

CHINA IN RUSSIAN SATIRICAL GRAPHICS IN LATE 19TH - EARLY 20TH CENTURY


Elena Starovoytova - *Saint Petersburg State University*

Abstract: *A cavallo tra il XIX e il XX secolo, con l'intensificarsi della politica nell'Estremo Oriente russo la stampa russa presta una maggiore attenzione alla Cina. Infatti, sin dalla seconda metà del XIX secolo la stampa russa vive un boom grazie alla crescita industriale e alla comparsa di nuovi mezzi di comunicazione di massa. Inoltre, l'aumento dell'interazione socioculturale tra i due paesi porta alla comparsa di informazioni sempre più diversificate sulla Cina nella stampa russa a disposizione di un vasto pubblico. Dalla prima guerra sino-giapponese in poi la stampa russa cita costantemente la Cina, e con l'aumento del numero di riferimenti alla Cina, autori e lettori inevitabilmente cominciano a formare un'immagine unica e talvolta contraddittoria della Cina stessa. È proprio grazie allo sviluppo dei mezzi di comunicazione di massa, che quest'immagine della Cina nella grafica satirica russa, di cui si occupa il presente articolo, si diffonde sempre più. E così, le riviste satiriche antecedenti alla Rivoluzione di febbraio del 1905 incentrate principalmente sugli affari internazionali, che hanno avuto una vasta circolazione all'epoca, ora possono offrire uno spaccato di come le pubblicazioni di massa valutassero la Cina all'inizio del XX secolo. Questo articolo, quindi, propone un nuovo sguardo allo sviluppo dell'immagine della Cina in Russia e alla storia delle relazioni sino-russe nel suo insieme.*

From the end of the 19th to the beginning of the 20th centuries, the government of the Russian Empire turned to an active foreign policy in the East, paying particular attention to its Far Eastern frontiers. At the same time, the strategic interests of powers, such as Great Britain, Germany, France, USA, and Japan, clashed in East Asia. The changing international situation in the Far Eastern region, as well as strengthening socio-cultural interaction between Russia and China, led to the growth of public interest in the Qing Empire (1644-1911) evident in a significant increase in the number of publications devoted to China in Russian periodicals of various kinds. From the 1890's, China became an object of attention for a variety of publications, including illustrat-

ed satirical magazines, which enjoyed great popularity among a wide range of readers. The cartooning of an event or phenomenon indicated acute topicality, because to become a subject of ridicule, it had to be in demand by the readership. Caricature images were a synchronous reflection of current political events. "It was during this period that caricature, thanks to large circulations of numerous and diverse periodicals, became extraordinarily widespread and became mass-produced" (Golikov, Rybačėnok 2010: 6). As Tat'jana Filippova (2016: 15), one of the leading experts on pre-revolutionary Russian satirical graphics, has noted: "The turbulent events of the early [20th] century served as a 'trigger mechanism' for mass creativity, including journalism, in the development of a new language of propaganda. The aggravation of foreign policy rivalry with other European powers over Russia's political and economic presence in Asia only added to the tension of these processes in journalism". Like any publicistic work, satirical graphics offer a certain interpretation and evaluation of events. The images placed on the pages of satirical publications were characterized by grotesque, deliberate pointedness. Caricature could be intellectual and aimed at a trained public, but more often it spoke the language of the mass reader and even the urban poor; the emphasis on visual perception gave the images enormous emotional power.

