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## The Activities of Foreign Entrepreneurs in the Amur Region as Reflected in the Regional Press of the 1860s

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**Abstract:** The article studies how the economic life of the Amur region in the first half of the 1860s is reflected in contributions to the newspapers “Amur” and “Vostochnoe Pomorie,” with a focus on the newspaper coverage of foreign entrepreneurs’ activities in the region. The authors analyze how the journalists tried to attract foreign capital to Russia, and how they interpreted the legal and cultural conditions that foreign traders encountered in the Amur region. Equally taken into consideration are the features and prospects of intercultural communication in the region, the respective publications’ attitudes towards the Russian annexation of the Amur region, and their perceptions of the factors that stood in the way of the comprehensive development of the region and of the attraction of foreign entrepreneurs. The article analyzes the image that the newspaper authors drew of life in the Russian Far Eastern peripheries; in particular, a number of articles were very critical in their discussion of how to remove obstacles to attracting foreigners to the region. At the same time this contribution argues that by their description of the nature and living conditions in the Amur region, the regional newspapers also contributed to the inflow of domestic and foreign investments into the Far Eastern region. It seems that this experience can be useful for the economic development of remote Russian territories also today, after a necessary adjustment.

**Keywords:** periodicals, foreign capital, Russian empire, history of entrepreneurship, economic history


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## Деятельность иностранных предпринимателей в Приамурье на страницах региональной прессы 1860-х гг.

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**Аннотация:** В статье реконструируется отражение экономической жизни Приамурья первой половины 1860-х гг. в газетах «Амур» и «Восточное Поморье». Основное внимание уделяется освещению данными изданиями деятельности иностранных предпринимателей в регионе. Анализируются публицистические приемы журналистов, их трактовки правовых и культурных основ ведения торгово-экономической деятельности иностранцами в Приамурье. Рассматриваются особенности и перспективы межкультурной коммуникации в регионе. Затронуто отношение изданий к присоединению Приамурья к России, понимание факторов, сдерживавших привлечение иностранных предпринимателей в регион. Анализируется процесс восприятия на

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страницах изданий повседневной жизни на российской дальневосточной окраине, выявляется критический взгляд авторов ряда статей на характер экономической деятельности в регионе с участием иностранного капитала. Делается вывод о положительной роли региональных газет в деле информирования, в том числе представителей делового мира, об экономических преимуществах дальневосточного региона. Представляется, что данный опыт заслуживает не только изучения, но и осмысления с точки зрения потенциала информационного ресурса в интересах экономического развития отдельных российских территорий в реалиях текущего столетия.

**Ключевые слова:** периодическая печать, иностранный капитал, Российская империя, история предпринимательства, экономическая история

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## Introduction

In the last decade, the Russian state has paid great attention to the development of the Far East. However, the problems of developing the remote territories in Russia began to be addressed over a century and a half ago. The authorities developed programs that could attract the population to the Far Eastern outskirts of the country, and the media tried to convey their content to local and foreign residents.

In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the territories of the Amur region became part of the Russian Empire. At the same time, there were updated the issues of economic, social and demographic development of this part of the empire. Already in those years, it was clear that one of the key factors that hindered the development of Russia's Amur region was its low population. The idea of the need to increase the population on the Amur by "eager ploughmen" and merchants was considered in the highest government circles of Russia from the end of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>1</sup> Putting forward this strategic task, the authorities understood that its solution only by Russian citizens was extremely difficult. Therefore, they thought about the forms and extent of the economic presence of foreigners.

The subject of foreign entrepreneurs' activities in Russia's Far East in the 18<sup>th</sup> – early 21<sup>st</sup> century received some coverage in Russian and foreign historiography. The scientists focused on the reasons for the emergence of foreign capital in Russia's Far East, the results of foreigners' presence in various sectors of the Far East economy, the most significant changes that occurred in the region under the influence of their activities.<sup>2</sup> The history of the establishment of the Far East press also received its coverage.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> N. Emel'yanov, "Kitaiskaia i russkaia kolonizatsiia," *Russkii vestnik* 268 (Avgust 1900): 561–570.

