

HISTORY OF WARFARE • VOLUME 29



The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective

World War Zero

*Edited by John W. Steinberg, Bruce W.
Menning, David Schimmelpenninck van
der Oye, David Wolff and Shinji Yokote*

BRILL

THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR IN GLOBAL PERSPECTIVE

HISTORY OF WARFARE

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VOLUME 29



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EDITED BY

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On the cover: Ernest Prater, "Japan at Russia's Throat." Gouache. (Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, lent by Gregory and Patricia Kruglak.)

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This project was born in May 1995, when Bruce Menning first suggested the undertaking to John Steinberg as they were examining the Russian military history collection at the Finnish National Defense Library. Within a short period, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye and David Wolff joined the cause to assist in brainstorming, administering, and editing the collection of essays that ensued. Three members of the editorial board (Schimmelpenninck, Steinberg, and Wolff) visited Japan in February 2003, where they conferred with academics, diplomats, and representatives from several foundations, including the Japan Foundation and the Yomiuri Shimbun Research Institute. These conversations brought commitments of Japanese participation in the collaborative research effort and added support for the overall project. Professor Emeritus Haruki Wada of Tokyo University, Professor Shinji Yokote of Keio University, (who has since joined the editorial board), Professor Teruyuki Hara of the Slavic Research Center at Hokkaido University, and Professor Tatsuo Nakami of Tokyo Foreign Studies University offered to participate in a project secretariat based in Japan.

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the Slavonic Library of the Helsinki University Library, the Southern Conference on Slavic Studies, The United States Army Command and General Staff College, and the Yomiuri Shimbun Research Institute.

The Editors

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CONVENTIONS

Unless otherwise indicated, all dates are rendered according to the Gregorian calendar, then, as now, generally in use in the West. At the time of the war, Russians adhered to the Julian calendar, which lagged the Gregorian by 13 days. For example, when Russians in St. Petersburg celebrated the New Year on January 1, 1904, it was already January 14, 1904 in Paris and London. However, some essays within this volume deal almost exclusively with Russian domestic affairs, and in these instances a conversion of dates seems unwarranted and perhaps even internally confusing. The same holds true for the dates of individual events or documents that are Russia-specific. In all these cases, notations of Old Style (O.S.) or Julian calendar appear either in the text or in notation. In matters of other measurements, except where impractical, the modern metric system is employed.

Transliterations from the Cyrillic alphabet observe the US Library of Congress system, but without diacritical marks and ligatures. The exceptions are proper names and terms widely known in English by other spellings (e.g. Nicholas II rather than Nikolai II). Where Russian surnames were adapted from German or other Western languages, authors were permitted leeway to apply either derivative Russian or original versions, with some bias toward Russian to avoid confusion in cross-cultural word searches. Exceptions include the surname “Witte,” which has come into common usage in Western historical literature. As for Chinese words, this volume employs *pinyin*, while Japanese is romanized according to the Hepburn system.

Publication data for printed materials borrow from Russian usage to abbreviate the more frequent places of publication (M for Moscow, SPB for St. Petersburg, L for Leningrad, and M-L for Moscow-Leningrad). Sources from Russian archives are cited according to the Russian system, i.e., f. (*fond* or collection); op. (*opis'* or inventory); d. (*delo* or file), l. (*list* or folio page). The acronyms for the repositories themselves occur in accordance with standard abbreviations from the Russian:

AVPRI	Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Rossiiskoi Imperii
GARF	Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii
OR RGB	Otdel Rukopisei, Rossiiskaia Gosudarstvennaia Biblioteka
OR RNB	Otdel Rukopisei, Rossiiskaia Natsional'naia Biblioteka
RGIA	Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv
RGVAMF	Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Voenno-Morskogo Flota
RGVIA	Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv

INTRODUCTION

World war as a form of conflict spanning the continents, engaging their millions in an all-embracing do-or-die effort, and unleashing the enhanced lethality of industrialized combat, is arguably the twentieth century's most baleful legacy. Although historians commonly refer to Europe's Great War of 1914–18 as the First World War, this volume contends that in many ways the modern era of global conflict began a decade earlier with armed confrontation between Russia and Japan. The Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 was fought between an established European power and an emerging Asian power, but most of the combat occurred either in China and Korea or in adjacent waters, while the war itself was largely financed in third-party money markets. Other nations also produced many of the capital ships and heavy armaments that figured prominently in the conflict, while outside observers viewed the war as a testing ground for military theories and applications born elsewhere. Indeed, while the rest of the world proclaimed “neutrality,” larger alliance systems governed the conduct of states in other parts of the world, disciplining expectations and participation. Meanwhile, the non-aligned states of the world tended to identify their interests with one side or another, thereby contributing to a realization that the world was rapidly dividing itself into armed camps. When peace was restored in September 1905, it came neither at Shimonoseki nor in St. Petersburg, but in the American city of Portsmouth, New Hampshire, thus heralding the notion in global history that key decisions affecting Europe and Asia might be made or be substantially influenced elsewhere. Finally, the Russo-Japanese War aroused nationalist passions among peoples of the Euro-American colonial world, lending impetus to fledgling anti-colonial sentiments and movements that would continue to blossom during the twentieth century's two better-known world wars.

In narrower military perspective, the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 presaged the Great War of 1914–18 in ways that were either unknown, undiscovered, or undeveloped in its more recent European and American antecedents. By the turn of the twentieth century, the second generation of the industrial revolution had made

available for widespread military application improved technologies, techniques, and methods, the sum of which exposed greater masses of manpower to increasingly lethal means in ever more remote locales. During late November and early December 1904, the Japanese General Nogi Maresuke spent 10,000 casualties to capture 203 Meter Hill, a prominence that enabled him to bring accurate siege artillery fire to bear on the First Russian Pacific Squadron at Port Arthur. Not until Verdun in 1916 would isolated strong points claim so many losses amidst the same infernal context of barbed wire, hand grenades, incessant artillery barrages, and deadly flat-trajectory fire from rifles and machine guns. Similarly, at Tsushima in May 1905, Vice Admiral Zinovii Rozhdestvenskii's reinforced Second Russian Pacific Squadron would lose 5,000 sailors (and another 6,000 prisoners) and eleven capital ships during one hellish 36-hour span. Not until Jutland in 1916 would surface forces of similar size engage in combat on a similar scale, but without the same catastrophic losses and Armageddon-like outcome.

The sheer drama of these "last man standing" confrontations eclipsed the impact of various scientific and managerial advances that both made them possible and that were busily revolutionizing the nature of modern warfare. Both Russia and Japan mobilized mass cadre and conscript armies respectively of 1,300,000 and 1,200,000 troops. Railroads and steamships conveyed them to the theater of operations and, where possible, supplied them, at least with munitions, arms, and military equipment. The deployment and employment of field armies that eventually numbered more than a quarter million troops required a high order of planning and management skills, many of which were borrowed with varying degrees of effectiveness from the same industrial revolution that was so busily transforming the nature of combat. Meanwhile, masses of men and smokeless powder weaponry meant extended flanks and extensive networks of trenches.

As large numbers of troops increasingly went to ground, the same weaponry created the expanded and paradoxically well-populated, but empty battlefield. Battlefield positions might stretch more than 100 kilometers from flank to flank, while depths extended to more than 50 kilometers. And, battles, which had previously and mercifully required only several hours or several days, now might drag on for weeks to become identifiable military operations in the modern sense of the term. Meanwhile, each of the combatants with vary-

ing degrees of success mobilized the press and other forms of media to enlist the home front. Thanks to electrically-based means of communication, both the home front, and, indeed, the entire world might learn about maritime and battlefield outcomes within a matter of hours. In many ways the Russo-Japanese War more closely resembled the First World War than either the American Civil War of 1861–65 or the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71.

These and other features of the prototypical world war argue for a historical treatment of the Russo-Japanese conflict in its broadest possible context. Indeed, a major premise underlying the present volume—the first of two—holds that a proper understanding of the war should draw on a wide range of perspectives, sources, and languages. Otherwise, major aspects of the confrontation, including its vast geographic scope, its subtle and not-so-subtle social, political, cultural, and financial implications, and its profound impact both on the battlefield and beyond, would surely prove elusive. The multi-faceted nature of the war requires a study not only of Russian and Japanese materials, but also of sources in Chinese, English, French, German, and Korean, not to mention the tongues of those people who felt the war's impact, including Indians, Vietnamese and Indonesians. This volume breaks new ground by highlighting, *inter alia*, newly-accessible documents from the tsarist-era military, diplomatic, and intelligence archives. Almost a third of this volume's articles make use of these fresh materials. In unfortunate contrast, the Japanese military archives were, in large part, lost at the end of the Second World War, leaving behind only fragmentary collections. Still, reexamining such semi-primary classics as Tani Toshio's *The Secret Japano-Russian War* in light of new considerations and fresh insights can yield important discoveries, as shown by three of this volume's contributors.

Recent decades have witnessed new approaches to understanding the past, many of which add depth and insight to the concerns of traditional military history. Accordingly, this volume accepts only as its figurative focus a conventional examination of the war's campaigns on land and on sea. However, due emphasis also falls on the conflict's origins, impact, conclusions, and aftermath, all of which fall initially under the purview of traditional diplomatic history, then reach out to embrace other sub-disciplines. For example, the application over the course of the war of new technologies and scientific developments requires perspectives from the history of science and technology. By the same token, the vital role played by international

finance necessitates the involvement of economic history. Other considerations, including the much-discussed link between the Russo-Japanese War and the Revolution of 1905 in Russia, benefit from the perspective of social history. Meanwhile, wartime efforts to unleash the martial passions of millions, both under arms and on the home front, suggest approaches associated with both social and cultural history. Mention of the latter sub-discipline implies that literary scholars and historians of art have ample opportunity to contribute important insights into significant aspects of the conflict's enduring legacy. To be sure, culturally-oriented treatments, including those that focus on the popular press, graphic arts, poetry, and music, promise additional understanding of the war experience, and their substance forms an essential complement to the historian's traditional diet of dispatches, memoranda, diaries, official histories, and related materials.

Although military history lies at the core of this volume, coverage begins with the origins of the confrontation, both long-term and immediate. The first section, "In the Shadow of War," comprises five essays by historians who examine the remote and proximate causes of war from various vantages, including diplomatic history. Several authors weigh a whole century's worth of causes, while others analyze only immediate *casus belli*, whether geo-strategic (Korea/Manchuria), technological (completion of the Trans-Siberian Railroad), or political (the *Bezobrazovtsy*).

Volume one goes on to deal with the war itself and its various ramifications. The second section constitutes a topical treatment of the war's course on sea and land, followed by coverage of discrete aspects, ranging from strategy and generalship to tactics and military intelligence. The third section examines the various ways in which the war found reflection in the media on the home front. The illustrations that accompany this volume are best viewed in conjunction with these essays. The final section, "Impact," skips ahead to the postwar years when all the real and figurative war debts either exacted heavy tribute or paid bonus dividends. The legacies were multi-faceted, affecting military and financial establishments, anti-colonial causes, and the shape of memory itself. The Portsmouth Treaty, an undeniable signal that the United States might now pursue its destiny more energetically across the Pacific, it turns out, was initialed in Kittery, Maine.

This is the first of two volumes. Although the second emphasizes Asian sources and perspectives, particularly Japan, China, and Korea,

the current volume makes important contributions to our knowledge of East Asia. Each section has one or more papers based primarily on Japanese sources. Woodblock prints, a pre-photography vestige in the advertisement market, gained a new lease on life to cover the war, revealing dramatic moments, both real and imagined. Modern Japan's much-remarked myth-making penchant once again comes under scrutiny, this time on the continent at the Chinese, then Russian, then Japanese (and now again Chinese) naval base of Port Arthur. These assertions notwithstanding, there is an imbalance in this volume that favors Russian perspectives, and this imbalance awaits redress by East Asian scholars in the second volume.

Although breadth and diversity of perspective remain important objectives for the two projected volumes on the history of the Russo-Japanese War, the editors are painfully aware that gaps in coverage will likely persist. Consequently, the editors are optimistic that whatever lacunae exist among the fifty-odd articles slated for publication will afford inspiration for other investigators to fill the gaps. The intent is that this collection will provide fodder for many sub-fields of history, while stimulating debate over the collection's central premise—that the Russo-Japanese war was worldwide in its causes, course, and consequences.

ILLUSTRATIONS



Fig. 1. Kokyo, "Engagement at Port Arthur, 14 February 1904." Japanese woodblock print. Caption: "A picture of our destroyer advancing quickly like a bird in morning fog, venturing in the turbulent snowstorm, shooting and wrecking the enemy's ship at Lushun (Port Arthur)."

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Fig. 3. Migita Toshihide, "Japanese Sailor Kicks Captain off the Russian Ship *Steregushchii* off Port Arthur." Japanese woodblock print. Caption: "On March 10 (1904), during a close battle between Russian and Japanese battleships off Port Arthur, our seaman apprentice leaped onto an enemy battleship, drew his sword as he barked at the Captain, thrashed him from the front, and kicked him into the sea." (Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, gift of Gregory and Patricia Kruglak.)



Fig. 4. Migita Toshihide, "Private Ueda Attends to a Wounded Russian under Fire." Japanese woodblock print. (Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, lent by Gregory and Patricia Kruglak.)

РУССКО-ЯПОНСКАЯ ВОЙНА.

Бой при Чончжу 15 марта 1904 г.



Издательство "Литература" и "Искусство". Москва, Мыльников переулок, собственный дом.

60

[illegible]

Fig. 7. "The Battle of Chongzhou 15 (28) March 1904," Russian lithograph. The text of General Kuropatkin's telegram to the tsar about the skirmish is reproduced under the cartoon. (*Rodina*.)



Fig. 9. "The Japanese and Fortune." Russian lithograph. (*Rodina.*)

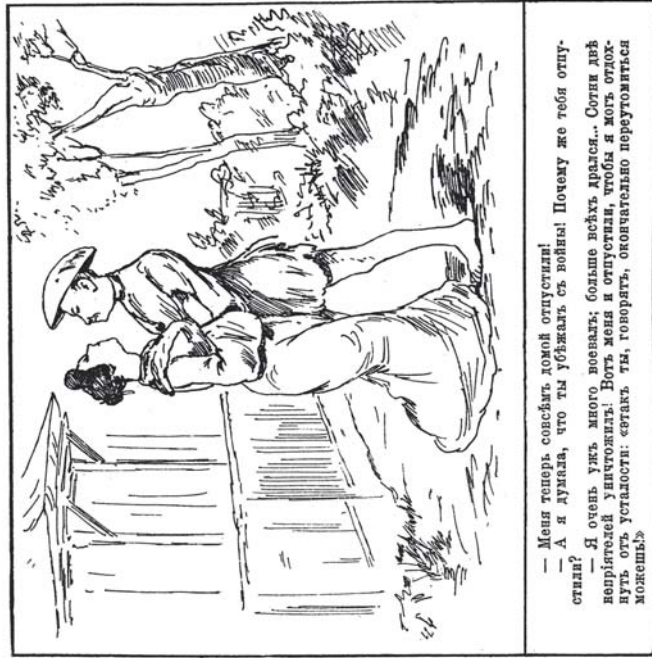


Fig. 10. "Japanese Lies." Russian cartoon. Caption: "— They sent me home permanently. — And I thought that you ran away from the war. Why did they send you home? — I've already fought a great deal; fought more than anyone... Killed two hundred enemies! So that's why they sent me home, so that I could at last get some rest: 'And so' they said, 'this is how you overwork yourself!'" (Rodina.)

→ Fig. 11. "Out, out, off with you, you worthless child!" Russian lithograph. The samovar is labelled "International Law." (Rodina.)





Fig. 12. "Mobilizing for the War Effort." Russian cartoon. Caption: "— Look at all the ladies of ill repute and chorus girls... And for some reason they're all old and wrinkled...—It's obvious that the strategic reserves have been mobilized from all towns." (Rodina.)

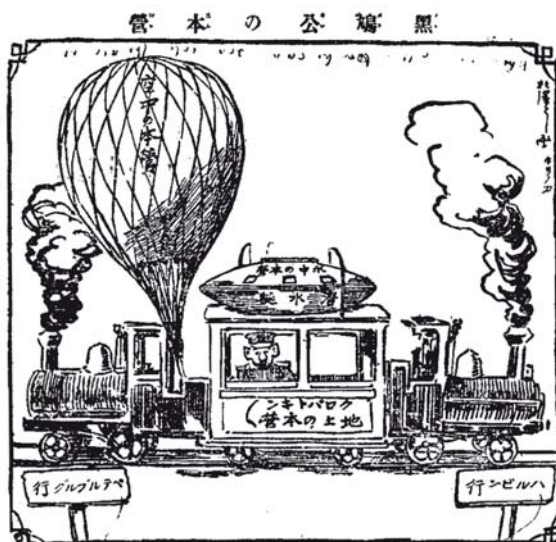


Fig. 13. "Kuropatkin's Means of Escape." Japanese cartoon. The caption explains that Admiral Alekseev invented the train, but General Kuropatkin developed the balloon and submarine, all the better to escape from danger by air or in the depths of the sea. (Herbert Wrigley Wilson, *Japan's Fight for Freedom*, 3 vols. [London, 1904-1906], III, 904.)



Fig. 14. "A Japanese Torpedo Devours Russian Ships." Japanese cartoon.
(Wilson, I, 231.)



Fig. 15. General Aleksei Kuropatkin, Commander of Russia's land forces in Manchuria, in
his favorite habitat. (Wilson, I, 79.)



Fig. 16. Field Marshal Oyama Iwao, Japan's land commander, resting after taking Mukden. (Wilson, III, 1397.)



Fig. 17. Rear Admiral Zinovii Rozhdestvenskii before leading the Second Pacific Squadron on its ill-fated journey around the world. (Wilson, III, 1093.)

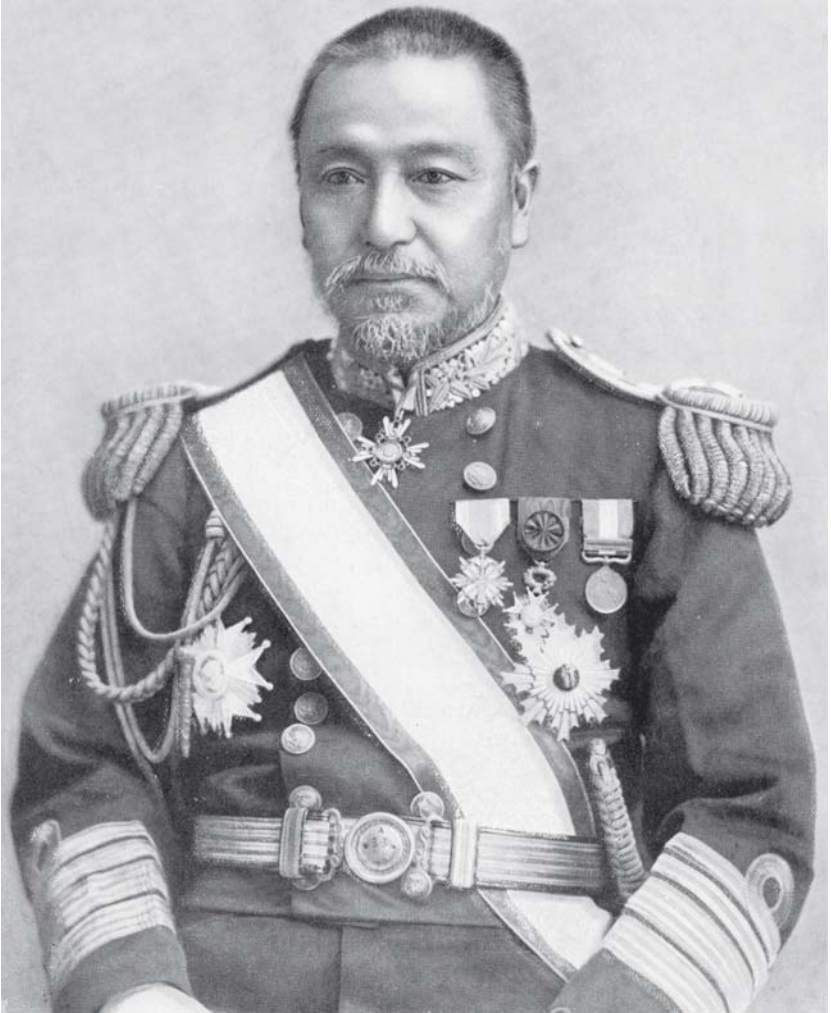


Fig. 18. Vice Admiral Togo Heihachiro, the architect of Japan's naval victory at Tsushima. (Wilson, III, 7.)



Fig. 19. Lt. General Baron Anatol Stössel (Stessel'), Port Arthur's commandant, who was eventually court-martialled for treason.
(Wilson, I, 67.)



Fig. 20. General Nogi Maresuke toasting his staff upon conquering Port Arthur a second time. (Wilson, III, 1159.)

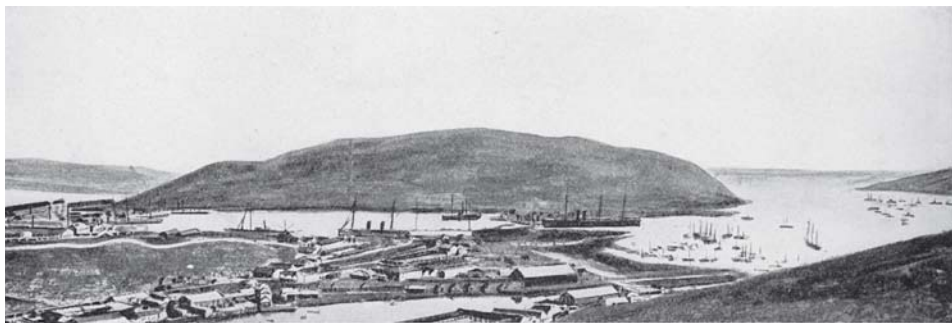


Fig. 21. A contemporary view of the entrance of Port Arthur's harbor. (Frederic William Unger, *Russia and Japan, and a Complete History of the Russo-Japanese War* [Philadelphia, 1904], 233.)



Fig. 22. A Japanese officer shows the topography around Port Arthur during the siege. (Wilson, II, 758.)



Fig. 23. Tsar Nicholas II gives his troops a rousing farewell as they head off to battle in the distant Far East. (Wilson, I, p. 271.)



Fig. 24. Japanese disembarking to fight in the Battle of the Yalu. (Wilson, II, 465.)

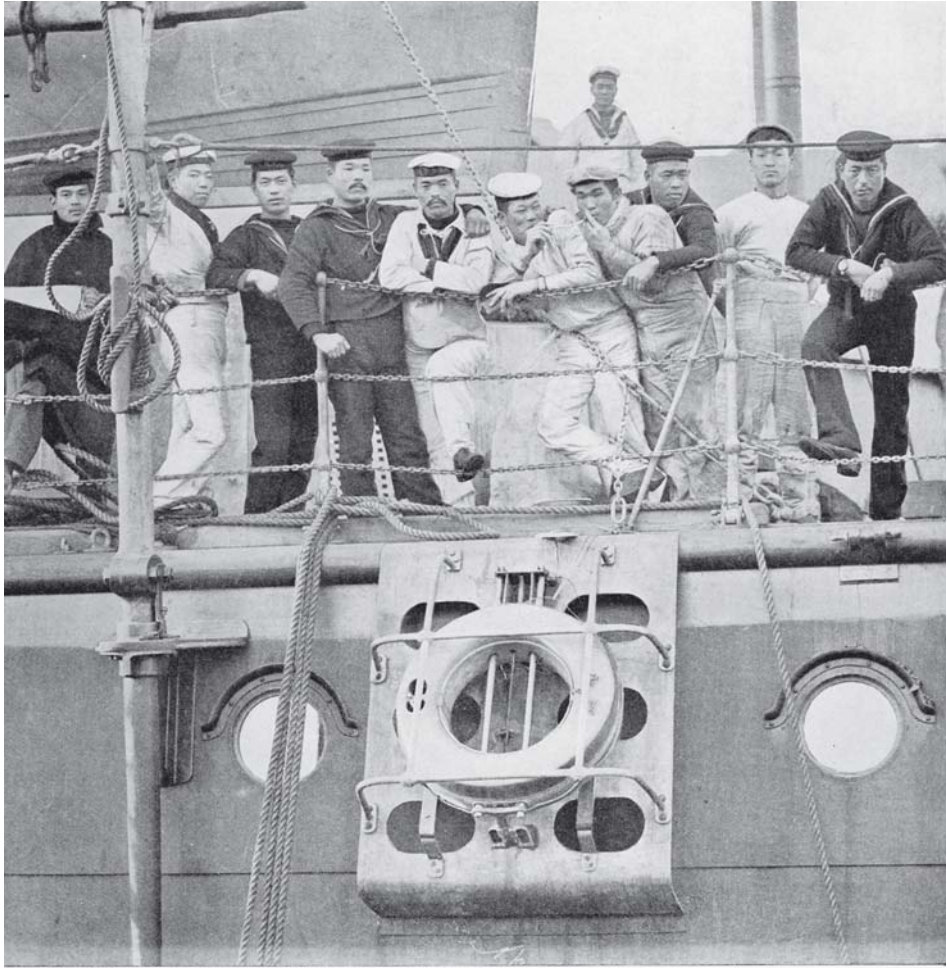


Fig. 25. Japanese sailors at ease on their fleet's flagship, the *Mikasa*. (Wilson, III, 1355.)

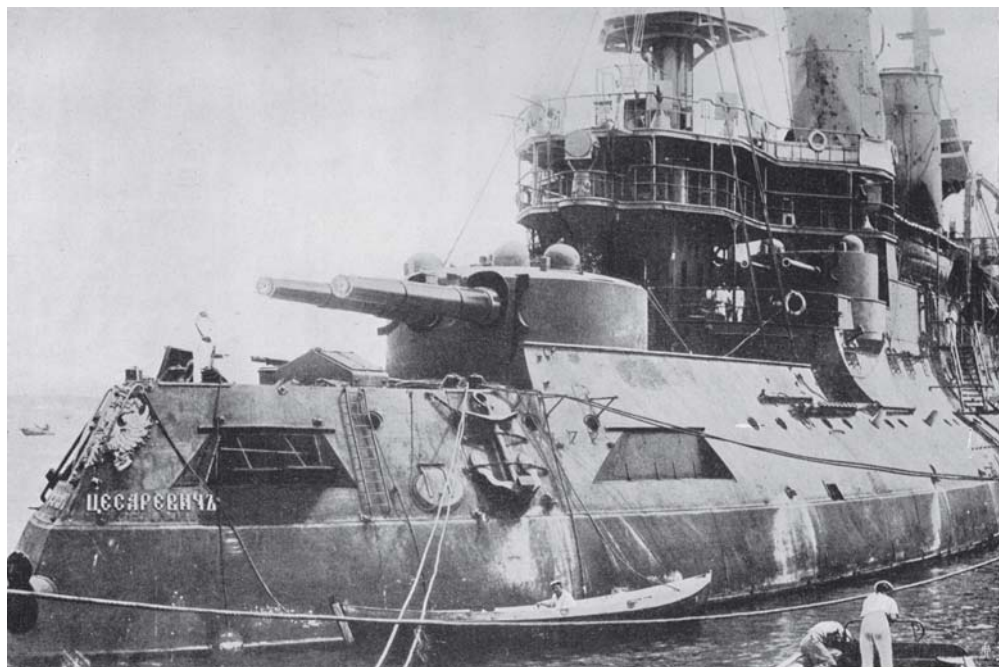


Fig. 26. The Russian flagship, the *Tsarevich* [sic], limps to internment in the German naval base of Kiaochow after being hit with 15 Japanese shells during the Battle of the Yellow Sea. (Wilson, II, 835.)

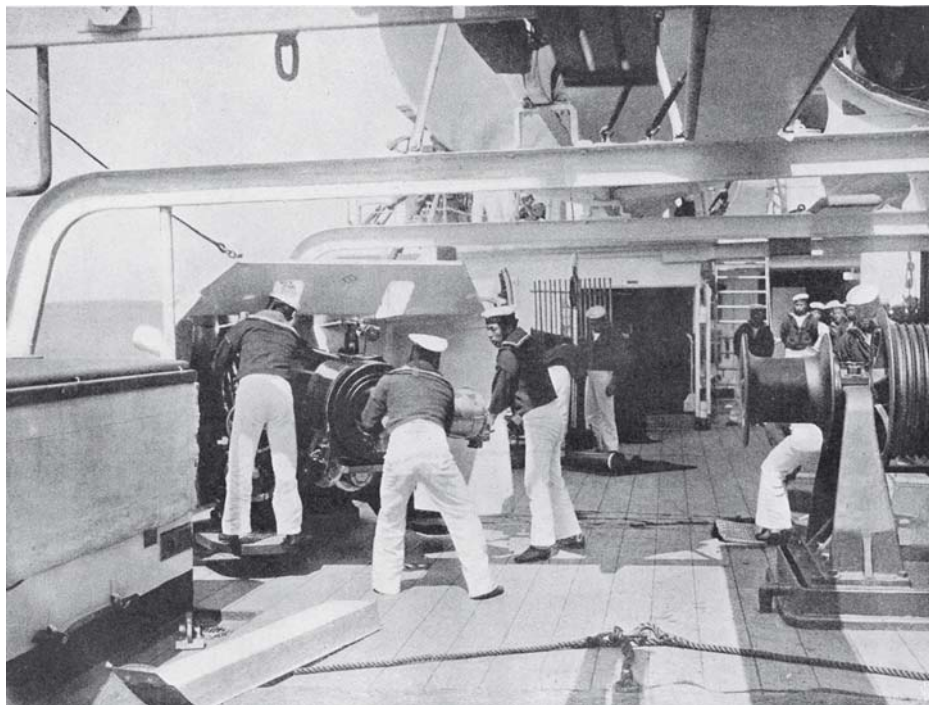


Fig. 27. The *Yashima*, one of the Japanese battleships supporting the siege of Port Arthur off shore. (Wilson, I, 182.)



Fig. 28. Port Arthur shortly before its fall to the Japanese. (Wilson, II, 777.)



Fig. 29. Russian artillery firing on the Liao Plain. (Wilson, II, 848.)



Fig. 30. Bamboo screens provide primitive but effective camouflage for a Japanese advance early in the war. (Wilson, I, 420.)



Fig. 31. Japanese infantry moving on a Russian position during the Battle of Sha-ho. (Wilson, III, 1079.)



Fig. 32. Japanese execute "treacherous natives" in northern Korea. (Wilson, II, 863.)



Fig. 33. Ernest Prater, "Japan at Russia's Throat." Gouache. (Arthur M. Sackler Gallery, Smithsonian Institution, lent by Gregory and Patricia Kruglak.)



Fig. 34. Ernest Prater, "When Rus Meets Jap then Comes the Tug of War." Gouache.
(Wilson, II, 508.)



Fig. 35. Selling war prints in St. Petersburg early in the war – an ephemeral trade. (Wilson, I, 274.)



Fig. 36. A Chinese serving tea to a wounded Japanese officer. (Wilson, II, 759.)



Fig. 37. Russian riflemen in Manchurian trenches late in the campaign. (Wilson, III, 1309.)



Fig. 38. Japanese dugouts during the relatively quiet winter months. (Wilson, III, 1033.)

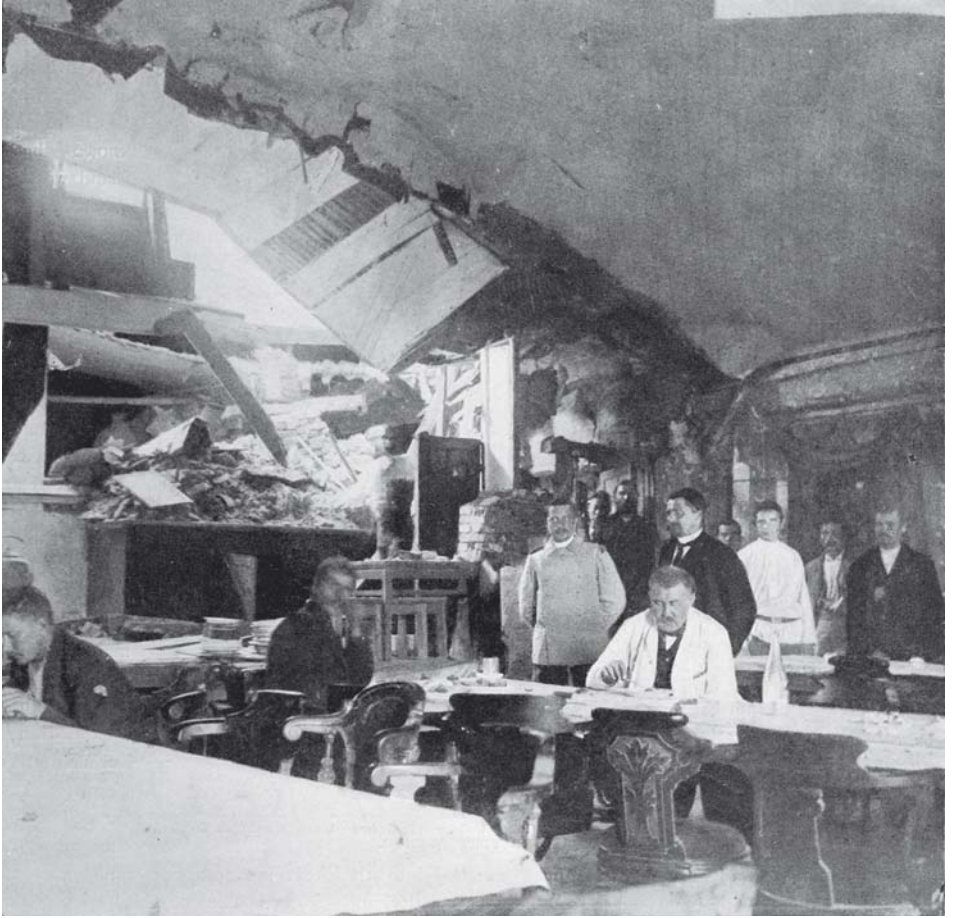


Fig. 39. Undeterred by the siege, a fashionable Port Arthur establishment carries on.
(Wilson, III, 1409.)

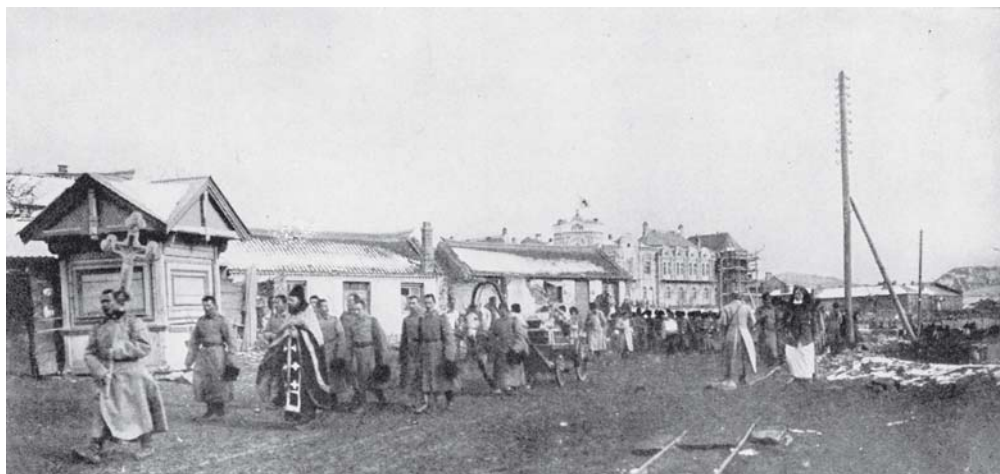


Fig. 40. Russians bury their fallen in Port Arthur. (Wilson, III, 1378.)

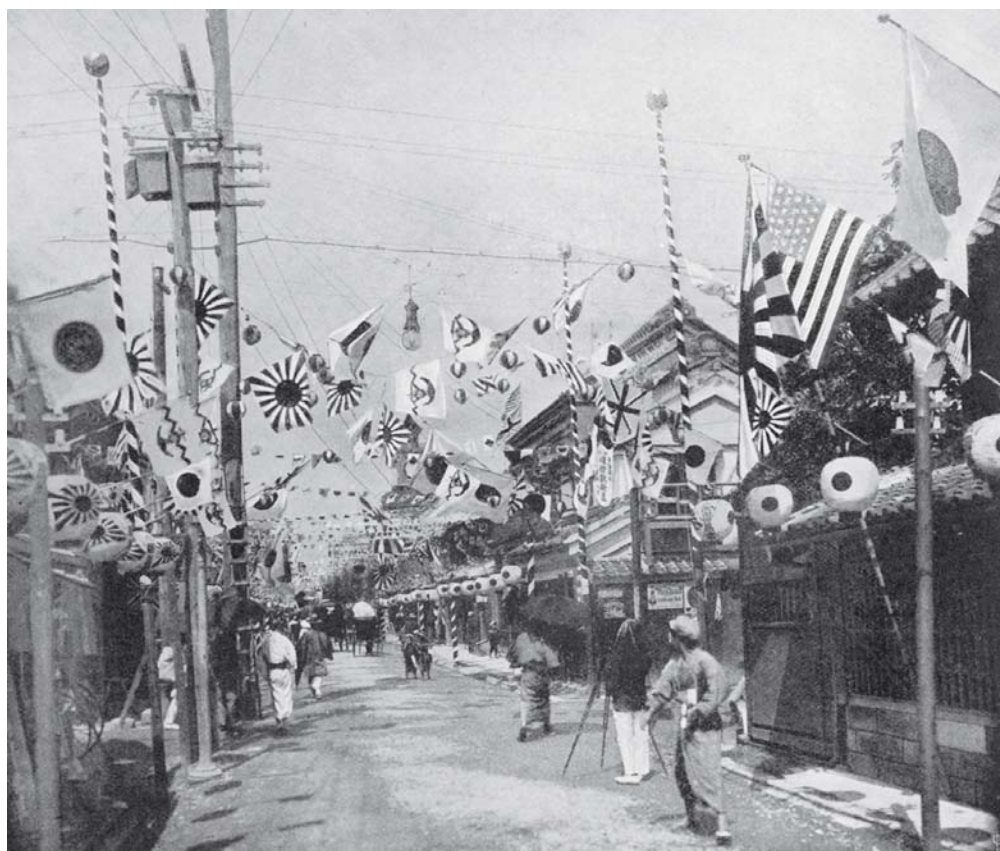


Fig. 41. Tokyo celebrates its victories and hails its British and American friends. (Wilson, II, 483.)

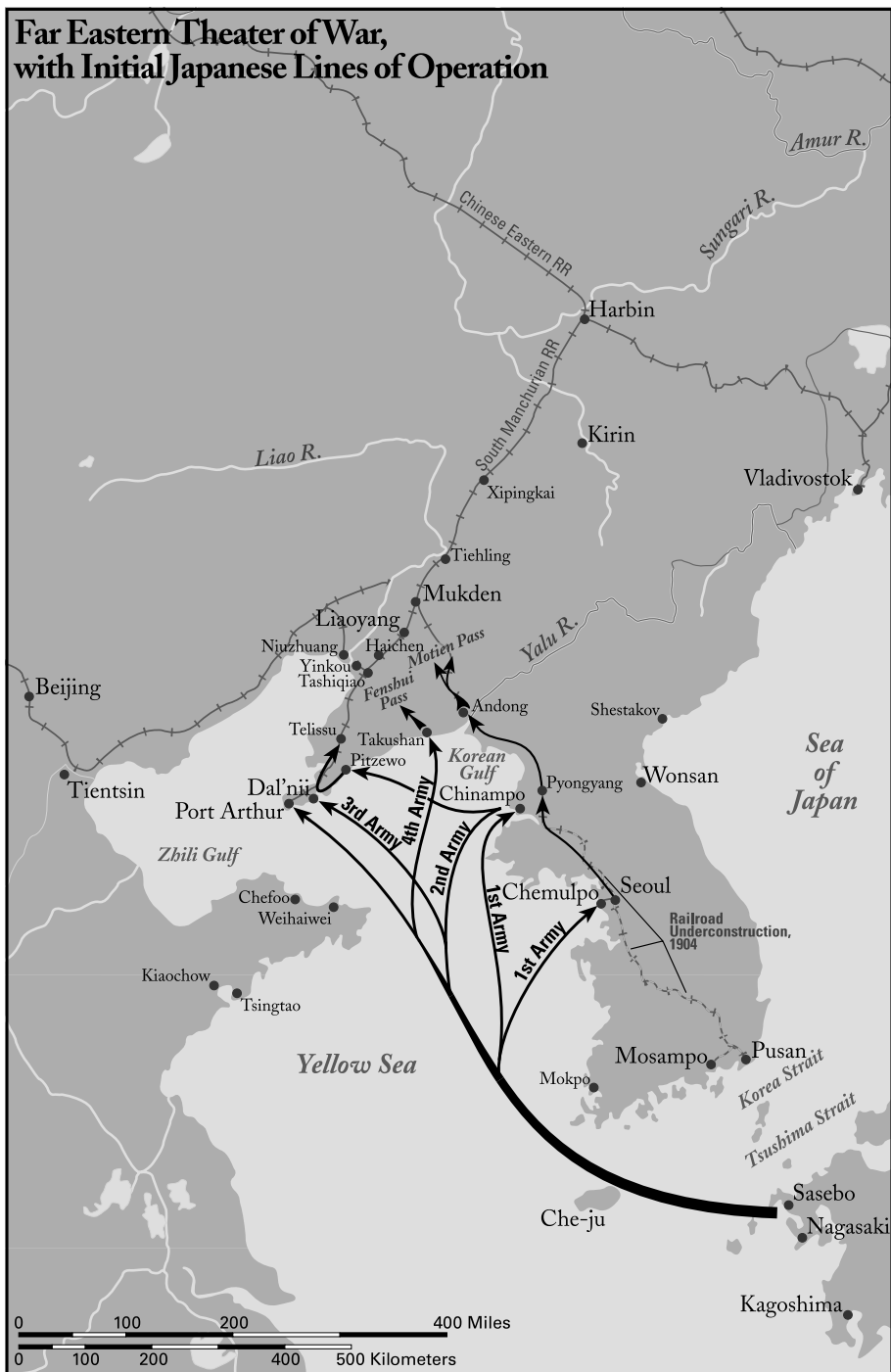


Fig. 42. Wounded Russian troops return to a capital in turmoil. (Wilson, III, 1014.)

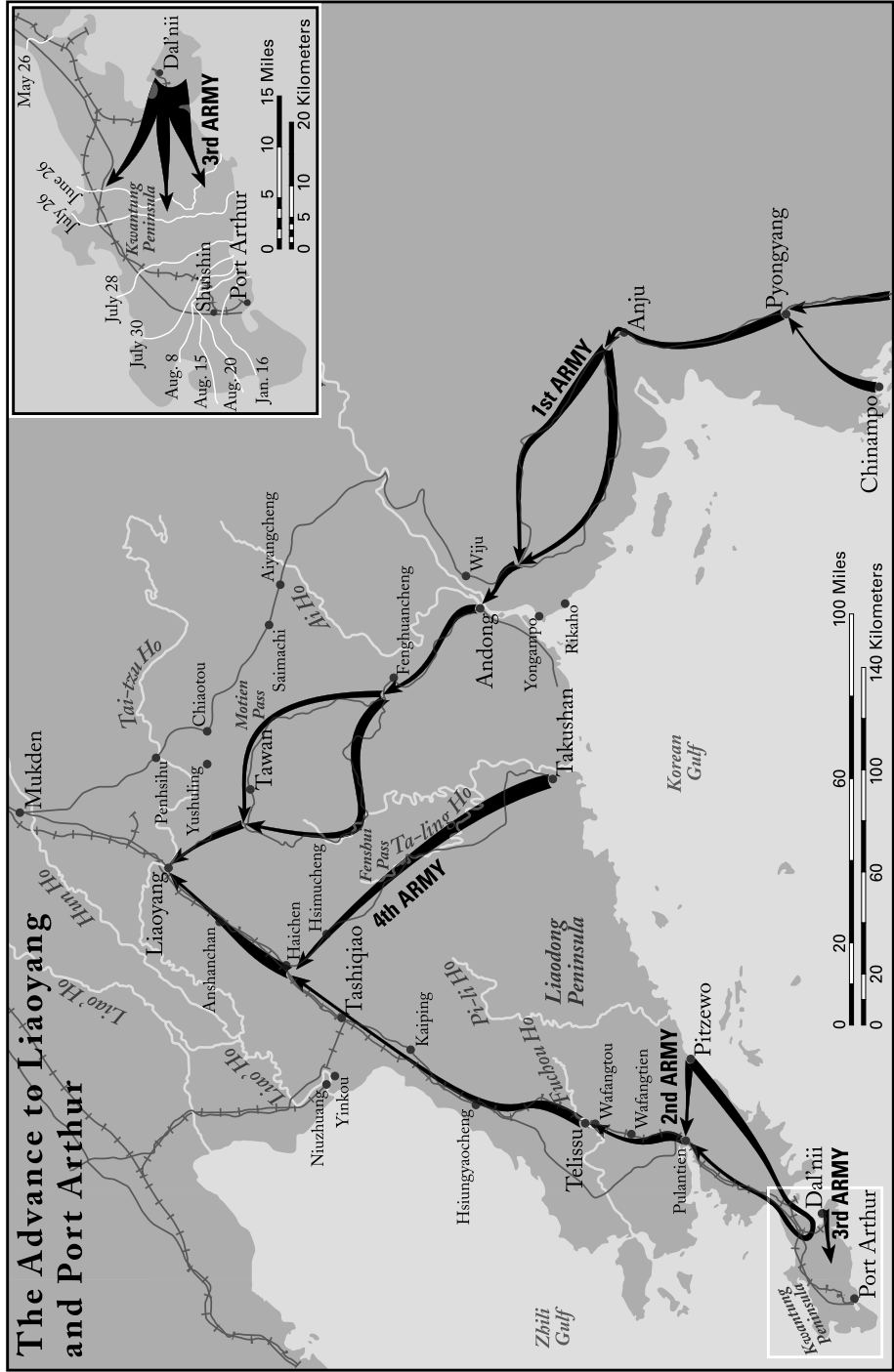


Fig. 43. American President Theodore Roosevelt introduces the Russian and Japanese plenipotentiaries to each other aboard the US Navy yacht, *The Mayflower*, before the peace talks. From left to right: Sergei Witte and Baron Roman Rosen (representing Russia), Roosevelt, Marquis Komura Jutaro and Takahira Kogoro (representing Japan). (Wilson, III, 1421.)

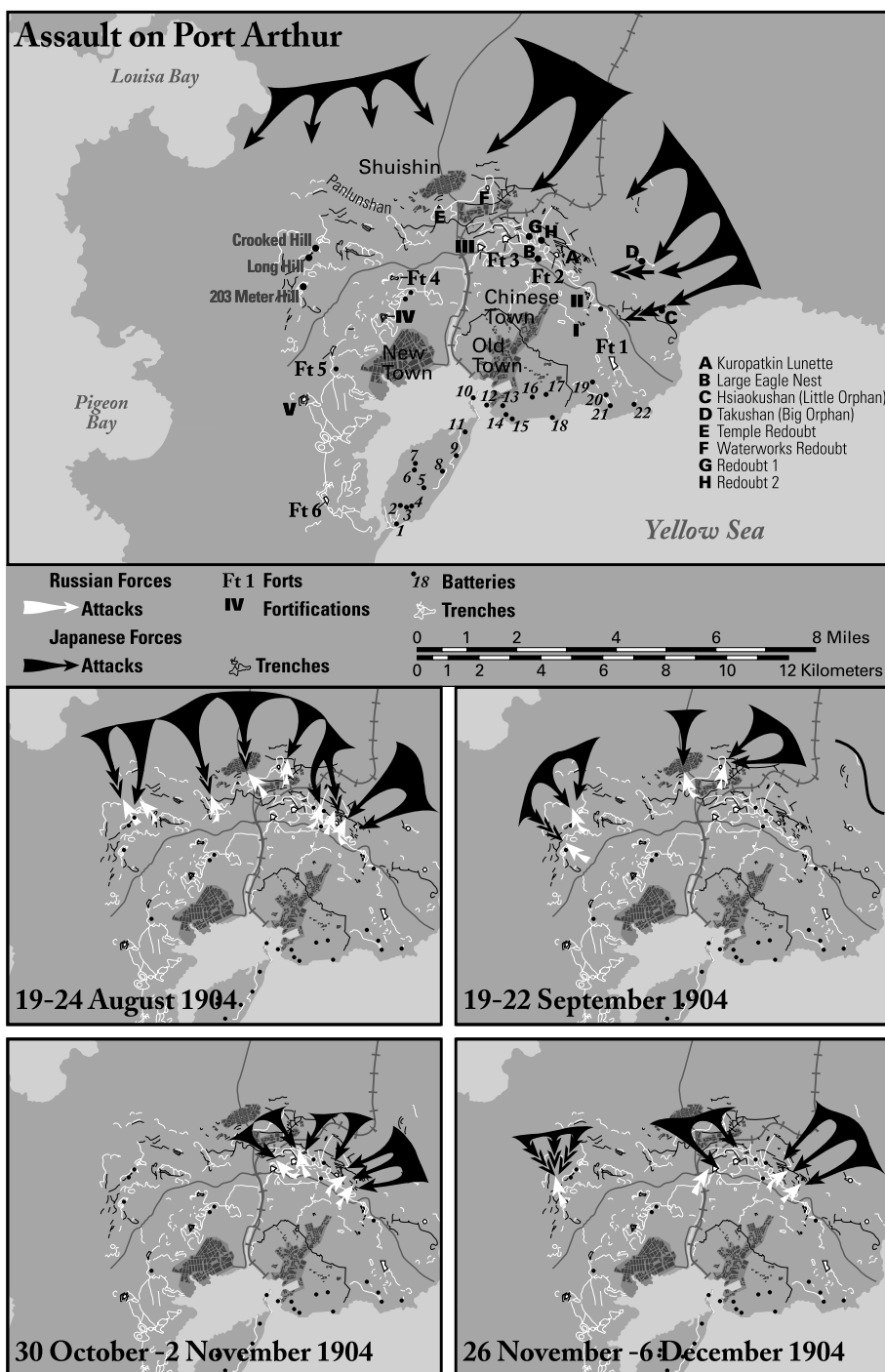
MAPS



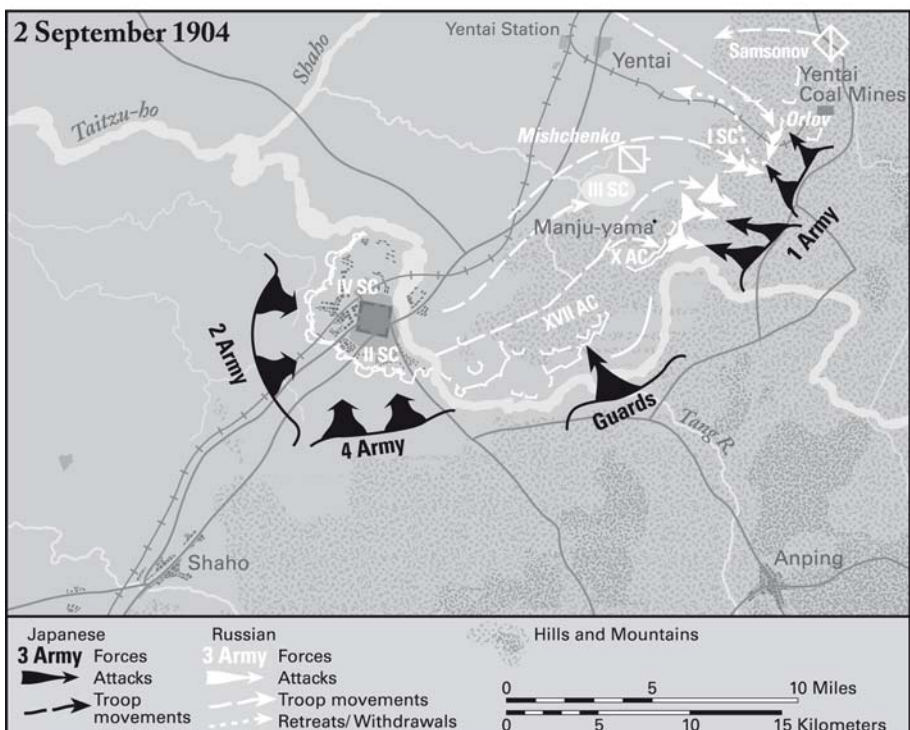
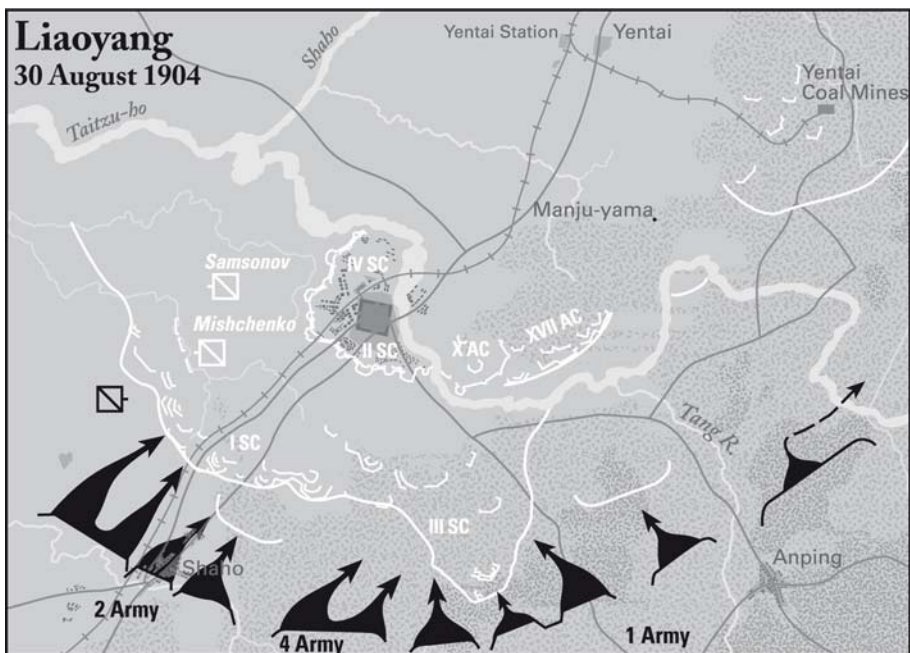
Map 1. Far eastern theater of war, with initial Japanese lines of operation.



Map 2. The advance to Liaoyang and Port Arthur.

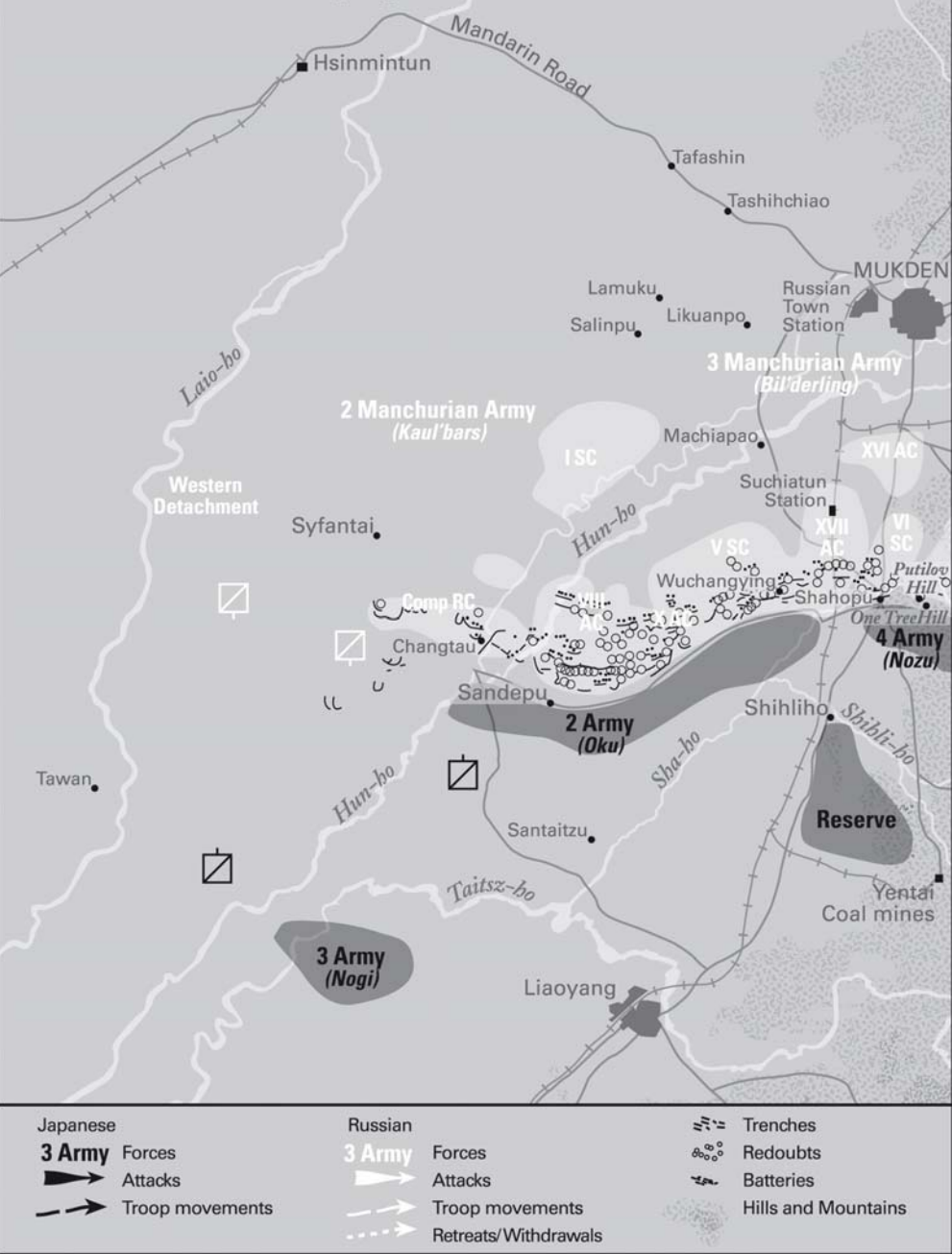


Map 3. Assault on Port Arthur (19-24 August 1904, 19-22 September 1904, 30 October-2 November 1904, and 26 November-6 December 1904).

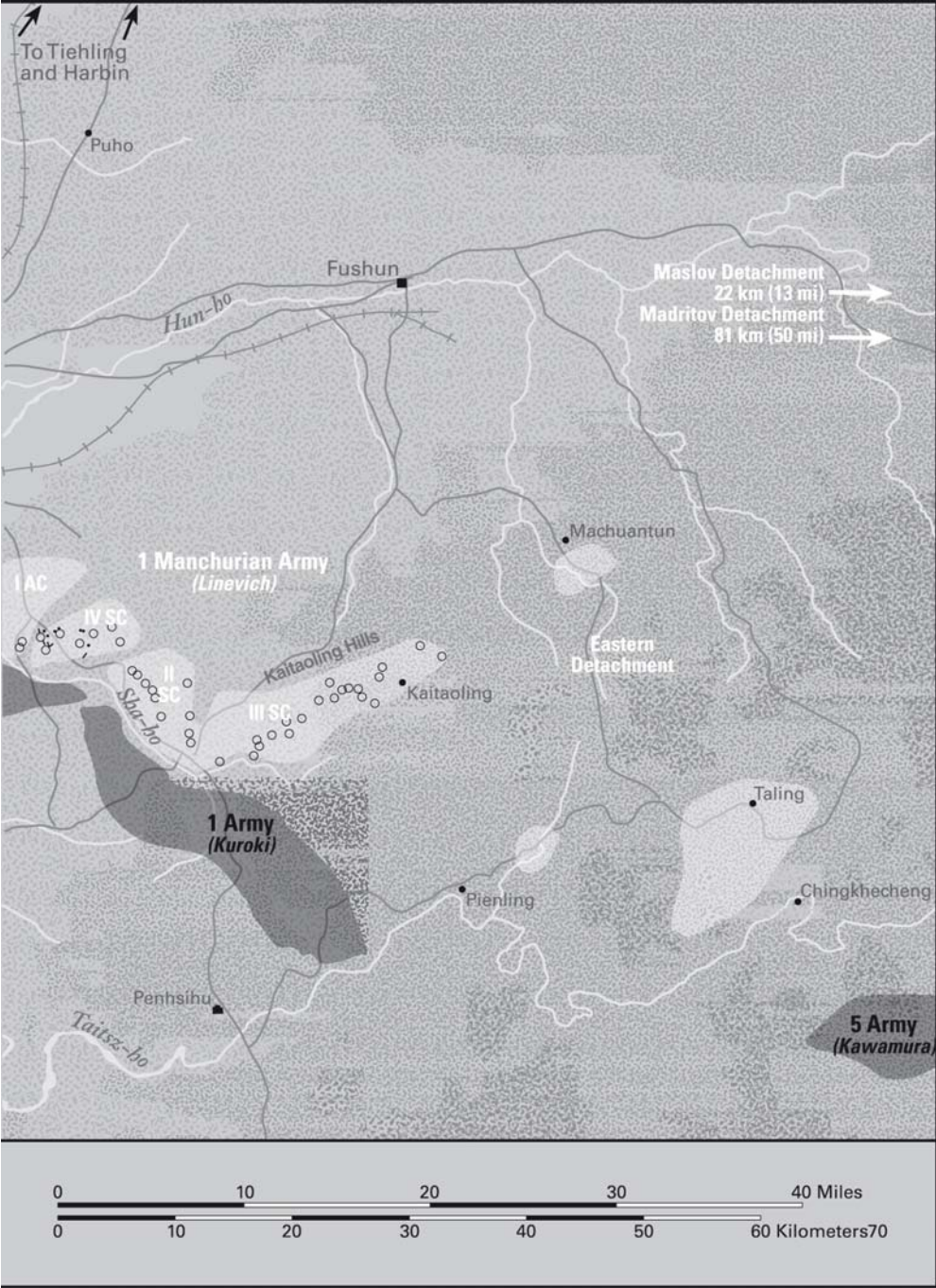


Map 4. Liaoyang (30 August 1904, and 2 September 1904).

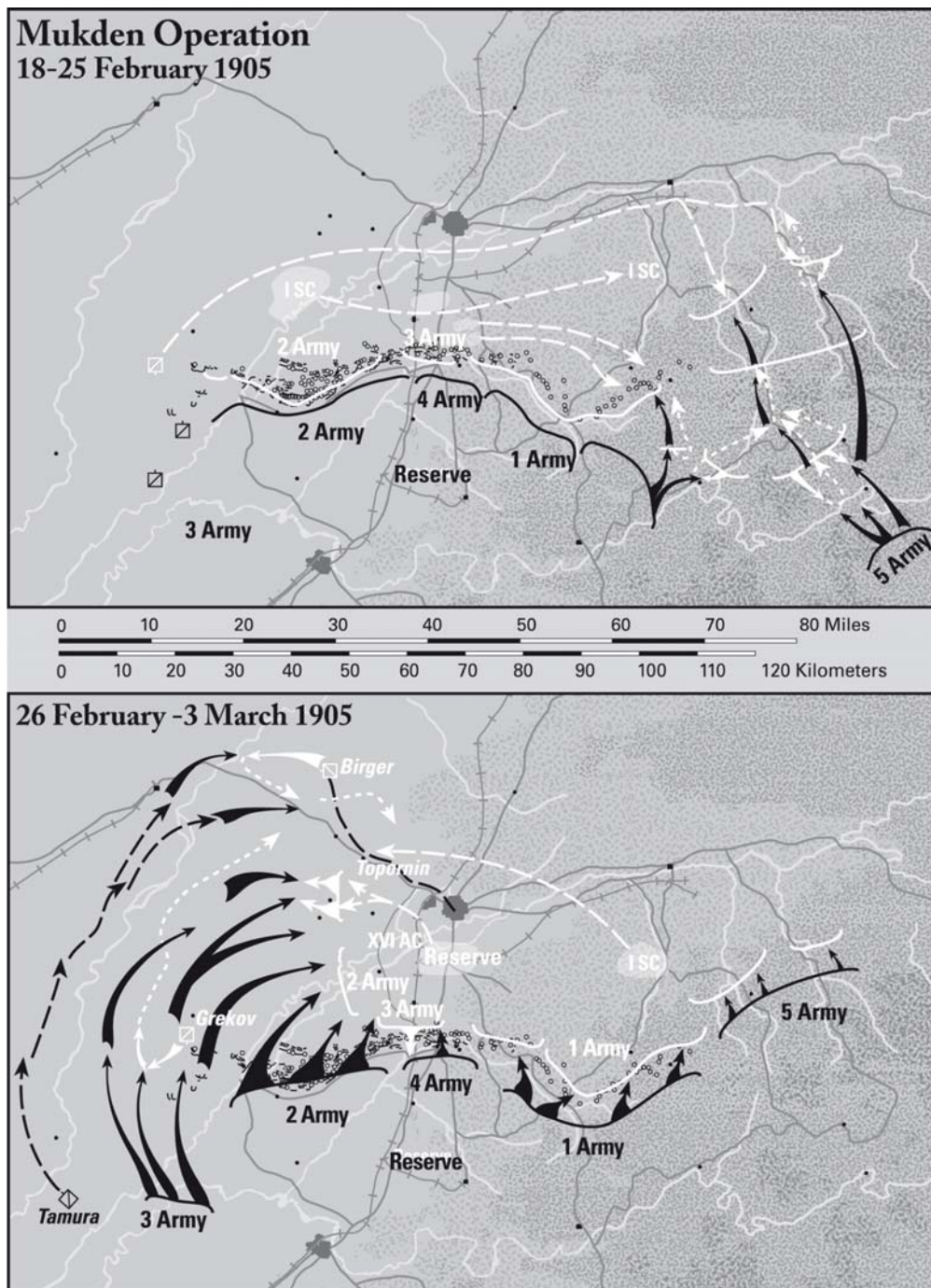
Mukden: Initial Deployments



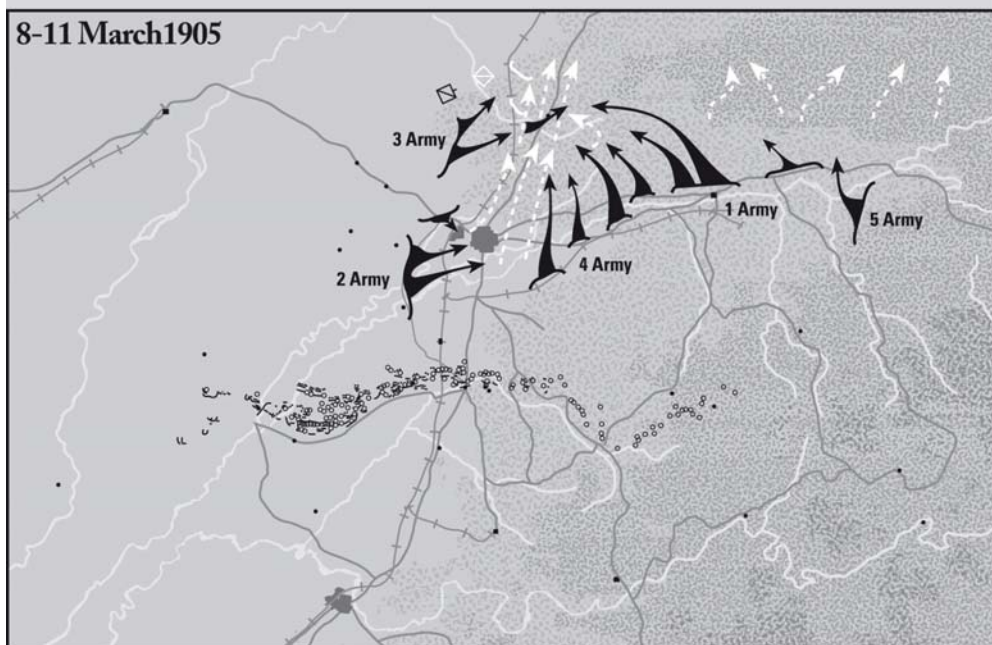
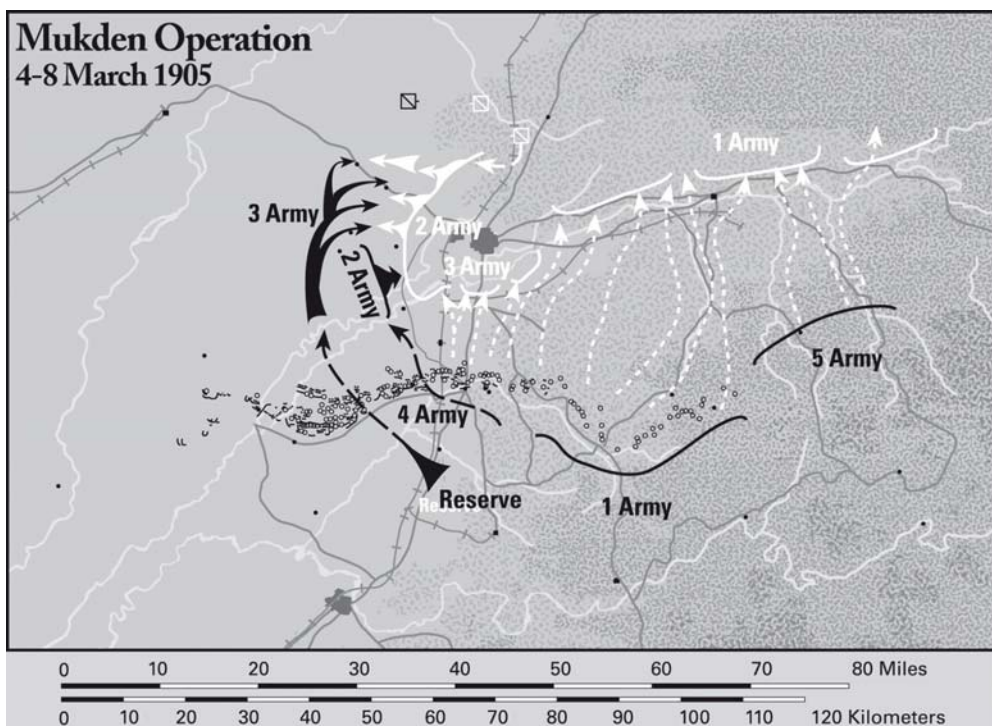
Map 5a. Mukden: initial deployments.



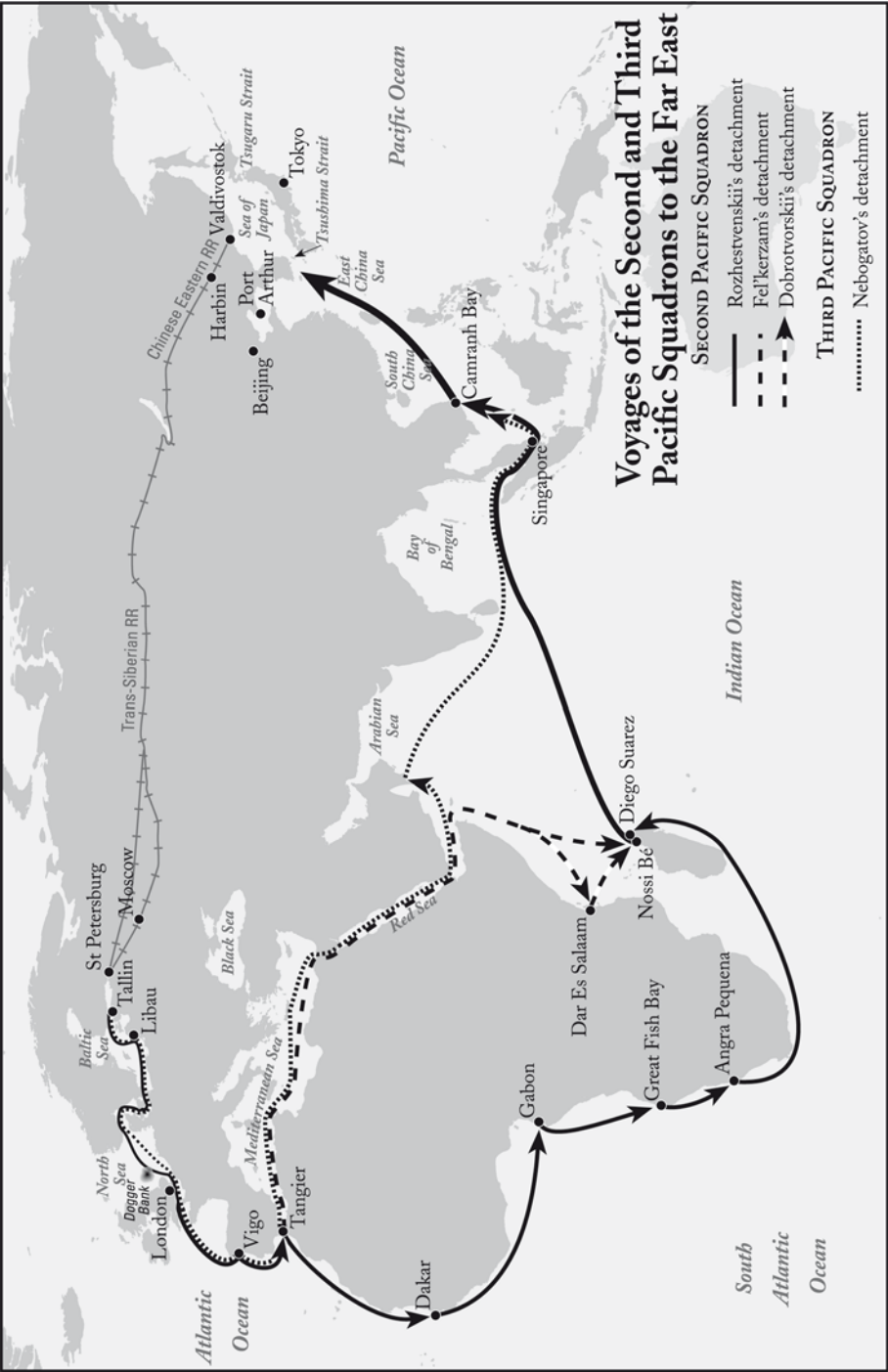
Map 5b. Mukden: initial deployments, cont.



Map 6. Mukden operation (18-25 February 1905, and 26 February-3 March 1905).



Map 7. Mukden operation (4-8 March 1905, and 8-11 March 1905).



Map 8. Voyages of the Second and Third Pacific Squadrons to the Far East.

PART I

IN THE SHADOW OF WAR

CHAPTER ONE

JAPANESE STRATEGY, GEOPOLITICS AND THE ORIGINS OF THE WAR, 1792–1895

Michael R. Auslin

The origins of Japan's surprise attack on the Russian Pacific Squadron at Port Arthur in February 1904 can be traced back more than a century before the hostilities that would decide mastery in East Asia erupted. From a geopolitical and strategic viewpoint, the Russian challenge to Japan began as early as 1792, though the Japanese perception of that challenge both evolved and fluctuated in intensity over time.

This chapter explores the background to the war from the perspective of Japanese policymakers, placing the struggle in the larger context of the modernization of Japanese strategic thinking. Rather than being a minute discussion of diplomacy, this essay considers the conflict within the long sweep of Japanese history and shows how it was one of the milestones in the internationalization of Japan.¹

I. *Japan's Traditional Strategy*

Russian attempts to open relations with Japan began in the last decade of the Eighteenth century. Whereas European nations considered trade and other contacts as the norm in international relations, Japan was representative of the Asian pattern that sought to limit links with other states either to those sanctioned by tradition or kept under tight central control.² China's Qing Dynasty, for example,

¹ For the most recent treatment of the war itself, see Matsumura Masayoshi, *Nichirô sensô 100-nen: atarashii hakken o mitomete* (Tokyo, 2003).

² On the origins of modern European international relations, see among others, F. H. Hinsley, *Power and the Pursuit of Peace: Theory and Practice in the History of Relations*

refused the entreaties of a British embassy seeking trade relations in 1793, the very year that the Russian Adam Laxman fruitlessly negotiated with Japanese officials for the same privilege.³ And Korea was derisively known by Westerners as the “Hermit Kingdom” into the 20th century, due to its refusal to treat with foreigners.⁴ Within this East Asian context, Japan fell somewhere between China and Korea. However, Laxman and his successors encountered a distinctly Japanese foreign policy, which derived from a long-held strategic culture.

By the time Laxman arrived in Ezo (modern Hokkaido), Japanese foreign relations had been controlled by the Tokugawa family for nearly 200 years. The Tokugawa were the strongest of the myriad samurai families that controlled Japan. Emerging victorious at the end of the civil wars that ravaged the country for the entire sixteenth century, the head of the Tokugawa was invested with the title of *shogun*. This allowed the family not only to act as the head of the military estate in Japan, but also to take control of foreign relations. Over time, Tokugawa rule extended to much of Japan’s civil and economic spheres. Yet the Tokugawa were supreme only in foreign relations. The three-quarters of the country not under direct Tokugawa control were divided into roughly 270 semi-autonomous feudal domains.

In the conduct of foreign relations, however, the Tokugawa ruled by the authority given directly by the symbolically important imperial court. And it was in foreign relations that the Tokugawa most distinctively impressed their stamp on Japan. From their main castle at Edo (modern Tokyo) in east central Japan, the Tokugawa shogun and their main advisors created a triple-layered boundary to defend not only Japan, but also their own power.⁵

between States (Cambridge, 1963), esp. 153–238; Garrett Mattingly, *Renaissance Diplomacy* (Boston, 1954); and Paul W. Schroeder, *The Transformation of European Politics, 1763–1848* (Oxford, 1994).

³ On Chinese strategy and foreign relations, see Mark Mancall, *China at the Center: 300 Years of Foreign Policy* (New York, 1984), esp. Chs. 1–3; for a broader overview of China’s global history, see Joanna Waley-Cohen, *The Sextants of Beijing: Global Currents in Chinese History* (New York, 1999).

⁴ On Korea, see Ki-baik Lee, *A New History of Korea* (Cambridge, Mass., 1984), esp. Chs. 12–13; see also Key-hiuk Kim, *The Last Phase of the East Asian World Order: Korea, Japan, and the Chinese Empire, 1860–1882* (Berkeley, 1980).

⁵ On Tokugawa strategy, see Michael R. Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism: The*

The physical boundary separating Japan from the outside world was the most important. Starting in the 1630s, Edo⁶ established a series of “maritime restrictions” primarily to control trade and facilitate the expulsion of Christian missionaries from the islands. The shogunate viewed trade through a political lens, seeing it primarily as part of the diplomatic ceremonies that helped buttress the shogun’s ideological position. Commerce was conducted as part of a carefully controlled tribute relationship between Japan and the kingdoms of Korea and the Ryukyus (Okinawa). In addition to this diplomatic tributary tie, Edo also maintained trade with Dutch and Chinese merchants but restricted them physically to the far-western city of Nagasaki.⁷ The shogunate monopolized these different forms of trade, giving licenses to preferred merchants and garnering the lion’s share of profit.

By the end of the 1630s, however, the maritime restrictions had broadened to forbidding Japanese to leave the islands, and refusing anchorage to foreign ships not from the four countries listed above. In addition, Christian missionaries, who had first arrived in Japan in the 1540s, were seen as an ideological, if not political, threat to shogunal supremacy, especially once they began a campaign of massive conversion, particularly in the areas of weakest Tokugawa influence. The missionaries were proscribed and ruthlessly suppressed from the 1610s through the 1630s.

This worldview reflected Japan’s strategic culture under the Tokugawa. Consequently, Edo’s foreign policy was designed to protect the boundaries between Japan and the outer world at all cost. It was thus the core of Japan’s international strategy that Adam Laxman and the Russians confronted when they attempted to open relations with Japan. To Japanese officials, the Russian approach was a challenge that held untold consequences.

Unequal Treaties and the Culture of Japanese Diplomacy (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), Ch. 1; see also Ronald P. Toby, *State and Diplomacy in Early Modern Japan: Asia in the Development of the Tokugawa Bakufu*, 2nd ed. (Stanford, 1991).

⁶ “Edo” is common shorthand for the Tokugawa shogunate.

⁷ See Toby, *State and Diplomacy*, for specifics of the trading relationships.

II. *The Unilateral Challenge, 1792–1852*

It was Russian actions, more than British or American, which first gave notice to the Japanese that the outer world was impinging on their borders. Yet even before Adam Laxman reached Hokkaido, his countrymen had pushed across Siberia and down the Kurile Island chain, reaching the northern island of Ezo in the late 1770s. This Russian advance catalyzed a shogunate debate over the nature of Japan's trade and foreign relations.

The chief advisor of the Shogun Ieharu (r. 1760 to 1786) was Tanuma Okitsugu (1719–1788), who was a member of the top shogunal policymaking body, the senior councilors, from 1769 to 1786. Excoriated by later generations for his cupidity, Tanuma held fairly advanced economic ideas and considered the Russian presence in Japan's north an opportunity to develop foreign trade.⁸ This stance flew in the face of the shogunate's tribute policy, which subsumed trade under a political ideology of the shogun's superiority over Japan's neighbors. Though nothing came of Tanuma's plan, unofficial trade among Japanese, Russians, and the indigenous Ainu flourished in the far northern reaches.

This willingness to consider other options was not new to Tanuma. The internationalization of Japan had begun under the reformist Shogun Yoshimune, grandfather of the man Tanuma served. Yoshimune (r. 1716–1745), hoping to improve certain scientific knowledge in Japan, relaxed restrictions on Western books dealing with astronomy, botany, and medicine. Because such books were brought in by the Dutch traders of Nagasaki and were usually written in that language, the movement of Western science became known as "Dutch Studies." Yet Yoshimune's goal was to make Japan even more self-sufficient. Three decades later, Tanuma sought in Russian trade a way to weaken Japan's traditional maritime restrictions and reach out beyond its borders, but only for limited commercial purposes.

Yet such far-reaching ideas were squelched by Tanuma's successors, particularly Matsudaira Sadanobu (1758–1829), another grandson of Shogun Yoshimune, who became chief councilor for his cousin, the 11th and longest serving shogun, Ienari (r. 1787–1837). Although

⁸ On the debate, see George A. Lensen, *The Russian Push Toward Japan: Russo-Japanese Relations, 1697–1875* (Princeton, 1959), 178.

Sadanobu served for only the first six years of Ienari's half-century tenure, he quickly put his stamp on Japanese policy and intellectual life, banning "heterodox" thought in favor of traditional neo-Confucian teachings, and halting many of Tanuma's economic projects.

It was into this atmosphere that Adam Laxman sailed in 1792, ostensibly to repatriate two Japanese castaways, but also charged with requesting the establishment of commercial relations between Japan and Russia. Laxman's request, from Empress Catherine the Great, was a new challenge to the Tokugawa, for unlike Tanuma's homegrown ideas it came from an outside party seeking to change Japanese policy.⁹

Sadanobu and his colleagues delayed their answer to Laxman for nearly nine months, while the Russian wintered in Hokkaido. When Edo's response arrived, it set the stage not merely for Russo-Japanese relations, but for the following six decades of Japanese diplomacy more generally. Japan's ancestral laws could not be changed, the response read, and the shogunate would receive unarmed ships only in Nagasaki. Other vessels were subject to capture.¹⁰ In light of Laxman's good intentions in bringing back the castaways, however, the shogunate would issue him one permit for one Russian ship to anchor at Nagasaki to return the remaining castaways still in Russia. Inherent in the shogunate's response was the possibility that Russia could establish a trade relationship like that between the Dutch and the Japanese, but that seemed less important than the refusal to allow any type of relations outside of Nagasaki.

Thus was the "seclusion" policy officially born. Although the 17th century maritime edicts tightly restricted foreign contact, they were not as rigidly drawn as later expressed to Laxman. Japan had sent a signal that it would not allow its physical boundary to be transgressed, and the eventual retreat from such a stance in the mid-19th century would gravely weaken the shogunate's authority and prestige.

The threat inherent in Laxman's visit underscored the warning contained in an unofficial report on Japan's northern defenses which appeared just the year before the Russian arrived, "Military Discussion

⁹ A detailed treatment of the Laxman episode is in Koriyama Yoshimitsu, *Bakumatsu Nichirō kankei-shi kenkyū* (Tokyo, 1975), 101–51.

¹⁰ Koriyama, *Bakumatsu*, 112. See also, Wada Haruki, *Kaikoku—Nichirō kokkyōkōsho* (Tokyo, 1992), Ch. 2.

on a Maritime Nation.” Written by Hayashi Shihei, a minor official for the lord of the northeastern domain of Sendai, the pamphlet expressed alarm at the weakness of Japan’s defenses and the menace of Russia, which had already shown interest in the southern Kurile Islands. Though placed under house arrest for his unauthorized activity, Hayashi had worried shogunal officials with his dire pessimism. With Laxman’s appearance the Russian presence took on new weight.

The shogunate responded by extending its direct control to Hokkaido in 1802, taking it away from the domainal leaders of Matsumae, located at the northern tip of the Japan’s main island of Honshu. This was a far-reaching move, for it signaled that Edo was beginning not only to incorporate hitherto non-Tokugawa lands within its bureaucratic reach, but also to define Japan’s northern boundaries, which had been vague at best. Russian pressure thus helped propel the modernization of Japan, a process marked by the extension of central control and the conscious development of policies such as were evident in Hokkaido. The lesson was clear, though: it was the foreign, and specifically the Russian, threat that brought about such institutional changes.¹¹

Two years after attempting to secure its northern border, the shogunate was faced with yet another Russian demand for trade. Nicholas Rezanov, using Laxman’s now decade-old permit, reached Nagasaki in October 1804. He sought the right for Russian ships to visit that port and other harbors, to barter trade with the Matsumae domain and the Ainu, and to gather information on Sakhalin Island in the Sea of Okhotsk, as well as on Chinese-Japanese-Korean relations.¹²

Edo’s response invoked the precedent set with Laxman. After delaying six months, perhaps due to domestic pressure from the imperial court, the shogunate rejected Rezanov’s requests, stating that “hereditary law” restricted relations to the Chinese, Dutch, Koreans, and Ryukyuans. This move indicated a hardening of seclusion edicts, signaling Edo’s resolve not to let the Russians breach the all-important

¹¹ See Koriyama, *Bakumatsu*, 179–89.

¹² Kajima Morinosuke, *Nihon gaikōshi 1: Bakumatsu gaikō: Kaikoku to ishin* (Tokyo, 1970), 128–34; see also, Lensen, *Russian Push*, 132.

physical boundary. Although the refusal was somewhat tempered by an order that Russian ships could be provisioned if necessary, Edo hoped that it had settled the issue once and for all.¹³

Within two years, the shogunate learned just how ineffective its “ancestral laws” were when challenged by a determined outside power. Rezanov sailed back to Japan in 1806, dropping off two subordinates, Nicholas Khvostov and Gavril Davydov, to pillage Japanese settlements in Sakhalin and the Kuriles. The attacks encouraged the government’s plans to fortify Hokkaido as a defensive buffer. At the same time, Rezanov’s visit re-ignited the debate over the wisdom of continued seclusion, with even Matsudaira Sadanobu now calling for trade with the Russians. Though the senior councilors refused to open up commercial ties, the fear of Russian encroachment pushed the shogunate in 1808 to commission the translation of Dutch books on Russia into Japanese. In 1811, the senior councilors established a formal information-gathering and translation department in the Astronomical Bureau.

As knowledge of Russia grew, it slowly spread among officials, scholars, and other literate Japanese. Taken as a whole, it became part of a larger cultural exchange between the Japanese and the Russians. This dialog started two decades previously, when Laxman had repatriated two Japanese castaways who had lived in Russia from 1783 to 1791. One them in particular, a fisherman named Kodayu, provided the shogunate with information gleaned from his numerous cultural experiences and his audience with the future Tsar Alexander I. To this was now added the translated books on Russia.

Ironically, this cultural exchange was boosted by the gravest crisis yet facing the two countries. In August 1811, Japanese soldiers on the Kurile island of Kunashiri captured a Russian naval officer, Vasili Golovnin, along with six compatriots. He was held for over two years, leading to the Russian seizure of a Japanese merchant in the same area. While the issue was ultimately settled amicably, Golovnin provided his captors with a wealth of information during his confinement. He imparted sorely-need geographical knowledge on Sakhalin and the Kuriles, helped compile a Russian dictionary,

¹³ Koriyama, *Bakumatsu*, 189–208.

and assisted Japanese efforts to write books based on Western math, physics, and astronomy.¹⁴

Yet just as this two decade-old cultural exchange was gaining steam, Golovnin's capture interrupted Russo-Japanese contact for over three decades. The specter of conflict over Sakhalin and the Kuriles encouraged both sides to step back, though Russia tried unsuccessfully from 1813 through 1821 to open up relations with Japan on a number of occasions. From 1821 through 1846, moreover, Russia stopped most of its exploration of the Siberian east, thus providing the shogunate with a much-needed breathing spell.

III. *The Multilateral Challenge, 1852–1875*

Over forty years ago the late American historian George Lensen argued that the first phase of Russo-Japanese relations lasted from 1697 to 1875. He reasoned that this was a time when relations were driven by two Russian objectives: first, to establish commercial and diplomatic relations with Japan, and second, to delineate the frontier between the two countries.¹⁵ From a Japanese perspective, however, it is more useful to view the first stage of bilateral relations as ending in 1855, when the first formal treaty between the two empires was signed. Until then, the shogunate's strategy had been to preserve the status quo, even if that meant creating or embellishing traditional maritime edicts to justify refusing Russian entreaties for relations.

The last act of this first phase of relations began in the late 1840s, when Russia resumed exploring eastern Siberia. Driven in part by concerns over Britain's growing strength in China after its victory in the Opium War (1839–1842), St. Petersburg approved expeditions deep into the Amur region separating Russia and China, and finally, from 1849 to 1852, again to Sakhalin Island. This latter was motivated by reports of the American Commodore Matthew C. Perry's planned expedition to Japan. In July 1853, coincidental with Perry's first arrival, St. Petersburg gave instructions for the occupation of Sakhalin. In tandem with these moves, the Tsar ventured

¹⁴ Koriyama, *Bakumatsu*, 248–53; see also Lensen, *Russian Push*, 205–206.

¹⁵ Koriyama, *Bakumatsu*, viii.

another formal request for relations, and dispatched Evfimii Putiatin in 1852 as a counterpart to Perry. Reaching Japan in August 1853, a month after the American, Putiatin now became simply one of a set of new actors challenging Edo's traditional boundaries.

The change in the international environment surrounding Japan removed much of the uniqueness of the half-century old Russo-Japanese bilateral relationship.¹⁶ Policymakers in Edo instead faced a triple strategic threat. Russia had reopened the northern question, the Americans had crossed the ocean from the east, and Great Britain was expected to arrive from its Chinese bases in the south. These simultaneous challenges forced a dramatic change in Japanese strategic thinking. Yet for nearly a decade, the shogunate had slowly been trying to prepare for the expected arrival of the Western powers. Responding to news of the Opium War as well to a letter in 1844 from the Dutch King William II warning of the approach of the West, the shogunate created a new bureaucratic position, the "maritime defense official" (*kaibo gakari*) in 1845.

These officials, who became Japan's first modern diplomats as well as the core of a group of international specialists, saw Putiatin's appearance as a way to blunt the impact of Perry and the British (who would not arrive until September 1854). Maritime defense officials such as Tsutsui Masanori, Kawaji Toshiakira, and Inoue Kiyonao argued that if Japan opened peaceful relations with Russia, Edo could use that country as a shield against the Anglo-American threat.¹⁷ This was a time-honored ploy originated in China of "using barbarian to control barbarian," and thus preserving national strength.

The maritime officials' plans to ally with Russia were scotched by the outbreak of the Crimean War in 1854 between Russia on the one side, and a coalition including Great Britain and France on the other. The war turned St Petersburg's attention back toward Europe and made it far less likely to agree to confront Britain in East Asia on Japan's account. Nevertheless, chief shogunal advisor Abe Masahiro saw the Russians as part of the larger international community seeking to open ties with Japan. Faced with American threats and the knowledge of Japan's defensive weakness, Abe signed the U.S.-Japan

¹⁶ Kajima, *Bakumatsu gaiko*, 134–40.

¹⁷ Kajima, *Bakumatsu gaiko*, 317.

Treaty of Amity on March 31, 1854, during Perry's promised return visit. The first blow to the centuries-old maritime restrictions was struck, and the precedent of formal relations could now be used against the shogunate.

Learning of Perry's success, Putiatin returned to Japan that December and began negotiations.¹⁸ Despite the ill omen of an earthquake and tsunami, which wrecked the Russian flagship, the *Diana*, Tsutsui Masanori and Kawaji Toshiakira signed the Russo-Japanese Treaty of Amity on February 7, 1855. In addition to establishing extraterritoriality and most-favored-nation status, the treaty was the first to define the Russo-Japanese border. The Japanese negotiators were not completely satisfied, for Kawaji insisted that all of the Kurile Islands were Japanese, but they finally agreed to divide ownership of the Kuriles in half between Etorofu (Japanese to the south) and Uruppu (Russian to the north). Sakhalin was to be a joint possession until further surveys could be made.

Unlike the treaties with Perry and later Great Britain, the Russian accord was the only one that contained provisions regarding Japan's territorial boundaries. From the beginning, then, Japan's relationship with Russia encompassed more than just trade. It forced policy-makers to consider just what was Japanese territory, how that territory was to be developed and defended, and how that territory brought Japan into direct contact with another power, which was both land- and sea-based.

During these early years of treaty relations Russia accordingly loomed as Japan's most important partner. Further, it was clear that Russia would demand equal treatment with the other European powers that had established relations with Japan. Less than two years after concluding his first agreement, Putiatin returned in October 1857 to sign an expanded Supplementary Treaty on the heels of the Dutch. Finally, on August 19, 1858, Putiatin signed the Russo-Japanese Treaty of Friendship and Commerce, just two weeks after Japan signed its first full-fledged commercial pact with the Americans.¹⁹

Even as the ink was drying on the treaty, it became clear to the

¹⁸ See the treatment in Roshia-shi kenkyukai, *Nichirô 200-nen: Rinkoku Roshia to koryûshi* (Tokyo, 1993), 37–53.

¹⁹ For a discussion of the treaty signings, see Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, Ch. 2.

new head of the shogunate, Great Councilor Ii Naosuke, that Japan's relations with Russia would remain primarily territorial, unlike the almost solely commercial relations Edo maintained with the Americans, British, Dutch, and French. This placed Russia in a special category of threat. Nor was this conclusion mistaken, for in 1858 Nicholas Muravev began his activities in the Amur region.²⁰ Known as Muravev-Amurskii for his exploits, the Russian cast a coveted eye on Sakhalin and sailed to Japan with seven warships in August 1859 in an attempt to overturn Putiatin's 1855 treaty. His goal was to compel Japanese recognition of Russia's ownership of the entire island.²¹ His high-handed approach and blunt threats marked a qualitative change in the Russo-Japanese relationship. From this point on, anti-foreign Japanese viewed the Russians with suspicion, resulting in the murder of two of Muravev's sailors in the treaty port of Yokohama in late-August 1859.

It was perhaps inevitable that the Japanese view of Russia would change with the inauguration of the 1858 treaty regime. To begin with, foreign policy now occupied pride of place among the problems bedeviling the Tokugawa shogunate. Russian moves in the north, therefore, were seen within the context of all the new challenges to the traditional boundaries separating Japan from the world. Moreover, the shogunate now had vastly greater experience with treaty relations, leading to a greater understanding of the restraints that diplomatic agreements were supposed to place on unilateral behavior by states. Muravev's blatant attempt to disregard the 1855 treaty was an insult according the laws of international conduct, and showed his contempt for Japan. Finally, Japan now had full commercial relations with a variety of Western states. Only Russia seemed to pose any direct territorial threat, for even Great Britain, the recent victor over China in the Second Opium War (1858), made clear her lack of interest in any type of outright colonization of Japan.

All these concerns came together just two years after the treaty ports were opened in 1859. On the morning of March 13, 1861, a Russian warship, the *Posadnik*, dropped anchor off the Japanese island of Tsushima.²² Located midway between Japan and Korea, Tsushima

²⁰ Kajima, *Bakumatsu gaikô*, 159–63.

²¹ Lensen, *Russian Push*, 371–78.

²² Kajima, *Bakumatsu gaikô*, 157–59.

had for centuries been the main conduit for trade and foreign relations between the two countries. Even more than Russian moves in far-off Sakhalin, the *Posadnik*'s visit posed a direct threat to long-held Japanese territory.

After six months of fruitless negotiation, and several armed clashes between Russian sailors and Japanese, Edo decided on a potentially risky gambit, asking the British to intervene on Japan's behalf. This was a shrewd move, revealing Edo's sophisticated understanding of great power relations. The head of the shogunal councilors, Ando Nobumasa, who took over when Ii Naosuke was assassinated in 1860, believed that British strategy precluded the unnecessary taking of territory. Thus, by using barbarian to control barbarian, Japan could make up for its defensive weakness.

The gamble paid off. The head of the British China Squadron, Vice-Admiral Sir James Hope, personally sailed to Tsushima in late-August 1861. Within one month, Captain Nicholas Birilev, head of the Russian squadron, left the island. For the Japanese, their proxy face-off with Russia had been an unqualified success. Yet it confirmed the unique threat posed by Russia. Not only had its territorial hunger apparently not diminished since the 1790s, it was the only one of Japan's treaty partners to brashly ignore the strict terms of the treaties and attempt to take new Japanese territory.

Heartened in part by its success in the Tsushima incident, Edo attempted to settle old scores with Russia the following year. In early 1862, Ando dispatched an embassy to Europe to negotiate a postponement in the opening of further treaty ports and cities.²³ While in Russia, the head of the embassy, Foreign Magistrate Takeuchi Yasunori, raised the issue of the Russian settlement of southern Sakhalin, hoping to convince Alexander II to vacate the island. However, the Russians refused to make any formal decision, proving to Edo that Japan's northern flank was not yet secure, despite the 1855 agreement mandating joint possession of the island. Further negotiations in 1865 and 1867 similarly failed to bring about any solution.

By this time, however, the Tokugawa shogunate was rapidly disintegrating, its two and a half century hegemony crippled by a combination of Western pressure and domestic revolt by leading anti-

²³ A full discussion is in Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, Ch. 3.

Tokugawa domains. In November 1867, the last shogun, Tokugawa Yoshinobu, returned his power to the emperor, and in January 1868, reformist samurai carried out a coup that ended the remnants of Tokugawa power. These samurai, many from the two powerful western domains of Choshu and Satsuma, formed a new government around the sixteen year-old emperor later known as Meiji. Quickly, they began the process of building a centralized administrative state out of the patchwork of feudal domains.

By the time the new imperial government assumed control over Japan's foreign relations, Russia occupied an anomalous position in Japanese strategic thought.²⁴ On the one hand, it was still feared as a territorial threat. Yet a decade of commercial relations between Japan and half a dozen Western nations had revealed Russia to be an economic pygmy. Russia had almost no presence in Yokohama, Japan's main treaty port, and no Russian firm distinguished itself in trade.

Only in Hakodate did the Russians maintain any sort of effective presence. Hakodate was one of the original treaty ports opened up by the Tokugawa shogunate back in 1859. Located on the remote southern tip of Hokkaido, its isolation was perfect for a government that hoped to stifle trade by locating ports in undesirable locations. The key official in the early years of Hakodate was Consul Iosif Goshkevich. Yet, although recognizable around town, he served as little more than a supercargo for passing Russian ships. A Russian school was set up in the port, though a plan in the mid-1860s to send Japanese students to Russia petered out after only a few years.²⁵

The 1862 Takeuchi Mission to postpone the port openings also had visited Britain, France, and Prussia. The members were shocked by the comparative backwardness of Russia. Britain had proven, through its commercial and military prowess, to be the leading Western power. By the early 1860s, it commanded over 80 percent of Japan's foreign import and export trade, exceeding ¥23 million annually.²⁶ In contrast, by 1879, twenty years after the opening of commercial relations, bilateral trade between Russia and Japan barely

²⁴ See Manabe Shigetaka, *Nichirô kankeishi, 1697-1875* (Tokyo, 1978), 312-35.

²⁵ See Lensen, *Russian Push*, 393.

²⁶ Trade figures given in Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, Ch. 4.

reached ¥60,000.²⁷ This was due largely to Siberia's underdevelopment, and the costs of transporting goods to the region from European Russia, where the country's economic production took place.

Given Russia's lack of economic might, and its lower level of societal development, the Japanese increasingly saw St. Petersburg as an intransigent bully, attempting to make up for its deficiencies by browbeating a weaker partner. The new Meiji government, however, upheld the Russo-Japanese treaty and made yet another formal attempt in 1872 to settle the Sakhalin issue. These negotiations, held in Tokyo, made no progress, and the government realized that Russia would most likely never give up its position on the island.

By now, however, Tokyo's strategic thinking was undergoing a fundamental transformation. Concurrent with its 1872 attempt to settle the Sakhalin issue, most of the new government's leadership embarked on a two-year embassy to the West, designed in part of seek renegotiation of the "unequal" commercial treaties of 1858 and in part as a learning expedition.²⁸ The leaders of the embassy, Iwakura Tomomi, Okubo Toshimichi, and Kido Koin were unable to revise any treaties, and they returned firmly convinced that Japan must undertake drastic modernization. Only then, once its strength was comparable to that of the Western powers, could it attempt to achieve international diplomatic and legal equality.

The Sakhalin question neatly fit into this equation. Growing tensions over the island made the Meiji leadership increasingly concerned about the possibility of a major clash with Russia, potentially jeopardizing the security of Hokkaido. In 1874, therefore, Tokyo decided to withdraw its claims to the island. Enomoto Takeaki, a former Tokugawa official, was dispatched to St. Petersburg in August of that year. Nine months of negotiation resulted in the May 1875 Sakhalin-Kurile Exchange Treaty. By its provisions, Russia gained all of Sakhalin, while Japan would take control of the entire Kurile Island chain, stretching from Hokkaido north to the Kamchatka Peninsula. By this stroke, Tokyo shelved its only pressing territorial concern and brought its relations with Russia firmly in line with its long-range strategic plans.²⁹

²⁷ Lensen, *Russian Push*, 422.

²⁸ See a discussion in Auslin, *Negotiating with Imperialism*, Chs. 6–7.

²⁹ For the 1875 Treaty, see *Nichirō 200-nen*, 50–53; see also Sugimori Koji and

IV. *Geopolitical Tensions, 1875–1895*

Japan's modern strategic history might be said to date from 1873 and the dual decision of the government to undertake massive modernization and not to launch an invasion of Korea. The former, as noted above, resulted from the observations made by the Iwakura Mission in America and Europe. The latter was the result of a nationalistic fervor on the part of certain government members to "chastise" the Koreans for their refusal to recognize the superiority of the Japanese emperor, as well as designed as an outlet for the pent-up energies of the former ruling samurai caste. The proposal was squelched by more cautious government leaders, such as Okubo Toshimichi (1830–1878), but it reflected the central role Korea was to play in the geopolitical thought of Meiji statesmen.

Japanese strategic thinking in the 1870s focused on the very issue that bedeviled Russo-Japanese relations, the question of borders. The old Tokugawa idea of physical boundaries, designed to insulate Japan, was giving way to a modern concept of drawing distinct borders. Tokyo had learned from its dealings with the Russians that ambiguity led to conflict.

Accordingly, moves were made to define Japanese territory, including those areas where Russian and Japanese interests clashed. In 1869, the Hokkaido Colonization Office was opened and charged with completely integrating the island into the emerging centralized administrative structure being constructed in Tokyo. Tsushima, the site of the 1861 crisis, was absorbed into the newly created Nagasaki Prefecture.

Korea proved a far more complex problem, due to its long history of independence as well as its clear recognition of its vassal relationship to China. It was largely the desire to sever Korea from Chinese suzerainty that prompted Tokyo to send envoys to the Qing in 1870 and 1871. The result was the first modern treaty between Asian nations, the Sino-Japanese Treaty of Amity. Signed in September 1871, the pact was an epochal statement by China that it maintained modern, equal relations with Japan; it thus served as a major

Fujimoto Wakio, *Nichirô-Nisso kankei 200-nen shi: Nichirô deai kara Shiberia kanshosensô made* (Tokyo, 1983), 1–29.

step on the road to the end of the Chinese world order that had structured East Asian international relations for centuries.³⁰

On the heels of this diplomatic triumph on the continent, Tokyo turned its attention back to Korea. The young government split over the Korean invasion question, leaving Okubo and Kido Koin (1833–1877) largely in control of policymaking. After biding their time for three years, they felt strong enough to force the Korean court to open relations with Japan. In February 1876, a ragtag fleet of Japanese warships reached the peninsula, and within several weeks had forced the Koreans to sign the Treaty of Kanghwa on February 26. Through this treaty, the Japanese exacted an “unequal” relationship similar to the ones imposed on it by the West. Japanese were protected by extraterritoriality in the three ports opened to trade, and Korea’s “independent sovereignty” was explicitly proclaimed. Responding to unequal treatment from the West, Japan was beginning to act like an imperial power itself.

Over the next years, the Meiji government allied with young Korean reformers opposed to the conservative Yi dynasty and its hereditary Yangban elite. A failed coup in 1884 brought in Qing forces to crush the pro-reform movement. The result was an 1885 Convention between Japan and China that neither country would maintain troops in Korea or send them to the peninsula without written notification to the other.

The next decade saw Japan grow increasingly concerned about the unstable condition in the country, which was now labeled as the potential “dagger pointed at the heart of Japan.” A third power taking control of Korea would be in a commanding strategic position vis-à-vis the island empire. Russia more than China increasingly came to be seen as the power that must be kept off the peninsula at all costs, since the former was building up its settlements in the Siberian east and showing more than a passing interest in both Chinese and Korean affairs.

This concern found its apotheosis in the strategic formulation put forth by Prime Minister Yamagata Aritomo (1838–1922) in March 1890. Japan, he argued, must maintain its “line of sovereignty,” that

³⁰ The best discussion is in Kim, *Last Phase*; see also, Immanuel C.Y. Hsü, *China's Entrance into the Family of Nations: The Diplomatic Phase, 1858–1880* (Cambridge, Mass., 1960), esp. Ch. 11.

is, the home islands and territories added to Japan proper in the 1870s. This overriding goal could only be achieved, however, by holding a secondary "line of advantage." This line included Korea.³¹

Korea was quickly becoming the axis of Japanese strategic thinking, and new developments made it seem all the more imperiled. Starting in the late-1880s, Russia had begun plans for the Trans-Siberian Railway, an enormous undertaking whose terminus would be in the Siberian city of Vladivostok, on the far edge of the Eurasian landmass. Construction was begun in 1891 and by 1897, the line connecting Vladivostok with Khabarovsk to the north was opened. Tokyo saw the Trans-Siberian as a direct threat to Korea, and thus, as Yamagata warned, "measures to guarantee the independence of Korea" were a necessity.³²

Much as in the 1850s, at the turn of the twentieth century Japanese policymakers saw simultaneous multiple strategic threats. But now Korea was the object. The long-term threat clearly was Russia, whose presence in Northeast Asia rapidly was growing. Tokyo was particularly worried about tsarist plans to build two new rail lines to connect with the Trans-Siberian network. The first, which would come to be known as the Chinese Eastern Railway, was to run from Vladivostok to Harbin, in Chinese territory, and the gateway to north China. Even more ominous were designs to run a line, known as the South Manchurian Railway, from Harbin south to the strategically crucial Port Arthur on the Liaodong Peninsula. Control over such a line would give Russia unimpeded access to an ice-free port leading directly to the Yellow Sea and Pacific Ocean. Nor did the Russian threat stop there, for the specter of Russia gaining control of the increasingly complex network of railways in Korea exercised Japanese policymakers such as Yamagata after 1890.

Compounding this long-term threat was a more immediate challenge over Korea. Since 1885, neither Japan nor China had been able to gain a preponderant influence in the Korean Court. Yet young Korean radicals opposed to the old-line conservatives still attempted to increase their role in society. Civil disturbances in Seoul in 1894

³¹ Roger F. Hackett, "The Meiji Leaders and Modernization: The Case of Yamagata Aritomo," in Marius B. Jansen (ed.), *Changing Japanese Attitudes Toward Modernization* (Princeton, 1965), 248-49.

³² William G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism, 1894-1945* (Oxford, 1987), 46.

pushed both Peking and Tokyo to send troops to bolster their respective positions. By the end of July, full-fledged fighting between the two sides erupted.³³

The Sino-Japanese War was a watershed in Asian and world history. A self-consciously modernizing nation was attempting to disrupt a centuries-old regional system by replacing the hegemon. Weakened though China was after half a century of foreign and domestic conflict alike, few international observers believed that the upstart nation could triumph over the continental giant. Within two months, however, Japanese forces drove all Chinese troops out of Korea. By early November, Japan had captured strategically important Chinese territory, including Port Arthur.

At the turn of the New Year, Peking announced the dispatch of a peace delegation, and by mid-April the Chinese accepted the terms of the Treaty of Shimonoseki.³⁴ This pact significantly enhanced Tokyo's strategic position. Formosa and its associated islands (the Pescadores) were ceded to Japan. Most of the Liaodong Peninsula, including Port Arthur, was also put under Tokyo's control. Japan thereby gained a strong presence in southern Manchuria, which could be used to block any other power from gaining access to Korea. Finally, the treaty reaffirmed Korean autonomy, which in reality meant freedom for Tokyo to increase its political and economic influence in the peninsula.