The main sources of satirical graphics during these years included the reputable weekly democratic magazine *Budil'nik* (*The Alarm Clock*), founded by the famous Russian cartoonist Nikolaj Aleksandrovič Stepanov (1807-1877) in 1865 in St. Petersburg. *Budil'nik* moved to Moscow in 1873, where it continued until the revolution of 1917. The circulation in different years varied from 2 to 4.5 thousand copies. The liberal-minded magazine *Strekozka* (*The Dragonfly*), which was published from 1875 to 1908 in St. Petersburg weekly, with 52 issues a year (8-9 thou-




sand copies) was another significant source of cartoons. The famous Russian writer Anton P. Chekhov (1860-1904) made his debut in this magazine in 1880. Both magazines were distributed by subscription in all cities of the Empire and abroad. During this study, the author reviewed all issues of these magazines from 1890 to 1917. In the issues of *The Alarm Clock*, about 50 caricatures of China from 1894 to 1905 were found, many of them on the cover. *Dragonfly* contained 45 cartoons depicting China over a similar period, most of which were published in 1904-1905. These two magazines, along with *Shut (The Jester)*, were among the most popular and widespread of their kind before 1905. These journals sought to reach a mass audience of urban men of varying degrees of education and social engagement and came to be seen as an indispensable attribute of everyday life at the time. Experts on the history of the Russian press generally classify these publications as 'liberal', but they admit that this characterization is very tentative, suggesting not ideological liberalism at the level of political debates, but 'everyday' liberalism among the reading public in capital cities and provincial towns. The authors and editors of these magazines did not claim to be part in an active ideological struggle, but rather showed political concern over events that were taking place. The distribution of the above-mentioned magazines to wide readerships makes them especially valuable historically, allowing an assessment of popular evaluations of China and revealing which China-related events resonated most with their contemporaries. The authors of a collective monograph recently published in Russia on the events of 1900 observe that despite the fact that the public in the capital was physically distant from the events taking place in the East Asia, "It was here that the public opinion was formed, assessments were made, and the agenda for discussions and debates was set" (Djatlov et al. 2020: 121). The assessments voiced in the press in

the capital were further disseminated among the reading population of the Empire.

Unfortunately, identifying the authorship of pre-revolutionary Russian cartoons remains difficult or impossible, because the vast majority were published anonymously or under pseudonyms that are not always decipherable. However, for this study, identifying authorship is not a primary task, since the concern is with caricatures as a reflection of the mood prevailing in Russian society as whole at a particular moment, rather than as an expression of the personal position of an artist. The main events that attracted the attention of publicists and journalists during the described period were the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, the Boxer uprising of 1899-1901 and Russian participation in its suppression, as well as the Russo-Japanese war in Manchuria of 1904-1905. In each of the periods highlighted, the number of mentions of China in the press of various orientations increased significantly.

The First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895) in Russian Cartoons

The armed operation to suppress the uprising in Korea, organized by the troops of China and Japan in early 1894, gradually developed into Sino-Japanese bilateral conflict. During this confrontation the Chinese army and navy suffered numerous defeats by the Japanese. By October of the same year, the theatre of military operations had already shifted from the Korean peninsula to the territory of the Qing state in Manchuria, and the port of Lüshunkou (later Port Arthur) was besieged. In January 1895 the Japanese landed in the strategically important Shandong Province. In February they reported the capitulation of the Weihai naval base there and the defeat of the Chinese Northern Fleet. As a result, the Chinese side was forced to initiate peace negotiations as soon as possible, the beginning of which Japan, in turn, delayed in every way possible in



an attempt to occupy as many Chinese territories as possible. Armistice negotiations began in March 1895 at Shimonoseki, where the recently removed Governor General of Zhili (Hebei) Province prominent Chinese dignitary Li Hongzhang (1823-1901) had been sent. The Shimonoseki Peace Treaty was signed by Li Hongzhang and Ito Hirobumi (1841-1909) on April 17, 1895, under the auspices of former U.S. Secretary of State John Watson Foster (1836-1917). Under the terms of the Shimonoseki Peace Treaty, China recognized Korea's independence, ceded to Japan the rights to the Liaodong Peninsula with the southern half of Manchuria, the Pescadores and Taiwan, and was required to pay Japan the contribution of 200 million *taels* of silver.¹ In addition, China for the first time granted to Japan, the right to build and operate industrial enterprises on its territory, and made other concessions: the opening of ports in the Yangtze River basin and the Grand Canal, the right of extraterritoriality, and most-favoured-nation treatment.

