Japanese attacks. In exchange, Russia received rights to build a railroad across Manchuria linking Harbin with Port Arthur.

In Korea, the Japanese remained thwarted by Queen Min’s faction at the royal court (which now had the support of the Russians). They quietly plotted her assassination with the help of the Taewon'gun. In the early morning of October 8, 1895, a band of assassins stormed the palace, found the Queen and stabbed her to death. An immediate cry of outrage rose from the diplomatic community, two of whose members had witnessed the crime. In a daring countermove, the Russian minister in Seoul, Alexandre de Speyer, formed an armed escort which took King Kojong from his palace and placed him under the protection of the Russian legation.

After this, Russia began to establish ever-closer ties with the Korean government, training its army and financial experts while guaranteeing the security of the king. By 1898 all commands in the new Korean army were being issued in Russian. Yet no nation, including Russia, approached Japan in its ability to aggressively dominate Korea’s overseas trade; three-fourths of which was with Japan by the turn of the century. Japanese railroads, Japanese timber industries, Japanese telegraph services, and many other business interests controlled by Japan dominated life in Korea.

**Russo-Japanese Tensions**

Russia used the Boxer crisis to considerable advantage. While sending a few troops to the Beijing relief expeditions, the Tsar’s government argued that the railroad from Port Arthur must be protected from falling into rebel hands. Large Russian forces were moved into Manchuria, where they became a virtual army of occupation.

With Russia now her chief rival for hegemony in Asia, Japan sought to find a counterweight. The obvious choice was Great Britain, the czar’s ubiquitous competitor in the “Great Game” of empire. Japan persuaded Britain to renegotiate their “unequal” commercial treaty (a pattern soon to be followed by other nations), and eventually the British agreed to a formal Anglo-Japanese Alliance (1902), the first between an Asian nation and a European power. The stage for the Russo-Japanese War was now set.

Russia, besides widening its ties to the Korean court, gave even greater priority to its interests in Manchuria, where both China and Japan had requested Russian troop withdrawals. Tensions rose over Russia’s continued Manchurian deployment.

A few leaders on both sides sought to avoid war. Prince Ito, convinced that Japan could not