However, less than a week after the Treaty of Shimonoseki was announced, Japan suffered a major setback. On April 23, the governments of Russia, France, and Germany urged Tokyo to renounce its possession of the Liaodong peninsula, control of which could only be a "constant menace" to China, in the words of the powers.³⁵ The Meiji government's attempt to retain only Port Arthur was unsuccessful, and in early May, Tokyo acceded to the European demand.

Despite widespread exhaustion due to the war, public resentment against both the government and Russia ran strong. For many Japanese, Russia, the ringleader of the so-called Triple Intervention, had proven that no matter how advanced Japan became, it would

³³ For Russia's role during the war, see Kajima Morinosuke, *Nihon gaikōshi 4: Nisshin sensō to sankoku kanshō* (Tokyo, 1970), 56–72.

³⁴ For a complete discussion of the war and its various facets, see S.C.M. Paine, *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895: Perceptions, Power, and Primacy* (Cambridge, 2003).

never be accepted as a full power. For the government, the lesson was equally that Japan was now fully involved in great power politics. The commanding position it would have held if in control of the Liaodong peninsula had sparked a classic balancing response on the part of the power with the most to lose, Russia. From now on, Russia became the clearest strategic threat to Japan's continental interests.

It took another decade for both sides to end their fruitless diplomatic fencing and for a new generation of Japanese leaders to decide that war was crucial to national survival. Nonetheless, Japan's decisions in 1904 were directly influenced by its memories of 1895 and Russia's role in the aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War. Even more so, awareness of a century of the Russian threat, from Laxman to Golovnin through Putiatin and Muravev-Amurskii were present in the memories of Japanese policymakers and the public at large. In an age when the borders of East Asia were being torn apart and reconstructed, when the diplomacy of imperialism legitimized the taking of territory, and when both Japan and Russia sought to modernize themselves on the international stage, the trail of Russo-Japanese relations seemed almost inevitably to lead to Port Arthur.

³⁵ Ian Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (London, 1985), 26.

CHAPTER TWO

THE IMMEDIATE ORIGINS OF THE WAR

David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye

Some four hundred kilometers west of Beijing, on the tip of Manchuria's Liaodong peninsula, stands the Chinese naval base of Lüshun.¹ In an earlier age, Europeans knew it as Port Arthur, named after Lt. William Arthur, the Royal Navy officer who seized the town in 1860 during the Second Opium War. Regardless of its incarnation, as the southernmost point of an enormous mountainous fang that guards the maritime approach to the Middle Kingdom's capital, the site has long been valued for its strategic importance. Over a millennium earlier, during the seventh century, its docks had served as an important staging post for the Tang dynasty's military. Ming admirals relied on it in the fifteenth century as a defensive installation, and in 1878, reforming officials of the Qing based their first modern naval fleet there.

By the early twentieth century, like such other valuable harbors on imperial China's coast as Hong Kong, Kiaochow and Weihawei, Port Arthur had fallen into the hands of more youthful European predators. In 1898, Russian diplomats had bullied the Qing into leasing the naval station for twenty-five years on highly favorable terms. Over the next five years, enthusiastic military men transformed the base into the headquarters of Nicholas II's Pacific Squadron and the forward post of tsarism's expansive East Asian ambitions.

Despite its strategic advantages, Port Arthur also suffered from some deficiencies. The shallow harbor was unsuitable for the massive capital ships of a modern navy. At the same time, back in

¹ This chapter is condensed from the second part of my *Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire on the Path to War with Japan* (Dekalb, 2001), and appears here with the kind permission of the publisher, Northern Illinois University Press. The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, the International Research and Exchanges Board, the Smith Richardson and Bradley Foundations, a Fox Fellowship, and the United States Institute for Peace generously funded my research.

St. Petersburg, the ministers of finance and war, neither of whom were particularly enthusiastic about the acquisition, had successfully restricted the flow of funds needed to convert the port into a naval station befitting Russia's growing obligations in the area.² But the most glaring defect was the blind overconfidence of its commander, Admiral Evgenii Alekseev, as the events of early 1904 would prove.

Tensions with rival imperialist powers in East Asia, most notably Japan, had begun to mount in the early 1900s. After several years of inconclusive negotiations over its rival ambitions in Korea and Manchuria, Tokyo's exasperated diplomats broke off their talks and withdrew their minister to St. Petersburg on February 6, 1904.³ In Port Arthur, the quarrel with Japan did not particularly worry the town's inhabitants. Although the Asian rival was no more than two days' sailing away, and the Russian naval attaché had been frantically cabling from Tokyo with reports about preparations for war throughout the island empire,⁴ there seemed to be no need to be unduly concerned. Admiral Alekseev did not even trouble to communicate the news about the rupture of diplomatic relations to most of his officers.⁵

The evening of February 8 began unremarkably.⁶ On land, no special preparations were made for the possibility of hostilities: The

² Richard Connaughton, *The War of the Rising Sun and the Tumbling Bear* (London, 1991), 29–30.

³ Baron Roman Romanovich Rosen, *Forty Years of Diplomacy*, 2 vols. (London, 1922), I, 231.

⁴ Aleksandr Ivanovich Rusin, "Iz predistorii russko-iaponskoi voyny: Doneseniia morskogo agenta v Iaponii A.I. Rusina (1902–1904 gg.)," *Russkoe proshloe*, no. 6 (1996), 55–86. Captain Rusin's penultimate telegram to St. Petersburg, sent on February 6, the day Japan broke off relations, read: "General mobilization. Rusin."

⁵ Aleksandr Ivanovich Sorokin, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 gg.* (M., 1956), 69. Alekseev also forbade the editor of the local newspaper, *Novyi Krai*, to publish news of this development, "to avoid alarming the public." I.I. Rostunov (ed.), *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 gg.* (M., 1977), 118.

⁶ Accounts of the Japanese raid on Port Arthur are in Istoricheskaia Komissiiia pri Morskom General'nom Shtabe [IKpriMGSh], *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 gg. Deistviia flota*, 2 pts. in 7 bks. incomplete (SPB and Petrograd, 1912–1918), pt. 2, I, 1–2; Julian S. Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War 1904–1905* (Annapolis, 1994), 88–100; A.I. Nemits, "Beglyi ocherk morskikh operatsii russko-iaponskoi voyny," *Morskoi sbornik*, CCCLXX, no. 6 (June 1912), 59–72; Petr Bykov, "Deistviia na more v russko-iaponskoi voinu," in N.A. Levitskii, P.D. Bykov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina* (Moscow, 2003), 482–90; Rostunov (ed.), *Russko-iaponskaia voina*, 110–22; Connaughton, *Rising Sun*, 29–44.

shore battery remained at rest, its guns heavily greased and covered with tarpaulins to protect them from the winter, while the powerful lighthouse at the tip of Tiger's Tail Peninsula continued to beckon ships to the port's entrance.

Vice Admiral Oskar Stark, who headed the naval detachment offshore, was more conscientious.⁷ Aware of the strained diplomatic relations with Japan, he had ordered the 16 ships of his impressive flotilla neatly ranged by row in the bay's open waters, to avoid the possibility of being confined in the shallow harbor. Meanwhile, in his orders for the night, he had warned his officers to be on the lookout for trouble. However, the admiral's wishes were generally ignored in the belief that he merely had another tiresome training exercise in mind. As had been the case for the past week, Stark tasked two torpedo boats to perform picket duty by patrolling the surrounding seas within a 30-kilometer radius, and at twilight he imposed blackout conditions while breaking off communications with shore.⁸

The night was cloudless, calm and chilly. The waxing moon had just entered its first quarter, and would not rise until after daybreak, so that the only light over the black waters was cast by the lighthouse and the searchlights of the Russian vessels on patrol. Shortly before midnight, as Admiral Stark was conferring with his staff in his quarters aboard the *Petropavlovsk*, he heard an explosion outside. The sound came from the direction of the *Retvizan*, another battleship a kilometer away. Since the latter's sailors had spent the day priming their torpedoes, Stark's first inclination was to dismiss the disturbance as an accidental detonation. It was only when two more blasts followed in rapid succession that the admiral realized his fleet was under attack.

The assault came from torpedo boats of the Japanese Navy. Two days earlier, when Tokyo had broken ties with Russia, two fleets

⁷ A colleague was even more prescient. In a remarkably prophetic letter sent to the navy minister earlier that very day, on February 8, the commander of the Baltic Fleet, Vice Admiral Stepan Makarov, wrote: "Were Japan not to possess protected harbors either, and like us had to keep all of its ships at anchor in open water, then our tactic, on the very first night after breaking diplomatic ties, would have to be to carry out the most energetic strike on their fleet. The Japanese will not let pass by such a wonderful opportunity to do us harm." Nemits, "Beglyi ocherk," 64.

⁸ IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina*, pt. 2, I, 2; Bykov, "Deistviia flota," 482-86.

under the command of Vice Admiral Togo Heihachiro steamed out of the base at Sasebo on the southern island of Kyushu. One of them made its way to the Korean port of Chemulpo (known today as Inchon), right outside of Seoul, where it incapacitated the Russian ships at anchor there and secured control of the maritime approach to the Korean capital.⁹ A larger force headed for the Liaodong peninsula, where the signal station at Port Arthur and the searchlights of the Russian fleet greatly assisted navigation. Striking in two waves, the Japanese torpedo flotilla launched 19 deadly fish, three of which found their mark, damaging the battleships *Retvizan* and *Tsesarevich*, as well as the cruiser *Pallada*.

The physical damage inflicted by the night-time raid on Russia's naval station was modest. None of the craft was sunk, and loss of life was minimal. But the psychological injury was immense, and the tsarist military never fully recovered from the shock to its morale. Throughout the conflict, Japan retained the initiative, and within a year Russian dreams of an Asian destiny had metamorphosed into a nightmare of military defeat and revolution.

How St. Petersburg first rose to and then fell from grace in East Asia during the nine short years between 1895 and 1904 is the subject of this chapter. The story is immensely complex and controversial. To keep it in manageable proportions, it focuses on four important turning points, or milestones, on Russia's path to war with Japan: The intervention on China's behalf after the latter's peace treaty with Japan at Shimonoseki in 1895, the lease of Port Arthur in 1898, the occupation of Manchuria in 1900, and the failure to reach a diplomatic settlement with Japan before 1904.

I. *Shimonoseki*

It could be argued that Russia's war with Japan began on April 17, 1895. That was the day representatives of the Chinese government concluded peace with Japan at Shimonoseki. The Treaty of Shimo-

⁹ This operation had actually begun on February 8, with the loss of the *Variag* and *Koreets* occurring on the 9th. However, cable links with Port Arthur were cut, since the Korean telegraph monopoly was in Japanese hands. As a result, Alekseev remained entirely ignorant of the attack. J.N. Westwood, *Japan against Russia, 1904–05: A New Look at the Russo-Japanese War* (Albany, 1986), 42.

noseki ended a brief conflict between the two Asian empires that had gone very badly for the Middle Kingdom. Japan's terms at Shimonoseki for ending the war were steep: China was to renounce all claims to Korea. It also had to pay indemnities and make commercial concessions to Japan. And there was also territorial cost: Taiwan off China's southern coast and, much closer to Beijing, the Liaodong peninsula with its important naval base at Port Arthur, were now to become Japanese. No one cared much about Taiwan. But the Liaodong peninsula was a different matter altogether, with its naval station of Port Arthur dominating the approach to Beijing.

Because of Eastern Siberia's proximity to the conflict's theater, Russian officials paid close attention to the Sino-Japanese War. Decision-makers in St. Petersburg were of two minds. One group advocated siding with Japan and joining in its grab for Chinese territory. Just as Russians had long tried to benefit from the decadence of the sick man of Europe, Ottoman Turkey, they should now see what they might get from the sick man of Asia. An editorial in one of the capital's more liberal dailies, *Novosti*, put the case well:

The Chinese question is clearly analogous to the Eastern Question. If it seemed possible to redistribute a significant part of Turkey, the same is all the more true for China . . . Now is the most opportune moment to cast aside all hesitation and finish off China, redividing it among the interested European powers . . . China delenda est!¹⁰

Those with more moderate ambitions focused on an ice-free outlet into the Pacific. Since its establishment in 1860, Vladivostok had seemed unsatisfactory as the main naval base in the Far East, because the surrounding seas were frozen for four months in the year. Among other things, this meant that Russia's Pacific Squadron wintered in Japanese ports, an option that depended too much on the goodwill of a potential rival.¹¹ Meanwhile, the start of work on the Trans-Siberian Railway made the need for a warm-water port all the more urgent, as its Pacific terminus.¹² Some leading men at the Admiralty,

¹⁰ In A.A. Popov, "Dal'nevostochnaia politika tsarizma v 1894–1901 gg." *Istoriisk-markсист*, no. 11 (51) (Nov. 1935), 42–43.

¹¹ The naval commentator Belomor pointed out that the only friendly port on the Pacific was distant Saigon. A. Belomor, "Morskie voprosy," *Novoe Vremia*, 3/3/1895, 2.

¹² General-Maior Panteleimon Nikolaevich Simanskii, *Sobytiia na Dal'nem Vostoke*, 3 vols. (SPB, 1910), I, 11–12. This remarkable study, first published in a highly

such as its titular chief, Grand Duke Aleksei Aleksandrovich, and Navy Minister Nicholas Chikhachev, suggested that the time was opportune to seize a port in Korea. Tsar Nicholas II, who had just inherited the throne and, like many of his generation, was an enthusiastic fan of the Mahanian navalist ideas then in fashion,¹³ sympathised with this view. As he noted, "Russia absolutely requires year-round a free and open *port*. This port must be on the *continent* (southwest Korea) and has to be linked to our current territory by a *strip of land*."¹⁴

In a memorandum to Nicholas II shortly after Japan's harsh terms were divulged at Shimonoseki, Foreign Minister Prince Andrei Lobanov-Rostovskii suggested that one response might be to make an arrangement with Tokyo for "an ice-free port on the Pacific, and a harbor in Manchuria to serve the Siberian Railway."¹⁵ Lobanov's proposal was merely one of several options he had dutifully submitted for his master's consideration, but there were indications that Tokyo might well have welcomed such a move. On the day after its conditions for peace were announced, a Japanese diplomat in Berlin hinted that his government would not oppose a Russian move to secure a portion of northern Manchuria and a Korean port, as long as Japan's demand for the Liaodong peninsula was assured.¹⁶

Others in St Petersburg backed a more cautious approach to the

restricted edition, was recently reprinted. See V.A. Zolotarev (ed.), *Rossia i Iaponia na zare XX stoletia* (Moscow, 1994).

¹³ As was his younger brother and heir-presumptive, Grand Duke Georgii Aleksandrovich, who sponsored a translation of Captain Mahan's *Influence of Sea Power upon History*. See A.T. Mahan, *Vliianie morskoi sily na istoriiu 1660–1783 gg.*, trans. N.P. Azbelev (SPB, 1894) and the review in the navy's journal, *Morskoi Sbornik*, CCLXXVI, no. 11 (November 1886), 1–10. A good summary of Russian navalism and East Asia at the time is in Choi Dokkiu, "Morskoe ministerstvo i politika Rossii na Dal'nem Vostoke (1895–1903)," *Ezhegodnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo nauchnogo obshchestva istorikov i arkhivistov*, I (1996), 145–171.

¹⁴ Italics in the original. Nicholas II to A.B. Lobanov-Rostovskii, marginal note, ca. 6/4/1895, AVPRI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 143/146, l. 4.

¹⁵ A.B. Lobanov to Nicholas II, 6/4/1895, l. 4. Nicholas enthusiastically noted in the margin "Exactly."

¹⁶ Viscount Aoki, the Japanese minister to Berlin, told the Wilhelmstrasse that Tokyo would also be amenable to annexations by Germany of a province in south-western China and a Korean island by Britain. Von Mühlberg, memorandum, 2/4/1895, Johannes Lepsius, et al. (eds.), *Die grosse Politik der europäischen Kabinette 1871–1914. Sammlung der diplomatischen Akten der Auswärtigen Amptes*, 40 vols. in 54 (Berlin, 1922) (Hereafter GP), IX, 260; William L. Langer, *The Diplomacy of Imperialism* (New York, 1956), 181.

developments in East Asia and wanted to take China's side. Finance Minister Sergei Witte was the most powerful advocate in the government of this approach. Like most tsarist treasurers, he preferred to avoid foreign complications. More important, Witte saw good relations with China as essential for his ambitious plans to develop Russia's Far East. He therefore suggested that Russia support the Middle Kingdom by helping it to resist Japan's territorial demands. Witte reasoned, "We will thereby become the savior of China, which will appreciate our services and thereby agree to a peaceful correction of our borders."¹⁷

The choice between China and Japan was finally made on April 11, 1895 at a special conference of leading ministers chaired by the emperor.¹⁸ Despite some misgivings from the tsar, Witte got his way. To avoid having Russia appear the lone bully, Prince Lobanov arranged for Germany and France to join in demanding that Tokyo hand back the peninsula.¹⁹ Not yet possessing the confidence to stand up to the European powers, Japan capitulated within two weeks, and declared that it would hand back Liaodong to China in exchange for a more generous indemnity.²⁰

Sergei Witte was right about earning China's gratitude. He quickly capitalized on Beijing's goodwill by extending Russian influence through the means of informal empire, or *pénétration pacifique*. Using French cash, Witte organized a major loan to help Beijing pay its indemnity to Japan and then set up a Russo-Chinese Bank.²¹ The

¹⁷ "Zhurnal Osobogo soveshchaniia," 11/4/1895, AVPRI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 145/148, l. 7.

¹⁸ For the minutes, see "Zhurnal Osobogo soveshchaniia," 11/4/1895, AVPRI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 145/148, ll. 2–11. Also in *Krasnyi Arkhiv* (hereafter KA), LII (1932), 78–83.

¹⁹ A.P. Cassini to A.B. Lobanov-Rostovskii, telegram, 19/4/1895, AVPRI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 85, l. 31; A.P. Cassini to A.B. Lobanov-Rostovskii, despatch, 14/5/1895, AVPRI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 113, ll. 134–137; France. Ministère des affaires étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques français (1871–1914)*, 1^{re} Série (1871–1900), 16 vols. (Paris, 1929–1947) (Hereafter DDF), XI, 694–695; Gutschmidt to Hohenlohe, memorandum, 24/4/1895, GP, IX, 275–278; A.M. Pooley (ed.), *The Secret Memoirs of Count Tadasu Hayashi* (New York, 1915), 82–85.

²⁰ A.P. Cassini to A.B. Lobanov-Rostovskii, despatch, 9/5/1895, AVPRI, f. 143, op. 491, d. 113, ll. 138–140; Tyrtov, 6/5/1896, l. 21.

²¹ Henri Cordier, *Histoire des relations de la Chine avec les puissances occidentales, 1860–1902*, 3 vols. (Paris, 1902), III, 305–306; Boris Aleksandrovich Romanov, *Russia in Manchuria*, trans. Susan Wilbur Jones (Ann Arbor, 1952), 67. For the terms of the loan, Ervin Davidovich Grimm, *Sbornik dogovorov i drugikh dokumentov po istorii*

finance minister also arranged permission for his Trans-Siberian Railway to take a shortcut through Manchuria, which considerably shortened the line's eastern portion. Most important, on June 3, 1896 the two empires concluded a secret treaty promising jointly to resist any future aggression by Japan.²²

The alliance with China had every possibility of becoming as momentous geopolitically as the military agreement Russia had signed with France three years earlier, in 1893. But for this combination of Eurasia's two greatest autocracies to work, territorial appetites would have to be suppressed. As events in the coming years would demonstrate, Russians too easily succumbed to baser temptations.

II. *Port Arthur*

The most immediate effect of the developments of 1895 and 1896 was to arouse intense interest at the tsar's court in Far Eastern affairs. After the depressing setbacks in Europe and the Near East during the past decades, the possibilities for greatness on the Pacific were intoxicating. Prince Hugo von Radolin, the German ambassador, captured the mood at the time:

Recently highly-placed officers have spoken to me with pride and self-importance about the great mission of Russia in Asia . . . everything I hear blends into one single voice, which says that in time Russia is destined for world domination, starting with the East and Southeast, which are as yet unspoiled by the cancer of European civilisation . . . I never thought it possible that such fevered fanaticism as I see now could ever take hold of Russia. These are not just a few single exalted individuals who think and speak this way—this is the general view that one encounters everywhere.²³

No one was more susceptible to the Orient's siren call than Russia's new emperor, Nicholas II. Nicholas had already become fascinated

mezhdunarodnykh otnoshenii na dalnem vostoke (1842–1925) (Moscow, 1927), 56–60. On the bank, consult Rosemary Quested, *The Russo-Chinese Bank* (Birmingham, 1977).

²² The text of the Sino-Russian treaty as well as related correspondence are in AVPRI, f. 138, op. 467, d. 151/157. For published versions, see Grimm, *Sbornik dogovorov*, 105–106. An account of the Chinese Eastern Railway is given in E.Kh. Nilus (ed.), *Istoricheskii obzor Kitaiskoi vostochnoi zheleznoi dorogi, 1896–1923 gg.* (Harbin, 1923).

²³ Radolin to Hohenlohe, memorandum, 14/7/1895, GP, IX, 357.

with the East during the grand tour he had taken three years before he inherited the throne in 1894.²⁴ Much less cautious than his father about foreign affairs, the tsar proved to be highly receptive to officials and courtiers who sought adventures in the Far East. As his war minister, Aleksei Kuropatkin, famously confided to his diary in 1903,

... our sovereign has grandiose plans in his head: To absorb Manchuria into Russia, to begin the annexation of Korea. He also dreams of taking Tibet under his orb. He wants to rule Persia, to seize both the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles.²⁵

Early in his reign, Nicholas could be convinced by Sergei Witte to keep his expansionist passions in check. However, the domineering finance minister's hold over the emperor declined as the ruler became more confident of his authority.²⁶

A little over a year after the secret alliance between China and Russia was signed, another opportunity for some more concrete gains in China presented itself. Now the protagonist was Germany. During fall 1897, on the pretext of the murder of two German Catholic missionaries in Shandong Province southeast of Beijing, Kaiser Wilhelm II ordered his navy to seize the port of Qingdao on Shandong's Kiaochow (Jiaozhou) Bay.²⁷

At first Russia's new foreign minister, Count Mikhail Muravev, issued strong protests to Berlin about the move.²⁸ But the count soon

²⁴ The classic account of the journey is E.E. Ukhtomskii, *Travels in the East of Nicholas II when Cesarevitch*, 2 vols. (Westminster, 1900). Nicholas' impressions of Japan at the time were particularly favorable, and were not marred when a deranged policeman attacked him in Otsu on May 11, 1891. Archival sources clearly disprove the canard that the tsarevich's hostility to Japan dates from this incident. See Schimmelpenninck, *Toward the Rising Sun*, 20.

²⁵ A.N. Kuropatkin, diary entry, KA, II (1922), 31.

²⁶ Sergei Witte's diaries, which have been published in numerous iterations, are a notoriously unreliable source. For details about the complicated relationship between Witte and Nicholas II see, among others, B.V. Anan'ich and R.Sh. Ganelin, *Sergei Iul'evich Vitte i ego vremia* (SPB, 1999).

²⁷ Georg Franzius, *Kiautschou: Deutschlands Erwerbung in Ostasien* (Berlin, 1902), 129–142; Langer, *Imperialism*, 445–454. The German debate about a suitable location for a naval station is described in Arthur Julius Irmer, "Die Erwerbung von Kiautschou, 1894–1898" (Inaugural Dissertation, Rheinischen Friedrich-Wilhelm Universität zu Bonn, 1930), 15–41; Ralph Norem, *Kiaochow Leased Territory* (Berkeley, 1936), 13–27.

²⁸ M.N. Muravev to Nicholas II, memorandum, 7/11/1897, KA, LXXXVII (1938), 37–38; M.N. Muravev to P.P. Tyrtov, letter, 7/11/1897, AVPRI, f. 138, op. 467, d. 166, l. 18, M.N. Muravev to Pahlen, telegram, 8/11/1897, AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 54, l. 290; M.N. Muravev to Pahlen, telegram, 9/11/1897, AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 54, l. 291.

changed his mind and began to suggest to his master that Russia should likewise grab a naval station in China's warmer waters for itself. The best one was Port Arthur, precisely the same base Japan had been forced to retrocede under Russian pressure two years earlier.²⁹

At a special conference on November 14 to discuss the matter, the count found himself outvoted by the army, navy and finance ministers. Admiral Pavel Tyrtov questioned the utility of Port Arthur to the navy and suggested that a Korean port would be more suitable, while Sergei Witte argued that seizing any Chinese territory would violate the alliance between the two empires and alienate China. Despite his desperate desire for a warm water port, Nicholas reluctantly accepted the advice of the majority.³⁰ However, what Muravev could not accomplish by persuasion, he managed to achieve by guile. Playing on the tsar's fears that the British Navy might take Port Arthur for itself, the count quietly advised Nicholas to order the Pacific Squadron to anchor there first.³¹ On December 16, 1897, Rear Admiral Reunov duly entered Port Arthur, effectively beginning Russia's occupation of naval station.³² There was no sign of the Royal Navy.³³

²⁹ N.M. Muravev to Nicholas II, memorandum, 23/11/1897, GARF, f. 568, op. 1, d. 127, ll. 11–18.

³⁰ Chancellery of the Finance Ministry, "Istoricheskaia spravka o vazhneishchikh dlia Rossii sobytiakh na Dalnem Vostoke v trekhletie 1898–1900," RGIA, f. 1622, op. 1, d. 935, 4–9; IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 gg.*, pt. 1–a, 215–217; Simanskii, *Sobytiia*, I, 99; Boris Borisovich Glinkii (ed.), *Prolog Russko-Iaponskoi voiny: materialy iz arkhiva Grafa S.Iu. Vitte* (Petrograd, 1916), 44–46.

³¹ Witte told the new war minister, Aleksei Kuropatkin, that Muravev "deceived" (*obmanul*) the tsar into believing the latter, i.e. that China invited Russia to take possession of Port Arthur. Kuropatkin, diary, 1/1/1898, RGVA, f. 165, op. 1, d. 1871, l. 6. Muravev alluded to this justification himself two days later in a conversation with Kuropatkin. Kuropatkin, diary, 3/1/1898, RGVA, f. 165, op. 1, d. 1871, l. 7. However, most other sources, including Witte's own memoirs, suggest that Muravev invoked the English bogey to convince Nicholas to change his mind. Lamsdorf, notes to minister's report, 9/12/1897, GARF, f. 568, op. 1, d. 58, l. 71; S.Iu. Witte, *The Memoirs of Count Witte*, trans. & ed. Sydney Harcave (Armonk, 1990), 275; A.P. Izvolskii, *Mémoires de Alexandre Izvolsky* (Paris, 1923), 161; Simanskii, *Sobytiia*, I, 100–103; IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina*, pt. 1–a, 217.

³² P.P. Tyrtov to F.V. Dubasov, telegram, GARF, f. 568, op. 1, d. 127, ll. 33–34; IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina*, pt. 1–a, 220–222.

³³ F.V. Dubasov to P.P. Tyrtov, telegram, GARF, f. 568, op. 1, d. 127, l. 37.

The other European powers likewise jumped into the fray.³⁴ By 1898 Beijing had been forced to sign leases for naval bases or other concessions with France and Britain, as well as Germany and Russia. Only Italy, which tried to extort a bay the following year, was successfully rebuffed. With a reference to their most dreaded form of execution, Chinese took to calling these indignities "slicing the melon."

Russia's occupation of Port Arthur had several momentous consequences. First, it effectively killed the alliance with China. Russia's immense prestige at the Qing court vanished just as quickly as it had appeared three years earlier, in the wake of Shimonoseki. At the same time, together with Germany's seizure of Kiaochow and the other copycat grabs by Britain and France, the Russian act was the catalyst for a major outbreak of xenophobic hostility in Shandong province, which culminated in the Boxer Rising during summer 1900.

III. *Manchuria*

St. Petersburg's reaction to the events of 1900 once again betrayed the confusion about East Asian policy in the imperial government. At first, the official reaction was to pretend that the violence did not affect Russians. After all, the Boxers first vented their wrath on Western missionaries and merchants. There were relatively few Russian Orthodox priests active in the Chinese countryside, and, despite Finance Minister Witte's strenuous efforts, tsarist commercial activities in China were minimal. Therefore, it was easy to pretend that the Boxers were angry only with West Europeans. A Finance Ministry official reflected the relatively sanguine attitude of his compatriots toward the disturbances when he reassured a friend back home: "The disorders in this country do not affect us. Don't believe the newspapers, which repeat the false British and the German reports."³⁵

Russian diplomacy also betrayed a strong element of denial when it came to relations with the Middle Kingdom. Throughout 1900,

³⁴ Westel W. Willoughby, *Foreign Rights and Interests in China* (Baltimore, 1920) 228–244.

³⁵ D.M. Pozdneev to Bulgakov, letter, 3/6/1900, Otdel Rukopisei, Rossiiskaia Natsional'naia Biblioteka, f. 590, op. 1, d. 112, l. 483. See also Ivan Iakovlevich Korostovets, *Rossia na Dal'nem Vostoke* (Beijing, 1922), 9–11.

the Foreign Ministry acted as if Russia were still China's protector and alliance partner. In late May, Russia's minister, Mikhail Giers, calmly explained his stance to officials at the Zongli Yamen, China's foreign office, "I stand outside of the whole conflict. But because our relations are the very best, and since our two empires both operate under an autocratic government, I can only hope that China will restore order by itself."³⁶ Even after the Boxers began to lay siege to the Legation Quarter in late May, Russians only joined the British-led relief expedition with great reluctance.³⁷ Meanwhile, during the negotiations over how the Qing should be punished for their actions during the crisis, Russians continued to infuriate the other powers by their reluctance to sanction a harsh penalty.³⁸

More cynical observers saw St. Petersburg's dovish stance as a clever feint to distract the world from its own occupation of Manchuria in summer 1900. Even a French diplomat muttered darkly that, "if it did not directly provoke [the Boxers, Russia] has perhaps encouraged them. It well knows how to benefit from the situation."³⁹ Such a view would credit Russian Far Eastern policy with much more consistency than it actually had. In fact, the decision to order armies into Manchuria came with considerable reluctance. While War Minister Kuropatkin advocated intervention, Finance Minister Witte repeatedly advised Nicholas that such a move would only "harm the good relations" that still existed between his subjects and Chinese in

³⁶ In Ralf Edward Glatfelter, "Russia in China. The Russian Reaction to the Boxer Rebellion" (Unpubl. PhD Dissertation, Indiana University, 1975), 70. The clearest exposition of official thinking about the crisis is the note Count Lamsdorf directed his legal expert, Fedor Martens, to draft, F.F. Martens to V.N. Lamsdorf, memorandum, 8/1900, KA, XX (1927), 177–185.

³⁷ N.M. Muravev to Nicholas II, memorandum, 13/6/1900, KA XIV (1926), 13–14; Romanov, *Russia*, 178. On the situation in Beijing during the Boxer rising, there are three published diaries by Russian government officials resident there at the time: Dmitrii Dmitrevich Pokotilov, *Dnevnik osady evropeitsev v Pekine* (Yalta, 1900); D.D. Pokotilov, *Dnevnik s 2-go po 31-oe avgusta 1900 goda* (SPB, 1900); Dmitrii Pozdneeov, *56 dni pekinskogo sidenia v sviazi s blizhaishimi k nemu sobytiiami pekinskoi zhizni* (SPB, 1901); Pavel Stepanovich Popov, "Dva mesiatsa osady v Pekine," *Vestnik Evropy*, XXXVI, no. 2 (Feb. 1901), 517–536; no. 3 (Mar. 1901), 5–37. See also V.V. Korsakov, *Pekinskie sobytiia: Lichnyia vospominaniia uchastnika ob osade v Pekine* (SPB, 1901).

³⁸ Simanskii, *Sobytiia*, II, 34–42; Andrew Malozemoff, *Russia's Far Eastern Policy* (Berkeley, 1958), 133–135.

³⁹ De Bezaure to Delcassé, despatch, 10/6/1900, DDF, XVI, 269.

Manchuria.⁴⁰ Only after Russia's Chinese Eastern Railway and other interests in the region began to be menaced by the Boxers in July 1900, did Witte consent to military action.

The invasion itself was relatively easy and aroused little hostility from the other powers.⁴¹ However, problems arose over the question of when Russian troops would pull out and restore the Qing's ancestral provinces to their rightful owners. From the first, Nicholas II's ministers assured the world that their country's troops had every intention of leaving the three provinces in the near future. Already on August 12, 1900, Count Lamsdorf asked his ambassadors to distribute a circular to foreign governments explaining the occupation as a temporary measure, which would end as soon as life was back to normal. "Russia has no designs of territorial acquisitions in China," he pledged.⁴² Yet Russian officials were also eager to win something in return for handing the region back to China. While the tsarist army sustained remarkably light casualties, the operation had been expensive, and the railroad claimed extensive damage at the hands of the Boxers. More important, tsarist officials wanted to be sure popular unrest would never again pose a threat to Russian lives and property.

Opinions in St. Petersburg over the Manchurian question were sharply divided. Foreign Minister Lamsdorf, and Finance Minister Witte argued that Manchuria should be handed back as soon as possible. Any reluctance to quit the region would only raise tensions in the region, they predicted. As Lamsdorf explained in a letter to Kuropatkin in spring 1902, "it would be advisable for us to evacuate Manchuria sooner, if possible, so as not to . . . provoke war with Japan."⁴³ Many Russians also advocated an evacuation for the simple reason that there were more pressing problems at home.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ S.Iu. Witte to Nicholas II, memorandum, 28/6/1900, RGIA, f. 560, op. 38, d. 180, ll. 104–105; S.Iu. Witte to Nicholas II, memorandum, 2/7/1900, RGIA, f. 560, op. 28, d. 190, l. 8; A.N. Kuropatkin to Nicholas II, memorandum, 16/8/1900, RGIA, f. 560, op. 28, d. 218, ll. 13–19; Glinskii (ed.), *Prolog*, 111–114, Simanskii, *Sobytiia*, II, 100–101.

⁴¹ Histories of the Russian invasion of Manchuria include V.G. Datsyshen, *Russko-kitaiskaia voina. Manchzhuriia 1900 g.* (SPB, 1996) and George Lensen, *The Russo-Chinese War* (Tallahassee, 1967).

⁴² For the text, see Simanskii, *Sobytiia*, II, 109–110; Glinskii (ed.), *Prolog*, 137.

⁴³ V.N. Lamsdorf to A.N. Kuropatkin, letter, 31/3/1900, RGVIA, f. 165, op. 1, d. 759, ll. 1–2. See also V.N. Kuropatkin to V.V. Sakharov, letter, 1/7/1901, RGVIA, f. 165, op. 1, d. 702, l. 2.

⁴⁴ A. Suvorin, "Malen'kie pisma," *Novoe Vremia*, 22/2/1903 (O.S.), 3; "Kitaiskaia

While Count Lamsdorf was being cautious, Witte had other reasons for wishing a speedy evacuation. During the four years after the finance minister had won a concession to build a railway in the north, "Witte's kingdom" had flourished. Work on the Chinese Eastern Railway proceeded at a frantic pace, with over 1,300 kilometers of the projected 2,500-kilometer line already on the ground by summer 1900.⁴⁵ The CER's headquarters in Harbin, which were initially set up in an old distillery at the intersection of the Sungari River and the future track in spring 1898, soon became the center of a thriving boomtown.⁴⁶ CER subsidiaries began to exploit the region's lumber and coal, and at the southern tip of the Liaodong peninsula, near the new tsarist naval station of Port Arthur, Witte had equally ambitious plans to turn the harbor of Dalien (Talienwan), now officially renamed Dal'nii ("Far away"), into a major commercial entrepôt.⁴⁷ To protect it all, the finance minister commanded an ever-expanding security force, derisively nicknamed "Matilda's Guards" after his wife, Matilda Ivanovna.⁴⁸ The army's presence in Manchuria during the Boxer rising had introduced a serious rival to Witte's own authority, and the sooner it left, the more quickly the Finance Ministry would regain its colonial monopoly.

At the same time, there were influential advocates for keeping Manchuria. Military men, many of whom had begun their careers

zheleznaia doroga," *Novoe Vremia*, 3/5/1902 (O.S.), 2; N. Kravchenko, "S Dal'nego Vostoka, pismo XVXIV," *Novoe Vremia*, 22/10/1902 (O.S.), 2; B.H. Sumner, *Tsardom and Imperialism* (Hamden, 1968), 17.

⁴⁵ Nilus (ed.), *Istoricheskii obzor*, 122; "Istoricheskaiia spravka," 92.

⁴⁶ David Wolff, *To the Harbin Station: The Liberal Alternative in Russian Manchuria, 1898–1914* (Stanford, 1999), 25–29, 35–41; Nilus (ed.), *Istoricheskii obzor*, 126–133.

⁴⁷ Nilus (ed.), *Istoricheskii obzor*, 131–134, 156–173. There was much sparring between him and War Minister Kuropatkin over who would have jurisdiction over the port. In 1899 it resolved to put the entire leasehold under the authority of a navy officer, although the Finance Ministry would retain much responsibility over Dal'nii, with Port Arthur becoming a Russian military base. Minutes, council, 12/1/1899 & 19/3/1899, RGIA, f. 560, op. 38, d. 179, ll. 23–39; Minutes, council, 17/4/1899, RGIA, f. 1622, op. 1, d. 167, l. 1.

⁴⁸ Nilus (ed.), *Istoricheskii obzor*, 200, 503–511; Glinkskii (ed.), *Prolog*, 111; Rosemary Quested, "Matey" Imperialists? *The Tsarist Russians in Manchuria 1895–1917* (Hong Kong, 1982), 99–100; David McLaren McDonald, *United Government and Foreign Policy in Russia 1900–1914* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), 12. The guards' most famous veteran was Alexander Guchkov, the future leader of the moderately conservative Octobrist Party in the Duma, Russia's pre-revolutionary legislature. Nilus (ed.), *Istoricheskii obzor*, 507.

during the Central Asian wars, believed that Manchuria should be absorbed into the Russian empire, just like the khanates of Khiva, Kokand and Bokhara had been in the late nineteenth century.⁴⁹ The most prominent hawk was Admiral Evgenii Alekseev. Based at Port Arthur, the naval officer had authority not only over the Pacific Squadron, but over the garrison on the Kwantung peninsula as well. He also commanded Russian forces in the Far East during the Boxer rebellion. Alekseev's mercurial temperament, ambition, and rumors that he was the illegitimate son of Alexander II earned him the dislike of many contemporaries, especially Sergei Witte, who regarded him as a dangerous rival in Russia's Far East. Count Lamsdorf also distrusted him, and fretted about the admiral's "unfortunate propensity for adventures."⁵⁰

Alekseev would emerge as the most forceful advocate for retaining Manchuria. He often argued that quitting the region would only make Russia more vulnerable to another rebellion as well as to an increasingly aggressive Japan.⁵¹ Yet if the admiral seemed to worry about defending his position on the Pacific, the international repercussions of a prolonged occupation did not bother him in the least. As he wrote the war minister: "Despite their protests against our intention to retain Manchuria, [the other powers] have long ago reconciled themselves to the matter."⁵²

General Kuropatkin himself took an intermediate position on the Manchurian question. When the unrest first broke out, he strongly supported intervention, and would come to oppose withdrawing the army prematurely. There were times when Kuropatkin was inclined to keep troops stationed in northern Manchuria, where the Chinese population was much smaller than in the southern province of Fengtien. However, even then he wavered between a full annexation of the north and making it a semi-independent vassal, like the Central Asian Emirate of Bokhara.⁵³ Weighing heavily in the war

⁴⁹ A good example of such reasoning is in I.P. Balashev to Nicholas II, memorandum, 25/3/1902, GARF, f. 543, op. 1, d. 180, ll. 1–26.

⁵⁰ V.N. Lamsdorf to L.P. Urusov, letter, 18/10/1899, BA Ms Coll Urusov, box 1.

⁵¹ E.I. Alekseev to A.N. Kuropatkin, letter, 19/3/1901, RVAMF, f. 32, op. 1, d. 123, ll. 1–7; E.I. Alekseev to A.N. Kuropatkin, telegram, 9/8/1901, RGVIA, f. 165, op. 1, d. 704, l. 1.

⁵² Alekseev to Kuropatkin, 19/3/1901, l. 6.

⁵³ A.N. Kuropatkin, diary, 12/9/1901, RGVIA, f. 165, op. 1, d. 1871, ll. 51–52; A.N. Kuropatkin, diary, 17/2/1902, RGVIA, f. 165, op. 1, d. 1871, l. 68; A.N.

minister's considerations was the empire's vulnerable western border, where German ambitions posed a far greater danger to the security of the realm than any threats to the distant Pacific frontier.⁵⁴

Disagreements in St. Petersburg over the fate of Manchuria continued right up to February 1904. The pathologically indecisive Emperor Nicholas II characteristically wavered between the alternatives, although by temperament he favored the more adventurous course. Matters were not helped when he briefly befriended a retired guards officer, Alexander Bezobrazov, who concocted a baroque enterprise to occupy northern Korea's Yalu River basin in the guise of a lumbering enterprise.⁵⁵

The result was a confused and erratic policy that increasingly aroused the hostility of the other powers. After over a year of difficult negotiations with a China emboldened by the support of Russia's rivals, an agreement was signed on April 8, 1902 in Beijing pledging a withdrawal of Manchuria in three stages over the next eighteen months.⁵⁶ However, St. Petersburg proved unable to keep its word. Tsarist troops did carry out the first phase of their evacuation on October 8, 1902, pulling out of the southern half of Fengtien Province, including the ancient Qing capital of Mukden (now Shenyang). But the second and final steps were not taken as Russian officials became increasingly divided over the merits of quitting the region, and the army even audaciously reoccupied Mukden the following September.

The year 1903 witnessed an endless series of conferences about the matter, each seemingly less conclusive than the preceding one.

Kuropatkin, diary, 2/11/1902, RGVIA, f. 165, op. 1, d. 1871, l. 92; V.N. Lamsdorf, note, 1/4/1902, AVPRI, f. 138, op. 467, d. 205/206, l. 1; V.N. Kuropatkin, diary, 31/12/1902, KA, II (1922), 17; Ministerial conference, minutes, 25/1/1903, KA LII (1932), 119.

⁵⁴ A.N. Kuropatkin to Nicholas II, memorandum, 9/8/1903, Bakhmeteff Archive (BA), Columbia University, Witte Papers, d. 27, no. 2. Although written before Russia's occupation of Manchuria, the war minister's extensive *tour d'horizon* of Russia's strategic position he presented to the tsar is an excellent example of his thinking. See A.N. Kuropatkin to Nicholas II, memorandum, 27/3/1900, RGIA, f. 1622, op. 1, d. 269. A brief summary of this remarkable document is in William C. Fuller Jr., *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600–1914* (New York, 1992), 377–379.

⁵⁵ Bezobrazov's role in Russian Far Eastern diplomacy remains highly controversial, but it has probably been exaggerated. For more details about his scheme, see Igor Lukoianov's chapter in this volume.

⁵⁶ For the text, see Glinskii (ed.), *Prolog*, 180–183.

Japan's exasperated foreign minister, Baron Komura Jutarō, spoke of a "serious diversity of opinion in the counsels of Russia."⁵⁷ Matters were not helped by the dramatic rise of Admiral Alekseev, who on August 12 was appointed Viceroy of the Far East.⁵⁸ Nicholas thereby placed all authority for his empire's military and diplomatic policy on the Pacific in the hands of his leading hard-liner. Not only did this harden Russian attitudes, but it also severely complicated relations with other governments by establishing two lines of command. Diplomats in the region were understandably confused about whether to take orders from Port Arthur or from their minister in St. Petersburg.

For one department there was little ambiguity about who was in charge. A fortnight after Nicholas named Alekseev his viceroy, he fired Sergei Witte as finance minister, silencing the most powerful champion of a more moderate course on the Pacific.⁵⁹ Much like his German cousin, Kaiser Wilhelm II, when he had sacked Chancellor Otto von Bismarck thirteen years earlier, the tsar was largely motivated by a desire to emancipate himself from a domineering official—with equally unfortunate consequences.

IV. *Japanese Negotiations*

Aside from China, which was too weak effectively to resist the Russians, the power that felt most aggrieved by Russia's reluctance to quit Manchuria was Japan. It was after all Japan that had been forced to give up Port Arthur "in the interests of the peace of the Far East." Nevertheless, St. Petersburg and Tokyo might well have achieved an agreement over the Manchurian question. In the wake of the Sino-Japanese War, Japan focused much more on Korea rather than Manchuria. Indeed, *Man-Kan kokan* (Manchuria for Korea) had become one of the island empire's leading foreign policy imperatives by the late 1890s.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ George Lensen (ed.), *Korea and Manchuria between Russia and Japan 1895–1904: The Observations of Sir Ernest Satow* (Tallahassee, 1966), 210.

⁵⁸ Nicholas II to E.I. Alekseev, telegram, 23/9/1903, RGVAMF, f. 417, op. 1, d. 2865, l. 31.

⁵⁹ Nicholas II to S.Iu. Witte, letter, 29/8/1903, RGIA, f. 1622, op. 1, d. 34, l. 1.

⁶⁰ Ian H. Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (London, 1985), 45; W.G. Beasley, *Japanese Imperialism 1894–1945* (Oxford, 1987), 79.

In 1896, when he travelled to Russia for Nicholas II's coronation, Marshal Yamagata Aritomo had tried to negotiate a *Man-Kan kokan* arrangement with Russia. Although he managed to sign a pact with Foreign Minister Lobanov, its terms disappointed his government.⁶¹ Two years later, on April 13, 1898, Baron Roman Rosen, the Russian envoy, and Japan's foreign minister, Nishi Tokujiro, signed a similar protocol in Tokyo. The deal gave Japan slightly better terms, including recognition of economic dominance over Korea, but pledged both signatories to upholding the kingdom's political sovereignty. Rosen himself dismissed it as "a rather lame and pointless convention," and the Japanese were hardly more enthusiastic.⁶²

During the next four years, as Russia largely withdrew from Korean affairs, there were repeated efforts to win its formal recognition of Japan's primacy there. However, Russian diplomats were unable to receive authorization from their government for such a deal. Alexander Izvolskii, then the minister to Tokyo, explained his dilemma: "We could give [Japan] *carte blanche* in commercial, economic and financial matters in Korea, but we could never countenance its occupation by Japanese troops or any attempt to infringe the peninsula's political independence."⁶³ The problem was that both the tsar and his admirals "attach an overly sentimental importance to Korea."

As long as Marquis Ito Hirobumi led the Japanese government, cooler heads prevailed in Tokyo. Although he was hardly pro-Russian, the prime minister had great respect for his nation's rival. Since the time of the negotiations at Shimonoseki in 1895, he had tended to caution vis-à-vis Russia. One of the most eminent Meiji statesmen, Ito was highly regarded both by other politicians and by the emperor.⁶⁴ However, in May 1901 his administration lost the confidence of the Diet, and a new prime minister, Count Katsura Taro, took office.

⁶¹ Hosoya Chihiro, "Japanese Policies towards Russia," James Morley (ed.), *Japan's Foreign Policy 1868-1941* (New York, 1974), 354-355; Simanskii, *Sobytiia*, I, 209-211; Langer, *Diplomacy*, 406-407.

⁶² Roman Romanovich Rosen, *Forty Years of Diplomacy*, 2 vols. (London, 1922), I, 159; Simanskii, *Sobytiia*, I, 267; William L. Langer, "The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War," C.E. and E. Schorske (eds.), *Explorations in Crisis: Papers on International History* (Cambridge, MA, 1969), 12-13.

⁶³ A.P. Izvolskii to L.P. Urusov, letter, 16/5/1901, BA Ms Coll Urusov, Box 1.

⁶⁴ On Ito's career, see J. Morris, *Makers of Japan* (Chicago, 1906), 119-153.

On average a decade younger in age than their predecessors, the members of Katsura's cabinet were much more aggressive to Russia.⁶⁵

Marquis Ito, now out of government, tried to salvage his country's peace with Russia by undertaking a private mission to St. Petersburg in November 1901. Although he had received the new government's approval for the trip, it was entirely at his own initiative. The elder statesman received a warm welcome, and Nicholas awarded him the Order of St. Alexander Nevskii, his dynasty's most prestigious decoration. In meetings with both Witte and Lamsdorf, Ito pleaded for a Korean-Manchurian deal. While the finance minister was sympathetic to such an arrangement, the foreign minister turned him down.⁶⁶ Lamsdorf was clearly heeding the wishes of his sovereign. Earlier that month, Nicholas had told his cousin, Prince Henry of Prussia:

I don't want Korea for myself, but neither can I countenance that the Japanese set foot there. Were they to try this, it would be a *casus belli* for Russia. A Japanese presence in Korea would be like a new Bosphorus for us in East Asia. Russia can never accept this.⁶⁷

If Marquis Ito had hoped to accomplish a *rapprochement* with Russia, Count Katsura's administration took a radically different tack. As Ito conferred with the tsar and his officials, the Japanese minister in London, Count Hayashi Tadasu, was secretly negotiating a defensive pact with the British government.⁶⁸ When the Anglo-Japanese

⁶⁵ Shumpei Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War* (New York, 1970), 24–31; Ian Nish, *Japanese Foreign Policy 1869–1942* (London, 1977), 59–62; Langer, *Diplomacy*, 747–748.

⁶⁶ V.N. Lamsdorf, notes for report, 3/12/1901, GARF, f. 568, op. 1, d. 62, ll. 43–45; V.N. Lamsdorf to Nicholas II, memorandum, 5/12/1901, KA, LXIII (1934), 44–45; V.N. Lamsdorf to A.P. Izvolskii, telegram, 5/12/1901, KA, LXIII (1934), 47–48; Ian Nish, *The Anglo-Japanese Alliance: The Diplomacy of Two Island Empires 1894–1907* (London, 1966), 186, 196–200; Simanskii, *Sobytiia*, II, 159–172; Langer, *Diplomacy*, 764–770; G. Trubetzkoi, *Russland als Grossmacht* (Stuttgart, 1917), 68–69.

⁶⁷ B. Bülow, memorandum, 4/11/1901, GP, XVIII, 1, 39. The navy minister was equally opposed to a Japanese presence in Korea, since that would deprive him of the possibility of a naval station on the peninsula. P.P. Tyrtov to V.N. Lamsdorf, letter, 13/12/1901, GARF, f. 568, op. 1, d. 177, ll. 1–3.

⁶⁸ For a history of the talks based on British and Japanese sources, see Nish, *Anglo-Japanese Alliance*, esp. 143–228. Hayashi's memoirs have been translated, but according to Nish are not entirely reliable. Idem, 394. See A.M. Pooley (ed.), *The Secret Memoirs of Count Tadasu Hayashi* (New York, 1915).

alliance was announced to the world in January 1902, Russian diplomats were caught entirely off guard.⁶⁹ Lamsdorf publicly shrugged off its importance and advised his diplomats to “keep their *sang froid*.”⁷⁰ Nevertheless, the new combination was an alarming one for Russia. Now its two most formidable opponents in the Far East had joined forces, radically changing the Pacific’s strategic landscape.

There was one more attempt to negotiate an agreement in summer 1903, again launched by Tokyo.⁷¹ Japan’s attitude now was more aggressive, as it demanded an entirely free hand in Korea and restrictions on Russian activities in Manchuria. There were good reasons for the island empire’s growing self-confidence. Along with the British alliance, Tokyo also enjoyed the strong support of the United States, whose secretary of state, John Hay, insisted on an “open door” to foreign commerce in Manchuria. The diplomatic constellation now was entirely the reverse of what it had been during the intervention at Shimonoseki eight years earlier, for now it was Russia that found itself isolated and facing an opponent bolstered by the backing of an ally and another power.

A compromise might have been possible even at this late stage. However, the tsar and his viceroy still found it difficult to take Japan seriously. Nicholas certainly did not feel that the interminable talks merited interrupting his lengthy autumn holidays abroad and hunts, while the convoluted four-way diplomacy between the travelling Russian court, St. Petersburg, Port Arthur, and Tokyo hardly simplified matters. Anyway, the tsar reasoned, “there will be no war because I do not wish it.”⁷² In the event, the decision was not his alone to

⁶⁹ Malozemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy*, 173; Keith Neilson, *Britain and the Last Tsar: British Policy and Russia 1894–1917* (Oxford, 1995), 223–225.

⁷⁰ L.P. Urusov to V.N. Lamsdorf, letter, 13/2/1902, AVPRI, f. 138, op. 467, d. 208/209, l. 1. In a letter to his ambassador in Paris, Lamsdorf told him not to be bothered by “the Anglo-Japanese arrangement, which makes so much noise in the world. It is always prudent to take things seriously, but I refuse to consider this so-called treaty as a tragedy.” V.N. Lamsdorf to L.P. Urusov, letter, 20/2/1902, AVPRI, f. 138, op. 467, d. 208/209, l. 3.

⁷¹ E.I. Alekseev to Nicholas II, April 1905, “Vsepoddanneishii otchet . . . po diplomaticheskoi chasti 1903–1904 gg.,” GARF, f. 543, op. 1, d. 186, ll. 6–56; Simanskii, *Sobytiia*, III, 473–520. For an interesting analysis of the talks, albeit from the perspective of a political scientist, see James L. Richardson, *Crisis Diplomacy: The Great Powers since the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge, 1994), 106–134.

⁷² David MacKenzie, *Imperial Dreams, Harsh Realities* (Fort Worth, 1994), 145.

make. On February 6, 1904, Baron Komura summoned Baron Rosen to his official residence to announce that his government had lost its patience at the "futile negotiations" and had decided to end them as well as to break off diplomatic relations. He handed Rosen a telegram that concluded ominously,

... the Imperial Government reserves to themselves the right to take such independent action as they may deem best to consolidate and defend their menaced position, as well as to protect their established rights and legitimate interests.⁷³

Upon returning to his legation, the Russian minister was informed by the naval attaché that earlier the same day, at 6:00 a.m. local time, two Japanese squadrons "had weighed anchor for unknown destinations."⁷⁴

Conclusion

St. Petersburg's East Asian diplomacy during the nine years that separate the end of the Sino-Japanese War in 1895 from its own conflict with Japan was highly erratic. First, after some uncertainty, it intervened on China's behalf and forced Tokyo to renounce its foothold on the Liaodong Peninsula. The following year, in 1896, the tsar concluded a defensive alliance with Beijing, promising to protect the Middle Kingdom from future Japanese predations. But the next year, he abruptly changed course, and seized the Liaodong peninsula's southern part, with its strategic naval station at Port Arthur, for himself. Three years later, in summer 1900, Russia seemed to resume its original direction and professed to help a China racked by the Boxer rising. Then Cossacks suddenly marched into the Qing dynasty's ancestral provinces of Manchuria. Although Nicholas' diplomats solemnly promised to evacuate, his military stayed put and even appeared to have designs on neighboring Korea. Japanese efforts on at least four occasions during this short decade to negotiate a mutually satisfactory division of spheres of influence all foundered in the face of Russian greed and an inability to take its nascent Asian rival seriously.

⁷³ Nish, *Origins*, 213.

⁷⁴ Rosen, *Forty Years*, I, 231.

Because of this confusion, there is a wide variety of explanations for the origins of Russia's military fiasco in East Asia. Many Russian accounts focus on finding a scapegoat, whether in the person of former Guards Colonel Bezobrazov, Finance Minister Witte, Admiral Alekseev, or the emperor himself. There are other candidates. Such efforts miss the point. At heart the war resulted from the irreconcilable ambitions of two aggressive states in an age of great power rivalry over the rest of the globe. As the distinguished American historian William Langer concluded, "the Russo-Japanese War still remains the classic example of a conflict waged for purely imperialistic motives."⁷⁵ At the turn of the twentieth century China was suffering the same fate that had befallen Africa a generation earlier, during the notorious "scramble" to divide that continent among the Europeans. Despite some close calls, the Scramble for Africa never resulted in a major war among its main players, partly because the potential costs of confrontation far outweighed the benefits of a clash overseas. Tragically, the Romanov autocracy was not similarly alert to such hazards.

⁷⁵ Langer, "Origins," 3.

CHAPTER THREE

STRETCHING OUT TO THE YALU: A CONTESTED FRONTIER, 1900–1903

Ian Nish

The Russo-Japanese war had its origins in two weak countries—China and Korea. They found it hard to survive in an age of acquisitive imperialism and resorted to the time-honored tactic of playing off one enemy against another. In Manchuria, the name we give to the home territory of the Qing dynasty, the incumbents since 1900 were the Russians who were opposed by all the world powers without distinction, but with particular distrust by Japan. The Chinese were not, however, happy to count the Japanese as their protector or agent. The war that emerged was, therefore, fought with China as a neutral and uninvolved country. This was how the Chinese and more especially the Japanese wanted it.¹ In Korea, the clash was simpler in nature, being a straightforward confrontation between Russia and Japan that had lasted since the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–5 at least. While the Korean king had put his trust in Russia in the immediate aftermath of that war and may have continued to do so after he assumed the title of emperor, Japan had come to enjoy greater influence in the country, both commercial and political, from 1900 onwards. That influence was perhaps greater around the country than in the court itself.²

This essay discusses the dispute that developed between Russia and Japan in the three years up to August 1903 before they took up formal negotiations. The dispute originated in rival claims to hegemony in northeast Asia. Since Japan had fought against China in 1894–5, she had been aiming at hegemony in the Korean peninsula and had been effectively challenged by the Russians. But, after

¹ Lanxin Xiang, *The Origins of the Boxer War* (London, 2003); Peter Duus, *The Abacus and the Sword* (California, 1995); John A. White, *The Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War* (Princeton, 1964).

² Chong Chinsok, *The Korean Problem in Anglo-Japanese Relations* (Seoul, 1987).

Russia improved her position in “Manchuria” after 1900, she tried to stretch out again into Korean territory in 1903 and in a new wave of expansionism pursued a provocative timber venture on the Yalu River. Japan which was herself stretching out towards the Yalu at the time was not willing to accept Russia’s retention of this piece of Korea. The Yalu River then was “the contested frontier” which became the symbol for the clash between Japan and Russia. But it was only a fragment of a larger rivalry since it was doubtful whether Japan was prepared to recognize Russia’s position in Manchuria in the long term. This local dispute led to bloody war in 1904 and became an issue of global crisis in the first years of the twentieth century.

I. *China*

The ultimate conflagration in 1904 was ignited four years earlier during the Boxer disturbances in China. The two major contributors of troops to the international expedition for the relief of Beijing were Russia and Japan. They eyed one another’s intention to send an expeditionary force with suspicion throughout the crisis. When Japan sought Russia’s sanction before she became a major contributor of troops to the expedition, the Russian government on 11 June 1900 replied through its minister in Tokyo, Alexander Izvolskii, that it saw no reason for interfering with Japan’s freedom of action. The Japanese saw this response as a red signal and felt it necessary to seek overwhelming support from other powers.³ Looking ahead beyond the immediate operation, the Japanese foreign minister, Aoki Shuzo, worried that after the Beijing legations were relieved all the powers would give free play to their territorial ambitions in China. The power he had most in mind was Russia. But he decided to address them all, stating Japan’s view that “after suppressing the Boxers and restoring order in China, all countries should simultaneously withdraw their forces. . . . Japan’s decision on whether to send an increased force depends on your reply.” Aoki records that Russia, Britain, Germany and France (in that order) responded by saying that they

³ Andrew Malozemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy, 1881–1904* (Berkeley, 1958), 129–30.

would withdraw immediately after putting down the disturbances. On this basis Japan was gradually persuaded to take on a major role in relieving the foreign legations in Beijing.⁴

The disadvantages had to be set against the advantages. There were inconveniences in Japan having to send a large force to China at short notice and there were formidable costs. There was the distinct possibility that she would antagonize Russia, which had not agreed to Japan being given a mandate to take part in the expedition, and was herself anxious to be the major player. And, of course, the more Japan intervened, the more likely she was to attract the distrust and suspicion of China. On the other hand, there was the advantage that, if the crisis led to acquisitiveness on the part of the powers, Japan, as a large contributor to the international force, would be well placed. It also gave her the opportunity to monitor the actions of Russia, which had mustered a very large force.

The outcome was more competitive than the various promises would suggest. The Japanese and Russians raced each other to the North gates of the city of Beijing, while the Americans and British entered by the South. In a mood of competition, the various forces rescued the legation quarter on 14 August. Not unexpectedly the Boxers melted into the countryside and continued to pose a problem. The Japanese armies pursued their mopping up operations, reclaiming the vast fortified Beitang cathedral two days later.

The relief of the legations did not resolve the crisis. Indeed, it was only a dramatic and well-publicized preamble to the main play, the situation created by the presence of large foreign military forces in north China in conflict with the Chinese and with each other. The flight of the Chinese court from Beijing led to a period of uncertainty when Japan, like some of the other powers, could not decide when her armies could be safely removed. The question was whether the various governments involved would live up to their promises to withdraw speedily. On 28 August Russia took the initiative by withdrawing her legation to Tianjin accompanied by her troops. The Germans seem to have done likewise. But these withdrawals were only temporary and they soon returned to Beijing.

Let us look at the estimate of troop strengths in the Beijing-Tianjin

⁴ *Nihon gaiko bunsho*, Meiji 33, doc. 532 [hereafter cited as 'NGB M'].

area in August. A return prepared by the Intelligence Division of the British War Office on 31 August 1900 shows that the number of British troops landed, en route and under orders for China was 21,583; Germans 21,203; Russians (exclusive of Manchuria) 42,570; Japanese 23,000 (exclusive of those under orders, the number of which is unknown). Obviously these figures are (in spite of their pretended precision) to some extent speculative and the inclusion of troops "on their way" tends to distort them. They are widely different from those quoted by other sources.⁵

The Japanese were highly suspicious of the Russian withdrawal, believing it to be only the precursor of some move against Manchuria or the railways of north China. But the most liberal of Japanese statesmen, Prince Ito Hirobumi, who was more favorably disposed towards Russia proposed to Prime Minister Yamagata Aritomo on 22 August that Japan should set an example by being the first to propose the withdrawal of her troops so as to demonstrate that she did not have any territorial ambitions and would thus gain the goodwill of China. The ministers decided to sound out foreign powers before doing so and, on the basis of the evasive replies they received, did not proceed with early withdrawal. They were too suspicious about Russia's intentions further north. Ito, however, felt that a valuable opportunity for winning China's respect had thereby been squandered.⁶

Pressure groups were meanwhile encouraging the Tokyo government to use the crisis to take a more positive line over Korea. So much so that Ito complained in a letter of 10 September that he was aware of the existence of a strong climate of opinion in favor of invading Korea. Indeed, one of Foreign Minister Aoki's plans was to withdraw the Japanese troops rapidly from China and post them to Korea as one form of leverage over Russia in Manchuria, where,

⁵ *British Documents on Foreign Affairs*, Part I, Series E "Asia" (University Publications of America, 1993), volume 13, document 34, 107 [hereafter cited as BDOFA]. One of the diplomats who survived the siege of the Beijing legation, Ishii Kikujiro, quotes Japan as having 10,000 men; Russia, 4000; Britain, 3000; United States, 2000. The Japanese military historian, Ito Masanori, gives different numbers: Japanese, 12,000 troops; Russia, 8000; Britain, 5800; United States, 4000. The Japanese understanding was that her troops were most numerous in the expedition. It is doubtful whether we will ever obtain more than rough figures because the relief expedition was not really an international one.

⁶ Ito to Yamagata, August 1900 in *Ito Hirobumi-den*, vol. 3 (Tokyo, 1941), 434ff.

it seemed, Russia would use the excuse of Boxer activities to enlarge her sphere of influence and dwarf Japan's. In time, however, the sheer expense for Japan of maintaining such a large body of troops as an occupying force in north China became crippling; supplying them in the field became difficult; and the indiscipline of the soldiers, and especially looting, became a problem. For these reasons, War Minister Katsura Taro's plan to retain only one-quarter of Japan's contingent while withdrawing three-quarters was approved. The 9th Brigade was accordingly withdrawn directly to Hiroshima in October.⁷

For the Japanese the "North China Incident" was a crisis of conscience as well as a crisis of international relations. War Minister Katsura, with much less global experience than Aoki, in agonizing over the withdrawal of troops in the autumn wrote,

Japan, having joined the civilized countries of the world (*sekai no bummei rekkoku*) must not put a foot wrong at this stage. . . . If we are to complete our meritorious task satisfactorily, it is necessary for us speedily to remove the majority of our troops and not lose the goodwill of the so-called powers.⁸

These remarks seem to indicate that Japan, which had been out of favor since 1895, was anxious to re-establish herself as part of the international community. She was looking for friends among the powers without antagonizing those she regarded as her rivals.

The Boxer intervention enabled the Japanese army to be measured against European armies operating in the east. Japan was already recognized as an important factor militarily. Her soldiers confirmed their reputation for bravery and endurance in 1900. The Japanese in the legation quarter, both male and female, won many accolades for their resistance and morale. The government in Tokyo also earned widespread respect in many parts of the world, especially from countries like Britain; and its decision to pull out its forces certainly eased the military tensions in the autumn.

On the other hand, there were those surveying the diplomatic scene who felt that China would do well to take advantage of Russia's help to suppress disorder in Manchuria. Russia seemed to be the

⁷ Sakane Yoshihisa (ed.), *Aoki Shuzo jiden* (Tokyo, 1971), 334.

⁸ Tokutomi Iichiro (ed.), *Koshaku Katsura Taro-den*, vol. 1 (Tokyo, 1917), 901-2.

power closest to the Chinese court (in exile) and had support among Chinese statesmen. Moreover it was in Russia's own interest to re-establish law and order to protect her own railway, which China could not do. The Austro-Hungarian minister in Beijing thought the Chinese were blundering by insisting on Russian withdrawal.⁹

Some arrangement had to be made in Manchuria between the occupying authorities and the civil administration. In Port Arthur there was initialled an agreement between Evgenii Alekseev, commander of the Pacific squadron and governor of Russia's Kwantung leased territory, and Zseng, the governor of Fengtien province, on 22 November 1900. The Chinese ministers in Beijing did not like this compact and after a while appear to have leaked it to Dr G.E. Morrison, *The Times* correspondent in Beijing, who telegraphed it to London. The first the Japanese heard of it was apparently through London. The terms on which the Russians would withdraw their forces were to become a major issue for Japan. Japan protested to the Chinese and tried to build up their self-confidence. Eventually the negotiations for the Manchurian convention proved to be abortive. Instead Russia published a unilateral communiqué in April 1901.¹⁰

In November 1901 Ito Hirobumi, Japan's leading statesman, decided after his resignation as prime minister to visit St Petersburg. There he put forward in writing "personal" proposals for a settlement of the Korea-Manchuria dispute on the old basis. That is, Japan would recognize Russia's stake in Manchuria provided Russia "disinterested" herself in Korea and recognized Japan's superior rights there. Ito was one of the main proponents of the formula of "Man-Kan kokan," the exchange of Manchuria for Korea. But Russia would not admit to "disinteresting" herself in Korea and would make no substantial concessions. So the initiative, which was clouded in vagueness, came to nothing. Ito was disappointed but felt that there was still scope for further negotiations.¹¹

The next landmark was the troop withdrawal agreement of 8 April

⁹ Satow diary for 11 November 1900 as quoted in Ian Ruxton (ed.), *The Diaries and Letters of Sir Ernest Satow* (Lampeter, 1998), 301.

¹⁰ NGB M34, doc. 75. More than 400 pages are devoted to the Alekseev-Zeng arrangement in NGB M34, 1901, 90–492, more space than is devoted to the negotiation of the Anglo-Japanese alliance.

¹¹ On the Ito mission see Ian Nish, *The Russo-Japanese War*, vol. I (Folkestone, 2003), 53–9.

1902. China secured better terms because Japan and the other powers had encouraged her to resist and they put pressure on Russia themselves. Its article on troop withdrawal laid down that the first tranche of troops would be removed within six months; the second from Mukden (Shenyang) and Jilin by April 1903; and the third from the north by October of that year. In short, the plan was that the withdrawal would be completed within 18 months. As part of the initial withdrawal Jinzhou was handed over but not all the territory the Chinese had expected to receive. Prince Qing, asked about the port of Newchwang (Yinkou), said that Russia had promised to return it at the same time as Tianjin but declined to do so until the plague was first eliminated. Japan's minister at Beijing was ordered home in October for extended consultations about the inadequacy of Russia's withdrawal.¹²

It was difficult to see how committed Russia was to removing her troops which on financial grounds was the rational course. Progress was slow but of course the logistical problems of a withdrawal before the railway was fully in operation were great. While consistently claiming to observe the independence and territorial integrity of the Chinese Empire, Russia was latching on to any excuse to delay the removal of her men. Some of these were perfectly legitimate: she wanted from China effective guarantees against future attacks on her frontier and her railway. But it was a question of rival groups in the Russian court catching the eye of the tsar with whom ultimate authority rested. One extreme view stated,

Withdrawal of Russian forces from Manchuria is out of the question. A problem such as this concerns only Russia and China and should not be made a subject for international negotiations. Russia should increase her forces in the Far East with a view to silencing any opposition. She should construct defence works on the Yalu River with the object of forestalling a Japanese attack on Manchuria's flank and of making it possible for her to threaten Japan from that region in case Japan attacks.¹³

As the date for the completion of the second tranche approached at the end of April 1903, the situation had radically changed. The

¹² Memo by Langley, 26 Oct. 1903 in BDOFA, vol. 7, doc. 365; *Uchida Yasuya* (Tokyo, 1970), 402.

¹³ Glinkii as quoted by Kajima Morinosuke, *The Diplomacy of Japan, 1894-1922*, vol. 2 (Tokyo, 1978), 92.

Russians tabled new and far-reaching demands to the weak Chinese court through their ailing minister, Pavel Lessar and his charge d'affaires, Grigorii Planson. While they claimed to be bringing their military occupation to an end, they attached various conditions to their withdrawal including insisting that sanitary arrangements in Newchwang should be under Russian control and "no portion of Manchuria [should] be alienated to another power." Administration should, they insisted, be carried on as during the military occupation. In short, they planned to set up for the center and north of the country a semi-monopoly situation. While China would nominally be in charge, Manchuria would in effect become part of Russia's informal empire. It would appear that, while Russia was relaxing her domination of the southern provinces, she was by no means ready to give up her overall control. Withdrawal was not given a high priority.¹⁴

On the Japanese attitude towards China, one of the important sources is the writings of Uchida Yasuya, Japan's minister in Beijing from 21 September 1901 to 9 June 1906. He was therefore around as an observer of the mounting tension over Manchuria right down to the outbreak of war and writes with particular authority on these matters. One of the uncertainties he faced was to know what the Russo-Chinese secret treaty of 1896—the so-called anti-Japanese alliance—amounted to and how far it was influencing the current situation. It was also his task to establish liaison with the large corps of Japanese journalists who were avidly following the course of Russia's troop withdrawals.¹⁵

Foreigners in the Chinese capital were intrigued about what was going on and were sending out survey missions. G.E. Morrison gathered information and published it in his newspaper. A British intelligence officer, Lt-Colonel Wingate, DAQMG, Intelligence, China Force, who toured Manchuria reported that Russia had consolidated her position there by June 1903 and turned it into a Russian province. He further expressed the opinion that Morrison's accounts in *The Times* had, if anything, under-played their strength. Major-General O'Moore Creagh, who had been commander of China Force, sug-

¹⁴ BDOFA, vol. 8, doc. 1, 7–10. David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Toward the Rising Sun* (DeKalb, 2001), 190–2.

¹⁵ Uchida's years in Beijing are covered in 63–108 of his biography, *Uchida Yasuya* (Tokyo, 1969).

gested that Russia, while conforming to her withdrawal engagements, fully intended to absorb Manchuria.¹⁶ This was also the view taken by Lt-Colonel Ducat after a similar journey that was widely quoted in the press. He had gone to test the accuracy of Alekseev's statement of 23 April that "the military occupation of Fengtian Province had ceased." Ducat concluded that Russia "is taking every precaution to make her occupation permanent and effective and does not expect active opposition from any Power except Japan." His finding was that Liaoyang and Fenghuangcheng, an important place at the junction of the railway and the main road leading to the Yalu River, had not been evacuated. "The haste with which military preparations are being pushed on, stores collected, and troops gathered at strategic points, out of all proportion for what is required to safeguard the railway, all indicate an intention to force a quarrel on Japan as soon as possible." This report was passed on from London to the Tokyo government.¹⁷

II. *Korea*

The starting-point for any discussion of the Russo-Japanese misunderstanding in Korea was the Nishi-Rosen protocol (*giteisho*) of 25 April 1898, sometimes called an "agreement." Nishi Tokujiro was the Japanese foreign minister while Roman Rosen was the tsarist minister in Tokyo, 1897-9. Under it Russia and Japan decided to pursue their interests in the peninsula on terms of equality. This suited Japan in the ugly year of 1898, when all the powers were showing themselves as acquisitive. But in terms of commercial avarice the situation was by no means equal since Japan was more successful in gaining railway leases, establishing banks and generally running the ports in Korea, under a sort of unnoticed peaceful penetration. By contrast, Russia was at the time increasingly interested in security: she wanted to establish a Pacific fleet based on Vladivostok and Port Arthur, where it could link up with a Russian railway network. But large sections of the Moscow-Vladivostok Grand Trunk line were

¹⁶ Notes by Wingate and Creagh, 18 June 1903 in BDOFA, vol. 8, doc. 24.

¹⁷ C.M. Ducat (Liaotung) to officer-in-charge, China Station, Winchester House, 14 May 1903 in NGB M36/I, doc. 843.

still under construction. The Pacific fleet was slowly coming into being. It was recognized that it was vital for the effective operation of this fleet that the Korea Straits should be kept open. That could be achieved by Russia herself acquiring the lease of a port in southern Korea or, alternatively, by ensuring that her rival Japan did not. This led to the great but obscure squabble over a lease at Masampo, a port some 50 miles west of Pusan, which took place in 1899–1900.¹⁸

Others expected that Japan would capitalize on the Boxer crisis. The British Admiralty did record in September that a large number of Japanese vessels from the allied fleet were staying in the Yellow Sea awhile, congregating around Korea as if something were in the offing. But in the end Japan exercised restraint during the crisis in Korea as in China.¹⁹

One of the ironies of 1900 was that both Russia and Japan were hopeful that the regional crisis might present an opportunity for some sort of diplomatic settlement for the Korean problem. They were both united in believing that Korea was a matter for settlement between themselves without outside intervention. The Japanese minister to St Petersburg, Komura Jutaro (later to play an important part in our story as foreign minister), asked Russia whether she had any objection to regarding Korea as falling within Japan's sphere of influence. This was something Russia was not prepared to contemplate. But the Russian foreign minister, Count Vladimir Lamsdorf, a year later mentioned to Ito that Russia had received such an approach from Japan. Japan simultaneously asked Germany whether she would have any objections, bearing in mind the support that Germany had given Russia in 1895 and 1898. This approach to Berlin may be thought of as an example of over-sensitive diplomacy. But it is clear from the Japanese documents of the day that Japan was convinced that Germany was cooperating closely with the Russians in north China and was regarded by Japan, or at least Foreign Minister Aoki, as part of the Russian camp. The Germans, after

¹⁸ *Collected Writings of Ian Nish*, Part II (Richmond, 2001), 103–4. The Korean kingdom which had long acknowledged tributary status to China gained independence by signing the Kanhwa treaty with Japan (1876). This was followed by the treaty with the US (1882) and the Parkes treaty with Britain (1884).

¹⁹ BDOFA, vol. 13, doc. 34.

some discussion, replied that they had no intention to take sides and would observe absolute neutrality.²⁰

Russia responded indirectly to this in January 1901 through Izvolskii, who had succeeded Rosen as minister in Tokyo in the previous year. She asked whether Japan was ready to enter into negotiations for the "neutralization of Korea." This was to return to the Nishi-Rosen "protocol" of 1898, which in effect allowed both countries to pursue their interests on an equal footing. It was a further step towards a solution to the deadlock and a solution that had the backing of the Korean court. But it ignored the commercial progress which Japanese interests had slowly been making in railways, telegraphs, commerce, investment and banking since 1898. The prime minister of the day, Ito Hirobumi, was ready to enter into negotiations on this basis; but his foreign minister, Kato Takaaki, was completely opposed. A sort of dual diplomacy operated within the Ito cabinet, and Kato who was always an advocate of Foreign Ministry autonomy had the temerity to veto the prime minister's go-ahead. Bitter arguments also took place between Kato who had much experience of European Great Power diplomacy and Izvolskii. Kato's reply to the Russian initiative was that

The 1898 protocol is still in force and seems to work fairly well and to be fairly responsive to actual requirements. In these circumstances the Imperial Japanese Government think that . . . it would be well to postpone negotiations until the *status quo ante* [in Manchuria] shall have been restored. [17 January 1901]²¹

At this stage it suited Japan better to maintain *laissez-faire*. The more Russia established herself in Manchuria, the more important was it for Japan to claim supremacy on the Korean peninsula. The issue of neutralization versus spheres of influence lingered in the air without formal approaches. It was mentioned during Ito's visit to St Petersburg in November. When the Anglo-Japanese alliance was concluded, it was stated that Korea's independence and territorial integrity would be respected but that Japan had interests there, "in a peculiar degree politically as well as commercially and industrially." Japan especially insisted on the inclusion of this phrase.

²⁰ NGB M33, docs. 522–31.

²¹ NGB M34, doc. 399.

Lamsdorf revealed in 1903 at a conference that Japan, doubtless fortified by the British alliance, had on 4 August 1902 suggested that previous Russo-Japanese agreements be annulled and a new agreement giving Japan paramountcy in the Korean peninsula be substituted.²²

This was overtaken by a countervailing initiative from the Russian side. It was sparked by Minister Alexander Pavlov in Seoul, who was regarded by the Japanese as a rather pushy, ruthless individual. Pavlov was due to go on leave. On his way home he stayed on 19 September with Minister Izvolskii in Tokyo and apparently discussed neutralization of Korea under the joint guarantee of Japan, Russia and the United States. Then he met Count Arthur Cassini, the minister in Washington, who happened to be in Paris and persuaded him to make approaches on his return to his post. This was in Japan's view dangerous enough, but what worried the Japanese diplomats additionally was that, while Pavlov was absent, the Seoul berth was to be filled by Carl Waeber, who had been minister there in the golden years for Russia in the 1890s when the Korean king had sought the protection of her legation and recognized Waeber as his particular ally. Waeber was to return with a Russian prince bearing gifts from the tsar for the jubilee of the Korean king in 1903. No wonder the Japanese got the wind up. Could there be a tie-up between this cordiality and the neutralization plan that Korea favored and Japan abhorred? Komura told his representative in Seoul to be on the alert.²³

Japan therefore exerted all possible pressure in friendly courts, notably Washington and London, to prevent this neutralization proposal coming to fruition. Clearly Washington was crucial and they would not adhere to the Russian proposal. Russia was told pointedly that the United States would not get involved in such entanglements.

The neutralization proposal, which Japan took to be a personal strategy of Pavlov, Izvolskii and Cassini, was still being ventilated in the new year. But Japan continued to be opposed. She did not want to be seen in British eyes as flirting with Russia over the independence of Korea enshrined in the Anglo-Japanese alliance and tried to keep the issue secret from Britain. But her minister in St. Petersburg

²² Malozemoff, 202.

²³ NGB M35, doc. 184.

discussed it inadvertently with the British ambassador and was rebuked accordingly.²⁴

At the beginning of the year “neutralization” gave way to other problems for Japan. In February Russia asked Korea that a concession for the building of the railway from Seoul to Uiju on the Yalu River should be granted to a Russian entrepreneur. The Japanese who were currently engaged in building the Seoul-Pusan line objected even though they had no plan to extend north from Seoul at that stage.²⁵ Waeber, who stayed until April, had a decade earlier obtained from the Korean king the pledge of a timber concession on the Yalu river. After neglecting the concession, the Russians now wanted to implement it and carry it out at Yongamp’o, some 15 miles from the mouth of the Yalu on its east bank. The Koreans were in a dilemma: Russia was insisting upon re-validation of the earlier agreement while Japan was known to be opposed.²⁶ Such were the imperialist pressures imposed on the faction-ridden Korean court.

From April 1903 the matter became more serious when Japan received reports that a Russian trading settlement was indeed being established at Yongamp’o. The Russian Timber Company under Baron Gunsberg seemed to have gained strong government backing in St. Petersburg; and Minister Pavlov sought Korea’s approval for Russia to establish a sphere south of the Yalu. To emphasize the proposal, Russia assembled her fleet in Port Arthur (confirmed by G.E. Morrison) and deployed ground forces in Fenghuangcheng between Mukden and the Yalu and along the Amnok-gang river. According to Korean sources, Korea refused to grant a lease of the region due to the strong protests of Japan and Britain. But the Russians took the law into their own hands and crossed the border and began erecting buildings, fortresses, barracks and military facilities, including telegraph lines.²⁷

This enterprise had customs implications and so E. Laporte, the French-born Korean Maritime Customs collector at Chemulpo, was sent on a tour of inspection in June 1903. Though much of the Yalu venture remains obscure, his report states,

²⁴ NGB M36/I, docs. 448–51.

²⁵ Inoue Yuichi, *Higashi Ajia tetsudo kokusai kankeishi* (Tokyo, 1989), chs. 3–4.

²⁶ Erwin Baelz, *Awakening Japan: The Diary of a German Doctor* (New York, 1932), 230.

²⁷ Han Woo-keun, *The History of Korea* (Seoul, 1970), 445.

The Russian Timber Concession Company have, under the name of their Korean interpreter, purchased about 50 acres of ground in the best location, which they are inclosing with a mud wall, and where they are erecting barracks etc. Fifty Russians and more than 200 Chinese, who live in barracks within the inclosure, are at work and, though no soldiers in uniform are seen, the presence of horses and rifles seems to indicate a military status. They have two steam launches (one 60 feet long) on the river, and a small wooden jetty for their service . . .²⁸

Laporte concluded that Russian timber concessions were probably only a screen to cover political designs and to extend Russian operations from Manchuria into Korea. Russian workers and soldiers were reported by Japanese military observers to be engaged in building-works, which looked like fortifications; but there was no clear distinction between Russian troops, guards and wood-cutters. They were especially concerned by the use on the timber project of soldiers on the active list (*geneki gunjin*), which convinced them that it was not purely a commercial operation. The Foreign Ministry reporting was coordinated by Consul Segawa at Newchwang, who sent his office several detailed intelligence reports.²⁹ But the press also carried extensive coverage of Yalu news from its own correspondents; and Japanese public opinion became highly incensed.

The Japanese military were highly suspicious that Russia wanted to seal the Yalu River by occupying both banks.³⁰ The only positive counteraction that Japan could take was to call on Korea to open a port on the Korean bank of the Yalu River for general trade. Britain supported this Open Door proposal wholeheartedly. But Minister Pavlov fought hard in Seoul for a port for Russia's exclusive use.³¹

III. *From Soundings to Negotiation*

While the Korean situation looked ugly in late spring 1903, the Manchurian situation was equally of concern for the Japanese. Russia

²⁸ E. Laporte, precis of a Korean Customs report in BDOFA, vol. 8, doc. 22.

²⁹ NGB M36/I, doc. 836, 838, 845–7. Segawa coordinated this series of reports from agents.

³⁰ NGB M36/I, doc. 409.

³¹ BDOFA, vol. 8, docs. 34–41, 51–2; *Katsura-den*, vol. 2, 123–7.

had failed to honor her treaty by completing the second tranche of her evacuation from Manchuria. She was making good progress over her railways, the problem being the line around Lake Baikal where construction was especially difficult. The Chinese Eastern Railway was “ready for exploitation” on 1 July 1903. Its builders had been forced to open certain sections to traffic as early as 1901, even at the cost of interfering with the construction itself. Such was the sense of urgency felt about Russia’s new asset. These developments were obviously significant for Russia, both politically and economically. But they were like a time-bomb for the Japanese who saw them as an essential reinforcement for Russia’s long-term ambitions in the east.³²

The progress of the Russian railways permitted statesmen to visit the area. This allowed the Russian minister for the army, General Aleksei Kuropatkin (1848–1925) to visit Japan after inspecting units in the maritime provinces. He stayed from 10 to 28 June, ostensibly on his own initiative but really with the tsar’s blessing. His official reception as state guest only affected the first five days. Kuropatkin was shown a wide variety of units and installations and formed a favorable impression of the troops, both their training and their fighting spirit. He was accompanied on these inspections by the top Japanese generals. But his special escorts were General Murata Atsushi and Major Tanaka Giichi who had studied the Russian military in St. Petersburg and become experts on continental Europe. He seems to have come to the conclusion that the Japanese army would be a formidable opponent, though his inspections elsewhere convinced him that Russian forces in the eastern region were also strong.

Kuropatkin held talks with Foreign Minister Komura, War Minister Terauchi and Prime Minister Katsura (twice). He spoke of the importance to the Russian state of the railways to Vladivostok and Port Arthur in opening up Siberia and the enormous costs they entailed. He tried to explain the difficulties involved in the evacuation of Russian forces and claimed that genuine reductions had been made. He was given a cordial reception. But some newspapers were already speculating whether he was on a reconnaissance mission (*shisatsu*) for possible hostilities in the future.³³

³² Excerpt from *North Manchuria and the Chinese Eastern Railway* (Harbin, 1924) in Nish, *The Russo-Japanese War*, vol. I, 86–7.

³³ Roman Rosen, *Forty Years of Diplomacy*, vol. 1 (London, 1922), ch. 22.

Following his tour of Japan, Kuropatkin was due to travel to Port Arthur where he would preside over a sort of “summit of experts” on Russia’s eastern problems which was due to open on 1 July. To his embarrassment, he was asked by St. Petersburg to stay on in Japan until former Guards Colonel Alexander Bezobrazov reached the east. This suggested that the main voice at the conference was intended to be that of Bezobrazov, despite Kuropatkin’s being its nominal chairman. The conference was convened in 16 sessions ending on 10 July; and Alekseev, Lessar, the minister to China, Pavlov and Colonel Vogak who had been accompanying the war minister on his rounds took part. The minister to Tokyo, Roman Rosen, who had taken over from Izvolskii on 12 April was notable by his absence, probably because of a critical memorandum he had penned before his departure from Europe.³⁴ Evidently the China and North Korean problems under discussion were not thought to be relevant to the Russian representative in Japan. In fact Kuropatkin and Bezobrazov turned out to be at loggerheads during the conference. The former took the view that Russia should not antagonize Japan by exploiting the Korean concessions on the Yalu River and favored pulling out of southern Manchuria and concentrating on the north. Bezobrazov with Alekseev is understood to have offered energetic opposition to any further withdrawal of troops. There was evidence of disunity in thinking and enmity at a personal level, especially between Kuropatkin and Bezobrazov and the current expansionists in Korea. The conference offered no concessions to Japanese complaints over Manchuria. Instead on 6 September Russia presented her latest slate of demands to China, delaying yet again the promised evacuation.

Another effect of the Port Arthur summit was that the tsar on 12 August set up the Viceroyalty of the Far East, appointing Alekseev to the new post. It was probably a genuine attempt to decentralize decision-making from St Petersburg and integrate the diplomatic, military/naval and economic administration on the periphery in the region itself. One disadvantage of placing the primary policy recommendations in the hands of those in the east was that local Russian opinion there was consistently expansionist. In accordance with this, Kuropatkin on his return from Port Arthur found himself sidelined

³⁴ Report of Minister Uchida, 9 September 1903 in NGB M36/I, docs. 308–13. *Katsura-den*, vol. 2, 127.

in the Russian establishment and his voice, like that of Witte, was not much heard in the final months before the war. He found it better to retire for a while on grounds of ill health.

Meanwhile in Japan the army concluded on 8 June that Britain and the United States should be invited to join her in calling again for the withdrawal of Russian troops from Manchuria. If they would not join Japan in this, she should open official discussions with Russia for herself; if these discussions were to break down, Japan would have to achieve her objects by armed force.³⁵ In its advice to government, it spoke of Manchuria but not Korea; and there was of course no mention of the old "Manchuria for Korea" formula. The Japanese military were already talking of the need for *kessen*, "the decisive battle."

Minister Uchida in Beijing, sensing that urgent decisions were imminent, decided to send his interpreter, Shimakawa Torasaburo, to Tokyo on 12 June in order to get his opinions across and to influence the views of the cabinet. Shimakawa discussed the issues with Komura and most of the departmental chiefs in the Foreign Ministry, which was then small. He then telegraphed a long report, which suggested that the prevailing opinion in the Ministry was moderate but determined. It had, however, to restrain many groups outside the Ministry, which did not want to delay by embarking on a period of patient diplomacy.³⁶

The Council in the presence of the emperor, the highest decision-making body in Japan, on 23 June adopted a formula less rigid than the army wanted. Korea was to be asked under no circumstances to give any territory to Russia; but some concessions to Russia in Manchuria might be possible. The Elder Statesmen had been consulted; and Marquis Ito as the most influential of them was partially successful in moderating the wording but it is doubtful if he won over the hawks inside or outside the army. It was decided to open formal negotiations with Russia over Manchuria and Korea on this basis.

Disappointed with the watered down formula that resulted, Prime Minister Katsura tendered his resignation the following day. There

³⁵ Shumpei Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War* (New York, 1970), 75–8.

³⁶ *Gaimusho no 100-nen*, vol. 1, 441–4; Uchida Yasuya, 94–7.

was a political crisis at the highest level for ten days until the emperor called on him to withdraw his resignation. He only agreed to return to high office if Ito's standing in the political structure was reduced. Ito who was regarded in effect as leader of the opposition to Katsura's cabinet found himself appointed against his will as head of the privy council and had to give up his political party role as head of the Seiyukai. It was less easy for him to influence policy from his more elevated position.

For these reasons it was 12 August before Minister Kurino who had previously been asked to draw up a personal draft³⁷ presented Russia with the new terms hammered out by the various committees in Japan. Japan wanted to place Korea where she had preponderating interests entirely under her influence, while she recognized Russia's special interests in railway enterprises in Manchuria. Japan would not say, however, that she had no broader interests in Manchuria. Her demands were modest, compared to those she was to make two years later after her victories in the war. The Yalu concession was given less prominence, considering the hostility it had earlier generated.³⁸

While talks were opened between the two sides over Manchuria, there was general agreement that there was little prospect of success. China and Korea in particular who were both well aware that the battles were likely to be fought on their territory viewed a rupture of relations as imminent. The old chestnut of "neutralization," so beloved of Seoul, was brought out again in a new guise. Under the strict guidance of the Korean emperor, John McLeavy Brown, the British-born commissioner of Korean Maritime Customs, drew up letters addressed to Russia and Japan confirming Korea's intention to stay neutral in the event of war,

If it should turn out . . . that Corea will find herself between the two conflicting parties, it behooves us to declare in anticipation that we intend to remain strictly neutral. While however confining ourselves to our own affairs, it will devolve upon us to see to the protection of our borders . . . We must therefore request Russia and Japan to consider us a neutral country, so that, if in the future war should break out,

³⁷ *Gaimusho no 100-nen*, vol. 1, 438–9.

³⁸ Rosen, vol. 1, ch. 22; Yoshihisa Tak Matsusaka, *The Making of Japanese Manchuria, 1904–32* (Cambridge, Mass., 2001), 35–6.

none of the operations will take place within our borders and we should have no bodies of troops marching through our territory.³⁹

Alas, Japanese military planning was already based on the need for the main force to land on the Korean peninsula, so the plaintive plea for neutralization again fell on deaf ears.

Such was the build-up to the negotiations that shuffled on at a snail's pace for six months without any formula for solution emerging. There was really no sign of concessions on either side. The thrust of the negotiations passed back to Manchuria where Russia continued to claim it was purely an issue between herself and China. Sir Claude MacDonald, the British minister in Tokyo, who was privy to many confidences from military men found both sides determined and unconciliatory. On 5 November he wrote, "If neither side will give way, I don't see where diplomacy will be able to come in."⁴⁰

On the Russian side, negotiations were to some extent decentralized into the hands of Admiral Alekseev in Port Arthur and Minister Rosen in Tokyo. Alekseev was obdurate, not wanting to yield anything from his new bailiwick. Like most Russian officers, he appears to have been over-confident and complacent about Russian military-naval power in the region. Rosen, according to MacDonald, was convinced that Japan was bluffing and would not fight. This was a view quite different from that formed by Kuropatkin and may have been due to bad military advice he received. But Rosen was so sick that he was confined to his house at the end of the year with tympanites and could not see any of his colleagues in the Tokyo Diplomatic Corps who would have assured him that "the Japanese meant business."⁴¹

Strategy in St. Petersburg was no longer in the hands of those best informed and a sense of urgency was lacking. The evidence from neutral observers suggests that large numbers of Russian troops were still being kept in Manchuria and that she was not in good faith trying to evacuate them. At the same time, the size of the force which she was concentrating there suggested that she wanted to hold on to the existing territory under her occupation and not that she expected or wanted war with Japan. The assumption of many Russians

³⁹ NGB M36/I, doc. 696, 27 Aug. 1903.

⁴⁰ MacDonald to Satow, 5 Nov. 1903 in Ruxton, *op. cit.*, 335.

⁴¹ MacDonald to Hardinge, 30 June 1904, in Charles Hardinge Papers, 3 [Cambridge University Library].

that Japan would not fight suggests that there was an element of racial superiority present in their thinking.⁴²

Japan was indeed scared both because of the size of the Russian military and its fierce reputation. She knew that it was difficult and risky for her to send a large army directly to Manchuria and devised the strategy of transporting the early expeditionary force by the shorter passage via Korea and through Korea to Manchuria. But her main worry in the long term was the completion of the Trans-Siberian and Chinese Eastern railways, which gave Russia a strategic advantage in the Age of Rail. They increased the threat that Russia posed to Japanese continental interests and seemed to set a deadline on any counteraction she contemplated. The Japanese scholar Furuya Tetsuo concludes that there was a general consensus among the political classes that the railways were critical and accepted that “now was the time to fight” for the solution of the problem.⁴³ There now existed a younger generation of politicians and military officials who were less cautious, more ready to contemplate an early confrontation with Russia with all the risks that that entailed and were not in favor of protracted negotiations. But the government, more aware of Japan’s weakness, sought to calm opinion while taking steps to undermine Russia in China and also in the soft underbelly of the Russian empire in Europe by cultivating and financing dissident groups in Poland and Finland. In August 1903 Japan cautiously embarked on the slow path of negotiation.

⁴² Schimmelpenninck, 191.

⁴³ Furuya Tetsuo, *NichiRo senso* (Tokyo, 1967).

CHAPTER FOUR

THE BEZOBRAZOVTSY

Igor V. Lukoianov

The question of responsibility for the Russo-Japanese War arose even as the conflict still raged. Count (after 1905) S. Iu. Witte blamed the war on irresponsible persons and their activities in Korea. Witte's opponents—the *Bezobrazovtsy*—held the former finance minister responsible for everything, asserting that his entire Far Eastern policy had been deeply flawed.¹ A “war of leaked documents” soon engulfed the press, with Witte emerging victorious. He skillfully outlined his perspective, one that he later repeated in his memoirs.² Although the opposition marshaled considerable materials depicting their own version of events leading to the war, the *Bezobrazovtsy* failed to generate widespread support for their cause.³

After 1917, when many previously secret archives became accessible, the origins of the Russo-Japanese War attracted the interest of the historian B.A. Romanov. Beginning in 1922, he published several articles on the war,⁴ including the activities of the *Bezobrazovtsy*,

¹ It is difficult to define those who figured among the *Bezobrazovtsy* as anything more specific than a group. B.A. Romanov called them the “Bezobrazov circle.” The *Bezobrazovtsy* had no formal structure, and their composition changed: adherents appeared and disappeared. It is possible to assert with some degree of surety only that there was a division of functions. So, for example, A.M. Bezobrazov served as leader and generator of ideas, while V.M. Vonliarliarskii specialized more in commercial activities, and N.G. Matiunin in Korean affairs, and so on.

² Here stress falls on a voluminous manuscript which was prepared under Witte's direction and published during his own lifetime (1914) by B.B. Glinskii in *Istoricheskii vestnik*, and which subsequently appeared as a separate book (B.B. Glinskii (ed.), *Prolog russko-iaponskoi voiny. Materialy iz arkhiva grafa S. Iu. Vitte* [Petrograd, 1916]). Nearly a third of the book (pp. 248–352) touches in varying degrees on the activities of the *Bezobrazovtsy*.

³ For more detail, see, B.V. Anan'ich and R.Sh. Ganelin, “Vitte i izdatel'skaia deiatel'nost' 'Bezobrazovskogo kruzhka,’” *Knizhnoe delo v Rossii vo vtoroi polovine XIX–nachale XX veka* (L, 1989), vyp. 4, 59–78.

⁴ B.A. Romanov, “Vitte i kontsessiia na r. Ialu. (Dokumental'nye kommentarii k ‘Vospominaniiam’ gr. S.Iu. Vitte),” in *Sbornik statei po russkoi istorii, posviashchennykh S.F. Platonovu* (Petrograd, 1922), 425–59. The text on the *Bezobrazovtsy* is basically

and, finally in 1928 an entire book.⁵ On the basis of materials drawn primarily from the archives of the Finance Ministry, Romanov convincingly revealed the unfounded nature of Witte's interpretation and masterfully depicted the many inter-related complexities, ambitions, and interests that led in the end to armed conflict. Other historians have not devoted as much attention to the *Bezobrazovtsy*; therefore, no serious scholarly work has thus far rivaled Romanov's.⁶ However, despite its excellence, his work suffers from several shortcomings, including lack of perspective and completeness. Both of these problems stem from the limited nature of Romanov's sources, since he had no access to materials from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and several other archives.

By 1898, Witte's activities as finance minister had actually facilitated the appearance of "the *Bezobrazovtsy*" with their own plan for a Russian Far Eastern policy. Already in the mid-1890s he had conceived a broad program for economic expansion in the East in conjunction with construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad and especially of the Chinese Eastern Railroad. Witte operated primarily in China and looked upon Korea mostly as a locale where Russia might acquire an ice-free port as a winter stopover for the fleet and as a commercial outlet for the Trans-Siberian. In 1896, after Peking rebuffed an attempt to acquire such a port in China, Korea attracted growing interest. From 1897 the Finance Ministry energetically courted influence with the Hermit Kingdom, gaining advantage from the monarch's favorable disposition to Russia, which he viewed as his primary defense against Japanese encroachments. By 1898, Korean finances, customs service, and the army had all gradually come under Russian control, while the government was basically comprised of pro-Russian ministers.

However, the situation changed drastically at the end of 1897 and the beginning of 1898 because of the Russian occupation of Port Arthur and the signing of a Russo-Chinese agreement for the lease of the Kwantung peninsula. Witte quickly lost interest in Korea,

repeated in Romanov's other article, "Kontsessiia na Ialu. K kharakteristike lichnoi politiki Nikolaia II," *Russkoe proshloe*, vol. 1 (Petrograd, 1923), 87–108.

⁵ B.A. Romanov, *Rossiia v Manchzhurii (1892–1906). Ocherki po istorii vneshnei politiki samoderzhavii v epokhu imperializma* (L, 1928).

⁶ See, for example, Pak Chon Khe's *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 gg. i Koreia* (M, 1997), which in essence repeats coverage already provided by Romanov.

which he viewed as compensation to Japan for the loss of Liaodong. The Finance Ministry correspondingly curtailed its aggressive designs on Korea.

However, Witte's Korean position was not viewed as implacable. Even though Russia possessed no notable advantages in central and southern Korea, the pursuit of illusory markets there continued until 1900, and Witte lacked the necessary means to bring the issue to a close. His refusal to strengthen Russia's position in Korea gave rise to confusion, the more so because circumstances there favored uncertainty. A.M. Bezobrazov and his clique were not slow in taking advantage of the apparent weaknesses in the finance minister's Far Eastern policy.⁷

⁷ A.M. Bezobrazov (1855–1931) was a retired guards colonel. Until 1881, he had served under Count I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov in the Cavalier Guards, which was perhaps the premier privileged military unit in Russia, and which conferred entry to court circles and the noble elite. In 1881–82, Bezobrazov was the Count's right-hand man in the "Holy Druzhina," an unofficial counter-revolutionary organization. After the Druzhina was disbanded, the Count continued to protect Bezobrazov, who in the mid-1880s left service to deal with matters on the family estate (his wife, born into the princely Khovanskii family, had some 17,000 *desiatiny* of land), albeit unsuccessfully. He spent his winters in Switzerland, a habit that persisted even during the height of *Bezobrazovtsy* activities. The retired colonel was extremely restless and enterprising. A dilettante, he constantly spun out various absurd projects, beginning with the invention of new forms of armament and ending with a review of Russia's entire foreign policy. Various people left impressions about Bezobrazov's personality, but they diverge. Witte, Vorontsov-Dashkov, and others saw him as an upright but diverted person surrounded by various scoundrels. Rear Admiral A.M. Abaza declared to K.P. Pobedonostev that "They call him a fop—and he is fop-pish—just like the German emperor. Much of what he says is nonsense, but his genius radiates from it." (K.P. Pobedonostev to S.Iu. Witte, 23 October 1903, RGIA, f. 1622, op. 1, d. 694). B.A. Romanov depicted the psychological peculiarities of both the emperor and the retired guards colonel that explained Bezobrazov's ability to exert significant influence over Nicholas II. Romanov noted that Bezobrazov was expressive, sincere, and self-confident, always expressing himself in terms that were simple and easily accessible to the emperor (B.A. Romanov, "Vitte i kontsessiia na r. Ialu, 446). It is well-known that the Russian autocrat was susceptible to such raconteurs, to some degree falling under their spell. With the onset of the Russo-Japanese War, Bezobrazov gradually lost any significance, especially after the assassination of Interior Minister V.K. Plehve. Later, Bezobrazov returned to his favorite pastime—the invention of new types of artillery shells, to which specialists reacted negatively. After 1917, he emigrated and eventually died in Paris.

V.M. Vonliarliarskii (1852–1940) also began his career in the Cavalier Guards. During the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78, he served as an orderly for Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich, who commanded Russian troops in the Danubian theater. Vonliarliarskii had already attained the rank of colonel in the early 1880s, but was forced to retire to his estate in 1881 after marriage to his older brother's former wife. A man of action, he worked actively in agriculture, displaying enterprise.

The *Bezobrazovtsy* had appeared in the beginning of 1898, with their origins prompted by the "Briner Concession." On 28 August (10 September) 1896,⁸ a merchant from Vladivostok, Iu. I. Briner, had received rights to a 20-year timber concession on approximately 5,000 square kilometers of land in the Yalu basin in northern Korea. In exchange for 15,000 rubles, the concessionaire received liberal advantages, including the right to construct factories, workshops, roads, and railroads. Briner was obliged to begin cutting the forests no later than five years after the onset of the concession; otherwise he would forfeit all rights to it.⁹ The wide-scale nature of his rights implied that the concession held political overtones. Actually, the concession was granted at a time when D.D. Pokotilov, the Finance Ministry's agent for China, was in Korea on a mission for Witte to

He possessed two paper mills in St. Petersburg and was interested in gold-mining concessions in the Urals and Chukotka. In the end, his enterprises proved startlingly unsuccessful: between the early 1880s and 1906, he lost his wife's entire fortune, amounting to two million rubles. He also proved capable of under-handed dealings, for which there is abundant evidence. Most striking was a court case that indicted Vonliarliarskii in the forgery of Prince Oginskii's will in his son's name (1911). Although Vonliarliarskii was exonerated, the case clearly revealed his complicity in forgery. During the 1920s, he emigrated to Germany, where he became the only *Bezobrazovets* to publish memoirs about the origins of the Russo-Japanese War as a rebuttal to Witte's memoirs. However, Vonliarliarskii's memoirs attracted little publicity.

N.G. Matiunin (1850–1907) was a childhood acquaintance of Vonliarliarskii, who saw lengthy service in Yakutiia, followed by a stint in the late 1870s as commissar for the border security service in the Priamur territory. He later became an agent there for the Finance Ministry, but was forced from office by Governor-General S.M. Dukhovskoi. For a brief period during 1898, Matiunin was Russian minister in Korea, where he was an ardent but circumspect supporter of a proactive Russian policy for the Korean kingdom. However, his tenure was brief, probably because of Witte's interference. In 1903–05, Matiunin served as Rear Admiral Abaza's assistant in the chancery of the Special Committee on the Far East. In contrast with many of the *Bezobrazovtsy*, Matiunin was wealthy, with commercial interests in the Caucasus.

A.M. Abaza (1853–1915) was a nephew of Finance Minister A.A. Abaza (1880–81), and served with the navy after 1873, rising to become adjutant for Grand Duke Aleksei Aleksandrovich, titular head of the Naval Ministry. Upon attaining rear admiral's rank, Abaza in 1902 transferred as assistant to Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich's Main Directorate for Maritime Commercial Shipping. In 1903–05, Abaza served as administrator for the Special Committee on the Far East, in which he oversaw Admiral Alekseev's affairs and served as the admiral's liaison to the various ministries. During the Russo-Japanese War, Abaza was assigned to locate and acquire vessels from abroad to reinforce the Russian navy. When the Viceroyalty was formally abolished in June 1905, his post disappeared.

⁸ Except as noted, all dates are rendered according to the Julian calendar.

⁹ Pak Chon Khe, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–05 gg. i Koreia*, 76–9.

report on the kingdom's economic status. Despite the fact that Briner possessed substantial lumbering assets in Vladivostok terms, he lacked sufficient capital for an undertaking on the scale of the Korean concession. N.G. Matiunin evidently learned of this from A.Iu. Rothstein, who headed the St. Petersburg International Commercial Bank, to which Briner had applied for assistance.

Matiunin had often supported an active Russian policy in the Korean kingdom, and he had written in such terms to the Foreign Ministry as early as the fall of 1897.¹⁰ On 24 November 1897, he was appointed emissary to Korea, and before his departure for the Far East in early 1898, he discussed the matter with an old acquaintance, V.M. Vonliarliarskii. Matiunin's concept was to create on the basis of Briner's concession "a large Russian industrial enterprise on the model of chartered companies, thereby regaining for Russia the position it had lost in Korea, and then gradually shifting activities into the Priamur territory and Siberia."¹¹ In proposing the Chartered Company, Vonliarliarskii and Matiunin made the fundamental assumption of governmental support, including financial support. Because their plans diverged from Witte's Korean policy, Matiunin sought support from Count M.N. Muravev, the foreign minister. Muravev was interested in the proposal, because he hoped with the assistance of the projected company "to put off or delay an unavoidable confrontation with Japan."¹² However, an absence of funding meant temporary postponement for the idea.

Meanwhile, Bezobrazov also became an adherent to the idea of an East-Asian company and "Briner's concession." The concessionaires needed Bezobrazov's connections with Count I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, the former minister to the imperial court.¹³ The newly minted concessionaires decided to go for assistance through the count directly

¹⁰ This assignment did not last long. Already on 7 June 1898, Matiunin received orders from the tsar transferring him to Melbourne. He was "crushed by the lack of mercy," and attempted to resist, but on 31 December 1898 he was forced to transfer all affairs not pertaining to Bezobrazov's group to A.I. Pavlov. Instead of departing for Melbourne, Matiunin returned to St. Petersburg. The very fact of his removal testified to the beginning of Witte's resistance to the Bezobrazov group.

¹¹ V.M. Vonliarliarskii, "Koreiskoe delo. 1 chast'. Ekspeditsiia v Severnyi Koreiu v 1898/99 gg.," in Arkhiv Sankt-Peterburgskogo Instituta Istorii Rossiiskoi Akademii Nauk [SPbII RAN], f. 121, op. 1, d. 104, l. 9.

¹² V.M. Vonliarliarskii, "Otchet o khode vysochaishe vozlozhennogo na ego imperatorshoe vysochestvo velikogo kniazia Aleksandra Mikhailovicha dela v Korei v 1898/99 gg.," in RGIA, f. 1282, op. 1, d. 759, l. 5.

¹³ Subsequently, Vorontsov-Dashkov assisted the *Bezobrazovtsy* only infrequently.

to the tsar. Unknown to Witte, Vorontsov-Dashkov on 26 February 1898 passed a note from them to Nicholas II.¹⁴ The note emphasized that the proposed East-Asia company must pursue political objectives: "Russia needs people in Korea not just for the enrichment of a few, but . . . for the implanting of Russian ideas." Inherent in the activities of the company (topographical sketching of the terrain, the construction of strategic roads and warehouses, etc.) was a requirement for substantial governmental subsidies, since private capital was unsuitable for such unproductive expenditures. In return, the government would enjoy the leading role in activities of the company, which would resemble a colonial administration under the guise of a pseudo-private enterprise. The note also emphasized that "in the hands of the company . . . must be concentrated all influences on the general course of Korean affairs."¹⁵

On 30 April 1898, the tsar received a second note indicating the necessity of sending to Korea a delegation to reconnoiter the situation on scene.¹⁶ In addition, the note also mentioned fashioning a Russian defensive line with the stationing "of our combat vanguard" of up to 20,000 and more personnel under the guise of employees.¹⁷

The emperor supported the idea, promising to allocate money for the acquisition of Briner's concession and for the delegation. The entire enterprise was to be headed by Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich, a man of great political ambitions, but who was temporarily out of favor because of a conflict with Grand Duke Aleksei Aleksandrovich over naval matters dating to 1896.

Two delegations (7 and 5 members) were sent to Korea in May-June 1898. The first included the well-known contemporary journalist S.N. Syromiatnikov, who had long been interested in Eastern affairs, and N.G. Garin-Mikhailovskii, a transportation engineer. N.I. Neporozhnev, an official from the emperor's personal cabinet, traveled separately. Before departure and with the tsar's assent, Neporozhnev on 11 May 1898 assumed title to Briner's concession for 65,000

¹⁴ The beginnings of the Bezobrazov enterprise were first recounted with minor inaccuracies in Romanov, "Vitte i kontsessiia na r. Ialu," 444.