As early as 1894, Russian newspapers and magazines began to publish notes and caricature images devoted to the Sino-Japanese conflict. The Russian press initially treated the military actions of the two sides with a great deal of irony. Their methods of warfare were also questioned. The central characters of such cartoon publications - China, Japan, and Korea - were depicted in an extremely condescending manner: usually as people in traditional oriental attire, with unsympathetic facial features, who did not understand how to use modern weapons. As we can see in the first picture, the fighters, a stout Chinese man and a skinny Japanese man are trying to use firearms. The Japanese exclaims: "I finally caught you, you Chinese hound!" His enemy replies: "I swear by the dragon of fire - it's your last hour." In the second sketch in the series, both participants in the fight complain about fate, since neither of them was able to use the gun as in-

tended: "Ah! Oh, woe!" Switching to swords, the opponents fail again. "Maybe this way?!" - the first one asks. "Fail again", - replies the second. "If all else fails..." - says one of the fighters, trying to use elements of his own traditional hairstyle as a weapon. The second responds in the same way: "Defend yourself!!!" (Fig. 1).

As the war progressed, accompanied by the constant failures of the Chinese army and navy, the attention of the Russian press became more and more intense. Political analysts of the Russian Empire and the public began to wonder, "When did a very large Chinese turn into a very small Asian and a very small Japanese turn into a very large European?" (*Strekoza* 4, 1895: 4). We can see that in the caricatures of early 1895, placed in the section "Review of 1895", China was again represented as a mandarin in traditional attire, while Japan was depicted as a man with short-cropped hair in a Western-style military uniform, the prototype of which was obviously Emperor Meiji (1852-1912) himself. Japan inflicts various insults on China in the form of kicking and cutting off the traditional braid, subjecting it to terrible humiliation (Fig. 2).

The cartoon depictions of the terms of the armistice between China and Japan also reflect a view typical of Russian public opinion of those years, according to which it was England who mostly benefitted from the Japanese victory. In the following image, we see an extremely contented John Bull picking the 'fruits of victory' from a pear tree signed 'China', which a bent Japanese man in traditional garb is shaking for him. To the right are a tall Chinese dignitary and a short Japanese soldier in uniform. The Japanese man offers the Chinese a bouquet called 'friendship', but the latter is in no hurry to accept it. The image emphasizes China's prudence as well as its considerable territorial superiority over Japan (Fig. 3).

The coverage of the First Sino-Japanese war by the Russian press shows that there was no unequivocal opinion about China and Russia's policy towards it in Russian public thought in the late 19th century. Nor was there any sympathy for Japan. The liberal press, impressed by Japan's military successes, feared Russian intervention in the East Asia conflict, believing that it might adversely affect the country's interests. At the same time, pro-government newspapers and magazines expressed solidarity with the position of the Empire's leadership at particular moments. The brief military conflict between China and Japan had a significant impact on its immediate participants, fundamentally changing the political balance of power in the Far Eastern arena. It influenced both Chinese and Japanese social thought and ideology. In addition, the events of 1894-1895 contributed to the formation of new images of East Asian neighbours in Russian public opinion.

The Boxer Rebellion in China as Illuminated by Russian Domestic Satirical Graphics

As in the case of the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, the Boxer Rebellion became one of the most popular subjects for Russian journalism, including political satirical graphics, for the rebellion of 1899-1901 was the most striking example of the anti-foreign movement in Qing China. At the very beginning of the uprising, the domestic press usually described it as a conflict between China and the West. For example, in 1900, Issue 26 of the weekly *Budil'nik* came out with a cover dedicated to events in the Qing Empire. The cartoon was titled "Modern China". In the image, we see an old lady 'Europe' sighing: "Oh, my God! Everything is 'upside down' in here. I'll have to set everything up as it was before...". Russia was left out of the picture (Fig. 4).