<sup>2</sup> A.V. Alepko, *Zarubezhnyi kapital i predprinimatel'stvo na Dal'nem Vostoke Rossii (konets XVIII v. – 1917 g.)* (Khabarovsk: Rossiiskaia Akademiia Nauk. Dal'nevostochnoe otdelenie Publ., 2001); V.G. Dacyshen, "Ussuriiskie kuptsy. Sud'ba kitaitsev v dorevoliutsionnoi Rossii," *Rodina*, no 7 (1995): 54–57; O.V. Zaleskaya, *Kitaiskie migranty na Dal'nem Vostoke Rossii (1917–1938 gg.)* (Vladivostok: Dal'nauka, 2009); V.V. Sinichenko, "International Capital in Manufacturing and Service Industries in Russian Far East in the Late XIX – the Early XX C.," *Izvestiia Irkutskogo gosudarstvennogo universiteta. Seriya: Istorii*, no. 2-1 (2012): 235–243; Z.T. Poznyak, *Inostrannye poddannye v gorodakh Dal'nego Vostoka Rossii (vtoraia polovina XIX – nachalo XX vv.)* (Vladivostok: Dal'nauka Publ., 2004); A. Babey, *Americans in Russia 1776–1917* (New York: The Comet Press, 1938); M.M. Laserson, *The American Impact on Russia 1784–1917 Diplomatic and Ideological* (New York: Collier Books, 1962).

<sup>3</sup> A.A. Grabel'nikov, and O.D. Minaeva, *Istoriia russkoi periodicheskoi pechati (1703–2003): bibliogr. sprav.: v 2 t.* (Moscow: RIP-holding Publ., 2004); S.I. Gol'dfarb, *Gazeta 'Vostochnoe obozrenie' (1882–1906)* (Irkutsk: Izdatel'stvo Irkutskogo universiteta Publ., 1997); N.M. Lisovskii, *Russkaia periodicheskaia pechat' 1703–1900 gg.* (Petrograd: Tip. G.A. Shumahera i B.D. Brukera Press., 1915); I.G. Stryuchenko, *Periodicheskaia pechat' Dal'nego Vostoka i Zabaikal'ia epokhi kapitalizma (1861–1917 gg.)* (Vladivostok: Dal'nevostochnoe knizhnoe izdatel'stvo Publ., 1983).

However, the problem stated in the article has not yet become the subject of a special study.

In this paper, the authors analyze the content of the publications of the newspapers “Amur” and “Vostochnoye Pomorie,” determine the nature of the mission that the editors set to their media outlets, and, above all, the methods that their employees used to attract foreign capital to the region.

### **Newspapers “Amur” and “Vostochnoye Pomorie” in the Life of the Amur Region**

A number of Russian-Chinese agreements in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century resulted in the entry of the Amur region lands into the Russian Empire. The strengthening of the position of the state required that the government develop programs aimed at settling and developing new territories. It was necessary to find such strategies that would help population settle in the Amur region of their own free will, rather than under compulsion.

Russian society had little idea of the Amur region. A lack of awareness was due to both incomplete information and a lack of public attention to the life of these territories. It was possible to attract the interest of the population in the Amur region, which was still being developed, with the help of periodicals that published materials about the events that were taking place in the region. An important role in covering the events was played by the regional newspapers, thanks to which many facts were published in the national press of Russia.

Among such media outlets, there should be noted the first private newspaper “Amur,” which from 1860 to 1862 was issued in Irkutsk weekly in sixteen pages of small format. The newspaper was distributed by subscription; one could subscribe to it in the editorial office at the library of M.P. Shestunov, one of the employees of the media outlet, as well as at the post offices in St. Petersburg and Moscow. The official publisher of the newspaper was titular councillor, writer, journalist and public figure M.V. Zagoskin. The editorial staff included representatives of the intelligentsia – exiled utopian revolutionary M.V. Butashevich-Petrashkevsky, talented publicist and member of the Petrashevsky Circle F.N. Lvov, merchant and journalist M.P. Shestunov, P.A. Gorbunov, who was educated in the family of Decembrist S.P. Trubetskoy, writer, Transbaikalian local historian and botanist, Nerchinsk merchant M.A. Zenzinov, historian and researcher of the Amur A.S. Sgibnev.<sup>4</sup> The newspaper covered the most important problems of the development of Eastern Siberia and the lands in the Amur River basin that had recently become part of the Russian Empire, as well as the interaction of these territories with China, Japan, America, India and Oceania.