¹⁵ RGIA, f. 560, op. 28, d. 100, ll. 3-5ob.; Romanov, *Rossia v Manchzhurii*, 387.

¹⁶ Vonliarliarskii, "Otchet," l. 6.

¹⁷ RGIA, f. 560, op. 28, d. 100, ll. 6-7; Romanov, *Rossia v Manchzhurii*, 386.

rubles (money for the concession and the delegations came directly from the emperor's personal cabinet).¹⁸

When members of the delegation arrived in Korea, they plunged into frenzied activity, including a quest for concessions. However, they displayed rashness and incompetence. Literally on the day of his arrival, Syromiatnikov informed the Korean minister to the court (who was an opponent of Russia) of his intention to construct a railroad from Russia to Korea. By merely mentioning this intent, Syromiatnikov provoked a Korean declaration that they themselves were supposedly planning to build the railroad.¹⁹ Naturally, Syromiatnikov received no such concession.

Neporozhnev fared little better. On 4 August 1898, he reported the possibility of obtaining a large concession to work the royal mines. Nicholas II sanctioned the purchase with cabinet funds, while also empowering his official to conclude "all advantageous transactions."²⁰ However, the Korean monarch, after giving his preliminary agreement, did not approve the arrangement. In the beginning of 1898, just before the delegation's appearance in Korea, St. Petersburg had rejected his proposal for support against the Japanese, and now the king was exacting retribution. For him it made no sense to grant further concessions of the sort made to Briner, which amounted to a gift.

Meanwhile, in St. Petersburg, Muravev and V.B. Frederiks, the current Minister to the Imperial Court, also decided to delay the purchase until the return of Neporozhnev with a personal report. The delay amounted to not less than three or four months, and it signaled a lack of desire for association with the concession. It is evident that Witte stood behind this turn of events. Thus ended the first stage of activities for the *Bezobrazovtsy*: they had not immediately realized their objectives for Korea, in no small part because of Witte's resistance.

Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich next resolved to work out a

¹⁸ On 26 June 1899, Neporozhnev "sold" the concession to M.O. Albert and N.G. Matiunin, who were obliged to transfer it to any person at the demand of the Minister to Court, V.B. Frederiks. See, Romanov, "Vitte i konstessiiia na r. Ialu," 447.

¹⁹ N.G. Matiunin to M.N. Muravev, 15 August 1898, AVPRI, f. 191, op. 768, d. 132, l. 47.

²⁰ Vonliariarskii, "Otchet," l. 10.

compromise with the finance minister. At a meeting on 7 January 1899, they discussed a broad spectrum of problems, including Korea. Witte declared that Russian activism there would elicit Japanese protests, but agreed with the necessity for limited Russian actions in northern Korea.²¹ Evidently as a result of this conversation with Witte, the Grand Duke on 6 March 1899 wrote a note on Korea.²² Instead of former pretensions to all of Korea, he favored its equal economic partition with Japan. If other options were pursued, he feared war with the Land of the Rising Sun, for which Russia was unprepared (repeating Witte's earlier argument that had laid out the rationale for withdrawal from Korea).

At about the same time, Vonliarliarskii prepared the draft of a report to the tsar on the creation of an East-Asian industrial enterprise, essentially repeating the previous year's idea. Its base now must be the Volunteer Fleet, which would become a separate governmental organization headed by the Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich. Vonliarliarskii's proposal reflected the Grand Duke's desire for a return to naval matters, while the *Bezobrazovtsy* would receive long-awaited reliable governmental support. However, Grand Duke Aleksei Aleksandrovich ruined everything when he proposed turning the matter over to Witte. Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich subsequently began to lose interest in the activities of the *Bezobrazovtsy*.

Bezobrazov's position stood in stark contrast. He did not agree with the idea of dividing Korea and, as before, made an appeal not to permit Japan access to Korea.²³ In contrast with Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich, he accentuated forceful action: "the most immediate" mission was "the occupation" [!] of the valley of the Tiumen and Yalu, for which he proposed concentration of the necessary forces in the Priamur military district. Just as Vonliarliarskii, Bezobrazov sought administrative support for this venture, desiring that inter-ministerial organizational status be accorded the new pseudo-private company. The objective was eventually to transform the organization into a colonial ministry that would operate under a council of ministers [!] and other personnel appointed by the tsar. Decisions

²¹ Aleksander Mikhailovich to Nicholas II, 8 January 1899, GARF, f. 601, op. 1, d. 1142, ll. 214–ob.

²² AVPRI, f. 136, op. 467, d. 163, ll. 3–7.

²³ Note from A.M. Bezobrazov to I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, 15 April 1899, RGIA, f. 919, op. 2, d. 603, ll. 1–8.

of this council would be binding on all governmental organizations.²⁴

Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich's withdrawal from active participation in the cause evidently affected the position of the group. Bezobrazov's perspective (aiming for the annexation of Korea entirely) gained the ascendancy, thus leading to conflict with the finance minister. On 2 May 1899, Vonliarliarskii informed the tsar of everything that he knew about the activities of Witte and Muravev in the Far East (naturally, in negative terms).²⁵ In a letter to the tsar of 15 July 1899, Bezobrazov depicted Witte as "an instrument of the Kikes and Poles."²⁶ But, slander gained nothing: Nicholas II adopted a very cautious position. With no desire "to restrict the ministers' freedom of judgment," the tsar "continued to accord support to the [*Bezobrazovtsy*] cause only within those limits to which the ministries would not object, that is, on condition of its assuming a completely private nature."²⁷

While the political discussion unfolded, the enterprising Vonliarliarskii and Matiunin attempted to exploit the Briner concession with the acquisition of timber from the Korean island of Dazhalet. They planned to ship the timber on Russian naval vessels and sell it at market prices to the Naval Ministry. In accordance with the terms of the concession, one-fourth of the income would go to the Korean king, while the rest remained with the concessionaires. His Majesty's Cabinet, whose money had funded the concession, would receive nothing from this arrangement. However, the venture foundered because the navy refused to participate in a commercial operation. The naval command considered it impermissible to order line officers to act in the interests of a private company.²⁸ After this refusal, Matiunin in January 1900 decided to cede the concession on Dazhalet to the Japanese (!) for 200,000 rubles²⁹—such was the value ascribed to governmental and strategic objectives for the entire enterprise.³⁰

²⁴ This draft is contained in a letter from A.M. Bezobrazov to I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, 11 March 1899, OR RGB, f. 58, *razdel* 1, *kart.* 6, No. 2, ll. 23–6.

²⁵ V.M. Vonliarliarskii, *Moi vospominaniia* (Berlin, 1939), 134.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 139–44.

²⁷ RGIA, f. 1652, op. 1, d. 100, l. 30.

²⁸ Ia. A. Gildebrandt to E.I. Alekseev, 21 March 1900, RGAVMF, f. 467, op. 1, d. 56, ll. 10–11.

²⁹ AVPRI, f. 150, op. 493, d. 134, l. 108.

³⁰ Matiunin fussed because terms of the concession stated that work must begin by the fall of 1901. However, the *Bezobrazovtsy* were successfully able to move the

Meanwhile, the *Bezobrazovtsy*'s direct attack on the finance minister was quickly choked out. Exclusion from governmental resources was sufficiently grave to force the *Bezobrazovtsy* to approach Witte on bended knee. On 27 October 1899, Matiunin was forced to request support from Witte for purchase of the concession that had originally been promised to Neporozhnev.³¹ Matiunin was also forced to divulge the entire history of the "concession," including the basic intent to use it as a means of bringing all of Korea to heel.³² Naturally, Witte explained that "he considered the matter lacking in seriousness, since it was conceived and conducted without knowledge of the finance minister; therefore, he decisively rejected either direct or indirect cooperation."³³ On 5 November 1899, the tsar forbade treasury participation in the concession on the basis a report from Witte, which recognized the impossibility either of anticipating income from "the Neporozhnev concession" or relying on the support of Korean authorities.³⁴ Exclusion from financial support signaled the inevitable failure of the entire enterprise; the concessionaires simply lacked sufficient personal resources. Therefore, at the end of 1899 it seemed as if the entire Bezobrazov initiative had ended in complete failure.

There remained one last chance—to continue the enterprise as a private matter. However, its scale would have to be drastically reduced. Bezobrazov reformulated his objectives on the earlier model of Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich: "[Russian] economic and political pre-eminence in northern Korea."³⁵ Bezobrazov was forced to admit that all his ideas related to timber contracts "cannot now withstand any kind of business-like critique."³⁶ Meanwhile, Vorontsov-Dashkov saved the entire affair from an ignominious fate by explaining to the tsar: "if it is not clear that we work either for YOU or under YOUR protection, then the majority, after losing their banner, will probably withdraw from the affair, not desiring to devote time and labor

deadline for the beginning of work to 1 January 1904, while the concession itself was extended to 1 January 1920. Note from the Korean Ministry of Foreign Affairs, RGIA, f. 1282, op. 1, d. 759, l. 68.

³¹ Note from N.G. Matiunin to S. Iu. Witte, 27 October 1899, RGIA, f. 560, op. 28, d. 282, l. 5.

³² Note from N.G. Matiunin to S. Iu. Witte, 1 November 1899, Ibid., ll. 11–13.

³³ RGIA, f. 1652, op. 1, d. 100, l. 30ob.

³⁴ Vsepoddanneishii doklad S. Iu. Vitte, 5 November 1899, Ibid., ll. 14–17.

³⁵ RGIA, f. 919, op. 2, d. 603, ll. 11–11ob.

³⁶ A.M. Bezobrazov to I.I. Vorontsov-Dashkov, 29 May 1900, Ibid., l. 9.

either to enhance the means of X, Y, or Z or to change the powerful views of the ministers.”³⁷ The former minister to the imperial court enjoyed success: Nicholas II reaffirmed his interest in the matter and his disposition towards the concessionaires. Somewhat earlier, on 20 December 1899, the tsar had declared to Admiral F.V. Dubasov that Matiunin and his colleagues had raised an issue of extraordinary significance. The tsar lamented the fact that its importance was not realized in St. Petersburg, transparently alluding to Witte.³⁸ However, it was Witte’s own policy that assured the continued viability of the *Bezobrazovtsy*. The wide-ranging expansionist intentions of the finance minister, which he retained until 1900, were doomed to failure. It was just this circumstance that created possibilities for the *Bezobrazovtsy*’s alternative policy in the Far East.

The Boxer rebellion of 1900, the occupation of Manchuria by Russian troops, and Russian participation in the campaign to Peking all figured in the drastically changing situation in China. Bezobrazov responded to these events with a series of notes to Nicholas II. On 15 July 1900, the first laid out a full denunciation of Witte, along with a critique of Russia’s entire China policy.³⁹ Bezobrazov wrote about the erroneous nature of penetration “to the center of the Chinese world.” It was intolerable that the penetration had been entrusted to “Kikes and Poles” (alluding to A. Iu. Rothstein and the Russo-Chinese Bank), while the entire Witte system had levied too great a burden on the Russian economy. In another note of 23 July, Bezobrazov wrote of the necessity for “neutralizing” Korea.⁴⁰ In a third note of 26 July 1900, Bezobrazov returned to the idea of an East-Asian company that would serve to carry out Russian policy under a state-secretary empowered to deal with governmental ministries in the name of the projected company.⁴¹ But, in 1900 Witte

³⁷ Letter, 4 June 1900, RGIA, f. 560, op. 28, d. 100, l. 25; Romanov, “Witte i konstessiiia na r. Ialu,” 447.

³⁸ Recording of F.V. Dubasov’s conversation with Nicholas II about Korea, 20 December 1899, RGA VMF, f. 9, op. 1, d. 630.

³⁹ RGIA, f. 560, op. 28, d. 100, ll. 26–27. Bezobrazov also sent this note to Grand Duke Aleksei Aleksandrovich (RGIA, f. 892, op. 3, d. 119, ll. 1–5). Such a ploy might be viewed as a sign that Bezobrazov was willing to distance himself from Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich and adopt a different guardian for the enterprise.

⁴⁰ Romanov, *Rossia v Manchzhurii*, 394.

⁴¹ Ibid., 389–92; V.M. Vonliarliarskii, “Materialy dlia vyiasneniia prichin voyns Iaponiei,” RGIA, f. 1652, op. 1, d. 96, ll. 85–6.

again hindered the company's progress under the convenient pretext of the inappropriateness of participation in the Bezobrazov enterprise by His Majesty's Cabinet or by state officials. In the victims' estimation, Witte was simply attempting to transform the East-Asian company "into a conventional private association that from the government's perspective might not accomplish anything of substance."⁴² Bezobrazov countered by raising the issue of Witte's retirement as a necessary precondition for accomplishment of the company's program.⁴³

In spite of Witte's resistance, the Committee of Ministers on 29 June 1901 approved a charter for the East-Asian Industrial Company. However, the *Bezobrazovtsy* victory soon proved pyrrhic. According to the charter, the organizers had to capitalize 20 percent of the company's shares (400,000 rubles) within six months as a condition for its activation. This condition was not met by February 1902, with the result that the company was considered not duly constituted,⁴⁴ while Nicholas II generally ordered "a halt to the matter."⁴⁵

However, after the Boxer rebellion, Russia's Far Eastern policy underwent serious change. The military, especially War Minister A.N. Kuropatkin, came to exert increased influence. An ambitious general and cautious courtier, Kuropatkin had his own views about Russian objectives in China. He proposed that Russia limit itself to Manchuria and refrain from moving into central and southern China. Accordingly, the Korean peninsula acquired a specific military-strategic significance, covering the Manchurian frontier and the approaches to Port Arthur. Because Japan was viewed as a likely foe, conceding Korea to her was considered undesirable. Transition to a policy of force in China (continuation of the Manchurian occupation) attested to the fact that Witte's policy of economic expansion had not produced the desired results. Correspondingly, his position as chief architect of this course could not be considered unassailable. Once again the *Bezobrazovtsy* were presented an opportunity.

Consequently, the *Bezobrazovtsy* limited their ambitions to focus on Briner's timber concession, while deciding to expand it to the Chinese side of the Yalu. The partners assumed that neither Witte, Lamsdorf,

⁴² Vonliarliarskii, "Materialy dlia vyiasneniia prichin voiny s Iaponiei," I. 95.

⁴³ A.M. Bezobrazov to Nicholas II, 24 June 1901, RGIA, f. 560, op. 28, d. 100, ll. 34–5.

⁴⁴ Glinskii (ed.), *Prolog russko-iaponskoi voiny*, 252.

⁴⁵ Romanov, *Rossia v Manchzhurii*, 399.

nor Kuropatkin would further hinder a private concession.⁴⁶ The *Bezobrazovtsy* were able to enlist the support of N.G. Hartvig, director of the Foreign Ministry's Asian Department, who assisted them behind Lamsdorf's back. However, the attempt to expand the concession to the Chinese side of the Yalu met insurmountable opposition from Beijing. Chinese authorities reasonably decided that it was of no advantage to grant a timber concession that would line only Russian pockets. Therefore, the maximum that the concessionaires could wring from the Chinese was a year-long permit from the Mukden governor (*jiangjun*) to cut timber, with the assurance of renewal (subsequently, the governor granted a second permit for 1904–05).⁴⁷ However, there was no guarantee that future permits would be granted forthright.⁴⁸ This state of affairs could scarcely be labeled a clear-cut success.

Interestingly, Witte himself figured in the restored hopes and increased influence of the *Bezobrazovtsy*. The failure of his policy in China was clearly manifested on 27 October 1902, during a conference at Yalta with the tsar over colonization along the right-of-way for the Chinese Eastern Railroad. Witte rejected the necessity for any kind of Russian proactive policy, even in Manchuria. He held that the process of Russification must proceed historically and “unhurriedly, without exceeding the parameters of normal development.” To strengthen the Russian position in the Far East, the finance minister proposed construction of an Amur rail line exclusively on Russian territory.

This full retreat from plans for wide-scale economic expansion in China constituted a serious blow for Nicholas II, who even at the end of 1899 still dreamed in terms of Russian hegemony over all of Asia. Reinforcement for the sense of bitter disenchantment came

⁴⁶ Excerpt from a letter of A.M. Bezobrazov to N.G. Matiunin, 13 April 1902, GARF, f. 102, op. 316, d. 578, l. 2.

⁴⁷ I.P. Shipov to V.N. Lamsdorf, 10 February 1906, AVPRI, f. 191, op. 768, d. 117, ll. 4–5, and 9–10.

⁴⁸ During preparation in St. Petersburg of a supplemental agreement with China over evacuation from Manchuria, there was debate over whether to include a separate point about granting a timber concession on the Yalu. After a review of circumstances, the issue was dropped. Such a step would underscore the political nature of the concession and elicit Chinese suspicions. Beijing would publicize the matter and appeal for assistance to the great powers. In general, there would be a great uproar with little expectation of a positive result.

from recognition of the fact that huge sums of money had been spent for political leverage in China and from Witte's acknowledgment that the money might have been put to better use for Russian internal reforms. The natural consequences were distrust of Witte and a desire to salvage something of value from the larger effort.

This state of affairs redounded to the benefit primarily of the *Bezobrazovtsy*, who were immediately prepared to propose a plan of action: concentrate in a single instance all Manchurian and Korean concessions, open southern Manchuria to foreigners, and engage Chinese bandits (*honghuizi* = red beards) to hinder foreign capital so that "enterprises would be ruined and people would disappear."⁴⁹ Absurd as the proposal might have seemed, it was still preferable to Witte's complete capitulation. No one proposed other viable alternatives for the tsar. Foreign Minister Lamsdorf's insistence on observance of international treaty obligations, i.e., the evacuation of Manchuria, differed little from the finance minister's position. War Minister Kuropatkin proposed annexation of northern Manchuria by force, without accounting for the consequences of such a step. Indeed, annexation would have resolved only one issue—defense of the Chinese Eastern Railroad. It was not surprising under these conditions that the *Bezobrazovtsy* received support from outsiders, as for example A.I. Pavlov, the minister in Seoul, who spoke of the necessity for a proactive Russian economic policy in Korea.⁵⁰

To exploit the victory, Bezobrazov himself left for the Far East at the end of 1902, arriving at Port Arthur on 30 December.⁵¹ To anyone who would listen he declared that Russian policy objectives in the Far East must include security of borders and the conquest of Manchuria.⁵² Bezobrazov behaved in an uncommonly unceremonious and tactless manner. He enlisted Russian functionaries as allies, scattering everywhere promises and money, with the latter coming from a special account for two million rubles opened in his name with the Russo-Chinese Bank.⁵³

⁴⁹ "Dnevnik A.N. Kuropatkina," B/m, 12, note of 1 December 1902. *Honghuizi* is transliterated into Russian as *khunkhuzy*.

⁵⁰ Ibid., 23, note of 5 January 1903.

⁵¹ "Dnevnik E.I. Alekseeva za 1903 g.," RGAVMF, f. 32, op. 1, d. 15, l. 1.

⁵² "Vsepoddanneishii doklad A.M. Bezobrazova 16 apreliia 1903 g.," and "Vsepoddanneishii doklad 9 avgusta 1903 g.," RGIA, f. 892, op. 3, d. 126, ll. 16 and 150, 152 respectively.

⁵³ For additional details on Bezobrazov's trip, see, Glinskii, *Prolog russko-iaponskoi voiny*, 253–60.

On 1 March 1903, the main office of the "Russian Lumber Association" opened in Port Arthur, with I.P. Balashev taking charge after Bezobrazov's departure.⁵⁴ From the first, the Association was more concerned with organizing "security" than with commercial activity. Lieutenant Colonel A.S. Madritov, who had entered service with the Association, recruited 600 men, the majority of whom were *honghuzi*.⁵⁵ Instead of security, this grouping upon arrival on the Yalu immediately set about robbing first the local Chinese population, then Russians. The enlistment of thugs was halted only upon instructions of the tsar after receipt of complaints from local military authorities and the local commander-in-chief, Admiral E.I. Alekseev.

However, the main problem did not lie with the *honghuzi*. The strange "commercial" activities of the Lumber Association attracted wide-ranging publicity and elicited sharp dissatisfaction from Japan, supported by Great Britain and the United States. The Japanese suspected that the Association was a guise for outright Russian military aggression in Korea, and Russo-Japanese relations suffered. Almost simultaneously, St. Petersburg refused to continue the military evacuation of Manchuria, the first stage of which was to be complete by 26 March 1903, and instead presented China with a whole list of additional conditions. In the aggregate, all of these circumstances looked very suspicious, and they facilitated assumptions about aggressive Russian intentions in the Far East.⁵⁶

Still, Witte would not capitulate. Lamsdorf and Kuropatkin reinforced his resistance to the *Bezobrazovtsy*. Their only major supporter was Interior Minister V.K. Plehve, who needed allies in his struggle to oust Witte as the tsar's most influential counselor. By the beginning of March 1903, the triumvirate of Witte-Kuropatkin-Lamsdorf managed to have the tsar recall Bezobrazov from the Far East for his propensity to engage in covert activities.

Witte's last triumph came at the Special Conference convened on 26 March 1903 at the behest of Rear Admiral A.M. Abaza. The main issue at stake was the fate of the Lumber Association on the

⁵⁴ Ibid., 289–91; the Association itself was officially established only on 31 May 1903.

⁵⁵ V.E. Flug to E.I. Alekseev, 29 April 1903, V.E. Flug to A.S. Madritov, 22 April 1903, and A.S. Madritov to V.E. Flug, 25 April 1903, RGAVMF, f. 32, op. 1, d. 178, ll. 1, 5–6.

⁵⁶ Glinskii (ed.), *Prolog russko-iaponskoi voiny*, 289.

Yalu. The *Bezobrazovtsy* proposed a return to the original draft proposal for the enterprise on the basis of a private association on the model of a chartered company (i.e., with political objectives and state support).⁵⁷ However, the triumvirate responded by insisting on an association of a strictly private and non-political nature, a tack that would destroy the entire undertaking. The finance minister emphasized the intolerable nature of pursuing a balance by force against Japan (a position to which the tsar adhered) and of using covert aggressive actions in the Far East. The ministers' majority carried the day, with the conference depriving the *Bezobrazovtsy* of their financial support and defining the enterprise as private in nature.⁵⁸

In spite of pressure from the newly-returned Far Eastern adventurer, Nicholas II temporized until mid-April 1903, when he finally sided with the *Bezobrazovtsy*. The autocrat presented Bezobrazov with his own photo portrait, inscribed "to Alexander Mikhailovich Bezobrazov—a grateful Nicholas."⁵⁹ As an indication of the highest trust, on 6 May 1903 the tsar named Bezobrazov a state-secretary (as requested in the note of 26 July 1900). Meanwhile, the military attaché in China, K.I. Vogak, who was among the group's adherents, received appointment as a general in the tsar's suite. These two actions were unprecedented.

The revenge of the *Bezobrazovtsy* came during the Special Conference of 7 May 1903.⁶⁰ With the exception of Nicholas II, none of the participants had altered his previous position. However, the changed correlation was sufficient to prompt a review of the decision of 26 March in favor of the concessionaires. Representing them at the Special Conference, Abaza fashioned a logic chain: retreat from the enterprise on the Yalu would finally cede Korea to the Japanese and constitute a threat to Port Arthur, while Russia would lose not only southern Manchuria and its wealth to foreigners, but in the final analysis also Russian prestige in the East. Even with an exaggera-

⁵⁷ "Proekt doklada A.M. Abaza Osobomu soveshaniu, predstavlennyi V.K. Pleve," RGIA. F. 1282, op. 1, d. 759, ll. 102–105a.

⁵⁸ On the proceedings of the Special Conference, see, Glinskii (ed.), *Prolog russko-iaponskoi voiny*, 277–82.

⁵⁹ K.I. Vogak to E.I. Alekseev, 21 May 1903, RGAVMF, f. 32, op. 1, d. 179, ll. 1–5.

⁶⁰ "Otchet o sovershanii i ego zhurnal, sostavlennye A.M. Bezobrazovym," RGIA, f. 560, op. 28, d. 213, ll. 150–58.

tion of the Japanese threat, it would have been difficult for Abaza to explain why decisive action on the Yalu would suddenly screen Russia from Japan, strengthen the Russian position in southern Manchuria, and maintain Russian prestige. Therefore, he had to depict the danger from Japan only in figurative terms. From Japan he assumed that "it was possible to anticipate only some mild clamor and sword rattling, but no serious action if we are persistent and firm." The risk that "a penniless" Japan would unleash war against Russia seemed unlikely to Abaza.⁶¹

Victory for the *Bezobrazovtsy* at the 7 May Conference was not complete, but they did receive permission to reactivate their enterprise on the Yalu, albeit as a private initiative.⁶² But even under these conditions the move elicited a most powerful public opinion backlash in Japan, and the Japanese government was traditionally very sensitive to shifting public moods. This was a circumstance for which the *Bezobrazovtsy* failed to account.

Witte gave ground to Bezobrazov and even tried to ingratiate himself with him, but to little avail. Mindful of earlier struggles with the finance minister, this time the *Bezobrazovtsy* insisted on his retirement, which came on 16 August 1903. In large part Witte's fall stemmed from the fact that his arsenal held neither new ideas nor new approaches. Moreover, Nicholas II no longer had confidence in him, and so the finance minister's removal had become a foregone conclusion. In addition to Witte's removal, Bezobrazov sought to break up the finance minister's "empire." Bezobrazov planned to deprive the Finance Ministry of its main instruments of Far Eastern policy—the Chinese Eastern Railroad and the Russo-Chinese Bank—and also to seize the most significant concessions from the Manchurian Mining Association, including most importantly, the Fushan coal mines. However, Witte's retirement (re-subordination of his organizations cost them their relevance) and the onset of the Russo-Japanese War prevented Bezobrazov from fully realizing his objectives.

Meanwhile, Foreign Minister Lamsdorf retained his portfolio, but

⁶¹ "Zapiska A.M. Abazy dlia V.K. Pleve 'Punkty, k kotorym zhelatelno pridti na sovershanii,'" 26 March 1903, RGIA, f. 1282, op. 1, d. 759, ll. 100–01; "Mnenie A.M. Abazy k Osobomu soveshaniu," 7 May 1903, RGAVMF, f. 32, op. 1, d. 172, ll. 17–20.

⁶² For details on the Special Conference of 7 May 1903, see, Glinskii (ed.), *Prolog russko-iaponskoi voiny*, 283–87, and Pak Chon Khe, *Russko-iaponskaia voina i Koreia*, 104–11.

henceforth the tsar ordered that all telegrams on Far Eastern affairs be directed through Admiral E.I. Alekseev.⁶³ Thus, the foreign affairs establishment was estranged for a time from East Asian policy. In October 1903, one diplomat noted,

We have little work, so that even our limited cadre can easily deal with it. The Ministry continues to dole out information from agency telegrams about events occurring in the Far East, but evidently this insulting, and in my view, even tragic-comic new era in the Ministry's existence threatens to persist. . . . But in any case it must be acknowledged that the Ministry has ultimately lost a voice in this matter.⁶⁴

This contradictory and unsystematic style of subordination to Admiral Alekseev rather than the foreign minister produced immediate chaos. After all, it was no secret to Russian ministers in Seoul, Peking and Tokyo that the views of Alekseev and Lamsdorf on Far Eastern problems sharply diverged. Already in May 1903 Lamsdorf had entered discussions with the Japanese after expressing his willingness not to interfere in non-military activities in southern and central Korea and to uncouple Manchurian and Korean matters from one another.⁶⁵ For his part, Alekseev was more concerned about the problem of Manchuria and more willing to relegate the Korean question to the back burner, assuming that in the immediate future Russia in case of necessity might resort to military power to eject Japan from Korea.⁶⁶

Meanwhile, the *Bezobrazovtsy* continued to develop their Association's activities on the Yalu. The director, Balashev, constantly importuned Bezobrazov for money, while pursuing ever more novel and economically doubtful concessions. The enterprise's attainments on the basis of the concessions at hand were far from distinguished. Only

⁶³ Note of V.N. Lamsdorf, 16 May 1903, with the resolution of Nicholas II, GARF, f. 568, op. 1, d. 179, ll. 35–6. On 29 May 1903, Lamsdorf told the tsar that on 7 May he had been instructed to inform Alekseev of all correspondence with Russian diplomats in Japan, Korea, and China (l. 46ob.). Evidently, such “prudence” and “extremely elastic ego” would, in the words of Witte, permit Lamsdorf to remain minister for a few more years; see, *Iz Arkhiva S. Iu. Vitte*, 3 vols. (SPB, 2003), II, 618.

⁶⁴ K.D. Nabokov to P.L. Vakseliu, 3 October 1903, OR RNB, f. 123, op. 1, No. 318, l. 14ob.

⁶⁵ GARF, f. 568, op. 1, d. 179, ll. 177–79, 80.

⁶⁶ E.I. Alekseev to Nicholas II, 21 May 1903, AVPRI, f. 138, op. 467, d. 205, ll. 40–2.

on 15 November 1903 did the Association begin to cut timber.⁶⁷ Lack of even the most primitive saw mills rendered the rough-hewn wood “worthless for anything,” and the results were sold for 300,000 rubles.⁶⁸ Floating log booms were poorly organized, and the local Chinese *daotai* simply orchestrated the theft of the Association’s floating timber.⁶⁹ Soon, mountains of cut timber piled up on the banks of the Yalu.

Meanwhile, the *Bezobrazovtsy* played a significant role in the failure of the Russo-Japanese negotiations over Korea that began in August 1903. Above all, the *Bezobrazovtsy* insisted upon their prerogatives under the new order. The Russian minister in Tokyo, Baron R.R. Rosen, conducted the negotiations. He sent all Japanese proposals and answers both to St. Petersburg and to Admiral Alekseev at Port Arthur. Since the essence of matters pertained to the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and War and also to the tsar, whole conferences had to be convened in St. Petersburg. Meanwhile, one of the *Bezobrazovtsy*, Rear Admiral Abaza, was named chancery secretary of the Special Committee on the Far East (which as such never met). Once a decision was made, Alekseev’s opinion was solicited, and only then were actionable instructions composed for Rosen in Tokyo.

This cumbersome arrangement was inconvenient, and more importantly, required copious amounts of time for harmonizing the diverse perspectives of the chief participants in discussions on Far Eastern affairs. In the end, the Japanese fixed on this dilatoriness as justification for breaking off negotiations. Without defending Tokyo, it should be acknowledged that any by-stander unfamiliar with the “kitchen” in which decisions were concocted might conclude that Russian behavior could be explained as foot dragging in order better to prepare for war.

In negotiations, the *Bezobrazovtsy* assumed the most aggressive stance. However, paradoxically their influence and support diminished during the second half of 1903, even as they apparently gained greater prominence. In conversations with War Minister Kuropatkin, Interior

⁶⁷ “Akt o nachale rubki lesa Russkim lesopromyshlennym tovarishchestvom 5 dekabria 1903 g.,” RGIA, f. 560, op. 28, d. 336, l. 24.

⁶⁸ K.I. Vogak to A.M. Bezobrazov, 18 October 1903, RGIA, f. 1282, op. 1, d. 761, ll. 153–54.

⁶⁹ “Kopiiia doneseniia G. Veselovskogo 1 oktiabria 1903 g.,” Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv, f. 14378, op. 1, d. 130, ll. 563–64.

Minister Plehve agreed with the necessity to confine Russian ambitions to northern Manchuria. He even realized that "a short victorious war against Japan" would not diminish his concerns about internal unrest in Russia. Grand Duke Alexander Mikhailovich had by this time disowned the *Bezobrazovtsy* and was surprised "that Bezobrazov could have influence."⁷⁰ Foreign Minister Lamsdorf gradually recovered influence in Far Eastern affairs. Meanwhile, Bezobrazov himself became mired in hopeless contention with the military over how better to organize defenses in the Far East. After a decisive rebuff by Kuropatkin,⁷¹ he left for Switzerland in November 1903, where he remained until mid-December, all the while losing substantial influence over the course of events.

Viceroy Alekseev remained the *Bezobrazovtsy*'s chief ally, although such had not always been the case. Early in 1903, he had viewed their activities on the Yalu with great suspicion, even attempting to complain to St. Petersburg about the concessionaires. However, by May, with their star on the rise, and more surely after a sense of Alekseev's impending appointment as viceroy at the beginning of May, his conflicts with them diminished.⁷² Alekseev and the *Bezobrazovtsy* held one priority in common—to concede nothing in the Far East to Japan—but there was no basis to ascribe to the Admiral and the *Bezobrazovtsy* an absolute identity of views as did Witte ("completely in concert").⁷³ Alekseev was not terribly worried about the fate of Korea, and he was largely indifferent to the enterprise of the *Bezobrazovtsy*.

In essence, Alekseev adhered to the same position held by Witte in 1898, the very position that had originally sparked contention with the *Bezobrazovtsy*. The viceroy's views were essentially closest to those of Balashev, who in November 1903 had proposed action corresponding with Alekseev's position: Annex all of Manchuria by force

⁷⁰ "Dnevnik A.N. Kuropatkina," notes for November-December 1903, 100, 110, 113.

⁷¹ Glinkii (ed.), *Prolog russko-iaponskoi voiny*, 314–15.

⁷² Formal appointment as Viceroy did not come until late July (05). Witte noted that Bezobrazov could, "so to speak, appoint Alekseev as Viceroy of the Far East," and that the appointment was constituted "on his [Bezobrazov's] initiative and according to his representation." See, *Iz Arkhiva S. Iu. Vitte*, I, 519. Admiral Alekseev received news of his appointment as head of a unified government for the Far East from Nicholas II on 2 May 1903. See, RGIA, f. 560, op. 28, d. 213, l. 132.

⁷³ Glinkii (ed.), *Prolog russko-iaponskoi voiny*, 257–58.

and neutralize Korea, all the while assuming that Japan would not attack Russia.⁷⁴ Alekseev's confidence knew no bounds. On 22 December, he declared, "I guarantee that energetic action in Manchuria and Korea based on the annexation of Manchuria and [on recognition of] existing treaties over equal access Korea can alone bring Japan to heel."⁷⁵

However, the viceroy's tough position did not win out. Abaza was usually a party of one in St. Petersburg when he presented these views at various conferences. Meanwhile, Abaza's readiness to concede all of Korea to Japan to assuage the protests of the great powers won little sympathy. In addition, Abaza too easily altered his stance from complete cession of Korea to stubborn defense of its northern regions—or at least their recognition as a neutral zone—thereby rendering his views unconvincing. By the end of 1903, moreover, Viceroy Alekseev had largely lost confidence in negotiations. He remarked to G.A. Planson, a diplomatic functionary, "all our writing is worthless. I would simply declare war on the Japanese for their impudence. They have to learn. All the same, we cannot avoid war."⁷⁶ Lack of unity at the top meant that any decision came with colossal difficulty and that no one course might be pursued consistently to its logical end.

Even at the end of 1903 the contradictions had not been ironed out. Foreign Minister Lamsdorf insisted on rejection of a neutral zone in Korea, while Rear Admiral Abaza categorically objected to the rejection.⁷⁷ The tsar occupied a middling position, proposing to make secret a draft treaty article about a neutral zone.⁷⁸ As before, all this was communicated to Alekseev and Rosen for their

⁷⁴ Note from I.P. Balashev, 5 November 1903, OR RGB, f. 58, *razdel 2, kart.* 55, no. 2/5, ll. 1–9. B.A. Romanov was probably correct when he assumed that after several months' worth of unsuccessful requests for money, Balashev might assume that Bezobrazov had already exhausted his possibilities and that the moment was right to switch over to Alekseev. See, Romanov, *Rossia v Man'chzhurii*, 459. However, at this point Balashev no longer had great influence with the *Bezobrazovtsy*.

⁷⁵ "Telegrammy G.A. Plansona v Peterburg s izlozheniem mneniia namestnika," GARF, f. 818, op. 1, d. 66.

⁷⁶ "Dnevnik G.A. Plansona," *Krasnyi arkhiv*, no. 4–5 (1930), 158–59.

⁷⁷ This occurred on 20–21 January (2–3 February) 1904, *Malinovaia kniga. Dokumenty po peregovoram s Iaponiei, khraniashchiesia v kantseliarii Osobogo komiteta Dal'nego Vostoka (na pravakh rukopisi)* (SPB, 1905), 45–8.

⁷⁸ Nicholas II to V.N. Lamsdorf, 21 January (3 February) 1904, GARF, f. 568, op. 1, d. 661, ll. 76–7.

acquiescence. Only on 6 February 1904 did Nicholas II first express serious alarm about the possibility of war with Japan, a fact that revealed the autocrat's lack of understanding for the entire situation. Everyone was so tired that the only common sentiment amounted to one of resignation: "either fight if we have to, or make peace if we have to."⁷⁹ On 8 February the Japanese were prepared to initiate landings in Korea, while simultaneously and symbolically a routine conference occurred in St. Petersburg, during which debate focused less on the points of a potential treaty with Japan than on plans to rebut them.⁸⁰ The Russo-Japanese War was not so much a consequence of Russian aggressiveness. Rather, the underlying causes for the conflict must be sought in the autocracy's entire Far Eastern policy, in its ideas, and in the mechanisms for their realization. Count Sergei Iul'evich Witte had led Russian policy into a dead end, and the activities of the *Bezobrazovtsy* took that policy to the brink of war.

They continued to wield influence through the end of 1904 and into 1905, but in gradually diminishing measure. The fate of their enterprise was as inglorious as their foreign policy. In 1905–06, the tsar liquidated all their assets. Their activities subsequently became the subject of a special investigative commission under the chairmanship of O.B. Richter. Despite the fact that the commission's report, compiled by V.P. Cherevanskii, clearly amounted to an indictment,⁸¹ none of the *Bezobrazovtsy* suffered any consequences. However, none of them subsequently played any policy role.

Translated by Bruce W. Menning

⁷⁹ "Dnevnik A.N. Kuropatkina," 128.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 130–32.

⁸¹ V.P. Cherevanskii, "Obzor snoshenii Rossii s kitaiskim i iaponskim pravitelstvami, predshestvovavshikh vooruzhennomu stolknoveniu Rossii s Iaponiei," GARF, f. 543, op. 1, d. 190.

CHAPTER FIVE

CRIMEA REDUX? ON THE ORIGINS OF THE WAR

David Goldfrank

Imperialism, so often glorified in the homeland, can be quite ugly for the imperialists themselves, not to mention the objects of their imperialism. This is particularly true when competitive imperialism results in a disastrous war—not that successful ones are all that pleasant for the winners. Russia, due in part to her own diplomatic folly, learned this unfortunate lesson twice between 1853 and 1905. In the Crimean War of 1853–56, the blustering Russian giant, despite some feats of military ingenuity and heroism, showed Europe that it had feet of clay in its extended and vulnerable Black and Baltic Sea peripheries. Half a century later, in East Asia, Japan profited from a new bout of disastrous Russian blustering and wasted heroism over a similarly vulnerable Yellow Sea periphery.

This essay will place the origin of Russo-Japanese war within the context of Great Power and imperialist wars, in some of the traditions and legacies of prior Russian diplomatic experience, as well as in the origin of the Crimean War. The latter, I will argue contains some pertinent analogies. The aim is to suggest, in the run-up to these wars, some historical regularity—what Soviet-era Russian historiography liked to call *zakonomernost'*, even if they sometimes had to squeeze this out of the constellations and concatenations of events and social facts to fit their peculiar combination of Marxism and Russo-centered, all-Soviet patriotism. My basic contention is that, from Russia's standpoint, the similarities in the origins of the wars in the Crimea and in East Asia half a century later are striking, so striking as to boggle the mind with the simple question of why, after the first disaster, Russian leaders allowed the second to occur. For despite the fact that both disputes seemed quite different in their initial stages, the outbreak of both boiled down in the last analysis to a military response to Russia's refusal to withdraw from the occupied borderlands of a neighboring, weaker empire without guarantees, which the other, concerned Great Powers opposed.

The Russo-Japanese War was an imperialist war *par excellence*, the only war among Great Powers which was purely imperialistic,¹ without the primacy of domestic security for at least the some of the participants, as in the case of World War I. Only by a wild stretch of the imagination was Japan's homeland seriously threatened by Russia's policies. Down the road, hypothetical Russian control of Korea and a gigantic, one-sided tsarist naval build-up in East Asia might pose a danger to the home islands. However, Japan's successful modernization proved an effective safeguard against Russian naval primacy in the Pacific. Thus, from the standpoint of Japanese security, one can term this conflict no more than a preventive imperialist war. In Japanese strategic thinking, as reported by Ian Nish who cites the chief of the general staff from 1 February 1904, "... there were too many Russian troops in Manchuria for Japan's conception of her own security. Russia wanted naval supremacy in the Korean Straits, and Japan *as an aspiring naval power* [*italics mine, DG*] could not accept that."²

By less of a stretch of the imagination, Russians might envision significantly expanded Japanese naval and fishing fleets endangering to Vladivostok and the Pacific maritime littoral, themselves relatively recent Russian acquisitions from the Qing dynasty. And these threats did emerge in Japan's expanded war aims. Such fears, however, while not in the reports of Russia's pre-war deliberations,³ were part of the subtext of Russian negotiating demands that Japan not have preponderance in northern Korea.⁴ Overall concerns for the Far East had already been implicit in the Russia's strategic arguments behind the building of the Trans-Siberian Railroad.⁵

In the event, the vital interests to be protected from the other in

¹ In other purely imperialistic wars of the period, Italo-Ethiopian (1896), Sino-Japanese (1894–95), Spanish-American (1898), Anglo-Boer (1899–1902), and Italo-Ottoman (1911), only one of the sides was a Great Power or approached that status.

² Ian Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (London/New York, 1985), 2.

³ I cannot claim to have made a thorough study of the original sources, but, during a brief review of some of the papers in Moscow's *Arkhiv Vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Imperii* in 1992, I found no deliberations, instructions, or recommendations, which were not published in *Krasnyi Arkhiv* or discussed in Boris Aleksandrovich Romanov, *Rossia v Man'chzhurii, 1892–1906* (L, 1928). At any rate, such concerns did not induce Russia to pursue any preventive war policies toward Japan.

⁴ See below, the text accompanying and following Note 26.

⁵ Steven Marks, *Road to Power. The Trans-Siberian Railroad and the Colonization of Asian Russia, 1850–1917* (Ithaca, 1991), 13–54, 70, 80–81, 99.

1904 were in the respective countries' near abroads, whose leaders and politically relevant elements (Owen Lattimore's "men of power") did not savor the "protection" proffered by each, but were caught in an impossible position.⁶ The origin of the Russo-Japanese War is to be sought, therefore, in the clash of rival imperialisms over the same territory, and so it goes in virtually every account, some of which trace that rivalry back to the early 18th century.⁷

This being stated, I shall examine two aspects of the genesis of this war, one that relates to the history of international relations, and the other to traditions of Russian diplomacy.

With regard to the history of international relations, I find it telling that virtually every possible Great Power rivalry that could have produced a war did so, at least once. Take, for example, Britain. On their way up and as an established colonial and imperialist power, the British fought the Spanish on and off, then the Dutch, then the French (six-to-nine times), and also the United States (as a rebellious confederation of colonies and as an independent federation); then China in a couple of small wars, Russia, and along the way in first part of the nineteenth century, several rival claimants to the Mogul succession in India; and then Germany twice, first also against the Ottoman Empire and Austria-Hungary, and in World War II also against Italy and Japan. In other words, the greatest colonial-imperialist power in modern history fought every possible Great Power rival at least once.

In less time, the United States, the greatest non-colonial imperialist power in modern history, managed to fight France (both before and, unofficially, soon after independence) and Britain; Mexico (an overrated regional power) and Spain (at this point in 1898 barely a regional power); Germany, Austria-Hungary, Italy and Japan; the Chinese; via the longest most expensive and extensive "cold war" in history, Russia; and now, it seems, a *sui generis*, dispersed, and militant Islamic "International."

⁶ Owen Lattimore, *Studies in Frontier History, Collected Papers, 1928-1958* (Paris, 1962), 510-11; cf. John LeDonne, *The Russian Empire and the World, 1700-1917. The Geopolitics of Expansion and Containment* (New York/Oxford, 1977), 7. C.I. Eugene Kim, *Korea and the Politics of Imperialism 1876-1910* (Berkeley/Los Angeles, 1967).

⁷ For example, George Alexander Lensen, *The Russian Push Toward Japan: Russo-Japanese Relations, 1697-1875* (Princeton, 1959). The English- and Russian-language bibliography, which I have consulted for the origin of this war is extensive; the footnotes here are selective.

As for our two rivals under discussion, the Japanese, in even less time, managed to fight the Chinese (twice), the Russians (two or three times), the Germans (sort of), the British, the Americans, and (by proxy) the French. The Russians, on the other hand, over a very *longue durée*, fought the Swedes (six times) and the Poles (seven times, or even nine, if one includes the nineteenth-century rebellions); the Crimean Tatars (impossible to reckon), the Turks (at least eleven times), and the Persians (twice); the French (three-to-five times) and the Prussians; the British, the Chinese (two-to-four times, but never declared) and the Japanese (two or three times); the Austro-Hungarian Dual Monarchy and the Germans (twice); and, via that above-mentioned “cold war,” the Americans.

So, both Japan and Russia, like Britain and the United States, warred against every imaginable Great Power rival,⁸ with the poignant exception of a hot war between Russia and the United States.

It is worth mentioning here that several factors seem to have prevented Great Power hot wars. One of these was and is capitalist semi-liberalism and democracy, which have played major roles in keeping the major Western powers and their imitators from shooting at each other since 1815. The second is nuclear deterrence—and the reality doctrine bolstered by the World War II bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki and the Chernobyl disaster.⁹ One might add a third factor preventing Great Power wars—a souring or disappointing experience from a war against a certain rival. For example, the British sense as of 1857 that the Crimean War may not have been worth the trouble and Russia’s experience with Black Sea vulnerability discouraged another Anglo-Russian clash during the remaining half century of their rivalry over the Asian heartland.

Applying these observations to the Russo-Japanese War, we find

⁸ These observations apply to other powers too. France fought Spain, Holland, Britain, all three German “Reichs,” Turkey, Russia, the United States (undeclared), China, Italy, and (by proxy) Japan; Germany fought France, Sweden, Poland, Turkey, Britain, Russia, Italy, the United States, and (sort of—in World War I) Japan; and China fought Russia, Britain, France, Japan, the United States, and also India and (in principle) Germany.

⁹ During the Cold War, when certain American observers were worried about the aggressive potential in Soviet military doctrine, I would retort by referring to the unofficial military doctrine of “Professors Hiroshima and Nagasaki” as carrying far more weight.

that before 1904 Japan had a reasonably free press, but was a fractious oligarchy with an army and a navy essentially unfettered by control of the restricted franchise Diet. Russia had neither an uncensored press nor even any façade constitutionalism at this time, but was a fractious dynastic autocracy. Neither power had a legal, popularly based domestic counterweight to aggressive militarism, and the Russians did not even seek elite consensus as the Japanese leaders did. Needless to say, the arms of the early twentieth century deterred no state from fighting, or for that matter, from fighting in the stupidest imaginable manner from the standpoint of the infantry soldier and officer. And since Russian and Japan had not yet battled each other, neither could have had a chastening experience from such a war. Rather Russia's previous military successes against non-Europeans and Japan's alliance with Britain and the earlier, smashing defeat of China in the projected theater of conflict with Russia gave both sides confidence. Thus one may claim that by early 1902, after the conclusion of the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, if not earlier, a Russo-Japanese war over Korea and Manchuria, was, absent resolute countervailing diplomacy, another one of these seemingly inevitable conflicts waiting to happen. Let us turn to it.

In a nutshell, as virtually every reader of this volume knows or soon will, the story goes like this. By the early 1890s, Russia and Japan were rivals chiefly in Korea, though they had a standing difference regarding Sakhalin Island. Victory over China in 1894–95 gave Japan the decisive advantage in both Korea and southern Manchuria, but Japan overplayed her hand here in unilaterally gaining control of the Liaodong Peninsula. The diplomatic triple intervention of Russia backed by France and Germany reversed these advantages, which Russia quickly acquired for itself—especially in southern Manchuria—in dealings with the Chinese and Korean courts. The Russians in turn then overplayed their hand after the Boxer rebellion of 1900, as military occupation of Manchuria set the stage for the less-coordinated triple intervention of the so-called “Open Door” powers, Britain, the US, and Japan. However, in the face of this diplomatic opposition, Russia, with her divided leadership, did not back down or make the best deal offered, but treated its relations with China over Manchuria as an exclusive, bilateral matter. So the leaders of the most interested of the “Open Door” powers, Japan, alerted its armed forces, marshaled domestic support, pursued a cautiously resolute, war-inviting diplomacy, and started shooting.

When the Japanese attacked, their morale, by all accounts, was high, and public opinion stood resolutely behind the war, while the Russians hardly cared.

There are some curious parallels between this story and the origins of the Crimean War.¹⁰ In both cases the underlying problem was imperialist competition for economic concessions and spheres of influence in a relatively decaying and weak, formerly hegemonic and imposing, “sick man”—the Ottoman Empire or China. In both cases Russia had an extensive border with that “sick man” and was in active competition with other European powers for influence in the weaker empire’s borderlands. In both cases Britain was the most powerful member of the “Open Door” grouping, though the term was not used in the 1850s.¹¹ In both cases the “Open Door” powers pressed the “sick man” for more openness at the expense of Russia’s more parochial interests.¹²

In both cases a member of the “Open Door” grouping was in active, aggressive competition with Russia for a specific goal. Thus in the early 1850s it was France pressing for concessions for Roman Catholics in the chief Christian “Holy Places” in Judea, whereas fifty years later Japan strove for economic and military ascendancy in Korea. In both cases that “Open Door” power represented greater economic and cultural dynamism in the region than Russia did. In the educational and missionary spheres Russia and the Orthodox could not compete with France and the Roman Catholics (and the various Protestants also active in the Holy Land) any more than Russian commerce and industry could rival Japan in Korea half a century later. In both cases, Russia’s “Open Door” rival proved more conciliatory regarding imperialistic interests in the diplomatic preliminaries, though in the case of the Crimean War, this aspect of

¹⁰ Substantiation for all of my statements concerning the earlier conflict can be found in my *Origins of the Crimean War* (London/New York, 1994), where the details of the diplomacy are almost exclusively based on the original documents, including Russia’s.

¹¹ Rather the British and French were called the “Maritime Powers.”

¹² In 1853, Britain’s ambassador Stratford de Redcliffe to Istanbul was continuously pushing the Ottomans for realization of the Tanzimat reforms and freer trade, and even boasted to the French ambassador there of London’s treaty gains for “commerce.” See Goldfrank, *The Origins of the Crimean War*, 162, note 28, from the French diplomatic papers. Late in 1903, Japan and the US induced China to open up Mukden and Andong (on the Manchurian side of the Yalu) as “treaty ports.”

French diplomatic deftness is not always recognized.¹³ At the same time, in both cases, a faction among the “Open Door” belligerents had maximal goals of a roll-back of Russia from some of its prior gains on the maritime littorals.¹⁴ And, in both cases Europe’s chief “Central” power, despite close court connections with St. Petersburg, was at least as malevolent as neutral toward Russia: In 1853–54 it was a hostile Austria, backed by the German Confederation; in 1900–04 it was a more manipulative Germany, allied with Austria (now the Dual Monarchy of Austria-Hungary).

On the eve of both conflicts a Russian emperor, who did not fully understand what was going on, gave a trusted but mediocre admiral extraordinary diplomatic and military power far from St. Petersburg. Nicholas I not only sent Prince Alexander Menshikov to Istanbul as plenipotentiary ambassador, but also appointed him commander-in-chief of the activated, southern military and naval forces. Nicholas II named Admiral Evgenii Alekseev head of the newly created Viceroyalty of Far East, and entrusted him not only with supreme military-naval command, but also, officially, with the authority to conduct diplomatic relations with Japan. In both cases this appointment hindered last-minute diplomacy. In 1853 Nicholas I’s disallowing any direct Russo-Ottoman negotiations, except in Constantinople (Istanbul) under Menshikov’s direction, blocked meaningful parleys in London between Turkey’s envoy, Constantine Musurus, and Russia’s minister there, Count Filip Brunnov,¹⁵ or a repeat of the open-ended Fuad Effendi mission to St. Petersburg, which ended the Hungarian-Polish refugee crisis of 1849.¹⁶ After mid-August 1903, the Alekseev appointment blocked any meaningful talks between Kurino Shinichiro, Japan’s minister in St. Petersburg, and Foreign Minister Count

¹³ See Goldfrank, *Origins of the Crimean War*, 104–105, 116, 272–273, in contrast to most other standard treatments, which trust the Russian Foreign Ministry explanations: for example, John Shelton Curtiss, *Russia’s Crimean War* (Durham, 1979), 34–57; Norman Rich, *Why the Crimean War? A Cautionary Tale* (Hanover/London, 1985), 18–22; Trevor Royal, *Crimea. The Great Crimean War, 1854–1856* (New York, 2000), 19–20 (virtually worthless as diplomatic history for the preliminaries).

¹⁴ In the event, in 1856 the Anglo-French succeeded in demilitarizing Bomarsund and Sevastopol and “neutralizing” the Black Sea, but not reducing Russia’s Baltic coast land fortresses; in 1905 the Japanese acquired the Liaodong port concessions and South Sakhalin, but could not force the demilitarization of Vladivostok.

¹⁵ In the only conversation between the two reported by Brunnov, Musurus asked for conciliatory negotiations, and Brunnov responded by saying to inform his government “that the eleventh hour had struck.” Goldfrank, *Origins*, 128, 130–note 32.

¹⁶ Goldfrank, *Origins*, 68–71.

Vladimir Lamsdorf, and needlessly complicated the Tokyo parleys of Russia's minister Baron Roman Rosen with Foreign Minister Komura Jutaro, adding to the existing disarray at the decision-making levels of the Russian government.¹⁷

In both cases, Russia's occupation of the "sick man's" territory followed by non-evacuation was the immediate cause of war. The difference was that in 1853 Russia occupied the Romanian principalities of Moldavia and Wallachia, two autonomous, long-standing Ottoman provinces, which Russia had been treating, at least since the 1770s, as effectively distinct from the Ottoman core lands, while in 1903 War Minister Aleksei Kuropatkin's influential line of thinking was that Russia should separate the north and western Manchurian provinces of Heilongjiang and Jilin, through which the main line of the Chinese Eastern Railroad ran.¹⁸

In both cases the Russian emperor rejected what I have termed "sound advice."¹⁹ In late 1852 and early 1853, Brunnov and Nesselrode urged Nicholas I to avoid the type of bullying of Turkey that would generate an overwhelmingly powerful anti-Russian coalition. Nicholas didn't listen. In spring 1853, Menshikov, of all people, urged Nicholas I, were the Turks to persist unyielding, to occupy a couple of East Anatolian provinces, rather than Moldavia and Wallachia as planned, lest he set "all of Europe" against Russia. Nicholas didn't listen. A month or so after the occupation, Peter von Meiendorf (Meyendorff), Russia's minister in Vienna, urged willing withdrawal from the Principalities before Russia was forced out. Nicholas didn't listen. In 1897, Sergei Witte, the original architect of "peaceful penetration" of Manchuria, strongly urged Nicholas II not to take the Liaodong ports of Dailen and Port Arthur (Lüshun); Witte was backed by the war and navy ministers, Petr Vannovskii and Pavel Tyrtov. Nicholas didn't listen. After 1900, Witte urged evacuation of Manchuria on several occasions, as did the envoy to China, Pavel Lessar, whose argument echoed Meiendorf fifty years earlier: Get out while the getting's good, before they force us out. Nicholas II didn't listen.²⁰

¹⁷ Nish, *Origins*, 186–190, 196, 208–09.

¹⁸ David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Toward the Rising Sun. Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan* (DeKalb, 2001), 180.

¹⁹ Goldfrank, *Origins of the Crimean War*, 140.

²⁰ Goldfrank, *Origins of the Crimean War*, 106–09, 140–43; Schimmelpenninck, *Toward the Rising Sun*, 152–56, 178–79, 193–94, 210.

In both cases, Russian arrogance played a critical role. Late in 1852 and early in 1853, when Nicholas I made the fateful decision to employ armed diplomacy with heightened demands on Turkey, he had contempt not only for the Ottoman's as "gravely ill," but also for the British due to their alleged caving into the French over Louis Bonaparte's assumption of the imperial mantle.²¹ Likewise Nicholas I bullheadedly acted as if he had Austria and its emperor Franz-Josef as firm supporters, despite messages to the contrary from Vienna. It is hard to pinpoint when Russia made its fatal aggressive step leading to the Japanese War. The occupation of Liaodong in 1898, the non-withdrawal from Manchuria after 1901, the reoccupation of Mukden in 1903, and the establishment of the Viceroyalty of the Far East that year are all good candidates. There are others. In all of these cases Romanov haughtiness added much fuel to the fire, with Nicholas II apparently assuming that Kaiser Wilhelm II's support would be a positive factor. Foreign Minister Count Nicholas Muravev's sense regarding China and the Liaodong ports in 1897, that one must overawe "Orientals" to secure their respect, is reminiscent of the mentality of the Menshikov mission to Istanbul in 1853.²² Nicholas II's reported myopic, racist contempt for the Japanese, a notorious example of rank incompetence,²³ was shared by others, though not by the two more dovish, early twentieth century envoys to Japan, Alexander Izvolskii and Roman Rosen, or by Kuropatkin, whose desire to control just northern Manchuria, while not satisfying China, could have led to a deal with Japan, and probably a better one than would be obtained in 1907.²⁴

So the analogies between the origins of these two wars include the physical and political geography, the broad context of international relations, the links of the interested parties to international commerce, and the absence of diplomatic deftness on Russia's part. In both cases the structure of Russian policy formation, with the

²¹ Goldfrank, *Origins of the Crimean War*, 103.

²² Schimmelpenninck, *Toward the Rising Sun*, 154, for Muravev's statement, and elsewhere for other examples of this arrogance.

²³ However, Schimmelpenninck has pointed out from Nicholas's II's letters, that during his "grand tour" of Asia of 1890–1891, he admired the Japanese most of all and was not resentful against the country for the attack by a fanatic: *Toward the Rising Sun*, 18–20. What happened to this level-headed attitude ought to be probed.

²⁴ The 1907 agreement is found in Basil Dmytryshyn, trans. and ed., *Imperial Russia. A Source Book. 1700–1917* (Hinsdale, 1974), 432–434.

extraordinary role of the emperor, stands out. And in both cases Russian arrogance and myopia in general and both a plenipotentiary naval appointment and rejection of specific wiser counsels played key roles.

The analogies even work for the pre-outbreak attempts for a negotiated solution, as Russia failed to end the crisis with a “co-imperialist” deal, to use a neologism that I have found apt for such situations. In both case the diplomatic preliminaries of war gave Russia a chance to back out peacefully. Britain, it should be noted, played a key role in making the Turks continue to negotiate in 1853 after the Russian occupation of Moldavia and Wallachia, and then in getting the Japanese to do the same after the Russians not only reneged on their withdrawal timetable, but had also established the new vice-royalty in 1903.

The stories here are as follows. From May through September 1853 the Russians and Turks went back and forth on details of a formal note that the Sultan was to send to the tsar concerning both the Holy Places of Judea and the protection of the Orthodox Church, so that Russia would be satisfied and withdraw peacefully from the Danubian Principalities. The four other Great Powers of Europe acted as official intermediaries, though it was assumed that Britain and France stood behind the Ottomans, while Russian diplomacy futilely tried to get London and Paris to stand aside. The key bone of contention turned on the issue of the Orthodox “subjects of the Porte,” which the Turks wished the Sultan explicitly to exclude from the tsar’s oversight, as opposed to the Christian Holy Places, where both Russia and France, representing respectively the Orthodox and the Catholics, could have a say. Underlying all of this was a Russian attempt to expand the 1774 Treaty of Kuchuk-Kainarji to make explicit Russia’s claim to “protect” Ottoman Orthodox Christians, and a maximal goal of restoring the extorted Russo-Turkish alliance of 1833–41 of the Treaty of Unkiar-Skelessi. At the same time the Turks and Anglo-French minimally wished to apply the Straits Convention of 1841 to cover Ottoman sovereignty and maximally hoped that an expanded version of that convention might do away with Kuchuk-Kainarji once and for all.²⁵ In the event, the diplo-

²⁵ No territorial goals were on the table before the Crimean War broke out, though all sides envisioned some.

matic exchanges ended with Russia's refusal to allow the Turks to modify in any way the draft Vienna Note to specify the exclusion of the "subjects of the Porte" from the tsar's protection. The British termed Russia's explicated refusal a "violent interpretation" of that draft Note, since, if applied by the Great Powers, it would compel the Ottomans against their will to relinquish some sovereignty, some territory, or both to Russian interference and occupation. The mobilized Turks then forced the hot action by shelling the positions of the Russian occupiers on the Wallachian side of the Danube.

In the preliminaries of the Russo-Japanese War, Russia's Unkiar-Skelessi equivalent—the high point of relations with China—was the agreement of 1896, limiting the damage from the latter's loss to Japan from the 1894–95 war and the extorted Treaty of Shimonoseki. In the aftermath of the 1897–98 leases and the post-Boxer occupation of Manchuria, however, Russia forfeited its position in China, which now leaned on the "Open Door" powers, as Turkey had leaned on the Maritime Powers in 1853. Russia, moreover, found herself in two-fold negotiations: with China over the conditions of withdrawal and with Japan specifically over spheres of influence in Manchuria and Korea. Just as in 1853, when Nicholas I, while he was bullying Turkey, simultaneously hoped he could get a preliminary partition agreement with Britain and the other European powers regarding the eventual fall of the Ottoman Empire, but failed, so now Nicholas II's Russia was open to "co-imperialist" deals for continued bullying of China. He already had some with Britain and Germany, and now wanted one with Japan, but was also thwarted. Why?

Just like the British and French regarding some important issues in 1853, the Japanese had been quite willing to bargain with Russia, and they had been offering a Korea-Manchuria *quid pro quo* (*Man-Kan kokan*). But Japan's proffer ran up against the Russian navy's insistence for a Korean port or coaling station,²⁶ St. Petersburg's position toward Korea having the analogous negotiable role to that of the "subjects of the Porte" in 1853. This demand also resembled Russia's unrealistic designs on the Turkish Straits, which surfaced from time to time, because the Maritime Powers found them threatening. With

²⁶ *Inter alia*, Ian Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War*, 45–48, 61–63, 67, 79, 118–23, 126.

Russia also stalling on the withdrawal, the Japanese resolved to pursue serious negotiations, and if these failed, go to war. As a result, the Katsura Taro Cabinet formulated its first set of demands. These included recognition of the "Open Door" and territorial integrity of all of China (J1.1), which Russia always insisted lay within the sphere of bilateral Russo-Chinese relations; recognition of Japan's exclusive political and military rights in Korea (J1.4–5); the right to extend their Korean railroad line across southern Manchuria to China's Shanhaikuan-Niuchuang line (J1.3), which could give Japan access to Beijing; and therefore lead to less exclusive, if formally recognized, Russian rights in Manchuria (J1.2,4).²⁷

When the dallying Russians finally came back with counter-proposals two months later, they omitted the Japanese railroad extension into southern Manchuria (R1.3). They also textually expanded but tried to restrict Japan's position in Korea. The key article (J1.5) became three points: Japan was not to use Korea for military or strategic purposes (R1.5); Korea north of the 39th Parallel was to be neutralized (R1.6), despite the fact that Russia had been demanding from China the right to garrison most of Manchuria; and Japan was to recognize that Manchuria and her littoral are outside her sphere of interest (R1.7).

Was the gap between the two sides unbridgeable? Partly under British pressure, the Japanese quickly made a serious compromise proposals amounting to a genuine Korea-Manchuria exchange. Refusing to bend on the military and strategic use of Korea except to promise to build no installations that might interfere with shipping (J2.5), Komura did offer a fifty-kilometer neutral zone on either side of the Korea border (J2.6). He then modified the terms regarding Manchuria (R1.7), proposed mutual renunciation of interest in the other's spheres, including the littorals (J2.7), permitted Russia's

²⁷ The demands and the subsequent proposals and counter-proposals of August 1903–February 1904 are published in John Albert White, *The Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War* (Princeton, 1964), 351–58. Hilary Conroy characterized this version of *Man-Kan Kōkan* as "... the Japanese allowing themselves some slight bargaining area, by defining Russian interests in Manchuria ('special' and 'railway') more narrowly than Japan's in Korea (simply 'prepondering')." *The Japanese Seizure of Korea* (Philadelphia, 1960), 329. A balanced, Japanese spin on these negotiations, with the text of the first Japanese proposal (and slightly different enumeration) is found in Morinosuke Kijima, *The Diplomacy of Japan, 1894–1922*, 3 vols. (Kajima Institute of International Peace, 1976–77), II:97–108.

right of armed intervention in Manchuria to protect her interests (J2.8), and sought mutual respect for each other's existing treaties with Korea and China (J2.9). Komura also altered the original wording respecting railroads (J1.3) to read that Japan's Korean railroad system could join the Chinese Eastern Railroad at the Manchurian border at some time in the future (J2.10), but nowhere was Russia committed to building that railroad extension.

Taken as a whole, these Japanese proposals represented a co-imperialistic package, which would leave each side free in its sphere from the other's interference, while committing both to respect, within limits, "open doors." Japan's promise respecting Korean naval installations (J2.5) was as much a pledge to the other maritime powers not to turn the Tsushima Straits between Japan and Korea into a Japanese Bosphorus or Sund, as a promise to Russia not to cut communications between Vladivostok and Port Arthur. The latter would be a necessary early action were war to break out and would occur regardless of Japan's Korea facilities unless Russia could deploy half a million troops in the Far East and double or triple her Far Eastern squadrons—an impossibility without at least a Franco-German-Russian alliance and a lot of unavailable cash. The right of armed intervention in Manchuria (J2.8) left Russia free to embroil herself with China and everybody else over troops in Manchuria, while Japan would appear less threatening in Korea.

In retrospect, Japan's second set of proposals were the equivalent of the Turkish Modifications of the draft Vienna Note and thus the missed opportunity of this crisis—a co-imperialist compromise worked out with British help that could enable Russia to evacuate her would-be "Principalities" with decided, if not maximum gain, and leave the other side's war party diplomatically isolated. Delaying further, however, Russia on 11 December replied with her second set of counter-proposals. They reflected the attitude of the navy and the Viceroyalty of the Far East. This, to all extent and purpose had the same effect as Nesselrode's "violent interpretation" in September 1853, which specified why the Ottomans had to recognize Russia's alleged historic oversight of the Sultan's rule over his Orthodox subjects.²⁸ Here Russia simply omitted any mention of Manchuria, but reintroduced

²⁸ On the often misunderstood Turkish Modifications and "Violent Interpretation," see Goldfrank, *Origins of the Crimean War*, 204–225.

the demand for a neutral northern Korea and a ban on Japanese military use of southern Korea (R3.5–6). The only compromise was to accept Japan's modified railroad ambitions (J2.10, R3.2), which made sense if Russia assumed she would win a war and thus acquire a Japanese-built Korean railway system linkable to the Chinese Eastern Railroad.

The Japanese in turn became convinced that they had to tell the Russians in no uncertain terms to allow full Japanese supremacy in Korea or face war. Historical tragedy now repeated itself and, in the light of the human cost of war, not at all as farce. Just as in early 1854, when, as the British and French started to render military and naval aid to Turkey, the Russians began too late to offer a good deal of what their opponents had earlier desired, so now early in 1904, the Russians were ready for greater concessions, but too late, for the Tokyo regime had resolved to unleash the dogs of war. Here, of course, the real difference from 1853 is obvious. Then the British and the French wanted Turkey to take the lead in defending itself and then join. In 1904, fearing a variety of complications, the Japanese wanted China to stay out of the war and localize it.²⁹

The foregoing analysis points to some of the structural problems which Imperial Russia had, both with its geography and with its governing system in the era of industrialization, capitalist imperialism, and ambitious maritime powers, when competitors were often in the way of each other as all of them were on the way to realizing their own goals. As my Moscow colleague V.N. Vinogradov observed concerning the origin of the Crimean War, this was a vicious world, in which one paid a terrible price for a big mistake.³⁰ In the case of the Far Eastern crises of 1897–1903, the Russian government made some big mistakes, some of which recalled the bull-headed blunders in the Near Eastern crises of 1852–53, and paid heavily.

As for the analogies presented here with the preliminaries of the

²⁹ White, *Diplomacy*, 114–16.

³⁰ V.N. Vinogradov, "The personal responsibility of Emperor Nicholas I for the coming of the Crimean War: an episode in the diplomatic struggle in the Eastern Question," *Imperial Russian Foreign Policy*, ed. Hugh Ragsdale and Valerii N. Ponomarev (New York/Cambridge, Eng./Melbourne, 1993), 169–170 (stated implicitly, followed by personal comments in subsequent discussions).

Crimean War, of course Russian policy makers did not understand during 1897–1904 how the rejection of a modified Vienna Note was a decisive turning point forcing the Crimean War, for nothing indicates that they had or even desired any real historical perspective on what they were doing.³¹ Even if such an analysis of the outbreak of the Crimean War had existed by 1903, and nothing the Russians or anyone else produced at that time looked squarely at the diplomacy of 1852–1853, the Russian Foreign Office, not to say military men, would not have taken it seriously. For had they been so minded, they would have been compromising with the “Open Door” powers all along. But instead, the Russians proceeded under some of the same assumptions as in the summer of 1853: The other side would not fight; or Russia could win; and at any rate Russia simply could not cede on such issues. After the Battle of Tsushima Straits, they showed a great deal more realism in Far Eastern affairs and proved to be consummate co-imperialists there right into World War I, but that is another story.

³¹ The official Russian Foreign Ministry history skirted over the key issues: Alexander Jomini, *A Diplomatic History of the Crimean War*, 2 vols. (London: 1882, originally in Russian, 1863), I, 214–17.

PART II

WAR ON LAND AND SEA

CHAPTER SIX

THE OPERATIONAL OVERVIEW

John W. Steinberg

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904–05 was a regional confrontation with substantial global aspects, important and enduring international implications, and immense—but often overlooked—military reverberations. More surely than either the American Civil War of 1861–65 or the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 this conflict between an Asian and a European power on the Eurasian periphery portended a new era in the history of warfare. During a war over colonial spheres of influence in Manchuria and Korea, Russia and Japan employed—albeit imperfectly and incompletely—weapons, resources, methods, and techniques from the second-generation industrial revolution to produce outcomes and dilemmas that more presaged future world wars than re-echoed wars of the recent past. On land, new technologies, including magazine-fed rifles, machine guns, rapid-fire artillery, and barbed wire, altered the nature of the battlefield and battle itself. On sea, steam propulsion combined with heavy armor and large-caliber guns seemingly to inaugurate a new era of *Dreadnaught*-style supremacy. Yet, in many instances, torpedoes and mines—the poor man’s weapons of choice—argued for their own places under the military-technological sun. Whatever the aggregate of uncertain conclusions for the future, the many novelties added substantially to an already lethal brew of death and destruction. In addition, with more than 2.5 million troops mobilized before war’s end, many of the same circumstances made more apparent the linkages between fighting front and home front.

This marshalling of material and human resources resulted in some of the largest and most protracted battles (with many now correctly labeled “operations” in their own right) fought by any belligerent since either Napoleon or the American U.S. Grant. Moreover, the officers who held command in 1904–05 had largely been trained and educated in milieus that fostered constantly rising professional standards and expectations. Military professionals on both sides

increasingly shared common ideas and theories that derived from either (or both) Napoleon and his interpreters or the new apostles of application, Helmuth von Moltke and, to a lesser extent, Alfred Thayer Mahan. With respect to the latter, commanders from both sides entered the war with an understanding that command of the sea would figure prominently in the outcome of operations on the Asian mainland. In sum, a whole set of factors, ranging from changing means and methods to changing impact and outreach, argues that the Russo-Japanese War in twentieth century context might be pro-spectively entitled "World War Zero."¹

Modern relations between Russia and Japan grew bitter after the conclusion of the 1894–95 Sino-Japanese War. Japan soon learned that Russia's volunteer efforts as peace-broker to the Shimonoseki Treaty actually signaled an aggressive turn in Nicholas II's policy toward the Far East. Relations further deteriorated after 1897, when Russia, Germany, and France grabbed spheres of influence in China, making the Qing dynasty's collapse seemingly imminent. The 1900 Boxer rebellion gave cause for all, but especially Russia, to deploy substantial numbers of troops to the Far East. The Japanese considered Russian encroachments into Manchuria and Korea unacceptable because of the long held belief, predating two centuries of isolation, that a hostile Korea represented a threat to Japan's national security.² Meanwhile, throughout the 1895–1904 period Russia's Far Eastern policy lacked consistency, in part because of political infighting between Finance Minister Sergei Iu. Witte and a retired guards officer, Aleksei M. Bezobrazov. Bezobrazov's supporters reached the zenith of their influence in August 1903, when Vice Admiral (and General Adjutant) Evgenii I. Alekseev received appointment as Viceroy of Russia's Far Eastern territories, thereby signaling a sharp decline in Witte's power. The tsar's intransigence in the weeks lead-

¹ Important English language secondary sources include: Richard Connaughton, *The War of the Rising Sun and Tumbling Bear* (London, 1988); Denis and Peggy Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise* (New York, 1974); and J.N. Westwood, *Russian Against Japan, 1904–1905* (New York, 1986). See also, Bruce Menning, *Bayonets Before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861–1914* (Bloomington, 1992), 152–200, and David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, "The Russo-Japanese War," in F.W. Kagan and R. Higham (eds.), *The Military History of Tsarist Russia* (New York, 2002), 183–203.

² See, Ian Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (London, 1985), and David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan* (DeKalb, IL, 2001).

ing up to the outbreak of hostilities, coupled with his refusal to believe that war could threaten his Empire, both testified to his ineptness as ruler and demonstrated official St. Petersburg's low regard for its potential adversary.³

Even though Russia and Japan committed vast reserves of manpower and materiel to the battlefields of the Manchuria, the central feature around which the war turned was the battle fought for command of the sea. Both sides understood this proposition, which explains why the war commenced with Admiral Togo Heihachiro's surprise attack against the Russian Pacific Squadron at Port Arthur on the night of 8–9 February 1904. The ability to command the sea was key to winning the conflict largely because of logistics. With the desperately long and not quite completed Trans-Siberian railway as Russia's only timely and secure means of transit and supply to the Far Eastern theater, the tsar's army required an extended period to build up a local force capable of successfully confronting the Japanese. To retain this time, estimated at six months, Russia had to enjoy at least limited command of the sea to prevent the Japanese from rapidly landing troops and supplies on the Asian mainland. Three days was the time span required for a convoy to sail from Japan and to unload its troops or cargo first in Korea and later directly on the Liaodong peninsula. Although Togo's surprise attack resulted in minimal damage to the Russian Pacific Squadron, his action effectively discouraged it from responding to the Japanese invasion of Korea the next day.

The attack on Port Arthur, sometimes referred to as history's first Pearl Harbor, was bold in conception but poorly executed. During the evening hours of 8 February 1904, Admiral Togo dispatched three torpedo boat flotillas against the seven Russian battleships anchored in the unprotected outer roadstead at Port Arthur. This surprise attack represented only part of a grand plan to seize command of the sea immediately and unexpectedly at the war's outbreak. Another flotilla was dispatched to attack Dalian (Russian Dal'nii), a Russian commercial port 60 kilometers north. Meanwhile, at dawn on 9 February Japanese cruisers escorted a convoy carrying

³ See, David M. McDonald, *United Government and Foreign Policy in Russia, 1900–1914* (Cambridge, 1992), and David Wolff, *To the Harbin Station: The Liberal Alternative in Russian Manchuria, 1898–1914* (Stanford, 1999).

2,500 troops into the approaches to the Korean port at Chemulpo (Inchon). After a brief and lop-sided engagement, the Russian cruiser *Variag* and gunboat *Koreets* were forced to scuttle themselves rather than surrender. The way now lay open for accomplishment of an important Japanese objective, the establishment of the first of several beachheads in Korea.

Knowing that if the Russians gained control of the sea, Japan stood to lose the war, Togo on the morning of 9 February committed his irreplaceable ships to a fleet action. Upon approaching the Russian squadron at Port Arthur, he noted that the Russians were in no state of readiness to sortie, even though damage from the previous night's torpedo attack had been disappointingly minimal. Vice Admiral Oskar V. Stark, the Russian commander, had spent the previous evening at a dinner party, and he was now struggling to repair damage, primarily to the battleships *Retvizan* and *Tsarevich* and the cruiser *Pallada*, to get his crews back to their ships, and to prepare for sortie. Nonetheless, the approach of Admiral Togo's van of cruisers about 0800 attracted a hail of wild Russian firing, most of which was ineffective, until shore batteries gradually joined the fray. By mid-day, Togo's main battle line was exchanging fire with a crude Russian line abreast, and each side counted a number of minor hits. Despite limited success, Togo withdrew, not desiring to expose his precious capital ships to increasingly accurate shore-based fire. Consequently, the Russian Pacific Squadron, although damaged, remained a dangerous "fleet in being" that possessed the capacity to strike either at Togo or at Japanese supply lines to the mainland. His Combined Fleet, therefore, had to remain on constant watch to protect logistical and communication lines, even as the Japanese army began to consider how to conduct siege operations against a modern fortress.⁴

The Russians did not at any time during the conflict give up the notion that they must contend with the Japanese for command of the sea. Not surprisingly, Stark was quickly sacked. Blamed for his squadron's lack of readiness, he was replaced by Vice Admiral Stepan

⁴ Sir Julian S. Corbett's comprehensive *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05*, 2 vols. (Annapolis, 1994) was first published in 1914. Volume I, 1-158, covers the opening rounds of the naval war. For the Japanese side see: David C. Evans and Mark R. Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887-1941* (Annapolis, 1997), 94-151.

O. Makarov, who arrived at Port Arthur on 7 March 1904 to inject new life into Stark's seemingly listless officers and crews. In addition to repairing damaged ships at a naval installation that did not have suitable dry docks, Makarov's central task was to convince his sailors to fight and die for Russia. His life-long motto was "Remember War!"

By the beginning of April the *Retvizan* and *Tsarevitch* were once again seaworthy, a fact that did much to boost morale. However, disaster struck on 13 April, when Makarov sortied against a Japanese feint at high tide. When he detected the approach of Togo's main battle line, Makarov elected a return to base, not wanting to chance main battle while his crews remained comparatively untrained. As he steamed back to base at low tide, his flagship, the *Petropavlovsk*, struck a mine and sank within minutes, taking some 600 men, including Vice Admiral Makarov, to their graves. Russia had lost its most competent—indeed its most irreplaceable—fighting admiral. Both sides now began to lay mine fields at and around the entrances to ports and anchorages on the Yellow Sea, thereby introducing into widespread use a once unreliable element into naval warfare.⁵

Responses to the challenges of war in St. Petersburg and Tokyo were clear harbingers of the future. The Japanese had a well-conceived war plan, and they sought to attain its objectives with every convoy dispatched to Korea. The Japanese aim was to destroy Russian power in northeast Asia. But the die-hard Russian naval presence at Port Arthur would soon necessitate a ground assault against its landward defenses, thus requiring the Japanese to divide their army into two forces—one to besiege the naval base and the other to fight what would become the Manchurian war of maneuver. In contrast, St. Petersburg lacked a formal war plan for its Asian marches, so the Russians began a massive improvisational build-up of men and materiel while keeping close watch on the Russian Empire's European front.⁶

Perhaps nothing more typified the shortcomings of Russia's war effort than the struggle for control over supreme field command

⁵ Corbett, I, 178–186.

⁶ Voenno-istoricheskaia komissiiia po opisaniiu russko-iaponskoi voiny [VIK], *Russko-Iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, 9 vols. in 16 bks. (SPB: 1910–13) is the fundamental Russian source (hereafter cited as *Russko-Iaponskaia voina*). For the mobilization process see: VIK, *Russko-Iaponskaia voina*, VII, 25–100.

throughout the spring and into the summer and fall of 1904. After the outbreak of hostilities, Nicholas II appointed his popular War Minister, General Adjutant Aleksei N. Kuropatkin, commander of the operational army in Manchuria. He arrived there in March, only to find his leadership challenged by Viceroy Alekseev. The two had different ideas about how to prosecute the war. Kuropatkin, understanding the military potential of the Japanese, favored a deliberate build-up of forces before decisive engagement, while Alekseev demanded immediate confrontation with an enemy he neither understood nor respected. His aim was to protect at all costs Port Arthur and the Russian Pacific Squadron.

Their differing strategic and operational priorities first made themselves felt in the field, when elements of the two warring armies met each other at the end of April on opposite banks of the Yalu River. To get there, General Kuroki Tametomo's Japanese First Army, initially composed of the 8th and 12th divisions, had first battled the winter cold and then the spring thaw to traverse northern Korea's execrable roads. Benefiting from Japanese control of the sea, transports in mid-April had landed the Guards Division at Pyongyang. With these reinforcements, Kuroki's First Army now numbered over 42,000 troops, and by the end of the month he was concentrating them on the Korean side of the Yalu. Opposite them, the Russians had formed the Eastern Detachment with slightly under 19,000 men under the command of General M.I. Zasulich.

The Russian high command remained deeply divided over how to meet the enemy threat. Kuropatkin and Alekseev never compromised, with the former insisting on trading space for time, and the latter just as adamantly calling for stopping the Japanese wherever they offered battle. Nicholas II believed that the Japanese would stop at the Yalu, thereby occupying Korea, so he remained characteristically aloof from the quarrel.

As was often the case, Nicholas misjudged the situation. His weak leadership combined with the impasse between Kuropatkin and Alekseev resulted in conflicting orders for Zasulich. Admiral Alekseev commanded him to defend and hold, while Kuropatkin ordered him to engage on the Yalu only long enough to gather definitive information about the size of the advancing Japanese forces. After determining their disposition and line of march, Zasulich was to withdraw into the Manchurian hills toward Liaoyang, about 195 kilometers north, while fighting to delay the enemy's advance.

General Zasulich set up his headquarters northwest of Andong and deployed his troops on the western side of the Yalu between his position and the area northward toward Chuliencheng. At the end of April the Japanese occupied a series of islands in the Yalu and on the night of 1–2 May, with the Guards Division in the lead, the Japanese swung north of the Russian position and crossed the Yalu north of Tiger Hill. Major General N.A. Kashtalinskii, commander of the Russian left, had anticipated just such a move and suggested a redeployment of his forces to meet the new threat. Zasulich, meanwhile, insisted that Kashtalinskii hold firm, thereby demonstrating that the detachment commander intended to follow Alekseev's, and not Kuropakin's, orders. Kuroki successfully confused the Russians by ordering diversionary forces to feint attacks all along various points of contact on the Yalu and its assorted tributaries. Thus, when the Japanese attacked, the size of their force, the high level of planning, and the coordination of their tactical movements combined with Russian inaction to produce a shocking defeat for the tsar's army.⁷

Because over 100 military observers and a large press corps closely followed movements of the belligerent armies and navies, the world soon learned about the outcome of battle for the Yalu.⁸ The Japanese victory was impressive on many levels. Russian officers envied the fighting spirit of Japan's soldiers and began to appreciate Kuropatkin's guarded respect for the enemy. Japan's quartermaster corps had demonstrated capabilities beyond anything the Russians had anticipated. In some cases Kuroki's troops had marched for eight weeks through the hardships of the Korean winter. Yet, they arrived at the Yalu reasonably well fed, rested, and more importantly, well supplied with everything from bridging equipment to 4.72-inch howitzers. Meanwhile, Russian intelligence efforts, despite the dispatch

⁷ This account of the opening phase of the war is based on A.A. Svechin and Iu.D. Romanovskii, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.* (SPB, 1910), 1–116. For an English version the reader is directed to Menning's *Bayonets Before Bullets*, Chapter 5.

⁸ Official reports have been published under the following titles: Committee of Imperial Defence Historical Section, *Official History, Naval and Military, of the Russo-Japanese War*, 3 vols. (London, 1910–1920); German General Staff Historical Section, *The Russo-Japanese War*, tr. Karl von Donat, 9 vols. (London, 1909); Great Britain, War Office, *Reports from British Officers attached to the Japanese and Russian Forces in the Field*, 4 vols (London, 1908); United States, War Department, General Staff, Office of the Chief of Staff, Second Military Information Division, *Reports of Military Observers Attached to the Armies in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War*, 5 parts (Washington, DC, 1906–07).

of General P.I. Mishchenko's cavalry brigade into Korea specifically to gather information and to harass Kuroki's movements, yielded little useful information about the Japanese. In contrast, the Japanese had been gathering intelligence on the theater of operations since they had first occupied it in 1895. The Japanese seemed only to know everything about the Russians, while the tsar's soldiers seemed tired and disoriented.

The opening round of the war on the Yalu concluded with the Japanese decisively out-thinking, outmaneuvering, and even out-gunning the Russians. Zasulich's troops had absorbed 5,000 casualties against 2,000 for the Japanese. Just how well the Russians responded in various ways to this defeat as they fled toward Liaoyang would determine the immediate course of events during the next stage of the war. However, perhaps nothing more signified the tsar's level of confidence than his orders for Admiral Alekseev to leave Port Arthur for a new set of headquarters in Mukden, more than 400 kilometers to the north, to which the Viceroy on 5 May repaired in some haste.

Even as the battle on the Yalu was taking shape, General Oku Yasutaka's Second Japanese Army had already put to sea. Immediately upon news of Kuroki's victory, Oku commenced landing at Pitsewo, 60 kilometers north of Dal'nii, thus setting the stage for the battle of Nanshan at the narrow waist of the Liaodong peninsula.⁹ At Takushan, 57 kilometers west of the Yalu's mouth, Kuroki's First Army enjoyed a brief respite before striking northwest toward the Motien Pass, but not before making way for elements of General Nozu Michitsura's Fourth Japanese Army to disembark. Now, Nozu might strike out northwest toward the Fenshui Pass while protecting Kuroki's left. With precious few forward assets, the Russians now faced multiple advancing threats.

On 26 May, Oku launched a vicious assault against heavily fortified Russian trench lines at Nanshan, located only 25 kilometers north of Dal'nii. Manned by 3,000 troops, these defenses stretched across the entire Liaodong peninsula at which point it narrowed briefly to become the Kwantung peninsula. With little initial hope of flanking the position, Oku elected a direct frontal assault. Once engaged in brutal battle, the Russians learned much about the resolve and deter-

⁹ See: A.H. Burne, *The Liao-Yang Campaign* (London, 1936), 11.

mination of the Japanese soldier. When multiple bloody assaults failed, Oku sent his troops into the surf to envelop the Russian left. Although the Russian commander, Colonel N.A. Tretiakov, demonstrated his mettle in battle, his superiors denied desperate appeals for reinforcement as his 5th East Siberian Rifles were overrun. General A.V. Fock at Dal'nii and his superior at Port Arthur, Lieutenant General A.M. Stessel, refused to send reinforcements, instead husbanding them for possible future operations at Port Arthur.

Nanshan accordingly fell, and with it, Dal'nii, thus providing the Japanese with a port on the Liaodong peninsula. This turn of events Kuropatkin had foreseen as a possibility already during the pre-war period. General Oku completely severed rail and telegraph communications between Port Arthur and Mukden, and the Japanese were now in a position to advance through the Green and Wolf Hills against the distant approaches of Port Arthur itself.¹⁰ At Nanshan, the Japanese had lost nearly one-sixth of the 30,000 troops committed, thus demonstrating a willingness, once engaged in battle, to pay a heavy price for success. In contrast, the Russian command seemingly revealed a lack of resolve to hold at any cost, preferring to save its forces for another day.

By the time of Nanshan, the naval war had assumed a shape and character of its own. Mine warfare proved to be a double edged sword. Admiral Makarov's loss was irreplaceable, but so were the Japanese battleships *Hatsuse* and *Yoshima* and the cruiser *Yoshino*, all lost either to Russian mines or collisions in mid-May 1904. Russia's fleet in being required Togo to keep elements of his fleet on constant watch in the Yellow Sea, a steady tedium that wore down both men and equipment. Although he attempted to harass the Russians with periodic shelling at Port Arthur and elsewhere, Togo also tried to block the entrance to Port Arthur by sinking ships at the mouth of the harbor. However, three different attempts, respectively on 23 February, 26 March, and 3 May, all failed to accomplish the objective.

While attention was focused on the Russian squadron at Port

¹⁰ For a brief yet clear description of this battle see Menning's *Bayonets Before Bullets*, 158–160. There are also two very important memoirs of this battle: N.A. Tretiakov, *My Experiences at Nan Shan and Port Arthur with the Fifth East Siberian Rifles*. tr. A.C. Alford (London, 1911) and Tadayoshi Sakurai, *Human Bullets (Niku-Dan): A Soldier's Story of Port Arthur*. tr. Masujiro Hondo and Alice Becon (Tokyo, 1907).

Arthur and the land battle at Nanshan, the Independent Russian Cruiser Squadron at Vladivostok sortied in mid-June to sink three Japanese transports, with the loss of 1,000 troops and heavy weapons intended for the siege train at Port Arthur. Still, except for nuisance value and the occasional public scare in Japan, Russian raiders failed to detract appreciably from Togo's primary effort in the Yellow Sea. Naval strategists, officers throughout the world's navies, political leaders, military observers, journalists, and indeed the educated public, all believed that navies composed of battleships had been built to fight decisive battles for command of the sea. Although several all-big-gun duels occurred during the Russo-Japanese War, both navies found themselves engaged in many unplanned tasks ranging from coastal defense to supporting their respective armies' roles in joint operations.¹¹

Nanshan, meanwhile, clearly disturbed Kuropatkin. Concern over the fate of Port Arthur figured prominently in both army and navy thinking. With the Japanese army no longer dependent on a supply line that stretched from Korea into Manchuria and onto the Liaodong Peninsula, control of the Yellow Sea remained vital to the future conduct of the war.

More significantly, Nanshan prompted Alekseev to pressure Kuropatkin for immediate relief of Port Arthur. Kuropatkin at first refused, insisting that Port Arthur was well supplied and defended and could withstand an extended blockade and siege while tying up massive Japanese resources.¹² Moreover, two other vital problems increasingly worried Kuropatkin. In short order, two major engagements had produced two decisive defeats for the Russian army. Kuropatkin now had to reconsider his most cherished notions about the combat capabilities of his forces, including their leadership and tactics in the face of a highly motivated and agile enemy.

This infelicitous combination—decisive defeats, questionable battlefield performance, and an unexpectedly tough enemy—began seriously to undermine Russian troop morale. For this reason alone, the Russian army could ill afford another battlefield defeat. Even

¹¹ Corbett, I, 187–213; Evens & Peattie, 99–100.

¹² For a solid recent study of Port Arthur, its place in 20th century fortress warfare, and its fate in the Russo-Japanese War see: V.V. Iakovlev, *Istoriia krepostei: Evoliutsiia dolgovremennoi fortifikatsii* (SPB, 1995) 207–230.

more importantly, Alekseev's insistence on relief for Port Arthur challenged one of Kuropatkin's fundamental strategic tenets. He truly feared that a major movement of Russian troops to the south would provide Kuroki in the east with an ideal opportunity to launch an all-out assault on Russia's point of concentration, Liaoyang. If the diversion of forces facilitated such an attack, Russia could conceivably lose the war before having the chance to organize its army in the field.¹³

Ironically, neither Kuropatkin nor Alekseev wanted to lose Port Arthur, for both understood the ramifications of such a reversal. Instead, the two commanders disagreed over general strategic and operational approaches to the war effort, based on how long the fortress could hold out against a Japanese siege. Kuropatkin's absolute refusal to follow Alekseev's orders bordered on insubordination, and in frustration the viceroy appealed to his tsar for intervention.¹⁴

Nicholas II took the extraordinary step of convening an ad hoc war council composed of War Minister Viktor Sakharov, Navy Minister Fedor Avellan, and the Interior Minister Viacheslav Pleva to discuss the faltering campaign. Weighing heavily in the background, and tied to the operations in Manchuria, was the dispatch of the Baltic Fleet to the Far East.¹⁵ In effect, once the tsar on 19 April had established the Second Pacific squadron under the command of Admiral Zinovii P. Rozhdestvenskii, Port Arthur had to be saved. Rozhdestvenskii's mission was to sail 29,000 kilometers from the naval base at Kronshtadt near the imperial capital to the theater of operations to wrest control of the sea. Port Arthur had to remain in Russian hands to receive the Second Pacific Squadron, which was not destined to arrive in the Far East for many months. The issue of sea power accordingly trumped Kuropatkin's continental-style strategy. Losses at the Yalu and Nanshan looked bad enough in the domestic press and in the eyes of world opinion, but

¹³ Kuropatkin explained these concerns in his *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, 2 vols. (London, 1909) II, 35–40.

¹⁴ For all of the political posturing within the High Command see: Kersnovski, *Istoriia russkoi armii*, 4 vols. (Moscow, 1992–1994) III, 59–66.

¹⁵ The most comprehensive published collection of telegrams and dispatches that focus on the conflicting attitudes and opinions, not to mention actions, of the Russian high command during the early stage of the war is: *Guerre Russo-Japonaise 1904–05 Historique Rédigé à l'Etat-Major-General de l'Armée Russe*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1909) II.

to abandon Port Arthur would create an impression of Russian inability to win the war.¹⁶

As for the Japanese, the war was going according to plan. They had won two major battles and they now controlled a port where they daily landed troops and supplies in the theater of operations. Indeed, in the immediate aftermath of Nanshan, General Nogi Maresuke's Third Japanese Army began disembarking on the Liaodong Peninsula to form a strike force for the assault on Port Arthur. With the exception of relatively minor losses to Russia's Vladivostok squadron, Japan possessed the sea. Tokyo's plan now called for the First, Second and Fourth Armies to march on Liaoyang, Russia's central point of concentration, while the Third Army was to reduce Port Arthur. In light of the prevailing Russian confusion over objectives and priorities, it would be simple to conclude that the Japanese were in an optimal position to defeat their adversary's principal field army with a strategic offensive that would culminate with its annihilation at Liaoyang. However, important factors lay outside Japanese control, including increasingly stubborn Russian resistance at Port Arthur, the maturing of the local millet crop into tall stands, and the seemingly endless supply of Russian troops. Together, these factors created sufficient friction to slow the Asian juggernaut.

Kuropatkin was beginning to learn that no matter what he tried, his army seemed incapable of beating the Japanese. Tragically for the fate of the regime, the problem of conflicting and indecisive orders grew even more pervasive, trickling down to the tactical level to result in the next decisive Russian defeat. While reinforcements were arriving from the Priamur and Trans-Baikal military districts in Eastern Siberia, Kuropatkin deployed his forces in three broad groups: An Eastern Detachment composed of III Siberian Army Corps that was to block Kuroki's movements in the Manchurian hills; a Southern Detachment consisting of I Siberian Army Corps that was to concentrate south of Liaoyang in the Liao River delta; and a general reserve that was to assemble at Liaoyang itself. But Russian troop deployments took time, and, as Kuropatkin was forced to dispatch troops farther south than he desired, his forces were soon

¹⁶ A collection of the telegrams that went from Manchuria to St. Petersburg with emphasis on Alekseev and Kuropatkin's view of the issues is located in: Kapitan Povorinski, *Boi pod vafangou* (Kharbin, 1906), 17–24.

spread out from Harbin to Liaoyang and points south and east. Under these conditions Kuropatkin fulfilled Nicholas' desires and ordered I Siberian Army Corps under Lieutenant General G.K. Shtakel'berg to march south to halt General Oku's northward march up the rail line between Port Arthur and Liaoyang. What followed was the next major engagement of the war, occurring between 14–16 June 1904 at Telissu, just south of the rail junction at Wafangou, 135 kilometers north of Port Arthur.

Oddly, Shtakel'berg, a cavalryman, choose to deploy his troops defensively at Wafangou, partially in response to Kuropatkin's orders. Kuropatkin had sent Shtakel'berg south with instructions to find and halt Oku's northward attack and then to destroy Japanese forces, thereby relieving Port Arthur. At the same time, Kuropatkin had also tied Shtakel'berg's hands with further instructions to avoid engaging superior forces and to refrain from using his reserves unless victory was assured.¹⁷ Orders that fail to deliver a clear message are a recipe for confusion. Kuropatkin's instructions invited Shtakel'berg to surrender resolve and withdraw if the going got tough. Hence the corrosive trend beginning at the Yalu continued, and it would come to characterize Russia's war effort in 1904–05. From the commander of the Manchurian Army on down, leaders were reluctant to make firm commitments by putting their reputations on the line. Instead, orders were usually issued with clauses that aimed at giving generals the flexibility to save their troops even at the cost of winning battles!

At Wafangou, the battle itself started with an artillery duel in the early morning hours of 14 June. The Russians demonstrated that they had learned nothing from the Yalu engagement, where they had haphazardly deployed batteries in open positions. As a result, tsarist gunners suffered grievous casualties from indirect and concealed Japanese artillery fire. Shtakel'berg had placed his Corps in a solid defensive position that covered 12 kilometers of terrain. General A.A. Gerngross commanded the strongest elements of this

¹⁷ I have reconstructed these instructions from two articles: Kapitan Sapozhnikov, "Boi pod vafangou," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 5 (May 1907) 35–39. Sapozhnikov was the Senior Adjutant of the 1st Siberian Army Corps. Shtabs-Kapitan Surnin, "Operatsii 1-go Sibirskago arm. korpusa po okhrane poberezh'ia Liadunskago poluostrova i ego dvizhenie dlia vyruchki Port-Artura. Vanfangouskii boi," *Obshchestvo revnitatei voennykh znaniï*, no. 2 (1908) 130–138.

force with 12 Infantry battalions just east of the rail line at Wafangou. A cavalry screen protected his right flank, impregnable terrain his left, and his rear backed into hills. Significantly, a strong eight-battalion reserve under General F.F. Glasko was located north of Gerngross, within an easy march of the latter's command. Oku, with three divisions at his disposal, had sent his Fourth Division some 10 kilometers north of the point of engagement with orders to envelop Shtakel'berg's rear, while the two other Japanese divisions, the Third and Fifth, engaged in a frontal assault on 14 June.

Although the going became rough, by the end of that day Shtakel'berg felt sufficiently confident to order Gerngross, with Glasko's support, to roll back Oku's forces with a drive through his right flank and then up his middle. But such an attack required careful coordination between Gerngross and Glasko, something that did not occur even as the battle heated up on the morning of 15 June. Moreover, because of poor intelligence, it was only at mid-day that Shtakel'berg realized that the Japanese Fourth division was indeed enveloping his position. The only thing that saved I Siberian Corps from destruction was a general withdrawal that afternoon, which was fortuitously supported by a driving downpour.¹⁸

With the land approaches to Port Arthur sealed off and with his badly demoralized army scattered across Manchuria and the Liaodong peninsula, Kuropatkin's ideas now prevailed over Alekseev's. The Russian army immediately began to prepare for the coming battle of Liaoyang, which would occur at the end of August/beginning of September. The Japanese, meanwhile, had three armies converging on Liaoyang and another one beginning the siege at Port Arthur. To coordinate the activities of these four armies, the Japanese high command appointed General Oyama Iwao as Commander-in-Chief of all ground forces in the Manchurian theater of operations. He arrived at Oku's headquarters on 22 July and immediately oversaw a brief engagement between the Second Army and the I and IV Siberian Army Corps that was designed simply to clear the way for Nozu's Fourth Army to march through the Fenshui Pass. Again, during this battle on 24 July, the Russians fought tenaciously but gave

¹⁸ Polkovnik Komarov, "Boi pod vafangou," in A.K. Baiov (ed.), *Russko-iaponskaia voina v soobshcheniakh v nikolaevskoi akademii general'nogo shtaba*, 2 vols. (SPB, 1906) I, 45–47. VIK, *Russko-iaponskaia vonia*, II, 24–25.

way when Kuropatkin felt his lines were stretched. The Japanese demonstrated that regardless of who was in command, their well-trained armies were more than capable of beating their foe. The Japanese were emerging from battle as masters in the war of maneuver.

At Liaoyang, the Russians dug three fixed defensive positions that stretched some 70 kilometers around and reached some 65 kilometers from the center of the city citadel. With three highly-motivated Japanese armies preparing to double envelop the Russians, the Battle of Liaoyang became one of the key turning points of the war. As the confrontation began in late August, Kuropatkin may not have clearly understood that he had more combatants, 158,000, at his disposal than Oyama, who had 125,000. But Kuropatkin did have a well-thought out, if simplistic plan of battle that amounted to wearing the Japanese down at each of his three heavily fortified defensive lines and then launching a counter-offensive to eject the enemy from the Asian mainland. The Russians acquitted themselves well at the beginning, as elements of III Siberian Army Corps held up the assault of Kuroki's First Army on their center. By evening of 22 August the Japanese were retiring in disarray. But instead of launching a counter-attack, the Russians withdrew to their second line of defense. The abject absence of initiative seemed to epitomize the Russian war effort. After three days' respite, Oyama ordered Oku to attack General Shtakel'berg of Wafangou fame at the southern end of Kuropatkin's position, while Kuroki swung to the northern end for operations against the rail lines to Mukden. Although Kuropatkin kept up to six army divisions in reserve, his fears of envelopment began to seep down the chain of command.

The second phase of the battle started on 25 August and continued in sporadic but intense battles all along the line until the night of 30–31 August. During that night, Kuropatkin received reports that the Japanese First Army had crossed the Taizi River, something Kuroki had ordered on his own initiative in the belief that the Russians were once again retreating. Fortune smiled on the Japanese General at this moment, because Kuropatkin did not realize that he held a substantial numerical advantage in troops. Nor did he realize that his opponents were dangerously vulnerable to a flanking attack after crossing the river. Without adequate tactical intelligence, Kuropatkin followed a pre-set plan for withdrawal to his third line of defense when the Japanese penetrated the Taizi river barrier on the night of 31 August–1 September. This withdrawal marked the

second opportunity lost in a battle in which an energetic Russian defense followed by a decisive counter-attack could have changed the course of the war.

The retreat to the next defensive barrier was opportunistic in the best military tradition, since Kuropatkin also intended to shift forces from his right to his left flank to deliver a knock-out blow against Kuroki's First Army. However, this maneuver proved more complicated than anticipated, giving Kuroki time to occupy the key position in Kuropatkin's third line of defense, an elevated piece of terrain called Manju-yama. When the Russians discovered the Japanese occupying these heights on the morning of 2 September 1904, Kuropatkin's plan unraveled. In an all-out effort to save the day Kuropatkin left his headquarters to orchestrate the retaking of the Manju-yama. Without modern radio communications, he lost touch with his army, thereby adding to the confusion. Despite determined fighting throughout the day and into the night, word came to Kuropatkin early on 3 September that his center had collapsed when General N.A. Orlov had yielded to the Japanese in front of the Yentai mines after being abandoned by General A.V. Samsonov's cavalry screen. With the collapse of his center, Kuropatkin ordered a general retreat up the Mandarin Road toward Mukden on the night of 3–4 September. Russian withdrawal meant that Marshal Oyama had given Japan a great victory. Yet, it had not come without great cost. Besides the human price of 23,000 casualties against Russia's 16,000, the combined Japanese armies were so fatigued that they failed to pursue the rapidly withdrawing Russians.¹⁹

While Oyama fought at Liaoyang, the Japanese also were engaged in a protracted struggle for Port Arthur. Even as Oyama's First, Second, and Fourth Japanese Armies were converging on Kuropatkin, General Nogi Maresuke was assembling the Third Army with reinforcements landing at Dal'nii. By the end of July, Nogi had 80,000 soldiers under his command, a force that Oyama could have used to complete his envelopment of Kuropatkin at Liaoyang. But two strategic considerations drove Japanese actions at this point in the war. Above all else, the Japanese wanted to end the war quickly,

¹⁹ A.N. Kuropatkin, *Srazhenie pod liaonianom v avguste mesiatse 1904 g.* (SPB, 1906). A.A. Svechin and Iu.D. Romanovskii, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–05*, 178–228. VIK, *Russko-iaponskaia voina*, III, pt. 3.

before the Russians reinforced their Far Eastern army with enough troops from the European heartland to put Kuropatkin's strategy into effect. The other concern was the newly-formed Second Pacific Squadron. The decision to deploy the Baltic Fleet to the Far East increased pressure on Japan's military and political leaders to gain control of Port Arthur without delay. Japan could not win the war if the Russians gained command of the sea. The stage was now set for the Russo-Japanese War's battle of attrition at Port Arthur.

Nogi seemed the ideal commander for the task. He had taken Port Arthur from the Chinese in 1894, and he knew the terrain. However, Nogi and his immediate subordinates failed to consider how combat operations had changed in ten years. When Nogi launched his first assault against the fortress on 19 August, the Japanese army inaugurated an operation that would turn into the biggest bloodbath of the war. In the early stages of the assault, Nogi attempted to overrun Russian positions with brute force. Although direct assault met with limited success, the Russians took a fearful toll on the Japanese with a variety of fires from rifles, machine guns, and supporting artillery.

In early August, even before the first major assaults, the tsar ordered the First Pacific Squadron to sortie, to join up with the cruiser squadron operating out of Vladivostok, thereby seizing command of the sea. But on 10 August 1904, in the Battle of the Yellow Sea, Admiral V.K. Vitgeft, Makarov's replacement as commander of the Port Arthur squadron, was killed in action. His death literally sent the fleet into disarray. Cut off from its planned route, the ships had no choice but to return to Port Arthur where the squadron turned its heavy weapons on the advancing Japanese army. Then, three days later, on 14 August 1904, the Vladivostok squadron consisting of three cruisers was caught by a detachment of six Japanese cruisers and assorted smaller vessels off of the southern tip of Korea. In a running battle that lasted over 24 hours, the Japanese sank two and badly damaged the third Russian cruiser. The Japanese now had total command of the sea.²⁰

By 24 August, as the battle of Liaoyang was unfolding to the north, Nogi counted his 16,000 casualties and called off what proved

²⁰ Corbett, I, 370–471; Evens & Pettie, 102–110.

to be the first of four attacks on Port Arthur. Almost a month of calm followed before the Japanese renewed the attack. During that month both sides sought to improve their tactical situation. The Japanese landed siege guns at Dal'nii, while their sappers began digging trenches parallel to the Russian lines. Meanwhile, the Russians, as at Nanshan, fortified their trench lines in a fashion that resembled something comparable to what appeared in Europe on the Western Front ten years later. To further strengthen their position, the Russians also started to remove light and medium ordnance from the various ships in the squadron.

Nogi's second attempt to reduce Port Arthur began with a six-hour artillery bombardment that commenced at day break on 19 September. In true World War I fashion, as the shelling died down and the Japanese infantry advanced into the Manchurian no-man's land, they were decimated by lethal interlocking crossfires. What became clear at this stage of the action was the significance of 203 Meter Hill. As the highest feature in the area, it provided an unobstructed view of Port Arthur's inner anchorage. Over the course of the next three days Nogi would lose 7,500 troops assaulting 203 Meter Hill. Although he failed to take it, the Japanese did seize control of Long Hill, which at least afforded a partial view of the harbor and a good jumping-off position for the next phase of the battle.

As the attack on Port Arthur wore on, the Japanese transformed their efforts into a classic siege. They dug their trenches closer to the Russians and conducted mining operations, which the Russians countered with similar activities. While molding the terrain below ground, the Japanese concentrated around the fortress perimeter 476 artillery pieces, including 18 massive 11-inch howitzers. With their 550-pound shells, these howitzers might penetrate any reinforced Russian defenses. By the time of the third Japanese assault, the siege began to resemble the Battle at Verdun in 1916. Between 26 and 30 October, the Japanese again suffered fearsome losses to Russian defensive fires, and again they failed to gain the summit of 203 Meter Hill. For the next month the Japanese continued to reinforce every aspect of their offensive effort, while the Russians, cut off from any substantial resupply by land or sea, had only materials that were on hand.

The fourth and climactic assault of the battle occurred between 26 November and 6 December. During this period Nogi alternated between pounding 203 Meter Hill with his 11-inch howitzers and

ordering in wave after wave of infantry assaults. At the horrendous cost of 10,000 additional casualties, the Japanese in early December finally gained control of 203 Meter Hill, and with it unimpeded observation for directing artillery fire against the First Russian Pacific Squadron. Once the squadron was destroyed during the first week of December, the situation at Port Arthur became increasingly untenable. On 2 January 1905 General Stessel' surrendered the fortress.²¹ Admiral Togo who now returned to Japan for the refitting of his ships in preparation for the arrival of the Second Pacific squadron, which had left the Baltic in October. Stessel' eventually faced a court martial for not continuing his resistance while he still possessed the means to wage war.²² Meanwhile, capitulation released the battered Third Japanese Army for operations elsewhere in Manchuria. Nogi, despondent over the loss of 64,000 troops, including his two sons, asked the Emperor for permission to commit suicide.²³

Having prevailed in every substantial engagement on both sea and land, the Japanese had nearly taken full control of the war in theater. However, they remained vulnerable to forces off the battlefield. As Oyama's armies were driving toward what proved to be the Battle of Mukden in February 1905, the Japanese were running out of everything—men, supplies, and more significantly, money. For the Russians, the war had been one catastrophe after another. While there were manifold examples of individual heroic exploits, there were also far too many reports of officers failing to make the right decisions. In logistical and reinforcement perspective, the Russian situation was improving dramatically as soldiers and materials were finally arriving in sufficient quantities to overwhelm the Japanese. But all of this effort came too late. Thanks to constant defeats and long standing social grievances, domestic disturbances broke out to destabilize the regime after the events of "Bloody Sunday." Now, the internal enemy as embodied in the Revolution of 1905 became Nicholas II's most formidable foe. Although his armies had sufficient forces to turn the war around and seize control of Manchuria and

²¹ VIK, *Russko-iaponskaia voina*, VIII.

