

## VLADIVOSTOK: HOPES AND REALITIES

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The name Vladivostok is made up of two words that together mean "to possess the East," an accurate expression, for Vladivostok has long been the largest and most powerful city in the Russian Far East. In 1878 a local newspaper wrote, "If Peter the Great made a window to the West with St. Petersburg, Vladivostok is the window to the East . . . it leads not into the narrow Baltic Sea but into the enormous Pacific Ocean."

Vladivostok was founded in 1860. A group of thirty-one men landed there to set up a military post so they could claim Russia's rights to that territory. It was officially named in November of the same year, after the conclusion of the Aigun Treaty with China. In its first years, Vladivostok functioned as both a military port and a supply depot. Nourishing the Russian navy with food, fuel, and services led to the building of shops, storehouses, and a hospital.

But there was not much public life in Vladivostok then. The young city provided its people with little amusement or entertainment except alcohol and cards. However, growth in the city's population led to a rise in public culture. In 1879, ten years after Vladivostok was founded, the first city official was elected. The new city authorities began to make Vladivostok a more appealing place to live. Increased civic activity led to the establishment in 1884 of the first public scientific organization - the Society of Amur Region Studies. This organization later changed its name to the Geographical Society. Its aim was to study the nature and history of the Primorie Territory and to gather materials for a new museum.

The military, however, maintained a strong presence. On August 30, 1889, Vladivostok was declared a fortress and the military started building the fortification system one can still see today around the city. The following year marked the visit of the future emperor, Nicholas II, and the beginnings of the Ussuri railway. Railroad construction spurred the city's growth. As many as ten thousand workers would gather there during the summers to work on the project.

The importance of Vladivostok in the Asian Pacific region also grew. In the early 1890s, naval squadrons from China, Japan, France, Great Britain, and the USA visited the city. The building of a new commercial port was begun, and this construction

attracted workers from abroad, mostly from China, Korea, and Japan. The foreign workers lived in a special quarter of the city called the Korean District. There, the different nationalities were self-governing. Chinese and Korean theaters could be found in Vladivostok along with schools and churches for other foreign nationals.

Foreign and Russian capital developed the city. But the status of Vladivostok suffered after the decision to build large ports farther south such as Port Arthur and Dalny (Dairen) in China. Many considered Port Dalny unnecessary, so far was it from Russia; but the desire for a warm-water port was stronger than common sense. The folly of such efforts led to defeat in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-5.

In spite of the nation's defeat, Vladivostok prospered. Its position as a leader in the Russian Far East was beyond doubt, and its relations with other countries expanded with every year. Ships from all over the world dropped anchor in Golden Horn Bay. After the war, public life returned; new schools, libraries, cinemas, and theaters flourished. Many newspapers circulated throughout the city. New firms and other concerns were established and plans for further development were drawn up. All this activity was the result of substantial new sums allocated by the state treasury.

The Russian civil war, following the Bolshevik Revolution, on the other hand, is the darkest and most complicated page in the history of Vladivostok. In January 1918 a Japanese warship came to defend Japan's interests in the Far East. Later on, other countries, including the United States, sent their troops here. Finally, the Russian government decided to create a special Far Eastern republic, of which the Primorie formed a part.

After Soviet power came to the Pacific in 1922, many firms and companies continued to function as before. But within two years, the government's attitude to private property had radically changed. All enterprises and buildings were nationalized. Many of those people who lost everything, including foreign businessmen, left for Japan and China. Since that time Vladivostok has remained, as it was founded, a naval base. The city continues today in this capacity. But we hope that soon Vladivostok will be able to take advantage of its place in the Asian Pacific region, developing closer ties to its neighboring countries. This seminar is a good sign that we and the city will do so.