In the spring and summer of 1900,

an increasingly active movement began to affect territories bordering Russia. In May of 1900 in some cities along the line of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER) there were mass demonstrations of Qing subjects who were dissatisfied with the foreign presence in the region. At the same time the movement was gaining momentum in the capital of the Empire. In June-July 1900, Boxer units, tacitly supported by the Chinese government, increasingly attacked the CER, and on July 10 they began a siege of Harbin. In late July 1900, Chinese artillery forces mobilized in Manchuria began shelling Blagoveshchensk. Having become a participant in the suppression of the rebellion along with Western countries and Japan, Russia could no longer withdraw from this confrontation and was drawn deeper and deeper into it. At that same time, the Russian satirical press was dominated by the view that Russian troops needed to defeat a 'threat', represented by China. Moreover, Russia was portrayed as the only force capable of so doing. On the covers of the *Budil'nik* of 1900 we see a Russian beauty in a *kokoshnik*, shooting at point-blank range a representative of the rebel movement with the inscription 'China' on his chest. Such illustrations show, in particular, that the participation of Russian troops in the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion was often perceived in the mass consciousness as a military conflict with China. The picture is entitled "A bone to pick with a stone" (Fig. 5).

By the end of August 1900, Beijing was already in control of allied troops. On September 12, 1900, Empress Cixi (1835-1908) was forced to announce the start of reprisals against the Boxer units throughout the country. As a result of the successful military action in Manchuria, Mukden (nowadays Shenyang) was taken on September 30, 1900, and in October 1900 Russian troops occupied Manchuria. Thus, the rebellion was practically crushed. Accord-


ing to finance minister Sergei Witte (1849-1915) personally, the Russian army, having achieved its declared goals, should have left China as soon as possible. This did not happen, however. Moreover, the Russian military, along with troops from other countries participating in the suppression of the rebellion, took an active part in the looting of the imperial palace in Beijing. At the same time, according to domestic cartoonists of the early 20th century, Russia appears as a kind of ‘liberator’ of China from the claims of third countries. One of the caricatures in *Strekoza* of 1901 called “Giant Elephant” depicts China as an animal, on which natives of various states – Great Britain, the United States, Austria-Hungary, Belgium, Germany, Japan, France, and Italy – attempt to climb, while a representative of Tsarist Russia tries to pull down one of the ‘hunters’. On the elephant’s back sits an elderly mandarin, easily recognizable as Li Hongzhang, who distributes ‘free treats’ in the form of candy to foreigners. The author suggests that China brought trouble upon itself by flirting with foreign powers, while Russia is called upon to protect it and preserve its integrity (Fig. 6).

As the allies succeeded in suppressing the Boxers, the theme of sympathy for China became increasingly evident in the pages of the Russian satirical press. For example, another illustration from the pages of *Strekoza*, portrays a Chinese man struck by what ‘sprouts’ the seeds of the ‘big fists’ have produced. The picture shows a representative of the rebel movement looking with horror at a flower with the inscription “378 million roubles. Remuneration to the European powers for their losses”. Auntie Europe is watching him carefully. The author seems to empathize with China, which appears to have got into this hopeless situation because of its own stupidity. The caption below reads: “Here’s ‘the little flower’ that grew out of the pot with the ‘big fist’.” (Fig. 7).

This same ‘empathy’ permeates another image from the same magazine, in which we can see two Chinese dignitaries with the sword of Damocles hanging over them, titled ‘European Terms of Peace’ (Fig. 8).

In both of the above images, Russia is absent. It was at this time that many Russian political and public figures asserted that participation in the suppression of the Boxer uprising was contrary to Russia’s fundamental interests in Russian Far East and East Asia. On the pages of the next issue of the *Strekoza* we can find an image imbuing sympathy for a battered but not broken China. The picture shows a Qing subject in a tattered outfit resembling either official or military uniform, looking around at foreign representatives leaving the Great Wall of China with bags, presumably full of money and valuables, in their hands. The caption to the image reads, “You may triumph! But I still have my big fist!”. The author suggests that the greed of Great Powers will be punished sooner or later. Even though China is now in a difficult position, it still has enough potential to retaliate against the wrongdoers. (Fig. 9).