²² According to Menning, 171, Stessel' surrendered with 546 guns, 82,000 shells, 2.25 million small-arms rounds, 878 officers, and 23,481 men.

²³ The Emperor denied Nogi permission claiming he might need the General's service again. Nogi, and his wife committed suicide on the day of the Emperor Meiji's funeral in 1912.

Korea, the domestic situation sapped his political will to persevere on the battlefield.²⁴

Through the fall and into the winter, Oyama's and Kuropatkin's forces struggled against both the extremes of the Manchurian climate and each other. In the aftermath of Liaoyang, as the Port Arthur siege heated up, Kuropatkin finally gained two important advantages over the Japanese. First, he was winning the battle for reinforcements. As he faced Oyama's victorious but increasingly exhausted troops, the Trans-Siberian railway had supplied him with nine full Army Corps, or close to 300,000 men. Second, Kuropatkin had gained a clear understanding of the number and the operational thinking of his enemy.

Hoping in early October to take advantage of this favorable situation, Kuropatkin divided his army into two large groups, an eastern detachment under the command of Shtakel'berg and a western under the command of General A.A. Bil'derling. In clear fall weather, with the roads firm and the crops harvested, Kuropatkin ordered his army to strike south toward Liaoyang in what would become the Battle of Sha-ho. Beginning on 4 October the Russian army began to move on a 65-kilometer front in a broad attempt to encircle Oyama and the Japanese Army. By 9 October, however, the Japanese had determined Kuropatkin's dispositions and intentions, and Oyama was able to strike hard at the Russian center, forcing the latter to retreat to the banks of the Sha-ho. There, the two sides engaged in a bloody battle of attrition until 17 October, when Kuropatkin disengaged and retreated toward Mukden. Again Russia failed to gain a decisive victory, this time at the cost of over 41,000 casualties against Japan's 20,000. Still, reinforcements continued to bolster the ranks of the tsar's army, while the Japanese had to cope with the challenge of doing more with less.

Dissatisfied with both his army's structure and senior leadership, Kuropatkin shook up his army and reorganized it into three field armies, the First, Second, and Third Manchurian Armies. He thus created the first army group in Russian military history. But again, the leaders of these armies, Generals N.P. Linevich, O.K. Gripenberg, and A.V. Kaul'bars respectively, demonstrated that they did not have the mettle to win in Manchuria.

²⁴ Abraham Ascher. *The Revolution of 1905*, 2 vols. (Stanford, 1988 & 1992).

In response to the surrender of Port Arthur, in the dead of the Manchurian winter Kuropatkin roused his reorganized army into action. On 16 January, he ordered an enveloping operation spearheaded by the Russian right wing, or the Second Manchurian Army, to strike at the village of Sandepu. This particular point Kuropatkin had deduced as Oyama's center of gravity. On 24 January, a four-day battle commenced, but poor coordination resulted in another Russian defeat, replete with an additional 12,000 casualties. Now Oyama decided to seize the moment and launch his own version of a Sedan-like enveloping battle against the entire Russian position at Mukden. Upon its arrival from Port Arthur, Nogi's third army would become Oyama's hammer. Meanwhile Oyama reorganized his anvil to create a Fifth Army under General Kawamura, who struck on the Russian left at the detachments of Generals P.K. Rennenkampf and N.A. Danilov. As the Russians recoiled under Japanese pressure, Kuropatkin, instead of settling his forces into defensive positions in front of Mukden, started to transfer units from his extreme right to his left across a front that stretched 100 kilometers at its broadest point.

This opening phase of the Mukden Battle captured the essence of combat operations in the Russo-Japanese War. The Russians reacted to a set Japanese plan, which invariably resulted in retreat because they lacked the command know-how, together with the communication and logistical capacities, for responding to an always deteriorating situation. The battle began in earnest on 17 February with four Japanese armies applying pressure against the entire Russian front. Once again, the Japanese initially found the going tough, and they made precious little progress as the Russians tenaciously defended their positions. But on 1 March 1905 Kuropatkin realized that his armies were being pinned in the center, while the Japanese Third Army under the redoubtable General Nogi was outflanking him from the west. It was on the Russian right, then, that the fate of the Battle of Mukden hung. Between 1–13 March, Kuropatkin frantically threw hastily improvised formations against enveloping forces from the west. However, he failed to halt Nogi, and soon Kuropatkin's left also began to give way. Again, Kuropatkin was forced to order a withdrawal, but not before significant parts of his armies melted away in a rout. The battle ended with his remnants straggling up the Mandarin road toward Harbin to new defensive positions at Xipingkai. Each side had committed over 270,000 men to the clash, making it

one of the largest single battles in military history. The Russians suffered 90,000 casualties and the Japanese 70,000, but the results remained the same: Japan had exhausted itself winning another victory but once again failed to destroy its enemy.²⁵

In the immediate aftermath of the battle Kuropatkin was relieved of command, but after pleading with the tsar, he was allowed to remain in the theater of operations as a subordinate to the new commander of Russia's Manchurian forces, Lieutenant General Nicholas P. Linevich. Although the tsar's army was in retreat and disarray after this latest defeat, Russia still had the forces to continue waging the war. The first task that confronted Linevich was to restore order and morale to the ranks of an army that had been enduring defeats and retreats since April 1904. Moreover, by March 1905 the Second Pacific Squadron was well on its way to East Asian waters, and once again the issue of command of the sea re-entered the strategic equation. Further complicating the picture was the 1905 Russian Revolution, which began to induce a progressive collapse of the home front that would spill over into the army in the form of mutinies.²⁶

The situation looked only slightly better for the Japanese. Their armies had fought well throughout the war, winning every major engagement. But they had failed to rout the Russians. Although increasingly in disarray, the latter still had fighting potential while the Japanese were running short of everything from manpower to money. Nonetheless, battlefield victories, specifically the reduction of Port Arthur in January, 1905 permitted Admiral Togo to take his fleet back to Japan where his ships were completely refitted, overhauled, and prepared for their next confrontation, the Battle of Tsushima Straits on 27–28 May 1905.

The saga of the Second Pacific Squadron is the best known episode of the war for a variety of reasons. These range from the Dogger Bank incident to the struggle simply to purchase enough coal en route to fuel the ships. The squadron enjoyed extensive media coverage as it navigated the perilous 29,000-kilometer journey from the Baltic Sea to its ultimate destiny in the Far East. In March 1905,

²⁵ VIK, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–05 g.g.*, V in two parts.

²⁶ John Bushnell, *Mutiny amid Repression: Russian Soldiers and the Revolution of 1905–06* (Bloomington, 1985).

the commander, Vice Admiral Z.P. Rozhestvenskii, was anchored off Madagascar when news reached him that the Battle of Mukden had been lost. Along with the loss of Port Arthur, this news convinced him that his mission had been compromised, since the Japanese now had complete control of the theater of operations on both the land and sea. In fact, the only place left for Rozhestvenskii to go was Vladivostok. However, the Japanese fleet, completely refitted and prepared for decisive battle, owned the sea route through which the Russians must sail to their destination. Even worse, the Russian would be facing a Japanese fleet manned with sailors who had been engaged in battle since the opening salvos of the war. In stark contrast, the Russians had been struggling simply to keep their ships operational. Even though the voyage was long, there was little time or fuel and ammunition for training exercises while en route. Despite the Herculean efforts of the Russians to sail to the theater of operations, they would arrive with their ships in need of extensive repair and refitting. Ships' crews were apprehensive about surviving the coming test of courage.

On paper Rozhestvenskii had an impressive reinforced squadron of 19 battleships and cruisers, followed by nine torpedo boats and an assortment of auxiliary vessels. Just to sail this aggregation from Kronshtadt to East Asian waters, regardless of the trials and challenges met along the way, required superior seamanship and navigational skill. Admiral Togo, however, possessed 26 battleships and cruisers, followed by 21 torpedo boats and his own assortment of auxiliary vessels. Indeed, it was one of his auxiliary cruisers that sighted the Russians early on 27 May 1904, as they tried to steam through the Straits of Tsushima.

A decisive fleet battle as envisioned by Captain A.T. Mahan for command of the sea, something that had not occurred since the age of Nelson—save perhaps at Navarino—then took place. By mid-morning on 28 May the scope of Russia's defeat became clear. Thirty-five Russian ships either had been sunk, captured, or interned, while over the course of the battle the Russians had absorbed at least 6,000 casualties and surrendered an additional 6,000. The Japanese lost three torpedo boats and around 700 sailors.²⁷ The Russians' total defeat at sea, along with the army's consistent failures

²⁷ See Corbett, II, 1–41, and 141–345; Evens and Peattie, 94–151.

on land, combined with external pressures and the 1905 revolution to force Nicholas II to agree to end the war. By August 1905 Russian and Japanese delegations were negotiating in the United States under the auspices of President Theodore Roosevelt. The war formally ended on 5 September 1905 with the signing of the Treaty of Portsmouth.

The Battle of Tsushima represented a turning point in the course of history that went far beyond the complete annihilation of Rozhdestvenskii's fleet. When the Russian and Japanese delegations arrived in the United States, the rest of the world, particularly the Western powers, could no longer ignore the rising power of Japan. Over a very short period of time the Japanese had undergone dramatic military modernization, and they had now demonstrated that they might use the products of the process to create their own version of a modern nation in arms. The victories of the Japanese armed forces sent shock waves not only to the West but also to the colonial world, where people of color now understood that their own might defeat the Great Powers on a modern battlefield.

But the Japanese learned an important lesson about Great Power politics at Portsmouth. By the time the treaty to end the war had been negotiated, the Japanese had to digest the idea that victory on land and sea did not necessarily translate into all the goals they sought in a peace treaty. Although the Russians had lost practically every engagement, their army still represented a formidable force, revolution and mutiny notwithstanding. Along with the formidable negotiating skills of his envoy, Sergei Witte, Nicholas II's insistence that he would agree to withdraw from Manchuria but not pay indemnities prevailed throughout the peacemaking process. Cut off from international financial markets after the Battle of Mukden and with all of their capital spent on fighting the war, the Japanese left the peacemaking process believing themselves victims of a Western power play.

The Russo-Japanese War, "World War Zero," set the stage for future conflicts of the twentieth century. The war's battlefields revealed both the dark lethal elements of industrialized warfare and the devastating shortcomings in the thinking of the men who controlled their nation's material and human resources. Tragically these lessons were not sufficiently appreciated to prevent the slaughter of World War I. Perhaps of even greater long-term consequence, Russia's defeat awakened and fortified nationalist stirrings throughout Asia and Africa that would lead to decolonization half a century later.

CHAPTER SEVEN

NEITHER MAHAN NOR MOLTKE: STRATEGY IN THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

Bruce W. Menning

We know that Russia is a powerful state and that its resources are mightier than Japan's, but Russia is strong in Europe, while on this side of the Asian continent, she is weaker than we are.

Major of the Japanese General Staff, captured on the Yalu, May 1904.¹

Any strategic decision is in essence unusually simple. It answers the questions, who, where, and when? In reality, strategy knows only three elements of measure: mass, space, and time.

A.A. Svechin, Russian and Soviet strategist, 1926.²

In large strategic perspective, the conflict of 1904–05 affirmed two maxims that might come readily to the lips of any modern urban street fighter. The first is “never bring a knife to a gunfight,” and the second is “never start anything you can’t finish.” Commonsensical as these propositions seem, each embodies an important principle of modern strategy that both antagonists failed to observe. The first proposition emphasizes the importance of congruence between instrument and circumstance, while the second highlights the importance of congruence between resources and objectives. For the Russians especially, to the above-mentioned maxims might be added Baden-Powell’s Boy Scout motto, “Be prepared.” At different times, under different circumstances, and in different ways, each of the belligerents in the Far East managed to violate the principles underlying these maxims. Indeed, the Russo-Japanese War was filled with mismatches, and in these mismatches, or asymmetries, to borrow a term from the modern military lexicon, lay much of the explanation for the course and consequences of the war.

¹ Quoted in L.M. Bolkhovitinov, “Rossiia na Dal’nem Vostoke,” in *Velikaia Rossiia*, 2 bks. (M, 1910), bk. 1, 210.

² A. Svechin, *Strategiia v trudakh voennykh klassikov*, 2 vols. (M, 1924–1926), II, 7.

From the beginning, asymmetry was perhaps *the* defining characteristic of conflict between Imperial Russia and Japan in the Far East. Geography and circumstance produced a scenario that pitted an emerging maritime power against an established continental power on its extreme eastern periphery. The Russians possessed a credible blue-water naval capability in the Far East, yet never effectively challenged the Japanese for “command of the sea,” as advocated by the era’s leading naval strategist, Alfred Thayer Mahan. Key to naval supremacy in Mahan’s view were the principles of mass, concentration at the decisive point, and maintenance of secure interior lines of communication. The object was main fleet battle for decisive victory. In contrast, Mahan’s continental counterpart, the Prussian Helmuth von Moltke, naturally placed his faith in overwhelming ground force as the prime prerequisite for victory. As architect of the Prussian triumph over France in 1870–71, Moltke’s well-worn maxim was “march separately and fight together.” This epigram neatly captured the essence of Moltke’s continental strategy: Pursuit of decision by means of a single, seamless strategic offensive operation beginning with troop mobilization and culminating with large-scale pinning and envelopment maneuvers.³ By early 1905, Russia and Japan each had concentrated field armies of more than a quarter million troops in Manchuria, but neither was able to re-create a Far Eastern version of Moltke’s resounding victory over the French at Sedan in 1870. Meanwhile, consistent Japanese retention of Mahan’s command of the sea did little to overcome stalemate in the Manchurian ground war. For various reasons, neither Moltke nor Mahan reigned in the Far East during 1904–05. In fact, the historian might argue that their varying counsels only contributed to the larger picture of strategic asymmetry.

³ Moltke and Mahan are summarized respectively in Gunther E. Rothenberg, “Moltke, Schlieffen, and the Doctrine of Strategic Envelopment,” and in Philip A. Crowl, “Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Naval Historian,” in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy from Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Princeton, 1986), 299–301, and 456–62. Mahan had been translated under the auspices of Grand Duke Georgii Aleksandrovich, Nicholas II’s younger brother, as A.T. Mekhen, *Vliianie morskoi sily na istoriiu 1660–1783 gg. Issledovaniia*, tr. N.P. Azbelev (SPB, 1895), A.T. Mekhen, *Vliianie morskoi sily na Franzuskuuu revoliutsiiu i Imperiiu 1793–1812. Issledovaniia kapitana A.T. Mekhena*, 2 vols., tr. N.P. Azbelev (SPB, 1897–98), and A.T. Mekhen, *Strategicheskii razbor deistvii na more vo vremia Ispano-Amerikanskoi voiny*, tr. Lieutenant N. Klado (SPB, 1899). Moltke and the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71 were treated in various writings of G.A. Leer, the leading Russian strategist of the era; see, Svechin, *Strategiia v trudakh voennykh klassikov*, II, 272–74.

As the allusion to Mahan and Moltke suggests, strategy has known many preoccupations and many definitions, especially in the modern post-Napoleonic era. Consequently, for reasons of focus and clarity the following treatment accepts a now-popular short-hand understanding. This understanding holds that strategy is the orchestration and linking of ends (objectives, aims), ways (policies, plans), and means (resources, instruments) to accomplish overall security objectives.⁴ This definition is elegant both in its simplicity and in its practical utility. For the historian, it affords a useful prism for viewing, analyzing, and assessing a myriad of intentions, actions, and activities associated with conflicts past and present.

At the same time, acceptance of this simplified understanding of strategy necessitates several caveats. First, emphasis in the following remarks falls on what knowledgeable participants in the events would have understood as higher military strategy. That is, the discussion focuses on the circumstances, considerations, plans, dispositions, movements, and logistics associated with the introduction and utilization of large naval and ground forces within a major theater of war. Second, the discussion embraces larger issues of intent and objective, both of which knowledgeable participants would have understood as lying in the realm of statecraft, and not necessarily strategy.⁵ Third, the treatment relies heavily on an understanding of military geography as an important determinant in shaping strategic approaches and outcomes.

The above-mentioned emphasis on congruence in strategic calculations underscores the supreme importance of establishing a sense of order, progression, and balance in planning for and conducting major military actions across time and vast distances. At the same time, there is the realization that military actions seldom occur in rational and orderly sequences. There is also the realization that asymmetries are almost always part of the larger military and military-political picture. At issue is not the presence of disorder and asymmetry in themselves, but rather the capacity of larger strategic concept to deal constructively, even creatively, with anomaly and lapses in logic.

⁴ Arthur F. Lykke, Jr., "Toward an Understanding of Military Strategy," in *Military Strategy: Theory and Application* (Carlisle Barracks, Pennsylvania, 1989), 3–5.

⁵ For an explanation of why this was so, see Bruce W. Menning, "Operational Art's Origins," *Military Review*, LXXVII, no. 5 (September-October 1997), 33–5.

In Imperial Russia at the turn of the twentieth century, this capacity greatly depended upon the overall political and political-military context within which war preparation wound its haphazard course. The picture was generally one of inconstancy and inconsistency, in which contradictory objectives, shortage of resources, and varying perceptions of the Japanese threat all played significant roles. The function of the autocrat was to impart vision and unity of action, but Tsar Nicholas II was young, inexperienced, and indecisive. In the absence of trusted counsel, these qualities left him vulnerable to his own limited perceptions and to diverse pressures from family, favorites, court, and government. Thus, although the tsar early and clearly marked the Far East as his preferred venue for Russian imperial expansion and consolidation, conflicting agendas and interests figured far too prominently in the struggle to match resources with objectives in a constantly evolving Far Eastern situation. The same set of factors lobbied strongly against a clear-headed differentiation between alarmism and complacency in any assessment of Japanese motives and intentions.⁶ The absence of such distinction contributed to a yawning gap, or asymmetry, between Russian interests and military resources in the Far East.

Highly-placed officials within the army and navy were aware of this gap, but they responded to it variously at various times. They were also aware of the fundamental geographical asymmetry that governed the employment of military resources in the Far East. As early as the spring of 1895, on the heels of Japan's resounding successes in the Sino-Japanese War, General Nicholas Nikolaevich Obruchev, chief of the Main Staff, drafted a sober analysis of Russian prospects for expansion in the Far East. He cited the post-conflict vulnerabilities of both Japan and China to outside intervention, but he also noted Russia's inherent weaknesses in the Far East. These included an extended and vulnerable land frontier, an underdeveloped commercial and transportation infrastructure, a sparse population, inadequate ground and naval forces, and the absence of an

⁶ On the tsar, see especially Helene Carrere d'Encausse, *Nicholas II, the Interrupted Transition*, tr. George Holloch (New York, 2000), 64–7; see also Ian Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War* (London, 1985), 4–8, 247–53, Marc Ferro, *Nicholas II*, tr. Brian Pearce (New York, 1990), 46–9, 68–72, and Dominic Lieven, *Nicholas II: Twilight of the Empire* (New York, 1996), 94–7.

ice-free port. Japan, meanwhile, was an integral island nation of 40 million inhabitants with a well-organized army and a powerful navy. Distances, especially, made a crucial difference, prompting the general to assert that the Japanese “had everything at hand, two steps from our Pacific possessions, while all our means are in another part of the world.”

In the face of this imbalance, Obruchev offered two courses of action. The first was to occupy northern Manchuria as far south as the valley of the Sungari and to occupy Korea as far south as the east-coast port of Shestakov, which lay approximately on the 40th parallel. Neither of these moves directly confronted Japanese occupying forces, and with appropriate agreements and concessions to the Japanese, the initiative would appreciably shorten Russia's Far Eastern land frontier, pave the way for development of a warm-water port, and facilitate Russian settlement of the newly-acquired region's fertile river valleys. The second course of action, for which Russia had neither the resources nor the military forces, was to seek a port either on the west coast of Korea or on the south Manchurian littoral. Such a venture would naturally arouse the apprehensions of the great powers and the animosity of Japan. Whatever the solution to Russian aspirations in the Far East, Obruchev counseled compromise and negotiation to placate the Japanese, observing that “Russia already had enough enemies in Europe and Central Asia.”⁷

It is unlikely that the tsar ever read Obruchev's memorandum, but subsequent events clearly revealed that Obruchev's focus on more proximate threats did not coincide with the tsar's priorities. Obruchev had been the military architect of the Franco-Russian Military Convention, and his expertise in planning for possible war against Germany and Austria-Hungary had earned him the sobriquet “Russia's Moltke.”⁸ However, on the first day of 1898, Nicholas II by-passed Obruchev to appoint the seemingly more pliant and possibly more eastern-oriented General Aleksei Nikolaevich Kuropatkin to head the War Ministry, at which point Obruchev retired. Meanwhile, the tsar greeted his new chief of ground forces with instructions “to cease temporarily the development of our armed forces and means on the

⁷ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv [RGVIA], f. 447 [Kitai], op. 1, d. 69, ll. 4–8.

⁸ O.R. Airapetov, *Zabytaia kar'era “Russkogo Mol'tke”: Nikolai Nikolaevich Obruchev (1830–1904)* (SPB, 1998), 261–69, 300.

western front and to continue expansion of our military readiness in the Far East.”⁹

During the period immediately following the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95, Russia did everything but pursue the kind of gradualist and conciliatory Far Eastern policy that Obruchev had advocated. With Russia in the lead, the European great powers in May 1895 coerced Tokyo into acceding to a revised Shimonoseki agreement, according to which Japan surrendered many of its gains from the war against China, including occupation of the Liaodong peninsula. Subsequently, St. Petersburg openly supported China and courted favor with the Korean monarchy. Russian influence grew rapidly in Korea, where in February 1896, a contingent of the tsar’s marines took the Korean king under Russian protection, and where a Russo-Japanese protocol later that same year acknowledged equal rights on the Korean peninsula for both Japan and Russia.

Meanwhile, the creation in December 1895 of a Russo-Chinese Bank with French backing facilitated China’s payment of Japanese war indemnities. In September of the following year, the Bank became a conduit for granting Russia a railroad concession across Manchuria. The object of the new link, the Chinese Eastern Railroad (CER), was to provide the on-going Trans-Siberian Railroad project with a more direct route between Chita and Vladivostok. In March 1898, after the Germans had obtained a concession at Kiaochow (Jiaozhou), the Russians used their leverage with China to obtain a 25-year lease on Kwantung, including Port Arthur’s harbor facilities, at the foot of the Liaodong peninsula. The lease agreement also wrung from Beijing a second concession for a Russian rail line, the South Manchurian Railroad (SMR), that would link Port Arthur and a new commercial port at Dal’nii with the CER.

In three short years, with precious little corresponding naval and ground force buildup in the Far East, the Russians had attained many of the objectives that Obruchev had earlier identified with Russia’s Far Eastern aspirations. Construction and security for the CER and the SMR would eventually entail a quasi-occupation of northern and central Manchuria, in effect reducing Russia’s Far Eastern land frontier by one-half. Russia had also procured the warm-

⁹ RGVA, f. 400 [Glavnyi shtab], op. 4, d. 50, l. 90.

water port that she so desperately needed in the region. In effect, she had carved out a sphere of influence in Manchuria, with the distinct possibility of extending that sphere into all of Korea.¹⁰

However, Russia also got the Japanese backlash that Obruchev had predicted. Reporting already in September 1897, Baron Roman Romanovich Rosen, the Russian minister in Tokyo, noted that Japanese perception of duplicitous Russian actions in Korea had triggered a doubling of Japanese military expenditures. These would culminate by 1903 with the creation of a powerful fleet of modern battleships. Rosen warned, "it is impossible to doubt that the large armaments program is directed against Russia and that Japan is preparing for armed conflict against Russia." In the event that Russia became embroiled in a war with Britain, Rosen envisioned a combined British-Japanese onslaught against Russia's ill-prepared Far Eastern possessions. Meanwhile, in the entire Far East, Russia had only five naval vessels of consequence, and these lacked suitable ports and coaling stations. Should war occur in the Far East, Russian naval resupply, he noted, "would depend, so to speak, on thin air." The best way out, counseled Rosen, was to seek a *modus vivendi* with the Japanese. Otherwise, differences over Korea would spawn a war with Japan. Meanwhile, he urged authorities in St. Petersburg to read carefully the reports of Lieutenant Ivan Ivanovich Chagin, the naval attaché in Japan who was becoming an authority on the scope and scale of the Japanese naval buildup.¹¹ Both Chagin and his replacement, Captain 2nd rank Alexander Ivanovich Rusin, were to become valuable sources of naval intelligence for St. Petersburg.¹²

The acquisition of Port Arthur and the projected Japanese naval buildup soon spawned a naval race in the Far East that would stretch

¹⁰ Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War*, 26–34; David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan* (DeKalb, Illinois, 2001), 130–158.

¹¹ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Voenno-Morskogo Flota [RGAVMF], f. 417 [Glavnyi morskoi shtab], op. 1, d. 1723, ll. 8–12; see also, RGVA, f. 400, op. 4, d. 329, ll. 62–72, and P.N. Simanskii (comp.), *Sobytiia na Dal'nem Vostoke, predshestvovavshie russko-iaponskoi voine. 1891–1903 g.g.*, repr. and ed. V.A. Zolotarev, *Rossiia i Iaponiia na zare XX stoletii* (M., 1994), 157.

¹² See, for example, RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 1, d. 2128, ll. 17–19, 25–31ob., and 49–52, and Istoricheskaia Komissia pri Morskom General'nom Shtabe [IKpriMGSh], *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, 7 bks. incomplete (SPB and Petrograd, 1912–1918), bk. 1, 130–35.

Russian resources thin. Since the 1880s, Russia had been engaged in an energetic shipbuilding program that had made her the third largest European naval power. The Naval Ministry had only settled in 1895 on a new program for 1895–1902.¹³ Two years later, however, Grand Duke Aleksei Aleksandrovich, the tsar's uncle and titular head of the Naval Ministry, sought to revise that program to account for new circumstances in the Far East. Under his chairmanship in December 1897 a conference of high-ranking naval functionaries recommended additional appropriations to embark on an ambitious shipbuilding program for the Far East that by 1905 would produce naval parity with the Japanese. Altogether, the proposed program entailed construction of five new battleships and sixteen new first-class cruisers, along with assorted torpedo boats and auxiliaries. Russian Finance Minister Sergei Iul'evich Witte, who had initially supported Far Eastern development, now began to have serious misgivings, but nonetheless, he agreed to appropriate 90 million rubles for the naval program from extraordinary funds that lay outside the normal state budget for 1898.¹⁴

Among higher-ranking naval officers, Rear Admiral Stepan Osipovich Makarov, hero of the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78 and a leading theoretician of mine and torpedo warfare, was one of the few to dissent. At the grand duke's conference, Makarov stood virtually alone against the wave favoring new outlays for capital ship construction. Echoing many of Obruchev's earlier sentiments, Makarov asserted that “in a war against us the Japanese fleet retains a huge strategic advantage because it will rely on numerous armed ports in its homeland that surround our shores like a ring, with all approaches to us in Japanese hands.” Consequently, in Makarov's estimation, “any small Russian numerical advantage in vessels will not assure us command of the seas washing Japanese shores.”¹⁵ Before embarking on any ambitious program of naval construction, Markarov argued for a well-conceived plan or even several plans for utilization of various types of vessels in the Far East. He even asserted “that a detailed examination of the question will show that we should refrain from

¹³ M.A. Petrov, *Podgotovka Rossii k mirovoi voine na more* (L., 1926), 32–3.

¹⁴ S. Iu. Vitte, *Vospominaniia*, ed. B.V. Anan'ich, F. Vchislo, et al., *Iz arkhiva S. Iu. Vitte*, 2 vols. in 3 bks., (SPB, 2003), I, bk., 2, 553.

¹⁵ RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 1, d. 1728, ll. 134–35.

commanding the seas washing the Japanese homeland and limit ourselves to the more modest mission of interdicting a Japanese landing on the mainland.”¹⁶ In pursuit of this mission, the Russians might proceed with a more limited program of naval construction while possibly acquiring and reinforcing Port Arthur as a bulwark against Japanese incursion. However, Makarov conceded that a detachment of torpedo boats might be based there.

Makarov’s reputation and remarks notwithstanding, the Naval Conference plowed full speed ahead with the grand duke’s recommendations. The official record indicated that “the Conference did not consider it necessary to review any kinds of plans for our actions in the Far East.” Instead, the Conference resolved that “our fleet in the Far East, just as the Japanese fleet, must consist of squadrons suitable for any actions, even surpassing the Japanese.” Parity with (and even marginal superiority over) Japan became the golden mean, with “the Conference recognizing as completely correct for the time being that calculations about . . . size ought to proceed from a comparison with the latter [the Japanese].”¹⁷ At least temporarily, Mahan had metaphorically triumphed over Makarov.¹⁸

However, the situation in the Far East was never clear-cut, in large part because Port Arthur failed to meet all the requirements for a large, well-situated, and well-appointed naval base. Before the age of oil-fired steam turbines, large steam-driven naval vessels required coaling stations and extensive facilities for repair and refitting. Vladivostok did not fit the bill, because it was too distant from the crucial Korea Straits and because it was ice-bound four months of the year. Port Arthur was at best a compromise solution, and there was considerable disagreement over its merits even before St. Petersburg had concluded leasing arrangements. However, since delicate circumstances precluded a lease on Masampo at the foot of the Korean peninsula, and since the Japanese were not about to grant alternate leasing privileges to the Russians, Port Arthur became the default solution.¹⁹

¹⁶ Ibid., I. 135.

¹⁷ Ibid., I. 136.

¹⁸ See the discussion in V.A. Zolotarev and I.A. Kozlov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.: Bor’ba na more* (M, 1990), 32–3, and in Choi Dokkiu, “Morskoe ministerstvo i politika Rossii na Dal’nem Vostoke (1895–1903),” *Ezhegodnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo nauchnogo obshchestva istorikov i arkhivistov*, I (1996), 145–171.

¹⁹ RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 1, d. 2334, ll. 1–2ob.

In reality, Port Arthur was every naval officer's version of a basing nightmare. The recent war and the evacuating Japanese had left the harbor strewn with wreckage, but even under better circumstances, the docks were incomplete and unsuitable, with none adequate to accommodate capital ships. The inner basin was restrictive and in need of extensive dredging to accommodate deep-draft vessels. Worse, exit from that basin to the open sea required passage through a two-kilometer-long defile that was so narrow and so shallow that capital ships might sortie only slowly and in single file. The process was sufficiently laborious that a squadron-size formation might sortie its full strength only over two changes of the tide.²⁰

Other drawbacks contributed to the list of Port Arthur's strategic shortcomings. Even with the gradual introduction of Grand Duke Aleksei's powerful Russian Pacific Squadron, retention of the new base without a network of auxiliary ports and outposts conferred at best only partial control of the Yellow Sea. Second, without the kind of population and transportation infrastructure that Obruchev had earlier envisioned for his version of an expanded Russian presence in the Far East, Port Arthur remained an isolated outpost at the end of a tenuous line of communications with Russian proper. The port had to be connected with Russia by rail. Meanwhile, economic and commercial development might require years, even decades, before local resources rendered Port Arthur more self-reliant. Finally, the very nature of limited egress from the inner basin meant that before impending action primary Russian naval units must anchor in the outer roadstead, a factor that left them vulnerable to possible surprise attack.²¹

While these issues were troublesome, for a time they represented longer-term challenges. The Trans-Siberian Railroad was not completed (with a break at Lake Baikal) until 1902, and the CER not until 1903. The Russian Pacific Squadron was not shifted to Port Arthur from Vladivostok until 1901, following completion of the SMR. Meanwhile, during 1898 and 1899, the Russians appeared to be working toward a *modus vivendi* with the Japanese, with the implied understanding that Japan was to retain a sphere of influence in Korea, while the Russians retained their own sphere in Manchuria.

²⁰ IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–05 g.g.*, bk. 1, 47–8.

²¹ Ibid., bk. 1, 118–120.

Much to Tokyo's displeasure, the Russians continued a modest military buildup in the region, ostensibly to secure Port Arthur, the CER, and the SMR. Moreover, despite all the rhetoric over possible definition of spheres of influence, the Russians continued to play an intrusive role in Korea, where commercial interests close to the tsarist court vied for subsidies and the development of various local concessions.²²

The Boxer Rebellion of 1900 substantially modified the already precarious Far Eastern balance. The various military actions that drew European, Russian, and Japanese forces to China caused a minor mobilization of tsarist ground force and naval assets not only in the Far East, but also from nearby Siberia and even European Russia. Altogether, Kuropatkin's War Ministry mobilized some 230,000 troops, although the majority either remained in place or were transited to the Far East in support of the Priamur Military District. Still, more than 65,000 Russian troops took part either in the relief of foreign legations in Beijing or in the pacification and occupation of China's three northeastern provinces. In addition to defending Russian frontier settlements, Russian troops and auxiliary guards in Manchuria quelled local disturbances and secured the CER and its branches. These and related military actions levied an extraordinary expense on the War Ministry of 65 million rubles.²³ Once hostilities ceased, the Russians continued to occupy much of Manchuria, and it was this continued presence of Russian troops, together with the naval buildup at Port Arthur, that fired Japanese resolve and fueled further military preparations for a possible war against Russia in the Far East.²⁴

The latter possibility made Kuropatkin extremely uncomfortable. Without the prospect of rapid reinforcement from the west, he realized that Russian dispositions in the Far East were at best tenuous. Although he would later concede the validity of the tsar's earlier instructions for reinforcement of the Far East because added troop strength had enabled Russia to accommodate the situation in 1900 with greater ease, the war minister's private thoughts were less sanguine. In a note to Count Vladimir Nikolaevich Lamsdorf of 25

²² Nish, *The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War*, 44–8.

²³ RGVA, f. 400, op. 4, d. 40, l. 8ob. See also, A.B. Shirokorad, *Russko-iaponskie voiny 1904–1945 g.g.* (Minsk, 2003), 117–127, and 130–148.

²⁴ RGVA, f. 400, op. 4, d. 481, l. 75.

May 1901 (O.S.), Kuropatkin chastised the foreign minister's alleged "new and bold plans" for the Far East and warned that Russia's military resources were already stretched too thin. Kuropatkin wrote that the War Ministry had never supported offensive action in China, and he even repeated the assertion of General Sergei Mikhailovich Dukhovskoi, the former Priamur Governor-General, that it was not in Russia's interests to press the Trans-Siberian Railroad beyond the Amur. Further, the War Ministry had not requested the lease on Port Arthur, but had viewed its acquisition only as a measure to "create a naval base on the Pacific for our fleet." Kuropatkin predicted that any substantial difficulty in the Far East would necessitate transit of troops from the west, "where the readiness of our forces for successful combat with the coalition [the Triple Alliance] can be considered far from assured." Meanwhile, because Russian troops were spread so thinly across Manchuria to secure the CER and SMR, the War Ministry could not countenance "the pursuit of any other missions." Indeed, Kuropatkin considered Russian ground forces in the Far East "unready for a war against Japan" because of their "relative small number and their dispersion . . . especially if such a war would extend into Korean territory."²⁵

Kuropatkin's concern for the opportunity costs of Far Eastern commitments was nothing new. As early as March 1900, he had complained that the costs of the revamped naval program, together with the expense of building corresponding infrastructure, was diverting attention from the western military frontier. And, it was a diversion for which the tsar's arms limitation initiatives at The Hague conference in 1899 could not compensate. Kuropatkin pointed out that the western military frontier had been deprived of more than 100 million rubles, while fielding a garrison at Port Arthur had reduced western commitments by 6,600 troops. He considered this trend ominous, noting that threat assessments in the west already favored Austria-Hungary and Germany. In words that might have flowed from Obruchev's pen, Kuropatkin wrote that "the European front" remained Russia's most vital concern. He argued against further naval commitments to the Far East, because Russia was a conti-

²⁵ Ibid., ll. 82, 87–8.

mental power, and “while she remained so, ground forces were always her main defense.”²⁶

Such assertions probably did not sit well with a tsar intent on increasing his Far Eastern commitment. In an apparent response to the challenge of “imperial overreach,” as early as 15 March 1902 (O.S.) Nicholas II proposed additional military economies in the west. His scheme was to withdraw farther to the east the line of peacetime Russian military deployments against Austria-Hungary and Germany, thus effecting savings in troops and infrastructure, but at the possible expense of ceding two-thirds of Russian Poland to potential invaders. Kuropatkin parried the tsar’s proposal by citing alliance obligations to France in the event of possible future war against the Triple Alliance.²⁷ However, the tsar returned to the issue again on 26 October 1902 (O.S.), and this time he was not so easily swayed. Kuropatkin had to respond with a carefully drawn report that revealed the true hidden costs of potential redeployment in the west, including 200 million rubles’ worth of new construction and the abandonment of 628 million rubles’ worth of prior military investment in Russian Poland.²⁸ Confronted with these numbers, the tsar ceased his advocacy for altered defensive dispositions in the west.

Still, competition between east and west for scarce military resources continued to make itself felt in other ways. In March 1903, as the War Ministry prepared its budget requests for 1904–1908, Lieutenant Colonel Sergei Konstantinovich Dobrorol’skii of the Main Staff reported that over the previous seven years the navy’s budget had risen by 66 percent in comparison with 12 percent for the army. Despite the army’s primacy in the defense of both European Russia and the Far East, the navy now claimed an annual budget equal to 35 percent of the ground forces. This figure represented almost a three-fold proportional increase since 1883.²⁹ Meanwhile, in July 1903, General Adjutant Kuropatkin reported to the Emperor that

²⁶ Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv [RGIA], f. 1622 [Vitte, S. Iu.], op. 1, d. 269, ll. 89ob.–90; see also, William C. Fuller, Jr., *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600–1914* (New York, 1992), 377–79. General Adjutant Kuropatkin had in 1898, incidentally, read Obruchev’s memorandum of 1895; see, Vasilii Kashirin, “‘Russkii Mol’tke’ smotrit na Vostok,” *Rodina*, no. 1 (January 2004), 44.

²⁷ RGIA, f. 400, op. 4, d. 433, ll. 37–8.

²⁸ Ibid., d. 445, ll. 61–4ob.

²⁹ Ibid., d. 56, l. 27ob.

two entire army corps had been allocated (but not deployed) from European Russia to reinforce the Far East in the event of war with Japan. The War Minister argued that these troops would be sorely needed in the west should a general European war break out.³⁰

Even more ominously, Russia was steadily losing out to Austria-Hungary and Germany in the all-important strategic competition to increase railroad throughput capacities to Russia's western military frontier. Railroads formed the backbone for the system of troop transit to wartime deployment and concentration, and Russia now suffered from such a comparative strategic disadvantage that Colonel Michael Vasil'evich Alekseev of the Main Staff simply conceded the neighboring powers' "complete superiority over us." He pointedly blamed this situation on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, because its diversion of scarce resources "had nearly halted the development and improvement of our rail net in the western half of the state."³¹

The resulting mismatch in railroad throughput capacities along the western military frontier forced the Main Staff to seek refuge in a strategy of desperation. To offset the potential adversaries' advantage in more rapid rail-driven troop mobilization and concentration, Russian war plans at the beginning of a major European war called for massive cavalry raids into East Prussia and Galicia. At the outset of mobilization, the commanders of the three frontier military districts in the west were to launch 200 cavalry squadrons into hostile territory, where their primary mission was to operate against railroads, thereby "forcing the enemy to disembark troops at stations farther from our frontier."³²

This palliative provided little comfort for military planners confronted with the hard realities of resource allocation between east and west, but precious months would elapse before Nicholas II attempted to impose greater unity of vision and action on the disparate requirements that flowed from the larger imperial design. On 30 July 1903 (O.S.), he established the Viceroyalty of the Far East and the Special Committee for Far Eastern Affairs, which was to supervise the activity of the Viceroy. However, the appointment of the tsar's bastard uncle, Admiral Evgenii Ivanovich Alekseev, as all-

³⁰ Ibid., d. 496, ll. 21ob.-22.

³¹ Ibid., d. 50, l. 22ob.

³² Ibid., l. 20.

powerful viceroy only complicated on-going negotiations with the Japanese over Manchuria and Korea and did little to foster unified military and naval planning. Meanwhile, the presence on the Special Committee of Finance Minister Witte and War Minister Kuropatkin virtually assured representation of their ministerial self-interests (respectively railroad development and the western military frontier) to the detriment of greater military and naval expenditures for the Far East. Worse, the inclusion of two representatives (Aleksei Mikhailovich Abaza and Nicholas Gavrilovich Matiunin) from the "Bezobrazov group" lent legitimacy to adventurists close to the throne who sought personal advantage in various schemes for Russian concessions in Korea.³³ In effect, the ostensibly unified Committee paradoxically represented a version of imperial "divide and misrule." It was not without justification that writers of the official military history of 1904–05 later blamed insufficient expenditures for war preparation in the Far East on "the principled views" of high-ranking functionaries, especially the ministers of finance and war, whose voices weighed heavily in deciding those expenditures.³⁴

Consequently, despite tsarist emphasis on Far Eastern priorities, scarcity of resources had a telling impact on Russian preparation for a possible war against Japan. Even by early 1903, little had been done to strengthen the fortress at Port Arthur against either a ground attack or an assault from the sea. General Adjutant Kuropatkin's visit to the Far East in the summer of 1903 spurred further allocations and preparations, but he remained parsimonious in responding to Viceroy Alekseev's requests for additional troops and expenditures.³⁵ Although Kuropatkin reported to the tsar that "we can now be calm over the fate of Port Arthur," later official estimates revealed that the fortress' defenses were still woefully incomplete at the outset of war in January 1904.³⁶ Perhaps worse, naval combat readiness especially suffered from inadequate funding to build

³³ Andrew Malozemoff, *Russian Far Eastern Policy 1881–1904* (Berkeley, 1958), 224.

³⁴ Voenno-istoricheskaiia komissiiia [VIK], *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, 9 vols. in 16 bks. (SPB, 1910–13), I, 751; the harmful legacy of the Special Conferences and the Special Committee is thoughtfully treated in N. Geiden, *Itogi russko-iaponskoi voiny 1904–1905 g.g.* (Petrograd, 1914), 76–8.

³⁵ Voennoe Ministerstvo, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet o deiatel'nosti glavnykh upravlenii Voennoho Ministerstva vyzvannoi voinoiu s Iaponiei v 1904–1905 g.g.* (SPB, 1912), 4–6.

³⁶ RGVIA, f. 400, op. 4, d. 496, l. 19; IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, bk. 1, 43–5.

up stocks of hard coal, to support live-fire drills, and to provide for all-important naval exercises at sea.³⁷ As a result, the Russian Pacific Squadron was ill-prepared for combat, despite gradual accretions in strength between 1901 and early 1904. Lack of preparedness no doubt fed the passivity that seemed so thoroughly to afflict naval commanders in the Far East. For their part, Russian ground forces appeared more combat-ready, but they suffered from shortages of modern quick-firing field artillery, and they lacked front-line troop strength and mountain artillery.³⁸

Kuropatkin's optimism in the face of these and other apparent shortcomings in Far Eastern military readiness appeared to spring less from naiveté than from a conviction that he had found a way to bridge the gap between threat requirements and the spare resources at hand. Between March and July 1903, he had begun to articulate the broad outlines of his strategy for waging a possible future war against Japan. He anticipated a war that would require a year and a half to wage, that would demand expenditures in the range of 700–800 million rubles, and that would levy losses of 30–50,000 on the 300,000 Russian troops involved in the conflict. Just as in 1894–95, he expected the Japanese to land substantial ground forces on the Asian mainland. In response, he would essentially trade space for time, yielding up Port Arthur to siege and withdrawing initial Russian ground force concentrations into central and even northern Manchuria. After an initial defensive phase to cover reinforcement and concentration, Kuropatkin would shift to the offensive to drive the Japanese from Manchuria and possibly also Korea. The War Minister anticipated—even expected—success because “our fleet is stronger than Japan’s and [our] reinforcements will arrive more quickly, thus enabling us to transition more quickly to the offensive.”³⁹ Aside from perhaps unwarranted confidence in the efficacy of reinforcements and the Russian navy, Kuropatkin’s strategy assumed that both time

³⁷ Aleksandr Nemits, “Beglii ocherk morskikh operatsii russko-iaponskoi voiny,” *Morskoi sbornik*, CCCLX, no. 6 (June 1912), 157–62; see also, Zolotarev and Kozlov, *Russko-iaponskii voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, 57, and 60–1.

³⁸ RGVA, f. 400, op. 4, d. 500, ll. 245–46ob.

³⁹ Quoted in Iu. F. Subbotin, “A.N. Kuropatkin i Dal’nevostochnyi konflikt,” in I.S. Rybachenok, L.G. Zakharova, and A.V. Ignat’ev (eds.), *Rossia: Mezhdunarodnoe polozhenie i voennyi potentsial v seredine XIX–nachale XX veka* (M, 2003), 161–62; the entire discussion appears on 158–62.

and strength of will would remain on the Russian side. Except in passing, he failed to take note of Major General Murat Tsuneishi's direct statement to him on 24 June 1903 (O.S.) that the Japanese were not about to permit time to work in Russia's favor.⁴⁰ As for will, Kuropatkin had blithely noted in March 1903 that the defensive phase of any future operations against Japan would require from Russians an "iron firmness of character" to withstand initial losses and failures.⁴¹ Until the reality of war proved or disproved these assumptions, Kuropatkin might remain the calm, consummately professional general staff officer, knowing that he had arrived at a Solomon-like solution for retention of strength in the west while providing for a worst-case contingency in the Far East.

It was the necessity for wartime reinforcement of Russia's ground forces that made the hastily-constructed and ill-financed Trans-Siberian Railroad and its Far Eastern branches the centerpiece of General Adjutant Kuropatkin's strategic calculations. For the war minister, the implications of the Far Eastern time-distance-mass calculus were clear: Any major military confrontation with Japan would automatically require rail transit of troop reinforcements from Siberia and European Russia. Even in late 1901, fully mobilized ground forces in southern Manchuria and the Kwantung region would number fewer than 60,000. And, this figure might be fully concentrated for operations only after 60 days, while intelligence estimates indicated that the Japanese might attack with 100,000 troops within the same span. Substantial Russian reinforcements from the Trans-Baikal and Siberian military districts might be expected on the scene only five to seven months after the onset of mobilization.⁴² Consequently, in any possible future war with Japan, the initial emphasis for reinforcement would fall on transit to deployment and concentration, while local forces conducted defensive operations.

In Russian war planning, the key questions were where to concentrate (northern or southern Manchuria), with what (a mixture of local forces and reinforcements), and when (60 to 180 days)? Little wonder that Kuropatkin was obsessed with the low carrying capacities

⁴⁰ E. Iu. Sergeev and I.V. Karpeev (eds.), "Iaponskie dnevniki A.N. Kuropatkina," *Rossiiskii Arkhiv*, no. 6 (1995), 433.

⁴¹ Subbotin, "A.N. Kuropatkin i Dal'nevostochnyi konflikt," 159.

⁴² VIK, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904-05 g.g.*, I, 193-94.

of the Trans-Siberian, CER, and SMR. As late as January 1904, the Trans-Baikal segment of the Trans-Siberian and the CER could transit only four pairs of trains per day, while the SMR might transit only three pairs per day.⁴³ Meanwhile, hard logistical realities dictated that an army corps required 90–92 trains for transit to concentration and deployment.⁴⁴

Little wonder also that Kuropatkin grudgingly considered Admiral Alekseev's Pacific Squadron as Russia's first line of defense in the Far East.⁴⁵ It was the Squadron's initial (and unenviable) mission to defend multiple naval approaches to the continental periphery while Russian ground forces completed their laborious and time-consuming buildup in Manchuria. In the fall of 1903, when Major General Vasilii Egorovich Flug queried Viceroy Alekseev's chief of staff, Vice Admiral Vil'gel'm Karlovich Vitgeft, about the Pacific Squadron's ability to defend the south Manchurian littoral against enemy landings, Vitgeft called such landings "inconceivable" as long as the Squadron remained intact.⁴⁶ Consequently, local ground force planners opted for initial troop concentrations in southern Manchuria in the region of Liaoyang-Haichen. This planning concept underwent review by the Main Staff and Kuropatkin in St. Petersburg, resulting in minor alterations.⁴⁷ However, Admiral Alekseev's naval plans underwent no such scrutiny, since the local naval commander (and Viceroy) had no obligation to submit his plans for review by the naval hierarchy. Consequently, neither the Naval Ministry nor the War Ministry was privy to Alekseev's naval plan for the Far East.⁴⁸

Nor, except for episodic personal contact, was there systematic exchange of information between the Naval Ministry and Alekseev over such key issues as lessons learned from naval war games. And, indeed, employment of the Russian Pacific Squadron against its potential Japanese adversaries found reflection in a cycle of three war games that were played out at the Nicholas Naval Academy between

⁴³ Voennoe Ministerstvo, *Vsepoddanneishii otchet o deiatel'nosti glavnykh upravlenii Voenmogo Ministerstva vyzvannoi voinoi s Iaponiei v 1904–1905 g.g.*, 56; A.I. Kuropatkin, *Žapiski generala Kuropatkina o rusko-iaponskoi voine. Itogi voiny*, 2nd ed. (Berlin, 1911), 228–30.

⁴⁴ RGVA, f. 400, op. 4, d. 500, ll. 96–97ob.

⁴⁵ Kuropatkin, *Žapiski generala Kuropatkina o rusko-iaponskoi voine. Itogi voiny*, 217–18.

⁴⁶ IKpriMGSh, *Rusko-iaponskaia voina 1904–05 g.g.*, bk. 1, 96.

⁴⁷ RGVA, f. 400, op. 4, d. 651, ll. 1–34.

⁴⁸ V.A. Zolotarev, I.A. Kozlov, and V.S. Shlamin, *Istoriia flota gosudarstva Rossiiskogo*, 2 vols. incomplete (M, 1996), I, 185.

1896 and 1903 under the auspices of the Naval Ministry in St. Petersburg. In the game of 1896, Russian naval forces suffered a predictably overwhelming defeat. In 1900, the second game did not proceed to conclusion.⁴⁹ However, the game of 1902–03 proved most instructive. It was set in May 1905, when both contending fleets would enjoy parity. The conditions of the game dictated a sudden Japanese naval onslaught against Port Arthur immediately on the heels of a war declaration. In anticipation of just such an attack, the Russian war gamers repositioned their Pacific Squadron in Dalianwan Bay, near Dal'nii. When the two main naval forces finally engaged in a Mahan-style shoot-out, the Japanese lost three-fifths of their capital ships and the Russians one-half. Surviving Russian battleships limped off for refit to Vladivostok, only to suffer ambush and annihilation at Tsushima Straits. Meanwhile, the remaining Russian cruisers were all sunk while attempting to interdict Japanese landings against the Asian mainland.⁵⁰

Whatever the precise number of major combatants, these games and the realities of naval planning revealed that parity was a very slender reed upon which to construct a Mahan-like premise for command of the sea. For one thing, unlike the situation in the west, the Russians could not count on assistance from their French allies. For another, the Anglo-Japanese Treaty of 1902 portended the possibility of British intervention with substantial naval assets on the side of the Japanese. For still another, the possible speed with which the Japanese might attack precluded reliance on Russian naval reinforcement from either the Black or Baltic Sea Fleets. Indeed, the naval game of 1902–03 specifically excluded the possibility of timely outside reinforcement. Meanwhile, 1,500 kilometers separated Port Arthur from Vladivostok, while Port Arthur displayed few of the attributes required for consistent support of decisive main fleet action.

By the fall of 1903, Viceroy Alekseev's staff had therefore chosen to adhere to a conservative planning philosophy. While not denying the possibility of contention with Japan's main battle fleet, the initial Russian naval objective in a war with Japan was simply to retain command of the Korean Gulf and the Yellow Sea (really only the

⁴⁹ IKpriMGSh, *Rusko-iaponskaia voina 1904–05 g.g.*, bk. 1, 108–09.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, bk. 1, 113–14, and RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 1, d. 2866, ll. 22–34, 43–4, and 75–75ob.

Zhili Gulf) from the vantage of Port Arthur. The governing rationale was to deny direct Japanese landing access either to the Liaodong peninsula or the western coast of Korea north of Chinampo (Namp'ŏ). The intent was to buy time for the Russian ground force buildup in Manchuria that might secure the tsar's possessions there and at Port Arthur itself. If the Japanese chose to put ground forces ashore, they would be forced to do so on the eastern or southwestern coasts of Korea, thus necessitating a time-consuming overland march to the Yalu for direct confrontation with slowly concentrating Russian ground forces. Meanwhile, Russian cruisers on the prowl from Vladivostok would commence a *guerre de course* against Japanese commerce and sea lines of communication.⁵¹

If this was Mahan, it was a severely proscribed version of the naval strategist's vision. Practical limitations and an overarching note of caution precluded an all-out sortie from Port Arthur in search of victory over the main Japanese fleet, followed by command of the sea. At best, the Russians were intent on observing the concept of maintaining a "fleet in being," thereby limiting Japanese options. This was more Philip Howard Columb than Alfred Thayer Mahan. More than Mahan, the British Admiral Columb believed that an inferior force "in being" might either opportunistically damage a superior force or discourage landing operations by raising the enemy's risk to an unacceptable level.⁵² Whatever the rationale, Alekseev's retention at Vladivostok of four cruisers for raiding purposes violated the principle of mass fleet action. Once hostilities began, these cruisers would be sorely needed at Port Arthur. Moreover, their variegated cruising ranges and highly-visible smoke plumes would render them only marginally effective in their role as commerce raiders.

The cautious nature of Alekseev's plans reflected both limited resources and limited intelligence about the Japanese. Direct observation and annual summaries of Japanese naval strength enabled Captain 2nd rank Rusin, the Russian naval attaché in Tokyo, to provide accurate summaries of Japan's naval capabilities.⁵³ However,

⁵¹ The naval plan in its entirety is reprinted in IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–05 g.g.*, bk. 1, 65–74.

⁵² D.M. Schurman, *The Education of a Navy* (Chicago, 1965), 53–7; the primary work has been republished as P.H. Columb, *Naval Warfare—Its Ruling Principles and Practise Historically Treated*, 2 vols., repr. ed. (Annapolis, 1990).

⁵³ See, for example, RGVIA, f. 400, op. 4, d. 329, ll. 101–114.

for various reasons both naval and ground force assessments of the Japanese were either inaccurate or unconvincing in three key areas: War imminence, intent, and the total mobilized strength of the Japanese army. Throughout much of 1903, a steady stream of alarmist reports from various sources in the Far East had the numbing effect of crying “wolf!” too often, especially for a tsar who had vowed that he would not permit a war to occur.⁵⁴ In the unlikely event that the Japanese did move against the mainland, prevailing Russian wisdom was that Tokyo would confine itself to a rapid occupation of Korea, a turn of events that official St. Petersburg seemed reluctantly willing to accommodate. When the Japanese first broke off negotiations, then severed diplomatic relations, only now Vice Admiral Makarov at the Kronshtadt naval base and General Viktor Viktorovich Sakharov at the Main Staff in St. Petersburg sensed the distinct possibility of an impending surprise attack against the Russian Pacific Squadron and Port Arthur.⁵⁵ Meanwhile, intelligence assessments underestimated the combat readiness of the Japanese field army and understated the number of troops that the Japanese could land on the continent by a factor of at least three, if not more.⁵⁶

In addition to significant shortcomings in intelligence, another common characteristic of naval and ground force plans for the Far East was that neither provided any detailed concept for operations following the outbreak of hostilities. On 15 February 1904, nearly a week after the attack on Port Arthur, General Adjutant Kuropatkin presented the tsar a brief note in which the war minister asserted that “the campaign plan must be simple.” It was to consist of four phases: 1) a struggle between adversarial fleets to establish superiority at sea; 2) an initial Russian defensive posture on land, characterized by widespread partisan-style actions until the assembly of sufficient Russian ground forces in theater; 3) transition to the offensive; and 4) the invasion of Japan. During the final phase Kuropatkin

⁵⁴ On the tsar, see, “Dnevnik A.N. Kuropatkina,” *Krasnyi Arkhiv*, II (1922), 77, and Velikii kniaz’ Aleksandr Mikhailovich, *Kniga vospominanii* (M, 1991), 174–77; on the steady stream of intelligence assessments, see, *RGVIA*, f. 400, op. 4, d. 500, ll. 2–12, and 108–09, and IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, bk. 1, 130–35.

⁵⁵ Simanskii (comp.), *Sobytiia na Dal’nem Vostoke, predshestvovavshie russko-iaponskoi voine*, 522.

⁵⁶ IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, bk. 1, 136–37, and VIK, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, I, 409–10.

envisioned Russian defeat of Japanese territorial forces, followed by a requirement to suppress Japanese popular uprisings.⁵⁷

Kuropatkin's last remarks illustrate another of the asymmetries that came to characterize preparation for war in the Far East. Subsequent Japanese actions indicated a Tokyo-instigated war with limited objectives. That is, the Japanese aim was to defeat Russian military forces in the Far East as prelude to a peace settlement that would severely limit the tsar's ability to interfere with Japanese designs on Korea and southern Manchuria. The Japanese had no intentions of fighting their way to St. Petersburg to topple the tsar.⁵⁸ In contrast, Kuropatkin's assertions were indicative of a maximalist war aim. At least initially, the objective was not only to defeat the Japanese, but also to conquer their home islands, then subjugate their government. At least at war's outset, the Russians were not satisfied with merely limited military and political objectives.⁵⁹

However, the actual course of the war got in the way, and the conflict soon reflected other anomalies and asymmetries. Despite Russian apprehensions and surprisingly good intelligence about Japanese naval deployments, Vice Admiral Togo Heihachiro was able on 8–9 February 1904 to effect a surprise attack on Port Arthur.⁶⁰ Serious damage to two Russian battleships and a cruiser, plus Togo's subsequent blockade—first loose, then close—prevented the Russian Pacific Squadron from interdicting Japanese landing operations either at Chemulpo, at the mouth of the Yalu, or on the Liaodong peninsula north of Dal'nii. For a brief period after Vice Admiral Makarov's arrival in early March to command at Port Arthur, the Russian Pacific Squadron appeared on the verge of contesting Togo for the initiative at sea. However, after his death on 13 April, the squadron lapsed into a torpor from which it never fully re-awoke. Subsequently, weak and widely-dispersed Russian ground force detachments soon found themselves facing lemming-like Japanese ground force advances

⁵⁷ VIK, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, I, 277.

⁵⁸ See especially, Shumpei Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War* (New York, 1970), 101–02, and 110.

⁵⁹ Compare, however, N.L. Klado, *Etudy po strategii*, comp. I.S. Danilenko (Moscow, 1997), 264–70.

⁶⁰ See, for example, Kuropatkin's query of 28 December 1903 to the Eighth Section of the Main Staff about whether the Japanese in 1894 had mobilized and conducted active naval operations before a formal declaration of war against China, RGVIA, f. 400, op. 4, d. 500, ll. 239–40.

far inland. With near absolute command of the sea and concomitant freedom of naval movement, the Japanese operated virtually at will around the Manchurian periphery, landing and supplying troops according to a well-orchestrated design. In support of littoral operations, the Japanese had crafted a taut military-naval instrument that enabled them to play on inherent weaknesses in rail-based Russian logistics and troop mobilization and concentration processes. Without naval cooperation, employment of the Russian army alone in the Far East amounted to arming local commanders with the proverbial knife for a gunfight. Beyond the obvious asymmetry, the irony was that Russian tacticians had traditionally preached the superiority of cold steel over firepower.⁶¹

Russian tradition might preach that cold steel was the sheer physical extension of will, but ill-advised responses to initial reverses and associated pressures would severely challenge General Adjutant Kuropatkin's earlier emphasis on will as figurative manifestation of "iron firmness of character." Kuropatkin had left the War Ministry in mid-February 1904 to become commander-in-chief of Russian ground forces in the Far East. However, Admiral Alekseev retained his status as viceroy and overall supreme commander. Because the tsar never fully spelled out their relationship, and because they could not fully agree on priorities and objectives, the two commanders simply became military examples of Nicholas II's penchant to "divide and misrule."⁶² Thanks in part to contradictory instructions from Kuropatkin and Alekseev, the Russians suffered an embarrassing defeat in the ground war during early May at the Battle of the Yalu. Subsequently, Kuropatkin gave in to goading from the tsar (at Alekseev's behest) to press another detachment southward to relieve Japanese pressure on the Liaodong peninsula. The result was a second serious defeat in mid-June at Wafangou.⁶³ Meanwhile, Kuropatkin was busily concentrating his field army at Liaoyang, a locale that was farther south than he now considered desirable under the changed circumstances of the war's initial period. After publicly vowing either

⁶¹ See the commentary in Julian S. Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–05*, 2 vols., repr. ed. (Annapolis and Newport, 1994), II, 393–96.

⁶² Even the official Russian naval history took note of the anomaly; see, IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskii voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, bk. 1, 61.

⁶³ On the Yalu and Wafangou, see, N.A. Levitskii and P.D. Bykov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina*, repr. ed. (SPB, 2003), 94–100, and 106–12.

to defeat the Japanese or “to make Liaoyang his grave,” Kuropatkin in late August and early September fell back in a series of costly defensive battles, then allowed himself to be turned out of a strong position.⁶⁴ Although Kuropatkin wanted to withdraw as far north as Tiehling to lick his wounds and await further reinforcements from European Russia, Admiral Alekseev (with the tsar’s backing) insisted on a stand at Mukden as prelude for a counteroffensive to succor Port Arthur.⁶⁵ Failure of that counteroffensive during the Sha-ho operation in the first half of October left General Adjutant Kuropatkin’s competence and character both open to question. Although in late October Admiral Alekseev would leave the field for St. Petersburg and merciful retirement, the steady succession of defeats and withdrawals had no less steadily damaged Kuropatkin’s reputation and his troops’ morale.⁶⁶

Kuropatkin’s agony unfolded during a ground campaign whose shape and scope were essentially dictated by fundamental asymmetries in logistics. Russian troop deployments and supply drew their strength from the spare regional rail net, especially the CER and SMR, both of which were steadily improved during the war. Their enhanced carrying capacity would eventually permit deployment of more than eight Russian army corps in theater, a figure far exceeding Japanese estimates of Russian rail transit and support capacities.⁶⁷ However, the Russian deployments were predictably tethered to the SMR, almost like a sacrificial goat in wait for the predatory mountain lion. Meanwhile, Japanese troop deployments and logistics drew their initial strength from harmonious sea-land coordination. However, once Japanese troops moved inland, they ironically fell prey to the same iron laws of logistical support that so constrained the Russians.⁶⁸

⁶⁴ See the commentary in L.N. Sobolev, *Kuropatkinskaia strategiiia* (SPB, 1910), 261–62, and E.I. Martynov, *Vospominaniia o Iaponskoi voiny komandira pekhotnogo polka* (Plotsk, 1910), 95–129–30.

⁶⁵ Levitskii and Bykov, *Rusko-iaponskaia voina*, 217–18.

⁶⁶ Ibid., 214–17, and 281–90; on the army’s steadily diminishing faith in Kuropatkin, see especially Martynov, *Vospominaniia o Iaponskoi voiny komandira pekhotnogo polka*, 237, 339, 350–51, and 391.

⁶⁷ Kuropatkin, *Zapiski generala Kuropatkina. Itogi voiny*, 240.

⁶⁸ Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861–1914* (Bloomington, 1992, 2000), 195–99; see also, Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, 105–08.

Another of the ironies inherent in the land campaign was that neither adversary might consistently adhere to the Moltke model of a continental ground-force oriented strategy. The presence of two objectives, Port Arthur and Russian ground concentrations in Manchuria, initially divided Japanese attention and deployments.⁶⁹ Moreover, the widely dispersed nature of initial Japanese landings and ground advances meant that considerable time elapsed before the Japanese might concentrate a mighty Moltke-like army in Manchuria. In fact, that concentration only occurred at Mukden in early 1905, after the capitulation of Port Arthur at the beginning of the year. For the Russians, more than ten separate troop mobilizations in European Russia, plus the necessity for laborious transit across Siberia, meant that Kuropatkin possessed Moltke-like numbers only in the late fall of 1904. Thus, for different reasons, neither adversary had realized the dream of a seamless rail-driven strategic operation that combined assembly, concentration, and deployment for a gigantic and decisive pinning and envelopment offensive.

It was at Mukden in February-March 1905 that symmetry finally entered the larger military picture to produce stalemate in the field. Although the Japanese scored important initial successes, in the end Kuropatkin was able to extricate the majority of his field armies from the deadly embrace of Marshal Oyama Iwao's double envelopment.⁷⁰ That this was so stemmed from the basic symmetrical nature of dispositions and means. Force ratios were approximately even, and without decisive superiority in ground mobility, the Japanese failed to prevent the escape of Russian forces northward to occupy a new set of dispositions at Xipingkai.⁷¹ Worse for the Japanese in the field, who were beginning to suffer from shortages in military manpower, advance northward to a new line of contact meant logistical over-extension. They, too, now fell victims to the same poor logistical infrastructure that had so bedeviled Kuropatkin. Ironically,

⁶⁹ Alfred Thayer Mahan in *Naval Administration and Warfare* (Boston, 1908), 98–100, 139, and 144–48, noticed almost immediately the Japanese pursuit of competing strategic objectives, and his views found subsequent reflection in works such as W.D. Bird, *Strategy of the Russo-Japanese War* (London, 1911), 21–2.

⁷⁰ Marshal Oyama had been an official Japanese military observer at Sedan in 1870, and his intent in Manchuria was to duplicate the Prussian victory. See, Levitskii and Bykov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina*, 48–50, 60–1, 316 and 382.

⁷¹ Aleksandr Svechin, *Evolutsiia voennogo iskusstva*, repr. ed. (M, 2002), 743–50.

this situation now left the Russians with a ground force version of Columb's fleet in being, with all the attendant implications for strategic stalemate.⁷² There was no triumph for the methods of Moltke, and consistent Japanese monopoly of Mahan's "command of the sea," especially after the Russian naval catastrophe at Tsushima Straits in May 1905, produced little direct advantage in a ground war whose main confrontational lines now lay far inland.

Tsushima thus came to reflect both the promise and limits inherent in a Mahanian-inspired quest for command of the sea. Shortly after Vice Admiral Makarov's death in April 1904, the tsar had ordered creation of a Second Pacific Squadron from elements of the Russian Baltic Fleet and vessels still under construction. The process would require some time, but it would continue to make sense only as long as Port Arthur held out and as long as the now re-christened First Pacific Squadron continued to exist. However, the Second Pacific Squadron was scarcely mid-way through its laborious transit to the Far East, when it received news in mid-December 1904 that Japanese siege howitzers had pounded the First Pacific Squadron to pieces. Because the Second Squadron alone could not hope successfully to engage Admiral Togo's Combined Fleet in a Mahan-style shoot out, the Second Squadron now required either recall or a new mission. However, the tsar and his Naval Ministry elected a third option—to reinforce with elements of a Third Pacific Squadron in a last-gasp effort to challenge the Japanese for command of the sea. But, with Port Arthur in Japanese hands after 2 January 1905, all of the drawbacks associated with Vladivostok as the primary Russian naval base in the Far East once more came into play. It was simply too distant from the main maritime theater of operations to provide a consistent platform from which the Second Pacific Squadron might launch a renewed bid for Russian naval supremacy in the Far East. In effect, the reinforced Second Squadron now had no clear strategic mission, except perhaps "do-or-die" in Mahanian terms during a breakthrough to Vladivostok.⁷³ Still, the siren-like

⁷² Mahan himself was aware of the irony in *Naval Administration and Warfare*, 128.

⁷³ On the shifting strategic rationale for the Second Pacific Squadron's mission, see, Zolotarev and Kozlov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina*, 151–54, 158, and 160–64; a more recent and eminently readable treatment is Constantine Pleshakov, *The Tsar's Last Armada: The Epic Journey to the Battle of Tsushima* (New York, 2002), 35–6, 62–4, 143–44, 170–73, 238–39, and 248–53; on Tsushima itself, see David C. Evans and

attraction of determining the outcome of the war on one last turn of the iron dice was too much for the tsar and his like-minded advisers to resist. Consequently, on 27–28 May 1905, all of the inherent disadvantages for Russia—and more—that Makarov had earlier associated with contending against the Japanese for command of the sea now made themselves felt at Tsushima. Meanwhile, for the Japanese a Mahan-style decision had indeed resolved their most immediate problem, but the naval instrument could no longer directly address the causes for a stalemated ground war in Manchuria.⁷⁴ Admiral Togo's swift sword was now of negligible utility for a distant and protracted gunfight in central Manchuria.

In the end, impasse bred exhaustion, compromise, and innovation, the latter at least in the realm of theory. In another striking illustration of asymmetry, this time between military ends and deeper national means, neither belligerent's home front was prepared to withstand possibly protracted war. Financial and manpower exhaustion for the Japanese and revolutionary-inspired exhaustion for the Russians brought both parties to the peace table at Portsmouth in August 1905. There, compromise became the order of the mediator's day. And U.S. President Theodore Roosevelt was perfectly willing to serve as the arm-twisting apostle of compromise.

Military theorists would subsequently search the lessons of 1904–05 for the rationale behind seemingly disparate military and naval actions. On the eve of World War I, Julian S. Corbett, a British lawyer, would analyze 1904–05 in Japanese naval perspective. His two-volume *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War* viewed naval and military developments as parts of an integral whole.⁷⁵ His depiction of the whole, which stood somewhere between Mahan and Moltke, came to be understood as the theoretical foundations for littoral strategy. Meanwhile, the Russian and Soviet heirs of 1904–05 would search the conflict for their own version of order and rationality.

Mark R. Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887–1941* (Annapolis, 1997), 114–24.

⁷⁴ For the developmental and intellectual calculus behind this turn of events, see, Paul Kennedy, *Strategy and Diplomacy 1870–1945* (Aylesbury, Bucks, United Kingdom, 1983), 43–51.

⁷⁵ As cited above, Julian S. Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905*; for Corbett's contributions to naval theory, see Schurman, *The Education of a Navy*, 174–84.

When their search later extended to the experience of World War I and the Russian Civil War, they would eventually produce a new understanding of theater-level operations as a component part of military art, along with strategy and tactics. During the 1930s, a Soviet counterpart to Corbett, Alexander Andreevich Svechin, would even find his own version of an integrated whole with his highly-original depiction of “deep strategy” in the Russo-Japanese War.⁷⁶

Whatever the nature of subsequent explanation, the Russo-Japanese War in broad strategic outline underscored at least two seemingly unchanging verities in the realm of military theory. One would hold that most—if not all—theories, despite their universalist pretensions, remain conditional. Neither Mahan nor Moltke were irrelevant to the Far East at the turn of the twentieth century, but the situation required a great deal of circumspection and critical analysis to determine the degree of theoretical application to specific circumstances. In the end, the Obruchevs and Makarovs also deserved their places under the theoretical and practical sun. The second verity would seem to hold that any sound strategy—whether military or “grand”—must emphasize a balance or congruence among objectives, methods, and instruments. This assertion would seem to hold as true at the beginning of the twenty-first century as it was at the beginning of the twentieth.

⁷⁶ A. Svechin, *Strategiia XX veka na pervom etape* (M, 1937), 46–8.

CHAPTER EIGHT

THE RUSSIAN ARMY'S FATAL FLAWS

Oleg R. Airapetov

In reminiscing about the German General Staff, Heinz Guderian wrote:

The General Staff fashioned for its officers uniform methods for evaluating tactical and operational situations and for making decisions. The French called this “*unité de doctrine*” (unity of doctrine). Lacking the power to impose his will, the chief of the general staff sought by way of developing uniform thinking among all officers of the general staff to spread his influence down to division level, thereby from top to bottom assuring unity of tactical and operational vision.¹

For the Russian army, the same ideal—unity of doctrine within the high command, reinforced by a special progression of service for officers and generals who were graduates of the Academy of the General Staff—remained elusive. Instead, the Russian army witnessed a growing dogmatism after D.A. Miliutin’s reforms of the 1860s and 1870s. This dogmatism facilitated evolution of an administrative-command system for the army that relegated the General Staff to a subordinate position, divorced the field army from military science, and led to the triumph of military bureaucracy. These developments were already evident at the onset of a more active Russian Far Eastern policy, but reached their fruition during the Russo-Japanese War.

Practically all the weaknesses associated with the Miliutin system appeared during the war. Salient among them was subservience of the command system to administrative concerns, in accordance with which administrators were accustomed either to underestimate or simply not to account for the complexities of staff direction over large units. The same administrative predominance not only failed to permit the mind, character, and soul of the army to develop along their own paths, but even pitted them against one another. It seemed

¹ G. Guderian, *Vospominaniia soldata* (Rostov-on-Don, 1998), 526.

almost symbolic that Aleksei Dmitrievich Miliutin, the son of D.A. Miliutin, was governor of Kursk Province during the 1902-grand maneuvers at which War Minister A.N. Kuropatkin made a name for himself.²

The war minister seemed to excel during the Kursk maneuvers. They involved large-scale training and the application of various experiments, including observation balloons, field telephones, and messenger automobiles for the army staffs. Primitive trucks even made an unsuccessful debut during an experimental attempt to re-provision troops in the field. Another innovation witnessed nighttime mock battles and troop redeployments.³ As commander of the Southern Army (the "Austrians"), General Adjutant Kuropatkin enjoyed success against the Moscow Army under Grand Duke Sergei Aleksandrovich. However, Kuropatkin's exploits failed to win universal acclaim, especially among a few highly-placed military officers who saw the war minister's abilities in a more skeptical light. M.D. Bonch-Bruevich, a staff officer with the Southern Army, remembered that Kuropatkin's successes stemmed less from the war minister's skill than from that of his chief of staff, General V.A. Sukhomlinov. It was Sukhomlinov who directed the Southern Army's troops while their commander was preoccupied with such details as visiting units and checking guard posts.⁴ Sukhomlinov felt that Kuropatkin used these ploys to win popularity with the troops. General A.F. Rediger, who would later serve as war minister, recalled that immediately afterward, Sukhomlinov "complained that during the maneuvers Kuropatkin bothered and tortured everyone."⁵ Meanwhile, General G.A. Leer, the unrivalled authority in Russian military theory, felt that the evolution of European armies had led to the necessity both to devolve the responsibility for decisions to junior commanders and to distance the high command from the immediate direction of troops on the battlefield.⁶

² O.R. Airapetov, *Zabytaia kar'era "Russkogo Mol'tke."* Nikolai Nikolaevich Obruchev (1830–1904) (SPB, 1998), 240; L. Drake, "V period bol'shikh Kurskikh manevrov 1902 g.," *Voenno-istoricheskii vestnik*, no. 3–4 (1911), 33.

³ Drake, 31, 35.

⁴ Otdel Rukopisei Rossiiskoi Gosudarstvennoi Biblioteki, f. 369, kart. 422, ed. khr. 1, ll. 60–1.

⁵ A.F. Rediger, *Istoriia moei zhizni. Vospominaniia voennogo ministra*, 2 vols. (M, 1999), I, 348.

⁶ Carl van Dyke, *Russian Imperial Military Doctrine and Education, 1832–1914* (New York, 1990), 105.

Upon accession to the War Ministry in 1898, Kuropatkin ascribed the following characteristics to the Russian army: "Her dignities are unique, and her shortcomings correctable."⁷ These principles inspired him until wartime defeat, after which he adopted another formula: blame everyone except himself for what had happened. Perhaps he was unable to act otherwise. Kuropatkin's administrative system emphasized energetic and detailed control, allowing subordinates little initiative. People who knew him well said that he preferred the external, parade-ground dimension of matters to serious, informed work.⁸ After attaining the power to act independently as commander, he strove to string out his army along a cordon line and then extricate himself from various crises in accordance with habits he had learned while commanding thousand-man detachments in Turkestan.

Such an approach was all the more easy because it was ingrained in tradition not only for Kuropatkin, but also for maneuvers. For example, in 1902 the Moscow Army accomplished a successful cavalry raid on the supply stores and field bakeries of the "Southerners," but the operation would have been absolutely impossible under realistic conditions.⁹ Despite attempts at innovation, the maneuvers as a whole proceeded according to some kind of outmoded scenario, as if the participants were engaged in wars of the Napoleonic era. Cossacks deployed in their one-rank *lava*, riders performed gymnastics, infantry advanced in close formation to the sound of drums and music, and batteries fired from open positions, where they stood "lined up, as if in a painting."¹⁰ In this staged production, fortune would not favor Kuropatkin's adversaries. As one of the participants noted, "... failure dogged the Northern Army, and it was not surprising in the end that Kuropatkin defeated the Grand Duke. The war minister himself had orchestrated the plan for the maneuvers, had selected the best troops for himself, and had appointed himself commander of the Southern Army."¹¹

⁷ N.N. Epanchin, "V Bolgarii osen'iu 1899 g.," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 1 (January 1901), 200.

⁸ F.P. Rerberg, *Istoricheskie tainy velikikh pobed i neob"iasnennykh porazhenii. Zapiski uchastnika russko-iaponskoi voiny 1904–1905 g.g.* (Madrid, 1967), 56. In 1906–9, Rerberg was a member of the Military-Historical Commission that compiled the official history of the Russo-Japanese War.

⁹ Drake, 31.

¹⁰ P.N. Krasnov, *Nakanune voiny. Iz zhizni pogrannichnogo garnizona* (Paris, 1937), 18.

¹¹ P.P. Isheev, *Oskolki proshlogo* (New York, 1959), 60.

During the final stage of the two-week-long maneuvers, Kuropatkin was able to eclipse everyone. At the end, the Moscow Army withdrew to prepared defensive positions, complete with trenches and concealed batteries, in the vicinity of the village of Kastornoe. The Grand Duke's chief of staff described the unfolding panorama:

The concluding act of the maneuvers, the battle at Kastornoe, near Kursk, demonstrated that Kuropatkin had not attained a clear understanding of what an attack meant against a fortified position under contemporary conditions and with modern weaponry, and still worse, against a position occupied by an entire army. After a weak artillery preparation, Kuropatkin massed about 20 infantry battalions in column formation with a scattering of skirmishers in the van and personally moved forward to lead the attack with his numerous suite and standard.¹²

When the war minister's detachment appeared at the edge of the woods, the chief umpire, Grand Duke Michael Nikolaevich, refused to believe his eyes.¹³ What came to transpire was remarkable. Grand Duke Sergei Aleksandrovich's own staff was situated in plain sight on a high prominence to the front of the main defensive position, where his standard with the image of St. George the Conqueror was also planted. Kuropatkin's infantry, meanwhile, advanced straight toward a well-concealed battery situated before Grand Duke Sergei's position. However, with Kuropatkin's infantry still in the distance, "Southern" cavalry suddenly appeared 2.5–3 kilometers behind the Moscow Army, and the Grand Duke's staff now unexpectedly confronted an attack from the rear.¹⁴ This development made a deep impression.

A military correspondent with the Grand Duke's staff recalled, that he [the correspondent V.A. Apushin], together with the majority of the [Moscow] Army's officers, was delighted by Kuropatkin's plans, by the energy with which he conducted the maneuver, and by the surety of vision with which he had conceived and conducted strokes against the most vulnerable objectives.

I remember how energetically and quickly he conducted the attack in the engagement at Kastornoe that culminated the maneuvers. We, the

¹² L.N. Sobolev, *Kuropatkinskaia strategiiia. Kratkie zametki byvshego komandira 6-go Sibirskogo armeiskogo korpusa* (SPB, 1910), 288.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 288–89.

¹⁴ Drake, 35–6.

staff of the Moscow Army, had to flee quickly from the outlying settlement from which we had observed the course of the battle and which had unexpectedly become the attackers' focus.¹⁵

However, Kuropatkin's ploy involved substantial risk, and not all those at the notorious settlement were panic-stricken. Guns from concealed batteries were immediately unmasked to conduct rapid fire against the cavalry. Under combat conditions a cavalry attack from such a great distance would not have boded well. But at this point the maneuvers were halted, and the tsar soon appeared to greet the approaching troops of the Southern Army.¹⁶

It is interesting to note that in October 1902 grand maneuvers were conducted in Japan, also in the presence of the emperor. Major forces included the Japanese Sixth and Twelfth Divisions, and the scenario involved a landing, its repulse, and a meeting engagement. Actions included envelopments, counter-strokes, and the employment of artillery in ways that would have made hopeless the kind of attack that had occurred at Kastornoe. This realization was no secret for the Russian army. One Russian observer, whose remarks were published in *Voennyi Sbornik*, wrote,

I stood with a battery before the village of Nanden and saw how the gunners worked: calmly, without fuss, completely silent, oblivious of their surroundings, and uninterested in what went on around them. It was as if the personnel manning the battery did not know one another. Under such circumstances, it was easy to direct the battery and its fire.¹⁷

Of course, the maneuvers revealed shortcomings within the Japanese army, but none of the kind that had occurred at Kursk.

There, after the attack at Kastornoe, the Southern Army was judged the winner. General L.N. Sobolev, chief of staff for the Moscow Army, openly declared that Kuropatkin's high marks from a series of generals (including his chief of staff, General Adjutant V.V. Sakharov, and his future subordinate army commander, A.V. Kaul'bars) were exclusively a function of his high office. The grand duke, after reading the exaggerated official account of the maneuvers, swore never again to participate in any such fabrications

¹⁵ V.A. [Apushin], *Kuropatkin. Iz vospominanii o russko-iaponskoi voiny* (SPB, 1906), 3.

¹⁶ Drake, 36.

¹⁷ Sipigus, "Iz Iaponii," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 11 (November 1903), 220, 231.

of the war minister.¹⁸ Still, Kuropatkin was successful in his self-advertisement. The “skill” with which Kuropatkin led his army in maneuvers added to the war minister’s popularity. He had also managed to attain another objective: a correspondent with the staff of the Moscow Army recalled, “At the conclusion of the maneuvers, when we began to exchange observations, we heard many stories about the simplicity of Kuropatkin’s life on maneuvers and about how his continuous work served as an example to the entire staff.”¹⁹ Later, the same correspondent would become his idol’s greatest critic.

Meanwhile, in Manchuria Kuropatkin operated in the same manner: He was always accompanied by a large suite, an escort, and the orange-black standard of St. George. At Liaoyang he personally led his last reserve—a regiment—into the attack.²⁰ One officer of his staff remembered that,

with the exception of the escort Cossacks, who were uniformly dressed, the remainder were striking in their variegated apparel, much of which was simply personal improvisation. The commander himself invariably wore a general officer’s gray tunic with a silver belt and sword knot that surprisingly resembled a combination of service undress with a parade uniform. The suite featured various tunics, leather jackets of several shades, plain jackets, and outer shirts. The lanky Colonel N.A. Danilov, known as “the Red,” who served in the most prosaic position as chief of the field chancery, dressed in a formal tunic with all his decorations. It seemed as if he pictured himself as one of the heroes in a battle painting from 1812.²¹

It was perhaps just this style that General M.I. Dragomirov had in mind, when in 1905 his own candidacy for commander-in-chief was being debated: “At present the commander-in-chief does not have to trot about on horseback; he can only and should only direct his troops from afar.”²²

Lieutenant Colonel Baron Carl Gustav Mannerheim, who arrived in Manchuria at the beginning of September 1904 after the Liaoyang operation, found what had by that time become a classical situation for the Russian army. He saw poor rations and munitions supply

¹⁸ Sobolev, 287–88.

¹⁹ V.A. [Apushin], Kuropatkin, 3.

²⁰ B.V. Gerua, *Vospominaniia o moei zhizni*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1969), I, 164, 170.

²¹ Ibid., 164.

²² A.S. Lukomskii, “Ocherki iz moei zhizni,” *Voprosy istorii*, no. 6 (June 2001), 61.

and a command expectation of reinforcements, which explained the inactivity that had such a debilitating effect on morale. He also saw a remarkable demonstration of "detachment-mania":

A general characteristic of the Russian conduct of war was the haphazard creation of larger units out of small ones. It seemed as if the High Command were trying to inspire themselves with courage when before a large operation they created new formations at the expense of the old framework. This was, of course, pure self-deception, for these improvised units lacked all coordination and cohesion, and it was clear the system became a source of weakness. Thus many a commander with a reputation for skill and courage was in these conditions bound to fail.²³

To a degree "detachment-mania" was the logical result of the way in which many partial mobilizations had been conducted, so that the army came to the field piecemeal. However, the field command simply added to the mistakes already made during the army's deployment. Their effects worsened already low morale among both soldiers and officers. A military administrator could not understand that 30 separate battalions did not make up a corps. And, this deficiency magnified the impact of other traditional shortcomings within the military machine that Miliutin had created.

Exaggeration of the capabilities of troops from the reserves was one of these shortcomings. It was first witnessed during the Russo-Japanese War, and not during the Russo-Turkish War of 1877–78. During the latter conflict, the elapsed time between the onset of troop mobilization (not counting the partial mobilization of 1876) and concentration and the beginning of military operations was nearly one-third of a year. This span was sufficient to create combat-ready troops from the reserve call-up. Moreover, the great majority also consisted of troops with considerable service and experience under arms. However, in 1904–05, the active army found itself in quite different circumstances, as demonstrated by the salient fact that by the time of Mukden in February 1905, reservists between the ages of 35 and 40 amounted to 75 percent of the army's manpower.²⁴

²³ C.G.E. Mannerheim, *The Memoirs of Marshal Mannerheim*, tr. E. Lewenhaupt (New York, 1954), 18.

²⁴ A.A. Svechin and Iu. D. Romanovskii, *Rusko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 gg. Po dokumental'nyim dannym truda voenno-istoricheskoi komissii i drugim istoricheskim istochnikam* (Oranienbaum, 1910), 28.

Call-up for service in Russia began at age 21, and active service required five years. This fact meant that a significant portion of those reservists called up for the Russo-Japanese War would have completed their longest span of active service while the single-shot Berdan rifle remained the army's main shoulder weapon. Meanwhile, rear-mament with smokeless powder cartridges and the magazine-fed Mosin rifle had occurred in 1893–95. Consequently, Ian Hamilton, the British military observer with Marshal Kuroki's army in Korea and Manchuria, noted, "It was evident that many prisoners of war from European Russia were not familiar with the magazine rifle, as they were 40 years old and had only been recently recalled to the colors."²⁵

Russian artillerists received the new quick-firing field gun, which was equivalent to the Japanese model, but they had not been trained to fire from concealed positions. The rationale for fire from indirect lay had been advanced ten years earlier, but had been greeted with severe admonition from one of Kuropatkin's and Sukhomlinov's sternest critics,

We assume that the author of the remarks under review [about firing from indirect lay] drew his conclusions under the influence of peacetime practice, but that which proceeds smoothly on the firing range will scarcely yield the same results on the battlefield.²⁶

Subsequently, it was only after the Battle on the Yalu (Tiurenchen) that the Russians began to assimilate new combat methods. Grand Duke Sergei Mikhailovich speedily devised new training for batteries in the Manchurian army, and the result was an unpleasant surprise for the enemy at Wafangou. At Dashichao, 76 guns of I Siberian Corps successfully suppressed 186 Japanese guns, preventing Japanese infantry from attacking the main Russian position.²⁷ Before the war, such problems had received little attention. Still less was devoted to combat coordination with newly created units.

General A.S. Lukomskii, a nearly-unrivalled authority on troop mobilization, remembered,

²⁵ Ia. Gamil'ton, *Zapisnaia knizhka shtabnogo ofitsera vo vremia russko-iaponskoi voiny*, 2 vols. (SPB, 1906), I, 274.

²⁶ [V.A.] Apushin, "Pekhota pod vystrelami svoei artillerii," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 3 (March 1895), 148.

²⁷ V.N. Ignat'ev, *Zhizn' odnogo khimika. Vospominaniia*, 2 vols. (New York, 1945), I, 284.

The mobilization conducted in the state's military districts showed that preparation for it was good in the Kiev and Warsaw districts, satisfactory in the Vilnius, Petersburg and Moscow districts, and completely unsatisfactory in the remaining districts.²⁸

In June 1904, VI Siberian Corps began its mobilization, a process that extended from Moscow to Siberia. From the beginning, there appeared many shortcomings in uniforms, footwear, horse harnesses, and so forth.²⁹ Upon declaration of mobilization, reserve brigades were expanded into divisions, roughly doubling their composition. Immediately there arose problems with armament, and also with formations that did not exist in the brigades under peacetime conditions. Of the four regiments of the 72nd Infantry Division that were mobilized in the Moscow district, the 285th Mzensk received weapons (rifles, revolvers, sabers, and axes) "in satisfactory condition" from local depots in Manchuria. The three other regiments, the 286th Kirsanov, the 287th Tarusskii, and the 288th Kulikov, received weapons either from units remaining in Russia or from the Moscow artillery depot.³⁰

It was completely apparent that even a moderate level of mobilization stress gave rise to significant organizational difficulties. The infantry and artillery within divisions could not be immediately considered integrated and combat ready. Other problems arose. In one company of X Army Corps, for example, 150 reservists from senior year groups were mixed with 60 first-term call-ups, 30 of whom were raw and insufficiently trained.³¹ The combat value of such units was not great. One division commander, General M.S. Stolitsa, wrote in a letter after Liaoyang, "The incorrect organization of our troops makes one feel as if our reserve forces are very poor. One of the reasons for our withdrawal to Mukden was the disorderly retreat of General Orlov's division; with such troops it is impossible to attack."³² To overcome this deficiency, St. Petersburg decided not to weaken

²⁸ A.S. Lukomskii, *Vospominaniia*, 2 vols. (Berlin, 1922), I, 21.

²⁹ A.I. Gusev, "Iz dnevnika korpusnogo kontrolera (V russko-iapniskuiu voinu 1904–1905 gg.)," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 10 (October 1910), 218–20.

³⁰ Arkhiv Voenno-Istoricheskogo Muzeia Artillerii, Inzhenernykh Voisk i Voisk Sviazi, f. 19, op. 106, ed. khr. 358, ll. 152 and ob.

³¹ A.N. Kuropatkin, *Otchet general-ad'iutanta Kuropatkina*, 4 vols. (Warsaw, 1906), IV, 182.

³² D. Balanin, "Tiazhelye gody (Iz pisem pokojnogo gen.-maiora M.S. Stolitsy)," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 7 (July 1908), 76.

the western frontier by taking from it the corps best suited for the offense; instead these corps were deprived of their artillery, officer and NCO cadres, and senior-service soldiers. As a result, both first- and second-line units suffered.³³

The quality of troops from various parts of the Empire was uneven. According to Japanese intelligence, Russian reservists who had performed their active service 10 or more years previously required at least three months' training, and sometimes this span was not adequate. In reality, X Army Corps, which was mobilized in May 1904, had only 10 days for training, while XVII Army Corps and V Siberian Corps, which were mobilized at the end of June, had two weeks.³⁴ Over the course of the war, the span for training gradually grew. XVI Army Corps initiated mobilization on 23 October 1904 and began movement to the front on 27 November, that is, in little more than a month. One infantry regiment of this corps, the 98th, required 52 days for transit from Dvinsk to Mukden.³⁵ The command did not use this time to good purpose. Of necessity, many officers from company to brigade levels became acquainted with their troops on the way to the front, but corps and staff exercises were not conducted. If the command failed to find something for its troops to do, then those with nothing to do found ways to occupy themselves. Card playing and drinking became important pastimes for troops in transit.³⁶

Upon arrival in the Far East, regiments of reservists were sometimes sent immediately to the front. More often than not they brought more harm than good. At Mukden, for example, rifle fire alone from the 1st and 4th Rifle Regiments in the course of a single day halted 12 Japanese assaults. The attacking Japanese brigade suffered high casualties. Meanwhile, with the explosion of the first artillery shells, Russian reservists who had been brought up to support the defense fled to the rear. One participant in the battle recalled,

the measures to fill out the regiment on the eve of battle were very poor. Success could be expected only if personnel were melded together,

³³ A.A. Svechin, *Takticheskie uroki russko-iaponskoi voyny* (SPB, 1912), 11.

³⁴ Kuropatkin, IV, 182–85.

³⁵ K. Adaridi, "Tur'evtsy v sostave deistvuiushchei armii s 5-go ianvaria po fevralia 1905 g.," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 1 (January 1906), 77–8.

³⁶ Gusev, 229.

if their leaders knew them, if they knew their leaders. I can assert with assurance that an integrated company is better than a composite battalion.³⁷

Whole regiments and divisions of fresh and unhardened reservists fared even worse when they went into battle "off the train." A classic example was that of Major General N.A. Orlov's 54th Division, "the Orlov Trotters," which fled in disorder during its initial exposure to fire at Liaoyang.

Heavy rain had preceded the arrival of Orlov's troops, and the local fields of millet had been transformed, in the words of one witness, "into a kind of dense swamp, so boggy and muddy, that one moved through it off-road only slowly and with great effort."³⁸ Orlov's division was hurriedly plunged into this morass. B.V. Gerua remembered,

the untested and older reservists of this division were sent immediately into the millet from trains at the Yentai station to counterattack enveloping Japanese troops: Here our Penza gray-beards, children of the open steppe and broad horizons became completely lost and they panicked with the first Japanese shrapnel rounds. The division broke up and only with great difficulty was later reassembled at Yentai.³⁹

Meanwhile, the Yentai coal mines and vital positions in this hilly region were lost. Orlov himself, a professor at the Nicholas Academy of the General Staff, was wounded, and his troops suffered significant losses. Yantai station remained in Russian hands, thanks only to efforts of Lieutenant General G.K. Shtakel'berg's I Siberian Corps.⁴⁰ A division that was not combat-ready had received a very difficult mission, and the consequences of this mistake achieved a magnitude exceeding simple defeat. Another witness to these events noted,

Mobs of reservists gradually multiplied, and the orderly rearward movement of some units quickly attained the nature of complete disintegration. In the skirmish with General Orlov, the Japanese lost only

³⁷ A. Rozenshil'd-Paulin, "Chzhanchzhantsa," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 2 (February 1909), 43.

³⁸ Komarovskii, "Vospominaniia verkhneudintsia o rusko-iaponsoi voine," *Vestnik russkoi konnitsy*, no. 7 (July 1911), 287.

³⁹ Gerua, I, 158.

⁴⁰ "Voina s Iaponiei. Ofitsial'nye dokumenty s 13 avgusta po 10 sentiabria," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 10 (October 1904), 201-02.

181 troops, while our losses reached 1,502 men, most of which resulted from fratricide. Troops completely lost their orientation, and in retreat began firing in all directions . . . Disappearance from the field of General Orlov's 12-battalion detachment was not as serious as the impact on morale that this episode produced among the troops of the entire Manchurian army.⁴¹

At the end of the war Kuropatkin finally began to understand. In a conversation after Mukden with retired Colonel I.A. Ladyzhenskii, a correspondent for *Russkoe Slovo*, Kuropatkin admitted,

Much must be attributed to the unsuccessful integration of troops sent from Russia after their likewise unsuccessful mobilization. Instead of a coherent living organism, units coming to the war long remained only a poor mechanism that had been quickly thrown together. In consequence, units of our army were far from homogeneous, and overall harmony was unattainable.⁴²

Time was required to build the spirit and combat value of these troops.

After Liaoyang, Kuropatkin sent General Stolitsa to instill order within General Orlov's 54th Infantry Division. Stolitsa was at first horrified. At the end of August 1904 his mission seemed almost unattainable. In his words,

I think that my subordinates say, look at the dog that was sent! I cannot assure them of being anything but a dog; the officers know nothing and do not want to know anything; the lower ranks are almost all reservists from the senior year groups; in a word these are not Russian troops . . . I am beginning to instill the fear of God, but with great difficulty.⁴³

But, in little more than a month, the division became integrated, well trained, accustomed to the difficulties of combat, and fit to attack without regard to losses.⁴⁴ These were the same reserve troops, with whom earlier "it was impossible to attack." The 54th Division command could not have done more. So, for reserve troops to become the material for real units required time and effort.

However, the army's problems were not limited to lack of uni-

⁴¹ Svechin and Romanovskii, 224–25.

⁴² *Otchet o primeneniі tsenzury na teatre voіny. Sostavlenn Tsenzurnym otdeleniem Shtaba Glavnokomanduiushchego pod redaktsiei general-kvartirmeistra. Prilozhenie No. 74* (Kharbin, 1905), 63.

⁴³ Balanin, 76.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 77.

form troop composition. The composition of the high command also lacked uniformity, at least in its educational preparation. Of the three supreme commanders, only Kuropatkin possessed a higher military education. General-of-Infantry N.P. Linevich (also a General Adjutant) had completed only the Chernigov Gymnasium, and then attained his military education on-the-job. Admiral E.I. Alekseev (also a General Adjutant) had no higher military education. Of the army commanders, Generals-of-Cavalry A.V. Kaul'bars and A.A. Bil'derling were graduates of the Academy of the General Staff. General-of-Infantry M.I. Bat'ianov had a mid-level military education: In 1852 he had graduated from the Naval Cadet Corps. Meanwhile, General-of-Infantry O.F.K. von Grippenbergh, who had entered the army as a junker at age 16 during the Crimean War, had no formal military education. Published information about the 101 general officers who served in the Manchurian theater provides a more complete picture. Forty-five were graduates of the Nicholas Academy of the General Staff, including six generals whose names did not appear on the list (Von Flug, Evert, Ruzskii, Eichholz, Orlov, and Zasulich). Three of the 101 were graduates of the Nicholas Engineering Academy, while one had completed the Academy of Military Law. Forty-nine generals possessed a mid-level military education, while one was a gymnasium graduate, and one possessed a civilian higher education. Of the remaining, there is no information.⁴⁵

The deep supporting rear also played a role in weakening the army. Educated society at the beginning of the 20th century displayed an anti-military sentiment of very a peculiar nature. Indeed, the rear played a telling role in the events of 1904–1905, according to the parliamentarian Alexander Ivanovich Guchkov, who was in a position to know. In a May 1908 speech to the State Duma, he noted,

If the government only at the end of this sad war understood its mistakes and within the limits of its power and rationality corrected them, then the second culprit for our failures—our society—remained blind right to the end. In this regard society remained no more and no less perspicacious than the government. Both deserved each other. The unpopularity of the very rationale for the war forced our society to close its eyes to the critical situation that was blossoming in the distance.

⁴⁵ M.E. Barkhabov and V.V. Funke (eds.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskaia voina*, 6 vols. (SPB, 1907–09), VI, 2–37.

And everything that flowed from society into the army, including the press, the letters of families and friends, and people arriving there, everything acted against the last vestiges of boldness, energy, and belief in self and outcome. Our society during the entire war served as a demoralizing factor for our army.⁴⁶

The absence of any sense of threat instilled in Russian society a disregard for the necessity for the state's military power. For European Russia, the distant war was not perceived as a threat.

This fact loomed large in the eyes of foreign military observers with the Russian army. Major E. Tettau, a German specialist on the Russian army and an observer with Kuropatkin's staff, compared the high patriotic spirit of Japanese society with what he observed among the Russians. He wrote,

Such was not the case on the Russian side: the war did not enjoy sympathy, in the highest circles they related to it with some degree of indifference, if not with great antipathy. Among the people, the war was completely incomprehensible. Soldiers, especially those belonging to units quartered in European Russia, frequently did not know for what they fought: in every letter dear ones asked whether the soldiers would quickly return, and why they were needed in Manchuria? It is impossible, therefore, to blame the Russian troops for their paralysis of energy.⁴⁷

At the very top the Russian army lacked brave and competent commanders. Each shortcoming within the military structure reinforced the next. A.F. Rediger noted,

During the entire reign of Emperor Alexander III, Vannovskii was war minister, and during the whole time awful stagnation reigned in the military sector. Whether the tsar or the war minister was to blame for this, I do not know, but the consequences of stagnation were horrible. Unfit and unsuitable personnel were not removed, and appointments went according to seniority, with no advancement for competent personnel, only movement along a line. Such personnel soon lost interest in service, initiative, and energy, and when they finally reached high office, they were little different from the surrounding mass of

⁴⁶ A.I. Guchkov, *K voprosu o gosudarstvennoi oborony. Rech'i v Gosudarstvennoi Dume tret'ego sozyva 1908–1912* (Petrograd, 1915), 13.

⁴⁷ E. Tettau, *Vosemnadtsat' mesiatsev v Manchzhurii s russkimi voiskami*, 2 pts. (SPB, 1907), pt. 1, 111.

mediocrity. This absurd system explained the horrible composition of our command cadre, both at the end of Emperor Alexander III's reign and later during the Japanese war.⁴⁸

Rediger's characterization was absolutely true, and it was traditionally applied to an evaluation of the activities of the entire war ministry under Vannovskii and Obruchev.

However, this characterization did not apply to an immense amount of work that was not accomplished during an earlier period—district maneuvers, the assembly of reservists (first conducted in 1887) and untrained personnel of the government militia (first conducted in 1890), all of which embraced more than 1,600,000 troops. Of course, the span of these activities—two weeks per year—was insufficient, but heretofore no work had been done with reservists.⁴⁹ Rediger correctly described the consequences for stagnation that stemmed from subordinating training and staff work to administration. The high command was not able to deal with that with which it must deal. However, there remained one other peculiarity of Kuropatkin's style that was completely typical of the Miliutin system. This peculiarity was the creation of improvised composite staffs with poorly integrated personnel. Since Kuropatkin considered himself personally capable of directing everything, he neither valued nor respected his own staff, and he was repaid accordingly.⁵⁰ Unity of doctrine and unity of method for operating were in this sense not attained. Was this just his own personal style? The following comments are intended to demonstrate that the shortcoming was systemic.

According to the 1890-Field Regulation for Troop Direction in Wartime, the composition of an army-level staff included 15 officers for the staff itself, four officers for assignments, and nine for messages, a total of 28. In comparison, a Germany army staff in 1870–71 numbered 25 officers, while the staff of Napoleon's *Grande Armée* in 1812 numbered 127 officers.⁵¹ Already on the eve of the Russo-Japanese War, various factors, including the growing size of armies

⁴⁸ Rediger, I, 158.

⁴⁹ Airapetov, 233–36.

⁵⁰ Sobolev, 240.

⁵¹ V.E. Borisov, "Rabota Nachal'nika General'nogo shtaba po praktike Napoleona i Mol'tke (Organizatsiia bol'shoi armii i upravlenie eiu)," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 3 (March 1899), 58.

and their firepower means, along with the complexities of supplying and directing masses of troops, had given rise to misgivings over whether 28 officers were sufficient for effective direction of a contemporary army. In 1899, Colonel V.E. Borisov wrote,

In any case the main task for changes in the Regulation must consist of reworking the composition of the army commander's staff (art. 37), so that during the hectic mobilization period the commander is not forced to spend time in forming a staff that corresponds with the actions for Napoleonic-style troop direction.⁵²

The inadequacy of the table of organization was later immediately evident, but this did not tell the whole story. First, from the very beginning, the commander's staff was doomed to improvisation. Second, even that which existed had to be effectively utilized, or, at a minimum, utilized as intended.

M.D. Bonch-Bruevich recalled,

General Adjutant Kuropatkin assembled his staff in St. Petersburg, so to speak, haphazardly, with overtones of clientage. If General Adjutant Dragomirov had been named commander, he would have arrived in theater with the staff of the Kiev Military District, which he would already have combed out from an operational and administrative perspective.⁵³

General Vladimir Sakharov, the commander of I Siberian Corps and a cousin of General Adjutant Viktor Sakharov (Kuropatkin's successor as war minister), was selected as chief of staff of the Manchurian Army. As commander of troops in northern Manchuria, he had participated in suppression of the Boxer rebellion, but he knew the region less well than Major General I.V. Kholshchevnikov, General Linevich's chief of staff and pre-war chief of staff for the Priamur Military District. Instead, Kholshchevnikov was made Trans-Baikal military governor. Meanwhile, General M.V. Alekseev remembered Vladimir Sakharov in his assignment as "featureless, unnoticed, and lacking in influence."⁵⁴

Major General V.I. Kharkevich, the noted historian of 1812 and chief of military troop transit for the Vilnius Military District, became

⁵² Ibid., 65.

⁵³ OR RGB, f. 369, kart. 422, ed. khr. 1, l. 64.

⁵⁴ Ibid., f. 855, kart. 1, ed. khr. 34, l. 7.

Quartermaster General of the Manchurian Army. Kharkevich was a fan of M.D. Barclay de Tolly. Meanwhile, Major General A.A. Blagoveshchenskii, Quartermaster General of the Kiev Military District and a specialist in military troop transit (but little else), was named Adjutant. A narrow formalist, he failed to earn the respect of his fellow officers.⁵⁵ Colonel N.A. Danilov, a professor at the Nicholas Academy, became chief of the field chancery. No senior officer within the staff of the Manchurian Army was well acquainted with the future theater of operations, or for that matter, with his fellow officers. A decade before the war, a German military theorist had written,

The strategist cannot get along without assistants (officers of the general staff). He must leave all preparatory work to them. . . . Strategy has become more than ever a *science*, but more than ever it is exposed to the dangers both of giving birth to a *bureaucratic monster* with a broad and interlaced integral mechanism, and of indoctrinating and educating *chiefs of chanceries instead of general staff officers* [emphases by O.A.].⁵⁶

Kuropatkin did not cultivate officers of the general staff because in essence they were unnecessary for him.

In accordance with Kuropatkin's approach to the situation, the staff of the Manchurian Army operated as a chancery for implementation of direct taskings. An instructor of the German Military Academy who studied the Russian army wrote: "The staffs never attained necessary prominence because they were preoccupied with small change and not real work."⁵⁷ The fact that staff work was not conducted doomed the staff officers of "the brain of the army," according to one observer, ". . . to legalized loafing:"

As befitting a significant directorate, it was outfitted with corresponding tables of organization, and, as a result, about a dozen generals and general staff officers languored over nothing. Inaction bred mischief, as for example, with such chancery rubbish as reports to the commander-in-chief in *two* formats—large and small—and with regard to the their length also in *two* variants—long and short. These formats with their variations by length were combined in the following ways:

⁵⁵ Lukomskii, "Ocherki iz moei zhizni," *Voprosy istorii*, no. 5 (May 2001), 108.

⁵⁶ P. Geisman, "Opyt issledovaniia taktiki massovykh armii," *Voennyi sbornik*, no. 2 (February 1895), 265.

⁵⁷ F.B. Immanuel', *Russko-iaponskaia voina v voennom i politicheskom otnosheniakh*, 4 pts. (SPB, 1906), pt. 4, 53.

the *long* report in large format, the *short* report in large format, the short report in *small format*, and the long report in *small format* [emphases by O.A.].⁵⁸

In letters from the field that in detail resembled a diary, Major General Alekseev constantly noted the absence within the staff of any kind of idea and progression in its dispositions,

This indicates only the sad fact for us that, if I may be permitted to say, there are no general ideas among our leaders that might guide our actions. There are only flashes, moments of thought. From this proceeds the serious failures and wavering among the troops and the complete absence among them of faith in the commanders and commander-in-chief. This situation is reflected in everything.⁵⁹

How this would end could be judged from the words of General Stolitsa, who about the same time wrote, "It is strange that in all minor clashes we always enjoy success, something that is impossible to say about large operations."⁶⁰ Both sets of commentary dated to the time of the so-called "Xipingkai occupation," and they very accurately describe the consequences of Kuropatkin's improvised staff. However, Kuropatkin did not immediately lose the trust of his own subordinates—this development evolved slowly.

The chief of Kuropatkin's staff thought that the commander-in-chief had no plan as such at the beginning of the war. To defeat the Japanese, Kuropatkin thought it necessary to assemble an army roughly equivalent to six corps. From this supposition flowed Kuropatkin's general intent, the idea of the campaign that he outlined to Nicholas II. According to the testimony of Vladimir Gurko, for which he was indebted to his brother, General Vasilii Gurko, the commander-in-chief proposed a gradual withdrawal without battle into the depths of Manchuria, and, then, after a build-up of forces, transition to the offensive. The offensive was to culminate with a landing in Japan and even the emperor's captivity.⁶¹ In fact, the Russian plan in its broad outline had evolved for nearly a decade before the war. Its foundation was laid in 1895, at the time of the

⁵⁸ M.V. Grulev, *Zhizn' dlia v zhizne armii* (Brest-Litovsk, 1911), 12.

⁵⁹ OR RGB, f. 855, kart. 1, ed. khr. 34, l. 5ob.

⁶⁰ Balanin, 84.

⁶¹ V.I. Gurko, *Features of the Past. Government and Opinion in the Reign of Nicholas II* (Stanford, 1939), 289; Rediger, I, 376, [V.A. Apushin], *Kuropatkin*, 6–8.

ultimatum over the review of conditions for the Shimonoseki Treaty.