Another media outlet that comprehensively covered the life of the Amur region was the newspaper “Vostochnoye Pomorie,” which was published in Nikolaevsk from June 1865 for a year and a half. It was military governor of the Primorskaya oblast P.V. Kazakevich that took an active part in the creation of the “Vostochnoye Pomorie;” thanks to his efforts printing presses and fonts were brought to Nikolaevsk-on-Amur. In 1865 the newspaper was published weekly and contained six pages. From 1866, it was published twice a month, and there were four pages. One could subscribe to the newspaper in Nikolaevsk-on-Amur, Irkutsk, Kronstadt and St. Petersburg.

The editorial board of the newspaper included mainly naval officers and hydrographers – V.M. Babkin, A.A. Boltin, M.A. Klykov, N.A. Chuprov, D. Afanasiev. The editor-in-chief was F.K. Yakimov, a Russian officer, the Crimean War veteran, who from 1857 was a teacher of history and geography, the head of the library at the Naval School

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<sup>4</sup> “Amur, gazeta,” in *Entsiklopediya i novosti Priangar'ya*, accessed August 2, 2021, [http://irkipedia.ru/content/amur\\_gazeta#new-simple-table-of-contents-2](http://irkipedia.ru/content/amur_gazeta#new-simple-table-of-contents-2)

of Nikolaevsk.<sup>5</sup> Along with the publishing of military directives and orders of port commanders, hydrographic and metrological data, the newspaper had a heading “Current state of Nikolaevsk and Amur,” which contained materials on the most interesting events that took place in the life of the Amur region. It was these materials that could contribute to the formation of a positive image of the region in the public opinion of the country.

The creation and work of the newspapers “Amur” and “Vostochnoe Pomorie” occurred almost simultaneously with the Amur region’s entry into Russia. In the short period of their work both media outlets not only covered the events unfolding in the Far East, but also made a significant contribution to reflecting the life in the territories remote from the center of Russia, which often attracted the attention of subjects of the empire.

The newspapers “Amur” and “Vostochnoe Pomorie” were published in Russian and had a regional status. Despite this, they had a wide readership outside the Amur region as well. The characteristic features of the media outlets were their objective coverage of the real situation, accuracy in describing details and the availability of proposals for the development of commercial and industrial activities in the Amur region for foreign entrepreneurs. The comprehensive coverage of the Amur region life on the pages of periodicals met the interests of people who were not afraid to conquer the vast Far East expanses and had special organizational qualities.

In the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century Russian entrepreneurs did not immediately show interest in the development of the Far East outskirts, which forced the country’s authorities to create conditions for attracting foreigners to the Amur region. Noting the difficulties of the Amur region development in the first half of the 1860s, the newspapers “Amur” and “Vostochnoe Pomorie” covered the history of foreign presence in the region. The media outlets wrote a lot about foreign travelers who visited the Amur lands in different years. However, the newspaper employees considered the best option for the Amur region development the creation of conditions for conducting trade and economic activities for everyone, regardless of nationality and state affiliation.

### **Newspapers on the Prospects for Foreign Business Development in the Amur Region**

The news of the Amur region’s entry into Russia in the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century quickly spread in the world community. The newspaper “Amur” wrote that in the “foreign Slavic lands” of Europe, this event was perceived as the global “triumph – not only Russian, but also all-Slavic.”<sup>6</sup> After the conclusion of the Treaty of Aigun (1858) and the Convention of Peking (1860), the territories of Russia’s Amur region began to be actively involved in trade and economic interaction with the countries of the Pacific region. The newspapers began to discuss the prospects for the region development, the mechanisms for attracting “all sorts of foreigners” to the Amur region “for the benefit of Russia.”<sup>7</sup>

In the 1850–1860s, there appeared large settlements in the Far East (Nikolaevsk,<sup>8</sup> Vladivostok, Blagoveshchensk, Khabarovsk), which gradually turned into centers of economic and cultural life in this part of the country. It was the establishment of permanent connection along the Amur, with which the Russian authorities linked plans for the development of Russia’s trade with the countries situated on the coast of the Pacific Ocean. On the other hand, foreign entrepreneurs tried to start commercial activities in the Amur region, which led to an increase in the number of foreigners both in the Amur region and in Russia’s Far East as a whole. In the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the ethnic composi-

