russian and Japanese empires. The vociferous anti-Semitism and pogroms in Tsarist Russia had been widely reported in the Korean press even before the revolution, and were perceived to be among the factors that triggered it. The root cause of revolution was predominantly found in autocratic misrule and Tsarist expansionist policies. A shift to constitutionalism and rule of law was seen to be needed in Russia – and, by extension, in Korea as well. The terrorist struggle by Social revolutionaries (SR), anarchists, and assorted minority nationalist groups attracted significant attention in Korea and may well have influenced the adoption of individual terror tactics by some Korean nationalist militants at the end of the first decade of the twentieth century.