At that time, the Japanese were located in southern Manchuria, bereft of contemporary communications. In the event of hostilities, the Russian army at the outset would assemble in northern Manchuria in the region of Jirin. Should the enemy advance too far north, he would quickly lose his superiority in numbers and supply. Improvements in railroad construction caused this plan to be altered several times. At first, the Russians planned to concentrate six reserve corps in Manchuria, since it was expected that Japan could attack only if Russia was at war in Europe with Germany and Austria-Hungary. Following the Boxer rebellion and successes in the Japanese program for modernizing and enlarging their army, two regular Russian army corps, X and XVII, were substituted for two of the reserve corps. During the Russo-Japanese War, the number of reserve corps was reduced by two. Their transit and concentration required time. During the initial period of the actual war, the Russian army was numerically inferior to the Japanese, who had up to 130,000 troops spread out between Port Arthur and Vladivostok. To protect these two fortresses, the Russians had 73,000 troops, with part of the Kwantung detachment deployed along the coast between Yinkou and the Yalu, while an additional 30,000 were concentrated at Liaoyang. This situation underlay a return to the habitual logic of initial actions—to withdraw into the depths of the land to win time. During the second period of the war, the Russian calculation was that a turning point must come. This calculus proceeded from an underestimation of Japanese mobilization capabilities. Meanwhile, the Japanese underestimated the carrying capacity of the Trans-Siberian Railroad. Over the course of the war, both sides experienced unpleasant surprises.⁶²

It was not surprising that Kuropatkin possessed no detailed plan of operations, but only an outline of the rough contours for a developing situation. However, the general plan of operations in his judgment must be “very simple”: 1) a struggle between the fleets for command of the sea; 2) resistance against Japanese landings; 3) defensive actions with wide application of partisan-style warfare until concentration of sufficient forces; 4) transition to the offensive, particularly

⁶² Svechin and Romanovskii, 37, 40; Svechin, *Takticheskie uroki*, 4, 11.

to expel (later changed to “destroy”) the Japanese from [in] Manchuria; 5) to expel them from Korea; 6) and the landing of our forces in Japan, followed by the suppression of territorial troops, the conquest of the main Japanese cities, and the taking of Mikado prisoner.⁶³

V.A. Sukhomlinov later recalled how Kuropatkin expected to realize his draft plan of actions. In the former’s opinion, after completion of concentration, the plan was distinguished by the logic and grand rationale of its elements: “Progressively, step-by-step, he would drive himself forward, transfer operations to the Japanese islands and finish with the laconically effective phrase ‘Captivity of Mikado!’”⁶⁴ One of Kuropatkin’s Russian critics compared him with Suvorov, who before the Italian campaign in 1799 had rejected the plan of the Austrian Hofkriegsrath with the words, “I will begin my actions with a crossing of the Adda and finish the campaign where it will be convenient for God.” The critic noted that, “the main difference between the operational plans of Kuropatkin and Suvorov was that Suvorov well knew where and how he would begin his actions, but he did not know where they would end. Kuropatkin knew well where he would end the war, but did not know how to begin it.”⁶⁵

After the Great War, a German general who was a graduate of the Berlin Academy summarized his experience leading armies,

The essential thing is action. Action has three stages: the decision born of thought, the order of preparation for execution, and the execution itself. All three stages are governed by will. The will is rooted in character, and for the man of action character is of more critical importance than intellect. Intellect without will is worthless, will without intellect is dangerous.⁶⁶

There are no better words than these by Hans von Seeckt to describe where Kuropatkin’s passivity would lead and where it would end. Because war was not on the Russian agenda in 1904, the decision about the beginning of military actions bore a forced, and, therefore improvised, character. Preparation for the execution of military actions was conducted in a rather mechanistic way that precluded effective application of available resources. Over everything loomed

⁶³ E. Tettau, *Kuropatkin i ego pomoshchniki*, 2 pts. (SPB, 1913), pt. 1, 33.

⁶⁴ V.A. Sukhomlinov, *Vospominaniia* (Berlin, 1924), 151.

⁶⁵ Tettau, *Kuropatkin i ego pomoshchniki*, pt. 1, 34.

⁶⁶ Hans von Seeckt, *Thoughts of a Soldier* (London, 1930), 123.

the legacy of the Miliutin reforms, especially in the realm of the staff direction of troops. Kuropatkin's character and lack of will only complicated the larger organizational crisis over the direction of armies, while the actual cause for the crisis far antedated Kuropatkin's tenure either as war minister or Commander-in-Chief.

Translated by Bruce W. Menning

CHAPTER NINE

HUMAN BULLETS, GENERAL NOGI, AND THE MYTH OF PORT ARTHUR

Yoshihisa Tak Matsusaka

Japan's victory in 1905 in what seemed at first to be a lopsided contest favoring Russia sent observers scrambling to discover the "secrets" of Japanese success. Among the various factors cited by Japanese and foreign commentators alike, the use by the Japanese army of massed infantry assaults against entrenched and fortified Russian positions, most notably at Nanshan, Liaoyang, and Port Arthur, figured prominently. These massed assaults, described as "human-bullet attacks (*nikudan kogeiki*)," came to be regarded in subsequent years as a standard Japanese army practice predicated on the inherent superiority of spirit over firepower. In Japan, the nationalist narrative emerging in the wake of this conflict extolled the "human bullet" as the epitome of the courage, determination, and self-sacrifice that had made the nation great. The ferocious bravery of Japanese soldiers and the ruthless will of their officer corps initially attracted much foreign admiration as well, and a renewed infatuation with *Japonaiserie* brought *bushido* into the vocabularies of Western languages.¹

There is considerable evidence that suggests, however, that at least during the Russo-Japanese War, "human-bullet" tactics were far from normative. The massed infantry assault had occupied, to be sure, an important place in Japanese army tactical manuals since the 1880s, and bayonet charges were meant to be used without hesitation under appropriate circumstances. The extent to which they were employed in the war against Russia, though, was not the product of any well-honed combat doctrine. In some of the most "celebrated" cases,

¹ See for example, MacKenzie, S.P., "Willpower or Firepower? The Unlearned Military Lessons of the Russo-Japanese War," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective, 1904–05*, eds. David Wells and Sandra Wilson (Basingstoke, 1999), 30–40.

costly infantry assaults resulted from the poor judgment of commanders, spotty intelligence, and logistical problems. Inadequate operational planning and contradictory demands made by a divided senior leadership contributed as well. Although the army might actively encourage myths about the bayonet-wielding infantryman, useful for many reasons, some leading officers had come to the conclusion that the costly expenditure of human bullets in this war reflected incompetence more than ruthless brilliance.

The siege of Port Arthur (July to December 1904) offers a case in point.² This six-month engagement, perhaps the best known of the Russo-Japanese War, electrified public opinion in Japan and attracted world-wide attention. Three bloody general assaults in August, October, and late November, in which Japanese infantry braved barbed-wire entanglements, artillery, and machine-gun fire in an attempt to storm the Russian fortress complex, brought the “human-bullet attack” into its greatest prominence.³ General Nogi Marusuke’s Third Army suffered 59,000 casualties before Port Arthur finally surrendered. Insofar as the siege ended in a Japanese victory, those inclined to do so might well see in this engagement evidence for the triumph of spirit over firepower. Nonetheless, the record of this campaign reveals that a series of strategic and tactical mistakes at all levels contributed far more to its terrible costs than any doctrine of combat. These massive losses and the fact that the siege tied down a major part of army manpower and material resources, in turn, jeopardized the success of the Japanese war effort as a whole. Rather than an unmitigated triumph, Port Arthur was a near debacle from which the Japanese army recovered only after a decision to employ both infantry assaults and heavy artillery firepower to capture crucial high ground overlooking the Russian base. It was the capture of 203-Meter Hill, not human-bullet attacks against the fortress complex itself, that ultimately led to the Russian surrender.

² Lushun in Chinese, Ryôjun in Japanese. For the sake of consistency, “Ryôjun” has been rendered as “Port Arthur” in translation.

³ Japanese sources refer to three while Russian sources refer to four assaults on Port Arthur. The difference occurs because the Japanese do not count the operations on 19–22 September as a separate action. Instead, they view it as operations preparing for a second overall assault which occurred during the following month. See: Japan, Army General Staff (ed.), *Meiji sanju shichi-hachi nen Nichi-Bo sen shi*, 6 vols. (Tokyo, 1912–15), 43–189, or V.P. Glukhov, “Oborona Port-Artura,” in I.I. Rostunov (ed.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskaia 1904–05 g.g.* (M, 1977), 224–228.

I. *Port Arthur in Japanese Strategy*

In war plans formulated in the summer of 1903 by the Army General Staff, the possibility of a relatively weak Japan prevailing in a war against an overwhelmingly powerful Russia depended on a swift preemptive strike against enemy forces in East Asia on land and sea. Japan would exploit its short lines of communication and supply, along with its ability to concentrate superior forces in the battlefield more quickly than its adversary, and establish a strategically advantageous position in Manchuria before Russia could bring its superior numbers to bear. The Japanese army planned to move rapidly through Korea into southern Manchuria, land forces on the Liaodong Peninsula near Port Arthur, and move north to engage the main concentration of Russian troops, probably somewhere south of the regional center of Mukden, possibly near Liaoyang. The advance would continue north along the Russian railway line past Mukden until Japanese forces positioned themselves to threaten Harbin, the crucial railway junction in northern Manchuria. Harbin in Japanese hands would isolate western Siberia from the Russian Far East and effectively paralyze enemy operations. It was hoped that this very rapid northern thrust, facilitated by use of the captured Russian railway, would discourage a counteroffensive and force Russia to the bargaining table.⁴

The main expeditionary force consisted initially of two field armies, each composed of three divisions.⁵ The First Army was to spearhead the campaign through Korea. The Second would establish a beachhead on the Liaodong Peninsula. Three additional commands, the Third, Fourth, and Fifth Armies, were subsequently organized. The combined force, known as the Manchurian Army, received direction from an umbrella command under Marshal Oyama Iwao (1842–1916) and his chief of staff, General Kodama Gentaro (1852–1906). Imperial Headquarters in Tokyo, with land operations under Army Chief of

⁴ Tani Hisao, *Kimitsu Nichi-Ro senshi* (Tokyo, 1966), 82–85. Tani, executed in China by the Nationalist Government in 1947 for his role in the Rape of Nanjing as commander of the Sixth Division, was an instructor at the War College in the 1920s (see biographical notes by Inaba Masao, 4–9). This book is a reproduction of his lecture notes, used in an elite officers' course in 1925. Also see Fujiwara Akira, *Nihon gunjishi*, vol. 1 (Tokyo, 1987), 111–12.

⁵ The Japanese army had long considered but had declined to adopt corps organization.

Staff Marshal Yamagata Aritomo (1838–1922) provided central coordination and leadership. Much of the work of the headquarters staff fell on the shoulders of its vice chief, Major General Nagaoka Gaishi (1858–1933).

The seizure of Port Arthur itself was not a central objective in the army's initial plan. A former Chinese naval base captured by the Japanese during their war with China, it had been acquired by the Russians in 1897–8, re-fortified during the years that followed, and transformed into the Russian navy's most important base in East Asia. It was the task of the Japanese navy to destroy or incapacitate Russia's Far Eastern Fleet, and that mission accomplished, the base as such would lose most of its military significance. The army would place a holding force on the narrow isthmus separating Port Arthur from the Manchurian mainland and isolate the Russian troops stationed in the fortress from the larger body of their compatriots in the north. General Kodama envisioned containing Port Arthur with a "bamboo palisade," by which he meant a relatively small and lightly equipped force sufficient to prevent a Russian break out.⁶

Between February and May 1904, the warships under the command of Admiral Togo Heihachiro (1847–1934) achieved significant success against their adversaries, although a substantial number of surviving Russian vessels retreated into the protected harbor at Port Arthur beyond the range of Japanese naval guns. These enemy ships, however, could be rendered useless by a Japanese blockade of the harbor. The Second Army succeeded in isolating Russian ground forces at Port Arthur in May 1904 in the battles of Nanshan and Jinzhou and took control of the connecting isthmus. In the same month the First Army fought the battle of the Yalu (April 29–May 1, 1904), crossing into southern Manchuria from Korea, and was poised to march, building a light railway behind it, toward the strategic town of Liaoyang. There it would join units centered on the Second Army fighting their way north for a decisive confrontation with the Russians.⁷

Japanese forces encountered some serious difficulties, particularly

⁶ Ôe Shinobu, *Nihon no sanbô honbu* (Tokyo, 1985), 105–06.

⁷ Background on the events of this conflict is drawn from *Tani, Nichi-Ro senshi*, above; Bôeichô bôeikenshûsho senshishitsu (ed.), *Daihonei rikugunbu*, vol. 1 (Tokyo, 1967), 100–27; and J.N. Westwood, *Russia against Japan, 1904–05: A New Look at the Russo-Japanese War* (Albany, 1986).

at Nanshan, that provided object lessons in the cost of human-bullet attacks. Without waiting for the arrival of its heavy artillery pieces, the Second Army had in haste commenced its assault on hardened Russian positions beyond the reach of light Japanese field guns. The 4,300 casualties, resulting from infantry charges made through artillery barrages and machine-gun fire came as a shock to army leaders. The Japanese had suffered more dead and wounded from this single battle than from the entire Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895). In contrast, the First Army had made effective use of twelve-centimeter howitzers in the Battle of the Yalu. Its rapid advance into Manchuria with relatively few casualties demonstrated the value of superior firepower.⁸ Captain Ugaki Kazunari (1868–1956), a future army minister, but at this time a minor staff officer assigned to a second reserve division, recorded in his diary his thoughts on the lessons of Nanshan: “In our battles to come, we must execute all necessary measures in their appropriate sequence and never take shortcuts. The cost of taking shortcuts is paid in unexpected quantities of blood.”⁹

Despite the shock of Nanshan, the strategy seemed to be working as planned in these early months. Imperial Headquarters in Tokyo introduced an unintentionally significant revision of the war plan, however, when it began reconsidering the importance of Port Arthur with increasing urgency in March 1904. The navy general staff regarded the possible deployment of Russia’s Baltic Fleet to East Asia as a major threat. The arrival of a second enemy force while a major portion of the Japanese navy found itself tied down in blockade operations which, if let up, would release bottled-up remnants of the Far Eastern Fleet to join the fight, presented a dangerous dilemma. Indeed, the blockade force would need to be released from its duties well before the approach of the Baltic Fleet in order to conduct essential repairs. Marshal Yamagata shared these concerns, and the speedy capture of Port Arthur was added to the operations agenda.¹⁰

Any attempt to capture the Russian base, however, presented three

⁸ Ôe Shinobu, *Nichi-Ro sensô no gunjishiteki kenkyû* (Tokyo, 1976), 105; Fujiwara, 112.

⁹ Ugaki Kazunari, *Ugaki Kazunari nikki*, ed. Tsunoda Jun, vol. 1 (Tokyo, 1968), item 7, 1904 entry, 25. Ugaki was reassigned to the Korean garrison in March 1905 and to the First Army in May.

¹⁰ Tani, 166.

major problems from the outset. First, the Japanese army possessed relatively little hard intelligence about the strength of Russian fortifications at Port Arthur. The extraordinary quantity of cement imported indicated that the Russians had made significant improvements since they had taken over the Chinese installation in 1897, but the nature of those modifications remained unclear. This intelligence gap left the degree of difficulty presented by the undertaking, not to mention the methods to be applied, uncertain. This uncertainty posed, in turn, a second major problem. Keeping to a tight timetable was key to Japan's success, and should the Port Arthur campaign prove protracted, the army might find itself fighting a two-front war that would place it at a dangerous disadvantage. Regardless of the difficulties entailed, then, it was essential that the fortress be captured in a quick and decisive blow. The third problem, one that would plague Japanese ground forces throughout the war but particularly relevant to a prospective siege operation, was the army's very stringent ammunition budget. The Battle of the Yalu had demonstrated the value of heavy artillery and had persuaded Imperial Headquarters to transfer the First Army's heavy artillery regiment to Port Arthur. Total ammunition needs, however, had been seriously underestimated. Plans for procurement and production, drawn up at the beginning of the war, had estimated rates of consumption based on the experience of the Sino-Japanese War, and that level had been far exceeded at Nanshan and Yalu.¹¹ Until this situation could be redressed, the available supply placed limits on resources available to the siege and aggravated the potential impact of the Port Arthur engagement on the northern front.

All three problems contributed to establishing parameters in decision-making that would contribute to high human costs. Some senior staff officers apparently harbored some misgivings, particularly about the danger of a two-front war. The weight of opinion in Imperial Headquarters during the spring and early summer of 1904 nonetheless favored the Port Arthur operation, confident that it could be settled quickly.¹²

¹¹ Fujiwara, 120–21.

¹² Tani, 196–97.

II. *General Nogi and the Third Army*

A new command, the Third Army, was created to undertake this mission in May 1904, and Lieutenant General Nogi Maresuke (1849–1912), promoted to full general in June, appointed commander. As the case with many of the army's most influential senior officers, including Yamagata and Kodama, Nogi hailed from Yamaguchi Prefecture and was associated with the so-called Choshu clique which, among other things, functioned as a powerful but informal network facilitating promotion and appointment. Prior to his retirement from active duty in 1901 upon which he took up part-time farming, he had enjoyed an illustrious career dating back thirty years. He had fought as a regimental commander against the rebels in the civil war of 1877 (Satsuma Rebellion or Sainan War) and had spent a year and a half studying military affairs in Germany between 1887 and 1888. Nogi served as a division commander during the Sino-Japanese War and as Governor-General of Taiwan, Japan's first colony, for a short stint between 1896 and 1898. His last post before retirement was command of the Eleventh Division. He returned to active duty at the beginning of the war against Russia in order to head the First Depot Division [*rusu shidan*] in Tokyo prior to receiving his field command. Yamagata's wishes and Nogi's ties to the Eleventh Division which, along with the First Division, formed the initial core of the Third Army, appeared to have been considerations in this appointment.¹³ The fact that Nogi had also participated in the successful capture of the Chinese naval base at Port Arthur during the Sino-Japanese War also seems to have been a factor. Given that Russia, in league with Germany and France, had forced Japan to return the base and its environs to China in 1895, only to lay its own claims a year later, this appointment carried, perhaps, some sense of poetic justice. At the same time, as Oe Shinobu notes, any expectation that the siege of Russian Port Arthur might recapitulate events in the war against China would have constituted a serious mistake.¹⁴

¹³ Tani, 168. Hata Ikuhiko (ed.), *Nihon riku-kaigun sôgô jiten* (Tokyo, 1991), 110.

¹⁴ Ôe, *Nihon no sanbô honbu*, 104–05. On the capture of Port Arthur and the attendant massacre during the Sino-Japanese War, see Stewart Lone, *Japan's First Modern War: Army and Society in the Conflict with China, 1894–95* (New York, 1994), 154–63.

Nogi's chief of staff was Major General Ijichi Kosuke (1855–1917). His roots in Kagoshima Prefecture and his affiliation with the Satsuma clique of army officers, the main countervailing network to Choshu, appear to have been factors in his selection. Maintaining a balance between the two factions apparently formed an important consideration in the structure of this staff organization. That he was also married to the niece of Manchurian Army Commander Oyama Iwao may have played a part as well. Although Nogi relied heavily on Ijichi, the latter appeared to lack the respect of both his subordinates and division commanders. Much of work actually fell on the young Choshu-affiliated vice chief of staff, Major Oba Jiro (1864–1935). Although Ijichi had a background in artillery, none of the senior staff had experience with siege warfare or engineering. Among the pool of prospective staff officers with training appropriate to a siege campaign, Major General Uehara Yusaku (1856–1933), a former engineer officer, had been appointed chief of staff of the Fourth Army, commanded by his father-in-law, General Nozu Michitsura (1841–1908).¹⁵

Initial plans drawn up by the Third Army staff in early summer called for a prolonged artillery barrage of the fortress complex, followed by a massed infantry assault against its northeastern face. Moving artillery into place required preliminary attacks against Russian forward positions, and this would take some time. Staff officers at Imperial Headquarters questioned this approach, partly because of the time-consuming preparations involved but also because the northeastern face appeared the strongest and best defended. Nogi and his aides acknowledged that they lacked adequate intelligence about the strength of the fortress, and they also pointed out that the shortage of artillery ammunition would pose some problems. At the same time, they saw no alternative method that would take less time and expressed confidence that, based on what they did know, Russian positions would be vulnerable to the shock of a massed assault.¹⁶

Ernst Presseisen argues that the Third Army's decision to use massed infantry assaults against Port Arthur may be traced to the legacy of German instruction under Major Klemens Meckel (1842–1906) in the 1880s. The enduring influence of Meckel's teaching on

¹⁵ Ôe, *Nihon no sanbô honbu*, 102–07; Tani, 168–69.

¹⁶ Tani, 200, 202.

the development of the Japanese army is unquestionable.¹⁷ At the same time, there is no reason to believe that, during the course of the nearly two decades following the German advisor's departure, the Japanese tactical manual remained unmodified. The Japanese army drew significant lessons from its first major foreign war in 1894–1895 and continued to keep itself abreast of developments in European military thought since the 1880s. If anything, Japanese infantry manuals of the late 1890s, which emphasized the importance of concentrated firepower, tended to downplay the utility of massed assaults apart from special circumstances.¹⁸ Recent experiences at Nanshan and the Yalu seemed to affirm this approach. Against this background, the tactics adopted by Nogi and his staff, particularly in the face of doubts expressed by Imperial Headquarters, must be understood as a discretionary judgment and not the product of a combat doctrine steeped in the cult of the bayonet, whether attributed to Major Meckel or *bushido*.

Decisions about how to attack Port Arthur lay within the prerogative of the Third Army command and ordinarily outside the scope of direct intervention by either Imperial Headquarters or the Manchurian Army. The operational timetable, however, was another matter. Nogi had planned to launch the first assault in the middle of August. Both Manchurian Army and Imperial Headquarters staff criticized this timing, concerned that Third Army's slow preparations would endanger the overall strategy, and exerted pressure on Nogi to move up the schedule. Nogi insisted that the timetable could not be advanced by more than a matter of days.¹⁹ Major General Ijichi reportedly questioned the need for speed and suggested that fears of the Baltic Fleet were driven by "needless and one-sided anxieties of Imperial Headquarters." He warned, prophetically, that haste, in the expectation that Port Arthur would fall in a single blow, might well lead to failure.²⁰

Quite apart from any pressure to speed up the schedule of attack,

¹⁷ Ernst L. Presseisen, *Before Aggression: Europeans Prepare the Japanese Army* (Tucson, 1965), 139–49.

¹⁸ Yamada, 33–35.

¹⁹ Tani, 203.

²⁰ Ijichi quoted in Iguchi to Nagaoka, 8/15/1904. Nagaoka Gaishi kankei bunsho kenkyūkai (ed.), *Nagaoka Gaishi kankei bunsho-shokan, shorui hen* (Tokyo, 1989) (Hereafter, NGKB), 13–14.

the Third Army's preparatory operations had encountered unanticipated difficulty by the beginning of August, auguring poorly for a successful assault. In a note to Vice Chief of Staff Nagaoka at Imperial Headquarters, dated July 18, 1904, Major Oba of the Third Army's staff reviewed plans for an orderly sequence of attacks on outlying defenses over the course of several weeks that would be followed by the encirclement of the inner fortifications with some 360 pieces of artillery, including twelve-centimeter howitzers. Four or five days of continuous bombardment, he believed, would breach Russian defenses.²¹ In a communication to Nagaoka on August 13, six days before the launching of the general assault, Oba continued to express confidence and depicted the Russians as "cornered mice." At the same time, he worried that Russian heavy artillery was impeding the Third Army's operations. Infantry troops took outer defenses repeatedly only to be driven back by fire from the Russian rear. The enemy's heavy guns also prevented the Third Army from bringing its own artillery to bear in close approaches to the inner fortifications. "Only our infantry can move in, but they must do so without the aid of a single artillery round [from our side]. To be exposed to enemy fire [in this way] is truly wretched, and I fear the weakening of our morale as a result . . . Their defensive works are well constructed and this has led to unexpectedly stubborn resistance." Complaining, "there is nothing more unpleasant than siege warfare," his own spirits seemed none too high.²² The mice were apparently doing an effective job of keeping the cat at bay.

III. *The First and Second General Assaults*

Given these circumstances, it is not entirely surprising that the first general assault (August 19–25) proved ineffective and frightfully costly. Six days of fighting that included repeated charges produced 14,000 Japanese casualties, including 2,300 dead, out of the Third Army's total troop strength of 56,000.²³ Two days after the start of the

²¹ Ôba to Nagaoka, 7/18/1904, NGKB, 93–94.

²² Ôba to Nagaoka, 8/13/1904, NGKB, 94–95.

²³ Ôe Shinobu, *Nichi-Ro sensô no gunjishûteki kenkyû*, 134. These figures include missing in action, many of whom were presumed dead.

offensive, Major General Iguchi Shogo (1855–1925), a senior staff officer attached to the Manchurian Army command, expressed his dismay at the progress of the fighting:

The fall of Port Arthur is taking longer than anticipated, and this is becoming a problem. Some may criticize earlier calls for a quick assault and speedy victory as having taken the campaign too lightly. I favored a surprise attack either at night or using the cover of heavy fog as the best hope for success. It was obvious from the start that an assault in broad daylight would be fruitless.²⁴

Iguchi criticized Third Army tactics, but he also acknowledged that he and others bore responsibility for underestimating the difficulty of the operation. Imperial Headquarters' decision to transfer eighteen 28-centimeter siege guns to the Third Army from fortifications in Japan reflected a reassessment of the problem.²⁵

Of greater concern to the high command than the use of excessively costly tactics as such, however, was the fact that the failure to capture the fortress complex in this first attempt threatened to bring its worst fears to life. The Manchurian Army faced the prospect of waging protracted campaigns to the north and the south that would divide scarce resources and endanger success on both fronts. The Third Army's staff, however, appeared not to appreciate the gravity of this situation. In a note dated August 28, 1904 to Nagaoka, Ijichi observed,

As a result of the enemy's secure fortifications and stubborn resistance, our army's main attack failed to progress as intended. Each of the planned charges ended in excessive losses and failure. This is terribly regrettable. However, as noted in our overall report, we believe that the enemy is also suffering and no longer has the will to launch a large-scale break out, so you may be assured.²⁶

Given that General Kodama had believed that a "bamboo palisade" could contain any attempted "break out" from Port Arthur, the task of containment alone would not have justified the organization of the Third Army, let alone the costly assault of August 19–25. Ijichi's gratuitous attempt at assuring Imperial Headquarters likely had the

²⁴ Iguchi to Nagaoka, 8/21/1904, NGKB, 14–16.

²⁵ Ōe, *Nichi-Ro sensō*, 110.

²⁶ Ijichi Kōsuke to Nagaoka, 8/28/1904, NGKB, 34.

opposite effect on Nagaoka, making him increasingly doubtful about the competence of the Third Army command.

The potential impact of a two-front war on Japan's strategy had already made itself evident in the Battle of Liaoyang (August 25–September 4, 1904), which had been expected by both civilian and military leaders to be the decisive battle of the war. Foreign Minister Komura Jutarō and Prime Minister Katsura Taro had drafted peace terms to be presented to Russia in anticipation of a victory.²⁷ As feared, the diversion of manpower to the Third Army, among other factors, had indeed slowed the process of building up forces for the northern advance and allowed the Russians to reinforce and fortify their positions at Liaoyang.

Insufficient troop strength, compounded by the fact that most of the available heavy guns had been directed to the siege of Port Arthur, contributed to making this engagement extremely costly. Forward units of Japan's converging First, Second, and newly organized Fourth armies were forced to mount massed infantry assaults against dug-in positions with insufficient artillery support. Major Machida Keiū (1865–1939), a staff officer assigned to the Fourth Army, lamented, "It is truly regrettable that, because of our inability to bring the full destructive power of our artillery to bear, repeated infantry assaults have been made at enormous sacrifice."²⁸ Put another way, "human bullets" were used at Liaoyang because of the inadequacy of available firepower, not because they were inherently superior, let alone preferable. Although the Japanese prevailed in this battle, exhaustion prevented them from taking advantage of their initial success. A chronic shortage of ammunition, caused by unprecedented rates of consumption and inadequate preparations for replenishment, made the Japanese army's difficulties yet worse.²⁹ This loss of momentum, in turn, allowed the Russians to retreat in good order. The enemy regrouped and launched a counterattack, leading to the Battle of Shaho (October 12–14, 1904).

²⁷ See Shumpei Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War* (New York, 1970), 101–12. Komura's draft peace terms may be found in Japan Gaimushō, *Nihon gaikō nenpyō narabini shuyō bunsho*, vol. 1 (Tokyo, 1965–66), 228–31.

²⁸ Ōe, *Nichi-Ro sensō*, 111–13.

²⁹ Yamada, 31–32. Yamada argues that a shortage of ammunition was the most important factor pushing the Japanese army into "human-bullet" tactics.

During much of September, the Third Army adopted a relatively cautious approach that employed more conventional siege tactics. In the aftermath of Liaoyang and Shaho, which underscored the fact that the Japanese might be losing their relatively narrow window of advantage, a growing sense of crisis descended on both Imperial Headquarters and the Manchurian Army command. Pressure on the Third Army to conclude its operations, high from the start, steadily intensified during October, coming both from Imperial Headquarters, anxious about the Baltic Fleet, and the Manchurian Army command, worried about slow progress in the campaign to the north. General Nogi launched a second general assault on October 26, but the Third Army failed to make any significant gains despite the support of 28-centimeter siege guns.³⁰

The growing acuteness of the ammunition shortage compounded difficulties apparent by the end of October. Calls from the Manchurian Army command to step up the supply became increasingly strident. In response, Nagaoka wrote to Kodama in late October, in the midst of the Third Army's second general assault, and acknowledged, "the lessons of the Port Arthur assault are beginning to underscore this very serious shortfall." He also admitted that army authorities in Tokyo had not been paying sufficient attention to the problem and that there had been some passing of the buck. Nagaoka assured Kodama that headquarters and the army ministry were now fully aware of the gravity of the shortage and were doing everything possible to resolve it. The army ministry had taken measures to double the production of domestic arsenals and had placed rush orders with foreign suppliers. Increased supplies, however, would not be available until the end of the year. Nagaoka advised rather complacently, "If efforts are made to conserve artillery ammunition to the utmost on the battlefield, there ought to be no great shortfall."³¹ Imperial Headquarters found itself demanding, ironically, that the Manchurian Army win decisive victories on both the northern and Port Arthur fronts before the end of the year while at the same

³⁰ Ôe Shinobu notes that initially, these siege guns did not appear to be as effective as hoped because they were firing shells meant to pierce armored warships that often failed to explode when striking the ground. This may have contributed to later arguments within the army that downplayed the effectiveness of artillery in general. Ôe, *Nichi-Ro sensô*, 111.

³¹ Nagaoka to Kodama, 10/29/1904, NGKB, 227–28.

time, calling for the conservation of ammunition until the beginning of 1905.

IV. *Third Assault and the Surrender of Port Arthur*

In the wake of the failure of the second general assault, and perhaps because the irony of Imperial Headquarters' demands was not entirely lost on the vice chief of staff, Nagaoka tried to persuade the Third Army to adopt alternatives to continued frontal attack, suggesting in particular, the taking of 203-Meter Hill which overlooked Port Arthur. The possible advantages of doing so had emerged, at the recommendation of the First Division commander, earlier in September. Nagaoka and others had come to the conclusion that Japanese siege guns directed by spotters placed on this hill could sink or damage Russian vessels in the harbor and perhaps destroy repair facilities. The fortress might not fall immediately, but this operation would alleviate the navy's concerns and reduce the urgency of outright capture. Russian ground forces based in Port Arthur could be contained with a "bamboo palisade" and release Nogi's forces to strengthen and accelerate the northern advance. Manchurian Army Chief of Staff Kodama apparently favored this approach as well. The Third Army command, however, resisted this proposal and regarded 203-Meter Hill as a target of secondary importance to the outright capture of Port Arthur. Nogi launched a third general assault at the end of November, initially focusing the operation, as before, on a frontal attack on the fortress complex.³²

As the assault began, an increasingly frustrated Nagaoka asked Manchurian Army staff officer Iguchi for support in redirecting the actions of the Third Army. In two notes dispatched on November 28 and November 30, he vented his criticism of Nogi and his staff. He decried the failure of Ijichi and his officers to gather appropriate intelligence about the strength of the fortifications before initiating full-scale attacks. The Third Army command placed itself too far from the front lines and left the vital task of gathering intelligence under fire to young and inexperienced infantry officers. To

³² Tani, 205-07, 210-14.

discover the basic features of fortress structure, gun emplacements, and the positioning of enemy troops only after two general assaults and tens of thousands of casualties was unacceptable. As a result of poor intelligence, “multiple attacks have been launched and our officers and men have dashed forward courageously into the fight only to be sacrificed to the small arms and artillery fire of an unseen enemy.”³³ His overall assessment of Nogi and his staff was quite blunt. “Because of the incompetence of the command responsible for the siege of Port Arthur, their choice of points of attack, and their use of the same method in each and every assault, we have, to our eternal regret, given up enormous sacrifices without achieving more than one tenth of our objectives. These past six months have taught me what to expect from them in the future.” The main point in both notes, though, was that the Third Army should concentrate its efforts on occupying 203-Meter Hill rather than attacking the fortress directly. Had this been done earlier, he noted, “we would have had the Rising Sun flying over Port Arthur with no more than 10,000 casualties.” He reiterated the danger that this protracted campaign posed to the war effort as a whole.

I ask you to give consideration to the future of Port Arthur. Indeed, *it is not so much Port Arthur but the enemy facing you not far from Shaho [that is of concern]*. The rate of [Russian] reinforcement is increasing daily, and it is essential to destroy the enemy as quickly as possible, which can only be done by concentrating a superior force against them . . . This, in turn requires a rapid breaking of Port Arthur . . . which has been tying down nearly half of Japan’s troop strength in a pointless operation [*mu mokuteki no chi*].” (emphasis added)

He added, “a country reaching the high tide of its limited strength must take its winnings quickly and use those winnings to carry out the next battle.”³⁴ It would appear that, by this point, at least in Nagaoka’s thinking, the siege of Port Arthur as an operation, rather than the Russian fortress itself, had become the real threat to Japanese success.

General Kodama appears to have agreed with Nagaoka’s assessment, not only of 203-Meter Hill, but of Third Army leadership as

³³ Quoted in Tani, 229–30.

³⁴ Nagaoka to Iguchi, 11/30/1904, NGKB, 230–31.

well. After requesting and receiving written authorization from Manchurian Army Commander Oyama, Kodama left field headquarters at Liaoyang for Port Arthur on November 29 with the intention of intervening in operations. Nagaoka endorsed this move. "The Third Army has a commander and a chief of staff," he noted, "but they are incapable of providing proper leadership without the intervention [of Kodama.]"³⁵ In a face-saving arrangement, Kodama purportedly refrained from invoking Oyama's authority and asked if he might "borrow" Nogi's command authority to direct the thrust of Third Army's efforts toward seizing 203-Meter Hill. Nogi agreed.³⁶ This extraordinary arrangement appears to have raised some questions about a violation of the chain of command, a problem that had emerged with Nagaoka's various efforts, often through intermediaries, to influence Nogi and his staff.³⁷ Nonetheless, Kodama and Nagaoka saw this intervention as unavoidable and had, indeed, arranged to take matters one step further. A note from Iguchi to Nagaoka several days after the start of the third general assault affirmed Kodama's agreement to a proposal, discussed with Nagaoka earlier, that after the capture of Port Arthur, the Third Army commander and his staff would be relieved of their duties and sent back to Japan.³⁸

Kodama's intervention and the redirection of the Third Army's efforts to 203-Meter Hill proved successful. Through a combination of repeated infantry assaults and heavy artillery barrages, the hill was captured and held on December 5, 1904. The effort still required 10,000 casualties, but subsequent placement of observers who could accurately direct the fire of the 28-centimeter siege guns into the harbor and city effectively sealed the fate of Port Arthur. The Russians

³⁵ Nagaoka to Iguchi, 11/30/1904, NGKB, 230–31.

³⁶ Tani, 233–36.

³⁷ Major Tanaka Giichi, a staff officer assigned to the Manchurian Army, wrote to Nagaoka criticizing Imperial Headquarters' efforts to intervene directly in the affairs of the Third Army. Tanaka to Nagaoka, 1904.8.22. NGKB, 199. Ôe Shinobu argues that sometimes conflicting pressures from the Manchurian Army command and Imperial Headquarters contributed to confusion in the Third Army command. Ôe, *Nihon no sanbô honbu*, 107. As an instructor at the War College in the early 1920s, Colonel Tani Hisao raised this issue in his lectures, but concluded that it did not constitute a violation. Tani, 238.

³⁸ Iguchi to Nagaoka, 11/29/1904, NGKB, 21. Imperial Headquarters and the Manchurian Army command had discussed replacing Major General Ijichi earlier in November. Tani, 213.

under Lieutenant General Anatolii Mikhailovich Stessel' surrendered on 2 January 1905.

Despite plans worked out in late November to dissolve the Third Army Command, General Nogi retained his post and led his forces into the Battle of Mukden (February 23–March 10, 1905), the last major land engagement of the war. Major General Ijichi, however, was relieved of his staff position and appointed commander of the captured Port Arthur fortress. At the urging of one of his staff officers, Kodama apparently reconsidered relieving Nogi of his command, persuaded that such an action would unnecessarily humiliate a military unit that had, after all, achieved its objective.³⁹ Such an action, moreover, would have both deprived military and civilian publics of a hero much needed after the horrendous campaign and severely dampened the Port Arthur victory celebrations. The Manchurian Army considered such celebrations sufficiently important, no doubt for morale's sake, to delay its advance north.⁴⁰ Perhaps more importantly, the army had no interest in airing its dirty linen in public, which any perceived rebuke to the commander of the Third Army would have rendered unavoidable. It would be highly problematic to suggest to the Japanese people that the massive casualties suffered at Port Arthur had been anything other than heroic, necessary, and productive.⁴¹ The lionization of Nogi clearly rankled some of his fellow officers,⁴² but alternatives to treating him as a hero were unattractive. More than a few commanders and senior staff who had demonstrated incompetence in this war received medals and were quietly pushed "upstairs" through nominal promotions. Ijichi Kosuke, for example, continued to enjoy a successful career after Port Arthur,

³⁹ Tani, 238.

⁴⁰ Captain Ugaki vigorously criticized these celebrations, pointing out that this delay had left Japanese forces vulnerable to a vigorous Russian counterattack at Heijiangdai. Ugaki, Item 54, 1904 entry, 34. The Battle of Heijiangdai (January 19–24) resulted in serious losses, the Japanese Eighth Division alone suffering 9,000 casualties. Fujiwara, 114.

⁴¹ In one of Nagaoka's notes to Iguchi cited above, the vice chief of staff shudders at the possibility of the public learning about the failings of the Third Army command. Tani, 230.

⁴² Tani reproduces a lecture given by Major General Shizaki Moriharu (1871–1946), presumably in the early 1920s, which recounts the rather negative light in which some who served in the Third Army regarded Nogi. Shizaki commanded a company in the Eleventh Division of the Third Army during the Port Arthur campaign. Tani, 239–41. On Shizaki's background, Hata, 70.

appointed to important commands and elevated to the peerage in 1907 as a baron.⁴³

V. *Lessons and Myths of Port Arthur*

Port Arthur had been taken by stratagem rather than storm, and the bitter six-month campaign left little reason for Japanese army leaders to endorse the efficacy of human-bullet attacks against fortified positions defended with machine guns and artillery. General Nogi and his staff had elected mass assault tactics, but they had proven ineffective and terribly costly, and the Third Army leadership had been roundly criticized for their judgment. Captain Ugaki recorded his own summary assessment in his diary after the fall of Port Arthur and linked what he regarded as unnecessary bloodshed to a failure to learn the lessons of Nanshan. He noted that it was a mistake to use field armies against a fortress in the first place. The operation required properly equipped siege divisions. "The first general assault on Port Arthur might be forgiven because of public opinion and the influence of amateur military experts," he wrote, "but to repeat this same grave error multiple times has actually delayed Port Arthur's capture. Those responsible must be judged as having lost all common sense. Fortunately, our brave and loyal soldiers redeemed the grave errors of their commanders with their blood and forced the fortress to surrender. Their meritorious deeds are indeed great."⁴⁴ Although he praises the courage of rank and file soldiers, Ugaki's remarks in this context can hardly be taken as an endorsement of human-bullet tactics.

Ugaki's observations and the lessons he drew from Nanshan and Port Arthur are of particular interest because, far from being a voice in the wilderness, he would play a key role in the development of the Japanese army in the decades after 1905. His postwar career took him through positions of increasing responsibility in the general staff, appointments as superintendent of the War College, vice minister of the army, army minister, governor general of Korea, and foreign minister. He held a firm conviction that in managing warfare and educating soldiers, matters of spirit, that is, morale, moti-

⁴³ Ôe, *Nichi-Ro sensô*, 317–19. On Ijichi's career, Hata, 13.

⁴⁴ Ugaki, Item 53, 1905 entry, 33–34.

vation, group cohesion, and citizen patriotism, would be perilous to neglect.⁴⁵ At the same time, he warned repeatedly against the notion that a superior “spirit” could substitute for numbers, firepower, and financial resources. He noted in 1907:

In developing operations plans, the value of spiritual factors must be kept out of the calculations. The true value of spiritual factors cannot be determined until the first engagement . . . Any attempt to incorporate the value of spiritual factors in our calculations is equivalent to a merchant incorporating future profits into his current capital, creating a plan without firm foundations. For this reason, our plans must be limited to our country’s financial strength, our troop numbers, and materiel available, concrete things that we calculate precisely.⁴⁶

Ugaki consistently advocated the development of firepower and the need to keep up with advances in technology. He became the leading champion of mechanization in the army, even at the cost of reducing the complement of regular divisions, a program he would carry out during his tenure as army minister between 1924 and 1927.⁴⁷

The perception that the Russo-Japanese War, and Port Arthur in particular, produced a mindset within the Japanese army that could be described as a “cult of the bayonet,” that exalted spirit over firepower, glorified the human bullet, and disdained the efficacy of artillery and machine guns, nonetheless, persists. Indeed, it appears as conventional wisdom in many studies of the Japanese army that this outlook retarded modernization and left Japan’s ground forces far behind its Western counterparts by the end of World War I.⁴⁸ Such perceptions certainly have some basis in fact, but the influence of a powerful body of postwar myths and politically-determined postures must also be taken into account. A number of developments after 1905 conspired to create the impression that a cult of the bayonet emerged within the Japanese army as a result of the lessons of this war.

First, there is no question that the tactics of mass assault came to occupy a prominent place in Japanese infantry manuals after 1905. Few field commanders who served in this war were left unimpressed

⁴⁵ Ugaki, various entries, 1917, 128.

⁴⁶ Ugaki, Item 59, 1907 entry, 61.

⁴⁷ On the Japanese army in the 1920s, see Leonard Humphreys, *The Way of the Heavenly Sword: the Japanese Army in the 1920's* (Stanford, 1995).

⁴⁸ This theme is central to Yamada’s study and, in a more nuanced manner, informs Fujiwara’s as well.

by the willingness of their troops to engage in human-bullet attacks, and whether or not they endorsed the extensive use of such tactics, courage and a spirit of self-sacrifice of this order were hardly undesirable qualities to inculcate into recruits. Ugaki himself saw the need to train soldiers ready “to charge into the jaws of death” when necessary.⁴⁹ It is not surprising, then, that the revised manual released in 1909, incorporating the lessons of the Russo-Japanese War, would contain appropriate exhortations to this effect: “From time immemorial, the way of the *arme blanche* [*hakuheishugi*] has been our method of warfare, and the use of the bayonet is a special skill of our countrymen. Therefore, to rely increasingly on the manifestation of this strong suit and to cultivate the development of combat by bayonet is most suited to the character of our people . . .”⁵⁰ At the same time, as Bruce Menning points out, precepts stressed in training manuals should not be equated with tactical doctrine.⁵¹ Cultivating the potential for human-bullets among Japanese soldiers did not necessarily mean that bayonet assaults represented the army’s primary mode of combat, nor did it imply, in itself, a disdain for firepower.

Second, the emergence in the decades following the Russo-Japanese War of a significant grouping of officers ideologically inclined toward a cult of the bayonet is undeniable. This circle, which eventually came to center on Uehara Yusaku, stressed the primacy of spirit in warfare and offered persistent opposition to the direction advocated by Ugaki and others of like mind. At the same time, it is important not to overstate the role of ideological convictions as such in driving conflict nominally focused on this issue within the army. The Japanese army officer corps, as before the war, continued to be riven by deep factional divisions defined largely by “old-boy networks” derived from what were originally regionally-based Choshu and Satsuma cliques. The so-called Choshu clique came to enjoy a perennial position of dominance, creating in reaction, an anti-Choshu opposition. Grievances on the part of this opposition coalition stemmed

⁴⁹ Ugaki, Item 41, 1904 entry, 30.

⁵⁰ Yamada, 34. For more analysis of Japanese infantry manuals after the Russo-Japanese War, see Fujiwara, 127–34.

⁵¹ Bruce Menning, “The Offensive Revisited: Russian Preparation for Future War, 1906–1914,” in *Reforming the Tsar’s Army: Military Innovation in Imperial Russia from Peter the Great to the Revolution*, ed. David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye and Bruce W. Menning (Cambridge, 2004), 217. I thank Prof. Menning for pointing this out and showing me a copy of his manuscript.

fundamentally from complaints about favoritism in promotion and assignment. Over time, however, these grievances acquired a layering of rationalization that challenged the qualifications of those promoted and chosen for the best assignments and highlighted the limited competence of officers selected for their connections rather than for their talent. Among a host of matters that allegedly demonstrated such incompetence was an excessive emphasis on firepower as opposed to spirit in the development of the army.⁵² The use of this issue as a battle standard in factional conflicts does not imply that the proponents of spirit-power were insincere in their arguments. Its linkage to a factionalism that transcended this question, however, likely contributed to an overstatement of actual differences as well as an exaggeration of the significance of the spirit-first debate itself, apart from its standing as a dispute over training and education.

A third and perhaps more important source of the perception that a cult of the bayonet took root in the army after the Russo-Japanese War lay in the larger political conflict between the army and parliament unfolding in the decade after 1905. The expansion of army manpower formed the main point of contention. Under Japanese constitutional practice, a new infantry division, once approved in the budget, represented a permanent expenditure beyond the power of parliament to reduce without the concurrence of the military authorities. The army, not surprisingly, eagerly sought such commitments whereas parliament, by the same token, avoided making them if at all possible. Weapons and equipment, in contrast, represented "discretionary" appropriations that the army thought more politic to request after securing manpower targets. Indeed, politicians in parliament generally preferred spending on military technology over appropriating funds for new divisions, in part, because of the potential benefits for industrial development and, in part, because they saw the substitution of firepower for manpower as leading to a more flexible cost structure in the armed forces. The configuration of this debate pushed the army toward making a case in the political arena that emphasized manpower over technology which, in turn, invited criticism for neglecting modernization and disdaining firepower.⁵³

⁵² Army factionalism and its dynamics form a central theme in Kitaoka Shin'ichi, *Nihon rikugun to tairiku seisaku* (Tokyo, 1978).

⁵³ This dynamic may be found throughout parliamentary debates between 1906

A fourth source, closely related to the dynamics of postwar politics, stemmed from the escalation of “culture wars” in Japan. Civilian popular nationalists on both left and right received a major boost from the conflict with Russia. For those on the left, the contribution to the nation of citizen-soldiers who had sacrificed their lives at Port Arthur justified the expansion of political rights and the power of parliament, and to a certain extent, this led to an affirmative conflation of “people power” and massed infantry assaults.⁵³ For those on the right, the heroism of these soldiers reflected traditional Japanese values and a lesson to misguided liberals and their advocacy of unrestrained Westernization. They noted that Western observers themselves had come to praise *bushido* in a recognition, at long last, of the fact that Japan could give as well as receive in a larger framework of world civilization. In particular, the model of the fiercely courageous, self-sacrificing soldier provided a valuable counterweight to what nationalists regarded as growing corruption, decadence, and frivolity in Japanese society, particularly among youth.⁵⁴ A significant segment of influential civilians thus came to embrace ideas that at least resonated with the cult of the bayonet. Army leaders, driven by their own concern that rising trends of individualism among youth might undermine “spiritual” values necessary for suitable recruits, joined the fray, attacking urban decadence and extolling the traditional values of rural Japan.⁵⁵ The way of the human bullet may not have been embraced wholeheartedly by the army as a tactical doctrine, but as the basis of social policy, it enjoyed more enthusiastic endorsement.

and 1924, but it was particularly pronounced in sessions held during and immediately after World War I. See for example, the 35th session, 1914, Teikoku gikai shûgiin, *Teikoku gikai shûgiin iinkai giroku*, Taishô hen, vol. 6 (Kyoto, 1981) 149–94.

⁵³ For example, Sasakawa Taneo, “Sengo keiei no mottomo dai naru mono,” *Nihonjin*, no. 407, 1905.3.20, 13–14.

⁵⁴ Although Miyake Setsurei’s popular nationalism was generally oriented toward the left rather than the right, his editorials about the degeneration of Japanese society and the model that an army cleansed of corruption might provide offers a good example of this kind of thinking. He also regarded the war with Russia as an opportunity to purge Japanese society of its decadence. Editorial (Miyake Setsurei), “Roshia to tatakau no rigai (shakai fuhai no kyûjisaku to shite),” in *Nihonjin*, no. 187, 1903.5.20, 1–4.

⁵⁵ Fujiwara, 134–39.

Conclusion

Politics and culture wars did much to create a powerful myth about Port Arthur in the years after 1905 and the perception that the human bullet had carried the day in the war against Russia. This myth came to be fixed in Japanese national consciousness with the death of General Nogi and his wife, Shizuko, by ritual suicide in 1912. In an atavistic expression of loyalty to their sovereign known as *junshi*, the couple took their own lives upon the passing of the Meiji Emperor.⁵⁶ The general had in his suicide the additional purpose of atoning for the loss, during the Sainan War of 1877, of his regimental standard, which he had received symbolically from the hand of his majesty. Nogi's qualities as a military commander had been questioned by his fellow officers and superiors, but his credentials as a national hero were impeccable. Known for his personal qualities of honesty, loyalty, steadfastness and frugality, he symbolized the persistence of the values of *bushido* in a modern Japan. A Cincinnatus-like figure, he had been recalled from retired life as a part-time farmer to lead his country's soldiers into war. Both his sons perished fighting the Russians. Accepting responsibility for the fulfillment of his mission, Nogi had threatened to commit ritual suicide if the third general assault failed.⁵⁷ Nogi's elevation to the status of the hero of Port Arthur had made it difficult to question the general's conduct, and by association, the campaign itself, outside of the inner circles of the army officer corps. Following his near apotheosis after 1912, even instructors at the War College had to tread lightly in their critical dissections of operations at Port Arthur, carefully disclaiming any intention of impugning the general's honor.⁵⁸ Heroic narrative has an important place national life, and it deserves respect. At the same time, it can often mislead and impede our understanding of history. Ugaki highlighted the redemptive role of those who died at Port Arthur, and it would compound the tragedy of this conflict to obscure the misjudgments that led to their sacrifice.

⁵⁶ See Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 221–27.

⁵⁷ Major General Shizaki, contrasting the high esteem Nogi enjoyed after 1905 with the views of his subordinates during the war, noted that this threat failed to move the Third Army's soldiers. Tani, 231.

⁵⁸ Tani offers such a disclaimer in his introduction to the chapter on Port Arthur. Tani, 196.

CHAPTER TEN

THE RUSSIAN FAR EASTERN SQUADRON'S OPERATIONAL PLANS

Nicholas Papastratigakis with Dominic Lieven

The Russian navy's operational plans at the outbreak of the war with Japan are understudied. Even today, the most important work on the subject remains the tsarist naval general staff's seven-volume official history.¹ Despite the survey's length, political considerations prevented a coherent and detailed analysis of the question. Rather than risk sullyng the reputation of prominent individuals in the wake of the fiasco, the authors preferred to abstain from presenting a detailed and impartial but potentially damning critique.²

The conceptual point of departure for naval strategy and operational planning was the Anglo-French debate over the use of maritime power at the turn of the twentieth century. The era's most influential theorist, the American Captain Alfred Thayer Mahan, believed that a navy's primary function was to achieve command of the sea through dominant naval power, which could only be exercised by "great navies." Operating from a central position and concentrating superior force at a decisive point, a great navy should mainly conduct offensive operations aimed at annihilation of the adversary's fleet. Incontestable superiority derived only from battle-ships, since they alone were the vessels that combined great firepower, seaworthiness, radius of action, speed, and armor protection.³ The

¹ Istoricheskaia Komissiiia pri Morskom General'nom Shtabe [IKpriMGSh], *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–05 g.g.*, 7 bks. Incomplete (SPB and Petrograd, 1912–1918).

² The most detailed English language account of Russian naval operations during the Russo-Japanese War can be found in J.S. Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905*, 2 vols. (Annapolis, 1994). Corbett's work greatly corresponds to the Russian Naval General Staff study of 1912 and does not offer any additional material on the subject of pre-war naval plans.

³ P.A. Crowl, "Alfred Thayer Mahan: The Naval Historian," in P. Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy—From Machiavelli to the Nuclear Age* (Oxford, 1986), 444–447.

arguments of the British Admiral Philip Howard Colomb followed the same line and were complementary to those of Mahan. However Colomb's and Mahan's views diverged over the notion of a "fleet in being."⁴ Contrary to Mahan, Colomb believed that an inferior naval force by remaining in "being" could damage isolated elements of a superior fleet, but more importantly hinder any landing attempts by imposing upon the enemy an unacceptable risk for undertaking such operations.⁵ Colomb's theories enjoyed a following in Tsarist Russia and even continued to exert some influence after 1917 in the Soviet Union.⁶

The antipodes of Mahan's theories were the doctrines of the theorists of the French-inspired *Jeune Ecole*, who placed their faith on inexpensive means in comparison to battleships, such as torpedo boats, submarines, and mines. Even though some extreme advocates of the school completely rejected the utility of battleships, most others believed that battleships should be used as supporting means in conjunction with torpedo forces. Another very important notion propagated by the *Jeune Ecole* was the conduct of an unrestricted *guerre de course* strategy, which was thought likely to create a climate of panic and financial uncertainty and thereby ruin enemy trade.⁷

By 1904 Russian naval opinion was prepared to encompass elements of both theories in the formulation of strategy. In this respect the situation was not dissimilar to that in France and even Britain.⁸ Even though Russian naval officers supported the construction and use of battleships, at the same time these officers were also favorably inclined to the creation of a coastal defense system based upon

⁴ The notion of a fleet remaining in being suggested that an inferior fleet should refuse to engage superior enemy forces and instead remain protected in fortified coastal bases.

⁵ For further elaboration on the issue, see, P.H. Colomb, *Naval Warfare—Its Ruling Principles and Practice Historically Treated*, 2 vols. (Annapolis, 1990).

⁶ R. Waring Herrick, *Soviet Naval Theory and Policy: Gorshkov's Inheritance* (Newport, 1988).

⁷ T. Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy—French Naval Policy, 1871–1914* (Annapolis, 1987), 155–180. T. Ropp, "Continental Doctrines of Sea Power," in E. Mead Earle (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy—Military Thought from Machiavelli to Hitler* (Princeton, 1971), 446–454.

⁸ At the turn of the century a number of naval officers supported the application of a coastal defense system for the protection of the British Isles. For the British case see, N.A. Lambert, *Sir John Fisher's Naval Revolution* (Columbia, South Carolina, 1999).

torpedo vessels and submarines, particularly for the defense of the Baltic coastline.⁹

Structurally the most important institutions for the formulation of naval strategy and operational plans were either an operational naval staff or a separate entity within the larger naval administrative apparatus. The Russian navy had no institution in the form of a Naval General Staff, which appeared only after 1904–05. During the pre-war period the main corresponding organ was the *Glavnyi Morskoi Shtab* (the Naval Main Staff, or the GMSH), which was responsible for a wide variety of functions, including operational, administrative, disciplinary, and educational.¹⁰ Within the framework of the GMSH there was, at least in theory, a section responsible for strategy and plans in the form of the *Voenno-Morskoi Uchenyi Otdel* (VMUO). However, like its parent institution, the VMUO held responsibility for a broad array of functions. Therefore, the VMUO was not in a position to concentrate wholly on the development of strategic plans and related formulations. The situation was actually aggravated because VMUO had a personnel complement of only six officers, including its chief. Even though the first traces of a skeletal strategic-operational section within the VMUO and GMSH began to emerge by 1904, its influence was insignificant, as it was only formally established after the outbreak of the war.¹¹

Moreover, the overwhelming majority of Russian naval officers lacked a higher military education that might enhance their understanding of strategy's finer points. Up to the middle of the 1890s, the Nicholas Naval Academy, the main higher education institution for naval officers, taught a curriculum that was overwhelmingly technical and scientific in nature. In 1895–96, the academy finally provided a one-year course, which included naval history, strategy, and

⁹ The main strategic concept underlying the task of the Baltic fleet was defensive in nature, which, when combined with suitable geographic and hydrographic conditions, favored the use of a coastal defense system.

¹⁰ *Znachenie i rabota shtaba na osnovanii opyta Russko-iaponskoi voyny*, 2 pts. (SPB, 1906), pt. 1, 31–2.

¹¹ F.N. Gromov (ed.), *Na rubezhe vekov. Tri veka Rossiiskogo flota*, 3 vols. (SPB, 1996), I, 260–61. A.G. fon Vitte, *Ocherk ustroistva upravleniia flotom v Rossii i inostrannykh gosudarstvakh* (SPB, 1907), 77. L.G. Beskrovnyi, *Armiia i flot Rossii v nachale XX v.—Ocherki voenno-economiceskogo potentsiala* (M, 1986), 221. Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Voenno-Morskogo Flota [RGAVMF], f. 417 [Glavnyi Morskoi Shtab], op. 1, d. 2655, l. 131–137.

tactics.¹² In the absence of a genuine strategic planning section within the Naval Ministry, the strategic war-games played out at the academy from the middle of the 1890s were an important element in the foundation of Russian strategic and operational planning.¹³ In fact, the Naval Ministry often assigned themes for the games by direct request. Apart from the participation of academy lecturers and students, the war-games were also attended by senior naval and army officers.

In the case of the Russian Pacific Squadron the aforementioned structural disadvantages in the formulation of strategy and plans suffered from further complications. From the autumn of 1899, the administration of the distant Far Eastern territories increasingly fell under the sway of the tsar's appointee as commander of the newly acquired Kwantung region, Vice Admiral Evgenii Ivanovich Alekseev.¹⁴ In the summer of 1903, Alekseev's position became even more powerful through his appointment as Viceroy for the Far Eastern territories. Subsequently, the prevailing view—at least in the navy—was that formulation of plans for the Far East lay within Alekseev's jurisdiction. Despite the GMSH's requests for the dispatch of information on war planning, particularly in 1902 and 1903, Alekseev simply assured St. Petersburg about the existence of such plans. The GMSH and the Naval Ministry did not develop any plans for the Far East prior to the war, and it also seems that neither organization informed Alekseev's naval staff about various strategic formulations in the capital.¹⁵

On a practical level Russian naval strategy was constrained by the empire's unique geographic, climatic, political and strategic conditions. In effect all of the four main maritime theaters adjacent to the Russian coastline failed to offer advantageous and unfettered access to the world ocean system and were isolated and separated

¹² L.G. Beskrovnyi, *Russkaia armia i flot v XIX v.—Voenno-economiceskii potentsial Rossii* (M, 1973), 560–561.

¹³ Beskrovnyi, *Armia i flot Rossii v nachale XX v.*, 218–219.

¹⁴ The Kwantung district mainly encompassed the territory of the Liaodong peninsula with the ports of Dal'nii and Port Arthur, acquired in 1898.

¹⁵ IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, bk. 1, 100–101, 107.

from each other. In addition, Russia did not have a single base or supporting point on the coastlines of Europe, Africa, and Asia, between the Baltic Sea and the Pacific Ocean. This fact rendered extremely difficult the movement of vessels from European Russia to the Far East. Therefore, a realistic naval policy would be to perceive each of the four main theaters as a separate theater of operations. Russian state finances lacked the capacity to sustain a sufficiently strong fleet to perform assigned strategic tasks in each of the theaters, so it was important to ascribe priority to one of the theaters and then deploy by contingency all available forces and means to the chosen theater.¹⁶ It should be added that the alliance with France, which existed since the early 1890s, had minimal impact in terms of combined naval planning or cooperation.¹⁷ Indeed, alliance arrangements had no effect upon Russia's need to choose among the four maritime theaters. Quite apart from anything else, France's main maritime theaters were the Atlantic and the Mediterranean.

The Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895 signified the appearance of Japan as a dangerous potential rival for Russia in the Far East, as a result of which Russia re-appraised its strategic situation in the region. Reassessment was indeed necessary as the Russian Far Eastern position until the mid-1890s was not supported by a strong build-up either at land or sea. The main problem for continental Russia was that the Trans-Siberian railway projected to link the European parts of the empire with the Pacific would take time for completion. Therefore, the swift and massive arrival of ground force reinforcements from Europe was impossible. Transit capacities were markedly improved between 1895 and 1904, but the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War underscored residual shortcomings. Throughput capacities varied on different parts of the line, while the detour around Lake Baikal remained unfinished until well into the conflict. Perhaps

¹⁶ M.A. Petrov, *Podgotovka Rossii k mirovoi voine na more* (L, 1926), 7–8.

Even though the occupation of the Liaodung Peninsula provided direct access to the Yellow Sea and to the world ocean system, nevertheless, like the rest of the Russian Far Eastern territories, it was separated from the metropolis by a great distance and lacked any industrial infrastructure.

¹⁷ T. Ropp, *The Development of a Modern Navy*, 239–244, P. Renouvin, “L’Orientation de l’Alliance Franco-Russe en 1900–1901,” in *Revue D’Histoire Diplomatique*, LXXX, (Juliet–Septembre 1966), 193–204. According to the available evidence the naval convention between the two sides only took place two years prior to the First World War, in 1912.

worse, the rail lines in Manchuria, where the main concentration of Russian ground forces was to occur, were in poor condition.¹⁸ Worse still, Russian ground forces in the Far East were minimal, as was the local support infrastructure. One solution to the problem would be to permanently station in the region a sufficient number of troops to repel an enemy invasion. In the event, both financial constraints and the War Ministry's policy of assigning supreme importance to the European theater left Russian ground forces in the Far East seriously understrength. Even though Russian forces in the Far East increased from roughly 35,000 troops in 1894–1895 to 98,000 by early 1904, during the same interval the Japanese regular army expanded from 61,000 to 150,000. Moreover, Japan could swiftly supplement its peacetime forces with reserve and militia units.¹⁹ By April 1904, scarcely three months after the beginning of the war, Japan had already deployed 206,000 troops in the theater of operations. Meanwhile, Russian ground forces were still assembling along a very long line that included the Priamur and Trans-Baikal military districts, in addition to Manchuria and Kwantung.²⁰

Considering that Japanese ground forces could reach the Asian mainland only if they were transported by sea from their home islands, a potential Russian counter would be to concentrate a strong battleship fleet in the Far East. The mission of such fleet would include either denying Japanese landing operations or at least delaying and restricting them to certain areas, thereby providing the Russian army with sufficient time to deploy adequate reinforcements. The alternative strategy of using mines, torpedo boats and submarines failed to receive serious consideration, because of the geography of the theater and the growth in influence of Mahanian ideas. Such means were perceived only as an auxiliary defensive force and not a replacement for the main battle-fleet.

However, Russian naval forces in the Far East until 1895 were

¹⁸ IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905* g.g., bk. 1, 57.

¹⁹ Ibid., 136–37; Voenno-istoricheskaia Komissiia po opisaniiu Russko-iaponskoi voiny [hereafter VIK], *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905* g.g., 9 vols. in 16 bks. (SPB, 1910–1913), I, 391.

²⁰ For a more detailed overview of several of the aforementioned issues, see Bruce W. Menning's essay in this volume.

limited to a cruiser squadron, which could not match the growing strength of the Japanese fleet.²¹ In December 1895 the tsar approved an inter-ministerial decision about the necessity for the presence of a permanent and strong battleship and cruiser squadron in the Pacific Ocean not only in case of conflict with Japan but also for exerting peacetime moral influence over Japan.²² Nevertheless, the final decision to construct new vessels specifically for the needs of the Far East, which would create an equal or slightly superior fleet to that of Japan by 1903, the time of completion for the reinforcement of the Japanese fleet, received approval only in March 1898. Under pressure from the Minister of Finance, Sergei Iul'evich Witte, apart from a reduction in the number of new vessels to be constructed, the duration of the shipbuilding program was extended to 1905.²³ As the Japanese navy was more or less fully reinforced by 1903 and consequently enjoyed a crucial superiority over the Russian Pacific Squadron during the initial stages of the war, the financial limitations imposed by Witte seriously impeded the implementation of Russian Far Eastern strategy. Given this reality, Russia should either have avoided confronting Japan or have been willing to pay the price to create superior naval and military capabilities in the potential theater of operations.

Meanwhile, naval planning evolved in concert with evolving capabilities. Until 1895 the plans for the Russian cruiser squadron were governed by earlier formulations of a commission under Captain Stepan Osipovich Makarov. Since 1888, these formulations had envisaged *Jeune Ecole*-type *guerre de course* operations against Britain and Germany, while also including several measures against China.²⁴ In the spring of 1895 the possibility of war between Russia and Japan forced the issue of undertaking naval planning against Japan. Even though knowledge of the exact plans formulated by the Russian Far Eastern naval command remains sketchy, their main inspiration came

²¹ D.C. Evans and M.R. Peattie, *Kaigun—Strategy, Tactics and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887–1941* (Annapolis, 1997), 57–60.

²² RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 1, d. 1474, l. 40.

²³ RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 1, d. 1728, ll. 53–54, 72, 155–156.

²⁴ The protocols of the commission can be found in RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 1, d. 429.

once again from Makarov, who was now a rear admiral. Upon returning to Russia in 1896, Makarov produced a report in which he argued that the most likely cause of a war would be a Japanese attempt to occupy Korea. Ideally a strong Russian squadron should be concentrated in a central position from which it might oppose a Japanese landing in Korea. The Russian squadron should be directed to the Korea Straits for occupation of Fusan or any other nearby port that might serve as a base. Even though Makarov admitted the danger of Japanese torpedo boats, he believed that such a move would result in a decisive battle with the Japanese fleet, which would exert crucial influence on the outcome of the campaign.²⁵

In 1896 the Nicholas Naval Academy conducted war games for a conflict with Japan based on the naval forces available to both states in December 1895. Even though the game's theoretical conclusions were similar to Makarov's strategic forecast, a comparison of the forces actually available demonstrated that the Russian squadron was inferior to its Japanese counterpart due to the lack of fast cruisers and torpedo boats. Therefore, at the beginning of the conflict the weaker Russian squadron should avoid instigating decisive battle and await the arrival of reinforcements from European waters. The plan of action suggested by the game's participants was that the Russian squadron should use a base on the Chinese coastline close to Hong Kong and then attempt to capture the Pescadores Islands and carry out a demonstration against Japanese-occupied Formosa. Following the arrival of reinforcements, the squadron should then move close to Nagasaki and attempt to interdict communications between Korea and Japan, while cruisers should be used to conduct *guerre de course* operations against Japanese maritime commerce. In case of victory in a decisive battle the Russian fleet should

²⁵ RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 1, d. 1300, ll. 282–285. IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, bk. 9, Vvedenie—Russkiiia morskiiia sily na Dal'nem Vostoke s 1894–1895, 90–100. The need to obtain a base in the Korea Straits was certainly motivated by their obvious geographic attribute of forming the closest point between the Japanese islands and the Asiatic mainland. The Korea Straits were also the choke point for access to the Sea of Japan and thereby Vladivostok, the only reliable Russian Port in the Far East, other than Port Arthur. Moreover, Vladivostok, ice-frozen for a significant part of the year, was also a considerable distance from the main theater of operations.

then proceed to assist the landing of Russian troops on the eastern coast of Korea.²⁶

In the ensuing years and even up to 1903, the ideal hypothesis of occupying a port in a central position in the Korea Straits and subsequently attempting to destroy or weaken the Japanese fleet in a decisive battle was an important notion underlying strategic concepts for utilization of the Far Eastern squadron.²⁷ The occupation of Port Arthur and Kwantung in 1898 can partly be seen as an attempt to provide the fleet with a base, even though the tragedy was that Port Arthur did not satisfy the navy's criterion for a central position in the Korea Straits. Moreover the newly acquired territory also extended the area that had to be defended. Nevertheless, as far as the formulation of a concrete naval operational plan was concerned, it seems that at least until 1900, apart from the aforementioned general outlines, no such work was done either in St. Petersburg or in the Far East.

In the winter of 1900 the Nicholas Naval Academy war-games examined the scenario of conflict with Japan in the spring of 1900. The games were conducted under the supervision of Rear Admiral Nicholas Illarionovich Skrydlov, and their participants included representatives from the War Ministry's Main Staff. The participants pointed out that the reinforcement of the fleet in the Pacific Ocean with newly constructed vessels had begun to materialize only after considerable delay. As a result the squadron in 1900 was in the same position as six years before. The correlation of forces between the Russian and Japanese fleets demonstrated that the latter was substantially superior in terms of both cruisers and torpedo boats. Even if the fleet waited for the arrival of forces from European waters, the result would only provide a disputed superiority. In any case the initial inferiority of the Russian fleet would not permit undertaking offensive operations at the beginning of the war.²⁸

²⁶ Leitenant Beklemishchev, *Strategicheskaia zadacha na kursakh voenno-morskikh nauk Nikolaevskoi Morskoi Akademii. Voobrazhaemaia voina Rossii s Iaponiei v dekabre 1895 goda* (SPB, 1896), 1–6, 24, 29–31.

²⁷ Choi Dokkiu, "Morskoe ministerstvo i politika Rossii na Dal'nem Vostoke, 1895–1903," *Ezhegodnik Sankt-Peterburgskogo nauchnogo obshchestva istorikov i arkhivistov*, I (1996), 149–176.

²⁸ Leitenant Beklemishchev, *Voina na Dal'nem Vostoke—Otchet po strategicheskimi zaniatiiam 1900 na kurse voenno-morskikh nauk pri Nikolaevskoi Morskoi Akademii*, 2 vols. (SPB, 1900), 1, 20–21, 46.

Taking into account the small number of Russian troops in the Far East and the possibility of a Japanese landing on the Asiatic mainland due to the weakness of the Russian fleet, the Russian army would have to fight defensive and delaying actions until the arrival of reinforcements from Siberia and European Russia. The representatives of the War Ministry's Main Staff argued that the vastness of the theater permitted defense only at its most important points. In this respect the defense of Kwantung was not crucial to the overall outcome of the war, as it was believed that the main Japanese objective would be to capture Korea. First of all, the Japanese would have four-five months at their disposal after the outbreak of war before the concentration of substantial Russian land forces capable of undertaking decisive offensive operations. Second, since the Japanese could conduct unopposed landings, the most secure area for staging the concentration of the Russian army was far up in the northern part of Manchuria and on the borders of the Russian maritime province with Korea.²⁹ Therefore even if Kwantung were attacked it should only be perceived as a secondary point of defense, whose role would be to assist Russian land operations by burdening those of the enemy. The defense of Kwantung should be based on the creation of a strong ground fortification system on the peninsula and its manning by a large garrison. Given these strategic parameters, the provision of support to the defense of the fortress by the main fleet would simply distract naval forces from more important tasks, while Port Arthur itself was not anyway suitable as a reliable naval base.³⁰ The only reasonable naval assistance that could be provided to Kwantung would be the stationing of a torpedo flotilla at Port Arthur that could act in conjunction with its garrison.³¹

Instead, the participants of the game suggested that the Russian main squadron should be stationed at Vladivostok in the Sea of Japan, in order to oppose landing operations against the port itself and the maritime province. At the same time cruisers should be deployed at Port Arthur for action in the Yellow Sea. The existence of two exits from Vladivostok harbor in contrast to the single and

²⁹ The maritime province consisted of the Russian Far Eastern territory with the exception of Kwantung.

³⁰ Both Vladivostok and Port Arthur were poorly positioned, inadequately defended, and lacked both facilities and the land communications to support a large fleet.

³¹ Beklemishcher, *Voina na Dal'nem Vostoke*, 39, 163–170.

narrow one at Port Arthur meant that it would be difficult for the Japanese fleet to blockade the main part of the Russian fleet. In any case the significantly superior Japanese navy could at any time paralyze the action of a Russian squadron based at Port Arthur and Kwantung. Furthermore the positioning of the fleet in Vladivostok would allow the possibility of disengaging troops from the defense of Vladivostok for immediate use in northern Manchuria.³²

The 1900 games signified changed perceptions for operational plans of the squadron, which were also expressed in practice. The spring 1900 maneuvers of the Pacific Squadron were based upon the premise that the enemy would have superiority at sea, while the main forces of the Russian squadron would be absent from the vicinity of Port Arthur. The plan of the maneuvers envisaged the use of coastal defense vessels and torpedo boats reacting in combination with the port garrison to an enemy landing in the southern part of Kwantung, while at the same time the port was blockaded by the Japanese.³³

Meanwhile, by the end of 1899 an alternative view concerning the value of Kwantung was being developed by the Governor-General of the maritime province, General Nicholas Ivanovich Grodekov. He believed that the Japanese would not stop in Korea but that they would proceed into southern Manchuria, therefore reducing the strategic importance of the maritime province. In contrast to the views of the Chief of the War Ministry's Main Staff, General Adjutant Viktor Viktorovich Sakharov, Grodekov argued that the loss of Port Arthur, which was not well defended, would be a tremendous blow to Russian prestige in the region. More significantly, the protection of the south Manchurian railway branch was important not only for financial reasons but also for the concentration of Russian troops in Port Arthur and for a move in the direction of Korea. Following reinforcement, Russian troops should use southern Manchuria as a spring board for offensive action into Korea. Despite the Main Staff's opinion, War Minister Aleksei Nikolaevich Kuropatkin was also leaning to the Grodekov point of view.³⁴

³² Ibid., 14–16.

³³ RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 1, d. 2011, l. 588.

³⁴ VIK, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, I, 177–91.

A year later, in the spring of 1901 the issue of developing operational plans for the Far East assumed great urgency, as the danger of armed conflict with Japan seemed imminent, thanks to the Russian occupation of Manchuria. In March 1901 Vice Admiral Alekseev, the supreme commander of Russian naval and land forces in the Far East, alluded to the absence of an operational plan and requested from the commander of the Far Eastern Squadron, Vice Admiral Skrydlov, the formulation of operational calculations.³⁵

Considering that Skrydlov had supervised the 1900 war-games, it is not surprising that his views echoed the conclusions of the Naval Academy. He believed that Japan would land troops to occupy Korea long before Russia could have an equivalent number of troops in theater. Having occupied Korea, Japan would then not necessarily proceed into Manchuria but would instead assume a strategically superior defensive position and wait for the Russian onslaught. Even though Russia should ideally have a good and well equipped port on the southern coast of Korea, realistically the acquisition of such a port would result in war. Since Port Arthur was situated at a distance from the Korea Straits, Skrydlov assumed that it would only marginally influence the course of the campaign. In addition, from a naval perspective Port Arthur was not in a state to supply and repair the squadron. The anchorage was not well protected and had only one narrow exit, which could be easily blockaded. Based on the above reckoning Skrydlov argued that it would be wise to station the fleet in the better-fortified and equipped base at Vladivostok.³⁶

He next turned attention to the purely naval aspect of the issue. He argued that even though the fleet should ideally be in a position to disrupt Japanese naval communications with the mainland, under the present naval situation the Japanese navy was superior both numerically and qualitatively to the Russian squadron, having at its disposal new and powerful vessels. The Japanese fleet could also rely upon many well-fortified ports along with other infrastructure located on the Japanese islands. Even if the Russian squadron

³⁵ RGAVMF, f. 418 [Morskoi General'nyi Shtab], op. 1, d. 5954, ll. 3, 16. The information cited as f. 418, op. 1, l. 5954 is based on the notes drafted by a lieutenant working on the Naval General Staff Study of 1912. As far as I know this draft remains the only source that treats in detail the foundations of the Russian operational naval pre-war plan.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 16–18.

were reinforced with additional vessels dispatched from European waters, shortcomings in squadron maneuvers, together with insufficient training, personnel, and supplies would not permit a high state of war-readiness. Therefore the main squadron should move to Vladivostok and remain there, though Skrydlov also toyed with the idea of simultaneously deploying cruisers to Port Arthur.³⁷

Following Skrydlov's reply, Alekseev, and above all his Chief of Naval Staff, Rear Admiral Vil'gel'm Karlovich Vitgeft, also examined the issue. In contrast to Skrydlov's argument, they correctly believed that Japanese action would not just be restricted to Korea, but would also attempt to expel the Russians from both Kwantung and Manchuria. Consequently a potential Japanese move into the latter two locales moved the key area of operations to the western coast of Korea. Upon this premise Vladivostok was too far away to serve as the base for the fleet. However if the fleet were based in Port Arthur it would find itself on the flank of the enemy transports carrying troops to the western coast of Korea, while at the same time the Japanese fleet would be operating at a distance from its well-equipped bases. Therefore the tactical disadvantages of Port Arthur were counterbalanced by its strategic advantages, and this was why Vladivostok should only be used for secondary operations. In relation to operational planning, as the Japanese plan depended on the landing of troops on the mainland, the task of the Russian fleet should be to halt such attempts, or if unsuccessful, then to disrupt enemy communications between the mainland and the Japanese islands. According to Vitgeft a comparison of the two fleets suggested that the Japanese superiority in terms of battleships and first class cruisers was not that great.³⁸ In addition, if Russia conducted *guerre de course* operations through the use of three cruisers based at Vladivostok, then they would at least distract six Japanese cruisers of the same class and consequently significantly weaken the main part of the fleet.³⁹

Alekseev, whose approval was required for any operational plans, was in agreement with Vitgeft's views. More importantly, Alekseev believed that the numerical superiority of the Japanese fleet was not

³⁷ Ibid., 17–18.

³⁸ In 1901 Japan had six battleships over Russia's five, and five first-class cruisers over Russia's four.

³⁹ RGAVMF, f. 418, op. 1, d. 5954, ll. 19–20.

that significant since he erroneously considered that modern warships in general—including Japanese vessels—often had technical weaknesses.⁴⁰ As regards the clearly strategic part of the argument, it is clear that Alekseev believed in the importance of Manchuria. In March 1901 he wrote to Kuropatkin calling for the permanent occupation of Manchuria by stressing its importance as a railway passage and, even more significantly, as a staging area for the large number of troops required for a subsequent move against either China or Korea. He added that it would take significantly more time to concentrate the same number of troops if dispatched from the Vladivostok area.⁴¹ It is therefore no surprise that he agreed with the Far Eastern army staff view, which called for the massing of troops in Manchuria. Consequently, in order to provide for sufficient time to secure their concentration, the fleet should attempt to halt a Japanese landing on the central and northwestern coast of Korea and thereby delay Japanese military operations in Manchuria.⁴²

The overall situation was discussed at a conference on 11 April 1901, which was held with the participation of the entire naval Far Eastern naval high command and local army personnel. Alekseev supported by Vitgeft decided to override Skrydlov's objections.⁴³ On the following day Alekseev issued an order setting out the foundations of the Russian naval operational plan for the Far East, which defined Russian fleet actions at the beginning of the war. The main Russian forces should be based in Port Arthur and would have the tasks of blocking the enemy fleet's access to the Yellow Sea and halting landing operations on the western coast of Korea, particularly at Chemulpo or at the Yalu estuary. The second task of the Russian fleet would be to distract part of the enemy fleet from the main theater of operations through a cruiser detachment based in Vladivostok. The detachment would undertake operations in the rear of the enemy, threaten lines of communication, attack commercial vessels, and also conduct raids on the least fortified parts of the Japanese coastline.⁴⁴

⁴⁰ According to Alekseev's erroneous perception, therefore, the newer Japanese fleet did not provide a substantial advantage over the older vessels of the Russian fleet. Unfortunately the existing sources do not allow for a more detailed analysis of Alekseev's rationale on this point.

⁴¹ RGAVMF, f. 763 [Kollektsiia o Russko-iaponskoi voine], op. 1, d. 53, l. 52.

⁴² RGAVMF, f. 418, op. 1, d. 5954, l. 21.

⁴³ Ibid., 21.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 4, 22.

Even though available archival sources do not contain detailed information concerning the exact discussion that took place during the conference of 11 April 1901, they nevertheless provide an indication that Alekseev was at least sympathetic to the army's Far Eastern staff views for a concentration in southern and central Manchuria. The successful implementation of such a plan ultimately relied upon buying the required time for the risk-free concentration of troops in Manchuria. A direct implication was that Alekseev was prepared to use the fleet in order to halt a Japanese landing in the northwestern coast of Korea and thus buy time for the army. In retrospect Alekseev's judgement that the Japanese would invade Manchuria was correct. However what proved to be catastrophic was his overly-optimistic belief that the Russian Pacific Squadron was sufficiently strong to carry out its assigned task.

Despite Alekseev's resolution, Skrydlov continued to disagree passionately with the decision taken. However Alekseev did not waver, and the disagreement between the two highest command figures in the Pacific was eventually resolved in the autumn of 1902 through the replacement of Skrydlov by Vice Admiral Oskar Viktorovich Stark.

In late August 1901 Alekseev and Grodekov presented the tsar with an army operational plan. The plan stated that in the initial stages of war, due to Japanese superiority, the Russian troops should avoid a decisive battle and near certain defeat and instead should remain on the defensive until the arrival of reinforcements from Siberia, European Russia, and the Caucasus. Russian land forces stationed in Vladivostok and Port Arthur for the defense of south Ussuri and Kwantung should be of limited size. Instead the main forces should be concentrated in central and southern Manchuria, and specifically on the Mukden-Liaoyang-Haichen line, where they should initially maintain a defensive posture. It was thus extremely important to delay the confrontation between main ground forces by not allowing a Japanese landing on the western coast of Korea, in order to buy time for the safe concentration and reinforcement of the Russian army. On 5 August 1901, this deployment was justified by Alekseev to Kuropatkin, when the Admiral argued that a significant Japanese landing on the western coast of Korea close to the borders of south Manchuria would be impossible due to the presence of the Russian squadron at Port Arthur. He also suggested that even though Port Arthur did not satisfy all the prerequisites for a major

naval base, the importance of the navy's task for the land forces necessitated the selection of Port Arthur as the main fleet base.⁴⁵

In the autumn of 1901, squadron maneuvers conducted in the vicinity of Port Arthur and the western coast of Korea under Alekseev's leadership seem to have confirmed his faith that the Russian squadron was strong enough to deny enemy landings in the River Yalu estuary on the Korean-Manchurian border and on the northwestern coast of Korea. However the report of the maneuver also stated that the above task could be secured only if there were a significant number of Russian scout cruisers and destroyers in addition to the main squadron.⁴⁶

1901 was a key point in the formulation of the basic and concrete strategic objectives, which remained in place until the outbreak of the war in 1904. It should nevertheless be stressed that a detailed operational plan was not developed in that year either for the main squadron or for the cruiser detachment.

Alekseev noted the absence of such a plan for the cruiser detachment and in the spring of 1902 ordered the preparation of a plan. By early 1903 Rear Admiral Konstantin Pavlovich Kuz'mich, the appointed commander of the detachment, prepared a plan. Kuz'mich argued that the threat presented by the Russian cruisers must be serious, in order to distract a significant part of the enemy fleet from the main theater of operations. Consequently Russian cruisers should leave Vladivostok and the Sea of Japan and mainly operate on the eastern and southeastern coastline of Japan. All of the important commercial Japanese ports, which would also serve for the dispatch of troops to the Asian mainland along with the main railway lines, were situated there.⁴⁷

However, in March 1903 Stark pointed out that under the current correlation of forces Japan would be superior to both the cruiser detachment and the main squadron.⁴⁸ Furthermore Stark expressed

⁴⁵ VIK, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, I, 191–96.

⁴⁶ RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 1, d. 2440, l. 38; RGAVMF f. 467 [Vremennyi Morskoi Shtab Namestnika na Dal'nem Vostoke], op. 1, d., 49, l. 6.

⁴⁷ RGAVMF, f. 418, op. 1, d. 5954, ll. 6–7.

⁴⁸ Early in the spring of 1903, Russia could deploy four vessels for cruiser operations, while Japan could pit against them six strong armored cruisers. At the same time, the enemy main forces would have at their disposal six battleships against four of the Russian squadron.

concern about the practical difficulties and problems that cruiser operations might encounter, which would prevent them from exerting a decisive influence on the enemy operations. For example, Russian cruisers could be easily blockaded in Vladivostok and the Sea of Japan at the beginning of the conflict. Even if they managed to secure access to the Pacific Ocean their operations would be hampered by the lack of supporting coaling stations. Based on these suppositions, Stark argued that it would be impossible to carry out the proposed cruiser operations. Even if some successful results were achieved, they still would not influence the main operations of the enemy, while simultaneously the already weak Russian squadron would lack three to four vessels with strong artillery armament. Instead he suggested that cruiser operations could be organized on a more limited scale and within the boundaries of the Sea of Japan. The cruisers could attempt to distract parts of the enemy fleet in the northern region of its communications with Korea by attacking individual or weakly convoyed transport and supply ships.⁴⁹

Although no decision was taken on this issue, the arrival of significant naval reinforcements at Port Arthur in the spring of 1903 under Rear Admiral Evald Antonovich von Shtakel'berg led to the re-evaluation of the overall foundations of the operational plan during two conferences of the naval Far Eastern high command held in April. Stark again brought up the issue of cruiser operations, noting the complete superiority that the Japanese enjoyed in terms of numbers and quality of vessels. He now supported the union of the cruisers with the main squadron.⁵⁰ However Alekseev continued to support the separate role of the cruisers and refused to consider their reassignment to the main squadron, since such a redeployment would allow the Japanese a secure environment and freedom of action in the Sea of Japan. Rear Admiral Vitgeft also argued that in any case the joining of the cruisers with the main squadron would not achieve a balance of power with the Japanese fleet. The cruisers in question would be powerless in a squadron size engagement as they were specifically constructed for *guerre de course* operations. Furthermore the moving of the three cruisers to Port Arthur would also allow Japan

⁴⁹ RGAVMF, f. 32 [Alekseev Evgenii Ivanovich, Admiral, 1843–1919] op. 1, d. 499, ll. 2–4.

⁵⁰ RGAVMF, f. 418, op. 1, d. 5954, l. 9.

to re-deploy its six cruisers and to strengthen greatly the forces of its main battle squadron.⁵¹ Apart from the cruiser issue, the most junior officer among the participants, Captain Andrei Avgustovich Ebergard, returned to the pre-1900 views and suggested that the fleet should undertake offensive operations in the Korea Straits. All the other participants were dismissive of his suggestion and in the end it was decided to maintain the existing plan foundations.⁵²

An important outcome of the conferences was that they led to the composition on 3 May 1903 of the first detailed operational plan for the squadron by Rear Admiral Vitgeft. The plan defined the main mission of naval forces in the Far East as retention of command over the Yellow Sea from the vantage of Port Arthur. The specific aim of these forces would be to prevent the landing of the Japanese army on the western coast of Korea. In addition, part of the Russian forces should be based in Vladivostok in order to distract significant units of the Japanese navy from the main theater of operations and also to protect the port and its region from potential Japanese operations. If, however, Japanese landings on the western coast of Korea were successful, then the Russian fleet should locate the enemy forces in the Yellow Sea and the Korea Straits and attempt to destroy them, thus interfering with the communications of the Japanese army with its homeland. In any case, the Russian Pacific Squadron should use Port Arthur as its main base, since operations in the Korea Straits under the present correlation of naval forces were viewed as very risky. A point of great importance was that the plan stated that the fleet should avoid suffering losses and should preserve its forces in order to retain command over the Yellow Sea and to constantly threaten Japanese landing attempts on its shores. Losses in the initial period of the war, even if the fleet were victorious, would have heavy consequences, as they would not permit

⁵¹ IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, bk. 1, 71. The cruisers *Rossia*, *Gromoboi* and *Rurik* were relatively old vessels constructed for cruiser warfare operations alone, and as such they were tactically inferior to the Japanese armored cruisers which could participate in a battleship-type naval engagement. See, V.E. Egor'ev, *Operatsii vladivostokskikh kreiserov v Russko-iaponskuiu voinu 1904–1905 g.g.* (M, 1939), 10–11, 266.

⁵² IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, bk. 1, 62–64.

the fleet to accomplish its key tasks.⁵³ The only circumstances under which the fleet should undertake offensive action in the initial period of the conflict involved the arrival of the Japanese fleet at Port Arthur, an enemy attempt to land troops at Chemulpo, Pyongyang or at the Yalu, or successful enemy landings on the southwestern coast of Korea. The above plan, apart from the introduction of several minor additions related to mine-laying schemes and the disposition and protection of the squadron in Port Arthur, was the one that was in existence when the war started in 1904.⁵⁴ It should be stressed that despite the formulation of these relatively coherent strategic considerations, one can note the conspicuous absence from the plan of any defined tactical parameters that might enhance its practical implementation.

The plan maintained the deployment of a cruiser detachment in Vladivostok. The intent was to employ this detachment for *guerre de course* operations, as well as raids against undefended ports within the limits of the Sea of Japan and attacks against the communications of a Japanese army that had landed on the eastern coast of Korea. It was believed that such actions would distract the armored cruisers of the Japanese navy and thus equalize the strength of the two main squadrons in the Yellow Sea.⁵⁵ Nevertheless, despite the provision of these general directives, a detailed operational plan for the cruisers was not yet composed. Even though by June 1903 Kuz'mich had produced a new plan, this was again not approved, and in July 1903 Rear Admiral von Shtakel'berg, who now commanded the cruiser detachment, was instructed to draw up a detailed operational plan.⁵⁶ Shtakel'berg's reply arrived in November 1903, and pointed out that the overwhelming majority of Japanese ports in the defined area of operations had no great importance, while the maritime commercial activity of these ports in wintertime was

⁵³ The idea of declining to engage in a decisive battle with the Japanese fleet was guided by a lack of sufficiently equipped repair facilities in Port Arthur.

⁵⁴ IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, bk. 1, 67–69, 80. The whole plan can be found on pp. 65–80. As mentioned in the main text, these relatively coherent strategic calculations never found reflection in sound tactical planning.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 267.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 80–82; RGAVMF, f. 523 [Otriad kreiserov v Tikhom okeane], op. 1, d., 4, ll. 114–115.

minimal. In addition, one of the cruisers, namely the *Riurik*, did not have sufficient speed to participate in operations in unison with the other cruisers. He therefore suggested that the main tasks of the detachment should be limited to opposing landing operations on the eastern coast of Korea and the Russian maritime province and also to disrupting enemy communications between Korea and the Japanese islands.⁵⁷

Meanwhile, late in September 1903 the War Ministry's Main Staff in St. Petersburg asked the ground force section of Alekseev's staff to provide information on the status of its operational plans for the Far East. In response Alekseev's army staff requested its naval counterpart to answer whether the navy could fulfil its task and force Japan to land its troops in the south of Korea rather than in the Yellow Sea and thus allow time for the concentration of troops in southern Manchuria. Vitgeft's reply was unequivocal. He argued that if the squadron were not defeated, then major landing operations in the north of the Yellow Sea were inconceivable. He also added that defeat of the Russian fleet in the Yellow Sea under the current correlation of forces was improbable. This view was also approved by Alekseev, and based on these estimates the army proceeded to draw up the operational plan that governed at the beginning of the war. This plan was based on the notion that no enemy landings would take place north of Chinampo on the western coast of Korea. Therefore, the march of Japanese troops to the north would take some time and this would allow for the reinforcement and concentration of Russian forces in southern Manchuria.⁵⁸

In December 1903, the reinforcement of the squadron with one battleship and one cruiser once again encouraged a re-examination of the plans of the squadron. On 31 December 1903, during the last conference of the high command of the naval forces in the Far East, Alekseev was more optimistic than ever. He argued that the arrival of reinforcements and the addition of the units of the cruiser detachment would make Russian forces equal in strength to the Japanese. Once again Captain Ebergard argued that even with the existing forces it would be possible to threaten the Japanese coast-

⁵⁷ RGAVMF, f. 418, op. 1, d. 5680, ll. 10–11.

⁵⁸ IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, bk. 1, 232–33.

line and undertake offensive action. However Alekseev was of the opinion that only "after the arrival of reinforcements and transports did he consider it possible to carry out changes to the existing plan and to advance towards the Japanese coasts to defeat the enemy."⁵⁹ To this effect he also requested calculations of the coal consumption needed for moving the entire squadron closer to the Japanese coast-line. Stark and Vitgeft agreed with Alekseev's view on a possible change of plans only after the arrival of reinforcements from the Mediterranean, and following that, the re-deployment of the cruisers from Vladivostok.⁶⁰

Following the conference, Alekseev and Stark continued to insist on the formulation of a plan for a cruiser offensive despite the lack of major commercial ports and maritime commerce in the defined area of operations. On 9 January 1904 the framework of an operational plan was dispatched to Shtakel'berg, which stated that attacks against the numerous fishing boats and civil coastal facilities such as lighthouses would incite panic amongst the coastal population of Japan and create a strong impression throughout the country.⁶¹ However, by the beginning of the war a detailed operational plan for the squadron had not been composed.

Despite the overwhelming confidence that Alekseev and Vitgeft had demonstrated in the capabilities and strength of the Pacific squadron, the war proved the fallacy of their beliefs. An impartial analysis concerning the actual strength of Russian naval forces in the Far East comes closer to the view expressed a few years earlier by Vice Admiral Skrydlov. In January 1904 the Russian Pacific Squadron consisted of seven battleships, four armored cruisers, seven cruisers, six gunboats and 37 torpedo boats. On the other side the Japanese squadron consisted of six battleships, six armored cruisers, 12 cruisers, eight gunboats and 46 torpedo vessels. Even though the Japanese fleet was superior to the Russian by only one ship as regards battleships and armored cruisers, the Japanese enjoyed the advantage that their vessels, and particularly their battleships, were one-class vessels of new construction. In contrast, Russian battleships were

⁵⁹ Ibid., 83. This reference to reinforcements was related to the dispatch of a reinforcement squadron under Rear Admiral Andrei Andreevich Virenius, which was on its way to the Far East. It consisted of one battleship, one new battle-worthy cruiser, the *Aurora*, and a small number of other vessels.

⁶⁰ Ibid., 82–84.

⁶¹ RGAVMF, f. 418, op. 1, d., 5954, ll. 12–13.

in the main older and had been constructed under different programs. In effect, out of the seven Russian battleships four were of different classes with different armaments, speeds and tactical capabilities. The Russian squadron was in general outgunned in terms of medium caliber armament, less well armored, and subject to a myriad of technical, qualitative, and supply related problems.⁶² The Russians also lacked adequate repair and maintenance facilities and were tied to a single, vulnerable main operational base. This set of vulnerabilities was compounded even further after the initial Japanese surprise attack that shifted the correlation of naval forces beyond any doubt in Japan's favor.

Even though the formulation of the strategic and operational planning for the Pacific squadron was conducted by the high command situated in the Far East, several sets of strategic considerations also evolved in St. Petersburg. The naval war game of 1902–1903 was devoted to examining the scenario of a war with Japan in 1905, in the period after the completion of the 1898 program. In 1905 the Russian squadron was expected to enjoy superiority in terms of battleships, having at its disposal ten vessels to Japan's six. However the Russian superiority in battleships would be nullified by the large number of Japanese cruisers, particularly armored cruisers of new construction.⁶³ Consequently in 1905 the naval forces of Russia and Japan should be considered equal. Under this premise, the conclusion of the participants in the games was that the Russian squadron would have sufficient presence to force the Japanese to land their army in the southern part of Korea, thereby affording sufficient time for Russian ground forces to be concentrated in Manchuria. However it was noted that if Russian forces had been weaker (as they were in 1903), then the Japanese would manage to land large forces in a short time in northwestern Korea, thus confronting Russian ground forces in Manchuria with impossible odds.⁶⁴

The game's report also noted several important problems facing the Russian squadron, including shortages of personnel, training,

⁶² V.A. Zolotarev and I.A. Kozlov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.—Bor'ba na more* (M, 1990), 51–54.

⁶³ At this time armored cruisers were equal to battleships in armament and speed, but not in armor and size.

⁶⁴ N.L. Klado and L.O. Kerber, *Otchet o prakticheskikh zaniatiakh po strategii v Nikolaevskoi Akademii v prodolzhenii zimy 1902–1903* (SPB, 1904), 14–19.

ammunition, and supplies. Another major problem included the tactical dilemmas associated with stationing the squadron at Port Arthur. It was pointed out that the Russian squadron was insufficiently strong and that the absence of the Vladivostok cruisers further increased the danger.⁶⁵

In October 1903 Captain Lev Alekseevich Brusilov, designated to head the new operational section within the GMSH, in line with the conclusions of the 1902–03 war game reported that at present the Russian navy was completely unprepared for a war in the Far East. Therefore, Russia should strive to avoid war even if it had to pay with significant concessions.⁶⁶ However as Alekseev and his naval staff were not subordinate to the Naval Ministry, let alone the GMSH, these considerations and particularly those of the Naval Academy were never dispatched to the Far Eastern high command by GMSH and its chief, Rear Admiral Zinovii Petrovich Rozhestvenskii. From available evidence it seems that Rozhestvenskii himself was actually more optimistic than the realities of the situation in the Far East permitted. In November 1903, the Chief of the GMSH commented in relation to the Brusilov report that, “*now more than ever we are prepared for war with Japan . . .*”⁶⁷ It has to be stressed, however, that even if Brusilov's appreciation had been communicated to the Far East as the official view of the GMSH, it is very doubtful whether the report could have exerted any influence, let alone changed, the well-entrenched views of Alekseev and his staff.

Defeat in war leads inevitably to close and critical analysis of pre-war operational planning. In the case of Russian naval planning before 1904 it is clear that the navy's options were severely constrained beyond the Russian Admiralty's control. Russia's meager resources were badly over-strained by the attempt to create a battle fleet with attendant light forces, as well as infrastructure in the Pacific theater. St. Petersburg's largest shortcoming was probably the window of opportunity given to the Japanese by the prolongation of Russia's construction program until 1905. With the Japanese program complete in 1903, the temptation for Tokyo to strike first was

⁶⁵ Ibid., 132–133.

⁶⁶ RGAVMF, f. 417, op. 1, d., 2831, l. 2.

⁶⁷ IKpriMGSh, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, bk. 1, 106.

overwhelming. By that time, however, St. Petersburg had allowed itself to be drawn into an over-extended position through a number of diplomatic and geopolitical miscalculations. Retreat through concessions to the Japanese would have required both significant loss of prestige and some risks to the long-term security of Russia's existing territories in the Far East.

Nevertheless, naval planning and the miscalculations of naval leaders must bear part of the responsibility for the subsequent disaster. Viceroy Alekseev's pre-war calculations that his fleet would be able to delay Japanese landings on the northwestern coast of Korea and southern Manchuria proved too optimistic. Alekseev can be faulted for the very large element of risk in his calculations, for underestimating the Japanese, and for believing that the deployment of the cruiser squadron in Vladivostok would cause the Japanese to detach their armored cruisers from the main fleet. Moreover he also failed both to produce detailed tactical analyses or plans for the interdiction of enemy landings and to take adequate precautions against a surprise attack. It remains partly a matter of speculation why Alekseev made these mistakes. Undoubtedly, however, it would not have been easy for this ambitious and aggressive sailor to admit that, despite the large sums poured out to create a Pacific fleet, the latter still could not guarantee the security of Port Arthur or allow the army to concentrate forward to defend most of Manchuria. For a senior officer of what was very definitely Russia's junior service to insist that Russia must commence operations in practice by giving up Port Arthur and most of Manchuria would have clashed with naval pride, personal ambition, and the aggressive courage required of the model fighting officer.

If naval operational planning had been conducted in St. Petersburg rather than at Port Arthur, it is by no means self-evident that the results would have been different. Many of the same factors could have influenced decisions and the same calculations might well have been made. In late 1903, for instance, it appears that Rear Admiral Rozhdestvenskii shared Alekseev's optimism. At the highest levels of the navy both the careful operational analysis conducted by the Nicholas Naval Academy and Captain Brusilov's views were likely to be tempered by political considerations and a concern for the navy's status in the Petersburg ministerial jungle. Perhaps the capital's worst influences on naval operational designs might have been avoided if they had not mainly relied on the conclusions of games

played out in an educational institution. Conventional wisdom would later hold that operational considerations be centered instead upon a firmly integrated and institutionalized planning process performed by an organ such as a general staff, the advice of which would form a powerful source of guidance within the Russian navy's command and highest administrative echelons.

CHAPTER ELEVEN

THE RUSSIAN NAVY AT WAR, 1904–05

Pertti Luntinen and Bruce W. Menning

Until the very beginning of the 20th century, the Imperial Russian naval presence in the Far East was minimal. Only in 1895 did the Russian Mediterranean Squadron appear off Japan for coercive reinforcement of Russian-led peacemaking efforts to end the Sino-Japanese War. Otherwise, the Russians maintained a mere handful of cruisers and gunboats in the Pacific. The naval facility at Vladivostok was under-developed, isolated from Russia proper, ice-bound in the winter, and distant from the Korea Straits. Meanwhile, tsarist naval assets remained firmly wedded to requirements in European waters, especially the Baltic and Black seas. With potentially separate and far-flung naval theaters to support, it was the task of the Mediterranean Squadron to reinforce either in Europe or the Far East. Only in late 1897 did the Russians conceive a supplementary shipbuilding program for the Far East with the objective of local naval parity with the Japanese by 1905.¹

Three related developments made the Russian Pacific Squadron possible. The first was the accession in 1894 of Nicholas II, a tsar who adopted the imperialist and navalist views of his time. The second was construction between 1891 and 1903 of the Trans-Siberian Railroad to forge an overland link between European Russia and the tsar's maritime possessions in the Far East. The third was formal acquisition by lease in early 1898 of Port Arthur, a warm water port on the Zhili Gulf with access to the Yellow Sea and the Pacific.²

Despite many inherent disadvantages, Port Arthur soon became the focal point of Russian naval activities in the Far East. During

¹ For a useful general introduction, see, F.N. Gromov (ed.), *Na rubezhe vekov. Tri veka Rossiiskogo flota*, 3 vols. (SPB, 1996), I, 317–49.

² See, S.A. Gladkikh, "Problema priobreteniiia Rossiei nezamerzaiushchego voennogo porta na Dal'nem Vostoke," *Gangut*, no. 16 (1998), 2–15.

the Boxer rebellion of 1900, gunboats from the new Russian base fought under the British Admiral Sir Edward Seymour to subdue Chinese coastal fortifications, while troops from the Russian garrison participated in the advance on Beijing.³ Late in 1901, following completion of the South Manchurian Railroad between Port Arthur and Harbin, lead elements of the growing Russian Pacific Squadron shifted their operational base from Vladivostok to Port Arthur. In August 1903, when Vice Admiral Evgenii Ivanovich Alekseev, the naval and ground force commander at Port Arthur, became Viceroy of the Far East, his staff assumed overall planning responsibilities for the ground and naval defense of the region. As Alekseev's chief of staff, Rear Admiral Vil'gel'm Karlovich Vitgeft presided over the resulting poorly coordinated planning effort.

Vitgeft had to deal with two different planning cultures. On the one hand, he was heir to ground force plans that had undergone periodic update since 1900 to contend with the likelihood of a Japanese invasion of Manchuria, together with possible assaults against Vladivostok and the upper reaches of the Amur. Under Major General Vasilii Egorovich Flug's staff supervision, the late-1903 version of these plans called for initial defense and delay while ground reinforcements from Siberia and European Russia slowly concentrated between Mukden and Liaoyang for an offensive to succor Port Arthur and drive the Japanese from Manchuria. To these tasks, General Adjutant Aleksei Nikolaevich Kuropatkin in February 1904 would add the conquest of Korea and the subjugation of Japan.⁴

Naval plans, on the other hand, were far more sketchy and subject to the Viceroy's direct interference. Rear Admiral Nicholas Illarionovich Skrydlov, who initially commanded the Russian Pacific Squadron, wanted to shift his wartime base to Vladivostok, but Alekseev regarded that port as too distant from the potential theater of operations, especially if the main Russian squadron must prevent Japanese landings on the western coast of Korea. Therefore, Alekseev insisted that the Russian Pacific Squadron remain at Port Arthur both to dominate the northern reaches of the Yellow Sea and to forestall Japanese

³ A.V. Skortsov, "Kanonerskaia lodka Siberskoi flotilii 'Giliak,'" *Gangut*, no. 22 (2000), 24–40.

⁴ L.A. Zaitsev and Iu.I. Chernov, "Sily i plany storon," in I.I. Rostunov (ed.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskoi voiny 1904–1905 gg.* (M., 1977), 95–6.

landings on the Korean littoral north of Chemulpo, the port city for Seoul. To harass Japanese communications and to divert heavy units from the Japanese Combined Fleet, Alekseev would leave three armored and one protected cruiser at Vladivostok. Beyond these initial dispositions, no operational plans governed. Their absence was not unusual for navies of the period, since staffs rarely possessed sufficient intelligence materials to accurately anticipate enemy courses of action, and since naval commanders in far-flung locales enjoyed relatively more freedom of action than their ground force counterparts. Short of full naval parity with the Japanese, Alekseev's general concept was to control only the Zhili and Korean gulfs, with emphasis on the approaches to Port Arthur and the nearby coastline of Korea.⁵

Russian failure to attain parity had resulted from an ambitious Japanese shipbuilding program, coupled with judicious acquisitions from abroad and effective naval leadership. In 1896, once Tokyo realized that Russia intended to continue its eastward expansion and possibly even gain control over Korea—a nation considered vital to Japan's national security—the Japanese launched a shipbuilding program scheduled for completion 1905, but actually finished in 1903. Ironically, Japan's new navy was largely financed with indemnities paid by China after defeat in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895. Adding insult to injury, the Chinese indemnities came from European loans arranged by Count Sergei Iul'evich Witte, the Russian finance minister. The very capable leadership of this new navy lay in the hands of Admiral Yamamoto Gonnokyo, the naval minister, and his chief of staff, Vice Admiral Ito Sekeyuki. By 1903, meanwhile, Vice Admiral Togo Heihachiro had emerged to command both the Combined Fleet and the Japanese main battle squadron. Two especially energetic officers, Vice Admirals Kamimura Hikonojo and Kataoka Shichiro, respectively commanded the cruiser squadron and a secondary squadron of older cruisers. Togo's main battle squadron consisted of six battleships, nine armored cruisers, a dozen light or protected cruisers, about 30 torpedo boats, and a several gunboats.⁶

⁵ Russian naval plans for the Far East appear in V.A. Zolotarev and I.A. Kozlov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 gg.: Bor'ba na more* (M, 1990), 65–8. This slender volume in many ways remains the best recent history in Russian of the naval war in the Far East.

⁶ Japanese preparations for war and naval order of battle are detailed in Julian

To contend with this mighty adversarial force, the Russians possessed a slight edge in the number of battleships, but were markedly inferior in cruisers and torpedo boats. At the outbreak of war, the Russian Pacific Squadron under nominal command of Admiral Oskar Viktorovich Stark consisted of seven battleships, the *Peresvet* (1898), *Petropavlovsk* (1894), *Pobeda* (1900), *Poltava* (1894), *Retvizan* (1900), *Sevastopol* (1895), and *Tsesarevich* (1901). Armament varied, but in the main they each mounted four 12-inch and twelve 6-inch guns. Admiral Alekseev's decision to deploy at Vladivostok three of his armored cruisers, the *Gromoboi*, *Rossia*, and *Riurik*, plus the protected cruiser *Bogatyr*, deprived the Port Arthur squadron of the 9-inch or 8-inch main guns of the first three and their equally impressive secondary armament. Their deployment to Vladivostok left Port Arthur with only one armored cruiser, the *Baian*, and the smaller cruisers, *Askold*, *Boiarin*, *Diana*, *Novik*, and *Pallada*, with each of the latter group mounting eight to twelve 6-inch guns. In addition, the squadron at Port Arthur counted some 20 torpedo boats, together with several gunboats and miscellaneous auxiliaries, including the very important minelayers, the *Amur* and *Yenisei*. Russian torpedo boats were smaller than their Japanese counterparts and inferior in their design and engineering characteristics.⁷ As war broke out, reinforcements under Rear Admiral Andrei Andreevich Virenus, including an additional battleship (the *Oslabia*), two protected cruisers, an unprotected cruiser, and 11 torpedo boats, were steaming into the Red Sea, but they were recalled to St. Petersburg. Until several months into the war, the Russians had no concrete plans for reinforcement of the Far East from naval assets in the Baltic. International agreement precluded transit of the Black Sea Fleet through the Turkish Straits to the Far East.⁸

To win the war, Togo had either to eliminate or to contain the Russian Pacific Squadron and to transport the Japanese army and its supplies safely to Korea and Manchuria. His primary mission was

S. Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War*, 2 vols., reprint ed. (Annapolis, 1994), I, 68–78. Corbett's treatment, relying heavily on contemporary Japanese sources, remains a classic account of the war at sea.

⁷ A reprint edition of two Soviet-era classics appears in N.A. Levitskii and P.D. Bykov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina* (M, 2003), with the Russian naval order of battle on 465–69, and 620–26; see, also, *Conway's All the World's Fighting Ships, 1860–1905* (London, 1979), 179–216.