<sup>5</sup> Trakalo, Y.U. “Stroki skvoz’ veka,” *Portal voennykh proektov*, Accessed June 4, 2020, <https://milportal.ru/stroki-skvoz-veka/>

<sup>6</sup> “Mnenie zapadnykh slavian ob Amure i ego kolonizatsii,” in *Amur*, June 28, 1860, p. 372.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> The city of Nikolaevsk-on-Amur until 1926 was called Nikolaevsk.

tion of the Far East cities was characterized by its national diversity. Along with the Russian population, there lived people from China and Korea. It was not surprising, since for almost two and a half centuries the neighboring peoples actively interacted with each other and had a long tradition of conducting joint economic activities. A new phenomenon was the increase in the Amur region of the number of people from European states and Americans who had their own interests in this region.

In the 1860s, the image of the Far East cities began to change: there were opened shops, bakeries, healthcare institutions, small industrial enterprises. Trading companies started their activity. The social sphere was also affected. A large number of merchants, including foreign ones, appeared in the Far East cities. According to the newspaper “*Vostochnoe Pomorie*,” by the end of 1864 in Nikolaevsk, out of 3131 residents, 59 foreigners (53 men and 6 women) lived in the city on a permanent basis.<sup>9</sup>

The position of foreign merchants in the region was determined at the legislative level. In 1856, they were allowed to conduct duty-free trade in the ports of the Amur region and Sakhalin Island, in 1859 – in all cities and ports of the Amur region, and from 1860 this provision extended to the ports annexed to the Russian Empire under the Convention of Peking. In addition, in June 1860, Alexander II adopted the law “On the rights of foreigners staying in Russia,” which equalized the rights of foreign and Russian merchants and opened up wide opportunities for conducting economic activities in the Far East of the empire.

Despite the difficulties and thanks to the economic policy of the Russian authorities, the presence of foreign capital in Russia’s Far East in the first half of the 1860s became significant. The newspaper “*Amur*” covered all the important official decisions on the rules for conducting economic activity in the Amur region. It was assumed that the declared principles could be of interest to merchants. Thus, already in the first few issues of the newspaper there were published two important pieces of information – the order of the Siberian Committee “On the trade in foreign goods and the navigation of foreign ships on the Amur” dated January 19, 1859<sup>10</sup> and the notice of the government’s plans to equalize the rights of foreign and domestic merchants in conducting trade.<sup>11</sup> Lack of competition and the government benefits made trading in the Amur region profitable business. As a result of informing the population about the measures taken by the government, trading in the Amur region began to revive. According to the newspaper “*Amur*,” in 1859 alone, 15 ships arrived at the Nikolaevsk port, of which 5 were Russian, and 8 were foreign. Goods worth 19 thousand 777 rubles 30 kopecks were sent from Nikolaevsk abroad (mostly wool and butter were exported). In addition, sable skins worth 56 thousand rubles and various manufactured goods worth over 26 thousand rubles were sent up the Amur.<sup>12</sup> In 1865, the newspaper “*Vostochnoe Pomorie*” informed that at the beginning of navigation (in May and June) 15 ships under both Russian and foreign flags sailed from Nikolaevsk by sea abroad and up the Amur.<sup>13</sup> They transported various goods and carried out passenger transportation.

It was studying the lifestyle of the Amur region population that could help solve the economic issues for arriving foreigners. The newspaper “*Amur*” was one of the first to write that foreign entrepreneurs were forced to act at their own risk, since they had no information about the composition of the inhabitants of these sparsely populated lands and could not determine what product would be in demand. A significant problem for

<sup>9</sup> “Nastoiashchee sostoianie Nikolaevska i r. Amura,” in *Vostochnoye Pomorie*, September 11, 1865, p. 86.

<sup>10</sup> “Mestnoe obozrenie,” *Amur*, January 19, 1860, p. 37.

<sup>11</sup> “Izvestiia iz Rossii,” *Amur*, February 3, 1860, p. 66.

<sup>12</sup> “Iz Zabaikail’ia,” *Amur*, May 17, 1860, p. 257.