The Boxer uprising became one of the most popular topics for Russian political satirical graphics during this period. Almost every issue of the *Strekoza* and the *Budil’nik* in 1900-1901 published materials related to the events and Russia’s role in its suppression. In general, they aligned with the popular view of that time according to which Russia’s armed forces were performing a feat by participating in the fighting against the rebels. At the same time, the cartoon depictions clearly separate Russia from the West and Japan. Some caricature images and satirical notes testify that Russian journalists even developed a certain sympathy for China, being torn apart by the Powers. The images of China formed by such publications were not devoid of contradictions, which



may be connected with the absence of a unified strategy in the Far Eastern policy of the Russian Empire.

The Image of China in Russian Satirical Periodicals during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905 for the control of Manchuria, Korea, and the ports of Port Arthur and Dalniy (Dalian), located on the territory of modern China, was one of the most tragic events in the history of Tsarist Russia in the early 20th century. The authors of a collective work on the history of these events even suggest that “the conflict, of course, meant that any system of global order that may have existed at the turn of the twentieth century was undermined” (Steinberg et al. 2007: 1), calling these events ‘World War Zero’. Russia’s participation in the suppression of the Boxer Rebellion in China led to a deterioration in Sino-Russian relations and weakened its position in the region. At the same time, Japan was making comprehensive preparations for an armed confrontation with Tsarist Russia. The Russo-Japanese negotiations on Manchuria and Korea, which took place in the summer of 1903, failed to frustrate the aspirations of the militaries on both sides. In the evening of February 8, 1904, the Japanese fleet, without declaring war, attacked the Russian squadron, stationed at Port Arthur, initiating short but bloody hostilities that lasted until September 5, 1905, as a result of which the Russo-Japanese War went down in history as the first major conflict of the 20th century.

Of course, representatives of the political caricature genre could not ignore the Russo-Japanese military confrontation. Even before the Japanese attack, an interesting image appeared in the first issue of the *Strekoza* magazine of 1904. The title reads: “Before the start of a new play”. In the picture, we see a Chinese and a Japanese acting as entertainers in a theatre against the

background of a curtain with the emblem ‘1904’ on it. The Chinese man wears traditional official attire. He again resembles the famous Chinese dignitary Li Hongzhang, already deceased by that time, but well-recognized by readers. To his right is a Japanese gentleman in a tuxedo and pince-nez, resembling Emperor Meiji. The costumes of these characters demonstrate the artist’s point of view, typical of Russian public thought of those years, according to which China was seen as a bastion of traditionalism and conservatism, while Japan had already become ‘westernized’ to some extent. However, it is noteworthy that due to the headdress, the Chinese native appears to be slightly taller than the Japanese - and therefore have a certain superiority (which may refer largely to the size of the countries). The whole image of a Chinese man commands more respect. The text, intended for an attentive audience, is also read by a representative of the Middle Kingdom. The hosts are listened to with interest by the audience – representatives of Austria, Turkey, USA, Germany, Great Britain, and France. Russia is not in the audience, which is interesting in itself.

The picture clearly suggests that China and Japan have a very important role to play in world politics in the coming year. China, though more mature and wiser, is in this situation only ‘voicing’ the ideas of the arrogant and self-righteous Japanese ‘colleague’. The caption under the image reads: “The curtain is not raised. Everyone is interested in the new play... There’s a sigh frozen in my chest. What the bright veil hides from us? Oh brothers, what lies ahead? The world is waiting for important events. Waiting for happy days – will they or won’t they come? May God grant that the new year will not be a ‘blank’”. Although in early 1904 it was already obvious that Russia was unlikely to avoid a conflict with Japan, the absence of Russia apparently means that the country is not ready to heed the speeches of its Asian neighbours as representatives of Western

powers do: in short, it will pursue an independent and autonomous foreign policy. Such an interpretation is congruent with the fact that in the early stages of the war and for some time after its end, Russian public opinion attributed responsibility for the events to the Japanese side alone. (Fig. 10).