⁸ Zolotarev and Kozlov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 gg.: Bor'ba na more*, 47.

to attain and maintain control of the sea in the theater of operations. Because Togo's capital ships constituted his most valuable and irreplaceable asset, he could not expose them directly to the coastal artillery and minefields of Port Arthur. First, he needed to sting the Russian battleships to reduce the odds, then entice them into the open sea for a Mahanian-style main-force shoot-out. During the chilly night of 8–9 February 1904, five Japanese torpedo boats succeeded in approaching the Russian Pacific Squadron at anchorage in Port Arthur's unprotected outer roadstead. They loosed 19 torpedoes, three of which hit their targets. The *Retvizan* and *Tsesarevich* were holed, but not mortally, while the *Pallada* suffered serious damage. Thus, the Russo-Japanese War began with Togo's election initially to pursue a cautious strategy of attrition and containment. Although he was wresting control of the sea from the Russians for freedom of Japanese naval movements, his inability to eliminate the Russian Pacific squadron produced a classic example of the baleful effect of "a fleet in being." Even bottled up, the Russian squadron would become the bane of Togo's existence, and more importantly, the primary rationale for later bloody ground assaults against Port Arthur.⁹

Events on 9 February revealed just how seriously the Japanese accepted their quest for control of the sea. Across the Yellow Sea at Chemulpo two Russian vessels, the cruiser *Variag* and the gunboat *Koreets*, monitored local developments and exercised presence. Cut off from telegraphic communications, they came under fire from Admiral Uriu Sokichi's superior cruiser force, including the *Asama*. After a brief, lop-sided duel that left the *Variag* burning, the Russians were forced to scuttle their ships. Uriu's mission was to convoy landing troops that would form the backbone of General Kuroki Tametomo's invading First Army. Kuroki's mission was to link up with Japanese troops coming from Pusan and other ports for an overland march to the Yalu. With the issue at Port Arthur still in doubt, Korea must be secured before the Russian army could move south from Manchuria. Otherwise, the kingdom might become impossible to retake once Russian occupiers had entered the peninsula in force. Moreover, Kuroki's army was to become one of the

⁹ For the war's opening moves at sea, see the initial chapters of Girard Piuoffre, *La guerre russo-japonaise sur mer* (Nantes, 1999); Corbett's *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War*, I, 79–101, affords detailed coverage in two-sided perspective.

tentacles that would eventually assail Russian troop concentrations in Manchuria.¹⁰

Back at Port Arthur on 9 February, Togo dispatched his cruisers to investigate the results of his torpedo attack. With the *Mikasa* and the main battle squadron nearby, Rear Admiral Dewa Shigeto's cruisers engaged the initially confused Russian Pacific Squadron in a brief melee that soon drew in Admiral Togo's battle line. To meet the challenge, the Russians laboriously formed their own line abreast, while supporting coastal batteries gradually joined the fray. After a 40-minute exchange of fire, the effects of which were largely attenuated by extended ranges and smoke, Togo broke off the action. His flagship had been hit, though not seriously. More importantly, Admiral Dewa's half-hearted reconnaissance in force seemed to indicate that the previous night's torpedo attack had damaged only two Russian battleships! The Russian response had been largely ineffective—joint gunnery had registered only 11 minor hits—but it was sufficiently intimidating to warn Togo off. Thus, the Japanese failed to press home their overwhelming advantage, and the sober realization dawned that Togo must dedicate precious assets to forestall the Russian squadron from challenging Japan's growing command of the sea.¹¹

Togo would eventually adopt various ploys either to cage the wounded lion or lure it into the open. On 23–24 February, after the Russian squadron had retreated into Port Arthur's protected inner anchorage, he sent out five expendable blocking ships to seal the harbor's entrance. However, effective defensive fires from the *Retvizan*, assorted auxiliaries, and the Russians' nagging coastal batteries stopped the ships and their escorts short of the scuttling objective in the narrow access channel. A similar nighttime attempt on 26–27 March failed for the same reason, with the addition of effective Russian employment of illuminating searchlights.¹²

In the weeks following Togo's initial assault, neither Vice Admiral Stark, who remained nominal commander of the Pacific Squadron, nor Rear Admiral Vitgeft proved effective in restoring the morale and combat effectiveness of their ships' dispirited crews. It was only on 7 March, when Vice Admiral Stepan Osipovich Makarov arrived

¹⁰ Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War*, I, 109–119.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 101–08.

¹² Levitskii and Bykov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina*, 498–500, 507.

at Port Arthur, that the situation noticeably improved. He had distinguished himself in 1877–78 on the Black Sea against the Turks and again in Central Asia as flotilla commander on the Amu Darya for the legendary General M.D. Skobelev. Makarov immediately saw to repairs for damaged ships. Because Port Arthur had no large floating docks, he ordered cofferdams constructed for this purpose. Whatever their state of repair, Makarov realized from the outset that the vessels under his command were worthy neither for sea nor for battle. Some had not exercised in open waters for over a year, and ship handling was such that the squadron risked collision whenever it formed a battle line. The first task was to train officers and crews alike.¹³ Even while training, however, Makarov showed the flag, at times even against long odds, which explained his loss of the torpedo boat *Steregushchii* and the damaging of the cruiser *Askold* in action against the enemy.¹⁴ Setbacks notwithstanding, he mounted a strict regime of maritime patrols and set about strengthening Port Arthur's seaward defenses by reinforcing the coastal batteries and constructing various barriers and booms to protect the outer roadstead.

On 10 March, Togo renewed his attack on Port Arthur, revealing still another ploy—indirect fire. With a radio-equipped cruiser opposite the harbor mouth to spot and adjust fire, he stationed heavy units to the east, from which position they lobbed shells over the surrounding hills into the inner anchorage. Although little damage was done, Makarov characteristically initiated countermeasures. He subsequently stationed observation posts on the highest hills and linked them by telephone with a unified system of fire direction for coastal and shipboard batteries. He ordered the *Retvizan* and *Pobeda* to assume lists by controlled flooding that would elevate their naval rifles to fire over surrounding hills. Then, on 22 March, when the Japanese returned to resume their bombardment, Makarov responded by jamming the cruiser's signals—perhaps the first recorded instance of radio-electronic combat—and by his own accurate indirect return fire. When Makarov began to sortie, Togo withdrew. His first duty was to protect the supply lines of the Japanese army, not to expose his squadron to the risk associated with heroics. For all of the efforts

¹³ Zolotarev and Kozlov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 gg.: Bor'ba na more*, 95–102.

¹⁴ N.N. Afonin, "Stereushchii," *Gangut*, no. 4 (1992), 20–9.

of Makarov's "fleet in being," Japanese naval forces did, in fact, control the sea at this stage of the war. Still, the possibility of a resurgent Russian Pacific Squadron would for some time remain a genuine concern for Togo.¹⁵

It was just this concern that prompted the Japanese admiral to attempt a third ploy against the Russians. On the night of 12–13 April, the *Koryo maru* with the assistance of torpedo boats laid a new minefield opposite the entrance to Port Arthur. The following morning, the torpedo boat *Strashnyi*, which had been lost in fog the previous night, was promptly sunk when dawn broke to reveal encirclement by Japanese combatants. There followed the slow sortie of Russian vessels, initially to aid the *Strashnyi*'s survivors. Led by the *Baian*, the Russians fought off Japanese torpedo boats to rescue sailors from the *Strashnyi*. When six Japanese cruisers suddenly appeared, Makarov himself put to sea on the bridge of the battleship *Petropavlovsk*, followed by the *Pobeda* and *Poltava*, with the latter flying a silken flag donated by the inhabitants of her namesake city. But when Makarov saw Togo's main battle squadron approaching, he wisely elected a return to Port Arthur; he knew that his ships were not yet ready for a gun duel in open waters. In retreating, his intent was also to draw the enemy into range of his coastal batteries.

Heading out earlier to sortie at high tide, Makarov's ships had safely steamed over the *Koyuru moru*'s minefield, but now, homeward bound during low tide, the *Petropavlovsk* struck a mine. The resulting explosion ignited the forward magazine and burst the boilers, breaking the flagship's back immediately. By the time the smoke and steam had cleared, only the stern could be seen rapidly sinking. The *Pobeda*, too, soon hit a mine, but luckily a coal bunker attenuated the explosion, and the ship survived. When the *Petropavlovsk* went down, she took 650 men with her, including Admiral Makarov and the famous artist V.V. Vereshchagin. Only 80 survived, among them Grand Duke Kirill Vladimirovich, prompting some contemporaries to lament cynically, "Why Makarov, why not Kirill!—we could well afford the loss of a grand duke, we have plenty of them!"¹⁶ The impact of Makarov's tragic death on Russia's war effort remains incalculable.

¹⁵ A.B. Shirokorad, *Russko-iaponskie voyny 1904–1945 gg.* (Minsk, 2003), 232–34.

¹⁶ V.Iu. Gribovskii, "Katastrofa 31 Marta 1904 goda (Gibel' bronenostsa 'Petro-pavlovsk')," *Gangut*, no. 4 (1992), 30–48.

The French historian Girard Piouffre holds simply that on the day Makarov was killed, Togo had won the war, though he did not yet know it.¹⁷ Other historians may not share this conviction, but the crews who had once been so animated by Makarov now sank into profound despondency. There were other energetic and capable officers, including Captain Nicholas Ottovich von Essen of the *Sevastopol*, but they lacked seniority. Another senior officer, Rear Admiral Zinovii Petrovich Rozhdestvenskii, was thought to have promise, but he would soon leave the Naval Main Staff in St. Petersburg to assume command of naval reinforcements for the Far East. Partially in response to Makarov's tragic death, the tsar on 19 April formally named Rozhdestvenskii commander of the Second Pacific Squadron, which would take some time to assemble from assets under construction and from major elements within the Baltic Fleet. At Port Arthur, Alekseev briefly assumed direct command of what had formally become the First Pacific Squadron.¹⁸

On dry land across the Korean Gulf, Kuroki on 1 May executed a textbook crossing of the Yalu near Andong, routing a reinforced Russian covering detachment. Meanwhile, on 5 May northeast of Dal'nii at Pizewo, General Oku Yasutaka's Second Army, led by a marine brigade and supported by the battleship *Fuso* and several gunboats, defied Russian expectations to land on the open coast. Under Togo's watchful eye, the Russian Pacific Squadron remained passively anchored at Port Arthur. Still, the Japanese landing was a risky proposition, and soon enough a storm precluded immediate resupply and reinforcement. However, the Russian command lacked daring. Upon news of the landing, Admiral Alekseev steamed out of Port Arthur by train for Mukden, shortly before Oku's advancing troops cut the line. Now in command at Port Arthur, Admiral Vitgeft dithered. Meanwhile, Oku's three divisions swung south to win a brutal battle on 26 May at Nanshan for control of the narrow isthmus linking Kwantung with the larger Liaodong Peninsula. Kuropatkin, who by this time had arrived in the Far East to command Russian ground forces, saw no necessity to prevent Port Arthur from being cut off.¹⁹

¹⁷ Piouffre, *La guerre russo-japonaise sur mer*, 109.

¹⁸ Zolotarev and Kozlov, *Russko-iaponskaia voiny 1904–1905 gg.: Bor'ba na more*, 102, 151–52.

¹⁹ I.I. Rostunov and Iu.I. Chernov, "Nachalo voiny i strategicheskoe razvertyvanie," in Rostunov (ed.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskoi voiny 1904–1904 gg.*, 150–54.

Japanese successes, meanwhile, had not come without substantial losses. The battle at Nanshan had cost 4,500 Japanese casualties. Requirements for incessant patrolling at sea and for maintaining the blockade at Port Arthur exacted a heavy toll on Togo's naval assets. In the early morning hours of 13 May, the cruisers *Kasuga* and *Yoshino* collided in heavy fog, with the latter lost. Much worse, on 15 May, the battleships *Hatsuse* and *Yoshima* steamed into a minefield laid by the *Amur*, and both sank. Togo now counted only four battleships, although the Russians were unaware of the full extent of Japanese losses.²⁰

Still, the Japanese high command displayed no loss of confidence and energy. The intent was to move immediately against Port Arthur because intelligence had discerned preparations in St. Petersburg for the dispatch of elements of the Baltic Fleet to the Far East. The Japanese feared that the possible addition of four newly-completed battleships from the Baltic to Port Arthur would seriously imperil Admiral Togo's command of the sea. Ten years earlier, the Chinese fortress at Port Arthur had fallen easily to the Japanese, but in the meantime the Russians had reinforced its land defenses and had proven at Nanshan to be a far more determined adversary than the Chinese. The situation required more troops, and seizure of the commercial port at Dal'nii would provide a gateway for reinforcements for an overland advance against Port Arthur.

At this point, Rear Admiral Vitgeft might have attempted a counterstroke with his three battleships and reinforcing cruisers. However, he was no Makarov: repairs lagged on damaged battleships, steam had not been raised, and there was the ever-present threat of Japanese torpedo boats. In addition, he lacked intelligence about Japanese losses, while Japanese spies generally kept Togo well-informed of Russian movements. Moreover, counsel was divided among Vitgeft's captains, the majority of whom supported dismounting their vessels' 75 mm guns to reinforce the ground defenses of Port Arthur. The idea was to defend on the ground until naval reinforcements arrived from the Baltic. With Vitgeft consequently immobile, on 28 May, Togo successfully convoyed troopships to Dal'nii, from which vantage Oku and his Second Army turned north to advance against Kuropatkin's defenses on the distant approaches to Liaoyang. At Dal'nii,

²⁰ Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War*, I, 232–63.

reinforcements poured in to form the Japanese Third Army under General Nogi Maresuke, the legendary conqueror of Port Arthur a decade earlier. His mission was to repeat the feat. Meanwhile, on 19 May, General Nozu Michitsura's Fourth Army had landed at Takushan on the northern reaches of the Liaodong peninsula to protect Oku's right in the general advance against Liaoyang. Too late, General Adjutant Kuropatkin awoke to the full extent of Japanese ground deployments. After a prod from the tsar, he dispatched a powerful detachment south to the Liaodong peninsula, but on 14-15 June, General Oku dealt that detachment a stunning reverse at Wafangou. Following General Kuroki's victorious advance through the Motien Pass in late June, Marshal Oyama Iwao assembled a coherent army group from the three armies now operating in Manchuria. After driving in Kuropatkin's advance guard, Oyama in late August and early September orchestrated a series of Russian reverses at Liaoyang. Although Oyama could not repeat the success of his German mentors at Sedan in 1870, he forced Kuropatkin's withdrawal northward to Mukden.

Vitgeft remained in direct command at Port Arthur, but Makarov's successor as overall naval commander in the Far East was Vice Admiral Skrydlov at Vladivostok. With Vice Admiral Petr Alekseevich Bezobrazov's Independent Cruiser Squadron at hand, Skrydlov proved more aggressive than his counterpart at Port Arthur. On 12 June, Skrydlov dispatched the cruisers *Rossiia*, *Gromoboi* and *Riurik* through the Tsushima Straits to harass Japanese naval communications off southern Korea. Bezobrazov captured several Japanese transports and sank the *Hitachi maru* when its crew refused to surrender. With Kamimura's seven cruisers in pursuit, Bezobrazov successfully sailed a less direct return route to Vladivostok along the western coast of Japan. On 30 June, Bezobrazov's cruisers appeared once again off the coast of Korea, this time to shell Gensan, after which they retired to base under cover of heavy weather. These raids afforded sober reminder that the fate of the Japanese army depended on Togo's ability to command the sea and its supply lines to the home islands. Subsequently, Admiral Kamimura's permanent detachment of cruisers remained constantly on station at the Tsushima Straits, with the result that the Russians were encouraged to look elsewhere for prizes and objectives. Thus, on 24 July, a renewed Russian cruiser raid under Rear Admiral Karl Petrovich Iessen actually reached Tokyo Bay via the Tsugaru Strait, causing panic in the Japanese capital.

Although this incident irritated the Japanese, further cruiser raids failed to alter the general strategic situation.²¹

Meanwhile, at Port Arthur, the *Tsesarevich* and the *Retvizan* had been repaired, with only the more seriously damaged *Pobeda* still out of commission. *Vigft* remained inert, however, until Alekseev ordered him to Vladivostok in a calculated ploy to challenge Japanese command of the sea. In contrast with *Vitgeft*, the ships' crews were eager for action. On 23 June, the Pacific Squadron put out to sea, but—because the news had been published in a local paper—Japanese torpedo boats lay in wait. They fired 38 torpedoes, and the Russians countered with 26, but neither side scored any hits. In general, this fruitless encounter demonstrated once again that torpedo technology was still too imperfect to produce reliable combat results. Powered by compressed air, torpedoes were slow and lacked range. However, the Russians spotted a freshly-laid minefield, and while they were engaged in clearing a passage, Togo's main battle squadron appeared on the horizon, prompting *Vitgeft*'s return to Port Arthur. He concluded that minefields and enemy torpedo boats made leaving the anchorage dangerous, and that the numerically superior and faster Japanese fleet had put Vladivostok out of reach.²²

Togo, meanwhile, had earlier elected to occupy the Elliot Islands off the Kwantung peninsula both to conserve his resources and to monitor from afar the Russian squadron at its anchorage. At the same time, Kamimura's cruisers maintained their watch at the Tsushima Straits. On the ground approaches to Port Arthur, General Nogi hastened to close the noose on the Russian Pacific Squadron before it might inflict serious damage on Togo's battle squadron. After overwhelming Russian defenses in the Green Hills at the end of June, Nogi on 30 July hurled 60,000 troops against 15,000 Russians on Wolf Hills. Naval gunfire supported both sides, with the cruisers *Askold*, *Pallada*, and *Baian* against the Japanese, and the *Nishin* and *Kasuga* against the Russians. However, the armored cruiser *Baian* was seriously crippled after hitting a mine while entering the outer roadstead at Port Arthur.²³ Meanwhile, even as Nogi's troops tightened their hold on the approaches to Port Arthur, the Japanese high com-

²¹ Ibid., 280–91, and 319–47; see, also, B.N. Bolgurtsev, "Admiral N.I. Skrydlov," *Gangut*, no. 22 (2000), 102–06.

²² Piouffre, *La guerre russo-japonaise sur mer*, 154.

²³ V.P. Glukhov, "Oborona Port-Artura," in Rostunov (ed.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskoi voyny 1904–1905 gg.*, 176–83.

mand began to experience the effects of pursuing two strategic objectives simultaneously. Several hundred kilometers to the north, Marshal Oyama might have completed his envelopment of Kuropatkin at Liaoayang, had General Nogi's Third Army figured in the action.

With the remote approaches to Port Arthur now in Japanese hands, there was an increased possibility that ground-based fire might imperil Russian warships in the anchorage. From the tsar via Admiral Alekseev came the order to transfer the Russian Pacific Squadron to Vladivostok. Although Vitgeft held that the *Baian's* fate had proved the impossibility of safe sortie, Alekseev stressed the growing nature of the threat—the danger loomed greater with each passing day. When a few harmless ranging shots struck the squadron, indeed, the admiral screwed up his courage to weigh anchor on 10 August with his six battleships, four cruisers and eight torpedo boats. Although Vitgeft successfully avoided Japanese minefields, machinery breakdowns slowed his progress. Delays eventually enabled Togo to intercept Vitgeft, and the Japanese initially and ineffectively opened fire at 10,000 meters. After a several-hour break in action, Togo was able to close the range—his ships were faster and in better repair, the latter a result of intermediate basing on the Elliot Islands. He elected to concentrate fire on Vitgeft's flagship, the *Tsesarevich*, with the result that that other Russian vessels distributed their fire among major Japanese combatants without undue hindrance. Consequently, the *Shikisima* was hit, as was Togo's flagship, the *Mikasa*. Altogether, the Russian managed to silence five of Togo's entire complement of 16 12-inch guns.

Nonetheless, Togo now demonstrated that he was cut from the same cloth as Makarov. Rather than break off the action, he steamed parallel to the Russians, with his back to the gathering twilight, while his opponents were clearly silhouetted against the evening sun. Amidst the ensuing exchange of main battery fire, a 12-inch shell struck the *Tsesarevich*, eliminating Vitgeft and his command group and locking the helm. When the flagship began steaming in a circle, the Russian battle line was thrown into confusion. Rear Admiral Pavel Petrovich Ukhomskii on the *Peresvet* was next in command, but his signal masts had been shot away. Pursuit became difficult as the Russians scattered to find safe haven, mostly at Port Arthur, and nightfall brought a halt to observed fire. Still, Togo pressed the attack with his torpedo boats, but none of their 74 launches brought results.²⁴

²⁴ Levitskii and Bykov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina*, 529–44.

The cruisers *Askold* and *Diana* sustained damage, but they limped off to neutral ports, where they were interned. Admiral Ukhtomskii might have elected to direct his surviving ships to Vladivostok as ordered, but he preferred the certainty of Port Arthur to the dangers of a perilous and long voyage to the northern base. It must be said in his defense that reassembling the scattered battle line and shepherding it around the Korean peninsula would have been a tall order. Meanwhile, the heavily-damaged *Tsesarevich* slowly made off in the darkness to the German port at Kiachow, where she too was interned. The *Tsesarevich* became the sole Russian battleship to return home after the war.²⁵

Admiral Skrydlov, meanwhile, on 12 August had dispatched the cruisers *Rossia*, *Gromoboi* and *Riurik* under Rear Admiral Iessen from Vladivostok to meet and reinforce Vitgeft's squadron. However, once again superior Japanese intelligence assets informed Kamimura that the Russian cruisers were putting out to sea. On 13 August, the Russian and Japanese cruiser squadrons passed each other in fog, but as the fog lifted, Kamimura caught sight of the Russians behind him and turned to give chase. As the range closed, the two squadrons engaged in a running duel that sunk the *Riurik* and damaged the *Rossia*. Only the *Gromoboi* escaped with minor damage.²⁶

The Battle on the Yellow Sea on 10 August had been a Japanese success, but it was no decisive victory, because most of the Russian battleships had escaped destruction. Togo had no means to gauge his adversaries' low morale, and there was the danger that the Port Arthur squadron might be able to join the Second Pacific Squadron, even then undergoing preparations for departure from the Baltic. Unknown to him, Admiral Ukhtomskii and his captains had given up on the idea of sortie. In fact, a naval brigade was formed from the ships' crews to reinforce the Russian ground defenses, and along with them the squadron surrendered to the army more than 250 guns and a number of searchlights. Whatever ordnance remained on the ships was dedicated primarily to supporting ground defenses.²⁷

²⁵ A.Iu. Emelin, "Flagman vyshel iz stroia (Povrezhdeniia eskadrennogo bro-nenostsa 'Tsetsarevicha' v srazhenii u Shantunga)," *Gangut*, no. 10 (1999), 20–33.

²⁶ Bolgurtsev, "Admiral N.I. Skrydlov," 106.

²⁷ Zolotarev and Kozlov, *Russko-iaponskaia voiny 1904–1905 gg.: Bor'ba na more*, 113–15; David C. Evens and Mark R. Peattie, *Kaigun: Strategy, Tactics, and Technology in the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1887–1941* (Annapolis, 1997) 102–105.

On 16 August, Lieutenant General Anatolii Mikhailovich Stessel', the fortress commander, rejected Nogi's generous terms of surrender, which would have permitted the garrison to leave with its colors, weapons, and supply train. On 19 August, besieging Japanese troops launched their first major offensive. After three days' savage combat, they counted precious little gain. A second major ground assault occurred on 19–22 September, with the same bloody and inconsequential results. There followed yet a third general assault on 30 October–2 November, after which the Japanese settled down to classic siege warfare, replete with sapping, underground mines, incessant heavy artillery barrages, and recurring night attacks. Although Russian defenses held, Stessel' began to run low on rations, energy, and key categories of ammunition.²⁸

By this time, the Second Russian Pacific Squadron had cleared the North Sea and transited the English Channel on the way to Tangier. Togo now felt increased pressure to destroy the First Pacific Squadron because his own vessels had been at sea for nearly a year. The Combined Fleet's main combatants were seriously in need of refit and repair, while their crews required much-needed rest. Without necessary respite and maintenance, Togo risked confronting a reinforced Russian enemy unprepared. Nevertheless, the Russians could not be left unguarded at Port Arthur, because there was no assurance they would remain inert and inept. There was always the possibility that another Makarov lurked in the wings. An energetic Russian admiral might sortie at the most critical moment to wreak havoc on Japanese supply lines, or even worse, to seize control of the maritime theater of operations.²⁹

But, because no such admiral came out to engage Togo's fleet, the fate of the Japanese war effort now lay in General Nogi's hands. On 26 November, he assailed the 17,900 defenders at Port Arthur in a fourth general assault with 50,000 Japanese troops. The Russians bitterly contested every square meter of terrain, but on 5 December the Japanese succeeded in planting the rising sun on 203 Meter Hill,

²⁸ For a survey, see, Glukhov, "Oborona Port-Artura," in Rostunov (ed.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskoi voyny 1904–1905 gg.*, 204–36; for an English-language version, see, Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861–1914* (Bloomington, 1992, 2000), 160–69.

²⁹ Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War*, II, 83–9.

a prominence that afforded complete observation of Port Arthur's inner anchorage. At the cost of 10,000 casualties, the Japanese might now subject the Russian Pacific Squadron to accurate fire from 11-inch siege howitzers, whose huge projectiles the Russians had dubbed "train shells" because of their noise in flight. Once accurate howitzer fire began to pound the inner harbor, the predictable results were not long in coming. Already on 5 December, the *Poltava* blew up, while on 6 December the heavily-damaged *Retvizan* and *Peresvet* sank. On 7 December, the *Pobeda* and *Pallada* burned, followed on the next day by the sinking of the already badly-mauled *Baian*. Only the *Sevastopol* avoided the massacre, as Captain Essen succeeded in shifting his ship to the semi-protected outer roadstead, from which vantage he kept firing until nearly the end of the siege. Japanese torpedo boats launched 180 torpedoes against her, hitting her twice, but failing to sink her.³⁰ Meanwhile, Togo's battle fleet steamed home, where its bottoms were scraped, machinery repaired, and ordnance reworked. Once again the fate of the war seemed largely Admiral Togo's to decide.

Although counsel remained divided within the Port Arthur high command over the prospects for further resistance, General Stessel sought terms after the Japanese had begun to penetrate the fortress' inner defenses. On 2 January 1905, he surrendered. Meanwhile, the land war continued to rage in Manchuria, highlighted by the Mukden operation in February–March 1905, during which Marshal Oyama once again failed to accomplish the encirclement and annihilation of Kuropatkin's army group. Under the latter's successor, General Nicholas Petrovich Linevich, the Russians slowly withdrew to new defensive positions at Xipingkai. There, reinforcements continued to pour in from European Russia, while the advancing Japanese were approaching the bottom of their manpower barrel and the end of their logistical tether.³¹ Although it was now true that revolutionary sentiment was slowly eating away at Russia's will to resist, no one might accurately foresee what that sentiment portended for the war. Everything now seemed to hang on the outcome of a great naval battle that was anticipated upon arrival of the Second Pacific Squadron

³⁰ Glukhov, "Oborona Port-Artura," in Rostunov (ed.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskoi voiny 1904–1905 gg.*, 236–52.

³¹ See, Bruce W. Menning's article in this collection.

in the maritime theater of operations. At the eleventh hour, the Russians still hoped to wrench command of the sea from Togo, thereby stranding the Japanese field army in Manchuria.

Already in April 1904, the tsar in St. Petersburg had convened a conference of his leading naval luminaries to determine the viability of possible reinforcement for the Russian Pacific Squadron. There followed a decision on 19 April to reinforce with battleships of the *Borodino*-class originally ordered for the Far East, although several were still in the last stages of construction. The general idea was to form a Second Pacific Squadron, whose arrival in theater would tip the naval scales in Russia's favor.³² However, despite the growing urgency of the situation at Port Arthur, Rear Admiral Rozhdestvenskii's work—even with imperial mandate—progressed slowly. It was not until mid-August 1904 that he was able to overhaul old ships, complete new ones, and assemble reasonably adequate crews. Like Makarov, Rozhdestvenskii had made his name during the campaigns of 1877–78, and also like Makarov, he was sufficiently energetic and authoritarian to impose a modicum of order within local dockyards and arsenals. Unlike Markarov, however, he was less experienced and less charismatic. Still, he was deemed—at least by the tsar—sufficiently competent and daring to undertake the daunting task at hand. For the most part, Rozhdestvenskii's officers were loyal and brave, but not always competent. His second-in-command, Rear Admiral Dmitrii Gustavovich Fel'kerzam, was already seriously ill with cancer, and his cruiser commander, Rear Admiral Oskar Adolfovich Enkvist, inspired little trust or confidence. As for Rozhdestvenskii's crews, harsh naval discipline often failed either to transform peasant conscripts into experienced sailors or to make conscientious machinists out of industrial workers, especially those tainted by revolutionary propaganda of a defeatist nature. Memoirists subsequently spoke with virtually a single voice about the baleful quality of the ships' crews, although perhaps the enterprise's disastrous outcome unduly biased various eyewitness accounts.³³

³² The saga of the Second Pacific Squadron—with the later addition of the Third—has been the subject of several English-language books, including two highly readable accounts, Constantine Pleshakov's *The Tsar's Last Armada: The Epic Journey to the Battle of Tsushima* (New York, 2002), and Richard Hough's *The Fleet that Had to Die* (Berlin and Edinburgh, 2000).

³³ On preparations, see, Zolotarev and Kozlov, *Russo-iaponskaia voiny 1904–1905 gg.: Bor'ba na more*, 154–57.

The stubborn reality was that Rozhestvenskii controlled neither the composition nor the training of his growing armada. The core consisted of four new battleships, the *Kniaz' Suvorov*, *Alexander III*, *Borodino*, and *Orel*. To these were added three older battleships, the *Oslabia*, *Sisoi Velikii*, and *Navarin*, of which only the *Oslabia* possessed updated armament and the capability to maintain fleet speed. In addition, Rozhestvenskii received an outmoded armored cruiser, the *Admiral Nakhimov*, several modern protected cruisers (the *Aurora* and the *Oleg*), several modern light cruisers (the *Zhemchug* and the *Izmurud*), an odd assortment of older cruisers, converted auxiliaries, nine new and untried torpedo boats, and five armed fast steamers. An ice-breaker and various supply and repair ships with varying degrees of seaworthiness rounded out the motley assortment of vessels. Like their ships, the majority of officers and crews had been hastily assembled, and Rozhestvenskii was able to allocate only ten days at the end of August for sea trials. There was no time for squadron exercises.³⁴

Still, Rozhestvenskii plowed ahead in a burst of frenetic activity. He chartered colliers from the Hamburg-American Line to resupply his vessels at designated points along the route to the Far East. He even inveigled Russia's French allies to consent to port calls at Madagascar and in Indochina for necessary respite during the long cruise. The French were less than enthusiastic because of implications for their relations with England, which since 1902 had been allied with Japan.³⁵ The shakiness of these and other Russian arrangements notwithstanding, on 15 October 1904, Rozhestvenskii weighed anchor from the Baltic port of Libau, where he had assembled his armada. Almost as a kind of dramatic foreshadowing, his flagship, the *Kniaz' Suvorov*, immediately ran aground, the *Orel's* engines broke down, and the *Sisoi Velikii* lost her anchor. On reaching the Danish straits, he had to order a torpedo boat and the icebreaker *Ermak* back to Libau. In seeming consolation, the tsar promoted Rozhestvenskii to vice admiral.³⁶

Still, recurring troubles seemed to have scant regard for rank. In cooperation with Rozhestvenskii, various ministries had stationed

³⁴ Gromov (ed.), *Na rubezhe vekov. Tri veka Rossiiskogo flota*, I, 379.

³⁵ On the international dimensions, see especially, Ohto Manninen, *The Second Pacific Squadron and French Neutrality*, Historiallinen Arkisto 68 (Helsinki, 1975), 91–209.

³⁶ Pleshakov, *The Tsar's Last Armada*, 89–94.

agents in countries along the squadron's anticipated course, and they now began to report Japanese spies and torpedo boats everywhere, with the latter camouflaged as fishing trawlers. As Rozhestvenskii proceeded from Jutland into the North Sea, he divided his ships into six echelons, with alert orders against torpedo attack. Off the Dogger Bank, during the early morning hours of 21 October, the skipper of the repair ship *Kamchatka* radioed that he was under torpedo attack, and other jittery watch officers began to report the presence of mysterious unlighted vessels. When the course of these vessels appeared to intersect that of the main echelon of battleships, the order was given to open fire. Ten minutes later, searchlights revealed only a few harmless (and now severely damaged or sinking) British fishing boats. When a second set of mysterious vessels appeared on the horizon, firing re-commenced, then quickly died away when the Russians realized they were firing on two of their own cruisers. Although the *Dmitrii Donskoi* escaped unscathed, the *Aurora* was holed several times above the waterline, and two sailors suffered wounds.³⁷

What became known as “the Dogger Bank incident” evoked a predictable outcry in Great Britain, both official and unofficial. Newspapers and governmental dignitaries alike howled in protest, demanding explanations, humility, and punishment. Nicholas II's “sincere apology” fell on deaf ears. In a great burst of righteous activity, the Channel Fleet at Gibraltar raised steam, the Home Fleet began to assemble, and the Mediterranean Fleet at Malta was brought to combat readiness. As Rozhestvenskii sailed blithely to Vigo off Spain, the European press reported that 24 British battleships were preparing to wreak vengeance on his squadron. A shadow force of British cruisers appeared just as the *Orel's* steam plant malfunctioned—once again—and Rozhestvenskii, after glancing at the perfect British formation, was heard to remark, “What seamen! Ah, if only we were this way . . .”³⁸

Meanwhile, Russia's French allies stepped in to salve wounds and staunch the general European outcry. Under French aegis, London and St. Petersburg agreed to the convocation of an international arbitration commission in Paris. Britain agreed to drop the demand to put Rozhestvenskii and his captains on trial, while Russia agreed

³⁷ Levitskii and Bykov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina*, 569–72.

³⁸ Quoted in Pleshakov, *The Tsar's Last Armada*, 108.

to *both* an apology and reparations. In the end, Edward VII's government was unwilling to jeopardize relations with Russia and the tsar's French ally for the sake of a regrettable incident that had stemmed mostly from simple Russian incompetence. Only Germany would have profited from pressing the issue farther. Grand Duke Aleksei Aleksandrovich, titular head of the Russian Naval Ministry, paid compensations to the families of the deceased fishermen and to the owners of the destroyed trawlers. Both the Franco-Russian Alliance and the budding Entente Cordiale managed to survive with only slightly ruffled feathers.³⁹

After meeting with the Sultan of Morocco at Tangier, Rozhestvenskii divided his squadron, sending his lighter and smaller units under Rear Admiral Fel'kerzam via the Mediterranean and Suez to Madagascar, while proceeding with his battleships to the same destination via the Cape of Good Hope. Rozhestvenskii dared not endanger his capital ships in the narrow waters of the Mediterranean and the Red Sea, where the Japanese might be lurking. Moreover, the Suez Canal was too shallow to accommodate battleships weighed down with coal. Indeed, to reduce the number of times that resupply would have to be accomplished at sea, each ship carried a double load of fuel, so that even turrets and officers' cabins were transformed into emergency coal bunkers. Thus began a nightmarish voyage at close quarters with fueling filth through tropical latitudes at a time when ships' ventilation was only one generation removed from the primitive.⁴⁰

Fel'kerzam's light detachment arrived off Madagascar without incident at the end of December, even as Rozhestvenskii's main detachment fought heat and rough weather to re-coal twice at sea while partially circumnavigating Africa. In German Southwest Africa, the squadron received news that 203 Meter Hill had fallen at Port Arthur. On 19 December, St. Nicholas' day, the rump squadron braved a savage storm at sea. Off the coast of Madagascar, the hospital ship *Orel* overhauled the battleships, only to inform Rozhestvenskii that the First Pacific Squadron had been pounded to pieces. Without a clear strategic objective, Rozhestvenskii and his captains were at least temporarily on a voyage to nowhere. Still, on 9 January 1905, Rozhestvenskii rejoined his light units at Nossi-Bé, an island anchor-

³⁹ Ibid., 98–109.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 115–44.

age off the northwestern coast of French Madagascar. No one had sighted any Japanese on either passage, although newspapers and Fel'kerzam's occasional brief port calls in the Mediterranean and around the horn of Africa brought ships' crews the news of revolutionary disturbances at home. Nonetheless, the sailors remained pre-occupied with local tropical fauna, bringing aboard parrots, chameleons, hares, dogs and apes, while the ships were also provisioned with live cattle, oxen, and sheep. For a brief time, the ships appeared equally full of manure and coal.

Even this perverted version of paradise proved short-lived. Short-tempered at the best of times, Rozhestvenskii flew into a rage when the crew of the torpedo boat *Groznyi* destroyed a pub in the village of Nossi-Bé. The admiral immediately ordered all animals ashore and forbade his sailors to visit local brothels and gambling dens. However, the crew of the *Admiral Nakhimov* submitted only after the *Kniaz' Suvorov* trained her main battery on the elderly armored cruiser. Meanwhile, the crew of the transport *Malay* revolted, but her officers restored order, after which a naval tribunal sentenced four mutineers to death. In the end, onset of the gloomy and clammy rainy season quieted rebellious crews, which by this time were existing on a steady diet of manioc soup, malaria, typhus, tuberculosis, boils, rash, fungi, and daily funerals. Suitably embellished, these and other circumstances subsequently came to light in the colorful stories of Aleksei Silych Novikov-Priboi, an eyewitness who later became a Bolshevik novelist.⁴¹

Delay at Madagascar was primarily a function of Russia's strategic quandary. With no First Pacific Squadron to reinforce, the Second Squadron now needed either recall or a new mission. Even the appearance off Madagascar in mid-February of Captain Leonid Fedorovich Dobrotvorskii's detachment of stragglers, including the fast cruisers *Izmurud* and *Oleg*, did little to change the strategic equation. Although Rozhestvenskii would have been quite satisfied with orders merely to join remnants of the Independent Cruiser Squadron at Vladivostok, his force was still too weak to challenge Togo directly in his own home waters. The tsar, meanwhile, remained convinced that the Second Squadron's mission should be to control the Sea of

⁴¹ See, A.S. Novikoff-Priboi, *Tsushima*, tr. Eden and Cedar Paul (New York, 1937), especially chapter 3 ("Madagascar").

Japan, something that could be accomplished only with additional reinforcement. For some time, Commander Nicholas Lavrent'evich Klado, an influential naval theorist and translator of Mahan, had argued in the press and elsewhere that Russia should concentrate all its available naval power in the Far East. Both Admiral Fedor Karlovich Avellan, director of the Naval Ministry, and Vice Admiral Aleksei Alekseevich Birilev, commander of the Baltic Fleet, actively supported the idea. From it sprang tsarist orders in mid-December 1904 to create the Third Pacific Squadron under Rear Admiral Nicholas Ivanovich Nebogatov. Drawn mostly from remnants of the Baltic Fleet, his command consisted of the outmoded battleship *Emperor Nicholas I*, three coastal defense battleships (*General-Admiral Apraksin*, *Admiral Seniavin*, and *Admiral Ushakov*), the outmoded cruiser *Vladimir Monomakh*, and the usual assorted auxiliaries. Almost none of these vessels was considered seaworthy for a lengthy voyage on the open ocean. Nonetheless, the governing rationale was that their addition to the Second Squadron would augment Rozhestvenskii's firepower, distract the Japanese from the four *Borodino*-class battleships, and provide useful augmentation for patrolling and even raiding in Far Eastern waters. For his part, Rozhestvenskii would have none of this. He felt that the pre-modern vessels of the Third Squadron would simply constitute an additional burden—they lacked maneuverability and their crews were insufficiently trained to confront the rigors of combat at sea. He also felt that his best chance was to bolt immediately for the Far East, since Admiral Togo's Combined Fleet would require considerable time for rest and refit following the capitulation of Port Arthur.⁴²

With no direct line of communication to St. Petersburg, Rozhestvenskii's response to undesirable reinforcement was to obey his own intuition. Better in an uncertain situation to leave Madagascar than to permit Nebogatov to catch up. However, provisioning and advance arrangements for coaling took time, while no amount of improvisation and cursing could hasten the haphazard preparation of his motley assemblage for sea. It was impossible to remedy even minor defects in machinery, let alone think about scraping fouled bottoms. Still, even amidst hurried preparations for departure, Rozhestvenskii

⁴² V.Iu. Gribovskii, "Krestnyi put' otriada Nebogatova," *Gangut*, no. 3 (1992), 16–32.

insisted on conducting brief squadron exercises. To his consternation and rage, the *Kniaz' Suvorov* succeeded only in losing an anchor, and his captains consistently failed to maintain formation. Live-fire gunnery exercises resulted in hits on the target-towing tug, while torpedoes ran everywhere except to their targets.⁴³ As if to punctuate the steady stream of discrepancies, messenger ships in early March brought news that General Adjutant Kuropatkin had suffered a severe defeat at Mukden.

In mid-March, just as Nebogatov was miraculously approaching Crete in the Mediterranean, Rozhestvenskii was no less miraculously weighing anchor for the Far East. After transiting the immense expanse of the Indian Ocean, he managed to shepherd his armada through the Straits of Malacca, and subsequently on 8 April to appear for once in orderly column formation off Singapore. By this time, world public opinion could only marvel at the squadron's exploits. It had steamed 4,500 sea miles from Madagascar, while coaling six times enroute, stopping 70 times for machinery breakdowns, and repairing 39 parted towing lines for trailing torpedo boats.⁴⁴

These achievements were of little comfort to Admiral Togo. He worried because the four newest Russian battleships were more powerful than his own. Even the more outmoded Russian battleships possessed an impressive array of heavy armament. Although Port Arthur and Mukden now lay in Japanese hands, the Russian army group in Manchuria had survived and was steadily receiving reinforcements. Meanwhile, nearly all of Japan's forces were now in the field, while society and economy were showing signs of shortages and wear. If Rozhestvenskii should reach Vladivostok, he might succeed in cutting Marshal Oyama's communication lines—however improbable—and Japan could still lose the war.⁴⁵

However, Admiral Rozhestvenskii had more worries than the Japanese and their communication lines. Upon arrival on 14 April at Camrahn Bay in Indochina, he received a categorical order from the admiralty to await Nebogatov. Meanwhile, there were the eternal worries about provisions and coal. In truth, whatever Rozhestvenskii's

⁴³ Zolotarev and Kozlov, *Russko-iaponskaia voiny 1904–1905 gg.: Bor'ba na more*, 159–62.

⁴⁴ Pleshakov, *The Tsar's Last Armada*, 213–22.

⁴⁵ Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War*, II, 149–55, 174–76, and 185–86.

desires, his squadron lacked sufficient fuel to strike out alone for Vladivostok—Nebogatov's Third Squadron was bringing the necessary coal. And, the waiting game was nothing like Madagascar. Under pressure from the British and the Japanese, the local French colonial government chose to observe the letter of international law that allowed belligerent fleets no more than 24 hours in a neutral port. Consequently, during daylight hours, the Russians had to steam briefly off shore in international waters and then return to drop anchor overnight in secluded Van Fong Bay.⁴⁶

Arrival there on May 8 of the Third Pacific Squadron failed to resolve Rozhstvenskii's more significant problems. Relations with Nebogatov were less negative than non-existent. Worse, even the addition of Nebogatov's coal reserves left few steaming options. There was simply not enough coal to sail south of the Philippines and east of Japan, then cut back towards Vladivostok via the Tsugaru Strait. This route would have afforded some possibility for avoiding detection by the Japanese. Still worse, Rozhstvenskii correctly guessed that the additional delay off Indochina had allowed Togo sufficient time completely to rest and retrain his crews and to repair his ships. The Russian admiral might surmise that even now Togo was dispatching his light cruisers on search and stationing elements of his Combined Fleet at Tsushima Straits to prevent the Russians from freely entering either the Yellow Sea or the Sea of Japan. It was no secret that Togo's tested battle line consisted of the battleships *Mikasa*, *Fuji*, *Shikisima* and *Asahi*, as well as eight modern and powerful armored cruisers.

Short of resignation or retreat, these considerations left Rozhstvenskii with precious few options. He might detour around Japan to east, but coaling on the stormy Pacific would be difficult, and the Japanese might catch sight of him anyway. Or he might attempt forcing the Tsushima Straits at night. However, he was well-aware of the Japanese prowess as night-fighters and was also well-aware of his own captains' lack of ship-handling and navigational skills even in broad daylight. Raw Russian firepower seemed to support a more viable third option: confront the Japanese during daylight hours, shoot his way past them, then sail the two Russian squadrons into Vladivostok.

⁴⁶ Levitskii and Bykov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina*, 577–78.

On 14 May, the two squadrons sailed into the South China Sea, with Rozhestvenskii's sights set on the Tsushima Straits.⁴⁷

Rozhestvenskii planned not for a major naval battle, but for a breakthrough and dash along the coast of Korea to Vladivostok. Consequently, his instructions and subsequent behavior were not complex. Enroute to the straits, he detached superfluous transports to find haven at Shanghai. He also detached several auxiliary cruisers to create a diversion along the Japanese coast. He arrayed his vessels in three parallel columns, with support ships in the trailing middle column, his modern battleships in the left-hand column and less modern battleships in the right-hand column. He ordered his cruisers and torpedo boats to screen elements of the modern battle line and the vulnerable support ships. Lights were doused, with the exception of those on the two hospital ships. Unknown to Rear Admiral Nebogatov, the second-in-command, Rear Admiral Fel'kerzam, was now on the verge of death from cancer, and perhaps this situation explained why Rozhestvenskii stipulated a command succession that went not to his admirals, but in rotation through the captains of his four *Borodino*-class battleships. On 24 May, Russians aboard the two squadrons celebrated the tsar's birthday without notable complaint, but blissfully unaware that they might not have the opportunity to celebrate the anniversary of his formal accession on 27 May. Ominously, the volume of intercepted but indecipherable Japanese ship-to-ship radio traffic increased as the two Russian squadrons approached the Korea Straits.⁴⁸

Somewhat before dawn on 27 May, the auxiliary cruiser *Shinano maru* caught sight of the lighted hospital ship *Orel* steaming towards Tsushima, and the Japanese captain dutifully radioed its position. Daylight broke on the Russian columns to reveal a fresh wind, persistent haze, and distant Japanese cruisers. Rozhestvenskii failed to drive them off, with the result that they reliably monitored his progress and changing formations. Admiral Togo, meanwhile, was in no hurry to engage—he had to assemble his own battle line and its auxiliaries, and the Russians were going nowhere fast. At about mid-day in the middle of Tsushima Strait, Rozhestvenskii peered ahead through

⁴⁷ Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War*, II, 201–09.

⁴⁸ Levitskii and Bykov, *Russko-iaponskaia voina*, 579–80.

the growing haze to perceive a column of Japanese cruisers and torpedo boats whose course appeared to put them into a position to lay a floating minefield in his path. Perhaps to bring maximum firepower to bear forward, he abruptly ordered his ships to assume line-abreast formation from their line-ahead approach. When the *Alexander III* turned the wrong way, throwing the Russian battle line into confusion, Rozhestvenskii quickly countermanded his order with instructions once again to assume "line ahead." Resumption of anything like a coherent double-column battle formation would require perhaps a half-hour, and Togo now had the opening he wanted. The haze partially lifted to reveal his main battle line steaming ten kilometers off to the north-northeast on a course intersecting that of the Russian line ahead, but slightly too far east to enable the Japanese in naval parlance "to cross the T."⁴⁹

In modern steam-powered navies, crossing the "T" held enormous tactical implications. As ranges closed, that force constituting the cross-bar might bring all its guns to bear either to isolate single targets or to fire through the entire depth of the approaching up-right bar. The unfortunate potential victims constituting the up-right bar masked each other's forward fire—except for the lead ship in formation—and had to deal with widely varying ranges against laterally moving targets. Indeed, the trailing ships in the victims' column formation might lie beyond range of the attackers' crossing formation. The situation was even worse for potential victims such as the Russians whose combatants were steaming in double columns. In this case, ships to the right or left would mask each other's fires to opposite flanks. The only possible escape, as the Germans were to demonstrate 11 years later at Jutland, was to "turn away together," a maneuver hopelessly beyond the practice and competence of Rozhestvenskii's captains. Because the Japanese enjoyed superior speed and maneuvering skill, Rozhestvenskii sensed his vulnerability to the "T" crossing tactic. Therefore, as Togo reversed course to reposition himself at battle speed to the west-northwest, Rozhestvenskii bade his ships at 1349 to open fire as soon as their various batter-

⁴⁹ The following account of Tsushima relies heavily on Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War*, II, 240–344, Pleshakov, *The Tsar's Last Armada*, 261–307, and Iu.I. Chernov, "Tsushima," in Rostunov (ed.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskoi voiny 1904–1905 gg.*, 332–47, and Evens and Peattie, 116–124.

ies could be brought to bear. Only the *Kniaz' Suvorov*, the *Borodino*, and *Alexander III* were in any position to do so. For a few brief minutes, the salvoes of the lead *Kniaz' Suvorov* raked the *Mikasa*, which withheld its own return fire.

However, Togo was only biding his moment. The haze and the Russians' last-minute maneuvering had thrown off his calculus, so that he lost time reversing course and increasing speed to cross the "T" a bit farther to the west than anticipated. As his main battle line briefly ran parallel to the Russians, he, too, commenced firing, with orders to concentrate on the two leading Russian battleships, the *Kniaz' Suvorov* and the *Oslibia*. Togo's intent was to attack the head of Rozhdestvenskii's formation, deprive the Russians of their command and control, defeat them piecemeal, and finish them off at night with energetic torpedo attacks. Togo added his own "Nelson touch" by signaling his crews that "the existence of our Imperial country rests on this one action, and every man of you must do his utmost."⁵⁰ Now, his entire battle line traded the Russian lead elements salvo for salvo, with telling effect. Between four and six Japanese battleships and cruisers were able to concentrate fire on each of the two leading Russian combatants. Rozhdestvenskii was simply overmatched by superior Japanese tactics, battle experience, gunnery, and, to some extent, technology. Many Russian armor-piercing shells failed to explode, while Japanese high-explosive shells containing a highly-incendiary version of picric acid decimated Russian crews topside and turned ship superstructures into raging infernos.

Within 30 minutes, as the Japanese literally began to cross the "T," concentrated Japanese fire produced the afternoon's first of many substantial casualties. The *Kniaz' Suvorov* took so many hits that she staggered out of line, not quite mortally wounded, but momentarily disrupting the Russian battle line before going dead in the water. Rozhdestvenskii was wounded, and he had now lost control of his armada. Sailing at the head of his second column, the *Oslibia* ran into a hail of fire from Togo's seven armored cruisers and made history as the first modern armored battleship sunk by gunfire. The *Alexander III* now assumed the lead as the Russians began steaming in two large circles to elude their antagonists. At approximately 1520,

⁵⁰ Quoted in Corbett, *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War*, II, 239.

she too went dead in the water, a blazing hulk. Her replacement, the *Borodino*, remained in the fight until approximately 1900, when she capsized and blew up. The star-crossed repair ship *Kamchatka* and the auxiliary cruiser *Ural* both blew up. The Russians fought heroically, but poorly-trained gun crews quickly lost centralized fire direction, while inept and disrupted formations often precluded the application of maximum firepower. In general, only 75 mm guns under local control succeeded in repeatedly warding off Japanese torpedo boats, which were busily closing the range to finish off stricken capital ships.

With the onset of twilight, command succession and a future course of action loomed large for the Russians. Before the *Kniaz' Suvorov* had sunk at 1930, the now twice and seriously wounded Rozhestvenskii had been transferred semi-conscious to a torpedo boat, the *Buinyi*. Rear Admiral Nebogatov, whose division of pre-modern battleships had largely escaped the day's maelstrom, was unknowingly now in command. Fel'kerzam was technically next, but he had died on the eve of battle, and Rozhestvenskii had not divulged the news to subordinates. Thus, it was only in the early evening that Nebogatov learned the flag was his. In the absence of instructions, he bade his battleship division and assorted stragglers, including the badly-damaged *Orel*, to steer into the night for Vladivostok.

However, the hours of darkness brought little respite. Nebogatov could not hold his remnants together, and various damaged vessels sailed helter-skelter in search of escape. Meanwhile, Admiral Togo loosed 60 torpedo boats in small detachments to pursue survivors of the daylight battle. In the darkness the little greyhounds sometimes collided with one another and often failed to conduct coordinated attacks. When at last they located some of the more outmoded combatants, the latter ineptly lit up the night with searchlights. Consequently, the old battleship *Navarin* was sunk, while the *Sisoï Velikiï*, *Vladimir Monomakh*, and *Admiral Nakhimov* sustained such severe damage that they later either sank or were scuttled.

The morning of 28 May found Nebogatov and his surviving ships surrounded by major elements of Admiral Togo's Combined Fleet off Dagelet Island in the Sea of Japan. Outgunned, outnumbered, and outmaneuvered, Nebogatov concluded that escape was impossible and further combat pointless. To the shame and consternation of many Russians, he surrendered the *Orel*, *Emperor Nicholas I*, *General-*

Admiral Apraksin, and *Admiral Seniavin* without a fight.⁵¹ Still, some captains either ignored or were unaware of Nebogatov's formal surrender, with the result that the converted yacht *Svetlana* and the coastal defense battleship *Admiral Ushakov* were later sunk in action that same day. The cruiser *Dmitrii Donskoi* elected to engage in a running fight, was beached, and then sank while being towed to Japan. Only the speedy cruiser *Almaz* and two torpedo boats ever escaped to reach Vladivostok. The equally speedy *Izumrud* shipwrecked along the way. Later, it was learned that Rear Admiral Enkvist had also fled with the cruisers *Avrora*, *Zhemchug* and *Oleg* to seek internment at Manila. A torpedo boat and several transports endured the same plight at Shanghai. Back on the Sea of Japan, the severely wounded *Rozhestvenskii* had been transferred from the *Buinyi* to another torpedo boat, the *Bedovyi*, whose captain promptly surrendered to the first Japanese ship encountered.

Russian losses at Tsushima were horrifying. With negligible losses of their own, the Japanese had sunk six battleships, one armored cruiser, one outmoded coastal defense battleship, five cruisers, one auxiliary cruiser, five torpedo boats, and several transports. In addition, Togo had succeeded in capturing another two battleships, two outmoded coastal defense battleships, and the torpedo boat carrying Admiral *Rozhestvenskii*. The Russians had lost slightly more than 5,000 men in battle, including 209 officers, with another 800 sailors wounded. More than 6,000 Russians became prisoners of war, while another 1,862 were interned at neutral ports. Only 62 officers and some 1,165 sailors from *Rozhestvenskii*'s original armada managed to escape captivity, internment, or annihilation.⁵²

After the war, a trial by court martial exonerated Vice Admiral *Rozhestvenskii*, the commander who had steamed headlong into the enemy and who had displayed few battle skills. After all, he had been honorably unconscious at the moment of the surrender. Meanwhile, Rear Admiral Nebogatov and three captains were sentenced to death, but Nicholas II commuted their sentences to ten years in fortress prison. This act of clemency was in itself commendable, for

⁵¹ Gromov (ed.), *Na rubezhe vekov. Tri veka Rossiiskogo flota*, I, 395.

⁵² Chernov, "Tsushima," in Rostunov (ed.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskoi voiny 1904–1905 gg.*, 346.

it was not the Third Pacific Squadron or its leader that had failed, but the entire imperial navy and its “Admiral of the Pacific,” the tsar himself. Or, as Nebogatov somewhat self-servingly would put it at his trial, “The entire criminal system was to blame.”⁵³

After the lop-sided victory at Tsushima, Admiral Togo entered history as a serious rival to Lord Nelson. A skillful and daring commander with great tactical and operational acumen, Togo was fortunate over time to have confronted a numerically-superior adversary piecemeal and under largely incompetent leadership. The chance death of Vice Admiral Makarov had eliminated his most dangerous opponent. Meanwhile, Togo benefited from a series of circumstances, including far-sighted preparations of the naval staff in Tokyo, correct timing of the Japanese shipbuilding program, and skillful reconnaissance and intelligence-gathering. Without diminishing Togo’s emphasis on leadership, training, patience, and sound battle dispositions, it might be said—turning Nebogatov’s indictment on its head in Japanese perspective—that it was the essential validity and vitality of the entire system that had brought victory to Togo and his fleet.

In contrast, the Russians suffered from flawed strategy and poor decision-making. The tercentenary history of the Russian navy notes that the initial paralysis of the Russian Pacific Squadron flowed from “a wrong idea of the navy’s mission in the war.”⁵⁴ Naval commanders in the Far East were less concerned with a proactive posture than with maintaining a “fleet in being” in anticipation of further reinforcement from European Russia. They approached the problem very much like Kuropatkin with his ground forces, but the navy did not have the luxury of playing for time. Under these circumstances, the historian cannot avoid the well-worn conclusion that Russia was unable to mobilize and concentrate her forces rapidly enough to defend her great power position, let alone assure the security of additional imperialist acquisitions.

Loss of the First Pacific Squadron confronted St. Petersburg with a strategic and political dilemma, both linked. To recall the Second Pacific Squadron would have meant admission of mistake and loss

⁵³ Istoricheskaia komissiiia po opisaniiu deistvii flota v voinu 1904–1905 g.g., *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g. Deistvii flota. Dokumenty*, 6 vols. incomplete (SPB and Petrograd, 1907–1918), otd. IV., bk. 3, vyp. 4-yi, 47.

⁵⁴ Gromov (ed.), *Na rubezhe vekov. Tri veka Rossiiskogo flota*, I, 361.

of face, with a concomitant loss of authority for a regime already under heavy domestic pressure. Yet, persistent pursuit of a changing mission for Admiral Rozhdestvenskii flew in the face of logic and strategy. With a force of uneven composition and quality, and without dominant numbers, he confronted the daunting task of breaking through a competent and battle-tested adversary to Vladivostok. Once there, he would have to contend with the no-less difficult proposition of challenging enemy communications from a distant operating base. Time and circumstances were just not on the Russian side, given the nature of the tsar's domestic situation and his inability to marshal more and better naval assets on short notice. News of Tsushima stirred Russia's revolutionaries and oppressed minorities alike, with many anticipating the imminent demise of tsarist tyranny. Indeed, Finnish nationalists greeted word of the Japanese victory with cries of "Banzai."

At the same time, overwhelming naval victory failed to bring Japan overwhelming overall victory. Although Marshal Oyama had marched to a succession of impressive victories on land, the Russians retained in Manchuria the ground-force equivalent of a "fleet in being," a proposition with which a dominant Japanese navy could not contend. The spring and summer of 1905 witnessed the onset of a positional war in central Manchuria that neither side might pursue with tangible results.⁵⁵ When peace finally came at Portsmouth in September 1905, Japanese conquests were limited to Korea and the southern halves of Manchuria and Sakhalin. In the end, command of the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan proved insufficient to assure conquest of the Russian Far East to the shores of Lake Baikal, the persistent dream of Japan's most enthusiastic imperialists.

⁵⁵ Richard W. Harrison, *The Russian Way of War: Operational Art, 1904–1940* (Lawrence, 2001), 5–23.

CHAPTER TWELVE

THE JAPANESE GENERAL STAFF AND THE ISSUE OF CONCERTED ANTI-GOVERNMENT ACTION IN THE RUSSIAN EMPIRE, 1904–5

Antti Kujala

Following the beginning of hostilities between Japan and Russia in February 1904, Colonel Akashi Motojirō, the Japanese Military Attaché to Russia, was appointed Military Attaché to Sweden to serve at the newly-established legation in Stockholm. This exceptional post, which was under the direct control of the General Staff, was created to establish a Japanese intelligence network in Russia. This network's primary mission was to sabotage the Trans-Siberian Railway and to support opposition movements within the Russian Empire.¹ Akashi's activities were a direct result of Japan's recognition that it needed to develop some means to compensate for Russia's great advantage in resources.

Colonel Akashi's name attained fame for the first time in 1906, when the Russian state police published a booklet about his secret activities during the war. The correspondence between Akashi and his fellow conspirators published therein demonstrated that the Japanese military attaché had overstepped the normal limits of his office and had, using considerable sums, funded revolutionary movements functioning within the Russian Empire.² Akashi's cooperation with the opposition movements among Russia's minority nationalities was closer than with the revolutionary movements led by Great Russians. The representatives of the national minorities served as middlemen, and as a smoke screen, for his work. As a result of his activities along with publication of the booklet, Tokyo had to recall Akashi to Japan.

¹ INABA Chiharu, "Akashi's Career," in: AKASHI Motojirō, *Rakka ryūsui: Colonel Akashi's Report on His Secret Cooperation with the Russian Revolutionary Parties during the Russo-Japanese War*, Olavi K. Fält and Antti Kujala (eds.) (Helsinki, 1988), 18.

² *Iznanka revoliutsii: Vooruzhemoe vozstanie v Rossii na iaponskiiu sredstva* (SPB, 1906), 4.

Akashi's operations against the Russian government were, for understandable reasons, greatly appreciated during the interwar years in Poland and Finland. Before the 1930s, when Stalin managed to distort the true history of the revolution, the historical writing of both the victorious and the vanquished Russian revolutionaries also mentioned their connections with Japan.

After World War II, Akashi's name began to arouse interest in the western world because it was believed that he, like the German imperial government during World War I, funded the Bolsheviks' revolutionary action. Because of this interest, almost everywhere in the world Akashi's name is associated with Russian history. Credit for this is due above all to Michael Futrell. While Futrell's interests were in Lenin and the Bolsheviks' relations with Akashi, the Japanese had much more to do with the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries than with the Bolsheviks. Being a true historical scholar, Futrell nevertheless came to the conclusion in his study that the Bolsheviks were a very insignificant offshoot of Akashi's operations.³

After his death in 1919, Akashi actually became the subject of a cult in Japan. His relations with the Russian revolutionaries and his influence on the Russian revolution of 1905 were exaggerated. After the end of World War II, this myth became redundant and disappeared altogether.

In 1988, the Japanese researcher Inaba Chiharu translated into English the principal parts of Akashi's report, *Rakka ryūsui*, on his secret operations during the war.⁴ The translation was supplemented by Inaba's substantial commentaries and published by the Finnish Historical Society. The book also included an essay by Inaba on the Japanese policy of weakening the enemy from within,⁵ and the present author's study on the attempts to organize an anti-government joint front of the Russian and minority nationalities' revolutionary parties in 1904–5.⁶

³ Michael Futrell, "Colonel Akashi and Japanese Contacts with Russian Revolutionaries in 1904–5," *St. Antony's Papers*, vol. 2, *Far Eastern Affairs*, vol. 4 (London, 1967), 7–22; also Futrell, *Northern Underground: Episodes of Russian Revolutionary Transport and Communications through Scandinavia and Finland 1863–1917* (London, 1963), 66–84.

⁴ Akashi, *Rakka ryūsui*, 23–53.

⁵ INABA Chiharu, "The Politics of Subversion: Japanese Aid to Opposition Groups in Russia during the Russo-Japanese War," in Akashi, *Rakka ryūsui*, 69–84.

⁶ Antti Kujala, "March Separately—Strike Together: The Paris and Geneva Conferences of the Russian and Minority Nationalities' Revolutionary and Opposition Parties, 1904–1905," in Akashi, *Rakka ryūsui*, 85–167.

In my study, I conclude that Japanese subversion played an important, but not a decisive role in these collaborative ventures. The revolutionary parties were fully aware that they were unable to overthrow the tsarist government single-handed. Initiatives to promote inter-party cooperation emerged in various quarters in 1904. At their decisive phases these collaborative ventures were directed by the most important parties in Russia, particularly the Socialist Revolutionaries. The evidence, therefore, does not support the belief that the 1905 revolution was a grand conspiracy masterminded from the sidelines by the Japanese and their agents. As a matter of fact, suspicions about Japanese involvement became an obstacle to achieving a broadly-based united front among the revolutionary parties. The Japanese policy of subversion, therefore, was to a large degree counter-productive for the revolutionary cause.

Finally, it should be noted that in 1990, Dmitrii Borisovich Pavlov and Sergei A. Petrov published an essay on Colonel Akashi's relations with the Russian liberation movement. In this essay and in the book *Tainy russko-iaponskoi voiny* (1993), they shed new light on the subject using previously inaccessible documents from the archive of the Russian Department of Police.⁷

The Finnish-Japanese Collaborative Initiative of 1904

From 1899 onwards, the Russian authorities embarked on a series of policies aimed at integrating Finland more closely, politically and administratively, with the rest of the Empire. These policies were directed by and identified with the then-Russian Governor-General in Finland, Nicholas Ivanovich Bobrikov. The Finnish constitutionalist opposition, comprising the Swedish Party and the Young Finns,

⁷ D.B. Pavlov and S.A. Petrov, "Polkovnik Akashi i osvoboditel'noe dvizhenie v Rossii (1904–1905 gg.)," *Istoriia SSSR*, vol. 6 (1990), 50–71; Pavlov and Petrov, "Iaponskie den'gi i russkaia revoliutsiia," *Tainy russko-iaponskoi voiny* (M., 1993), 5–139; Pavlov, "Tainaia voina protiv Rossii: Iz dokumentov russkoi kontrrazvedki 1904–1905 gg.," *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, vol. 3 (1994), 13–59. The effectiveness of the Okhrana's counter-measures, as well as the fatal mistakes of the Russian authorities, were for the first time highlighted by P.E. Shchegolev in 1917 and 1925. The Okhrana proved efficient in acquiring information on the revolutionaries and Colonel Akashi, but incapable of making use of this information in its struggle against subversion and revolution. See P.E. Shchegolev, "Russkii Rokambol," in his book *Okhranniki, agenty, palachi* (M., 1992), 179–97.

adopted a policy of passive resistance in a bid to maintain Finland's autonomy. In the spring of 1903, the tsar issued a special decree granting Bobrikov a range of extraordinary powers to allow him to eliminate the opposition which had emerged. Under these new powers, a significant number of the leaders of the constitutionalist opposition were ordered into exile.⁸

Following the outbreak of hostilities in the Far East in February 1904, secret discussions started between a number of Finnish exiles in Stockholm and the Japanese military attaché in St. Petersburg, Colonel Akashi, to sound out the possibility of developing some form of cooperation between the Finnish opposition and Japan. Akashi had already realized the previous year that the Finnish opposition could be used as a means to weaken Russia from within.

One of the most active figures in pursuing this new avenue was Konni Zilliacus, a Finnish journalist resident in Stockholm.⁹ He had proposed in 1902 that the Finnish opposition act as a catalyst to unite opposition forces across the Russian Empire. In his opinion, the Finnish opposition, because of its non-socialist character, was ideally suited to the task of putting forward the idea of increased inter-party collaboration. By working together, the opposition groups would have a much greater chance of overthrowing the Russian autocracy than by continuing the anti-government struggle separately. Within the constitutionalists, Zilliacus represented the radicals, a small minority group, whose views the mainstream Finnish opposition did not share.¹⁰

In December 1903, Zilliacus presented his ideas to various leading Russian Socialist Revolutionaries (SR's) living in Western Europe with whom he felt close affinity.¹¹ Zilliacus was a Finnish nationalist, but he argued that united opposition action could pose a serious threat to the government only if ethnic Russian forces participated in this action. Following the beginning of the war, he outlined a plan of cross-party

⁸ Tuomo Polvinen, *Imperial Borderland: Bobrikov and the Attempted Russification of Finland, 1898–1904* (London, 1995); William R. Copeland, *The Uneasy Alliance: Collaboration between the Finnish Opposition and the Russian Underground, 1899–1904* (Helsinki, 1973).

⁹ Antti Kujala, "Nichiro sensō ji ni okeru Finrando rikken shugi teikō ha to Nihon Igrisu Suwēden no kyōryoku," *Hokuō-shi kenkyū*, no. 5 (1987), 39–41.

¹⁰ (K.) Zilliacus, "Den ryska oppositionen och Finlands framtid," *Fria Ord*, 12 September 1902, 3–4.

¹¹ K. Zilliacus to A. Neovius 6 January 1904, Arvid Neovius Collection, National Archives of Finland (NA); L.A. Rataev to A.A. Lopukhin 2 January 1904/20 December 2003, Okhrana Archives, XXI, F. 1, Hoover Institution (HI).

cooperation and finalized it in his discussions with Feliks Vadimovich Volkhovskii and Nicholas Vasil'evich Chaikovskii, whom he met in London in April 1904. According to the plan, a joint conference of the various opposition movements was to be convened to agree on a common campaign of anti-government activities. Russia's military setbacks and the ensuing social unrest should be used to overthrow the autocracy.

Having secured the approval of two leading Socialist Revolutionaries for his plan, Zilliacus lost no time in presenting it to the Japanese diplomats resident in London, Minister Hayashi Tadasu and Military Attaché Utsunomiya Tarō. Zilliacus approached the Japanese on his own initiative. He needed Japanese assistance to fund the various stages of the plan. Funds were to be channelled to the various opposition parties involved as the overall plan progressed; the intention was to disguise the origin of the money from the ethnic Russian parties.

Unrest and disturbances on the home front would, as Zilliacus viewed it, prevent Russia from deploying all her military forces against Japan. It was this bait which he hoped would attract Tokyo's interest. His own aim in the longer term was for the establishment of a constitutionally-administered Russia and the granting of a broad measure of self-government to Finland.¹²

The Japanese General Staff approved Zilliacus' plan at the end of August 1904 and decided to free funds (100,000 yen) to finance it. In its instructions to Akashi and Utsunomiya, the General Staff emphasized that the proposed plan was to include all the opposition parties.¹³ Akashi must, in fact, have given Zilliacus the green light at the end of July, that is, a month earlier than the General Staff sanctioned for the subversion plan.¹⁴ More than once Akashi not only anticipated the decisions of his superiors but also overstepped the limits sanctioned by Tokyo. His behavior resembles to some extent that of the Swedish General Staff officers in charge of intelligence operations concerning Russia. The latter helped Akashi and his assistants in intelligence activities, although the Swedish government adhered

¹² K. Zilliacus to F.V. Volkhovskii 1 and 31 March 1904, F.V. Volkhovskii Collection, HI; Zilliacus to A. Neovius 13 April and 8 August 1904, Neovius Collection, NA; Zilliacus to J. Castrén 18 April 1904, Jonas Castrén Collection 2, NA; Zilliacus to "T" (probably Th. Homén) 19 March 1905, J. N. Reuter Letter Collection XXIII, Åbo Akademis Bibliotek [Library of Åbo Academy] (ÅAB).

¹³ Inaba, "The Politics of Subversion," 75 (see also 57).

¹⁴ K. Zilliacus to A. Neovius, 8 August 1904, Neovius Collection, NA.

to a strict policy of neutrality with regard to the participants in the war in the Far East.¹⁵

Japanese authorities, however, opposed their country's involvement in the Polish question. On hearing of Zilliacus' plan, the Polish Socialist Party (PPS) responded by developing its own variant. This called for the holding of a joint conference of socialist and revolutionary organizations representing the oppressed national minorities within the empire. The conference was to be charged with agreeing on a program of anti-government actions. The parties attending the conference were also supposed to commit themselves to supporting a federal, non-centralist, form of future government. The ultimate aim of the PPS was to foment a rebellion within Russian Poland. The uprising was to be supported by other minority nationalities.¹⁶ Józef Piłsudski, leader of the PPS, went to Japan in the summer of 1904 and requested that Tokyo enter into an alliance with the Poles. He needed Japan to provide a subsidy or arms for the planned anti-Russian insurrection. Tokyo decided against giving the Polish Socialists any aid.¹⁷

Zilliacus, in contrast, did not ask the Japanese for any diplomatic or military commitments and limited his request for weapons to no more than perhaps a thousand small arms.¹⁸ These would not have been enough to start a revolution in Russia, but enough to tie down some Russian forces in Europe and hamper the overall Russian war effort. Japan had no wish to be instrumental in triggering a revolution in Russia.¹⁹ Zilliacus realized that he could only ask the Japanese

¹⁵ Kujala, "Nichiro sensō," *Hokuō-shi kenkyū*, no. 5 (1987), 41–3, no. 6 (1988), 40–45; Akashi, *Rakka ryūsuī*, 170–72.

¹⁶ K. Zilliacus to A. Neovius 27 June and 8 August 1904, Neovius Collection, NA; Zilliacus to Neovius 22 August 1904, Leo Mechelin Letter Collection 47, NA; f. 167, *Kolleksiia dokumentov po istorii pol'skogo rabocheho i sotsialisticheskogo dvizheniia*, op. 1, d. 70, ll. 3–5, 8–10, 19–20, 41, d. 71, l. 4, d. 75, l. 1, Zilliacus to W. Jodko-Narkiewicz 25 July 1904, d. 69, ll. 1–4, Rossiiskii Tsentr Khraneniia i Izucheniia Dokumentov Noveishei Istorii (RTsKhIDNI); Z. Balicki to Zilliacus, undated, f. 102, Departament politsii, Osobyi otdel (OO), op. 316, 1904–I, d. 1 ch. 5 t. 2, l. 6, Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF); "Primiritel'nye popytki 'Bunda' v 1905 godu," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 11 (1922), 168; Wł. Pobóg-Malinowski, *Józef Piłsudski, 1901–1908: W ogniu rewolucji* (Warsaw, 1935), 174–7; Pobóg-Malinowski, *Najnowsza historia polityczna Polski*, vol. I (London, 1963), 480–81; Walentyna Najdus, *SDKPiL a SDPRR, 1893–1907* (Wrocław, 1973), 181–3.

¹⁷ Jerzy J. Lerski, "A Polish Chapter of the Russo-Japanese War," *The Transactions of the Asiatic Society of Japan*, Third Series, vol. 7 (Tokyo, 1959), 69–97; INABA Chiharu, "Polish-Japanese Military Collaboration during the Russo-Japanese War," *Japan Forum*, vol. 4 (1992), 229–46.

¹⁸ K. Zilliacus to L.E. Shishko 10 May and 1 July 1904, Volkhovskii Collection, HI.

¹⁹ Inaba, "The Politics of Subversion," 71–8.

for as much as would be acceptable to them, while at the same time meeting his own minimum requirements. His skill lay in his ability to develop an approach flexible enough to embrace the various aims of all the parties involved, the Japanese, the Russian revolutionaries, and the Finnish opposition. Another factor contributing to Zilliacus' success was his recognition of the reluctance of the Japanese to supply funds for specific particularist interests.²⁰

In his efforts to convene a joint conference of the opposition movements, Zilliacus had so far been obliged to abide by the guidelines given by the Finnish constitutionalists, as it was they who had financed his trips in Europe. Zilliacus abandoned this position when Tokyo decided in the summer of 1904 to begin funding his plan. With greater freedom of movement, Zilliacus' activities brought him close to being a Japanese agent, although it should be noted that he refused to help them military intelligence-gathering work.²¹ Zilliacus was too independent-minded to become a docile stooge of the Japanese. Thus, for example, when Akashi advised him not to invite the Russian liberals to the conference, Zilliacus ignored him.²²

In fact, Zilliacus did not need to become a Japanese agent as his Finnish friends arranged matters on his behalf. Jonas Castrén arranged contacts between Akashi and Swedish General Staff officers. In May and June 1904, Finnish Captain Lieutenant Gösta Theslöf, Castrén, and Theodor Homén briefly participated in joint Swedish-Japanese reconnaissance work but were not of much help to the Japanese.²³ Erik Ehrström, a friend of Zilliacus' living in Paris, used his contacts that extended to Danish court circles, together with his international business links, to acquire information on construction work being carried out for the Russian railways and navy, and on the sailing of the Baltic Fleet for the Far East in particular.²⁴ In July 1904, Akashi organized a saboteurs' course in Paris for the Poles of the PPS and

²⁰ Akashi, *Rakka ryūsui*, 57.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 37.

²² *Ibid.*, 40.

²³ Kujala, "Nichiro sensō" (1987), 41–5 (1988), 40–43.

²⁴ F. 102, OO, op. 316, 1904–I, d. 1 ch. 5, l. 61, 69, 90–91, 103–4, d. 1 ch. 3, ll. 82–5, 88–9, 95–8, 100, 188 (Ehrström's correspondence photographed by the French secret police for the Russian government), GARF; W. Thulstrup to Ehrström 6 and 13 September, 13, 17 and 20 October and 12 December 1904, K. Zilliacus to Ehrström 7 September 1904, Eb 13, Erik Ehrström Collection, Helsinki City Archive (HCA).

National League. The goal of this was to halt traffic on the Trans-Siberian Railway. Zilliacus and Ehrström were involved in the arrangements for this course.²⁵ Zilliacus supplied Polish (PPS) and Russian (SR) terrorists with information on explosives from the Japanese military. Judging by the evidence, this happened not only with Akashi's knowledge but also his approval, thereby making him an officer of the Japanese General Staff promoting terrorism in a hostile power.²⁶ It is unlikely that Akashi had authority from his superiors to conduct such operations. It is clear that, through their information-gathering activities, the Finns tried to persuade Japan to look favorably on their political ambitions; a similar ambition underlay the Poles' enthusiasm for sabotage.

Zilliacus' conference plan found more support among the opposition parties of the Russian Empire than the PPS' proposal, and served to bury the latter. The minority nationalities-led insurrection envisaged by the PPS never materialized, following the Japanese refusal to support it. The joint conference was held on Zilliacus' initiative between 30 September and 5 October 1904 in Paris. Only eight parties were represented there, including the Union of Liberation (the Russian liberals), the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries, the Polish National League, the Polish Socialist Party and the Finnish opposition.²⁷ The results of the conference were of minor importance. Unrest did increase in a number of areas of the empire towards the end of 1904, but primarily as the result of independent action taken by individual parties.

In his secret memorandum on the conference, Zilliacus requested Japan to state officially that it would rather conclude peace with a Russian constitutional government than with tsarism, which it con-

²⁵ Pobóg-Malinowski, *Józef Piłsudski*, 216–17; M. Akashi to E. Ehrström 3, 4 and 24 July, 7 and 16 August and “le 16,” 1904, K. Zilliacus to Ehrström 20 July and 7 September 1904, Eb 1 and 13, Ehrström Collection, HCA; *Russkii politicheskii syzk za granitsej*, L. Menshchikov (ed.), vol. I (Paris, 1914), 183; Inaba, “Polish-Japanese Military Collaboration,” 233–4.

²⁶ K. Zilliacus to E. Ehrström 7 September 1904, Eb 13, Ehrström Collection, HCA; Zilliacus to W. Jodko-Narkiewicz 22 February 1905, f. 167, op. 1, d. 69, ll. 38–9, RTsKhIDNI; “Doneseniia Evno Azefa (Perepiska Azefa s Rataevym v 1903–1905 gg.),” *Byloe*, no. 1 (23) (1917), 221–2; Akashi, *Rakka ryūsui*, 44–5, 52.

²⁷ *Listok Osvobozhdeniia*, no. 17, 19 November (2 December) 1904, 1–2; Adolf Törngren, *Med ryska samhällsbyggare och statsmän åren 1904–1905* (Helsingfors, 1929), 241–55; *Russkii politicheskii syzk za granitsej*, 182–95; K. Zilliacus, *La conférence & Mémoire I* (October 1904), Kakkoku naisei kankei zassan, no. 3, 1.6.3.2–9, Gaikō Shiryōkan [Archives of the Japanese Foreign Ministry].

sidered to be its real enemy.²⁸ His request was not well received within the Japanese Foreign Ministry, since it was used to working through traditional diplomatic channels.²⁹ The General Staff refused Akashi's request to allow him access to additional funds for subversion beyond the sum already granted.³⁰ After the Paris conference, Zilliacus kept on passing various Japanese subsidies to the parties which had attended the conference, taking care not to reveal the origin of the funds to the Russian parties.³¹

Soon after the end of the conference, the Finnish constitutionalist opposition, whose leadership had only half-heartedly backed Zilliacus' efforts or been totally averse to them, decided to rescind its association with the conference. As a result of this move, Zilliacus founded a new radical opposition group known as the Finnish Active Resistance Party. The new party signed the official documents connected with the conference instead of the Finnish constitutionalist opposition which had actually been represented at the conference.

Unlike the constitutionalists, the Activists were ready to resort to armed struggle and terrorism against the tsarist authorities and link forces with the Russian revolutionary movement. The party lacked any policy program covering social issues. The main aim of the Finnish Activists was the implementation of national self-determination in cooperation with the forces of the Russian opposition. Absolute separatism was contrary to closer association and was therefore not implemented as a political program.³²

The failure of the Paris conference to attract as wide a range of participants as had originally been hoped for by its organizers resulted, in the main, from the revelation of Zilliacus' links with the Japanese, which prevented the social democratic parties from sending their

²⁸ K. Zilliacus, *Mémoire I*, *ibid.*

²⁹ Futrell, "Colonel Akashi," 18.

³⁰ Akashi, *Rakka ryūsui*, 57; Inaba, "The Politics of Subversion," 75; K. Zilliacus to W. Jodko-Narkiewicz 3 November 1904, f. 167, op. 1, d. 69, ll. 21–2, RTsKhIDNI.

³¹ K. Zilliacus to "T" 19 March 1905, Reuter Letter Collection XXIII, ÅAB; Zilliacus to W. Jodko-Narkiewicz 9 January and undated 1905, f. 167, op. 1, d. 69, ll. 33–4, 42, RTsKhIDNI. In September 1904, the Japanese paid the travel expenses of the representatives of some minority nationality parties to the Paris conference; Zilliacus sent 600 francs to the Polish Socialist Party which divided the money among the parties in question. See Zilliacus to Jodko-Narkiewicz 16 and 23 September 1904 and Zilliacus to J. Kaniowski (= B.A. Jędrzejowski) 23 September 1904, f. 167, op. 1, d. 69, ll. 9, 14–15, 20, RTsKhIDNI.

³² Kujala, "March Separately," 129–30, 158–9.

representatives to Paris. The social democrats found out about his ties with the Japanese General Staff due to the Zilliacus' own lack of caution. Zilliacus made the mistake of considering the Jewish Bund a more nationalist organization than it was, and hinted to its representatives in Geneva that money or weapons might be available to their party from Japanese military coffers. Opposition groups from all the other minority nationalities had seized upon this offer.³³ The representatives of the Bund, however, gave no definite answer to Zilliacus' offer and informed the other social democratic parties of the Russian Empire of it at their informal joint conference held in Amsterdam in August 1904. (In the light of this, Lenin's idea of the extent of the Bund's nationalism seems grossly exaggerated.)

At this conference and in the ensuing discussions within the foreign leadership of the Russian Social Democratic Workers' Party (RSDWP), it turned out that Rosa Luxemburg representing the Polish Social Democrats (SDKPiL), in particular, was opposed to inter-party collaboration cutting across ideological and class divides. The attitude of the hard-core Mensheviks, Fedor Il'ich Dan and Iulii Osipovich Martov, was almost as negative as Rosa Luxemburg's. One has the impression that the revelation of Zilliacus' contacts with Japan served to a large degree as a pretext for the Mensheviks to abandon the conference venture, which, in their opinion, involved too much fraternization with "bourgeois and petty bourgeois forces."

Georgii Valentinovich Plekhanov agreed with Dan and Martov that the RSDWP could not take part in any conference serving the interests of Japan, but the Mensheviks' emphasis on issues of party particularism did not evoke much sympathy in him.³⁴ Of all the RSDWP leaders, Zilliacus had been in direct contact only with Plekhanov, whom he considered the most important figure within the main wing of the party. Zilliacus had managed to make a positive impression on Plekhanov which even the revelation of his contacts with the Japanese General Staff was not able to eliminate. In all

³³ Konni Zilliacus, *Från ofärdstid och oroliga år*, vol. 2 (Helsingfors, 1920), 14–17.

³⁴ Zametki o konspirativnom soveshchanii delegatov rossiiskikh sotsialisticheskikh partii (22 August 1904), M G-9, 80, Bund Archives, YIVO Institute for Jewish Research (New York); I. Volkovicher, "Partiia i russko-iaponskaia voina," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 12 (35) (1924), 119–22; Karol Grünberg, "Socjaldemokracja polska a ruch liberalny w państwie rosyjskim w 1904 r.," *Materiały i studia katedry historii powszechniej i stosunków międzynarodowych WSNŚ przy KC PZPR*, vol. 1 (Warsaw, 1960), 41–3.

likelihood, Plekhanov did not disapprove of contacts with the enemy as categorically as the Mensheviks.³⁵

Extremely little information is available on Lenin's attitude toward Zilliacus' venture after the revelation of his Japanese contacts. Lenin's view on this question may have been quite similar to Plekhanov's. These two men often resembled each other in their "Jacobinism." The assumption that information on Lenin's attitude has been concealed cannot be excluded. Nevertheless, nobody has so far been able to find any clear evidence that the Bolsheviks had anything more to do with the Japanese than the propaganda dispatches envisaged or actually channelled to Japan by Vladimir Dmitrievich Bonch-Bruевич, who was in charge of the Geneva office of the RSDWP.³⁶

Zilliacus himself effectively scuttled his own aim of uniting opposition forces. It would nevertheless have been impossible for him to disguise his secret links with the Japanese in the long run. As the Japanese were interested in organizing inter-party cooperation only on a truly broad base, they would have been wise not to finance Zilliacus' activities at this stage. The results might have been better if Zilliacus had acted independently of the Japanese.

The Revolution of 1905

The 1905 revolution began with the shots fired on Bloody Sunday (22 January 1905) in St. Petersburg. The Russian Socialist Revolutionaries now began in earnest to bring together the revolutionary parties, and engaged Father Georgii Apollonovich Gapon, the hero of Bloody Sunday, as the figurehead for their venture.³⁷ The fate of broadly-based inter-party collaboration was sealed as a result of talks held by Mark Andreevich Natanson, representing the Socialist Revolutionaries, and Plekhanov in his capacity as the chairman of the council of the RSDWP. Natanson and Plekhanov³⁸ were able to

³⁵ The correspondence between Plekhanov and Zilliacus in 1904, f. 1093, op. 3, d. 97 and 273, Arkhiv Doma Plekhanova (St. Petersburg). Also see Kujala, "March Separately," 95–6, 110–22, 127.

³⁶ Futrell, "Colonel Akashi," 7–22; Kujala, "March Separately," 120–22; Pavlov and Petrov, "Iaponskie den'gi i russkaia revoliutsiia," 29–32. The papers of the Bolshevik Party should now be reviewed to see if any new evidence can be located.

³⁷ Kujala, "March Separately," 137–49.

³⁸ Natanson and Plekhanov had been comrades in arms in the populist movement thirty years previously.

agree on two basic issues relating to a possible political agreement between the two parties: the transfer of land to popular control and the endorsement of terror as an appropriate and necessary part of the ongoing revolutionary struggle. With regard to the former issue, agreement on a choice of words acceptable to both parties was left to a later date.

The council of the RSDWP, however, rejected the draft proposal Plekhanov outlined at a meeting on 11 March 1905. Martov and Pavel Borisovich Axelrod threatened to resign from the council if it endorsed a policy condoning individual terrorist acts as an acceptable weapon in the anti-Tsarist struggle. In Martov's and Axelrod's opinion, the rank and file of the party would abandon work among the masses and resort to bomb-throwing if the RSDWP gave its blessing to terrorism. The hard-core Mensheviks thus again proved to be more unwilling to tolerate any form of compromise than Plekhanov.

In a memorandum drawn up the same day, the council of the RSDWP proposed to the Socialist Revolutionaries the holding of talks on a collaborative agreement, restricted to technical questions such as the coordination of mass action and individual acts of terrorism. The council stressed that it would continue to consider the social democratic parties of the minority nationalities as the RSDWP's political allies, while seeing the Socialist Revolutionaries as suitable partners only at a technical level. This was highly unlikely to occur with the latter, who wanted the RSDWP to recognize them as the second major socialist party in Russia alongside the RSDWP itself.

The council, in the shape of Plekhanov, Axelrod and Lev Grigor'evich Deutsch (Deich), forwarded its memorandum in person to Natanson the same day (11 March). Natanson expressed his disappointment at its content and Plekhanov promised to call a further meeting the following day. The council did not, however, meet on 12 March to discuss the draft agreement proposal; instead, Deutsch sent Natanson a letter in which he asked the Socialist Revolutionaries for a reply to the memorandum the council had sent the previous day. Natanson was anything but pleased with this move. He was reluctant to put the RSDWP memorandum before the Socialist Revolutionaries for official consideration, anticipating that his party would be unlikely to accept its terms.

With discussion thus deadlocked, Natanson and Plekhanov wrote to each other (on 13 and 15 March) outlining their respective positions on the talks while asking the other side to show a little more flexibility.

Plekhanov attempted to deny that any formal discussions on the issues in question had, in fact, even taken place. Least of all, he wanted to reveal that the other members of the council had forced him to accept their conditions. This correspondence effectively put the seal on the failure of the talks between the parties to produce any workable agreement. A historical chance to draw the two parties closer together was lost.

The decisive disagreements did not focus on the class nature of the Russian revolution or the agrarian question, as one might have expected, but were concentrated around the role to be given to terrorist action. Although Natanson seems to have gone further in the discussions than his party expected, it is difficult to imagine that the Socialist Revolutionaries would have rejected the results of the talks if the council of the RSDWP had ratified them. As if by common agreement, the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks allowed the discussions between Natanson and Plekhanov to be quietly forgotten. As a result, virtually nothing had been known about this interesting stage in relations between the two parties until 1988 when I disclosed their existence.³⁹

The inability of the Socialist Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks to come to any form of agreement emerged as the major stumbling block which restricted the range of participants at the Geneva conference. The disagreements existing between the main wings of the Russian revolutionary movement effectively frustrated all the attempts made during the spring of 1905 to establish a common front. The Mensheviks backed out of the preparations for the conference;⁴⁰ and the representatives of the other social democratic organizations (the Bolsheviks, the Bund, etc.) soon walked out of the Geneva conference when they found out that the Socialist Revolutionaries and their

³⁹ RSDWP council memorandum 11 March 1905 (copy); M.A. Natanson to G.V. Plekhanov 13 March 1905 (copy); Plekhanov to Natanson 15 March 1905 (copy), Arkhiv Partii Sotsialistov-Revoliutsionerov (PSR), No. 758/11/b, International Institute of Social History, Amsterdam (IISH). Natanson's name was systematically removed from both copies of the letters, apparently because he wished his role here to remain unknown. The original and a copy of the memorandum are contained in B.I. Nikolaevskii Collection (No. 125, item 3) in the Hoover Institution. Also see J. Martow, *Geschichte der russischen Sozialdemokratie* (Berlin, 1926), 95; Kujala, "March Separately," 115–16, 141–4; *Pis'ma Azefa, 1893–1917*, D.B. Pavlov and Z.I. Peregudova (eds.) (M., 1994), 123.

⁴⁰ *Leninskii sbornik*, vol. 16 (1931), 81; *Iskra*, no. 98 (23 April 1905), 3; *Revoliutsionnaia Rossiia*, no. 65 (25 April 1905), 4.

allies held the upper hand.⁴¹ If the Mensheviks had attended, there might have been a chance to achieve a balance of power between the social democratic and SR-led forces.

The conference of seven revolutionary parties (the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries, the Polish Socialists, the Finnish Activists, etc.) held in Geneva on 2–8/9 April 1905 led to the formation of a revolutionary bloc comprising only the Socialist Revolutionaries and their allies among the national minorities.⁴² The main role in the lead-up to, and in directing, the conference was taken by the Socialist Revolutionaries. Zilliacus took no part in the preparations and did not attend the conference. As the social democratic parties had decided to boycott the Paris conference because of Zilliacus' links with the Japanese, someone else would have to be entrusted with the task of organizing a follow-up meeting. Zilliacus satisfied himself with exercising influence over developments indirectly through the Socialist Revolutionaries.⁴³

After Bloody Sunday, Zilliacus and Akashi began to organize a rebellion in Russia.⁴⁴ In order to achieve positive results, collaboration between as many revolutionary parties as possible was a necessity. The efforts to organize a new conference of all revolutionary forces active within the Russian Empire served Zilliacus' and Akashi's purposes excellently.

Following the battle of Mukden in March 1905, the Japanese government and General Staff abandoned their former caution on the subversion question and allocated, even prior to the Geneva conference, a million yen to backing an armed uprising in Russia. If Russia could not be made to yield by force of arms, it would be possible, according to Japanese thinking, to break the Russian determination to continue the struggle by paralysing the country from within through subversion.⁴⁵

After the break-up of the conference and the failure of the attempts

⁴¹ *Revoliutsionnaia Rossiia*, no. 65 (25 April 1905), 5–6.

⁴² Kujala, "March Separately," 148–59.

⁴³ Akashi, *Rakka ryūsui*, 61–2, 66; Kujala, "March Separately," 138–40, 149–50, 159. Zilliacus had no real influence with regard to the possibility of the Socialist Revolutionaries settling their differences with the RSDWP. He would only have made things worse if he had intervened in the Natanson-Plekhanov talks.—Also see Zilliacus to W. Jodko-Narkiewicz 2, 22 and 23 February and 2 March 1905 and undated, f. 167, op. 1, d. 69, ll. 16–17, 35–42, RTsKhIDNI.

⁴⁴ Futrell, "Colonel Akashi," 17–18.

⁴⁵ Inaba, "The Politics of Subversion," 78–82.

that had been made to develop some kind of working relationship between the two wings of the Russian revolutionary movement, Zilliacus and Akashi had to resign themselves to the fact that only the Socialist Revolutionaries and their allies would be involved in the plans for a rebellion. This must have been a source of major disappointment to Zilliacus, but particularly for the Japanese, who had considered it important to gain as wide a base as possible for the planned campaign of subversion.

The uprising was planned to start in St. Petersburg following the arrival of the arms shipment from the West. The aim was to stage a final settling of accounts with the autocracy. Even if the uprising in the capital was to fail, it would be sufficient, it was assumed, to trigger popular rebellions in Poland, the Caucasus and elsewhere, which would serve to provide the impetus for a revolution embracing the empire as a whole. Zilliacus, Akashi, Chaikovskii and the Georgian revolutionary, Georgii Dekanozi, began to acquire arms and the vessels needed to transport them to Russia in the period immediately following the Geneva conference. The weapons purchased were intended for the Socialist Revolutionaries, the Finnish Activists, the Polish Socialists and the Georgian Socialists-Federalists. Gapon was recruited to serve as a figurehead to lead the uprising planned for St. Petersburg.⁴⁶

The Socialist Revolutionary leaders must have realized that the money Zilliacus was offering them, allegedly as funds collected in America, had its origin in Tokyo, but they saw fit to accept Zilliacus' explanations at face value.⁴⁷ Many Russian socialists apparently did not regard the receiving of Japanese subsidies a particularly serious offense, provided that all traces of its source could be hidden. The freighter *John Grafton* sailed for St. Petersburg at the beginning of August, loaded with 15,560 rifles and 2,500 revolvers, together with ammunition and explosives. About a third of the cargo was destined

⁴⁶ Antti Kujala, "The Russian Revolutionary Movement and the Finnish Opposition, 1905: The John Grafton Affair and the Plans for an Uprising in St. Petersburg," *Scandinavian Journal of History*, vol. 5 (1980), 261–2, 269. For the surveillance the Russian police subjected Akashi and Zilliacus to and its ultimate failure, see Shchegolev, "Russkii Rokambol," 179–97; Pavlov and Petrov, "Iaponskie den'gi i russkaia revoliutsiia" and Pavlov, "Tainaia voina protiv Rossii," *passim*.

⁴⁷ Kujala, "March Separately," 161–2 (see also 100–01). Zilliacus' connections with the Japanese were known not only by the social democrats but by the Russian liberals as well. See A. Törnngren to A. Neovius, 4 April 1905, Neovius Collection, NA.

for the Finnish Activists.⁴⁸ Zilliacus approved the inclusion of the underground organization of the Finnish constitutionalists, the *Kagal*, and the Bolsheviks in the operation. The latter collaborated with the *Kagal* in this venture, a fact that some *Kagal* leaders subsequently tried to conceal.⁴⁹

Zilliacus and Chaikovskii aimed for the uprising to get under way immediately on the arrival of the arms in St. Petersburg. Akashi's desire for events to be put in hand as quickly as possible to take some of the pressure off Japan, which, despite her military victories, was by this stage sorely in need of a respite from the conflict, undoubtedly contributed to this decision.⁵⁰ The Socialist Revolutionary party leadership, on the other hand, argued for stockpiling the weapons until Russia was truly ripe for revolution.⁵¹ Zilliacus and Chaikovskii decided to ignore the concerns and warnings of the party leadership, putting their faith instead in Gapon's completely unsubstantiated assurances that the St Petersburg workers were just waiting for the sign to mount the barricades.⁵²

At the beginning of August, the Activist leadership in Helsinki decided to accept the argument for the need to delay the planned rebellion, thereby challenging Zilliacus, the party's founder and undisputed authority until then. An additional reason for this change of policy was the lack of preparation witnessed in St. Petersburg. The Activist leadership also decided to bypass Zilliacus' promises made to the *Kagal* and the Bolsheviks regarding the arms shipment.⁵³ These changes resulted from the intervention of the Socialist Revolutionaries.⁵⁴ The control of the project thus slipped out of Japanese hands.

⁴⁸ The annual report of the party council for 1904–5 (19 November 1905), Finnish Active Resistance Party Archive, NA.

⁴⁹ Kujala, "The Russian Revolutionary Movement," 257–75. Lenin was interested in Zilliacus' arms shipment but avoided any personal involvement in the affair, apparently because he guessed the source of the weapons.

⁵⁰ Kujala, "The Russian Revolutionary Movement," 262; Kujala, "March Separately," 163.

⁵¹ M.R. Gots to N.V. Chaikovskii 12 August 1905, no. 115, item 14, Nikolaevskii Collection, HI.

⁵² N.P. Petrov, "Zapiski o Gaponе," *Vsemirnyi vestnik*, vol. 4, no. 2 (1907), 14–23; K. Zilliacus to A. Neovius 15 May 1905, Neovius Collection, NA; Zilliacus, *Från ofärdstid och oroliga år*, vol. 2, 40–41.

⁵³ Kujala, "The Russian Revolutionary Movement," 268–71; Kujala, "March Separately," 163–4.

⁵⁴ H. Biaudet to "Sliotoff" (a representative of the Socialist Revolutionary leadership) 31 October 1905, contained in the portfolio of copies of Henry Biaudet's letters, 31–3, in his collection, NA.

The project ended in total failure, when the *John Grafton* ran aground on the Finnish coast and the crew blew her up. This happened a few days after the conclusion of peace in September 1905.⁵⁵ The result may have been a serious personal disappointment to Akashi, but to his country it did not really matter any more once she had concluded peace with Russia. Whatever the result, the money spent in financing the arms shipment had been lost and could not be recovered.

The Japanese General Staff used the Russian revolutionaries as one uses mercenaries, providing financial support for the sake of military victory. The General Staff broke off relations with the opposition groups in the Russian Empire when the war drew to a close. Japan did not intend to remain on unfriendly terms with Russia.⁵⁶ This also sealed the end of contacts and collaboration with the Finnish opposition.

Ironically, the best investment the Japanese made with a view to hampering the Russian war effort was their subsidies not to Zilliacus and the inter-party collaborative initiatives but to the Polish Socialist Party and its violent activities within Russian Poland. Even early in 1904, prior to the outbreak of the latter, the Russian government maintained an army of 250,000 men in Poland. At the outbreak of the war in February 1904, Russian armed forces stationed east of Lake Baikal numbered only 135,000 men. Although every Russian military unit was needed in the Far East, the government, concerned about revolutionary activism, had to increase the size of its armed forces in Poland by 50,000 men by mid-1905.⁵⁷

Russian Political Parties and Inter-Party Collaboration

The efforts to establish a common front between the various political and national opposition movements of the Russian Empire should not be viewed merely from the perspective of a Japanese policy of subversion. After the outbreak of the war, the idea of greater collaboration arose in a number of quarters totally independently and, above all, in some cases irrespective of the Japanese, but Zilliacus' greater success

⁵⁵ Kujala, "The Russian Revolutionary Movement," 271–5.

⁵⁶ Inaba, "The Politics of Subversion," 83–4.

⁵⁷ Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905: Russia in Disarray* (Stanford, 1988), 158; J.A. White, *The Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War* (Princeton, 1964), 147. The Russian troops in Poland were also naturally needed to ward off potential external attacks.

served to bury these initiatives. In the final analysis, Zilliacus and Akashi were successful because their policy corresponded to the needs of the revolutionary parties. An unprofitable and unpopular war created ideal conditions for the opposition's efforts towards unity. Although Japanese aid did play a certain role in the revolutionary events of 1904–5 in the Russian Empire, these events resulted mainly from internal causes.

Of the two main parties, the RSDWP and the Socialist Revolutionaries, the former, firmly committed to its own ideological orthodoxy and centralist philosophy, was clearly the less flexible in its attitude towards cross-party collaboration. Differences of opinion nevertheless existed within the party—Plekhanov's attitude toward joint action was generally more positive than that of the hard-core Mensheviks, such as Dan and Martov.⁵⁸ The conciliatory approach towards the other parties adopted by Lenin in the spring of 1905 owed much to the Bolsheviks' desire to break out of their isolated position.⁵⁹

The various competing socialist parties representing many of the borderlands within the empire often enjoyed significantly worse mutual relations than those existing between the Russian Social Democrats and Socialist Revolutionaries. Internecine competition came to dominate local opposition politics in a number of regions, particularly in the case of the Polish and Latvian⁶⁰ socialist movements.

The weak overall position of the minority nationalities prompted the revolutionary parties representing them to encourage collaboration between forces across the Empire. They were more active in this field than the Russian parties. The activity of the minorities was especially prominent in the early stages of the development of the idea of joint action during the spring and summer of 1904. As a result of the smaller degree of influence wielded by the minority nationalities, none of these parties was in a position to be able to eliminate the common front idea alone, unlike the larger Russian parties such as the RSDWP.

⁵⁸ Kujala, "March Separately," 110–25, 131–45.

⁵⁹ The minutes (and their draft version) of the Foreign Committee 7 April 1905, PSR, No. 18, IISH; "K biografii Gapon," *Minushie gody*, no. 7 (1908), 40–41; V.I. Lenin, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 5th ed., vol. 10 (M, 1960), 181, vol. 47 (1964), 20, 22.

⁶⁰ *Revoliutsionnaia Rossiia*, no. 65, 25 April 1905 O.S., 5; *Bureau Socialiste International: Comptes rendus des réunions, Manifestes et circulaires*, Georges Haupt (ed.), vol. I (Paris, 1969), 241, 265, 376–9, 391–2.

The Polish Social Democrats were the least favourably disposed of any party within the whole of the empire to the question of collaboration between the social democrats and the other revolutionary parties and opposition movements. In the period leading up to both the Paris and Geneva conferences, the SDKPiL consistently followed policies at odds with those espoused by the RSDWP and the other social democratic parties. Despite this, the Russian Social Democrats, both the Mensheviks and the Bolsheviks, favored the Rosa Luxemburg led party (the SDKPiL) because of its renunciation of the type of nationalism advocated by its competitor, the PPS. The SDKPiL's unambiguous internationalist stance made the party an important ally for the Russian Social Democrats.⁶¹

The Polish Socialist Party's attachment to Polish nationalism, together with its anti-Russian sentiments, forced the party into a position within the opposition movement far from matching its potential significance as the main socialist party of the Empire's second most important national group. The PPS' traditional separatism was based in large measure on the weakness of the Russian revolutionary movement. The strengthening of the Russian opposition during 1904 forced at least part of the party to reassess its attitude to separatism and to the idea of collaboration, and led to a number of disputes within the party over its future policy position.⁶²

Of the other parties, the Jewish Bund in particular attempted to promote unity among the social democrats,⁶³ while among the Finnish opposition, Zilliacus, together with his supporters, similarly aimed at the creation of a joint front embracing all revolutionary forces, albeit one biased in favor of the Russian Socialist Revolutionaries. Since the Finnish Activists were much less separatist and Russophobic than, for example, the Polish Socialist Party, it was much easier for the Russian revolutionary parties to cooperate with the former. Mostly for this reason, Zilliacus rose to the head of efforts directed at Empire-wide collaboration between the revolutionary and opposition parties in 1904.

The obstacles in the way of cooperation among the revolutionary parties proved, in the final analysis, insurmountable. This alone,

⁶¹ See Najdus, *SDKPiL a SDPRR*, and Georg W. Strobel, *Die Partei Rosa Luxemburgs, Lenin und die SPD: Der polnische 'europäische' Internationalismus in der russischen Sozialdemokratie* (Wiesbaden, 1974), passim.

⁶² See Anna Żarnowska, *Geneza rozłamu w Polskiej Partii Socjalistycznej 1904–1906* (Warsaw, 1965), passim.

⁶³ Kujala, "March Separately," 114–15, 119, 135–7, 145–6.

however, can hardly explain the failure of the 1905 revolution. The revolutionary parties were much weaker comparatively at the beginning of 1917, when even the small measure of collaboration existing in 1905 was lacking. The 1905 revolution remained no more than a “dress rehearsal” for things to come because, despite its weakened position, the autocratic regime was able, drawing on what reserves it had left at its disposal, to avoid the type of complete breakdown which it was to encounter only 12 years later.

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

RUSSIAN MILITARY INTELLIGENCE IN THE WAR WITH JAPAN, 1904–1905

Evgenii Yurievich Sergeev

Because of the growing complexities of the strategic landscape in Europe at the turn of the twentieth century, military intelligence (MI) was one of the most important organizations within the armed forces of the Great Powers. Charged with collecting, analyzing, and disseminating information about the military capabilities of all its foes, MI provided all European armies with vital information about their rivals and partners, to help them prepare for future war. In Russia, the sweeping military reforms carried out in the 1860s and 1870s by War Minister Dmitrii Miliutin, created a solid foundation for MI in the Imperial Army.¹

Although gathering information about other countries was the responsibility of several Russian government departments, especially foreign and internal affairs, only the War Ministry focused on the whole intelligence cycle. According to the memoirs of Walter Nikolai, the legendary head of German espionage in World War I, by the early 1900s, tsarist MI successfully competed with its counterparts in Germany and France. The creation of permanent facilities for data collection in the Scandinavian kingdoms, as well as in Switzerland and the Netherlands, enabled St. Petersburg to know much about the situation in Europe in the period before the Great War.²

However, late in the 1890s, the rising Japanese Empire began to pose a new challenge to the Russian Main Staff. Since this occurred in the Far East, a little studied region of the tsarist Empire, it is

¹ See, David Schimelpenninck van der Oye, “Reforming Military Intelligence,” David Schimelpenninck van der Oye and Bruce W. Menning (eds.), *Reforming the Tsar’s Army* (Cambridge, 2004).

I am grateful for the advice of David Schimelpenninck van der Oye and David Wolff, who read and commented on an earlier draft of this article.

² V. Nikolai, *Tainye sily. International’nyi shpionazh i bor’ba s nim vo vremia mirovoi voiny i v nastoiashchee vremia* (M., 1925), 62–64.

necessary to conduct a proper examination of all the civil and military institutions, including those involving intelligence. The activities of Russian MI in the war with Japan remain one of the little-known aspects of the conflict. This is partly due to the unpopularity of the war among the Russians, both before and after 1917. Meanwhile, the democratic revolution of 1905–07, then World War I, and finally the Civil War consigned the Russo-Japanese clash to the dustbin of history. And, a third reason for neglect was the inaccessibility of archives before the early 1990s, which meant that scholars could only examine published memoirs and diaries. While such sources provided useful details, they often degenerated into polemics about the causes of the catastrophic defeat.

As a result, in spite of a seeming abundance of essays and books on the Russo-Japanese War in Russia and the West, the role of intelligence on the Manchurian front still remains understudied. Those few works that tackled the problem immediately after 1905 analyzed it mostly in the negative sense, though some achievements of the Russian Main Staff were mentioned.³ The authors stressed poor knowledge of the Japanese armed forces and the future theater of warfare, the absence of a prepared draft for conducting strategic and tactical intelligence, inexperience in organizing the intelligence sections of the Manchurian armies, among others, as obvious failures of tsarist MI. However, the paucity of sources prevented contemporary authors from giving a detailed and balanced description of the events they had witnessed themselves.

The most comprehensive early studies of Russian MI were written shortly after the Revolution of 1917 by the former General Staff colonel, later Major General Pavel Fedorovich Riabikov and by the Soviet military historian Konstantin Kirillovich Zvonarev (a pseudonym for Karl Zvaigzne), who emphasized failures of tsarist human intelligence (HUMINT) in comparison with the achievements of the Japanese.⁴ Aside from these years of heightened tension in East Asia

³ See, Nikolai Alekseevich Danilov, "Podgotovka v shirokom smysle voyuyutshikh storon pered voinoi i obstanovka pered srazheniem pod Tiurenchenom," *Russko-iaponskaia voina v soobshcheniakh v Nikolaievskoi akademii General'nogo Shtaba*, 2 vols. (SPB, 1906), I, 1; Aziatikus, "Razvedka vo vremia russko-iaponskoi voiny," *Russko-iaponskaia voina v nabludeniakh i suzhdeniakh inostrantsev* (SPB, 1907), vyp. 12.

⁴ Pavel Fedorovich Riabikov, *Razvedyvatel'naia sluzhba v miroe i voennoe vremia*, 2 pts. (Tomsk, 1919); Konstantin Kirillovich Zvonarev, *Agenturnaia razvedka*, 2 vols. (M, 1929–1931), reprint ed., 2 vols. (M, 2003).

in the late 1930s and the early 1940s, this subject remained out of bounds for serious Soviet scholarship. The primary focus in popular histories was put on extracts from official correspondence and private memoirs that described Japanese espionage in Russia's Far East and China.⁵ At the same time, too little attention was paid to Russian MI on the Manchurian front.⁶

Western historians did not do much better. Their inability to consult archives led some historians incorrectly to conclude that there was little effort on the Russian side to set up a proper MI organization in East Asia after fighting erupted.⁷ At the same time, they highlighted the successes of Japanese HUMINT, which was well established in the region.⁸ Most foreign scholars focused only on land and sea operations, while largely ignoring the intelligence service.⁹ Although general assessments were changing in 1960s–1980s to a more objective description of Russian war efforts, the state of the field nevertheless remained under-developed because of the inability of scholars to consult Soviet documentary repositories.¹⁰

Thanks to the opening of Russian archives in the early 1990s, some important studies of the subject have been carried out in recent years. Books and articles by Il'ia Valerievich Derevianko, Mikhail Alekseev, and Igor Nikolaevich Kravtsev,¹¹ as well as a series of top-secret

⁵ See, for example, Aleksei Petrovich Votinov, *Iaponskii shpionazh v russko-iaponskuiu voinu 1904–1905 gg.* (M, 1939); Petr Sofinov (ed.), *Iaponskii shpionazh v tsarskoi Rossii. Dokumenty* (M, 1944).