<sup>13</sup> “Dvizhenie sudov v Nikolaevske,” *Vostochnoe Pomorie*, June 5, 1865, p. 6.

foreigners arriving in the region was their ignorance of the cultural and national characteristics of the peoples living in the Amur region, who had their own traditions of conducting trade operations.<sup>14</sup> The Far East newspapers took on the function of providing information. The articles that appeared on the features of life and trade in the nearest Asian states – China<sup>15</sup> and Japan,<sup>16</sup> as well as on the way of life of the peoples inhabiting the territories of the Lower Amur and the coastal strip of the Tatar Strait,<sup>17</sup> were of review character. At the same time, subsequently such publications began to be used for educational purposes, becoming a historical source for the study of Asian countries in the Oriental Institute, which was opened in 1899 in Vladivostok.

It should be noted that the interaction between peoples gradually penetrated into everyday life. The strengthening of intercultural dialogue was influenced mainly by economic or social factors. Any information, even small in volume, that contributed to a positive perception of certain peoples, was published in the newspaper “Amur.” In one of the newspaper articles in the column “Correspondence,” there was described the difficult situation with food that had developed by the spring of 1860 in the Amur region. By that time, Russia’s Far East cities had practically run out of food. In Blagoveshchensk, tea, wine, sugar, butter, cereals, and cigarettes became scarce. The shops of Blagoveshchensk and other cities were empty. Russian merchants could not resolve the situation, since the traffic of steamships that could deliver goods was to begin only in April. The local residents partially solved the food problem with the help of the Manchurians, who actually saved Russian citizens from starvation by delivering them granulated sugar, candy and wheat flour.<sup>18</sup>

The aggravation of the economic and social situation in the Amur region was due to various reasons, including the low level of entrepreneurship development. Basically, the trade in bread and essential goods was in the hands of officials, or those merchants who were under their patronage. For many businessmen of that time, obtaining a trade permit was problematic and costly enough, which was a serious obstacle to developing their own business. Unlike the national press, this acute issue began to be actively discussed in the newspaper “Amur,” where it was noted in particular that the emerging bureaucratic system was becoming a hindrance to the development of the Amur region economy; attention was drawn to the fact that during a corn failure, in the region the trade in bread almost stopped, not to mention its export to China and other countries.<sup>19</sup>

Similar problems were raised by the newspaper “Vostochnoe Pomorie” as well. The newspaper wrote a lot about seaports as centers of international trade. Nikolaevsk was a major port with access to the Amur and the Sea of Okhotsk. In the 1860s, the Nikolaevsk port was actively rebuilt, becoming the center of sea and river trade. At the same time, according to the “Vostochnoe Pomorie,” by the beginning of the 1860s almost all trade in Nikolaevsk was in the hands of foreigners.<sup>20</sup> A similar situation was typical of other ports significant for the region. Thus, from Russia’s Posyet, which to this day remains the southernmost Far East port of Russia, in the mid-1860s Asian merchants supplied seaweed and trepang to the Chinese cities of Hunchun, Chifu (Yantai), Shanghai and Japan’s Niigata. During the navigation period of 1864, not a single Russian ship was

<sup>14</sup> “Svedenia o khode torgovli v Shankhae,” *Amur*, February 23, 1860, p. 109.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>16</sup> “Mestnoe obozrenie,” *Amur*, June 14, 1860, p. 310–312; “Neskol'ko svedenii o yuzhnykh gavaniakh,” *Vostochnoe Pomorie*, December 4, 1865, p. 159–160.

<sup>17</sup> “Naselenie Imperatorskoi Gavani,” *Vostochnoye Pomorie*, June 26, 1865, p. 23–24.

<sup>18</sup> “Korrespondentsiia,” *Amur*, May 24, 1860, p. 270.

<sup>19</sup> “Khlebnaia torgovlia v Sibiri i zakony ob ney,” *Amur*, June 7, 1860, p. 305.