In early 1904 satirical political journals expressed evident hope that China, weakened and outdated but still huge, would stand up to Japan, refusing to support it and remaining neutral. It can be assumed that such sentiments, in general, were characteristic of fairly wide circles of Russian society. One of the caricatures of the early days of the war depicts China as a cunning but clever mandarin who does not agree to give ‘furnished rooms’ to a ‘dangerous lodger’ Japanese – unshaven, bent, even without pants. The mandarin declares: “You ‘call’ in vain: I have rooms only for noble payers, and you’re trying to either *cheat* or *steal* something... You’ve made a fool of me once!” The last phrase obviously refers to the events of 1894-1895. There are no other characters in the drawing: Russia, which was directly related to the events described, was notably absent. In our view, this could mean that journalists of those years recognized China’s ability to pursue its own policies, skilfully manoeuvring between the Powers that harbour various claims to it. (Fig. 11).

Like the top leadership of the Russian Empire, Russian cartoonists clearly expected that official China would by no means support the Japanese warlord. Thus, in another image we see a large, respectful Chinese mandarin with a ‘Zhifu’ (Yantai) inscription on his mandarin jacket (*magua* 马褂) chastising and cursing a crooked Japanese marine with a swollen cheek on top of a ship that resembles a child’s toy. The caption to the picture reads: “Wow! How your cheek is blown, Jap! However, this is the highest reward for heroic insolence!” The artist once

again emphasizes China’s ability to pursue its own policy, independent of third-party forces. (Fig. 12).

Despite the hopes of the Russian authorities and the public, seeking to safeguard their interests in Manchuria, the Chinese government looked ‘through its fingers’ at the fact that since 1905 Chinese army units had increasingly fought on the Japanese side against Russia. In general, ordinary residents of the Middle Kingdom were more likely to support the Japanese. This may have been due, among other things, to cultural differences with the Russians and the language barrier. Also, the Chinese subjects feared for their lives and health because of the extremely brutal attitude of the Japanese military, so they preferred to cooperate with the latter. And of course, by balancing between Russia and Japan the Chinese authorities hoped to regain their sovereignty over Manchuria following the end of hostilities. Thus, in a sketch from *Strekoza* in 1905, we see an unsympathetic fat Chinese mandarin and a Japanese military man of the same height, holding each other’s hands together stomping on torn papers with the inscriptions ‘Neutrality’ and ‘International Law’: “What kind of International Law! We’ve got our own law!”. (Fig. 13).

The authors of satirical publications of those years emphasized the traditional feature of Russian foreign policy of appealing to the norms of international law. It was also typical of domestic public thought at that time to search for the causes of the war in the provocations and incitement of other countries. Russia was portrayed as the party that had to deal with the consequences of conflicts unleashed by third forces. China was most often shown as a victim, unable to fend for itself, or as a sleeping ‘monster’ harbouring a dangerous potential. Attempts to shake up this ‘beast’ would not bode well for those provoked it. Thus, in another cari-



capture from the Russo-Japanese War period, we see Uncle Sam and John Bull stroking and coaxing a half-dragon half-crocodile named China, trying to 'teach' it to attack the ships of the Russian Navy. According to the artist's idea, the dragon, although cunning, is prudent enough not to buy into the provocations of third countries: "Nudge me, nudge me, my friends, be my guests, I'd rather wait a little longer so I can get rid of you all at the same time!" Thus, China is both feared and respected by Russian journalists because of its perceived hidden potential, wisdom and independence. (Fig. 14).