⁶ Nikolai Alekseevich Levitskii, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 gg.* (M, 1938); Vladimir Vasil'evich Luchinin, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 gg.* (M, 1940); Aleksandr Ivanovich Sorokin, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 gg. (Voenna-istoricheskii ocherk)* (M, 1956); Ivan Ivanovich Rostunov (ed.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskoi voiny 1904–1905 gg.* (M, 1977).

⁷ See, for example, Howard Molyneux Edward Brunner, *The Story of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905* (London, 1909), 37.

⁸ See, for example, William Greener, *A Secret Agent in Port Arthur* (London, 1905).

⁹ Edward Hoyt, *The Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905* (London, 1967); Christopher Martin, *The Russo-Japanese War* (London, 1967); Russian ed. (M, 2003); David Walder, *The Short Victorious War. The Russo-Japanese Conflict, 1904–1905* (London, 1973); Denis and Peggy Warner, *The Tide at Sunrise. A History of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905* (London, 1974).

¹⁰ See, especially, John Westwood, *Russia Against Japan, 1904–1905. A New Look at the Russo-Japanese War* (London, 1986); Richard Connaughton, *The War of the Rising Sun and Tumbling Bear: A Military History of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–1905* (London-New York, 1988).

¹¹ Il'ia Valerievich Derevianko, "Russkaia agenturnaya razvedka v 1902–1905 gg.," *Voenna-istoricheskii zhurnal*, no. 5 (1989), 76–78; Mikhail Alekseev, *Voennaia razvedka Rossii ot Riurika do Nikolaia II*, 4 vols. in 3 bks. (M, 1998–2001), I, 141–225; Igor Nikolaevich Kravtsev, *Tainye sluzhby imperii* (M, 1999), 37–130.

materials, composed by some chief Main Staff officials during the war, were published under the guidance of Russian archivists in the 1990s.¹² Outside Russia, William Fuller, Bruce Menning and David Rich gave a fresh look at the evolution of the tsarist armed forces, including some aspects of MI, in late imperial Russia.¹³ But the first Western academician to concentrate on Russian MI in Manchuria was David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye.¹⁴ At the same time, the Japanese historian Chiharu Inaba examined the Russian successes in wire intercepts and code-breaking in the Far East.¹⁵

However, Russian MI in 1904–05 still needs a more thorough investigation. This article aims to fill this need by focusing on the tsarist government's efforts to create a modern intelligence service in the Far East on the very eve and at two main stages of the war. Research is based on the data collection, analysis, and dissemination made by Russian general staff officers in collaboration with other civil and military officials before, during, and after the war. Since Russia's Pacific naval assets were blockaded by the Japanese navy in Port Arthur and Vladivostok, thereby reducing those assets to very limited action,¹⁶ this article examines the question of military intelligence only in connection with land operations. Another important topic—the dramatic struggle of Russians against Japanese HUMINT—also requires study but lies beyond the scope of this essay.¹⁷ After a

¹² Dmitrii Borisovich Pavlov, Sergei Alekseevich Petrov, Il'ia Valerievich Derevianko (eds.), *Tainy russko-iaponskoi voiny. Iaponskie den'gi i russkaia revoliutsiia. Russkaia razvedka i kontrrazvedka v voine 1904–1905* (M., 1993); Evgenii Iurievich Sergeev and Igor Vyacheslavovich Karpeev (eds.), "Iaponskie dnevniki A.N. Kuropatkina," *Rossiiskii arkhiv*, no. 6 (1995), 393–444.

¹³ William C. Fuller, "The Russian Empire," in Ernest R. May (ed.), *Knowing One's Enemies: Intelligence Assessments before the Two World Wars* (Princeton, 1984), 98–126; Bruce Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets. The Russian Imperial Army, 1861–1914* (Bloomington, 1992); David Alan Rich, *The Tsar's Colonels: Professionalism, Strategy and Subversion in Late Imperial Russia* (Cambridge, MA, 1998).

¹⁴ D. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, "Russian Military Intelligence on the Manchurian Front, 1904–05," *Intelligence and National Security*, XI, no. 1 (1996), 22–31.

¹⁵ Chiharu Inaba, "Iz istorii razvedki v gody russko-iaponskoi voiny (1904–1905). Mezhdunarodnaia telergaphnaia sviaz' i perekhvat protivnika," *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, no. 4–5 (1994), 222–227.

¹⁶ On Russian naval intelligence during the Russo-Japanese War, see M. Alekseev, *Voennaia razvedka*, I, 161–164, 219–220.

¹⁷ For further reading on Russian counter-intelligence before and during World War I, see Ian Nish, "Japanese Intelligence and the Approach of the Russo-Japanese War," Christopher Andrew and David Dilks (eds.), *Governments and Intelligence Communities in the 20th Century* (London, 1984), 17–32; Elena Kruchinina, "Iaponskii shpionazh v Rossii perioda russko-iaponskoi voiny," *Shpion*, no. 3 (5) (1994), 81–88; D.B. Pavlov,

brief survey of intelligence structures on the eve of the Japanese attack, the present paper dwells on developments in strategic and tactical intelligence, as well as on those of combat reconnaissance at the initial stage of the war (i.e., until October 1904) and after that, particularly during the decisive battle of Mukden and the aftermath. Some concluding comments are made about efforts to reform tsarist MI in the post-war period.

I. *On the Eve*

At the turn of the twentieth century, the Russian Main Staff defined MI (or as they called it, *military espionage*) as the “collection of information about armed forces and strongholds of other states together with geographical, topographical and statistical data of military importance, including strategic routes and communications.”¹⁸ The Main Staff also differentiated between overt and covert means of gathering such data. In peacetime the War Ministry carried out collection through its military attachés or by spies recruited among high-ranking officials in foreign states. After the start of war, some new channels appeared, including the interrogation of enemy deserters and prisoners of war (POWs).¹⁹

Learning who was responsible for establishing an accurate view of enemy intentions is complicated. The accepted wisdom is that Russia was caught entirely unprepared for the Japanese attack on Port Arthur because of a complete lack of intelligence about the intentions of the rising Asian power. Such an interpretation, however, reflected an effort of Russian official historiography to excuse Nicholas II and his leading officials for defeats at the initial stage of the war. Instead,

“Rossiiskaia kontrrazvedka v gody russko-iaponskoi voyny,” *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, no. 1 (1996), 14–28; Jonathan Daly, *Autocracy under Siege. Security Police and Opposition in Russia, 1986–1905* (Bloomington, 1998); Nikolai Sergeevich Kirmel, *Organizatsiia russkoi kontrrazvedki i bor’ba s iaponskim i germanskim shpionazhem v Sibiri (1906–1917 gg.)* (Cand. diss, Irkutsk, 1999); Nikolai Vladimirovich Grekov, *Russkaia kontrrazvedka v 1905–1917 gg.: shpionomanii i real’nye problemy* (M, 2000).

¹⁸ Quartermaster-General of Odessa military district Emmanuil Khristianovich Kalnin to the Main Directorate of the General Staff, 7 September 1907, RGVA, f. 2000. Glavnoe upravlenie General’nogo shtaba, op. 15/s, d. 26, l. 125.

¹⁹ Genrikh Antonovich Leer (ed.), *Entsiklopediia voennykh i morskikh nauk* (SPB, 1883–1897), VI, 35.

these sources place the blame for disaster on the two most important military commanders: Viceroy Evgenii Ivanovich Alekseev and General Aleksei Nikolaevich Kuropatkin. Thus, the members of the army's commission set up to compile an official history of the land war wrote in their multi-volume work: "We did not take any interest in the history of that country [Japan] and did not know it at all . . . Truth to tell, we had a network of military agents, but where did we collect information and to what extent was it valid? Though in the Far East, particularly in the Priamur military district, attempts were made to get more detailed information about the Japanese army, all of them proved to be ineffective."²⁰

The crucial obstacle for conducting intelligence operations in the Far East was a deficit of coordination and a clash of ambitions at all the levels. Without any question, Nicholas II closely supervised the activities of his government, in particular those of the War and Naval Ministries. He regularly read secret data being reported to him by the Main Staff.²¹ This organization, in turn, analyzed facts and figures assembled by military attachés (or in Russian—*voennye agenty*) abroad. The instruction of 1903 (*Instruktsiia po rabote s doneseniiami voennykh agentov*) presented the sovereign daily intelligence digests composed of information that was collected by these Russian "shoulder-strapped" diplomats.²² But with the establishment of a Viceroyalty in the Far East headed by Admiral E.I. Alekseev on July 30 1903, Nicholas II created an additional, intermediate level that was charged with the task of analyzing collected data. Henceforth, the Russian military and naval attachés in China, Japan, and Korea were subordinated to Alekseev, and reports were sent to St. Petersburg only after going through Alekseev's staff.²³

Thus, the Main Staff, more precisely Section Seven of its First Military Statistical Department, sorted out strategic data. Meanwhile, the Viceroy's headquarters in Port Arthur was in charge of short-range reconnaissance. A similar division of responsibilities was imposed

²⁰ Aleksei Konstantinovich Baiov (ed.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskoi voyny*, 2 vols. (SPB, 1907), 20, 23.

²¹ Iurii Nikolaevich Kriazhev, *Voenno-politicheskaia deiatel'nost' tsaria Nikolaia II v period 1904–14 gg.* (Kurgan, 2000), 38–101.

²² *Instruktsiia po rabote s doneseniiami voennykh agentov*, 12 November 1903, RGVA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 44, ll. 1–2. All dates are rendered according to the Julian calendar, or Old Style.

²³ Alekseev, *Voennaia razvedka*, I, 141.

upon naval intelligence, which now was coordinated both by the Main Naval Staff and by Alekseev himself.²⁴

The examination of a potential theater of operations was made by the Staff of the Priamur military district, located in Khabarovsk, and by the Staff of the Zaamur district of the Special Corps of Frontier Guards, set up in Irkutsk. While the former was subordinated to the Main Staff, in an odd quirk of tsarist administrative organization, the latter was formally subordinated to the Ministry of Finance. In wartime, however, both were assigned to the command of the active army. But almost nothing had been done to introduce a network of HUMINT in China and Korea before the war. The initiative of the Priamur military district to gather intelligence through secret agents had been rejected by the War Ministry on the grounds of budgetary limitations.²⁵ Despite such fiscal restraints, on 12 November 1903 Admiral Alekseev ordered the military commanders of the three Manchurian provinces occupied by Russian troops after the suppression of the Boxer rebellion in 1900–01 to be responsible for conducting so-called “administrative reconnaissance” of the region through HUMINT as soon as possible.²⁶

Military attachés played a decisive role in strategic intelligence before the war. However, officers stationed in East Asian capitals faced specific obstacles.²⁷ The first was poor knowledge of the region and its languages. This prevented attachés from creating an efficient network of HUMINT within Japan and Korea. As a result, Colonels Gleb Vannovskii and Ivan Strel’bitskii had been recalled to St. Petersburg in 1902 after two years of ineffective work in Tokyo and Seoul. Though their successors proved to be more able, particularly Colonel Vladimir Samoilov, a critical period for gathering information about adversary had been lost.²⁸

A second hindrance to the activity of military attachés in the Pacific were restrictions made by Japanese officials and journalists

²⁴ Alekseev, *Voennaia razvedka*, I, 310.

²⁵ Derevianko, “Russkaia agenturnya razvedka v 1902–1905 gg.,” 76.

²⁶ Mikhail Fedorovich Kvetsinskii, *Otchet voennogo komissara provintsii Heilongjiang v Glavnyi shtab o deiatelnosti s 1900 do 1904 goda*, September 1904, RGVIA, f. Voenno-Uchenyi Arkhiv (VUA), d. 29091, ll. 135–139.

²⁷ The most recent account of the Russian military attaches’ activities in the Far East is in Elena Viktorovna Dobychina, *Vneshnaia razvedka Rossii na Dal’nem Vostoke, 1895–1904 gg.* (Cand. Diss., M., 2003).

²⁸ *Ofitsial’naia perepiska i spravka o sluzhbe polkovnikov Vannovskogo i Strel’bitskogo v Iaponii i Koree*, June 1902, RGVIA, f. 400, Glavnyi shtab, op. 4, d. 108, ll. 1–40.

after 1902.²⁹ In addition, the Russian “shoulder-strapped” diplomats very often found themselves subject to disinformation, when they reported to Port Arthur and St. Petersburg false details about the adversary’s army based on sources controlled by Japanese counter-intelligence. According to the memoirs of Colonel Evgenii Ivanovich Martynov, the commander of the 140th Zarsk Regiment during the war, “only a single item relating to Japan in the *Review of the Armed Forces of Foreign States* until 1903 proved to be correct.”³⁰ Based on the Main Staff’s assumptions, the Japanese could deploy a maximum of 130,000–160,000 troops, whereas in fact they had 442,000 at the front in August 1905. As for the total number of mobilized Japanese soldiers and officers, at the height of the war that figure reached nearly 1,500,000.³¹

A third problem for military attachés was the scornful perception of the Far Eastern neighbor by the Russian officer corps. Most of them thought of Japan as “a toy, mini-state, capable only of imitating some superficial features of Western civilization,” in spite of the Japanese empire’s dramatic economic growth before the war.³² Even more telling about the military’s attitude toward Japan in the pre-war period, professors at the General Staff Academy in St. Petersburg began to lecture on Japanese military statistics only in autumn 1904. Almost all the Russian newspapers depicted the country of the Rising Sun as “an ugly pygmy,” “a wicked dwarf,” and the Japanese as “yellow-faced islanders with high cheek-bones and narrow eyes,” and more often, simply as “macaques” (a species of small monkeys indigenous to the region).³³ Judging from the diary entries and rumors prevalent in St. Petersburg on the eve of the war, Russians believed that “all the Japanese suffered from a certain sleeping sickness and they might fall asleep almost immediately!”³⁴

²⁹ Voenno-istoricheskaiia komissiiia [VIK], *Russko-Iaponskaya voina 1904–1905* g.g., 9 vols. in 16 bks. (SPB, 1910–13), I 158.

³⁰ Evgenii Ivanovich Martynov, *Vospominaniia o iaponskoi voine* (Plotsk, 1910), 5.

³¹ VIK, *Russko-Iaponskaya voina 1904–1905* g.g., I, 419–420.

³² Aleksei Andreevich Riabinin, *Na voine v 1904–1905* g.g. *Iz zapiskok ofitsera deistvuiushchei armii* (Odessa, 1909), 3–4.

³³ For further information see Elvira Aleksandrovna Drozdova, “Obraz Iaponii i yaponitsev v russko-iaponskuiu voinu 1904–1905 gg. (PO materialam dal’nevostochnoi periodiki i arkhivnym fondam Priamurskogo general-gubernatorstva),” *Piataia Dal’nevostochnaya konferentsiia molodykh istorikov* (Vladivostok, 1998), 38–42.

³⁴ However, the origins of these ideas remains undetermined. See, Aleksei Alekseevich Ignatiev, *Piat’desiat’ let v stroiu* (M, 1998), 143.

Hence, many leading tsarist military commanders anticipated a short, victorious, colonial war, very similar to suppression of the Boxers in China in 1900. As the French war correspondent Ludovico Nodo wrote: "I know from the most reliable source that a prominent army general tried to calm down a certain colonel while talking to him at the initial stage of the warfare: 'Please, do not worry. Be assured that the Japanese will be beaten in the same way as we have done with the Chinese.'"³⁵ Even worse, prewar attempts of the competent naval attaché Alexander Ivanovich Rusin to break stereotypes failed, though most of his assumptions later proved to be accurate.³⁶ The problem here lay with the traditional rivalry between the War and Navy Ministries. Besides, some of generals considered Rusin's reports to be provocative and even dangerous to officers, who, on reading them, "may have feared their potential enemy in advance."³⁷ There is substantial reason to believe that the Russians had done a poor job of gathering information about their enemy, and, as a result, misunderstood the intentions of the Japanese in 1904.

Other important means of gathering intelligence before the war were official and covert trips in the Far East made by general staff officers. According to A.N. Kuropatkin, Colonel Mikhail Alekseevich Adabash, the head of Section Seven at the First Military Statistical Department, who had visited Japan in 1903, brought to St. Petersburg important data about the enemy's army but "the information was again shelved" by Quartermaster-General Iakov Grigorievich Zhilinskii because it sharply contradicted information gathered by military attachés.³⁸ The vacillations of Russian policy in the Far East and a high discrepancy in the assumptions made about Japan motivated Kuropatkin to make a journey to the Russian Pacific area and Japan in summer 1903. On returning to St Petersburg, he reported to the tsar of "a real menace from Tokyo to the interests of Russia." In addition, Kuropatkin predicted a series of Russo-Japanese conflicts threatening Russia with a future loss of Eastern Siberia.³⁹

³⁵ Ludovico Nodo, *Lettres sur la guerre* (Paris, 1905), 28.

³⁶ See, for example, Alexander Ivanovich Rusin to Admiral Alekseev, March 25 1902, RGAVMF, f. 763, op. 1, d. 44, ll. 38–40.

³⁷ A.K. Baiov (ed.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskoi voiny*, Vol. 1, 24.

³⁸ Aleksei Nikolaevich Kuropatkin, *Zapiski o russko-yaponskoi voine. Itogi voiny* (Berlin, 1909), 186. Adabash was actually in Japan during the fall of 1902.

³⁹ Sergeev and Karpeev (eds.), "Iaponskie dnevniki A.N. Kuropatkina," 439.

In December 1903, these various data were summed up by the Military Statistical Department for Nicholas II. It was clear that the Japanese had completed their war preparations and were waiting only for a favorable opportunity to assault Russia.⁴⁰ Only at that time did the tsarist government begin to take frantic steps in the Far East, although Nicholas II refused to break negotiations with Tokyo until the Japanese attack against Port Arthur.⁴¹ While the Anglo-Japanese Alliance signed in London in 1902 may have made the tsar hesitant to initiate aggression against Japan, it does not provide adequate explanation for St. Petersburg's unwillingness to accept the growing danger of war in December 1903 and January 1904.

The first war plan that considered operations against Japan was adopted in 1895. As the situation changed in the region, the plan was modified several times. In autumn 1903 Admiral Alekseev presented a new draft to Nicholas II. But the tsar approved it only on 27 January 1904. Meanwhile, War Minister Kuropatkin criticized the document and, despite having to submit to the will of his sovereign, he composed his own strategic plan diverging from Alekseev's. As a result, the Russian Main Staff and the Headquarters of the Manchurian Army were understandably confused about which plan should be the basis of their actions during eventual hostilities. Nevertheless, Russian MI did succeed in making some preparations before the outbreak of the war. General staff officers explored the Manchurian theater of operations and mapped the terrain quite properly.⁴² The problem they faced was how to disseminate their new, highly-detailed maps to field detachments.⁴³ The officers also analyzed the ethnic composition of northern China (with particular attention to potential allies—the Chinese muslims) and made recommendations on preventing an uprising of the local ethnic groups against Russian occupation troops.⁴⁴ And officers did their best to hinder Japanese sabotage

⁴⁰ Evgenii Maksimovich Primakov (ed.), *Ocherki istorii rossiiskoi vneshnei razvedki*, 5 vols. incomplete (M, 1996–2003), I, 194–195.

⁴¹ Nicholas II to Admiral Alekseev, 8 February 1904, in VIK, *Russko-iaponskaya voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, I, 276–277.

⁴² See, *Materialy po voenno-statisticheskomu opisaniiu Man'chzhurii, sobrannye ofitserami Genshtaba Priamurskogo voennogo okruga v 1901 g.*, 2 vols. (Khabarovsk, 1902–03).

⁴³ Vladimir Vasil'evich Glushkov, Aleksander Aleksandrovich Sharavin, *Na karte General'nogo shtaba—Manchuria* (M, 2000), 14–15, 340, 342, 396.

⁴⁴ Mikhail Alekseevich Adabash, *Otchet o mestopolozhenii i chislennosti kitaiskikh musulman*, 17 January 1904, RGVA, f. 165, Aleksei Nikolaevich Kuropatkin, op. 1, d. 1064, ll. 1–3.

in the defense zone of the Chinese Eastern Railroad (CER) and in the naval fortresses at Port Arthur and Vladivostok. But in the end, and despite the best efforts of Russian MI, the Imperial Army had no effective war plan when the Japanese attacked Port Arthur in February 1904.

II. *The Initial Stage of the War*

The outset of hostilities meant that MI had to be conducted according to *The Regulation for the Army in the Field*, adopted in 1890.⁴⁵ At first, the responsibility was borne by Viceroy Alekseev's headquarters. But after Kuropatkin's arrival in Manchuria on 28 March 1904, the activities of intelligence operations moved from the Admiral's Port Arthur staff to the Army's headquarters at Liaoyang.⁴⁶ As well as taking over MI responsibilities, Kuropatkin also appointed a former professor of the General Staff Academy, Vladimir Ivanovich Kharkevich, as Quartermaster-General on 6 April.⁴⁷ Endeavoring to use all assets at his disposal, Kuropatkin ordered the staffs of the Priamur military district, the Zaamur district of Frontier Guards, and the military commissars in the three Manchurian provinces to continue gathering intelligence within areas under their control. In addition, the Headquarters of the Rear in Manchuria established its own intelligence service for collecting data about the Mongolian interior, as well as Korea.⁴⁸ Once all of this intelligence was gathered, the Main Staff in St. Petersburg and Kuropatkin's headquarters in Manchuria analyzed all the data. Then, the most important data were sent to the tsar, the War Ministry and the commanders of the military districts in the form of short analytical reviews.

But frequent personnel changes along with duplication of effort resulted in regular confusion when conducting MI at the initial stage of the war. Among numerous similar diary entries, a high-ranking intelligence officer described the situation, "The army is now in an

⁴⁵ Voennoe Ministerstvo, *Priказы po voennomu vedomstvu* (SPB, 1890), LXII, 1–152.

⁴⁶ Rostunov (ed.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskoi voiny*, 144.

⁴⁷ Vladimir Andreevich Kosagovskii, *Dnevnik*, 6 April 1904, RGVIA, f. 76, V.A. Kosagovskii, op. 1, d. 217, l. 285.

⁴⁸ Nikolai Antonovich Ukhach-Ogorovich, *Manchzhurskii teatr voennykh deistvii v russko-iaponskoi voine 1904–1905 gg.* (Kiev, 1911).

indefinite position: nobody knows and trusts each other, all the faces are new and personnel are not on course, nothing has been fixed up properly.”⁴⁹ Another general staff officer recollected later: “Until 14 April 1904, we had not yet formed a conclusion of the Japanese landing force’s deployment on the seacoast because the data we got were extremely controversial.”⁵⁰ Thus, despite the use of numerous MI assets within the theater of operations, the Russians had little idea about the dispositions of the Japanese in the early part of the war.

Things began to change in the summer of 1904, when three main branches of intelligence crystallized: *distant* or strategic intelligence, *flanking* or tactical intelligence, and *short range* or *combat* reconnaissance.⁵¹ The task of supervising *distant* intelligence was first assumed by the military attaché in Korea, Colonel Alexander Dmitrievich Nechvolodov. Later, in June 1904, Kuropatkin replaced him with Major General Vladimir Andreevich Kosagovskii, the former coordinator of Russian MI in Persia and Afghanistan. Unfortunately, this officer could not find a common language with his direct chief—the above-mentioned Quartermaster-General V.I. Kharkevich.⁵² Meanwhile, Russian military attachés both in Europe and China intensified efforts through a variety of means. The most valuable Russian intelligence agents at this stage of the war were the Consul General in Beijing, Aleksei Ivanovich Pavlov, and Leonid Fedorovich Davydov, a member of the Russo-Chinese Bank’s board of management.⁵³

It should be stressed, that subjects of European countries—mostly journalists or commercial travelers—offered their services to Russian officials. Archival sources reveal a variety of such contacts with Frenchmen, Belgians, Swiss, Danes, Germans, and even the British. A confidential telegram by the Russian Consul in Shanghai, Konstantin Kleimenov, exemplified such contacts. He informed higher commanders of an unexpected meeting with a certain German naval officer who had been working for the secret service of Russia at the time. The individual asked for Kleimenov’s assistance to resume con-

⁴⁹ Kosagovskii, *Dnevnik*, 6 April 1904, RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 217, l. 285.

⁵⁰ Ignatiev, *Piat’desiat’ let v stroyu*, 165.

⁵¹ Shtab Manchzhurskoi armii i Glavnokomandisiushego, *Otchet No. 1 o deiatelnosti razvedyvatel’nogo otdeleniia (s nachala voyny po 26 oktiabria 1904 g.)*, October 1904, RGVIA, f. 14926, Shtab voisk Dal’nego Vostoka, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 5–18.

⁵² Kosagovskii, *Dnevnik*, June 1904, RGVIA, f. 76, op. 1, d. 217, ll. 293–294.

⁵³ Shtab Manchzhurskoi armii i Glavnokomandyutshego, *Otchet No. 1*, RGVIA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 5–18.

tacts with Russian MI to disseminate important information about the Japanese army.⁵⁴

Another piece of evidence was a dispatch from the military attaché in France, Colonel Vladimir Petrovich Lazarev, of 17 November 1904. He reported to the Main Staff about the offer of a former French naval attaché, Viscount de Labri, concerning the establishment of a spy web in the theater of operations with the help of two French citizens, Dori and Bougouin.⁵⁵

A typical case was a British subject named Collins who had worked as a jockey at the court of the Japanese emperor. Having moved to Port Arthur with his family, he became a manager in the Eastern-Asian Steamship Company and simultaneously a correspondent for a British newspaper in Shanghai. After the outbreak of the war, Collins found himself in a difficult financial position. He accordingly offered his services to the Russians for \$300 a month and was sent to Japan. Unfortunately, he was arrested by the Japanese counter-intelligence in January 1905 and sentenced to 11 years in prison (though later he appealed for a pardon and was released from jail in 1907).⁵⁶

Apart from secret agents, Russian MI succeeded in regularly intercepting Japanese diplomatic correspondence from Europe to Tokyo via Shanghai. The Japanese historian Chiharu Inaba notes that between April 1904 and March 1905 more than 350 secret wires were intercepted and deciphered by Russian general staff officers in close cooperation with their French and Danish colleagues.⁵⁷

Finally, data was also extracted by Russian MI from open sources, including newspapers and magazines published in East Asia and Europe. In spite of confidential regulations, the Russian intelligence service could occasionally glean some valuable nuggets of information from the articles of the foreign correspondents accredited to the Japanese headquarters. This situation contrasted dramatically with the

⁵⁴ Aleksei Ivanovich Pavlov to the Headquarters of the Manchurian army, 8 September 1904, RGVA, f. VUA, d. 29289, l. 422.

⁵⁵ Vladimir Petrovich Lazarev to the Main Staff, 17 November 1904, RGVA, f. 400, op. 4, d. 691, ll. 9–11.

⁵⁶ Vladimir Lebedev, "Razvedka vinovna mence vsekh... O maloizuchennykh urokakh i opyte russko-iaponskoi voiny 1904–1905 gg.," *Nezavisimaia gazeta*, 22 November 2002.

⁵⁷ Inaba, "Iz istorii razvedki v gody russko-iaponskoi voiny (1904–1905)," 225–226.

carelessness of correspondents for Russian military newspapers, such as *Russkii Invalid*, who shared secret information, including exact numbers of regiments and divisions, with their readers—something that the Japanese never missed.⁵⁸

The adversaries also waged campaigns of disinformation through the press. Becoming aware of this situation, officers of Admiral Alekseev's Headquarters raised questions about publishing a newspaper in English in June 1904. The Russian military attaché in China, Fedor Evlampevich Ogorodnikov,⁵⁹ was appointed to supervise the *China Review* on 10 September 1904.⁶⁰ Another periodical that was set up under the auspices of Kuropatkin was *Shenqingbao*—a special news-bulletin for the Chinese edited by Colonels Mikhail Fedorovich Kvetsinskii and Mikhail Alekseevich Sokovnin in the fall of 1904.⁶¹ Finally, a weekly newsletter was also published in Russian, *Vestnik Manchzhurskikh Armii*, although it was intended more for propaganda among the active army.⁶²

In *flanking* (tactical) intelligence, primary attention was paid to preventing Qing authorities and Mongolian princes from violating their neutrality and allying with the Japanese. Russian commanders dispatched numerous mounted and dismounted reconnaissance missions to Inner Mongolia and even Tibet.⁶³ Perhaps the most effective operation was the secret mission of the Cossack Esaul Dmitrii Ivanovich Livkin in April 1904. Under the assumed identity of a tea merchant named Popov, together with a few servants he reached the headquarters of the powerful Chinese General Ma. Livkin's generous presents and a comprehensive knowledge of traditional rituals enabled

⁵⁸ Upravlenie general-kvartirmeisterstva pri Glavnokomanduiushchem, *Otchet No. 2 o deiatel'nosti razvedyvatel'nogo otdeleniia (s 4 Marta 1905 g. po 31 Avgusta togo zhe goda)*, September 1905, RGVIA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 19–51.

⁵⁹ From 1903 on, the Russian Main Staff used to dispatch to China two military attachés. During the Russo-Japanese War, the second (or assistant) military attaché in China was Major General Konstantin Nikolaevich Desino. See, Alekseev, *Voennaia razvedka*, I, 251, 316–317.

⁶⁰ See, also, Head of the Governor-General's diplomatic chancellery Grushetskii to Quartermaster-General Vasilii Egorovich Flug, June 1904, RGVIA, f. 487, Russko-iaponskaya voina, op. 1, d. 117, l. 5.

⁶¹ M.F. Kvetsinskii, M.A. Sokovnin, *Vypiska iz raporta ob izdanii gazety na kitaiskom iazyke*, 4 July 1905, RGVIA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 171–172.

⁶² Upravlenie general-kvartirmeisterstva polevogo shtaba 3-i Manchzhurskoi armii, *Otchet o deiatel'nosti 1904–1905 gg.* (SPB, 1907), 195.

⁶³ Shtab Manchzhurskoi armii i Glavnokomandyutshchego, *Otchet No. 1*, RGVIA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 5–18.

him to come in close contact with the Qing commander. As a result, the Russian emissary proved that no preparations for anti-Russian uprising were being carried out by the Chinese.⁶⁴

A similar secret operation was carried out on the left flank of the Manchurian front, i.e. on the Korean border, where a special cavalry detachment assisted by recruited Chinese *honghuizi* (or field gangsters) patrolled the terrain.⁶⁵ The security of the CER zone, as mentioned above, was controlled by Russian frontier-guards. They also informed intelligence sections in Liaoyang and Port Arthur of clashes with *honghuizi* and attempts to destroy railway and telegraph lines, as well as depots of various kinds in the rear of the Russian army (e.g. in Vladivostok).⁶⁶ The officers included the most urgent information in confidential summaries for commanders in the field.

The principal obstacles to conducting *combat* reconnaissance were inexperience, the abundance of contradictory orders from various headquarters, poor knowledge of the terrain, and Japanese counter-measures. The latter included strong camouflaged outposts in front of as well as to both flanks of trenches, which made it virtually impossible for cavalry reconnaissance, especially in mountains, deep forests, and gaolian (a sort of the Chinese millet) thickets, to fulfill its mission. In addition, hostile attitudes among the local inhabitants, with fresh memories of atrocities during the recent anti-Boxer expeditions, formed another major obstacle to Russian reconnaissance. Tsarist patrols often suffered serious casualties from Japanese outposts armed with machine guns. According to the memoirs of participants, "more than 15 percent of officers and 10 percent of the rank-and-file were killed during such fruitless forays."⁶⁷

Secret missions of individuals were also doomed to failure. In September 1904, a volunteer from the 284th Chembarskii regiment, Vasili Riabov, crossed the front disguised in Manchurian peasant

⁶⁴ Primakov (ed.), *Ocherki istorii rossiiskoi vneshnei razvedki*, I, 180–181.

⁶⁵ Sergei Ivanovich Odintsov, *Doklad general-kvartirmeisteru shtaba Glavno-komanduiushchego general-maioru Evertu o formirovanii partisanskikh otriadov iz kitaitsev*, 12 July 1905, RGVA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 1647, ll. 122–123.

⁶⁶ Zamuurskii okrug Otdelnogo korpusa pogranichnoi strazhi, *Svedeniia, dobytyie putem razvedki chinami Zamuurskogo okruga Otdelnogo korpusa pogranichnoi strazhi soglasno sostavlennoi dlia sego instruktsii*, September 1904, RGVA, f. 14390, Stab tyla voisk Dal'nego Vostoka, op. 2, d. 15, ll. 3–14a.

⁶⁷ Zamuurskii okrug Otdelnogo korpusa pogranichnoi strazhi, *Svedeniia, dobytyie putem razvedki*, 14.

garb, but was seized by the Japanese within a few days and executed.⁶⁸ Nevertheless, according to the reports of Russian commissars in Manchuria, foreign civilians, including even Catholic missionaries, were hired as spies.⁶⁹

Combat intelligence was conducted by less hazardous means, most notably gathering enemy documents and other artifacts, including maps, notebooks, letters, badges, envelopes, and munitions, and interrogating POWs (the reward for capturing a Japanese soldier was 100 rubles and 300 rubles for an officer). All data was communicated to intelligence sections, first at the level of divisions and corps, while the most important information was reported to Kuropatkin's headquarters. Here the principal problem was not only with the Japanese counter-intelligence misinforming their Russian "colleagues," but with the lack of professional interpreters. Translations were usually made by alumni of the Oriental Institute in Vladivostok or by Chinese and Koreans employed for this purpose.⁷⁰

One means of HUMINT frequently carried out on the Manchurian front was reconnaissance through scouts. Some were volunteers from Russian active regiments, while others were recruited among the Chinese, Manchurian, Korean, and Mongol populations within the theater of operations. On 23 February 1904, General Nicholas Petrovich Linevich instructed a cavalry detachment under the command of Major General Petr Ivanovich Mishchenko to conduct deep reconnaissance against the Japanese.⁷¹ Later, in March 1904, Linevich fixed rewards for data communicated by Chinese scouts to Russian commanders. Amounts usually varied from 10 to 200 rubles, depending on the importance and urgency of information (not exceeding usually 40–50 rubles).⁷²

The general goals for recruiting such scouts were revealed in the instruction of Quartermaster-General Kharkevich to Mishchenko and Kosagovskii of 22 May 1904: "Reconnaissance through scouts,

⁶⁸ Derevianko, "Russkaya agenturnya razvedka v 1902–1905 gg.," 78.

⁶⁹ M.F. Kvetsinskii, *Otchet voennogo komissara Mukdenskoi provintsii o deyatelnosti za 1900–1904 gg.*, September 1905, RGVIA, f. VUA, d. 29091, l. 135.

⁷⁰ Shtab Manchzhurskoi armii i Glavnokomanduiushchego, *Otchet No. 1*, RGVIA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 5–18.

⁷¹ Linevich to Major General Mishchenko, 23 February 1904, RGVIA, f. VUA, d. 29289, l. 1.

⁷² Shtab Glavnokomanduiushchego Manchzhurskoi armii, *Vedomost' raskhodov na tainuiu razvedku*, 21 March 1904, RGVIA, f. VUA, d. 29289, ll. 62–63.

besides investigating the deployment of armed units together with their numbers and names of commanders, should aim at gathering information about strongholds, artificial obstacles and mines, arsenals, and garrisons.”⁷³ But collecting such intelligence was hazardous, indeed, because the Japanese did not hesitate to execute anyone caught conducting espionage within their lines of operation.

Later, in July 1904, the coordination of combat intelligence was assigned to two experienced officers, General Staff Captains Sergei Vladimirovich Afanasiev and Aleksei Nikolaevich Rossov. The former became responsible for sectors in the center and on the left wing of the front (facing the armies headed by Generals Oku and Nozu), while the latter was in charge of reconnaissance at the right wing (opposite General Kuroki's army).⁷⁴

However, Russian setbacks during the summer of 1904, particularly at Liaoyang, forced Kuropatkin further to intensify reconnaissance. According to the governing regulations issued by Major General Kharkevich, intelligence sections in the corps and divisions should have recruited as many scouts as possible to infiltrate the Japanese rear as workers, porters, shop-assistants, and the like, to inform headquarters about all the maneuvers and immediate numbers of the Japanese army in the field.⁷⁵ However, the effectiveness of reconnaissance through local residents remained low during the war. Almost all of them lacked special training, and few were highly motivated to collaborate with the Russians.⁷⁶

Although minor, naval intelligence did play a role in the war. At sea, cruisers, destroyers and mini-submarines of the Russian Pacific Squadron conducted a series of successful secret operations. On 20 March 1904, the Russian navy used radio interceptions for the first time by the order of the celebrated Russian Vice Admiral Stepan Osipovich Makarov. Radio reconnaissance subsequently played an important role in the Battle of the Yellow Sea, during raids made by the Russian light cruisers from Vladivostok to the Japanese islands,

⁷³ Vladimir Ivanovich Kharkevich to Major Generals Mitschenko and Kosagovskii, 17 June 1904, RGVA, f. VUA, d. 29289, l. 121.

⁷⁴ Shtab Manchzhurskoi armii i Glavnokomanduiushago, *Otchet No. 1*, RGVA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 5–18.

⁷⁵ V.I. Kharkevich, *Instruktsiia shtabam korpusov i divisiï*, 17 September 1904, RGVA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 22, l. 71.

⁷⁶ For further information on the use of Chinese spies by the Russians and the Japanese, see David Wolff's chapter in this volume.

and in the siege of Port Arthur.⁷⁷ While the Russian navy was not able to make adequate use of the intelligence it gathered, developing the capability to intercept radio communications represented the dawn of a new age in communications warfare.

The headquarters of the Manchurian Army accumulated all the data from different sources and prepared intelligence summaries. They contained information about the maneuvers of Japanese detachments and reviews of the current situation in China, Mongolia and Korea. Summaries were supplemented with some extracts from POWs' questionnaires, maps, plans and sketch-maps of enemy positions, as well as by the occasional detail from the press.⁷⁸ Initial drafts were assembled only in four copies in March 1904. Later, vigorous efforts were made to augment the number of copies, but shortages of printing equipment, paper, and ink prevented Kuropatkin's headquarters from regularly disseminating intelligence summaries to troops in the field.

At any rate, these bulletins often came too late and frequently contradicted the immediate situation on the front. According to one intelligence officer, Captain Petr Ivanovich Izmistiev, "sometimes the next intelligence summary refuted a previous one."⁷⁹ Needless to say, the never-ending rivalry among the staffs of different units also interfered with the objective dissemination of intelligence.

The general results of data processing by Russian MI at the initial stage of the war culminated with a number of printed surveys: *A List of the Chiefs of the Japanese Divisions and Brigades*, *The Schedule of the Japanese Land Troops* (both in two editions), and *The Order of Battle of the Japanese Armies on December 1, 1904*.⁸⁰

III. Responding to the Challenges of the War

A series of defeats on land and in the sea, the capture of Port Arthur, and the beginning of trench warfare forced tsarist military leaders to reconsider the type of war that they were fighting in Manchuria.

⁷⁷ Alekseev, *Voennaia razvedka*, I, 220.

⁷⁸ Shtab Glavnokomanduiushogo sukhoputnykh i morskimi silami Rossii na Tikhom okeane, *Svodki svedenii o protivnike*, 2 vols. (Kharbin, 1905).

⁷⁹ Pavlov, Petrov, and Derevianko, *Tainy russko-iaponskoi voyny*, 153.

⁸⁰ Shtab Manchzhurskoi armii i Glavnokomanduiushogo, *Otchet No. 1*, RGVA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 5–18.

Viceroy E.I. Alekseev was recalled to St. Petersburg, which ended his military career. General A.N. Kuropatkin wielded all authority at the front from October 1904 until his dismissal after the defeat of the army at Mukden in March 1905. The former Manchurian Army was divided into three armies, each with a quartermaster service and intelligence section. Supreme control over MI passed to Major General Aleksei Ermolaevich Evert, and in spring of 1905 to Major General Vladimir Aloisovich Oranovskii.

After Mukden and Kuropatkin's dismissal the army began to coordinate the collection, analysis and dissemination of intelligence more tightly. In practice, however, the intelligence sections of the three armies, rear services, the Priamur military district and the Zaamur district of Frontier Guards continued to plan and conduct secret operations on their own initiative. The collection and dissemination of intelligence information, therefore, remained defused throughout the army for the remainder of the war.

However, agents continued to perform their jobs across the world, resulting in the gathering of important information that contributed to the war effort. In the realm of *strategic* intelligence, Russian military attachés focused on the question of arms supply from Europe to Japan. Colonel Vadim Mikhailovich Shebeko, for example, reported from Berlin that British shells and German artillery were being dispatched to the country of the Rising Sun in October 1904. His urgent telegram provoked a request from the Chief of the War Ministry, Lieutenant General Vladimir Viktorovich Sakharov in St. Petersburg, to make every effort to intercept all cargo coming from Great Britain and Germany to Japan.⁸¹

Numerous reports by other Russian attachés across Europe resulted in the gathering of other vital information. According to the Soviet expert Zvonarev, the Russian "shoulder-strapped" diplomats spent about 32,000 rubles to gather such data during the war.⁸² For its money the Russian War Ministry, for example, was informed about the purchase of horses in Australia for the needs of the Japanese cavalry. Closer to home the Russians learned from Stockholm that the Japanese had placed an order with the Bofors Company for armour (steel) plates for their navy. Perhaps most surprisingly, from Paris

⁸¹ V.V. Sakharov to the Main Staff, 31 October 1904, RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 6552, l. 21.

⁸² Zvonarev, *Russkaia agenturnaia razvedka*, I, 50–51.

(the loyal ally?) Russian MI learned that an order had been placed by the Japanese government with the Creuset factory for mountain howitzers. Taken together, such information gathering exemplifies the success of Russian MI, although it reminds unclear if any successful counter measures were taken as a result of the information gathered in European capitals.⁸³ Meanwhile, Russian strategic intelligence intensified with the departure of the Second Pacific Squadron from St. Petersburg in the fall of 1904. Every effort was made to secure its voyage from the Baltic to the Straits of Tsushima.⁸⁴

The beginning of the trench war stimulated both the activities of the Russian military attachés and their civil assistants in China. The above-mentioned Consul General Pavlov, for example, suggested stirring up a rebellion of the natives on Formosa (Taiwan), which was occupied by Japan during the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95.⁸⁵

The focus of *tactical* intelligence shifted from Manchuria to Mongolia because of Japanese attempts to perpetrate acts of sabotage against Russian communications. The Commander of the Zaimur district of Frontier Guards, Lieutenant General Nikolai Mikhailovich Chichagov, informed the Commander of Rear Services, Lieutenant General Nadarov, about “the evident increase in the number of *honghuzi* (in total more than 20 gangs) recruited by Japanese spies near our strategic strongholds and railroads.”⁸⁶ Even worse, a gang of the Manchurian bandits assassinated the Russian military commissar Lieutenant Colonel Bogdanov not far from Qiqihar in October 1904.⁸⁷

Another source of concern for higher Russian commanders was a potential uprising of the Mongolians. In an effort to prevent rebellion in the Far East, Russian counter-intelligence agents planned to remove the Dalai Lama from Tibet to the center of Outer Mongolia—Urga, in spring 1904.⁸⁸ Another project related to bribing the most authoritative Mongolian princes. The official correspondence notes

⁸³ Alekseev, *Voennaia razvedka*, I, 214–215.

⁸⁴ Igor L'vovich Bunich, *Dolgaya doroga na Golgofu. Vospominaniia. Istoricheskaia khronika* (SPB, 2000), 347–386; E.Iu. Sergeev and A.A. Ulunian, *Ne podlezhit oglasheniiu* (M, 1999), 66.

⁸⁵ A.I. Pavlov to A.N. Kuropatkin, 4 January 1905, RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 6564, l. 9.

⁸⁶ Lieutenant General Nikolai Mikhailovich Chichagov to Lieutenant General Nadarov, 19 March 1905, RGVIA, f. 14390, op. 2, d. 15, l. 365.

⁸⁷ N.A. Ukhach-Ogorovich, *Manchzhurskii teatr voennykh deistvii*, 72–73.

⁸⁸ Upravlenie General-kvartirmeisterstva pri Glavnom komanduiushchem, *Otchet No. 2*, RGVIA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 38–39.

that a monthly subsidy to a certain prince of South Gorlos district came to 5,000 rubles.⁸⁹

In addition, the Headquarters of Rear Services made enormous efforts to enlist former *honghuzi* as cavalry groups for so-called *active* reconnaissance (i.e., performing acts of sabotage on territory controlled by the Japanese). According to analytical reviews, Russian intelligence actively sought the support of muslim Chinese. In the spring of 1905, the Headquarters of the Second and of the Third Manchurian Armies, as well as of the Zaamur district of Frontier Guards, began to recruit *honghuzi* for patrolling within the theater of operations. In total, about 500 of the Chinese had joined them by June 1905. In addition, Russian agents recruited detachments of native Koreans to deploy on the left wing of the front to gather information about Japanese planning for attacks against Vladivostok, Sakhalin, and Kamchatka.⁹⁰

However, by June 1905, Russian MI arrived at the conclusion that the reconnaissance provided by native sub-units was totally ineffective. A certain Russian intelligence officer reported to Quartermaster-General Oranovskii on 29 June 1905, "they were doing nothing except plundering villages in the area occupied by our troops, increasing in this way mass opposition against us among peasants."⁹¹ As a result, in June 1905, General Headquarters introduced a new scheme of intelligence organization. The theater of operations was divided into three zones of responsibility, attached accordingly to Colonel Ogorodnikov (Japan and Korea), Captain Afanasiev (western Manchuria), and Staff-Captain Rossov (eastern Manchuria with seaports).⁹²

Improvements in *combat* intelligence progressed very rapidly despite the serious damage it suffered after the battle of Mukden. Many

⁸⁹ Upravlenie General-kvartirmeisterstva pri Glavnokomanduiushchem, *Otchet No. 2*, RGVIA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 29–30.

⁹⁰ Ukhach-Ogorovich, *Manchzhurskii teatr voennykh deistvii*, 17, 69–74; *Sluzhebnaia perepiska, dokumentatsiia i spiski sotn kitaiskoi militsii*, March–June 1905, RGVIA, f. 14390, op. 2, d. 26, ll. 58–60, 127–128, 237–238, 448, 803–809, 850; *Proshenie koreiskikh dobrovol'tsev komanduiushchemu voiskami Priamurskogo voennogo okruga*, November 1904, RGVIA, f. VUA, d. 31898, l. 50; *Instruktsiia tainoi razvedki Primorskoi oblasti i prilegaiushchikh chastei Manchzhurii, Korei i Yaponskogo morya*, 1904, RGVIA, f. VUA, d. 31903, l. 69.

⁹¹ Captain S. I. Odintsov to Major General Oranovskii, 29 June 1905, RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 1647, ll. 122–123.

⁹² Upravlenie general-kvartirmeisterstva pri Glavnokomanduiushchem, *Otchet No. 2*, RGVIA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 19–51.

assets were compromised when the Japanese captured the archives of the General Headquarters and most of the information about the entire system of Russian HUMINT in Manchuria.⁹³ To recreate an intelligence network, the Mukden commissar Colonel Kvetsinskii set up a unique training center in April 1905. This “scout school” was located in the village of Kuangchengtzy near the front line. According to the commissar’s report, 24 Chinese had completed the course in April-June 1905.⁹⁴

A similar positive result occurred with the implementation of reconnaissance technique in the field. Early in 1905, Kuropatkin ordered the establishment of the first balloon sub-unit for front-line reconnaissance. In addition, Russian officers began to use special optical devices for monitoring positions. It is also worth mentioning that during the siege of Port Arthur, a number of trained pigeons communicated between the fortress and General Headquarters.⁹⁵

The quartermaster service continued to collect information through captured POWs, documents and munitions. However, none of this information had an impact on the course of the war. According to the registers compiled by the First Army Intelligence Section after the battle of Mukden, only twice did the Section obtain Japanese papers of some value,⁹⁶ while of the 366 POWs questioned by Russian MI, few provided any data of importance.⁹⁷

Finally, it should also be pointed out that the system of disseminating intelligence summaries to corps and divisions had been put into full swing only by the summer of 1905. New equipment made it possible for intelligence officers to print as many copies of reports

⁹³ Shtab 2-i Manchzhurskoi armii, *Otchet razvedyvatel'nogo otdeleniia upravleniia general-kvartirmeistera s oktiabria 1904 do 1 sentiabria 1905 g.*, September 1905, RGVIA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 26, ll. 12–13.

⁹⁴ M.F. Kvetsinskii, *Otchet o deiatelnosti Mukdenskogo voennogo komissara*, RGVIA, f. VUA, d. 29093, ll. 77–78, 85–87.

⁹⁵ Shtab Manchzhurskoi armii i Glavnokomanduiushchego, *Otchet No. 1*, RGVIA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 5–18; Shtab 3-i Manchzhurskoi armii, *Otchet o deiatelnosti upravleniia general-kvartirmeistera za vremia voiny 1904–1905 gg.* (SPB, 1907), 216–218; Shtab 2-i Manchzhurskoi armii, *Otchet razvedyvatelnogo otdeleniia upravleniia general-kvartirmeistera*, RGVIA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 26, l. 8.

⁹⁶ Shtab 2-i Manchzhurskoi armii, *Otchet razvedyvatel'nogo otdeleniia upravleniia general-kvartirmeistera*, RGVIA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 26, ll. 9–10.

⁹⁷ Shtab 1-i Manchzhurskoi armii, *Otchet upravleniia general-kvartirmeistera o deiatelnosti razvedyvatel'nogo otdeleniia* (M, 1906), 9; Shimmelpenninck van der Oye, “Russian Military Intelligence on the Manchurian Front, 1904–05,” 28; Alekseev, *Voennaya razvedka*, I, 197.

as they needed (in August 1905 the circulation came to 500 copies a day). Besides, much effort was made to resume the newspaper *Shenqingbao* in Chinese and to refresh intelligence in a number of reference books on the Japanese armed forces.⁹⁸

Conclusion: Successes and Failures

By the end of the war, Russian MI had gone through a profound transformation. Instead of inexperience and dilettantism, a level of professionalism had emerged that sought to address the challenges of the war. For the first time in Russian history, the process of collecting, analyzing and disseminating information about an adversary was divided into three categories: *strategic, tactical, and reconnaissance*. A new variant of the intelligence cycle had been introduced into the daily routine of general staff officers both at headquarters in St. Petersburg and within the operational army in Manchuria. Progress was made in HUMINT and in the use of special new techniques, including devices for wire and radio interception, optics, and balloons.

At the strategic level, the Russian Main Staff gained much knowledge about Japanese efforts to purchase war supplies from Germany, Great Britain, France, Sweden, and Australia. But the most significant achievement of Russian MI during the war proved to be the gathering and analysis of data to secure the unprecedented round-the-world route of the Second Pacific squadron commanded by Admiral Z.P. Rozhdestvenskii. Meanwhile, in the tactical sphere, estimations of almost the exact date of the Japanese landing in Sakhalin, together with the prevention of sabotage against the CER and Russian garrisons in the distant rear, also exemplified improvements in MI. MI noted that the Japanese were powerless to stir up an uprising of the native population both in China and Mongolia.

Even foreign military experts admitted to progress in Russian MI by the end of the war. For example, Colonel J. Haldane, who had been dispatched by the British General Staff on a mission as military observer to the Second Japanese Army, pointed out in his lecture at

⁹⁸ Upravlenie general-kvartirmeisterstva pri Glavnokomanduiushchem, *Otchet No. 2*, RGVA, f. 14926, op. 1, d. 22, ll. 19–51; *Otchety o deiatelnosti gazety "Shenqingbao" na kitaiskom iazyke v 1904 i 1905 gg.*, 1906, RGVA, f. VUA, d. 29091, ll. 147–164; d. 29093, ll. 94–106.

Sandhurst in 1909 that: "there had been obvious improvements in the organization of Russian MI in the Manchurian armies after Mukden."⁹⁹

In fact, the war had been lost not by poor Russian MI, but by stubborn, narrow-minded higher commanders who proved to be ill-prepared for an armed clash of such intensity in a new age of industrial war. Nevertheless, Russian HUMINT and combat intelligence (including its naval branch) were far less effective than similar Japanese efforts, particularly in the speed of disseminating intelligence to higher levels.

The rich experience gained by Russian MI during the Far Eastern war inspired a series of reforms in the post-war period. The result was a complete revision of the secret service system in the tsarist empire. Most importantly, Russian MI's annual budget was increased from around 50,000 rubles in 1903 to 500,000 rubles in 1910.¹⁰⁰ In 1905, the Main Directorate of the General Staff became the governing center for overseeing the intelligence cycle in the armed forces. Intelligence sections were established in all the military districts with special attention to Germany, Austria-Hungary, Persia, China, and Japan. A new discipline (MI administration) was included in the curriculum of the General Staff Academy, while Russian military experts began to collect and disseminate intelligence on a long-term basis. In spite of all the failures suffered by Russian MI in 1904–05, the war against Japan prompted the transformation of Russian MI into one of the most powerful secret services in the world before the Great War of 1914–18.

⁹⁹ "Iz istorii razvedyvatel'noi deiatelnosti Iaponii i Rossii. Lektsiia polkovnika britanskogo voennogo ministerstva," *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, no. 1 (1997), 165.

¹⁰⁰ Aleksander Iurievich Shelukhin, "Razvedyvatel'nye organy v strukture vysshego voennogo upravleniia Rossiiskoi imperii nachala XX veka, 1906–14," *Vestnik Moskovskogo universiteta*, Seriia 8 "Istoriia," no. 3 (1996), 24. The author provides a comprehensive analysis of reforms within Russian MI after 1905.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

INTELLIGENCE INTERMEDIARIES: THE COMPETITION FOR CHINESE SPIES

David Wolff

Оделся китайцем для скрытия плана,
Простился и храбро пошел.
Добрался совсем до японского стана,
И тут свою гибель нашел.

Узнали его и в китайском наряде,
Что это есть русский солдат.
И тут же при общем смятении и гаме,
Немедленно в плен был он взят.

“Про Разведчика Рябова”

As Chinese he dressed to hide his plan
Crossed himself quickly,
off then bravely he ran,
To the Japanese lines,
where they saw through his drag.
“Rojin” rose the cry;
he was grabbed; he was bagged.

In the course of history, there have been few wars in which espionage
was so widely practiced as during the Manchurian campaign.

General Aylmer Haldane, later head of
British Military Intelligence¹

I. Not So Neutral

The Russo-Japanese War began at a naval base in China and ended
at a naval base in the United States. Most of the fighting and casu-
alties took place in Korea and Manchuria, primarily the latter.

¹ “Из истории razvedyatel’noi deiatelnosti Iaponii i Rossii. Lektsiia polkovnika bri-
tanskogo voennogo ministerstva,” in *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, no. 1 (1997), 154. The author
thanks Dmitrii Pavlov for pointing out this source. The original is held in the Public
Record Office, Kew Gardens.

Although this conflict became the lynchpin of a second century of essentially bad relations between Japan and Russia, it also had wide repercussions for the rest of the countries of Northeast Asia and Asia-Pacific. Military observers and correspondents from Europe and America then spread the news far and wide. It is only in this broad regional and global context that the Russo-Japanese War can take on its broadest meaning as the very cradle of global history, a first statement that the most important world events would no longer be decided solely by white men of the North Atlantic world.

Of all the “non-combatants,” none participated more fully than China. In fact, as the war began, Chinese officials and public had split on whether or not to join the Japanese in what the Chinese had been unable to accomplish alone during the previous three years—the ejection of the Russian army from its occupation of Manchuria.² Caution prevailed and on 12 February 1904, China announced its neutrality.³ This statement forbade all Chinese to take part in the war. Nonetheless, millions of inhabitants of the Chinese Northeast were unwillingly enmeshed in the hostilities as over a million foreign soldiers turned their homes into the first proving ground of twentieth-century warfare. The Chinese casualty count, the value of destroyed property and the toll of human suffering rose as the months passed. The informality of Chinese participation makes statistical accuracy difficult, but here are some estimates. Rosemary Quested cites Chinese Maritime Customs in giving the number of Chinese dead as twenty thousand, while fixing the capital losses at 70 million taels, concentrated in the “swathe of devastation,” where the armies had passed. Michael Hunt speaks of hundreds of thousands of homeless, and British military observers noted eight thousand refugees under the protection of the Mukden Scotch Mission alone after the battle of the same name.⁴

² The Russians would continue to fear that successive losses might convince the Chinese to take sides with Japan openly. Russian intelligence kept track of nearby Chinese military units as well as the Japanese army. See Mikhail Alekseev, *Voennaia razvedka Rossii ot Riurika do Nikolaia II*, 3 vols. in 4 books (M, 1998–2001), I, 178.

³ Michael Hunt, *Frontier Defense and the Open Door* (New Haven, 1973), 85, 124; *Neutralitätserlasse, 1854–1904* (n.p., n.d.), 247.

⁴ For estimates of the population of the Chinese Northeast in the early twentieth century, see Kang Chao, *The Economic Development of Manchuria: The Rise of a Frontier Economy* (Ann Arbor, 1982), and Kungtu Sun (assisted by Ralph Huenemann), *The Economic Development of Manchuria in the First Half of the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge, MA, 1969); Rosemary Quested, “*Matey Imperialists?*” (Hong Kong, 1982), 140, 142;

Although most would agree that the war began because Japan and Russia were unable to agree on a division of imperialist labor in Korea, it ended with far-ranging changes in the status of Manchuria. The war was fought and the peace was made over the prostrate bodies of both Korea and Northeast China/Manchuria.⁵ The Sino-Japanese Treaty of December 1905 redefined relations in Northeast Asia as extensively as the Treaty of Portsmouth, setting Japan on the slippery slope to the Siberian Intervention, the Mukden Incident, and Pearl Harbor. It was a swift and deadly race from the proud victories of Port Arthur and Tsushima to the incineration of Japanese ambitions at Hiroshima and Nagasaki.

The Chinese historian understands well the contradictory impulses, both celebration and mourning. Today, 1,300,000,000 Chinese have been taught the undeniable sorrow of war and the questionable joys of racial assertion on the basis of the Russo-Japanese war and China's role in it. In this national interpretation, the year 1905 becomes a low point in the period of national humiliation designated in Chinese as *guafen kuangchao*, the "mad rush to divide the melon [China]," but the Japanese victory is also a shining example of the East rising triumphantly against "the white man's" impositions and presumptions. Probably, the anecdote most widely known in China about this war is the inspiration that Lu Xun, the father of Chinese modern literature, drew from it. At the time, Lu was a medical student in Sendai, Japan. Later, he remembered the moment,

One day in a slide I suddenly came face to face with many Chinese on the mainland, and I had not seen any for a long time. In the center of the group there was one who was bound while many others stood around him. They were all strong in physique but callous in appearance. According to the commentary, the one who was bound was a spy who had worked for the Russians and was just about to have his

Michael Hunt, 86, also describes Fengtian province as "devastated." British observers in Great Britain, War Office, *The Russo-Japanese War: Reports from British Officers Attached to the Japanese and Russian Armed Forces in the Field*, 3 vols. (London, 1908), III, 384, cite the Mukden missionary Dr. Christie.

⁵ The three (and sometimes four) provinces of Northeast China are commonly referred to as Manchuria, in all languages except Chinese. In Chinese, this region is called either *dongsansheng* (the three eastern provinces, Liaodong, Jilin, and Heilongjiang) or simply *dongbei* (the Northeast). I will use "Northeast China" when I wish to emphasize the ultimate sovereignty of Beijing in this area and "Manchuria" when I wish to stress the international struggle that took place here, the source of much of this region's local differentiation and identity vis-à-vis the rest of China.

head cut off by the Japanese military as a warning to the others, while the people standing around him had come to watch the spectacle.

Before the term was over I had left for Tokyo, because after seeing these slides I felt that medical science was not such an important thing after all. People from an ignorant and weak country, no matter how physically healthy and strong they may be, could only serve to be made examples of, or become onlookers of utterly meaningless spectacles. Such a condition was more deplorable than dying of illness. Therefore our first important task was to change their spirit, and at the time I considered the best medium for achieving this end was literature.

This is the bitter central root of twentieth-century Chinese literature.⁶

The great revival of local history in the 1980s and 1990s gave the 100 million inhabitants of Northeast China a chance to reconstruct local memory of the war. *Difangshi* on this topic has developed unobstructed by Beijing, since it fits into the basic paradigm of historiographic periodization espoused by the Communist Party—China as semi-feudal, semi-colonial victim (*ban fengjian*, *ban zhimindi*). It is a story of lives and livelihoods lost as Japanese armies swept northwards flattening all in their path with artillery barrages and infantry charges, while the Russians retreated leaving behind as little as possible of use to the advancing enemy forces. Russian sources show that many tried to make financial and psychological amends for wartime losses by entering the employ of either one or the other army. Although Part 1, Point 11 of the Chinese neutrality announcement specifically prohibited Qing subjects from “providing intelligence” to either side, this interdiction was honored in the breach, continuing the grave division between central policy and local practice that had been dug ever deeper by foreign wars, ranging from the Opium War of 1840 to World War II. The Russo-Japanese War sits squarely in the middle of this period and this process.⁷

A military magistrate, Colonel Ogievskii, who by the end of the war had become the head of Russian counterintelligence in the Far East, pointed out in a September 1905 memorandum,

⁶ Leo Oufan Lee, *Voices from the Iron House* (Bloomington, 1987), 17–18.

⁷ There is evidence in I. Nikitinskii (ed.), *Iaponskii shpionazh v Tsarskoi Rossii* (M, 1945), 74, of Chinese spies gathering intelligence for Beijing in Northeast China during the war, but this paper will only treat Japanese and Russian employment of Chinese subjects.

The recruitment of agents among the Chinese population was aided by the fact that thanks to the war local trade had come to a standstill and both merchants and shop assistants willingly accepted Japanese offers to form their own cadres of agents.⁸

The questioning by Russian interrogators of one Chinese accused of spying suggests that the Japanese may have reduced local inhabitants to poverty on purpose to motivate them to accept dangerous employment as spies. Liu Yunyan reported that he had joined the Japanese in order to avenge himself on them for they had occupied his village on the northern outskirts of Mukden after the battle. Then “they insulted me, taking away all my property and my whole family . . . This they did with the obvious aim of forcing me into their service, which I entered for vengeance (*radi mesti*).”⁹ The Russians deplored such cruelty, but as we will see below, by the end of the war emulation of Japanese methods was seen as the only way to counter Japanese successes in the intelligence field. In particular, the final report on intelligence covering through 31 August 1905 concluded, “it was recognized that the best method for battling it [the enemy’s Chinese spies] was by means of [our own] Chinese.”¹⁰

The Russians, it turns out, had few networks in place when war broke out, were slow to develop them, failed to unify their sources of information until the fighting was almost over, and never had an effective means of countering either the thousands of Chinese spies employed by the Japanese from among the day laborers on which the Russian army depended for its every need or the much rarer Japanese officers also disguised as Chinese coolies. Ineffective military intelligence has been cited by such historians as I.V. Derevianko, Bruce

⁸ Ibid., 71 (henceforth, cited as *Iaponskii shpionazh*). This document collection was compiled from four archives and published by the NKVD in 1945, as part of the counterintelligence preparations for the Manchurian campaign.

⁹ Of course, Liu had every reason to convince the Russians of his undying hatred for the Japanese. This excerpt from his interrogation is in *Iaponskii shpionazh*, 71.

¹⁰ I.V. Derevianko and D. Pavlov (eds.), *Tainy russko-iaponskoi voiny* (M, 1992), 202 (henceforth, cited as *Tainy*). This excellent collection of documents from Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF) and Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv (RGVIA) covers covert intelligence battles between the Japanese and Russians, both in Europe (from GARF) and in the Far East (from RGVIA). I am grateful to Hara Teruyuki for drawing my attention to this source. Effective use of the Derevianko/Pavlov collection and additional RGVIA materials also makes the Russo-Japanese war chapter in Alekseev, *Voennaia razvedka Rossii*, I, into essential reading.

Menning, and David Schimmelpenninck von der Oye, as a key contributing cause to initial and successive Russian losses with Derevianko concluding: "It is beyond any doubt that unsatisfactory intelligence work was one of the basic reasons for Russia's defeat in this war."¹¹ Late Imperial observers saw this deficiency as merely one weakness flowing from Russia's under-developed regional studies. As *Novoe vremia* editorialized on the war scare (with China) of 1909,

If you look on China as a friend, then you need to know it in order to draw mutual advantage from this friendship; if you look on China as a potential enemy, as a yellow peril, then you must know it as one knows an enemy—a large step toward victory over it. The Japanese knew Manchuria and us thus during the last campaign, while we hardly knew them, or the Chinese, or the land in which we had to fight.¹²

In 1905, crucial military information about the Japanese had to be gleaned from the equally inscrutable Chinese, for there was no alternative to their use behind enemy lines, as the sad story of young Riabov (see epigraph) indicates. By the time hostilities ended, the Russians had achieved several signal successes and a clear idea of Japanese methods. Below, I will analyze the place of operations using Chinese spies in the overall Russian intelligence effort as well as the successes and limitations of this approach. This will naturally lead to issues of cross-cultural learning requiring area studies skills. On numerous occasions, general officers noted the key role played by the students and teachers of Vladivostok's Eastern Institute, but Japanese graduates of the East Asian Common Cultural Academy (*Toa Dobun Shoin*) in Shanghai were also assigned to the army to translate and continue the mass production of Chinese spies in Japanese-run schools. On the field of battle, the Russians and Japanese conducted an *in vivo* comparison of their intelligence, counterintelligence, and area studies' strengths. The Russians would be found wanting.

¹¹ *Tainy*, 154; David H. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, "Russian Military Intelligence on the Manchurian Front, 1904–5," in *Intelligence and National Security* XI, no. 1 (January 1996), 22, 29; Bruce Menning, "Miscalculating One's Enemies" *ms.*; foreign observers were divided on the value of the Chinese spies with Major Joseph E. Kuhn of the US Army Corps of Engineers (United States War Department General Staff, *Reports of Military Observers Attached to the Armies in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War*, 5 vols. [Washington, DC, 1906–07], III, 109) arguing that: "Neither side can be said to have derived any valuable assistance from their employment of bannermen and hunhus [Red Beards/bandits]. As spies they possessed neither skill nor ability to judge of military situations . . .," while British officers gave the Chinese spies credit for sketching out the Russian line of defense before the Battle of Mukden (*The Russo-Japanese War: Reports from British Officers*, III, 320).

¹² *Novoe Vremia*, 25 February 1909.

II. *The Russian Effort*

The Russian command undertook four intelligence tasks in connection with the war: "long-distance [strategic] intelligence," "local [tactical] intelligence," "intelligence on the flanks," and "intelligence preparation of our rear in case of [further] retreat."¹³ It is the second of these that concerns us here. Local or tactical intelligence, defined as "information about the enemy in the immediate area of his army's location and activities,"¹⁴ was undertaken primarily through three methods, "troop reconnaissance" (*voiskovaia razvedka*), "secret intelligence by Chinese spies" (*lazutchnikov*) and "information from the press." The last of these was considered to have been an almost complete failure as the Japanese press obeyed strict orders to prevent even the slightest reference to military matters, except in the most general terms. Close examination of English and German publications fared better, but not by much.¹⁵ "Intelligence in force" involved cavalry raids aimed at the "seizure of prisoners, documents, arms, uniforms, etc." Although this kind of information was hard to come by and often cost the Russians casualties among their own forces, it was evaluated highly because of the concrete proofs it provided. Prisoners were particularly useful, "willingly providing sufficiently full and accurate information," when treated with "softness and cordiality" (*miagkost i serdechnost*).¹⁶

The most important method of obtaining intelligence on the Japanese in Manchuria was through the employment of Chinese, although officially their government required their neutrality. Fall 1904 and Fall 1905 overview reports written by the Quartermaster-General claimed that this channel was unsuccessful at the outbreak of hostilities due to a lack of pre-war preparation and the inability to motivate

¹³ *Tainy*, 180. In Russian, these categories are "*dal'naiia razvedka*," "*blizhnaiia razvedka*," "*razvedka flangov*," and "*podgotovka nashego tyila v otnoshenii razvedki na sluchai otkhoda armii*." For more on these and an overview of Russian military intelligence, see the Sergeev article in this collection or Schimmelpenninck Van der Oye, "Russian Military Intelligence on the Manchurian Front, 1904-5," 27.

¹⁴ For definition, see *Tainy*, 184.

¹⁵ As we will see below, the Russians had few men capable of reading Japanese, so this analysis boils down to a statement that "there was nothing to read and no one to read it." Reversing the clauses to "there was no one to read and therefore nothing to be read" provides an additional causality, less flattering to both the Russians and Japanese. See, *Tainy*, 187-8.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 184, 189. Not all were in favor of such gentle methods. See *Tainy*, 244-6 and note 63, below.

the Chinese properly. Although no doubt more could have been done, a close examination provides several cases of pre-existent intelligence networks.¹⁷ For example, the Trans-Amur Borderguard District, responsible for protecting the 2,512 kilometers of Chinese Eastern Railway (CER), had secret agents among the population even before the war began, although they were primarily concerned with Chinese intentions and troop concentrations. On 11 December 1906, General Chichagov, the district's commander, wrote in hindsight to the Chief of the Borderguards, Finance Minister N.I. Kokovtsov, stating that¹⁸

From the day of its creation, life itself required the district's forces to undertake activities far broader than those included in its budget and duties (*shtaty i polozheniia*). It was necessary to study the war theater, to gather, by way of intelligence raids and spying, information about the Chinese, and later, Japanese armed forces. Then, thanks to the war and trade relations, the district was involuntarily drawn into ties with Mongolia . . . All these extensive intelligence matters required the formation within the district headquarters of a special intelligence section.

The district also provided cavalry units for the harassment of Japanese troops in Korea during the spring of 1904.¹⁹

Although those subordinate to the CER considered relations with the Chinese in a different light from those employed by the Viceroyalty of the Far East, both of them had the same need for local intelligence in the years directly preceding the Russo-Japanese War. Thus, the military commissars established by Viceroy Evgenii Alekseev in 1903 to obtain "full influence" over the Chinese, while "gradually changing them into true servants of our Motherland," were able to make use of their ties to gather information from Chinese officials sympathetic to the Russians as well as spies for hire. The military commissar of Mukden Province, Colonel Kvetsinskii, was praised for the "solid basis" of the espionage conducted under his personal supervision, although the presence of talented sinologists, recent graduates of the Eastern Institute, may also have helped. In any case, this did not last long as most of Mukden province was lost to the Japanese during 1904.

¹⁷ Reports are contradictory on the basic antebellum stance of the Chinese population vis-a-vis the Russians, some claiming that cooperation was possible, because of extensive trade relations with the Russians and bad memories of the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–5. Others were less sanguine. See, *Iaponskii shpionazh*, 11–12, 25.

¹⁸ Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. 6081, op. 1, d. 152, l. 113.

¹⁹ GARF, f. 7071, op. 1, d. 46 contains the *zhurnal voennym deistviiam* for these activities.

In 1905, Kvetsinskii saw his budget curtailed in favor of his colleagues in Jilin and Heilongjiang provinces further north, where additional branch offices were opened.²⁰

In fact, it becomes clear from these reports that over a dozen military units made active use of Chinese espionage. Staff Captain Rossov gathered information on traffic to and from the southern ports of Manchuria, Captain Afanasev was responsible for the Japanese rear, while General Ukhach-Ogorovich tried to intercept the 424 attempts to sabotage the railroad linking the theater of war with European Russia.²¹ Main Headquarters, the Quartermaster-General, individual corps and frontline cavalry units all maintained independent intelligence operations. In fact, the reproduction of identical functions and then competition among the various units represented seems similar to the inter-ministerial rivalries that helped drive Imperial Russia into the Russo-Japanese war before St. Petersburg realized that armed conflict was imminent.²² It should not surprise that Russia's

²⁰ *Tainy*, 187, 216. For more on the military commissars and their plans for local control, see David Wolff, *To the Harbin Station*, (Stanford, 1999), 76–77. For more on Kvetsinskii's activities, see Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Voenno-Istoricheskii Arkhiv (RGVIA), f. Voennyi uchenyi arkhiv, d. 29091, 29093.

²¹ GARF, f. 6081, op. 1, d. 152, l. 41. Only fifteen were successful and of these the most damaging only resulted in a fourteen-hour repair job. Sabotage is a topic in its own right. I. Geishtor, a CER engineer, who "volunteered" to help the Japanese and was questioned by General Nogi at his headquarters near Dal'nii/Dairen/Dalian later reported that his interrogators became "terribly mindful" (*uzhasno za eto spokhvatilis'*), when he reported that as one of the builders of the Xingan tunnel, he could help them destroy it. He attributed his release to playing on this desire (*Iaponskii shpionazh*, 56). On 10 February 1904, Gendarme Gavrilov conducted a search of a Japanese-owned laundry in Irkutsk and found 600 negatives, a veritable photographic archive of every weak point east of the Urals along the Trans-Siberian (*Iaponskii shpionazh*, 41). This testifies to an interest that predates the war itself. On railroad construction as a count-down to war, see Wolff, 45, 75.

Finally, it is worth mentioning a report from Russia's Paris embassy regarding the recent Japanese purchase in France of specialized explosive shells. These were to be dropped through the "toilet flush holes" (*otverstiia v vagonnykh klozetakh*) by "richly-bribed foreigners" (*shchedro podkuplennye inostrantsy*) as the trains passed over Russia's biggest bridges spanning the Volga, Ob, Enisei and Sungari (*Iaponskii shpionazh*, 58). Although none of these sabotage schemes produced significant destructive results, additional preventive security measures did slow down train traffic, already a small advantage for the Japanese army.

²² On inter-ministerial rivalry in St. Petersburg, see David McDonald, *United Government and Foreign Policy in Russia, 1900–1914* (Cambridge, 1992), Chapter I, entitled "The Witte Kingdom in the Far East." For the local politico-military dimensions and their influence on the coming of war, see Wolff, Chapter II, entitled "Interministerial Rivalry as a Way of Life." The social history implications are detailed in Chapters III and IV.

organizational weaknesses, both local and central, would persist from the pre-war into the wartime period. Only after the painful defeat at Mukden, when the recruitment of Chinese spies became ever more difficult, were all efforts involving local espionage united under Captain Blonskii, attached to the intelligence section of the General Staff.²³

Piecemeal intelligence meant both signal failures and successes. Ji Fengtai (sometimes Li Fengtai), alias Tifontai, a Russified merchant of Chinese descent, was brought in from Khabarovsk to employ his business networks located in the rear of the Japanese armies. His successes under Captain Blonskii helped that officer to achieve promotion and the unity of later intelligence efforts.²⁴ Tifontai's later initiatives, again in close cooperation with Blonskii, drew less praise. For example, he funded the formation of a 500-man Chinese "partisan" unit, the *Bindui*, to conduct intelligence and raids on the left flank of the Russian army. Although this detachment saw little action between its June 1905 formation and August dissolution, it was around long enough to draw complaints of harassment from numerous local inhabitants. The final report on its activities placed the blame squarely on the "lack of officers knowing Chinese to be assigned to these detachments to lead and supervise them." Colonel Sokovnin, the military commissar of Jilin province, appears to have been more effective, negotiating an agreement with the local chieftain, Han Denggui and his "ten thousand" bandits.²⁵

In 1904, 30-year-old Zhang Zuolin had almost a decade of experience as a bandit chieftain under his belt before being persuaded to operate under (nominal) Russian command. Although he was captured and sentenced to death by the Japanese in early 1905, he was swiftly pardoned by the Chief of Operations of the Japanese Army, Lieutenant Colonel Tanaka Giichi, the same man who as Japan's

²³ *Tainy*, 173.

²⁴ Tifontai is a name closely associated with the local history of the rise and fall of Russia's imperial ambitions in the Far East. In 1894, he received a Russian passport, despite his queue and polygamous lifestyle. Priamur Governor-General A.N. Korf had rejected his first application, but his successor S.M. Dukhovskoi had proved more tolerant. The following year he began to apply his expertise in border trade to Russia's expansion into Manchuria. As a citizen, his eligibility for government contracts raised his net worth to three million rubles by the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War. See, Wolff, 15–17, 198–9.

²⁵ *Tainy*, 195–196. Here, one must be suspicious of the number ten thousand, which as the Chinese character *wan* [Japanese *man*] often means "many" rather than a specific number.

Premier would bear responsibility for Zhang's assassination in 1928. Zhang's biographer, Gavan McCormack, concludes that this is a "reason for thinking that he was playing a double game: not only aiding the Russians but cooperating with some elements of the Japanese forces at the same time."²⁶ Wu Peifu, later one of Zhang's rival warlords in North China, also appears to have served Japanese intelligence during this period.²⁷

The right flank did much better under the leadership of the Borderguard District. Lieutenant Konshin had conducted intelligence operations into and through Mongolia to southern Manchuria even before the war, so the opening of hostilities found him ready with a mixed unit employing Chinese, Koreans, Mongolians and Russians with a knowledge of Chinese. At first, he was mainly required to track the presence and intentions of Chinese troops for fear that the Chinese government, either local or central, might follow the Boxer precedent and join in the Japanese attack. As Mongolia became a crucial source of cattle with which to feed the Russian army, the Quartermaster-General also deployed intelligence resources to the right flank.²⁸ The Russian consul at Urga (Ulaan-Baatar), the military commissar of Qiqihar province and the Russo-Chinese Bank's representative also conducted operations in Mongolia. All of these made use of Chinese and Mongolian hirelings. This multinational effort led to the detection of a small group of Japanese saboteurs sent through Mongolia in the winter of 1904 to damage the Xingan tunnel. They were caught and executed after 40 days under cover, first as Chinese merchants and then as Mongols. Extra queues and explosives in their luggage became the evidence for their convictions.²⁹

²⁶ Gavan McCormack, *Chang Tso-lin in Northeast China, 1911–28* (Stanford, 1977), 17. It is also possible that he cooperated only after he was captured and pardoned. I have not yet found any references to Chang in the Russian military documents.

²⁷ Stephen MacKinnon, *Power and Politics in Late Imperial China* (Berkeley, 1980), 124.

²⁸ The Quartermaster-General was responsible for procuring food, fodder and intelligence. Over two billion pounds of supplies were brought to the front (Quested, 143). Information is harder to quantify, but just as vital. Area studies specialists are the experts necessary to collect and deliver both. The Japanese also combined these services.

²⁹ *Tainy*, 165–6, 312; This is the beginning of involvement by the Trans-Amur borderguard district in Mongolian affairs. In 1911, elements of the guard would participate directly in attempts to separate the Mongolian region of Barga, through which the Chinese Eastern Railway passes, from Chinese sovereignty.

Probably the greatest achievement of Chinese spies in Russian hire was the gathering of information regarding the positions of the Japanese army after the battle of Mukden, when the Russian retreat temporarily broke off all contact between the opponents.³⁰ Between mid-March and mid-May, Chinese spies behind Japanese lines brought back military flotsam allowing the full and documented reconstruction of this crucial information. The Russians had decided to pay rewards only for concrete proofs, for visual reports had repeatedly been unreliable. This attainment was not only a bright moment for the Chinese agents, but also a sign that the analytical unity of Russian intelligence had progressed to the point where disparate information, pieces of uniforms, letterhead stationery, envelopes, labels, badges, canteens, etc., could be made to speak volumes.³¹ But by then the war was all but over.

III. *Area Studies and Intelligence Activities*

Quartermaster-General V.A. Oranovskii wrote one of the earliest summations of Russian intelligence in the Russo-Japanese war. In his final conclusion, he blamed Russian failures on five primary insufficiencies. Of these, the lack of pre-war preparation has been discussed above and the almost complete absence of organized counter-intelligence will be handled in the next section. Two other points, "ignorance among our forces of local and enemy languages" and "war in a country whose population leaned towards the enemy" could be taken as an indictment of Russian orientological communication skills.³² An examination of the role of East Asian specialists (*vos-tokovedy*) at war indeed proves their central role in Russian intelligence efforts, especially in those areas that involved the running of

³⁰ This is all the more impressive as Haldane asserts that Japanese counterintelligence began to tighten up about this time, especially after capturing a wagon-load of maps near Mukden. These materials showed the Russians to be fairly well-informed regarding the Japanese positions. See, Haldane, 161.

³¹ *Tainy*, 208–9.

³² Bruce Menning in "Miscalculating One's Enemies" has noted the near complete lack of Asian language skills among officers posted in the Far East as military attaches. With this handicap, it is also no surprise that their estimates of Japanese maximum troop strength were far off the mark. The Japanese ended up tripling the Russian estimate. I thank Dr. Menning for access to his unpublished manuscript on pre-war intelligence estimates.

non-Russian agents, the translation/interpretation of Asian documents, and the production of Chinese print propaganda.³³

Immediately on the heels of the decision to build the final leg of the Trans-Siberian through Chinese territory, Finance Minister Sergei Witte, the moving force behind the railroad project, also expedited the creation of a “practical” institute of orientology at Vladivostok, whose graduates would provide him with cadres capable of intercultural tasks. Between 1887 and 1900, 26 Russians had received degrees in orientology. From 1903 until 1916, over 500 garnered such diplomas. Within a year of the school’s opening, the Boxer uprising broke out and soon Russian troops occupied Manchuria. The experience of the brief military campaign already clarified the urgent need for Chinese speakers. This, combined with the new and exciting opportunities for serving with the troops in various capacities during summer *practicums*, swiftly made Chinese the most popular language at the Eastern Institute. In fact, all freshmen focused exclusively on Chinese, before taking up an additional Asian language in their second year.³⁴

From the very beginning of the war, the first commander of the Manchurian Army, General N.P. Linevich, requested Viceroy Alekseev’s permission to draft the complete student body of Vladivostok’s Eastern Institute. Although salaries of 155 rubles per month were approved, it appears that only the more advanced students were considered sufficiently capable to take up this offer. In a December 1904 report to Viceroy Alekseev, E.G. Spalvin, the acting director, listed the placements of his 25 most advanced students (in all fields) to a wide range of military posts and places.³⁵ The rest of the school body had been evacuated en masse to Verkhneudinsk (Ulan Ude) after the Japanese naval bombardment of Vladivostok on 6 March 1904.³⁶ In addition, as the war began, the need for specialists in Chinese language, and even in Japanese, seemed secondary, since, in Russia, the

³³ Oranovskii’s final point that “Russia’s war-long retreat” damaged intelligence efforts is buttressed by a particularly eloquent quote: “It is necessary to admit unconditionally that the attacker, having the advantage in almost all, also garners advantages regarding intelligence. He possesses the field of battle, full of documents, as well as the positions abandoned by the enemy, rich in stories.” *Tainy*, 229.

³⁴ Wolff, 146–153.

³⁵ N. Troitskaia (ed.), *Iz istorii vostokovedeniia. Dokumenty* (Vladivostok, 2002), 45.

³⁶ For more on the history and pre-history of the Eastern Institute, see Wolff, Chapter V and Appendix.

conflict was seen as Japan's claim by arms to Korea. The main events of the war were expected there and therefore Captain Kuzmin, formerly an instructor of Korean troops in Korea, was called on to organize local intelligence operations. Within months, however, the Russian presence in Korea was liquidated and Captain Kuzmin returned to Russia. Korean language would be less in demand for the rest of the war, except for counterintelligence purposes.³⁷

In contrast, the situation with Japanese was nearly desperate. In the whole army, there were only eleven translators, of whom eight came directly from the Eastern Institute.³⁸ Whole corps operated in the field without anyone capable of interrogating captured soldiers on the spot to allow immediate access to crucial military intelligence. The ability to read captured documents was even more limited, especially since many field-level commands were written by hand. There were only two individuals, both kept at Army Headquarters, with enough experience to read this kind of communications, Tikhai and Han Kilmyeng (sometimes rendered as Han Pil-men).

Until May 1905, Tikhai, born in Tokyo, the son of the sexton of the Russian embassy's church, labored alone as untranslated handwritten materials were forwarded from all fronts. It was Tikhai, for example, who translated the diary of the would-be Japanese saboteurs intercepted hundreds of kilometers from Headquarters on the way to destroy the bridge across the river Nonni. As the war wound to a close, he was joined by Han Kilmyeng (here called Han Pil-men), a Korean subject who had previously served in the Russian consulate at Chemulpo and as *lektor* (language assistant) at the Eastern Institute.³⁹

³⁷ *Tainy*, 161, 199; *Iaponskii shpionazh*, 50. In addition, influenced by the full occupation of Korea by the Japanese army, Koreans living in the southern part of the Ussuri region bordering Korea, "willingly entered Russian service as translators," but the need was simply not that great. Meanwhile, Koreans escaping from Japanese occupation of their homeland offered to help unmask those of their countrymen aiding Japan while undercover in the Russian Far East and Manchuria. The low demand for Korean is further corroborated by Han Kilmyeng's use as a translator of Japanese, although at the Eastern Institute he was employed as the Korean *lektor*.

³⁸ Although E.G. Spal'vin served as early as 1902 deciphering Japanese-based intelligence codes (*Iaponskii shpionazh*, 37) and his *lektor* Z.A. Maeda would be assassinated in 1907 by "a patriot," I have still not found any clear traces of any intelligence activities during the war itself. On Maeda, see M. Ikuta, "E.G. Spal'vin v Iaponii," *Izvestiia vostochnogo instituta*, no. 6 (2001), 30–31; or Hiyama Shinichi, "Pervyi lektor-iaponets vostochnogo instituta," *Izvestiia vostochnogo instituta*, no. 1 (1994), 48–51.

³⁹ *Tainy*, 198–200. On the crucial role of *lektors* in the development of a "practical" curriculum at the Eastern Institute, see Wolff, 150. The Chinese *lektor*, Tsi, played an important part in recruiting Chinese spies and deciphering the Chinese materials they brought him.

Mongolian skills matched, more or less, the demand for them. Although only two Russians present in Manchuria actually knew the literary language, V. Shangin, a Petersburg University student and A.P. Khionin, the first graduate of the Eastern Institute to specialize in Mongolian studies, these could always be supplemented by the use of Buriats among the Cossack troops. Since there was no fighting in Mongolia, the need for instant accuracy was greatly reduced. Negotiations over cattle and other supplies could be conducted in a more leisurely and less demanding manner. Interestingly, the dean of Mongolian studies in Russia (and concurrently, the dean of the Eastern Institute), Aleksei Pozdneev, was never called to the field of battle. Nonetheless, the desirability of his presence was discussed in connection with his knowledge of Tibetan, for the Russians briefly entertained the idea of inviting the Dalai Lama to settle in Russia. This move would not only have greatly increased Russian influence in Mongolia, but would also have been a sharp reply to the English occupation of Lhasa.⁴⁰

Chinese skills were more widely available, because the Eastern Institute's main task was to provide orientologically competent cadres for the Russian imperial endeavor in Manchuria, where Chinese (along with Shandong dialect) was the *lingua franca*. In addition, since many officers and railroad workers had recently served in China, either as part of the Russian occupation army in Manchuria between 1900 and 1903 or on the Chinese Eastern Railway, they already possessed a linguistic level necessary for minimal communication in Chinese or Chinese-Russian pigeon. All corps were provided with at least one Russian possessing translation skills, since Chinese translators had earned themselves an unenviable reputation during the Boxer uprising and suppression.

Nonetheless, the number of officers with a mastery of Chinese and a range of local Chinese acquaintances remained the limiting factor in developing and running networks of Chinese spies. Especially after the retreat from Mukden, as Russian chances of victory seemed to fade causing the number of potential recruits to dwindle, Blonskii (also a graduate of the Eastern Institute) pointed out the necessity of teamwork between officers knowing Chinese and at least one devoted Chinese

⁴⁰ *Tainy*, 218–9; Information on A. Pozdneev, his academic genealogy and tenure as the Eastern Institute's first dean (nicknamed by the students "the Mongol yoke" on account of Pozdneev's penchant for enforcing discipline) can be found in Wolff, 146–154, 186–9.

aide. In his September 1905 report, he stated that "Chinese to whom an officer might personally propose work as a secret agent regard this offer and the promised compensation in most cases with distrust. Besides, they don't know with whom they are dealing in such cases."⁴¹

A quick survey of individual cases reveals that all of the "Easterners" were associated with espionage. I.F. Diukov and V.M. Mendrin conducted "secret espionage" for the Quarter-Master General and First Manchurian Army, respectively. A.P. Boloban garnered four medals for intelligence feats. P.V. Shkurkin, in contrast, received not only Russian medals, but a Chinese award as well, the Double Dragon (second-class). The Chinese officials noted that: "The Russian officer Shkurkin fully understood the feelings of the Chinese population. Undertaking his tasks, he defended and helped the Chinese, without insult or harm." General P.K. Rennenkampf saw a different face of this activity as noted in an order dated May 4, 1905: "Staff-Captain Shkurkin has conducted intelligence operations since last November in my Headquarters with both knowledge and love for his work. Thanks to this dutiful approach, significant advantages have accrued for understanding the situation that surrounds our troops."⁴²

The need to present the Russian wartime situation in as positive a light as possible was understood, since cooperation with local inhabitants in many areas depended on it. This had been the goal of two publications supported by the Viceroyalty. One in English, *The China Review*, came out in Beijing, while the second, the *Shengjingbao*, came out in Mukden. Prior to the Russo-Japanese war it was the only Chinese publication in the Chinese Northeast. Originally run by the military commissar's office with help from local Chinese editors, after the war began Eastern Institute students took over the operation. A.V. Spitsyn became editor, while his classmate P.S. Tishenko seconded him as assistant editor. Another member of the class of 1905, I.A. Dobrolovskii, also served on the editorial team. At the end of 1904, however, as Japanese troops approached, the Chinese employees left, fearing reprisals from both the Japanese and Chinese authorities. The printing press was boxed up and shipped to Harbin, while the

⁴¹ *Tainy*, 198, 231. Shengjing is another name for Mukden, although today the city is called Shenyang.

⁴² A.M. Buiakov, "Vostochniki na frontakh russo-iaponskoi voyny, 1904-5 gg.," in *Izvestiia vostochnogo instituta*, no. 2 (1995), 20-21; A.A. Khisamutdinov, "Sinolog P.V. Shkurkin: 'ne dlia shirokoi publiki, a dlia vostokovedov i vostokoliubov,'" in *Izvestiia vostochnogo instituta*, no. 3 (1996), 154.

Mukden military commissar Kvetsinskii wrote a letter of lavish praise to Pozdneev, "sending greetings to an institution that has produced such outstanding and talented alumni as Blonskii, Spitsyn, Tishenko, and Dobrolovskii et al., whom I am proud to count among my collaborators and of whom the Eastern Institute should also be proud." The Quartermaster-General's report concluded: "It is impossible not to recognize the usefulness for the army of the Eastern Institute in Vladivostok. Strictly speaking, those taking courses there, both officers and students, were the sole reliable and educated translators."⁴³

IV. *The Japanese Advantage*

Unlike the Russians, the Japanese had made good use of the years before the war to collect information regarding the probable opponent and the likely field of battle. Military officers with impressive linguistic skills had been placed in embassies and consulates around the globe.⁴⁴ Many of these men would rise to the highest positions, such as Fukushima Yasumasa, who rose from military attaché in Beijing to overall responsibility for frontline intelligence during the Russo-Japanese war. Even more impressive, Tanaka Giichi, formerly military attaché to St. Petersburg, returned to Japan in 1903 to plan the Korea/Manchuria offensive. He finished his career as prime minister. Four years in the Russian capital taught him the language, ballroom dancing, and the intricacies of Russian politics. His successor, Akashi Motojiro, built on Tanaka's insights to develop a plan to fund nationalist and revolutionary discontents in an effort to open up "a second front" on Russia's western frontier. Large sums were spent, especially

⁴³ *Tainy*, 200, 214; Plans for continued publication in Chinese were only fulfilled after the war at Harbin and under the new name, *Yuandongbao* (*The Far Eastern Paper*). The class of 1905 received its diplomas and Spitsyn became editor once again, but this time assisted by Dobrolovskii. Tishenko also joined them in Harbin to edit the CER's Russian daily, *Khabinskii vestnik*. The war had shown that success in the Far East required propaganda for both Chinese and Russians. The *Shengjingbao* continued on in Mukden, but now under Japanese patronage. Chinese nationalists also began to publish in the Northeast, subsidized by local government. The competitive origins of the regional press are treated in Wolff, Chapter V.

⁴⁴ A graphic representation of the network with officer's names and ranks appended can be found in Tani Toshio, *Himitsu nichiro senso* (Tokyo, 1966), 250. This is a reprint of the circa-1925 first edition originally classified for limited circulation within the Higher Army School (*rikugun daigakko*).

after the battle of Mukden made clear both the high cost of “victory” and the fast dissipating initiative with which Japan had begun the war. But the key effort, the shipment of one thousand rifles into the Grand Duchy of Finland (a constituent part of the Russian Empire until 1917) aboard the *John Grafton* literally ran aground on a sand bar near the town of Jakobstad in the Gulf of Bothnia. It seems unlikely that this threat, well-known to the Russians through their decoding of Japanese ciphergrams (with French help), really led to changes in troop dispositions.⁴⁵

Akashi's insurrectionary efforts were under the control of the Imperial [Army] Headquarters (*Daihonei*), while closer to home, intelligence in Manchuria, China and Southern Korea fell to the Manchurian Army, which built on a decade of local intelligence to outshine the Russian effort.⁴⁶ Ever since the Russian decision to build the Trans-Siberian Railway, patriotic-minded, adventure-loving Japanese, often associated with the Amur/Black Dragon Society, had traveled across Siberia and Manchuria reporting back to the Japanese general staff.⁴⁷ As the 20th century dawned, the exploits of these *shishi* gave way to locally based intelligence networks, centered on particular professions. Japanese dominance in Northeast Asia's nascent photographic business guaranteed that Tokyo would have clear pictures of every bridge on the Trans-Siberian to guide those who would be sent on such missions. Laundry facilities put employees in touch with a wide range of clients, while providing physical evidence of class and military rank. The chain of Japanese brothels, staffed mainly by Kyushu-born “Amazons” (*joshigun*), also put subjects of the Rising Sun within eyesight and earshot of Russian indiscretions.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ On the individual basis of the Japanese intelligence effort, see Ian Nish, “Japanese Intelligence and the Approach of the Russo-Japanese War,” in Christopher Andrew and David Dilks (eds.), *The Missing Dimension* (Urbana, Ill., 1984), 31. The complexities of organizing subversion within the Russian empire are handled in great detail in Kujala's article in this volume. Even more extensive discussion of Akashi and his later lionization can be found in Inaba Chiharu, *Akashi kosaku* (Tokyo, 1995). It is Nish's point that the *Akashi kosaku* is, in all probability, originally a *Tanaka kosaku*. On codebreaking, see Inaba Chiharu, “Franco-Russian Intelligence Collaboration against Japan during the Russo-Japanese War, 1904–5,” in *Japanese Slavic and East European Studies*, no. 19 (1998).

⁴⁶ Tani, 249.

⁴⁷ On the Amur Society (*kokuryukai*), see Marius Jansen, *The Japanese and Sun Yat-sen* (Cambridge, MA, 1954).

⁴⁸ On Japanese prostitution, see Hara Teruyuki, *Shiberia shuppei* (Tokyo, 1989), 8–12. Imamura Shohei's film, “*Zegen*,” also portrays the linkages between the world's oldest profession and the world's second oldest profession. *Shishi* can mean either patriot or lion, both appropriate.

Possibly the most famous of these humble collectors of relevant intelligence is Ishimitsu Makio. In one volume of his memoirs, he documents his activities as a photographer in the city that would soon become the Russian rear headquarters, Harbin.⁴⁹ Once the war had started, Ishimitsu took on new tasks, but all involving his ability to interact with both Chinese and Russians. One particularly exciting incident sees Ishimitsu assigned to reestablish secure rear communications that had been disturbed by roving Cossack bands. He hunted too well and his whole detachment was wiped out, aside from himself. Further exercising his intercultural skills, Ishimitsu put a gun to a Chinese man's breast and offered him five yen to take him to safety. Under the circumstances, the hostage agreed to accompany Ishimitsu.⁵⁰

In another story, softer in tone, Ishimitsu and his unit stationed somewhere along the Sha River declared a local truce with the Russian unit opposite them. The officers met and agreed to put aside the "enemy-ally" syndrome. They then drank copious amounts of local hooch together. They exchanged war stories and continued to meet irregularly.⁵¹

Although Ishimitsu returned to Japan before the outbreak of the war and entered the army formally, he does not mention any continued contact with Chinese at Harbin, who were now behind enemy lines. But it was exactly this that the Russians feared most and at Harbin, in particular. After the battle of Mukden, "a certain Persits" was assigned the job, but Harbin was too much for him. He had a solid background in investigative policework and "foreign language skills". With high hopes, he was given a budget and sent to Harbin, already recognized as "spy central" (*ochag shpionstva nepriatelii*). This venture proved a failure due to Persits' "moral unsoundness."⁵²

Matters were turned over to Tifontai, who proceeded to Harbin from his post at Kuanchengzi where he was running spies behind

⁴⁹ Later volumes of his memoirs are less martial in tone as he questions the militarization of Japan in the 1930s. His emotional and intellectual evolution paralleled Japan's, making his autobiography quite popular in pacific post-World War II Japan. The skepticism of the final volume is captured in its title, *Dare no tameni* (For whom?). See Ishimitsu Makio, *Ishimitsu Makio no shuki* (Tokyo, 1958), 9.

⁵⁰ Ishimitsu Makio, *Bokyo no uta* (Tokyo, 1979), 22–23.

⁵¹ Ishimitsu, 62–3.

⁵² *Tainy*, 201–2, 247. A 25 March 1905 memo from Oranovskii described Japanese access to the areas occupied by Russian troops as "unhindered" (*besprepriatstvenno*). On the general atmosphere and kinds of temptations available in Harbin during the war, see Wolff, 121–8.

enemy lines. In a memorandum to Oranovskii dated 16 May 1905, he admitted defeat,

The trip to Harbin was not successful. The city is too large and populous to quickly finish off the matter of which we have spoken with Your Excellence. After spending two weeks in Harbin and despite all the efforts of [our] reconnaissance, we were unable to find anything. Departing Harbin, I left behind ten of our intelligence operatives under one Chinese officer Li Xipu in order to watch for and catch Japanese spies.⁵³

Running Chinese spies recruited during previous visits was only one way to penetrate Russian defenses. From the Japanese embassy in Beijing, Colonel Aoki Norizumi served as liaison with Yuan Shikai, while organizing spying and sabotage missions into Manchuria and Mongolia.⁵⁴ Whole units of Chinese soldiers, often recruited directly from banditry, took Japanese orders in exchange for Japanese pay.⁵⁵ Tani was aware of both sides' use of this tactic, praising General P.I. Mishchenko, while denouncing the failures of one Major Hasegawa.

According to Tani, Japanese ties to these armed groups began before the war and, in fact, most intelligence officers received their information through Chinese and Korean subordinates. Information was a two-way street for information officers. This formula for success was the same one described by Blonskii from the Russian side. In parallel with Russian efforts again, the Japanese spread propaganda in Chinese. When Port Arthur fell, Japanese intelligence made sure that Chinese far and wide knew. With twenty years of hindsight, Tani categorized the tasks of the intelligence services as: "1) Japan-China cooperation to organize a unit for study of the enemy; 2) disruption of communication in the enemy's rear; and 3) threatening the enemy rear by raising armed bands."⁵⁶

⁵³ *Tainy*, 202, 251. Nonetheless, Tifontai's men soon uncovered two networks.

⁵⁴ Nish, 29.

⁵⁵ As noted above, Zhang Zuolin and Wu Peifu, two warlords who later ruled large swathes of the Chinese North, both got their start as Russo-Japanese war collaborators.

⁵⁶ Tani, 278, 280, 299. *Himitsu nichiro senso* was written for the classified edification of students at the Higher Army School. The book was originally a series of lectures. It appears to have been presented for the first time in 1925, when the celebration of the twentieth anniversary of the victory was at its peak. An inaugural group of ten top students attended the first meeting. Tani cautioned his select audience that the materials, written and oral, should not be discussed outside the classroom for they contained criticism of politicians and military men still in power. Other information had also not been declassified.

Tani concludes his discussion of Japanese field intelligence and its diverse ties to the Chinese, by pedantically stating: "Thus, it should now be known (*shirubeki*) that in peacetime we must foster Chinese (*Shina*) translators."⁵⁷ The Toa Dobun Shoin, recently moved to Shanghai from Nanjing, would be the instrument of that policy recommendation, producing steady increases in the number of Chinese-speaking Japanese. By 1945, over 5,000 students would cross its threshold in search of practical sinological skills, but in April 1904, the Academy only sent 25 students from the graduating class as military translators (*jugun tsuyaku*).⁵⁸ This represented over 40 percent of the new graduates. The Academy's director, Nezu Hajime, had served on the General Staff in the 1880s and must have been pleased with his contribution to the war effort for every Chinese speaker could recruit many Chinese spies teaching them the basic skills outlined below.

The students who remained behind provided support in other ways. For example, the Academy's March 1904 report expressed concern with Russian successes in buying up Chinese newspapers in order to influence public opinion. The spread of anti-Japanese rumors was blamed on the Russians and their allies, the French. To counter this trend, the Academy decided to print its own Chinese-language news report for distribution to central and local military and government leaders.⁵⁹ Quality control was maintained by Negishi Tadashi, a young scholar who instructed students to "record only facts, stay away from grand theories, and keep out vague information of doubtful origin."⁶⁰ In 1905, five recent graduates received a Ministry of Foreign Affairs grant to investigate Xinjiang and Outer Mongolia. Their results were so informative that the Foreign Ministry decided to make the grant

Tani was executed as a war criminal by Chinese Nationalist forces at Nanjing in April 1947. The editor of the first open publication of Tani's collected and edited lectures, Inaba Masao, denies that Tani was a war criminal in the introduction to the 1966 first edition.

⁵⁷ Tani, 281.

⁵⁸ *Toa dobun kaishi* (Tokyo, 1988), 382. Douglas Reynolds has written the best English overview of the organization in "Chinese Area Studies in Prewar China: Japan's Toa Dobun Shoin in Shanghai, 1900–1945," *Journal of Asian Studies*, XLV, no. 5 (November 1986), 945–970. Reynolds speaks of the East Asian Common Culture Academy's reputation as a "spy school" for many did go on to work with the military or intelligence. He, unfortunately, says nothing about the school's role in the Russo-Japanese war.

⁵⁹ *Toa dobun kaishi*, 382–3.

⁶⁰ Reynolds, 961.

permanent allowing a graduation trip (and trip report) for each student. This came to be known as the Big Trip (*chosa dai ryoko*). Between 1900 and 1945, 3,652 students would graduate. Over 1,300 were enrolled, when the school was evacuated to Japan.⁶¹

As the Russians saw it, Japanese intelligence was mounting two kinds of operations involving Chinese spies. The first involved intelligence centers set up opposite each other, behind Japanese lines with a counterpart behind Russian lines. The latter were run exclusively by trusted Chinese collaborators, most of whom had been recruited before the war, when hundreds of Japanese spies had wandered freely in Manchuria and the Russian Far East creating an exact topographical and photographic record of the region that would become the field of battle. With funds from the Japanese treasury, a spy center would often take the form of a legitimate business. Bakeries were preferred as a shop where men of all classes and ranks could be subjected to eavesdropping, while they waited in line. By late in the war, many of these had lost their significance as spycenters, as they fell behind Japanese lines.

A second system of collecting military intelligence used Chinese as paid penetration agents. For most of the war, a steady stream of Chinese peasants and laborers crossed unimpeded between the Russian and Japanese zones bringing up-to-date information on troop formations and deployments. Until the battle of Mukden, the troops were close enough to each other that a crossing rarely took more than three-four days.⁶² These were spies for hire and needed to be trained properly by Chinese-speaking personnel. Many were needed and recruitment to dangerous work was always an issue. Japanese intelligence had a special interest in all Chinese who spoke Russian. Upon arrival in a new area, and with a steady stream of victories came ever new areas, bribes and threats were used to prepare a list of all those who had worked with the Russian occupiers. Those who had not evacuated with the Russians were then offered the opportunity to prove their trustworthiness (or else!) by re-crossing the line of battle to find employment among Russian acquaintances. A principal spy (*glavnyi*

⁶¹ Reynolds, 963, 947, 962. The school's impressive library was bombed and burnt in 1937.

⁶² *Iaponskii shpionazh*, 17–8, 21. Much of this information is drawn from Ogievskii's September 1905 memorandum, "The Organization of Espionage in the Japanese Army." Although a recommendation was made to restrict Chinese movement, while registering the whole Chinese population, this was dismissed as impractical.

shpion) who ran his own cell would be paid as much as five times the rate of his underlings. Wages were based on access to useful information, not on devotion to the Japanese cause. Close monitoring of village society to compile lists of potential spies also was a counterintelligence method. Unremarked arrival from the Russian side became much harder.⁶³

To produce a steady and effective flow of Chinese helpers from a largely illiterate population of peasants, the Japanese opened three spy schools. There, classes of one hundred were trained by two officers for five days. The course included the duplication of Russian letters, recognition of crucial characteristics of Russian uniforms, and some very basic spycraft. Graduates were given a pass through the lines, a cash advance, and a territorial square off of the Japanese map of Manchuria compiled before the war. They would proceed to the assigned quadrant and draw whatever they saw onto the map. This piece of paper was then smuggled back through the Russian lines (pleating it into the queue was a favorite hiding place). Payment was made on delivery. With the steady production of hundreds of such spies, Japanese military intelligence could afford to send two men, unbeknownst to each other, to double-check each quadrant's contents. As more and more Chinese lost their homes and livelihoods, the price for this service fell steadily. Russian sources speak of "spy masses," and, although this may be an exaggeration, it appears that Chinese spies in Japanese employ can be numbered at least in the hundreds, if not thousands. At the end of the war, the Russians also opened a spy school in order to reproduce the Japanese results. Kvetsinskii, no longer resident in Mukden after the battle of that name, began to train the first classes with the aid of his former sinological staff as Mukden Commissar.⁶⁴ There were also plans to imitate Japanese methods for transmitting information across no man's land. (*kak eto bylo organizovano u iapontsev*).⁶⁵

⁶³ *Iaponskii shpionazh*, 7, 21, 72. Russian sources talk a great deal about the "cruelty" of Japanese military intelligence, especially how effective it was in impeding Russian recruitment of Chinese spies. Although clear proof may be lacking, such behavior would not be shocking when at war. Lieutenant Colonel Panov wrote on 31 July 1904 of the possibility of undertaking a "decisive, if rather cruel measure," namely, the taking of hostages. According to Panov's theory of the Asian family, this would dispose the Chinese to cooperate fully. His information, he claimed, suggested that the Japanese were already using this method "without exciting any particular hatred." Panov in *Tainy*, 244–6.

⁶⁴ Alekseev, *Voennaia razvedka Rossii*, I, 186.

⁶⁵ *Iaponskii shpionazh*, 71–73; *Tainy*, 187, 223, 254.

In intelligence as in much else, as the war ended Russia was actively correcting the errors of 1904 and early 1905, but time had run out. Nonetheless, this moment is important, because it shows both what could and what could not be copied. More important, it also highlights the great novelty of a Western power choosing to copy Eastern success in such areas as the focused employment of Chinese spies as intelligence intermediaries. By the end of the conflict, both Russian and Japanese military intelligence ran bands of Chinese, trained in crash courses, who covered the rear areas of the two armies in Manchuria, looking like “Chinese soldiers, minor merchants, or simple villagers.” In examining the intelligence history of the Russo-Japanese war, we see clearly the new global era in which crucial initiatives and models would no longer come from Europe and the United States alone.

On the other hand, some things could not be changed overnight. For example, even though Ogievskii had learned that the Chinese spies were accurately reproducing the Russian dislocations by copying the colors and symbols on officers’ shoulder boards, he was powerless to ameliorate the situation. The epaulettes were essential to internal discipline. Ingrained military culture stood in the way of flexible counterintelligence.⁶⁶ There was also little the Russians could do about the paper-thin neutrality of Chinese officialdom. Tani saw clearly that “our General Staff is keeping China strictly neutral on the surface, while behind the scenes, there is a Japan-China alliance.”⁶⁷ This was as inalterable a reality as the fact that the brave Riabov could not be mistaken for Chinese, no matter how great his desire or how useful the goal.

V. And Then the War was Over: Considerations

If war is politics by other means, then a gentle semantic twist makes conflict into competition by violent means. For over fifty years, China, Japan and Russia competed for the fertile fields on which the Russo-Japanese war was waged. China chose neutrality, because it believed that such a policy would put her in the best position for the ongoing

⁶⁶ *Tainy*, 204.