<sup>20</sup> “Nashi domashnie interesy,” *Vostochnoe Pomorie*, July 31, 1865, p. 53.

involved in this trade, whereas 14 foreign ships were engaged in the transportation of goods.<sup>21</sup>

In the early 1860s, Russian merchants showed little interest in the territories that were deserted and remote from the European part of Russia. At that time, Russian entrepreneurs doubted the prospects for developing their business in the Amur region. In addition to the harsh natural and climatic conditions, underdevelopment of transport infrastructure and low consumer demand, there was bureaucratic arbitrariness. The newspaper “*Vostochnoe Pomorie*” wrote with regret about the not unfounded fears of Russian merchants to develop trade in the Far East ports, pointing to the possible negative consequences for the region from the economic dominance of foreigners. It should be emphasized that in the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century these issues could be raised only in those media outlets that took an independent position and sought for a deep analysis of the existing problems. Lack of Russian merchants’ initiative led to the fact that in the first half of the 1860s all important trade places of Russia’s Amur region were under the control of foreign entrepreneurs.<sup>22</sup> Despite the considerable volumes of goods they sold, the benefit for Russia from such trade “was negligible.” Unenthused about the comprehensive development of the Amur region territories in the long term, foreign merchants were determined to receive quick and easy money. On the list of goods they offered there prevailed alcohol or strong drinks, the proceeds from the sale of which were not supposed to be invested in the development of the Amur region. The newspaper “*Vostochnoe Pomorie*” raised one of the important issues that are relevant even today, related to the search for attractive conditions for the development of Russian entrepreneurship in the region.

It would be fair to note that the cases of organizing small enterprises by foreigners, which contributed to the development of the industrial sector of the Amur region economy, were positively assessed by the media outlets. Thus, the newspaper “*Vostochnoe Pomorie*” wrote with enthusiasm about the opening of a mechanical workshop, in which American specialists Barr, Wood and Eliot took an active part.<sup>23</sup>

Among the foreign merchants engaged in trade in Nikolaevsk, the newspapers noted German Friedrich Ludorff, who had his own shipping company in the city, and in 1856 he founded a trading shop in Nikolaevsk with a large selection of goods “at very reasonable prices.”<sup>24</sup> The entrepreneurial spirit of this man was also noted in 1862, when he was appointed German consul in Vladivostok. The newspapers did not publish Friedrich Ludorff’s biographical data; however, “*Vostochnoe Pomorie*” noted that most of the ships carrying colonial goods up the Amur belonged to him.<sup>25</sup>

A significant contribution to the development of economic activity in the Far East was made by Germans G. Kunst and G. Albers, who founded a small store in Vladivostok in 1864, which soon turned into the largest trading firm “Kunst and Albers.” The trading house was distinguished by a wide variety of goods, which attracted attention of buyers from different parts of the region. The firm “Kunst and Albers” was the first to build a power plant and a swimming pool in Vladivostok, donated money for the construction of St. Paul’s Lutheran church, and subsidized many projects for the development of the city. The German entrepreneurs also planned to expand their activities in the region through the trade in raw materials, in which the Amur lands were rich. Thus, the newspaper “*Vostochnoe Pomorie*” did not miss the fact of Kunst’s negotiations with the employees of the Nikolaevsk port on his purchase of 700 tons of coal.<sup>26</sup>

<sup>21</sup> “Koe-cto o gavani Pos’eta,” *Vostochnoe Pomorie*, August 15, 1866, p. 70.

<sup>22</sup> “Nashi domashniye interesy,” *Vostochnoe Pomorie*, January 1, 1866, p. 4.

<sup>23</sup> “Otkrytie novoi mekhanicheskoi masterskoi,” *Vostochnoe Pomorie*, September 11, 1865, p. 89.

<sup>24</sup> “Ob”iavlenie,” *Vostochnoe Pomorie*, September 25, 1865, p. 102.

<sup>25</sup> “Dvizhenie sudov v Nikolayevske,” *Vostochnoe Pomorie*, June 5, 1865, p. 6.

<sup>26</sup> “Svedeniia o razrabotke kamennogo uglia v Pos’ete,” *Vostochnoe Pomorie*, June 15, 1866, p. 54.