However, many Russian journalists at the turn of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries did not consider China to be a full-fledged participant in international relations, capable of participating in communication with the Powers 'as equals'. There were historical reasons for this, such as 'The Boxer Protocol' on the results of the anti-foreign uprising in September 1901, which was effectively imposed on China by military force. During the signing of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty between Russia and Japan, the domestic satirical press once again emphasized that China was left out of the process, despite the fact that the terms of the peace directly concerned its territories. In one of the *Strekoza's* covers, we see a weeping Chinese mandarin of advanced years who cannot even get into the 'Peace negotiation' room in 'Portsmouth', because he is prevented by a blade labelled 'The Japanese'. The mandarin laments: "Oh, millions of dragons, what on earth is going on! Nobody wants to listen to me even now! As if what concerns me does not concern me at all!". (Fig. 15).

Another illustration shows a Qing mandarin in tattered dress against a background of ruined buildings. He looks sad and pensive, and sighs: "Oh, I've been pretty banged up! I wonder if there's something in it for me?". (Fig. 16).

Such attitudes may have appeared, in part, because to the artists' reluctance to damage the image of Tsarist Russia itself, by holding it responsible for the harm inflicted on China. Also, the caricaturists clearly desired to distract the reader from the results of the war, which ended with heavy losses for Russia and the signing of an extremely disadvantageous peace.

Conclusion

All the above images, once again confirm that attitudes towards China in Russian public thought in the late 19th-early 20th century were far from settled. The ambivalence typical of the mutual perception of Tsarist Russia and Qing China was clearly manifested in the pages of the press. On the one hand, Russian politicians and public figures saw themselves and their state as a force capable of 'modernizing' a rigid and stagnant China. In this sense, Russia was ranked among other Western Powers. Yet in general, despite the differences in assessments of China and the events taking place there in Russian publications of various orientations, most of them were united by the common idea that Russian interests in the region were opposed to the interests of 'Europe' or 'the West'. The Russian popular media of that period in every way condemned the attempts of Europe, Japan, and the USA to colonize China, seeing itself as the defender of the integrity of the huge Qing Empire, thus contrasting its own foreign policy interests in East Asia with the interests of the West and Japan. As for the image of China, it was depicted as a state absolutely different from Russia and, at times, one which might pose a certain threat to the latter. At the same time, late Qing China was primarily viewed as a victim of the colonial claims of the West and Japan, and Russia's mission was to protect it and restore universal justice. This attitude could not but influence the artists working in the genre of political satire, who



turned their attention to China as early as the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895. At that time, a unique visual image of the Asian neighbour appeared on the pages of popular magazines. Of course, the greatest interest among the authors and readers of those years, was the role played by China in the policy of the Russian Empire in the Far East. During the Boxer Rebellion and later, with the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, this image underwent changes and was supplemented, but at the same time it never became the image of the enemy.

The period of 1894-1905 occupies a special place in the history of Sino-Russian relations, which is confirmed by a significantly increased number of publications on China in Russian periodicals of various orientations. The constant presence of China on the pages of the domestic satirical press of this period testifies to the growing attention to their East Asian neighbour in broad strata of Russian society. The images that appeared on the pages of satirical magazines confirm the concept that representatives of various social and political groups and ideological currents in Tsarist Russia of the time had significantly different perceptions of China and Sino-Russian relations. Such contradictions in perceptions of China, among other things, were related to the absence of a unified long-term political strategy with regard to the Qing Empire in mentioned historical period. It can be concluded that the satirical graphics devoted to the issues of politics and international relations, so popular among the readers of those years, are one of the important sources on the history of the China's image formation in Russia at the turn of the 19th and 20th centuries.

It is also worth mentioning that in the late 19th-early 20th century the Russian press was actively disseminating the idea of the 'yellow peril' as part of the popular concept of a threat emanating from East Asia. As Guzej (2014: 17) has established, the