The regional newspapers tried not to miss even the smallest details in the life of the Far East cities. The newspaper “Vostochnoe Pomorie” paid much attention to the Chinese entrepreneurs of Khabarovka (later Khabarovsk), which was founded in 1858 and named after E.P. Khabarov, named by the newspaper “a famous adventurer... of the 17<sup>th</sup> century.”<sup>27</sup> In 1865, in Khabarovka there permanently resided 20 foreign merchants, representing three Chinese families. Every year in August, the number of foreigners increased due to Chinese merchants arriving on junks from the nearest town of Xiang-Sin.<sup>28</sup>

However, by the mid-1860s it was Yukhasin, one of the richest and most influential Aigun merchants who became best known in the Amur region. He controlled trade of Chinese people with Russians from Blagoveshchensk to Nikolaevsk. Yukhasin saw that people of different states conducted trade in the Amur region. Interaction with foreigners forced the Chinese merchant to master the Russian language and study European customs.<sup>29</sup> In the opinion of “Vostochnoe Pomorie,” Yukhasin's experience could be of use for foreign merchants who were just about to start trade in the Amur region.

The newspapers of the Amur region tried to write as much as possible about various important events that took place in the region, trying to create its attractive image among the local population and foreigners. The analysis of publications allows us to state that in the early 1860s Chinese and Japanese merchants were mainly engaged in small-scale trade in the Amur region, whereas European and American entrepreneurs tried to gain a foothold by founding their own business.

Gradually, the Amur region began to be considered as a promising territory for the implementation of major international projects. In February 1865, the Russian-American company planned to start building a telegraph line from Nikolaevsk to North America in order to attract enterprising people to the Amur mouth area and improve conditions for their trading activities. It was part of a grandiose project, which was to result in a telegraph line that would connect America and Europe through Siberia. One of the sections was supposed to be under the Bering Strait and further across Russia. The newspaper “Vostochnoe Pomorie” wrote about the prospects that opened up for Russia in case of participation in this project and rightly noted that after three or four years the telegraph communication would lead to “a new era and a new life” in Nikolaevsk, it would serve as an impetus for the development of trade and social life in the region.<sup>30</sup> The newspaper gave a brief description of the agreement concluded with Hiram Sibley (in the newspaper – Giram Sibley), the representative of the “American Western United Telegraph Company” (later “The Western Union Company”). The document contained 21 paragraphs, which, among other things, stated that during the construction period and in the next three years, American entrepreneurs could import duty-free from abroad through the ports of the Pacific Ocean all the necessary materials and tools, as well as food, clothing for workers serving the telegraph in Russia.<sup>31</sup> The consideration of the agreement provisions in the newspaper testified to the declared openness of Russian policy and ensuring of broad opportunities for foreign entrepreneurs in the Far East. The project was not developed, since a few years earlier a telegraph line between Europe and America had begun to be laid across the Atlantic Ocean. The current circumstances had a negative impact on the economic situation of the Amur region. In July 1865, the newspaper “Vostochnoe Pomorie” reported that all trading posts of the Russian-American Trading Company in Siberia had been abolished and its outlet in Nikolaevsk had been closed. This news was extremely bad for the Lower Amur territories, since the idea of building large industrial enterprises (for exam-

<sup>27</sup> “Nastoyashchee sostoyanie Nikolayevska i r. Amura,” *Vostochnoe Pomorie*, October 9, 1865, p. 111.

<sup>28</sup> Ibid.

<sup>29</sup> “Nashi domashnie interesy,” *Vostochnoe Pomorie*, September 15, 1866, p. 82.

<sup>30</sup> “Razreshenie telegrafa v Ameriku,” *Vostochnoe Pomorie*, June 5, 1865, p. 6.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.



ple, for the production of ice) in this part of the Amur region, according to the newspaper's staff, was postponed indefinitely. The attempts to develop trade in manufactured goods produced in the Amur region were unsuccessful, and the trade now concentrated in the hands of foreigners and "small speculators" was limited only to "antediluvian goods" and strong drinks.<sup>32</sup> Even the ongoing surveys by representatives of the American company could not significantly change the situation. The implementation of major international projects was postponed.