term 'yellow peril', previously found only in translated articles, entered the socio-political vocabulary of the Russian Empire around 1900, although notions of danger from the East were formed in Russia earlier and developed independently – in parallel with the spread of similar ideas in Europe and the USA. The concept of 'yellow peril' was interpreted rather broadly. Some authors spoke of a threat to the regional economic and commercial interests of Tsarist Russia in East Asia, others feared the emergence of a large-scale military conflict between representatives of the 'white' and 'yellow' races and even possible assimilation of the 'white' race by the 'yellow' race, seen as including Chinese, Japanese and Koreans, because Russian ordinary people did not make any particular distinction between representatives of these nations. There was a particular increase in the number of publications on the 'yellow peril' during the period of the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-1905, when all the attention of the Russian press was again focused on East Asia. Of course, most attention in those years was paid to Japan, but China, where military actions were taking place, often drew the attention of authors as well and a change in attitudes can be discerned. Between 1904 and the first half of 1905 many metropolitan, and then provincial, newspapers wrote that China was too weak to engage in hostilities and that it would be unable to oppose Japanese aggressors with its own forces and, therefore, needed Russian support. The ordinary Chinese, with whom the Russian military in the Far East met, were mostly described by the press as peace-loving, hard-working people who feared Japanese rule and were therefore sympathetic to the Russian side. However, as the failures of the Russian army and navy increased, attitudes toward China began to change. From the end of the summer of 1905, the press began to include their large East Asian neighbour more frequently within discourses of 'the yellow peril'.

Dissatisfaction was expressed over China's neutrality and its unclear position with regard to the belligerents. Qing subjects were increasingly accused of espionage and clandestine support for the Japanese military. Thus, the Russian press of 1904-1905 painted an increasingly negative picture of China. However, unlike Japan, China was not considered a direct enemy of the Russian Empire. After Russian defeat in the Russo-Japanese War and the conclusion of the Portsmouth Peace Treaty, the Russian Empire and Qing China distanced themselves from each other. The treaties of 1896 and 1898 were annulled, and a characteristic feature of Russian Far Eastern policy after 1905 was its dependence on its former enemy, Japan. Mentions of China in the satirical press became increasingly rare. After the publication of the Manifesto of October 17, 1905, and the subsequent 'Provisional Rules of Press', which abolished prior censorship for all urban publications, illustrated satirical magazines flooded the Russian Empire, but their discourses were primarily devoted to domestic political events. As for China, caricaturists showed little further interest until after the 1917 revolution in Russia.

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“Meblirovannaja komnaty. Kitaj” Меблированные комнаты Китай [Furnished rooms. China] (1904), *Budil'nik* 25, p. 2.

“Našla kosa na kamen” Нашла коса на

камень [Someone has ran into a brick wall] (1900), *Budil'nik* 29, p. 1.

“Ne vezët!” Не везёт! [Bad luck!] (1905), *Strekoza* 30, p. 1.

“Obozrenie 1895” Обзорение 1895 [1895 Review] (1895), *Strekoza* 4, p. 4.

“Pered načalom novoj p'esy” Перед началом новой пьесы [Before a new play begins] (1904), *Strekoza* 1, p. 3.

“Političeskie šalosti” Политические шалости [Political mischief] (1894), *Budil'nik* 35, p. 2.

“Postradavšij” Пострадавший [The victim] (1905), *Strekoza* 37, p. 7.

“Scena v Čifu” Сцена в Чифу [The Zhifu Scene] (1904), *Strekoza* 34, p. 3.

“Slon velikan” Слон Великан [The Giant Elephant] (1901), *Strekoza* 12, p. 7.

“Sovremennyj Kitaj” Современный Китай [Modern China] (1900), *Budil'nik* 26, p. 1.

“V Kitae” В Китае [In China] (1905), *Strekoza* 19, p. 6.

“Zloba dnja” Злоба дня [Spite of the day] (1900), *Strekoza* 44, p. 2.

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Notes

¹ Tael or liang (兩) - a measure of weight, as well as the monetary unit in Southeast Asia. In old China the currency was silver ingots, the weight of which was measured in *taels*. In the described period 1 tael of silver weighed about 37.8 grams.

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— Какое еще тамъ международное право! У насъ свое собственное право!

Fig. 13. Sino-Japanese alliance. Source: *Strekoza* 11, 1905: 3