People from Asia (mainly China and Japan), Europe (France, Great Britain, German lands) and the United States came to the Far East due to various circumstances and pursued different goals. However, the newspapers "Amur" and "Vostochnoe Pomorie" focused mainly on highlighting the positive impact of foreign presence, supposing that the "practical view" and travel notes of foreigners would make life in the region more attractive.<sup>33</sup>

Considering the problems of attracting foreign capital to the Amur region, the Far East press took on many functions: information, communication, and the formation of public opinion. The publications of the newspapers "Amur" and "Vostochnoe Pomorie" in the first half of the 1860s became part of a nationwide cause aimed at attracting foreign capital to the Amur region and the development of Russia's Far East as a whole. Encouraged by the plans for the development of the Amur region, the newspaper staff published almost no materials about the severe climate, insanitary conditions, lack of infrastructure, increased crime rate, etc. This information had a negative connotation and could discourage foreigners considering the possibility of conducting trade in the region. The published materials could strike a balance between the intensification of foreign trade and economic activity in the Amur region and the security guarantee of the country's Far East borders.

At the same time, unlike many official media outlets of the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century, "Amur" and "Vostochnoe Pomorie" which were published far from the center of the country allowed themselves publications that were almost independent of the censorship of that time. Such circumstances made it possible to publish author's judgments about the prospects for the Amur region development. The critical character of some articles could cause officials' negative attitude towards the newspapers. Losing the authorities' support, the newspapers began to suffer financial problems, which led to the dismissal of employees and a decrease in the number of subscribers.<sup>34</sup> Despite the wide popularity among the population of the Far East outskirts, the newspapers were forced to close.

## Conclusions

The regional periodicals directly contributed to the formation of a positive image of the Amur region; they became one of the sources of information for foreigners interested in conducting trade and economic activities in the Far East. The newspapers "Amur" and "Vostochnoe Pomorie" followed the news of the changing Amur region, receiving information from people who were on the ground and were directly involved in entrepreneurial activities.

Unlike many publications of that time, the materials of the newspapers "Amur" and "Vostochnoe Pomorie" contained numerous details and nuances of the Amur region life. This made it possible to offer material vital and valuable for use, identifying the most acute and problematic issues in the development of the region.

<sup>32</sup> "Zakrytie trgovli Rossiisko-Amerikanskoi Ko v Nikolaevske," *Vostochnoe Pomorie*, July 24, 1865, p. 47.

<sup>33</sup> "Nashi domashnie interesy," *Vostochnoe Pomorie*, September 15, 1866, p. 81.

<sup>34</sup> "Amur, gazeta," *Entsiklopediia i novosti Priangar'ia*, accessed August 2, 2021, [http://irkipedia.ru/content/amur\\_gazeta#new-simple-table-of-contents-2](http://irkipedia.ru/content/amur_gazeta#new-simple-table-of-contents-2); Y.U. Trakalo, "Stroki skvoz' veka."

The increase in the number of foreigners in the Amur region in the early 1860s met the interests of both the Russian government and representatives of business circles of different countries. The Far East outskirts of Russia were gradually settled and integrated into the trade and economic space of the Pacific region. The policy pursued by the Russian authorities towards the Amur region, the developed system of legislative measures regulating entrepreneurial activity, increased the inflow of foreign capital to the Amur region. Foreign entrepreneurs received large profits from investing their funds in various sectors of the Amur lands economy. As the newspaper “Vostochnoe Pomorie” rightly wrote at the time, “foreigners go to places where they find marketing of their goods,” and nothing can “prevent them if they find a profit.”<sup>35</sup>

By the last third of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Far East had gradually turned into a large commercial and industrial region, for the benefit of which there worked foreign entrepreneurs, including Chinese merchant N.I. Tifontai, Finn O.V. Lindholm, German O.K. Timm, Frenchman Emile Nino and others.

The successfully implemented commercial initiatives of foreigners changed the attitude of representatives of domestic capital towards the Far East as well. By the 1870s on the Far East outskirts, Russian entrepreneurs P.I. Kuznetsov, D. Esipov, merchants A.F. Plyusnin and V.F. Plyusnin, M.I. Chardymov, S.Ya. Bogdanov, S.I. Khlebnikov, I.P. Pyankov, I.P. Emelyanov, I.Ya. Churin, I.R. Rafalov became well known. However, even then it was clear that it would be difficult for Russia alone to develop a sparsely populated and large territory.

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<sup>35</sup> “Nastoyashchee sostoyanie Nikolayevska i Amura,” *Vostochnoe Pomor'e*, June 5, 1865, p. 4.

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