⁶⁷ Tani, 281.

competition, shortly to be continued by non-violent means.⁶⁸ The long-term nature of the issue, however, guaranteed that Chinese would participate and suffer, even if Beijing officially said otherwise. In 1904, China made good her demographic losses by removing the barriers that had long hampered and limited immigrant access to the Northeast.⁶⁹

The artificiality of China's neutrality was not unique. Was not Britain a Japanese ally and France on the Russian side? Ten years later, all five of these countries would fight on the same side. Had this hindsight been available at the time, would the Japanese have felt compelled to decapitate Chinese spies every night of the summer of 1905 as the war slowed to a halt?⁷⁰ Maybe it is best to keep in mind the words of a certain Lu, who when caught spying against the Russians, proposed to switch sides in order to help the Russians catch other Japanese spies. Maybe even more importantly, he offered to help *avoid* catching those who were not spies, "first, because that would ruin Russia's good reputation, and second, because it would spoil your conscience, making a terrifying death inevitable."⁷¹

The Russians, nonetheless, recognized that their poorly-coordinated intelligence and almost non-existent counterintelligence had cost them dearly. The Quartermaster-General's report noted that "the battle with the enemy's spies" had not really been assigned to anyone at the beginning of the war and only later was it noted how serious an omission this had been. His final comments on counterintelligence are cutting, including such suggestions as "not leaving the catching of spies to chance."⁷² In the summer of 1905, counterintelligence

⁶⁸ In the Chinese literature, this stratagem is known as: "Monkey on a Hill watches two Tigers fight."

⁶⁹ The Russians would wait two more years until the war ended to encourage mass migration to the Russian Far East. The number of Japanese in Manchuria would also rise dramatically after the war. Conflict had again been replaced by competition.

⁷⁰ Major Joseph E. Kuhn of the US Army Corps of Engineers (*Reports of Military Observers*, III, 110) reports the nightly executions.

⁷¹ *Iaponskii shpionazh*, 76. A different prisoner from the one cited in note 9.

⁷² *Tainy*, 201–204, 226, 247, 324. Two Japanese officers were captured 20 kilometers behind Russian lines when a Russian soldier decided to amuse himself by "pulling their tails." Much to his surprise and their sorrow, the queues came off in his hands. Because Chinese were widely distributed all over Asia, Japanese could disguise themselves in this way in a wide variety of locations. For example, Russian documents speak of Japanese officers working as coolies on the docks at Singapore, waiting for news of the Russian Baltic Fleet as it made its way to Tsushima. *Iaponskii shpionazh*, 57.

activities were finally united under Colonel Ogievskii, but the war was already coming to an end for other reasons.⁷³

Both Blonskii and Tani recognized the need to breed sinologists. Not surprisingly, the Eastern Institute and the Toa Dobun Shoin would expand after the war based on this universal and correct perception. Officers were assigned directly from both the army and navy to study at the Eastern Institute. But a few years later, the graduates were languishing in their original units, no plan having been made for their further employ. The Eastern Institute complained loudly of the waste in "lost labor and human capital" as alumni were condemned to forget a hard-won skill. Many suggestions were made for relocating the Easterners back to the Russia Far East where their skills were needed in both military and civilian spheres.⁷⁴ For example, efforts at geographic unification of counterintelligence tasks⁷⁵ were making slow headway. In 1906, Rotmistr Mikhailov had been appointed to handle this field in the Russian Far East with the intention of extending his responsibilities to include Russian Manchuria as well.

Realities on the ground, however, often proved more difficult than resolutions in St. Petersburg. A 1908 memo from the head of the Trans-Amur border guard described the special challenges of conducting counterintelligence in a city, Harbin, where not only did Russia possess no right to challenge the presence of foreigners, but where even Russian society had no interest in helping the state to carry out its security tasks. The Chinese authorities had specifically told the Russians that they had no more right to question Japanese who might be drawing sensitive installations than did the Japanese to question Russians engaged in similar intelligence work.⁷⁶ When the Portsmouth Treaty awarded Russia's rights and railroad in southern Manchuria to the Japanese, the legal basis for the next stage of the competition in Northeast Asia had been set.

⁷³ His 1905 scorecard, however, is not impressive, having captured a total of 25 spies of whom nine were later released for lack of evidence. Most of the Chinese were caught as they took notes for presentation to their Japanese spymasters. Only four Japanese, dressed as Chinese laborers, were apprehended—all by good (bad) luck.

⁷⁴ See, Troitskaia (ed.), *Iz istorii vostokovedeniia. Dokumenty*, 52, for Fall 1905 correspondence with navy; later came additional lament from Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Istoricheskii Arkhiv Dal'nego Vostoka (RGIA DV), f. 226, op. 1, d. 198, l. 29.

⁷⁵ Some broader lessons, it appears, were also learned. In 1908, an Army conference at Kiev established the formal parameters of peacetime counterintelligence and the roles to be played by the military, gendarmes and borderguards. In 1909, an inter-ministerial conference under the chairmanship of the Police Department fine-tuned the division of labor.

⁷⁶ On the liberal local politics of post-war Harbin, see Wolff, 142–5.

PART III

THE HOME FRONT

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

THE SPECTER OF MUTINOUS RESERVES: HOW THE WAR PRODUCED THE OCTOBER MANIFESTO

John Bushnell

Historians generally assume that the Russo-Japanese War played some role in the Russian Revolution of 1905–6, but seldom specify what it was. They usually treat the war as something that was in the background, that brought discredit on the government, perhaps emboldened and certainly provided ammunition to the liberal and revolutionary opposition, but which did not have much to do with the revolution itself. In the worker-centric narrative that dates the revolution from Bloody Sunday, the war scarcely figures at all. Father Gapon's efforts to organize the workers of St. Petersburg had nothing to do with the war, the incidents that culminated in the march on the Winter Palace had nothing to do with the war, the petition that the workers sought to present mentioned the war only in passing and as an afterthought.¹ The revolution unfolded as a struggle first to rectify economic, social and political grievances, then as an attempt to overthrow autocracy. Soviet accounts of the revolution consistently downplayed the contribution of the war, but Western histories have also tended to be worker-centric, and to concentrate on the socio-economic sources of revolution. Marc Ferro, for instance, in his brief biography of Nicholas II, says simply, "revolution appeared, as an unwished-for consequence of economic growth."²

Historians who assign liberals a critical part in inaugurating the revolution have noted that the humiliating string of defeats turned

¹ The war figured in a somewhat contradictory way in the following points, buried deep in the document and added only in the last draft: "Contracts for orders of the war and naval departments are to be made in Russia and not abroad. Termination of the war in accordance with the will of the people." Walter Sablinsky, *The Road to Bloody Sunday. Father Gapon and the St. Petersburg Massacre of 1905* (Princeton, 1976), 347, 349.

² Marc Ferro, *Nicholas II. The Last of the Tsars* (N.Y., 1991), 77.

liberal and moderate opinion against the war, and that left-liberals in the Union of Liberation seized on Russia's battlefield failures as a weapon with which to smite the government.³ Especially during the Sviatopolk-Mirskii ministry in late 1904, when Russians enjoyed unusual freedom to write and speak their minds, there was an outpouring of denunciations of the war in the press and at the liberals' political banquets. Yet after Bloody Sunday the war virtually disappears even from the liberal narrative, and for good reason: with the surrender of Port Arthur (December), the defeat at Mukden (February) and the destruction of the reinforced Second Pacific Squadron at Tsushima (May), the war lost political salience, because everyone assumed it would soon be over. The fierce and unresolved domestic political conflict was what galvanized the opposition.

And yet, even though the war was at the outer margins of the political agenda during 1905, war and revolution were deeply intertwined. Jan Kusber has argued that the war not only aggravated social divisions and galvanized political opposition, it undermined the agrarian and industrial economies, caused a crisis of government finances, and badly strained autocratic political institutions. In Kusber's view, the war so weakened the regime that it finally had no choice but to surrender, and issue the October Manifesto.⁴ Even after the Treaty of Portsmouth had been signed in August, in other words, revolution continued to gain impetus because of the war's domestic consequences.

While Kusber has accurately mapped the way war altered the social and economic terrain, his study misses both the reason the tsar issued the October Manifesto, and the pivotal linkage between war and revolution. The tsar yielded not because of financial crisis, not even because the regime had lost political authority, but because he could find no trusted civilian or military official who would urge him to fight rather than surrender. Government and court officials believed that the soldiers available were too few and too unreliable to contain or suppress the general strike. That was a consequence of the war alone. During 1904 and 1905, most cadre soldiers were shipped to Manchuria and the Far East; they were unavailable to combat revolution in October. Reserves replaced many of the regulars in

³ Shmuel Galai, *The Liberation Movement in Russia 1900–1905* (Cambridge, 1973), 196–213, 232–236; Abraham Ascher, *The Revolution of 1905. Russia in Disarray* (Stanford, 1988), 57–70.

⁴ Jan Kusber, *Krieg und Revolution in Russland 1904–1906: das Militär im Verhältnis zu Wirtschaft, Autokratie und Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart, 1997).

the European garrisons, but in late 1904 tens of thousands of them had stunned the government by rioting as soon as they reached their assembly points. After that, the government did not fully trust reserves to suppress civil disorder, and as the need for military force in Europe mounted, so did the distrust. By October, the government was convinced that the reserves themselves posed a revolutionary threat. And so: the October Manifesto. The war shaped the political outcome of the revolution because it altered the deployment and composition of the army, and because of the specter of the reserve riots of late 1904.

The first reserves were called up in the Far East and Siberia, immediately after the war began. In accordance with graduated build-up, the army then conducted four limited (partial, as the Russians called them) mobilizations, April–August 1904, to fill out the army corps being shipped to Manchuria. Successive defeats persuaded the military that it needed to put more troops in the field, so a fifth mobilization was carried out in September, a sixth in October, and a seventh in December.⁵

Combing through a variety of War and Interior Ministry sources, Vladimir Petrov counted 123 disorders during the nine limited mobilizations in European Russia between April 1904 and August 1905, 107 of them in conjunction with the September–December call-ups. The actual numbers were probably larger than that, because for the critical October and December mobilizations, Petrov relied heavily on the Minister of Interior's weekly report to the tsar on noteworthy events.⁶ These weekly reports were not comprehensive, or systematically updated when new information arrived; they were not meant to provide the tsar a database. Nevertheless, both Petrov's figures and the weekly incident summaries capture the gross modulations: relative calm among the reserves up to September 1904, a preliminary cluster of disturbances during the fifth mobilization in early September, then a tidal wave during the sixth mobilization in October. Reserve

⁵ Voenno-istoricheskaiia Komissiiia [VIK], *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, 9 vols. in 16 bks. (SPB, 1910–1913), VII, pt. 1, 26–28.

⁶ V.A. Petrov, *Ocherki po istorii revoliutsionnogo dvizheniia v russkoi armii v 1905 g.* (M-L, 1964), 55; “Vsepoddanneishie ezhenedel’nye zapiski, 1904” and “Vsepoddanneishie ezhenedel’nye zapiski, 1905,” t. 1, GARF, f. 102 [DP], op. 255, dd. 37, 39. Petrov's count for the incidents connected with the sixth mobilization corresponds exactly to the number of incidents in the “Vsepoddanneishie ezhenedel’nye zapiski,” and therefore omits most of the October riots in the counties of Vitebsk and Mogilev provinces; see below.

riots broke out across almost all districts subject to the call-up in the western provinces, where the sixth and seventh mobilizations were concentrated, and swept as far east as Lake Baikal, the reserves smashing and looting train stations in Europe and along the Trans-Siberian Railway. From October through early January, mobs of reserves broke open and looted liquor stores and markets. They staged their own or participated in mixed civilian-military pogroms in Kishinev, Gomel', Sosnovitsy, Mogilev, Bykhov, Vitebsk and many smaller towns. Sometimes they resisted boarding troop trains, and looted cafeterias and stores at stations where their trains stopped. Cadre units sometimes had to open fire to regain control.⁷

The official military history of the Russo-Japanese War attributed the riots to demoralization stemming from the defeats in Manchuria; the impact of revolutionary propaganda (for which there is no evidence; some revolutionary leaflets were distributed among reserves, and some of the mobilized reserves had ties to revolutionary organizations); and the confusion and irritation caused by exemptions to the call-up based on age, health and family status.⁸ These exemptions were never standardized; "large family" was variable even within a single province. Exemptions were granted only after reserves reported to the assembly points, and provoked suspicion and anger among the non-exempt.

There were other sources of tension as well. Processing was slow, because of the time it took to conduct thousands of medical exams, and to rule on the hundreds of appeals for family-based exemption. Provisions frequently ran short. Efforts to limit contact between the reserves and the throngs of relatives who accompanied them were ineffectual but provoked outrage. The Imperial aid-de-camp who observed the mobilization at Ostrov (Pskov province), June 22–27, 1904, reported that the 2,225 men called up began to arrive two days ahead of schedule, and that some had to wait more than a day to receive their first rations. Sorting out family status appeals was both protracted and in the end depended almost entirely on the reserves' branch of service. There were barely enough infantry to meet the quota, so a widower who was the sole support of his family was

⁷ Both Petrov, *Ocherki*, 55–70, and the "Vsepoddanneishie ezhenedel'nye zapiski" provide good overviews; also "Pogromy i mobilizatsii," printed leaflet, November 1904, Bund Archive (New York). From October 1904 on, almost every issue of the Mensheviks' *Iskra* and the Bund's *Poslednie izvestiia* carried reports on disturbances among the reserves.

⁸ VIK, *Russko-iaponskaia voina 1904–1905 g.g.*, VII, pt. 1, 31–34.

taken, as were men who headed families of 10–12. In contrast, the supply of artillerymen so far exceeded the quota that most were allowed to return home. Because of the mob of wives, children and the curious who gathered at the station, the dispatch of three troop trains was utterly chaotic.⁹

In the midst of the fall riots, the government identified another precipitant, the closing of liquor stores during mobilization. This regulation was intended to forestall disorder when thousands of men and their families converged on cities and small towns, but it could not stop illegal sales, often (claimed officials) by Jews and at inflated prices that aggravated the reserves' hostility toward Jews.¹⁰ After reading the first reports on the October 1904 riots, the tsar himself said that "immoderate closing of [vodka] shops does more harm than good, hurts the treasury and leads to illicit vodka sales."¹¹ Interior Minister Prince Petr Sviatopolk-Mirskii, in a November 22 circular to governors and police chiefs summarizing security measures to prevent a recurrence of the riots, told them to keep in mind that "the timely closing and opening of drinking establishments" was of critical importance, and urged them to be flexible in enforcing regulations. Keep in mind, he suggested,

The reserves wait for their medical exam and mobilization into service at crude assembly points, in the open air, in rain and cold, for a full day, which arouses among them a corresponding desire to warm up with vodka, and if that turns out to be impossible, then dissatisfaction and agitation very quickly turn into major disorders.¹²

Yet none of these factors—not the suspension of liquor sales, not the disorganization at the assembly points, not the frustration over family exemptions—caused the riots. These conditions had held since the first mobilization in April, while prior to September, despite all the aggravations, reserves reported in virtually without riotous incident.¹³

⁹ RGVA, f. 400, op. 6, d. 706, ll. 89–99.

¹⁰ GARF, f. 102 [DP], 3–oe deloproizvodstvo, 1904, d. 120, ch. 4, t. 1, an October 1904 report from Finance Minister Kokovtsev to Interior Minister Sviatopolk-Mirskii.

¹¹ As reported by Kokovtsev to Sviatopolk-Mirskii: GARF, f. 102 [DP], 3–oe deloproizvodstvo, 1904, d. 120, ch. 4, t. 2, ll. 7–7 ob.

¹² RGVA, f. 400, op. 6, d. 770, ll. 255–256.

¹³ See the reports of the Imperial aides-de-camp who represented the tsar during mobilization: RGVA, f. 400, op. 6, d. 770; and reports gathered by the Ministry of Interior: GARF, f. 102 [DP], 3–oe deloproizvodstvo, 1904, ch. 1, 2, 3 ("Svedeniia po povodu voiny Rossii y Iaponiei"), f. 406, op. 6, f. 706.

Riots by reserves in Mogilev and Vitebsk provinces during the October 1904 mobilization were unusually numerous, but materials gathered during an official investigation in their immediate aftermath are diagnostically representative. In Mogilev, reserves reporting for duty on October 9 tried to pick fights with Jews; on October 10, the local lumpenproletariat, augmented by some of the reserves, carried out a substantial pogrom that had been rumored for days, beating Jews, stealing their property and breaking windows in their homes in many city precincts. On October 11, in Vitebsk, 2,000-odd reserves, augmented by local ruffians, after standing in the muddy market square all morning awaiting medical examination, demanded to be allowed to buy vodka to warm up, and then looted the shuttered state vodka stalls, and also the stalls of private, mostly Jewish food vendors who had closed shop in anticipation of trouble. Driven away from one vodka stall, the mob of reserves headed to another and then another, with the assault on the stalls lasting until 11 at night. Civilians, reserves and regular infantry continued to loot and to beat Jews on October 12. Investigative reports faulted both military and civilian officials for not adequately preparing for the call-up, for not reacting energetically at the first sign of trouble, and for permitting (Mogilev) or banning (Vitebsk) the sale of vodka during mobilization.

Reports from the small towns of Mogilev and Vitebsk provinces offer a particularly clear view of the dynamics of the riots. In Vitebsk province, reserves in five of ten counties attacked vodka stalls, Jews, or both, either at the assembly points or while marching from the county seat to the nearest train station. Reserves rioted at the assembly points in seven of eight counties in Mogilev province, attacked vodka and food stalls and the houses of Jews, and continued to do so—and to extort money on threat of force—at every settlement and estate they passed on their march to the railway. Wherever the trains halted, hundreds of reserves dispersed into towns and settlements to loot and beat some more. On October 15, several hundred reserves detrained in Vitebsk and beat Jews at the market.¹⁴

Events in the county seats, where there was no admixture of violence-prone lumpenproletariat, and too few police and soldiers to

¹⁴ Report of Assistant Minister of Interior Major General Rydzevskii, 27 Oct. 1904: GARF, f. 102, op. 1904, d. 120, ch. 4 t. 1, ll. 8–23 ob. Reports, telegrams from local officials and others: *ibid.*, ll. 61–116, 163–163 ob.; GARF, f. 102, op. 1904, d. 120, ch. 4 t. 2, ll. 17–57 ob.

prevent the reserves from doing whatever they wanted, allow us to identify the true cause of the riots: intent. Many reserves reported in angry, or as the governor of Mogilev province put it, “determined to engage in a debauch, not hiding their conviction that laws weren’t written for men going to their death.”¹⁵ In both provinces, rumors of the reserves’ intent to riot preceded their appearance.¹⁶ Reserves were determined to get their hands on vodka and ready to attack Jews, in that order. In every case the riots began with a demand for vodka. In a number of localities they chanted “We’re the tsar’s and so is the vodka” (*My tsarskie i vodka tsarskaia*), or some variation thereon; no one had the right to keep the tsar’s (state monopoly) vodka from the tsar’s soldiers.¹⁷ Reserves then proceeded to seize food, and since Jews ran many of the shops and stalls, the latter were victimized.

Reserves also harbored a particular animus against Jews: They and officials alike believed, wrongly but unshakably, that mass flight by Jewish reserves put an undue burden on Christians, and in a number of towns they deliberately sought out Jewish property to destroy and Jews to beat. In Mstivslavl (Mogilev province), a mob of 4,000 reserves and their relatives was reported to have yelled, while looting the market, “We have to serve for the yids,” “Our families are left without means,” “We need warm clothes.” In Mogilev they yelled, “The Jews are fleeing to America, and we’re off to shed our blood for them.” The reserves who got off the train to beat Jews in Vitebsk on October 15 yelled, “Beat the God-damned Jews, they’re deserters.”¹⁸

Anger at Jews certainly contributed to the explosion in Vitebsk, Mogilev and other provinces within the Pale, but Jews were a target, not a reason for riot; reserves were bent on riot with or without Jews

¹⁵ GARF, f. 102, op. 1904, d. 120, ch. 4 t. 1, l. 97.

¹⁶ GARF, *ibid.*, ll. 8, 103; ch. 4 t. 2, l. 55.

¹⁷ GARF, *ibid.*, ll. 12, 13, 13 ob., 69, 75.

¹⁸ GARF, *ibid.*, ll. 19 ob., 98, 8, 15, 17 ob., 97, 101, 102 ob., 111; ch. 4 t. 2, ll. 42–43. As against the many official reports supporting the reserves’ claim (including Sviatopolk-Mirskii’s November 22 circular; RGVIA, f. 400, op. 6, d. 770, l. 256 ob.), one from Mogilev and another from Vitebsk noted that Jewish reserves responded to the call-up at the normal rate: GARF, f. 102, 3–oe deloproizvodstvo, 1904, d. 120, ch. 4 t. 2, ll. 36, 53 ob. Iokhanan Petrovskii-Shtern has subjected the related and equally firm official conviction that Jews dodged the draft in disproportionately large numbers to statistical analysis, and found that, if anything, Jews were overrepresented in the army; see his *Evrei v russkoi armii, 1827–1914* (M, 2003), 185–196.

at hand. One of the most violent incidents during the October mobilization, for instance, occurred in Moscow, when 1,000 drunken reserves from Vologda province, trying to break out of the rail yard and into the city, hurled rocks and logs at a battalion of infantry summoned to pen them in, and were driven back to their train with gunfire that killed two and wounded four.¹⁹ These were riots by men angry at being sent to war, and determined to seize compensation in kind.

After the last reserves from the seventh mobilization crossed the Urals in late January, the riots virtually ceased. The countermeasures developed by the Ministries of War and Interior by mid-November—better provisioning, better quarters, larger staffs for faster processing, legal access to vodka, and above all, a larger military presence at assembly points, on trains hauling reserves to the Far East, and at stations where the trains stopped—had some effect.²⁰ There were many but somewhat fewer riots following the seventh mobilization in December than the sixth in October (36 as against 55, by Petrov's count).²¹ But the fundamental explanation for the end of the riots was that mobilizations were suspended during the first half of 1905: the Ministry of Interior argued forcefully that calling up reserves was too dangerous, and the Ministry of War did not protest. Interior and War approached the last call-ups in June and August with great trepidation, and chose the counties to be mobilized, the dates, and the assembly points with a view to minimizing the risk of disorders.²²

The explosion of late 1904 haunted the government throughout 1905 even though, between February and August, the reserves posed no actual problem. Officials had three overlapping worries: calling up more men was likely to provoke disturbances among both peasants and reserves; the army's need for more manpower to prosecute

¹⁹ "Vsepoddannishie ezhenedel'nye zapiski, 1904," GARF, f. 102. op. 255, 1904, d. 37, l. 37–37 ob.

²⁰ RGVIA, f. 400, op. 6, d. 770, ll. 256–257.

²¹ Petrov, *Ocherki*, 57. The Imperial aides-de-camp observing the December call-up reported with near unanimity that there were scarcely any incidents at all during the seventh mobilization; "Vyborgi, kasaiushchiesia deiatel'nost' chinov voennogo vedomstva (iz otchetov lits Svity Ego Velichestva i chinov Glavnogo Shtaba, komandirovannykh dlia prisutstvovaniia pri proizvodstve chastnykh mobilizatsii," RGVIA, op. 6, d. 713, ll. 3–35. The Minister of Interior's weekly reports to the tsar tell a different story.

²² RGVIA, f. 400, op. 6, d. 770, l. 306–306 ob., 364–364 ob.; GARF, f. 102, op. D-3 (1905), d. 1190, ll. 2–2 ob., 5–7, 10–11, 15–16, 27–31, 44–44 ob., 51–53, 64–65, 70.

the war conflicted with the need to restore civil order; military units consisting entirely or in some substantial part of reserves could not be trusted to act against workers and peasants.

The reserves figured in both the March and May military councils that framed the tsar's decision to seek peace with Japan.²³ On March 13, in the aftermath of Mukden, Grand Duke Nicholas Nikolaevich presided over a small council of generals that assessed Russia's capacity to sustain the war effort. Nicholas solicited written reports from key ministers—of finance, communications and interior—for the consideration of the committee. They were all highly pessimistic.²⁴ Interior Minister Alexander Bulygin warned that a new mobilization would without question provoke popular discontent, and most likely new disorders, and, he wrote, "as the minister charged with internal security" he could only say that a new call-up was undesirable. Nevertheless, if absolutely necessary, mobilization should be conducted so as to affect only those counties from which no, or at most few, reserves had yet been taken. No reserves at all should be called from 21 provinces in southern Ukraine, Poland and the Baltic region because of the particular tensions there. And mobilization should be delayed until late May at the earliest, so as not to agitate peasants during sowing. In the interim, the 100,000-odd reserves in the 100 depot battalions that had been created in European garrisons after the seventh mobilization could furnish any additional manpower needed in the Far East. On the other hand, the depot battalions themselves posed a security threat; in some towns they were the only military force at hand, the men were undisciplined and disorderly, and so could not be counted on to maintain order among civilians.²⁵ Bulygin's appeal was heeded: although the eighth mobilization did cover some of the provinces he had insisted should be bypassed, it was delayed until June.

Nicholas Nikolaevich forwarded the ministers' reports, the conference's equally pessimistic conclusions and his own personal recommendation that the totality of circumstances left Russia no choice

²³ B.A. Romanov, *Ocherki diplomaticheskoi istorii russko-iaponskoi voyny, 1895–1907 g.g.* (M-L, 1955), 375–419, covers both of these conferences within the context of the diplomacy and intrigue that produced the decision for peace.

²⁴ These are in GARF, f. 543, op. 1. They give the impression that Nicholas Nikolaevich sought to organize a case that would persuade the tsar to seek a way out of the war.

²⁵ GARF, f. 543, op. 1, d. 160, ll. 42–44 ob.

but to explore the terms under which the war could be ended, but the tsar hesitated until after Tsushima.²⁶ Following that disaster, on May 24 the tsar himself presided over a larger council to determine whether it was possible to supply the forces—four more army corps and an additional 80,000 replacements—that Commander-in-Chief Nicholas Linevich considered necessary to prosecute the war successfully. The tsar had in fact already made up his mind: both he and the two Grand Princes at the conference insisted that peace must be sought before the Japanese occupied any Russian territory. Grand Prince Vladimir Aleksandrovich—commander of the St. Petersburg military district and the Guards Corps—added that the army was needed to restore civil order, and that domestic tranquility was more important than victory in war.²⁷

The generals, beginning with War Minister Viktor Sakharov, inclined to the view that, even if with considerable difficulty, it was possible to provide Linevich the manpower he required; that because of reinforcements already en route Russia would shortly have better than 100,000 more men in the field than Japan; and that Japanese finances were in even worse shape than Russia's. Their resistance to putting out peace feelers was compounded in equal parts of the realistic conviction that time, population and resources were on Russia's side, and on the belief that concluding peace without a single victory would sully Russia's honor and endanger her standing in the world.²⁸ They did, in a variety of ways, recognize that the decision for peace was linked to the revolution going on around them, but some insisted that bringing a defeated army home would further infuriate the public.²⁹ The upshot of the conference was that Russia both sought peace and, to strengthen her hand for negotiations that might in the end fail, sent to Manchuria the additional troops Linevich had requested.

Sakharov's report tells us precisely what preparing to continue the war did to the European garrisons. As of May 3, 135,000 cadre reinforcements were already on their way to the front; these were men transferred from their regular units to units fighting in Manchuria. They would be followed in mid-June by XIX Corps, brought to

²⁶ GARF, f. 543, op. 1, d. 158, ll. 36–48.

²⁷ "Konets russko-iaponskoi voyny. (Voennoe soveshchanie 24 maia 1905 g. v Tsarskom Sele," *Krasnyi arkhiv*, no. 3 (1928), 196, 200–201.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, 198–204.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 198, 202–204.

wartime strength with reserves mobilized earlier and regulars from other units. Reserves for the three additional corps designated for the front, and to fill out some units left in Europe, were to be mobilized in June; some would have to be called up from the Western provinces, despite the opposition of the Minister of Interior. Half of the 80,000 men sent as replacements would be regulars taken from units left in Europe. After that, and not counting the Guards and Grenadier Corps, there would scarcely be any cadre infantry left: in all of Europe, the Caucasus and Central Asia, only 78,400 men, including 10,400 fortress infantry.³⁰

The geography of Russian military basing was, by the summer of 1905, misleading. As of October 1905 there were 203 line and reserve infantry regiments and brigaded battalions in Europe, but by then most of Russia's cadre infantry had exited the political stage east.³¹ Except for the Guards and Grenadier Corps, the infantry regiments remaining in Europe had been hollowed out, many losing well over half of their officers and men. For example, out of the normal peacetime complement of 70 officers and 1,786 men, the 50th Belostok Regiment sent 44 officers and 1,594 men east, the 179th Ust-Dvinsk Regiment 31 officers and 1,100 men.³² While most reserves also headed east, during 1905 more and more of them accumulated as replacements for regulars in the European regiments, and in the depot battalions through which they rotated before being sent out as replacements. As of early October, there were in Europe 240,000 reserves, most of them infantry, outnumbering the 70,000-odd regular infantry and the 54,000-odd men in the Guards and Grenadier Corps (garrisoned for the most part in St. Petersburg, Moscow and Warsaw) by roughly 2-to-1. Another 300,000-odd soldiers were divided almost equally among Cossacks and cavalry (critical in the fight against revolution), artillery (of marginal value), and a hodge-podge of non-combat units.³³ Cossacks and infantry were the mainstays.

³⁰ Ibid., 191–195. What actually happened was somewhat different: after the June mobilization there was another in August; and one of the additional corps was in the end retained in Europe.

³¹ For sources, see John S. Bushnell, *Mutiny amid Repression: Russian Soldiers in the Revolution of 1905–1906* (Bloomington, 1985), 281, note 5.

³² E.P. Nikolaev, *Istoriia 5-go pekhotnogo Belostokskogo polka*, 2 vols. (Odessa, 1909), II, 376; S.E. Charnetskii, *Istoriia 179-go pekhotnogo Ust'-Dvinskogo polka* (Spb., 1911), 139–144.

³³ For the sources used to compute these figures, see Bushnell, *Mutiny*, 275–6, 279, notes 18 and 63.

The fear that having reserves on hand might be worse than having no reserves at all was heightened by the way reserves in Europe were deployed: To units closest, or close, to home. On June 28, Assistant Interior Minister Dmitrii Trepov voiced the widespread apprehension on this score in a note to the new war minister, Alexander Rediger. It was dangerous for reserves to serve close to home, wrote Trepov, "since at present military units are quite often called on by civil authorities to forestall and end peasant and worker disorders, and it is quite possible that soldiers in these units will have to act against fellow villagers."³⁴

The reserves' performance actually provided few grounds for such fears. Once they arrived in their units, they did as ordered, or at least were no more undisciplined than regulars. There were few mutinies before October 17: By my count, only 23, of which only 5 involved infantry in Europe. Reserves did not instigate any of them. Soldiers posted in small detachments at factories and on estates to deter worker and peasant disorders did often fraternize with the potential enemy, but there is no evidence that reserves were more prone than regulars to sympathize with civilians. Prior to October 17, the only known instances of refusal to act against civilians involved one cavalry and two naval units.³⁵

There was, it is true, an early summer eruption that recalled the reserve riots of late 1904, in which regulars and reserves were equally implicated. In May and June, military pogroms broke out as units embarked for Manchuria. In Minsk, soldiers about to ship out beat and robbed Jews two days running. There were similar outbursts in Narva, Brest-Litovsk, Siedlce and Bialystok. Soldiers entraining in Kiev beat to death two Jews attempting to distribute revolutionary leaflets.³⁶ Indiscipline and demoralization were rampant, and reserves and regulars alike continued to take out their anger on civilians. This could only have reinforced the fears originally kindled by the October and December mobilizations.

Apprehensions about the reserves' assumed unreliability mounted after the Treaty of Portsmouth was signed in August, and finally

³⁴ Quoted in Petrov, *Ocherki*, 55.

³⁵ Bushnell, *Mutiny*, 54–56, 234–235.

³⁶ *Pravo*, no. 22, 8 June 1905; Petrov, *Ocherki*, 137; S.M. Dubnow, *History of the Jews in Russia and Poland from the Earliest Times until the Present Day*, 3 vols. (Philadelphia, 1920), III, 119–120; A. Belen'kaia, "O rabote Kievskoi organizatsii v 1905 g.," *Proletarskaia revoliutsiia*, no. 2 (1926), 260.

converged with the October general strike to paralyze the government. In late August and September, in the wake of the ninth mobilization, the Ministries of War and Interior received reports of another wave of reserve assaults on vodka stalls at assembly points and railway stations.³⁷ For officials concerned about the reliability of the European garrisons, some of the reports were especially alarming. In early September, reserves mobilized for duty in Penza were themselves a threat to public order: they beat up traders at the local market, wandered the streets drinking, singing and dancing, and harassed civilians.³⁸ Reserves sent to the Fifth Finland Rifles openly declared their sympathy for the revolution, crossed out "For Faith, Tsar and Fatherland" on a barrack plaque, and wrote instead "Down with autocracy."³⁹

No wonder War Minister Rediger concluded, a month later, that the reserves could not be counted on to suppress the October strike. On October 12, Witte presided over a ministerial conference that focused on just that question. Apparently no minutes were kept, but in January 1907 Rediger summarized his recollection of the meeting after looking over a memorandum Witte had written:

In general, the war minister stated that not only a large number of military units, but also many officers and soldiers from units that remained in European Russia, had been sent to the army in the field; these units had been brought back to strength with soldiers from the reserve, but among the latter a general ferment had begun because they were kept in service after the conclusion of peace. This circumstance, together with the prolonged employment of troops in police service, had to a considerable degree disorganized the troops remaining inside the empire.⁴⁰

Witte reported to the tsar the conclusions of the October 12 meeting: The army could not restore movement on, or even guard, the railroads. Witte could recommend only obviously inadequate palliative measures. Over the next several days Witte and others told Nicholas that he must choose either constitutional government or military dictatorship, but Witte also told him frankly that military dictatorship would not end the upheaval, while Nicholas Nikolaevich, the tsar's

³⁷ GARF, op. 102, op. D-3 (1905), d. 1190, ll. 108–110, 135–138, 142–142 ob., 145–147, 159.

³⁸ The report circulated in both ministries; *ibid.*, ll. 158–159 ob., 167–168 ob.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, l. 164–164 ob.

⁴⁰ "Manifest 17 oktiabria," *Krasnyi arkhiv*, no. 4–5 (1925), 82–83.

choice for military dictator, told him there were too few troops to do the job. By this point officials in the Imperial household were making plans to flee abroad. As the tsar reported to his mother, even his most conservative confidants, indeed “almost everybody I had the opportunity of consulting,” urged him to grant a constitution.⁴¹ In the face of the general strike, which had broad support even within government institutions, and believing that the army did not have the capacity to suppress the revolution, the tsar issued the October Manifesto.

Most likely Rediger, Witte, and Nicholas were wrong. Soldiers could not run the trains, or compel workers to return to their factories, and there may not have been enough of them to guard the tracks and stations. The infantry was stretched thin and weakened by its reliance on reserves. Yet even as Nicholas was working up his nerve to grant Russia a constitution, troops—including reserves—were hard at work shooting and clubbing mobs of civilians. They could have continued to do so—the general strike seems to have been on the verge of collapsing⁴²—had Rediger, Trepov, Witte, Nicholas Nikolaevich and Nicholas not believed that the soldiers at their disposal were too few, and too unreliable, to suppress revolution. That was a legacy of the mobilization riots, the fear of the reserves amplified in October by the regime’s unprecedented dependence for survival on brute military force.

Phantom threat became real immediately after the publication of the October Manifesto. Reserves in the Far East understood the Manifesto to mean that they were to go home immediately, and their mob violence in Vladivostok, Harbin and in the field persuaded Commander-in-Chief Linevich to ship them back to Europe as quickly as possible. The 500,000-odd reserves in Manchuria and the Far East swarmed the railway stations, commandeered trains, and looted canteens all the way back to the Urals. That stampede delayed the return of regular units from Manchuria until early 1906. The gov-

⁴¹ *The Secret Letters of the Last Tsar. Being the Confidential Correspondence between Nicholas II and his Mother, Dowager Empress Maria Fedorova* (N.Y.-Toronto, 1938), 185. Also: S. Iu. Vitte, *Vospominaniia*, 3 vols. (M., 1960), II, 544–59; III, 10–35; Dnevnik A.A. Polovtseva, *Krasnyi arkhiv*, no. 4 (1923), 63–76; V.N. Kokovtsov, *Out of My Past. The Memoirs of Count Kokovtsov* (Stanford, 1935), 65–68; “Manifest 17 Oktiabria,” 80–82; A.V. Ostrovskii, M.M. Safonov, “Manifest 17 Oktiabria 1905 g.,” *Vspomogatel’nye istoricheskie distsipliny*, XII (1981), 168–88.

⁴² Bushnell, *Mutiny*, 73.

ernment confronted the rapidly mounting worker and peasant violence that the October Manifesto had also set off with the European units that it had judged inadequate to cope with the much less threatening October general strike. Worse, the October Manifesto was followed by the utter collapse of discipline and explosion of mutiny within the European garrisons.⁴³

The rampage of the Manchurian reserves persuaded the desperate Ministry of War that the only way to end mutiny in Europe was to demobilize reserves there, too. The initial plan had been to keep most reserves under arms until regulars returned from the Far East, but Rediger, his reasoning shaped by reports from the Far East, mistakenly believed that reserves were the source of indiscipline and mutiny in Europe. As he reported to the tsar, "to bring the army to order, it is necessary to demobilize the dissatisfied element—the reserves."⁴⁴ The order was issued on November 14. That did not stop the mutinies—they increased in number and severity over the next three weeks—but it did immediately reduce the force available in Europe by 240,000 men. Regiment and company strength in the infantry fell immediately and dramatically, by 50 to 80 percent in many regiments; already small detachments scattered in the countryside, now made quite tiny, scurried back to the safety of urban garrisons. Revolutionaries took de facto control of some small cities whose garrisons were so small that they did not dare leave their barracks.⁴⁵

That chain reaction—the stampede out of Manchuria, the sharp contraction of infantry unit size in Europe, the hasty retreat from the countryside, the continuing mutinies in the European garrisons—very nearly overwhelmed the government. By early December the regime was weaker militarily than at any moment during the entire revolution. But at that point, with military action against civilians the only alternative to the complete collapse of the tsarist regime, the government dispatched some small punitive detachments to reconquer, with extreme brutality, areas that had been lost to the revolution. Once the fighting was joined, mutinous units turned against civilians and saved the tsarist regime.⁴⁶

⁴³ Bushnell, *Mutiny*, 74–108.

⁴⁴ "Zapiski A.F. Redigera o 1905 g.," *Krasnyi arkhiv*, no. 2 (1931), 94.

⁴⁵ Bushnell, *Mutiny*, 105–107.

⁴⁶ Bushnell, *Mutiny*, 109–144.

The war was over in August, yet it was critical to the revolutionary crescendo from October through December. The reserves who rioted in 1904 haunted military and civilian officials throughout 1905, influenced the way the regime assessed its options in October, seized control of the Trans-Siberian Railway in November, deprived the regime of reinforcements from the army in Manchuria, frightened the War Ministry into discharging reserves in Europe, and thereby critically weakened the army. The reserves played a different role in the revolution than the factory proletariat, but one almost as consequential.

The Russo-Japanese War itself was a constitutive element of revolution. There is a strong, albeit counterfactual, case that the war enabled revolution at every important juncture through December 1905. The range of possible alternatives to the war as it actually developed may be collapsed into a single "no war or short war" hypothesis: no war at all; a war that went about as well as Kuropatkin had hoped, so that there were no call-ups of reserves after the fourth limited European mobilization in August 1904; or an equally early recognition of defeat.

If there had been no war or a short war, revolution was somewhat less likely but still a reasonable possibility; Gapon's workers' movement, after all, was not a product of the war. However, the government would have confronted that revolution with European garrisons at or near full strength, and with regiments manned almost entirely by regulars. Most likely civil disorders would have been suppressed within a few months. There would almost certainly have been no general strike, quite certainly no October Manifesto, and so nothing like the near-death experience the regime endured after the publication of the October Manifesto. These later events would have been foreclosed because, with a million regulars in hand and prepositioned to suppress revolution, the regime would have dealt with disorders with greater dispatch in the early part of the year, and with no reason to doubt its army's reliability. No war or short war, no revolution or short revolution.

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

THE FAR EAST IN THE EYES OF THE RUSSIAN INTELLIGENTSIA, 1830–1890

Paul Bushkovitch

For most of its history, the Russian intelligentsia was firmly focused on the great question of Russia and Europe, Russia and the West. Its curiosity about the world did not extend much into Asia, and the small interest it had was on the Near East which figured so prominently in Russian foreign policy for most of its history. The Far East, China, Japan, and their neighbors, with whom the Russians began to come in contact in the seventeenth century, remained an exotic interest largely restricted to the Russian Geographic Society, the army, the navy, and the small tribe of professional orientalists. The situation is very clear from the contents of the major Russian “thick journals” in the central decades of the nineteenth century, the main fora for the exchange of ideas among the intelligentsia in that period.¹

The Russian intelligentsia came into being with the periodical press, both products of the slow modernization of the Russian empire. The periodical press from the 1830s and especially after the Crimean War both expressed and served the new intelligentsia in Russian society. Educated society in general (at first mainly the gentry) was the principal audience and remained crucial to the success of publications, but in the 1860s the “thick journals” in particular came to speak to and for the intelligentsia. Specifically gentry opinion had other sources and fora, in the government, court, and army as well as the public press.

The editors of these journals and other Russian writers on Asia starting in the 1830s did not begin with a tabula rasa. In the eighteenth century most of the important European publications on East Asia circulated in the original (or in French and German translations)

¹ *Sovremennik*, *Otechestvennye zapiski*, *Moskvitianin*, *Russkii Vestnik*, *Vestnik Evropy*, and others.

and were eventually translated into Russian. This was the case of François Caron's account of Japan, but there are many others. The Russian spiritual mission in Beijing also contributed translations of some Chinese works.²

At the beginning of the nineteenth century the most important Russian work on Japan, which in translation acquired a European audience, was Captain V.M. Golovnin's account of his time in Japan as a prisoner in 1811–1813. Captured during an attempt to map the southern Kurile Islands, perhaps as a result of Khvostov's earlier depredations, Golovnin produced a detailed narrative of his captivity as well as an account of Japan, such as he could assemble from limited observation and talking to his guards and Japanese officials with whom he dealt. Golovnin's account is surprisingly positive, with numerous polemics against European detractors of Japan. He found the Japanese quite humane and not at all "barbarians," as well as clean, skilful in crafts and trade, and most of all, "enlightened" (*prosveshchennye*). He was amazed to report that even the common people could read in the syllabic alphabet, and that Japan had several mutually tolerant religions. In all this he revealed himself a child of the European enlightenment: Enlightened Japanese customs, not Japanese politics, were the focus of his attention and praise. His admiration extended to Japanese cats, whose behavior refuted the belief of Europeans that they were unable to catch mice.³

Such was the baggage that Russians brought to the new journals when they arose in the 1830s. The task here is not an exhaustive catalogue of what little was published on Asia and attracted attention in the periodical press of the time. Instead, I would like to discuss three writers who dominated the writing on East Asia in these three decades: Father Iakinf Bichurin in the 1840s, Ivan Goncharov and his *Fregat Pallada* of 1858, and M.I. Veniukov's writings on Japan and China of 1869–1874. The first two at least are well known figures: Father Iakinf was the founder of Russian sinology, Goncharov was a famous writer, still regarded as a Russian classic today. His account of Admiral Putiatin's voyage to Japan seems to be virtually the only account of either nautical life or East Asia to appear in nineteenth

² *Opisanie o Iapone . . .*, 3 pts. (SPB, 1734); P.E. Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia* (M, 1977), 74–75.

³ [V.M. Golovnin]. *Žapiski Vasiliia Mikhailovicha Golovnina v plenu u iapontsev v 1811, 1812 i 1813 godakh*, 3 vols. (SPB, 1851 [originally 1816]), I, 55–56, 101 (note 2), 202 (note 1); II, 28, 40–41; III, 16, 21, 30, 86.

century Russia and be widely read. M.I. Veniukov (1832–1901), in contrast, is now known only to historians, and mainly those concerned with the annexation of the Amur and Ussuri regions, issues on which he spent part of his early career. A liberal military officer and an admirer of Alexander Herzen, Veniukov published widely on East Asia, in part on army-sponsored expeditions.

Taken together, the three illustrate the attitudes prevalent in the Russian intelligentsia, or more particularly, the reaction to their work illustrates that attitude with exceptional clarity. Veniukov's work is important also because he was primarily a geographer and popular writer rather than a scholar.⁴ Russian sinology after Crimea was pre-occupied with religion, as we see in V.P. Vasilev's studies of Buddhism (1850s onward) and S.M. Georgievskii's work on Confucianism and Daoism (1880s). These were not topics that interested the intelligentsia at large, whereas Veniukov's accounts of Japanese government and Chinese interactions with Europe did have some resonance.

The body of work these men produced was not negligible, and it contained a great deal of information and reflections. How did the intelligentsia, as opposed to Russian orientalists react to it? Unfortunately I must confess at the outset that the principal response of the spokesmen of the Russian intelligentsia to works on East Asia was to ignore their informational content and to use the topic for reflections on progress, the fate of the world, and thus ultimately on Russia politics and society. The problem is that the mid-century generation was so obsessed with the momentous issues of the Reform era that it was deaf to any ideas or issues that did not seem relevant. Among other things, imperialism did not seem relevant. The enthusiasm over the Amur of which Mark Bassin makes so much was not about defeating China, but about settling an "empty" land in explicit imitation of the United States (an obviously progressive thing to do in 1860).⁵ It was the court and the army that cared about imperialism, and only the conservative minority among the intelligentsia shared this concern.

Intelligentsia authors and reviewers therefore did not use the works I am discussing, or others as texts to prove European or Russian

⁴ After his retirement with the rank of major general in 1876 Veniukov went to Paris, where he lived until his death, publishing several works abroad to escape censorship. R.K. Balandin, "Veniukov, Mikhail Ivanovich," *Russkie pisateli 1800–1917*, 4 vols. (M., 1989–1999), I, 417–18.

⁵ Mark Bassin, *Imperial Visions: Nationalist Imagination and Geographical Expansion in the Russian Far East 1840–1865* (Cambridge, 1999).

superiority over Asia, because the Russian readers, at least in the intelligentsia, were not interested in conquering any part of Asia nor had they any desire to feel superior to it. This attitude did not begin to change to a more pro-imperialist stance until about 1900.⁶ Furthermore, all three of our writers, but especially Goncharov and Veniukov, were extremely hostile to European imperialism in Asia. They never drew (in print under censorship) explicit conclusions, but the reader emerges from their work with the sense that they were rather glad that Russia was too weak and too concerned with its own internal affairs to be able to oppress or exploit the Chinese.

This picture is not what is found in the Soviet era discussions of Russian oriental studies. In those years Soviet orientalists produced a number of very interesting and fairly complete histories of various aspects of Russian studies of the East before 1917, but the Soviet era works had distinct political and academic subtexts. They were trying to prove several things. First, that Russian oriental studies were sophisticated, important, and to a large extent ignored in the West. This was largely true, though many Western orientalists were not as narrow-minded as Soviet-era writers asserted. Second, that Russian orientalists were not only great scholars but in some way could be described as progressive. This was a sort of slight of hand: the idea was that the Asian peoples were oppressed by colonialism, therefore study of them made the scholar ipso facto progressive. This is the sort of argument we now encounter in US Academia: the study of this or that people is per se good, progressive, and promoting of diversity, the study of other peoples is not. P.E. Skachkov's otherwise very useful 1977 history of Russian sinology is a particular offender in all these areas. His brief mention of the confrontation between Veniukov and K.A. Skachkov is especially revealing, as the Soviet Skachkov effectively concealed his namesake's political conservatism and falsified his very dismissive opinion of the Taiping rebellion.⁷

⁶ The Russian journals surveyed here devoted almost no space to the Russian conquest of Central Asia or the Caucasian wars. In the case of the Balkans, they stressed the democratic and liberal-progressive side of the movements among the Christian peoples against the Turks. They were clearly aware of the government's great power ambitions, but chose to stress other issues. These topics need to be investigated more thoroughly.

⁷ Skachkov, *Ocherki istorii russkogo kitaevedeniia*, 161–2. For a more objective view see the appendix to David Wolff, *To the Harbin Station: the Liberal Alternative in Russian Manchuria 1898–1914* (Stanford, 1999).

Perhaps the first significant Russian orientalist was Father Iakinf (1777–1853), as he was known before 1917 (calling him “Iakinf Bichurin” is a Sovietism: Orthodox monks renounced their worldly name). Born the son of a Chuvash deacon in the Volga region, he studied at the Kazan’ Spiritual Academy where he became a monk in 1800. He went on from there to the analogous institution in Tobol’sk and in 1807 received appointment as head of the Peking Spiritual Mission of the Russian Orthodox Church, where he remained until 1822.⁸ After his return he composed some dozen books and many shorter pieces on China and inner Asia, the most ambitious of his works on China being his four-volume *Kŭtai v grazhdanskom i nraustvennom sostoianii* of 1848. Father Iakinf did not see himself as the creator of new ideas on China. As he repeatedly emphasized in print and in private letters, practically all of his books were simply more or less complete translations of Chinese works, mostly official Chinese publications. Not surprisingly, they consisted of masses of factual information about Chinese government, society, economy, literature and culture, and for the budding sinology of 1850 must have been absolutely fascinating. For the general reader they are today and clearly were at the time deadly dull. That is perhaps the only excuse for the reviewers, who did not read them carefully, if at all.

In spite of their specialist character, Father Iakinf’s works elicited a distinct political response. Soviet writers on Iakinf effectively concealed this response, emphasizing scholarly controversies and pseudo-scholarly exchanges of insults between Iakinf and his various rivals. The actual response to Father Iakinf was straightforwardly political: conservatives were for him and liberals and radicals critical. He understood himself to fall into the conservative camp, and indeed any other allegiance was unthinkable for a monk in the Russia of Nicholas I. In his first body of translations and comments on China from 1840 Father Iakinf laid all this out. His account of Chinese government stressed that in contrast to Europe, China had one civilization that lasted for millennia. The language and basic values, the literature was still the same. The state, in spite of the ups and downs

⁸ Father Iakinf seems to have been a colorful character. On his return to St. Petersburg in 1822 he was accused of mismanaging the mission, a charge he evaded by the protection of powerful friends. In 1831 he asked to be released from his monastic vows, but Tsar Nicholas I refused the request. There were also rumors that he kept women in his cell and other delinquencies.

of fortune, was still there, while the ancient empires of the west had perished. Of China he concluded, "there is much good and educational for Europeans who are circling in the whirlwind of various political systems." The reader of 1840 knew exactly what was meant here. China was eternal, an autocracy, though in the monk's view one based on law, Nicholas I's ideal state. Father Iakinf was surprisingly positive for an Orthodox monk about Confucianism, but the core of this account was the portrait of the Chinese state as a rational, benevolent structure whose examination system guaranteed a high level of education in a traditional, national spirit.⁹ Iakinf's China was a clearly superior civilization to Europe when approached with conservative politics and a conservative value system.

The readers of the time saw this point. Belinskii's review of the 1848 book on China was largely devoted to expounding the Hegelian view of China, agreeing with Father Iakinf that China was unchanging, but concluding that this was bad and doomed China to failure if not destruction.¹⁰ The conservative M.P. Pogodin, in contrast, thought the monk was one of the great lights of Russian scholarship, praised him to the skies and gave him many pages in his *Moskvitianin* to advertise his works and attack his enemies. Father Iakinf's main enemy, however, was not Belinskii, but rather a fellow conservative, Osip Senkovskii ("Baron Brambeus"), whose *Biblioteka dlia Chteniia* was the highest circulation Russian journal of the 1830s and 1840s. Father Iakinf, in the great traditions of scholarly debate, devoted some fifty-six pages to insulting and attacking Senkovskii, whom he obviously hated much more than Belinskii.¹¹

Senkovskii is now largely forgotten, but in the time of Nicholas I, he and his fellow Pole, Faddei Bulgarin, were the principal spokesman of the Russian autocracy. For Osip Senkovskii (1800–1858) was actually Józef-Julian Skowski, a Wilno Pole and a trained orientalist specializing in the languages of the Near East. Thus the debate was between two "easterners," and it had nothing to do with Belinskii's progressive, Hegelian agenda. Senkovskii objected to Father Iakinf's idealization of the Chinese government because his basic

⁹ Iakinf [Bichurin], *Kitai, ego zhiteli, nruvy, obychai, prosveshchenie* (SPB, 1840), 115; idem, *Kitai v grazhdanskom i nruvstvennom sostoianii*, 4 vols. (SPB, 1848).

¹⁰ V.G. Belinskii, [review of *Kitai v grazhdanskom . . .*], *Sobranie sochinenii*, 9 vols. (M, 1976–82), VIII, 1982, 595–599, originally in *Sovremennik* 7 (1848).

¹¹ [Otets Iakinf], "Sovremennye russkie pisateli: Otets Iakinf," *Moskvitianin* 2 (1849), 2–98; 3 (1849), 1–14.

principle was that (as he put it), in Europe government is the source of all good and all evil. In the East, the government is only the source of evil, and all good comes from the inhabitants, their culture and values. By this verbal paradox Senkovskii threw out the Hegelian scheme as well as liberal ideas of progress, leaving the unchanging East, but leaving it as a separate group of civilizations no less valuable than Europe. Thus Senkovskii found nothing particularly bad about the Ottoman Empire, praising the autocratic and centralizing reforms of Mahmut II (1808–39) but finding the value of the Near East in its civilization, not its governments. Senkovskii's quarrel with China, and thus with Father Iakinf, was not only that he saw China's government as a corrupt despotism. It was also his opinion of Confucianism as simply materialism, and a trivial materialism at that, which prevented the development of rational thought. Buddhism was much better, for it possessed authentic spirituality, though it had never acquired dominance in China.¹²

Father Iakinf was not able to answer Senkovskii other than to pick apart factual errors. The European literature on China and China's failure to defend itself and its traditions in the Opium War (1839–1842) made the monk's defense of Chinese tradition hard to sustain. In this dispute neither side, neither the monk nor the Polish orientalist, shared European views of China. In the West the liberal progressist agenda of the nineteenth century mandated a judgement on China as despotic, superstitious, and economically backward. Father Iakinf agreed with none of that description, and Senkovskii thought all the issues were irrelevant.

As the Crimean War drew to its sorry end Russian life began to change quickly and new journals sprang up unexpectedly. This was the great age of the "thick journals," massive volumes of two or three hundred pages that printed novels Russian and foreign, articles on learned issues and those of current concern, many reviews, and often a political chronicle as well. One of the first off the mark was unexpectedly *Morskoi sbornik*, the organ of the navy under the relatively liberal Grand Duke Konstantin Nikolaevich.¹³ In its pages

¹² [O. Senkovskii]. *Sobranie sochinenii Senkovskogo (Barona Brambeusa)* (SPB, 1859), 6, "Sposobnosti mneniia noveishikh puteshestvennikov po Vostoku" [= *BCh* 1835], "Mekhmed-Ali" [= *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* 1840], "Kitai i Kitaitsy" [= *Biblioteka dlia chteniia* 1841, 1849]. Senkovskii was very negative about Mohammed Ali in Egypt, whom he saw as a greedy despot, praised out of self-interest by French orientlists and travelers.

¹³ A.P. Shevyrev, *Russkii flot posle Krymskoi voyny: liberal'naia biurokratiia i morskii reformy* (M., 1990).

from 1855 to 1857 the novelist Ivan Goncharov (1812–1891) published the most significant work of Russian literature to try to describe and understand the Far East, his travelogue entitled *Fregat Pallada*.

The work was the result of his notes and letters from the 1852–54 voyage of Admiral Putiatin to Japan, a voyage with similar intentions as that of Admiral Perry at the same time. With this voyage Japan entered the Russian discussion on East Asia in a serious way for the first time since the 1820s.¹⁴ The author was not in any way expert or experienced with the countries he visited. The son of a merchant from the Volga town of Simbirsk, he had attended the Moscow Commercial School (which he hated), but eventually made his way to Moscow University. To enter he had to be officially removed from the merchant estate, according to the laws of the time. From the university he made a career as a minor official, first in Simbirsk and then (from 1835) in St. Petersburg in the Ministry of Finance. He ended up on the voyage in part by accident. The place had been offered to his well-connected friend Apollon Maikov, who did not want to go and recommended Goncharov instead.

Goncharov wrote about much more than Japan, for he went to South Africa, the Philippines, Java, Singapore, Shanghai, and the Ryukyu Islands. His reactions varied. The Chinese did not receive much praise: at his first encounters with them in Java and Singapore they offended his sensibility. The Chinese quarter of Singapore “collected everything that might insult sight and smell.” He found Chinese visual aesthetics ugly, and could not stand the smell of Chinese cooking spices and perfumes (to be fair, he hated English colonial cooking even more).¹⁵ Chinese society and state did not inspire confidence, and in this he departed sharply from Father Iakin:

It was impossible for China to continue to live as it has lived until now. It did not go, it did not move, it only breathed convulsively, falling under the weight of its own exhaustion. There is no unity or wholeness, no conditions for the organic state life that is necessary for

¹⁴ In 1852 the liberal journalist E.F. Korsh published a piece on Japan, praising the American attempts to open it to trade and forecasting a future of progress. Korsh relied entirely on Golovnin and the recently published work of Phillip Franz von Siebold. The only substantial piece on China in those years was that of E.P. Kovalevskii, a moderate Slavophile. E.F. Korsh, “Iaponia i iapontsy,” *Sovremennik*, 35/1 (September), 36/1 (November, 1852; E.P. Kovalevskii, “Kitai v 1849 i 1850 gg.,” *Otechestvennye zapiski* 3–5 (1853); idem, *Puteshestviia v Kitai*, 2 vols. (SPB, 1853).

¹⁵ Ivan Goncharov, *Fregat Pallada* in *Sobranie sochinenii*, 6 vols. (M, 1959–60), I, 261–262.

the movement of such an enormous whole. The political element does not bind the people into one inseparable body, and the presence of religion does not warm the bodies inwardly.¹⁶

Japan was another story. He noted Japan's weakness, and thought that any European power that chose could easily seize the trading station at Nagasaki and subject Japan to its will. But his long close observation of the only Japanese whom he met, the diplomats and interpreters dealing with Putiatin, led him to hopeful conclusions. Surprisingly, the Japanese seemed to him less strange than the Chinese: the Japanese were clean, orderly, learned in their own way and polite. He thought that the difference in daily customs concealed many similarities: watching a Japanese diplomat eat, he wrote: "In what is he not a European? In that once during dinner he hid the dessert in a piece of paper to take home, and another time licked the soya off the anchovies because it pleased him? These are local customs—nothing more."¹⁷ He was sure from his encounters that the Japanese would move very quickly to acquire some parts of Western culture and progress.

Goncharov's book had a curious fate. Reviewers clearly liked and respected Goncharov, and the reactions to the pieces were politely positive. When the whole book appeared early in 1858, it received very few reviews, especially when compared with the storm that greeted *Oblomov* a year later or even Goncharov's earlier work. *Fregat Pallada* seems to have acquired a reputation mainly as an example of good Russian descriptive prose. The first reaction, from A.V. Druzhinin, spent three quarters of the space praising the author for his earlier work and then complimenting him for remaining truly Russian while abroad. Goncharov's friend, the government official and minor litterateur I.I. L'khovskii, wrote both a preface and a review of the work stressing the author's style. N.A. Dobroliubov was merely polite, and followed L'khovskii's lead in emphasizing style. The most extensive reaction was probably that of Pisarev, who saw the book as a series of nature sketches and national character studies of no great interest, though he put all that in a positive vein.¹⁸ This tradition

¹⁶ Goncharov, *Fregat*, in *Sobranie*, I, 601–2.

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 482.

¹⁸ Untitled reviews: A.V. Druzhinin, (*Sovremennik*) 1 (1856), *Kritika*, 1–26; I. L'khovskii, (*Biblioteka dlia Chteniia*) 150/7 (1858), 1–11; D.I. Pisarev, (*Rassvet*) I, no. 2 (1859), *otdel* 2, 68–71; N.A. Dobroliubov, (*Sovremennik*) 6 (1858), *otdel* 2, 195–97.

continued for decades, forming the Russian image of the book as a slight achievement of an otherwise important novelist. None of the reviewers seemed to have noticed that Goncharov had a moral to his story among the vivid descriptions of exotic peoples.

Goncharov was obsessed with the British Empire and the British position in the world from the beginning. The first chapter is on London and Portsmouth, and he devoted the longest single section of the book to the Cape Colony, surely the earliest widely read account of Africa in Russian. These two sections were the key to the book. What obsessed Goncharov about the English, mainly the English businessmen, was what he saw as their ambiguous role in the world. On the one hand, he admired their enterprise and activity, their ability to dominate the world not so much by arms but by organization, skill, business acumen, and relentless activity. On the other hand, the result was that Goncharov found the same hotels, the same food, and the same customs everywhere, overriding native tradition. Even in exotic Madeira all the big houses belonged to English wine merchants. Goncharov also noted that the Christian Englishmen, prudish and endlessly prating on about virtue and freedom, treated the Africans and the Chinese as subhumans in their own countries. The signs warning Chinese off the English riding track in Shanghai particularly shocked him. His reaction was not the result of gentry snobbism toward British businessmen, for Goncharov was one of the few Russian writers to spring from a merchant family.

The lack of deep interest among educated Russians in a prominent writer's work on Asia was not the result of rejection of his overall theme, European progress and its ambiguities. His most famous novel *Oblomov* and other works had exactly the same theme, foreign dynamism and native sloth, with Russia playing the role of Asia. His Asian experiences made him more uneasy about Russia, as he revealed in a passage noting that the bazaars in China and Japan were essentially the same as older Russian markets.¹⁹ The Russian intelligentsia was so focussed on Russia's internal problems that it could not assimilate Goncharov's ideas unless he presented them in Russian dress, in a novel set in Russia.

The incomprehension that greeted Goncharov's travels prefigured the lack of interest that met the publications of M.I. Veniukov a

¹⁹ Goncharov, *Fregat*, in *Sobranie* 1, 483.

decade later. Veniukov was a more serious student of the east than Goncharov. A career military officer of gentry origins, he finished the General Staff Academy in 1856 and went to Irkutsk to serve as adjutant to the governor-general of Eastern Siberia, N.N. Muravev-Amurskii. He did a great deal of travelling in his position through Siberia and Russian borderlands. He served in Russian Poland in 1863–7, and then went to China and Japan for the army to study the military forces of Russia's neighbors.

The 1869 book on Japan and his other work were the result of these journeys. Most of the thick journals did not even review the book, even though it was scarcely a heavy academic treatise, for the work was a combination of personal narrative and journalistic study that makes it lively reading even today. It also seems to be largely accurate in its facts, in part because Veniukov knew his limitations: he did not try to go beyond a basic level of information available to him on Japanese or Chinese society or government. He followed the European authorities of the day, supplementing them with his own observations and experiences.

His account of Japan is particularly engaging, for it came in the middle of the struggle over the Meiji restoration. Veniukov's picture of Japan is resoundingly positive: he saw the Shogunate and its society as a sort of aristocratic gentry constitutional state, and interpreted the recent events as a turn toward the more modern type of state toward which all European countries, he believed, were moving. His account of Japanese society and customs is almost exclusively positive: the Japanese are clean, polite, well-educated in their traditional culture and rapidly acquiring Western knowledge as well. The evildoers are the European powers: the envoys of Napoleon III who were trying to push Japan toward autocracy, the English who merely wanted to exploit Japanese weakness for commercial purposes, using thin excuses to dominate Japan by gunboat diplomacy. Only the Americans were somewhat better. Veniukov noted their nefarious commercial interests, but thought that on the whole their role was positive because their trade brought with it no political manipulation.²⁰

Veniukov's book actually received a brief review in the liberal journal *Vestnik Evropy*, which emphasized the portrait of Japan as successfully moving on the road of progress, cultural and political. It was one of the few reviews or articles of the whole decade to touch

²⁰ M.I. Veniukov, *Ocherki Iaponii* (SPB, 1869).

on East Asia.²¹ That *Vestnik Evropy* would review the book is perhaps not a surprise, for it was both the best managed as well as the most forthright (though not the most radical) of the liberal publications. Under the editorship of M.M. Stasiulevich it had the largest circulation of any of the thick journals, and from its appearance in 1869 to the end of the century was the flagship publication of the Russian liberal intelligentsia. A survey of its pages in those decades reveals almost nothing on East Asia except for Veniukov's articles. The "Foreign Review" (*Inostrannoe obozrenie*) section was almost entirely bereft of references to East Asia, though it devoted space to the United States and occasionally to the Ottoman Empire.

The exception was again the work of Veniukov. His 1874 collection of articles on China in book form was based on a series of articles in the same *Vestnik Evropy*. Veniukov was most unhappy with Chinese politics: he thought that Asia generally lacked self-consciousness (presumably political) and that its governments ruled over abject subjects (using the French word *sujets*). His conception of China was a vast agglomeration of such subjects, many of them not Han, a structure which increasing western influence could easily disintegrate. The Chinese people, however, he thought entirely capable of self-government, and thought he had found the proof of that idea in Chinese emigration. Veniukov noted that most Chinese went to British colonies, which for all their defects provided legal order and to the United States, a democratic polity. Law and democracy, he thought, were what the Chinese immigrants were looking for, not just work. Unfortunately the Europeans in China were not providing the country with any of the benefits of Western Civilization. Most of them were just scum, thieves, smugglers, prostitutes, and the businessmen were no better: to Veniukov the British merchants Jardine, Matheson, Dent, and their confreres from the Empire like the Sassoons were just swindlers and criminals. About missionaries, the less said the better: certainly they were not mercenary, but instead they were hypocritical, despotic and contemptuous of the people they were trying to convert. (In this Veniukov echoed Goncharov, who was equally hostile to the missionaries.) In China the West had only destroyed and created nothing in its place. He did not exclude the possibility that the Chinese

²¹ Untitled review in *Vestnik Evropy* 3 (1869), 506–10; M. Veniukov, "Sovremennaiia Iaponiia, ee gosudarstvennoe ustroistvo i uchrezhdeniia," *Vestnik Evropy* 7 (July 1870), 252–77.

might assimilate enough to reform, but he was not optimistic.²²

Veniukov's effort seems to have brought forth little in the way of attention except for a venomous and extensive attack by K.A. Skachkov in Mikhail Katkov's conservative *Russkii Vestnik*. Skachkov tried to refute the liberal officer's account by long and tedious attempts at listing factual errors, which mostly seem to the modern reader either trivial or matters of interpretation. There was also another element here, since Veniukov and Skachkov had old scores to settle. When Veniukov served in 1859–60 in Omsk under the governor-general of Western Siberia, General Gustav Gasfort, Skachkov was consul in Chuguchak. Gasfort had been enraged by Skachkov's misinformation about trouble among the Kirghiz, and had Veniukov send him a reprimand, with copies to the Asiatic Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Thus when Veniukov came to Tianjin in 1870, where he found Skachkov again as consul, the latter did what he could to make life difficult for Veniukov.

All this animus came out in the review, but there were also deeper issues: Skachkov repeated Father Iakinf's notion that China was intrinsically stable, again comparing it to the European political upheavals to the detriment of Europe, and providing a very romantic picture of the Chinese people's reverence for the emperor. In the same article he dismissed the Taiping rebellion as just one of many such inconsequential Chinese revolts.²³ As in the time of Belinskii, the conservatives idealized traditional China, and the liberals saw its vulnerability and backwardness. The new element was the admiration for Japan, primarily for its post-Meiji developments, but also for its more "constitutional" past.²⁴

With Veniukov's departure for Paris in 1877 his main outlet, *Vestnik Evropy*, ceased to publish anything of importance about East Asia,

²² M.I. Veniukov, *Ocherki sovremennogo Kitaia* (SPB, 1874) [some chapters originally as "Ocherki krainogo Vostoka," *Vestnik Evropy* 3 (March 1871) 156–207; 8 (August 1871) 469–512].

²³ K.A. Skachkov, "Ocherki Kitaia," *Russkii vestnik* (January, 1875) 5–67; (February, 1875) 45–521. K.A. Skachkov witnessed the Taiping rebellion, and his account was later edited by his Soviet namesake: K.A. Skachkov, *Pekin v dni taipinskogo vosstaniia*, ed. P.E. Skachkov (M, 1958). For Veniukov's contact with him, see, M.I. Veniukov, *Puteshestviia po Priamur'iu, Kitaiu i Iaponii* (Khabarovsk, 1970), 178–80.

²⁴ Veniukov favored Russian imperialism in Central Asia, as one might expect from an army officer and even wrote about it: M.I. Veniukov, "Tuzemnye plemena na predelakh vliianiia Rossii i Anglii v Azii," *Russkaia mysl'* (May 1885), 18–33. In this he seems to have been more militant than the staff of *Vestnik Evropy*, who almost entirely ignored the subject, whatever they thought about it.

and in this silence it did not differ from the other thick journals. Only with the Sino-Japanese war of 1894 did the subject revive. In September the journal devoted some pages of its *Inostrannoe obozrenie* to the conflict, comparing it to the Austro-Prussian war of 1866. In this comparison Japan played the role of dynamic modernizing Prussia, while China seemed to repeat the experience of backward Austria. The next month other comparisons appeared, though only implicitly. After the Japanese victory at Pyongyang, the journal noted that China only seemed strong because it had a government of unlimited power, no opposition, no foreign inspired reforms, and an army with modern technology. Japan on the other hand had experienced a period of revolution and reform and was now a limited monarchy with a parliament and constitution. The Russian reader did not need any explanation to see what European country might soon play the role of China.

After the peace came at Shimonoseki there were more reflections. The editors attacked an unnamed conservative columnist in the Russian press who had started the war supporting Japan but had turned to vicious attacks on Japanese policy and civilization. Then came a new note. *Vestnik Evropy* quoted at some length the pamphlets of A. Ia. Maksimov and General A.V. Putiata. Maksimov praised Japan not just for its success at modernizing but also its “knightly” (*rytsarskii*) spirit, and argued that Japan was the most appropriate ally for Russia in the area and China a dangerous enemy. The general also thought that Japan was admirable but too small to ever be a threat to Russia, but China was most certainly a potential threat. To provide “balance” the editors also quoted at length the views of D.D. Pokotilov, a Finance Ministry agent in China, to the effect that the war was the result of the Japanese oligarchy’s need for a quick victory now that they had won the reforms they needed but faced much opposition. All of this discussion was rather new for *Vestnik Evropy*, both for the amount of space devoted to East Asia and for the frank reflections on great power politics in the area.²⁵

²⁵ “Inostrannoe Obozrenie,” *Vestnik Evropy* 9 (1894), 379–81; 10 (1894), 839–45; 2 (1895) 889–90; 5 (1895), 410–20. V.M. Khevolina, *Vlast’ i obshchestvo: Bor’ba v Rossii po voprosam vneshnei politiki 1878–1894 gg.* (M, 1999), 291–305, notes the pro-Japanese bias of the liberal press in the period to 1894, but her account of *Vestnik Evropy* in 1894–95 is rather misleading. See also David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, *Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan* (DeKalb, 2001), 125–7. The unnamed conservative may be Prince V.P. Meshcherskii, earlier on more favorable to Japan: idem, 127.

The portrait of East Asia available to Russians from mid-century to the 1890s emphasized European exploitation, Japanese progress, and Chinese difficulties. Unfortunately not many Russians took advantage of the achievements of their fellow-countrymen in trying to understand this area of the world, and East Asia remained an extremely exotic interest of a very few people. This conclusion raises some questions about Russian opinion before and after 1894. What happened in daily newspapers? The "foreign review" section of *Vestnik Evropy* is bereft of news on East Asia, but what about newspapers, liberal and conservative? Were there conservatives who admired Japan (other than Meshcherskii before 1894) and liberals who preferred China? After 1894, what happened to the image of Japan as progressing toward modernity? Did any of the public press or the writers on East Asia have any impact on the government? Were the contemptuous views of Japan on the part of Nicholas II and the Russian government in 1904 in part the result of reaction to liberal admiration? Did the government rely entirely on internal sources? Were the writings of experts inside or outside the corridors of power, as always, the least read?

Attempts to answer these and related questions promise to open new research venues and new avenues for understanding Russian attitudes toward the Far East and its peoples. The same attempts also promise to shed light on the ways that the press and expert commentary both reflected and influenced opinion high and low in the years immediately prior to the conflict of 1904–05. Whatever the emphasis or mode of investigation, the relationship between perception and policy merits further scholarly treatment.

CHAPTER SEVENTEEN

“LOVE THY ENEMY”: JAPANESE PERCEPTIONS OF RUSSIA

Naoko Shimazu

How did the Japanese perceive Russians as the enemy during the Russo-Japanese war? Without a doubt, it mattered greatly to the Japanese that international opinion was sympathetic to them in this struggle against the European monolith. Not only did Japan need to win militarily to protect and expand its national interests, but more importantly, it had to do so in a manner acceptable to the western imperial powers, which were all spectators to this historic event. The obsession of Japanese official discourse with wanting to depict Japan as a “civilized nation” (*bunmeikoku*) that would win the sympathy of the West meant that images of the enemy had to reflect such an agenda. Interestingly, the preoccupation with being “civilized” was also evident in domestic debates, but with a quite different effect. Essentially, Japanese perceptions of Russia during the war reveal an uneasy coexistence of two contradictory discourses: On the one hand a vehemently anti-Russian domestic opinion in the name of defending “civilization,” while on the other, the official endorsement of the “civilization discourse” (*bunmeiron*) largely for international consumption. This study addresses these two patterns of development: First, the construction of “Russia” as the enemy “Other” in domestic public opinion; and second, the official “civilization discourse” as manifested in the Japanese treatment of Russian prisoners of war (POWs) in the Matsuyama POW camp.

“Russia” in Japanese Public Opinion

In general, images of Russia constructed in the realm of domestic public opinion were venomously anti-Russian, stopping just short of utter demonization. What was ironic about the domestic debate was

the willingness to debase the Russians because the Japanese were so desperate to claim themselves “civilized.” Almost without exception, pundits espoused the “civilization discourse,” which gave a “civilized” Japan the world historical mission of fighting on behalf of the West against a barbaric Russia that was threatening world peace.¹ In February 1904, Okuma Shigenobu argued in the English edition of *Taiyō* that Russia, not Japan, was the real peril to peace in Asia.² Meanwhile, an editorial in *Yorodzu chōhō* warned of the resurgence of the “Yellow Peril” and pointed out that:

Russia is the shame of Europe; we need to defeat this nation in the name of civilization, in the name of peace, and in the name of humanity. Europe should be pleased that there is a new nation in the Far East, which will bear the torch of their civilization and is suppressing the troublemaker, Russia.³

In this scenario, Russia was portrayed as the enemy of western civilization, and Japan as the knight in shining armor saving the West. It goes without saying that the notorious image of the “Yellow Peril” depicted by the German Kaiser, Wilhelm II, known as the “Knackfuss picture,” continued to haunt the Japanese throughout this war.⁴

The Japanese perspective on the “Yellow Peril” was not totally self-deluding. Some of the pro-Japanese British and American media echoed their arguments. The international propaganda machinery set in motion during the war “exported” anti-Slav and anti-Russian views from Britain and the United States to Japan, which in turn, re-exported them back to the international arena via Britain and the United States. The *New York Times* of 18 April 1905 stated, “As Japan represents Occidental ideas in Asia, so Russia represents Oriental ideas in Europe.” And Charles A’Court Repington, who was the military correspondent of the *Times* and a known pro-Japanese mouth-

¹ For example, Hasegawa Tenkei, “Bunmeishi jō no nichiro sensō,” *Taiyō* 10:4 (March 1904), 158–60.

² Okuma Shigenobu, “The Yellow Peril: What it is,” *Taiyō* 10:3 (February 1904), 7.

³ “Nihon kokumin to sensō,” *Yorodzu chōhō* (28 February 1904).

⁴ See, Walter Groetz (ed.), *Briefe Wilhelms II an den Zaren 1894–1914* (Berlin, 1920). For an analysis of the Willy-Nicky correspondence over the Yellow Peril, consult Rolf-Harald Wippich, “The Yellow Peril: Strategic and Ideological Implications of Germany’s East Asian Policy before World War I: The Case of William II,” *Sophia International Review*, 18 (1996), 57–65.

piece, continuously propounded the anti-Russian, pro-Japanese viewpoint in that influential paper.⁵ The *Times* of 7 January 1905 argued:

If there be any Yellow Peril today, it is not a new thing, but an old thing in a new guise. A year ago there was a real Yellow Peril, which few people marked. There was imminent danger that China would fall under the domination of Russia, which would have meant the organization of Chinese resources for the purposes of Russian aggression and tyranny.

Japanese reliance on Anglo-Saxon sources of information on the Russians revealed two things. First, it was politically expedient to side with the Anglo-Saxons to win their sympathy. Second, Russia was still a remote country for the majority of Japanese, whose general knowledge of the enemy was negligible.⁶

Without a doubt, the favorite imagery employed by the Japanese was to pitch the Japanese as the "civilized" "yellow" nation fighting against the "barbarian" "white" Russians. What amused the Japanese especially was the juxtaposition of "barbarous" with "white," thereby completely reversing and undermining the Western stereotype of "white" as "civilized" and "yellow" as "barbarous." Ariga Nagao wrote that Russia consisted of two different nations—a European aristocracy consisting of Europeans without a single drop of Slav blood, and a Slavic majority who constituted a "half-yellow" and "half-white race," known historically from the time of the ancient Greeks to be "barbarian."⁷ The Japanese were reliably informed that the legendary prowess of Cossack fighters was a myth because they were originally lowly bandits, leading a nomadic existence.⁸ A popular magazine, *Taiyō*, featured a translation of an article from the *Fortnightly Review* that outlined what the Anglo-Saxons considered to be the mentality of the Slavs.⁹ Moreover, one Japanese writer especially identified male chauvinism in lower class Slavs as being particularly oriental, which led him to conclude that, "Russia possesses

⁵ Charles A'Court Repington, *The War in the Far East, 1904–1905* (London, 1905).

⁶ An exception to this was Russian literature. Consult the relevant chapters in J. Thomas Rimer (ed.), *A Hidden Fire: Russian and Japanese Cultural Encounters 1868–1926* (Stanford, 1995).

⁷ Ariga Nagao, "Bunmei sensō no hōki kanrei," *Taiyō* 10:5 (October 1904), 57; also see Inoue Tetsujirō, "Jikyoku zakkan," *Taiyō* 10:12 (September 1904), 42–3.

⁸ Yazu Masanaga, "Roshiajin," *Taiyō* 10:7 (May 1904), 192–7.

⁹ "Surabu oyobi sono shōrai," *Taiyō* 10:7 (May 1904), 218–20.

both elements of East and West.”¹⁰ To put it less flatteringly, the Russians were “the Mongolians of the West.”¹¹

However, this argument that mixed “civilization” with “race” reflected an interesting problem of self-definition for the Japanese, who clung to the western definition of “civilization.” Most controversially, the Japanese resorted to the use of the color code to define who was civilized and who was not. Often, the Japanese would adopt for themselves the symbolic Western definition of “yellow” as uncivilized and “white” as civilized. Thus, Japanese commentators would end up stating that the Russians were barbaric because they were “semi-oriental” and “half-yellow.” At the general meeting held by the National Congress for Religious Leaders (*Ōenoku shūkyō taikai*) in May 1904, Ōuchi Seiran, a Buddhist representative asserted:

The Japanese are not at all the Yellow Peril. The Japanese have a white heart underneath a yellow skin. It is the Russians who are the Yellow Peril because they have a yellow heart under their white skin.¹²

In another instance, one prominent intellectual, Taguchi Ukichi, fell into this trap when he wrote in *Taiyō* that the Japanese and Hungarians were both “beautiful white people” because of their shared linguistic roots.¹³ An anthropologist, Torii Ryūzō, duly criticized Taguchi in *Jidai shichō*, arguing there was no academic foundation to Taguchi’s claim that the Japanese belonged to the white race.¹⁴ Even the Christian newspaper *Fukuin shinpō* criticized Taguchi for implying that the yellow race was inferior to the white race.¹⁵ Notwithstanding these criticisms, it cannot be denied that the general thrust of Taguchi’s argument reflected the popularly-held Japanese attitude that identified strongly with the “Western” attitude towards the East, even at the expense of denying the very roots of their own cultural and racial identity.

A more rationalistic argument was that the Japanese were “civilized” because they were more advanced politically than the Russians. Shimada Saburō in *Chūō kōron* stated that this war was a war between

¹⁰ “Roryō jijō,” *Taiyō* 11:12 (September 1905), 195.

¹¹ “Kokumin no jikaku,” *Yorodzu chōhō* (3 March 1904).

¹² Nakamura Kennosuke, *Senkyōshi Nikorai to Meiji Nihon* (Tokyo, 1996), 208–09.

¹³ Taguchi Ukichi, “Nihon jinshu no kenkyū,” *Taiyō* 12:10 (July 1905), 187.

¹⁴ Torii Ryūzō, “Jinshugaku jō yori Taguchi hakushi no ‘Nihonjin wa ōshoku jinshu ni arazu’ o hyōsu,” *Jidai shichō* 5 (5 June 1904), 45–6.

¹⁵ “Jikyoku shōkan: Kōka,” *Fukuin shinpō* 465 (26 May 1904).

“constitutionalism” as represented by Japan and “absolutism” by Tsarist Russia.¹⁶ Although he recognized that there was a strongly racial undertone to the war, he argued that Japan should demonstrate to the world that states should not be judged by their racial characteristics alone, but by other considerations, such as the political order. He noted that Japan was as yet the only country in East Asia to adopt constitutionalism, stressing the irony of having to fight against the only remaining absolutist empire in Europe. Consequently, he concluded that the war must also be about the struggle for freedom against oppression.

However, some of those who expounded the civilization argument could not help but be distrustful of the overwhelmingly sympathetic attitude shown by the Anglo-Saxon countries to Japan’s cause in the war. For instance, an article in *Jidai shichō* in May 1904 stated that an undertone of moral superiority could be detected in Western praise of Japan, because the West implicitly believed that the Japanese were heathens, war-mongering, imitative, and even threatening. Therefore, Western fascination with Japan remained superficial as witnessed in the way “Japan-lovers in Britain and the United States treat us as though they handle toys and children.”¹⁷ Hence, there remained a sense of unease among some Japanese pundits that the present “happy marriage” between Japan and the Anglo-Saxon West against Russia was only a temporary arrangement, bound to end sooner or later in tears.

Only a small minority clung to a racial argument (*jinshuron*) that pitted a yellow Japan uncompromisingly against the white European West. That such a perspective was generally unfashionable said much about Japanese intellectual preoccupations of the time. A rare proponent of this perspective was Narukawa Sei, who assumed an alarmist stance in his article in *Chūō kōron*: “Now the era of race war has arrived. The war between Russia and Japan . . . is the first step in the rivalry between the Aryan race and the yellow race.”¹⁸ Narukawa saw the Japanese as the only credible contender against the politically dominant Aryan race:

¹⁶ Shimada Saburō, “Kokumin no soyō,” *Chūō kōron* 19:1 (1 February 1904), 23.

¹⁷ “Nihon no bunmei to sekai no dōjō,” *Jidai shichō* 4 (5 May 1904), 10–12.

¹⁸ Narukawa Sei, “Nichiro kansen ni tsukite,” *Chūō kōron* 19:2 (1 March 1904), 67.

If whites have the ambition of “whitening” [*hakujinka*] the world, than the yellow race also has the ambition of “yellowing” the world. But the yellow race is not vulgar enough to hold such an ambition. The whites have their strengths, just as the yellows have their strengths.¹⁹

The racial argument was more widely circulated in the post-1905 era, as the Japanese gradually began to feel the brunt of western racism, particularly in emigration. In spite of an all-out Japanese effort to integrate with the West, their attitude towards the West began to harden.

In balance, a survey of public opinion during the war demonstrates that there was an underlying desire to justify the war on the basis of the “civilization discourse” (*bunmeiron*) because it was the most effective propaganda weapon against the Yellow Peril. To justify Japan’s position, however, domestic public opinion did not hesitate ruthlessly to attack the enemy and to portray him in a very unflattering light as “barbarous,” “absolutist,” and “Oriental.” These stereotypes were designed to highlight contrasting attributes for the Japanese, namely “civilized,” “constitutionalist,” and “Western.” In addition, Japanese images of Russia were heavily influenced and informed by Anglo-Saxon views of Russia. While the Japanese were constructing images of the enemy for domestic public consumption, these images often appealed to the anti-Slav instincts of the Anglo-Saxon powers in order to fuel Japanese perceptions of the “Other.”

Russian Prisoners of War in Matsuyama

The Japanese treatment of Russian POWs is important not only because it tells us how the Japanese perceived the “enemy,” but also because it tells us about the self-image the Japanese wanted to project domestically, and even more importantly, internationally. Russian captives benefited from the fact that they were “European,” since the Japanese played the role of the civilized belligerent largely for the benefit of a Western audience.

It is widely acknowledged that Japanese treatment of Russian POWs in the Russo-Japanese war was exemplary, and contributed to setting a standard for future international conventions on the treatment

¹⁹ Ibid., 69.

of both POWs and the sick and wounded. For political and diplomatic reasons, wanting to be accepted as a "first-rate" power by the great powers, Japan not only abided strictly by international law, but also took the lead in establishing new standards for the treatment of POWs.²⁰ In October 1904, the Japanese Army Ministry issued a statement to the international community on the question of the treatment of enemy non-combatants, such as sanitary and medical personnel, as well as combatants who were disabled in fighting. The Ministry argued that they should be repatriated because "wars are based on political relations between states and the objective is to decrease the fighting capability of the enemy country. . . . As a result, one should not possess animosity towards the people of the enemy country. . . ."²¹ This assertion acknowledged a categorical distinction between an enemy state and its people on humanitarian grounds. Russian POWs were "treated as honored guests and that was testified to generally by the Japanese and foreigners who visited and witnessed these camps".²² To this end, the Red Cross Society of Japan, serving as a unit of the Japanese armed forces, played a crucial role as an instrument of diplomacy in the war.²³

During the war, the Japanese military opened twenty-eight prisoner of war camps throughout Japan to accommodate 71,947 Russian POWs.²⁴ The number of Russian POWs increased dramatically after the fall of Port Arthur in early January 1905. Once captured, the Russians were transported from Manchuria or Korea by sea directly

²⁰ For Japanese literature on the history of POWs, consult Fukiura Tadamasa, *Horyo no bunmeishi* (Tokyo, 1990); Hasegawa Shin, *Nihon horyoshi* (Tokyo, 1955); Hata Ikuhiko, *Nihonjin horyo* (Tokyo, 1998).

²¹ Rikugunshō (ed.), *Meiji sanjūshichihachinen sen'eki rikugun seishi*, 11 vols. (Tokyo, 1911, reprint 1983), VIII, 412–3.

²² "Furyo taigū hinan no tsūshin ni kansuru tōkyoku no daiwa," *Kokusaihō zasshi* 3:6 (1905), 85.

²³ By 1903, the JRC had grown into a huge organization, with some 900,000 members (of which 800,000 were "ordinary members", the rest being "special" and "honorary" members) with an annual income through subscription of 2,965,300 yen (each member paying around three yen subscription). Nagao Ariga, "The Red Cross Society of Japan: Its Organization and Activity in Time of Peace and War" (St. Louis, 1904), 6; "The Carrying out of the Ten Years' Plan," *The Red Cross in the Far East*, 3 (May 1910), 47; J. Suzuki, "The Japanese Red Cross Mission to England," *Japan Society of London*, 14 (1915–16), 29.

²⁴ Rikugunshō (ed.), "Dai nijū san hen: Furyo," *Nichiro sensō tōkeishū*, 15 vols. (Tokyo, 1995), XV, 11, 132. This was in contrast to the 2,088 Japanese POWs captured by the Russians, mostly held in Medved near Novgorod, two hundred kilometers to the south of St. Petersburg.

to the port town of Takahama on Shikoku Island. From there, they were taken on a short railway journey to Matsuyama. Historically, Matsuyama was chosen as a suitable location for a POW camp (going back to Hideyoshi's campaign against Korea in the late sixteenth century, then more recently, during the Sino-Japanese war of 1894–5) for a number of reasons: first, for security, as an island in the Inland Sea, second, for its geographical proximity to the continent and the convenience of transport, and third, for the excellent climate and the beauty of its location (the third reason being the diplomatic one).²⁵ The Matsuyama Prisoner of War Camp (Matsuyama fūryō shūyōjō), which came under the Army's 11th Division, was the first to open on 18 March 1904, together with the Marugame Camp also on Shikoku Island, and the last to close, on 20 February 1906. At its peak capacity in the initial months after the outbreak of the war, the Matsuyama Camp housed some 788 officers and 5,122 lower ranks.²⁶ It is not difficult to imagine the enormity of the social and economic impact these 6,000 POWs must have had on Matsuyama, a city of 36,189 inhabitants.²⁷

Closer examination of the Matsuyama Camp reveals that the loftiness exhibited in the official policy of humanitarianism did not necessarily sit comfortably with the less internationally-minded local military men who had to implement those high ideals on a day-to-day basis in their contact with the Russians. In reality, it depended on men like the head of the Matsuyama Camp, Colonel Kōno, a man universally disliked by the POWs as "Prussian," "totally inflexible," "sly and stupid," to show how truly "civilized" the Japanese were.²⁸ We can glean some of the practical difficulties through the *Matsuyama Record*, which was published in February 1906, incorporating invaluable uncensored observations made by Japanese wardens on the behavior and character of the Russian POWs. Japanese self-conceit is evident in the preface written by Kōno himself: "That the yellow race defeated the white race and captured some 70,000 POWs is

²⁵ Matsuyama fūryō shūyōjō hen, *Matsuyama shūyōjō rokoku fūryō* (Matsuyama, 1906), 3.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 2.

²⁷ Ehime ken, *Meiji sanjū hachinen Ehime ken tōkeisho* (Matsuyama, 1905), 39.

²⁸ F. Kupuchinsukī, *Matsuyama fūryō shūyōjō nikki: Roshia shōkō no mita Meiji nihon*, trans. Odagawa Kenji (Tokyo, 1988), 65; Ogiso Ryu and Ogiso Miyoko (eds.), *Nichiro sensō ka no nihon: Roshiajin horyō no tsuma no nikki* (Tokyo, 1991), 159, 196.

the greatest achievement since history began and will be commemorated with the publication of this document.”²⁹

Kōno even suggested that the Matsuyama Camp became “a sort of an exhibition ground for the quality of POWs” (*issu no furyo hin-shitsu tenranjō*). Two weeks after the *Records*’ publication, the military issued a warning that any writings on the behavior of the POWs published by the POW camps must first be referred to the Army Ministry to ensure that these did not contain materials which might harm diplomatic relations with Russia in the post-war period.³⁰ There is little doubt that *Matsuyama Record* was the stimulus for this directive. It pointed out the gap between conservative local military officers and the more internationally-minded élite in the General Staff.

Contemporary accounts show that the Japanese were by no means perfect in their conduct towards the POWs, as had been idealized by many foreign observers, some of whom had been employed by the Japanese government as doctors and nurses.³¹ One young Russian officer who was detained in Matsuyama, F.P. Kupchinskii,³² recorded that, “. . . the treatment of the POWs by the Japanese who were brutalized by the war was not necessarily good. The only thing for the POWs was to remain tolerant until the Japanese regained their calmness and showed kind consideration.”³³

Occasionally, Kōno exploded and made ugly scenes, such as the notorious one over the forced confiscation of swords from newly-

²⁹ Matsuyama furyo shūyōjo, 6–7.

³⁰ It seems that this document was confiscated, as not many copies of it remain. I would like to thank the Iyoshi dankai, and especially Saitō Rieko for allowing me to obtain a photocopy of this document. Rikugunshō, *Meiji*, 8: 542.

³¹ Teresa Eden Richardson, *In Japanese Hospitals during War-time: Fifteen Months with the Red Cross Society of Japan (April 1904–July 1905)* (Edinburgh, 1905); Louis Livingston Seaman, *The Real Triumph of Japan: The Conquest of the Silent Foe* (New York, 1906) and *From Tokio through Manchuria with the Japanese* (New York, 1905); E. McCaul, *Under the Care of the Japanese War Office* (London, 1905).

³² F.P. Kupchinskii was born in 1881 in St. Petersburg, and studied law at university. When the war broke out in February 1904, he accompanied the troops to Manchuria as a military telecommunications officer, and was injured in the Battle of Nanshan. Then he remained in Port Arthur, writing for various Russian newspapers, when captured on 22 July 1904 with eleven other Russians and sent to Matsuyama. He was eventually released on 3 February 1905. There is useful biographical information on Kupchinskii in Kaiyama Shinichi, “Roshiajin ga mita nihon josei,” in Nakamura Yoshikazu (ed.), *Kyōdō kenkyū: Roshia to nihon dai ni shū* (Tokyo, 1990), 81–2, 90–1.

³³ Kupchinskii, 20.

arrived Russian officers, after the fall of Port Arthur in January 1905.³⁴ When General Stessel surrendered to General Nogi in Port Arthur, Nogi allowed Russian officers to continue wearing their swords under the Articles of the Capitulation. However, Kōno prohibited the wearing of swords when these POW officers reached Matsuyama, because it was against the existing regulations. Needless to say, this caused a rapid deterioration in the relationship between the Japanese wardens and the POWs. Tension in the camp increased because the Japanese were reaching a crisis point in accommodating the large influx of new arrivals from Port Arthur. In one case, Kōno personally dispensed severe corporal punishment by hitting the head, legs and the hip of a drunken Russian officer with a sabre, over a minor misunderstanding.³⁵ In fact, the relationship between the Russian officers and this “Prussian” colonel was so strained that when Kōno invited them to a farewell party, they refused to accept his invitation.

In a sense, Kōno’s uneasy relationship with the POWs most likely reflected the view held by many Japanese officers, that it was a dishonor to be captured as a POW. A naval officer, Mizuno Hironori, in his *Kono issen*, a first-hand account, was critical of the “excitement” surrounding the Russian POWs,

It was very bizarre when we saw from time to time in newspapers during the war, words such as “honorable surrender” and “honorable POWs”. Why should surrender be honorable, and being a prisoner of war honorable? If that was the case, then the responsibility of us soldiers has lessened greatly. Although it is not a crime to get caught necessarily by the enemy when the sword breaks and after having exhausted all else, but it still cannot be an honor. It is only to make up for the humiliation of having being caught as a prisoner of war, in spite of one’s brave acts and particularly distinguished conduct. In whatever case, it is more honorable to die in war.³⁶

What concerned Mizuno the most was that the very favorable treatment of the Russian POWs might give the wrong idea to the Japanese people that it was not an embarrassment to be a prisoner of war. He condemned the frivolous attitude and the commercial greed shown by the people of a host city (supposedly his hometown, Matsuyama),

³⁴ Ogiso and Ogiso, 176, 196; Matsuyama furyo shūyōjo, 214–5.

³⁵ Kupuchinsukī, 109–110.

³⁶ Mizuno Hironori, “Kono issen,” in *Meiji bungaku zenshū*, 100 vols. (Tokyo, 1969), vol. XCVII: *Meiji sensō bungakushū*, ed. by Kimura Tsuyoshi, 163.

who were all spellbound by the “God of POW” (*furyo no daimyōjin*).³⁷ In desperate frustration, he cried out, “regarding the treatment of prisoners of war, there is a set of international rules which does not allow for their oppression or violation. However, it does not demand their preferential treatment at the cost of harming the national character!”³⁸

Although Mizuno attacked popular behavior, his criticism was indirectly aimed at the government’s policy in allowing for such privileged treatment of the POWs. Moreover, in some respects, Mizuno was criticizing the penchant of the Japanese from top down to “worship” the West. Interestingly, the *Matsuyama Record* opined that the hosting of Russian POWs in Matsuyama had a positive influence on its people because it had the effect of nurturing their “international intelligence,” ridding them of their “island-mentality.”³⁹ It meant that the people of Matsuyama were able to witness first-hand the “incompetence” of the supposedly civilized Russians, just as they had learned how incompetent the Chinese were in the previous war.

For a closer examination of the Japanese treatment of the POWs, I focus on four aspects of daily existence: food, housing, strolls, and pastoral care. Not surprisingly, one of the areas that most concerned the Japanese was food. The First Hague Conference of 1899 stated that prisoners of war “should be treated in a manner analogous to that of the troops of the Detaining Power” under the Convention on the Laws of War on Land.⁴⁰ However, the Army Ministry soon realized that the daily food provisions allocated for Japanese soldiers were simply not enough for Russian POWs, who generally had a much greater appetite than their Japanese counterparts. A report submitted by a Japanese Foreign Ministry official who inspected the Matsuyama Camp noted that the small quantity of food was one complaint universally voiced by the POWs.⁴¹ The report also pointed out that the present policy of providing the same quality foodstuffs to the officers and the lower ranks should be changed to meet the differing requirements, namely that the officers preferred quality to quantity, whereas the latter needed quantity. Thus, the Japanese authorities bent over

³⁷ Ibid., 164.

³⁸ Ibid.

³⁹ Matsuyama *furyo shūyōjo*, 339–40.

⁴⁰ G.I.A.D. Draper, *The Red Cross Conventions* (London, 1958), 4–5.

⁴¹ Rikugunshō, *Meiji*, 8: 402.

backwards to accommodate the large appetite of the Russian POWs by providing a much larger budget of sixty sen per day for officers, and thirty sen per day for the lower ranks, as opposed to the figure of seventeen sen normally allocated for the Japanese lower ranks.⁴² In fact, these figures later became a point of contention between Japanese and Russian authorities over the allowances given by the Russian authorities to lower-rank Japanese POWs. Fourteen kopeks was below the rate given to Russian lower ranks of twenty kopeks.⁴³

Russian POWs tended to like “greasy and heavy” food, ate large amounts but did not much care for variety, liked meats of all kinds, liked Japanese soy sauce, but did not enjoy sake or small fish with bones.⁴⁴ On an average day, breakfast was served around 8–9 am, consisting of tea, coffee, or milk with boiled eggs. Lunch, the main meal of the day, was served around noon, with bread, accompanied by “soup, beef, balls (meat balls or dumplings), fried fish, and vegetables.” Around 3 pm, the POWs drank tea, and then at 9 pm, dinner consisted of more or less similar fare as the lunch menu.⁴⁵ According to another study, the POWs seem to have consumed stews of various kinds, as well as beefsteaks.⁴⁶ In comparison, Itō Kyūkichirō noted in memoirs of his captivity as a POW in Russia, that he was fed one and a half loaves of bread per day, accompanied by millet for lunch, at 2 pm with tea, and then with a porridge-like soup for dinner.⁴⁷ Meanwhile in Matsuyama, some Russian officers became dissatisfied with the served meals and proceeded to employ personal cooks, spending anywhere from six yen to fifteen yen a month on food.⁴⁸

Another area in which the Japanese military showed flexibility was housing for officers. As of 16 January 1905, the Russian officers with accompanying dependents were allowed to rent ordinary houses for accommodation.⁴⁹ However, these POWs and their dependents were

⁴² Ibid., 402, 464.

⁴³ Ibid., 464–5.

⁴⁴ Matsuyama fūryo shūyōjo, 110–11.

⁴⁵ Ibid., 18.

⁴⁶ Saikami Tokio, *Matsuyama shūyōjo: Horyo to nihonjin* (Tokyo, 1969), 68–9.

⁴⁷ Itō Kyūkichirō, “Tekikoku no ichinen yūhan,” in *Meiji bungaku zenshū*, vol. XCVII: *Meiji sensō bungakushū*, 350.

⁴⁸ Matsuyama fūryo shūyōjo, 19.

⁴⁹ Rikugunshō, *Meiji*, 8: 430. There is a discrepancy between the *Matsuyama Record* and the records of the Ministry of Army. The former says that the arrangement was authorized in April 1904, but no such record remains with the Ministry of Army. Matsuyama fūryo shūyōjo, 226.

prohibited from communicating by post or telegraph without first obtaining permission from camp headquarters.⁵⁰ Sofia von Teil, who travelled from Russia to be with her injured officer husband, Vladimir, was one of the beneficiaries of this new regulation.⁵¹ Even before this regulation came into effect, she was given a special authorization from the army minister to take up residence in Matsuyama to be near her husband. Her diary shows that her previous experience of living in Japan as a child helped her enormously to adjust to the new life in Matsuyama, often with her acting even as a cultural mediator between the suspicious and unhappy POWs and the Japanese. Most of the other beneficiaries of the new regulation were the new arrivals from Port Arthur in January 1905, such as Captain Semen Ivanov, who memorably arrived in Matsuyama with a young daughter of about eight in tow.⁵²

Another issue of great importance to the bored POWs was the “outing,” that is, going on strolls around the city. In June 1904, the Army Ministry gave permission to the Matsuyama Camp to allow POWs to go on unaccompanied walks after signing an “oath” that they would not try to escape.⁵³ However, a major row developed between the Japanese and the POWs as a result of the inappropriate choice of a Russian word to translate “oath.” The POWs angrily claimed that it was a sacrilege to use this translation, and as a protest, only one-third signed in order to gain the privilege. Once the anger died down, more POWs came forward to sign the oath in order to enjoy the unsupervised diversions. Those officers and NCOs who did not sign the oath went on strolls under the chaperon of Japanese guards. Incidentally, privates were only allowed to go on supervised walks.⁵⁴

On these unsupervised walks, many POWs frequented the Dōgo spa area of the city, where teahouses and prostitutes made a handsome business. One of the famous love stories of the war occurred when a young naval officer, Fedor Reingard, fell madly in love with Ohana, one of the attendant girls (*yuonna*) at the famous Dōgo spa. Reingard published a book about it in 1907, which was translated and serialized in the broadsheet, *Osaka mainichi shinbun*, from January

⁵⁰ Rikugunshō, *Meiji*, 8: 452–4.

⁵¹ Ogiso and Ogiso, 219–20.

⁵² Matsuyama furyo shūyōjo, 226–44.

⁵³ Rikugunshō, *Meiji*, 8: 397.

⁵⁴ Matsuyama furyo shūyōjo, 22–4.

to February 1909 as “Miss Ohana: (Diary of a young Russian officer as a prisoner of war)” [Ohana san: (Wakaki rokoku shikan no furyo nikki)].⁵⁵ However, there were some model officers, too, who read by the banks of the River Ishite, took walks to tour the nearby porcelain factories, or collected specimens of flora and insects. In the summer, the walking area was expanded to include the beaches of Takahama and Mitsuhamma. Apart from these strolls which gave them a degree of freedom, POWs tried to kill time by playing cards, tennis, having pets, especially birds, riding bicycles, engaging in photography, playing music and dancing, and performing plays.⁵⁶

Last but not least, the Japanese military ensured that the pastoral care of the POWs was not neglected. Hence, “[i]n order to satisfy their religious conscience, the missionaries of the Orthodox and the Catholic churches are allowed periodically to visit prisoners’ quarters, the former for the Russians and the latter for the Poles, for the exercise of their religious worship.”⁵⁷ Weekly religious service was conducted in the chapel, in addition to services for all other Christian events in the calendar.⁵⁸ Since Bishop Nicholas, the head of the Orthodox Church in Japan was prevented by the authorities from leaving Tokyo for fear of his personal safety, Father Sergei Suzuki, a convert based in Osaka, was entrusted with the task in Matsuyama.⁵⁹ However, some of the POWs suspected Father Suzuki of being more an agent of the Japanese military than an overseer of their pastoral care.⁶⁰

Moreover, the Japanese wardens soon realized that their POWs were not all ethnic Russians, but included among others, Poles, Jews, Finns, Baltic minorities (especially Estonians), Armenians, and Tatars. This diverse POW population represented many different religions, including Orthodoxy (roughly 71.5 percent), Roman Catholicism, Judaism, Protestantism (Lutherans in particular), and Islam.⁶¹ The *Matsuyama Record* shows that the Japanese became aware that even among the Russians, those who came from “European Russia” and

⁵⁵ Reingaado [Reingard, Feodor Feodorovich], *Ryōjun rōjō: Ken to koi*, trans. Takasu Baikai and Kajima Teigetsu (Tokyo, 1912); Kaiyama, 83–4. Reingard was then a twenty-two-year-old second lieutenant (*shōi*).

⁵⁶ Matsuyama furyo shūyōjo, 25–35.

⁵⁷ “Treatment of the Russian Prisoners of War,” *Album of the Russian Captives’ Quarters at Matsuyama* (Matsuyama, 1904).

⁵⁸ Matsuyama furyo shūyōjo, 273–4.

⁵⁹ Senkyōshi Nikorai, 336, 350.

⁶⁰ Kupuchinsuki, 37–9.

⁶¹ Rikugunshō, “Dai nijū san hen: Furyo,” 45, 93.

those had who lived for a long time in Siberia were different. Moreover, the Orthodox Russians tended to look down on other ethnic groups "as though they were slaves," who reciprocated by despising the Russians "as though they were beasts."⁶² As a result of this obvious tension, Poles and Jews were housed in separate buildings from the Russians in Matsuyama. Sofia von Teil noticed that the Japanese seemed to prefer the POWs from Poland, Finland, the Baltic provinces, and the Jews, because they were more diligent, clean, and less argumentative.⁶³

Of all the ethnic non-Russians, Poles were the biggest group within the Russian Manchurian Army, consisting of up to forty percent and even fifty percent of some regiments.⁶⁴ The Polish nationalist leader, Roman Dmowski, visited Japan during the war in May to July 1904 to meet Japanese political and military leaders, and pledged in the memorandum of 20 July 1904 that, "The Polish people would like to contribute in any way possible to Japanese victory as long as it does not disadvantage their national interest."⁶⁵ The Japanese were taken aback that the complex ethnic composition of the "Russian" military meant that loyalties were deeply divided. This was particularly noticeable with the Poles, Jews, and Tatars, who were overjoyed with Russian defeats at Port Arthur, Mukden, and the Battle of the Sea of Japan.⁶⁶ Although the experience of having direct contact with the Russians unwittingly gave the Japanese wardens a more sophisticated understanding of the "Russians" as a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural, and multi-religious nation, these observations did not necessarily lead them to hold enlightened views of the enemy. Instead, they were used as evidence against the cohesiveness of the Russian army.

In all fairness, Japanese wardens like Kōno probably tried their best to keep their unwanted "guests" suitably comfortable, battling with cultural differences and linguistic barriers, as the *Matsuyama Record* shows many instances of the authorities struggling to accommodate the wishes of the POWs, who never ceased to complain.⁶⁷

⁶² Matsuyama furyo shūyōjo, 137.

⁶³ Ogiso and Ogiso, 200–1.

⁶⁴ Bando Hiroshi, *Pōrandōjin to nichiro sensō* (Tokyo, 1995), 20.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 40–1.

⁶⁶ Matsuyama furyo shūyōjo, 147; "Himeji furyo no kanki," *Kainan shinbun*, 3 June 1905.

⁶⁷ Philip A. Towle, "Japanese Treatment of Prisoners in 1904–1905—Foreign Officers' Reports," *Military Affairs*, XXIX, no. 3 (October, 1975), 115–6.

On this point, even Kupchinskii, who tended to be generally more critical of his experience in Matsuyama, readily conceded.⁶⁸ Doctors and officers were often highly praised for their civilized conduct towards the POWs. It helped that some Japanese who had contact with the POWs were regarded as the embodiment of “*bushido*” values.⁶⁹ Thus, in the eyes of the POWs, there emerged two types of Japanese people—the “good Japanese” and the “bad Japanese.” The “good Russian” could identify with the “good Japanese,” as “civilization” overcame “race.” The well-educated and well-cultivated class of Russians who left first-hand accounts of their Japanese experience were able to appreciate the values upheld by the well-educated and well-cultivated classes of Japanese. In this sense, class mattered more than race.

Leaving aside the POW camp, how did local authorities respond to the Russians? Both the authorities of Ehime Prefecture and the City of Matsuyama were extremely concerned about projecting the right image of Matsuyama as a “civilized” international city to the outside world. As a result, local authorities were particularly concerned about controlling crowd behavior that was bound to get rowdy and “barbarous” when overexcited by battle victories. On 5 March 1904, the Ehime Prefectural government issued an advisory concerning the conduct of the people towards the POWs, for whom they should “feel sorry.”⁷⁰ As one of the early measures to educate the crowd, “Rules concerning Conduct towards the Prisoners of War and the Injured of the Enemy Country” appeared on 19 March 1904 in the local *Kainan shinbun*,

The conduct by our people towards the enemy people is what the rest of the world is focusing their attention on, in order to determine whether or not we are worthy of attaining the labels of “the Heavenly Sunny First Rate Civilized People,” “Nation of the Oriental Monarch.” Therefore, as the behavior of our regional people towards the enemy people will be judged in front of the world as the behavior of the people of Imperial Japan, it is absolutely important that we have enough determination to maintain honor as the victorious nation, by watching every move to the point of being overly cautious, and respecting international rules fully.

⁶⁸ Kupchinskii, 21.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 112; Urajimiru Semiyonofu, *Zenyaku Tsushima kaisenki: Kaigun chūsa Urajimiru Semiyonofu*, trans. Ōkubo Yasuo (Tokyo, 1935), 176; Ogiso and Ogiso, 238.

⁷⁰ “Ehime ken kokuyu,” in Ehime kenshi hensan iinkai, ed., *Ehimekenshi*, 41 vols. (Matsuyama, 1982–88), III: *Shiryōhen: kindai* (5 March 1904).

The people of Ehime Prefecture were asked to conduct themselves with propriety, and warned not to “be without clothes and behave shamefully, torment animals, scrawl graffiti, and urinate in the street.”⁷¹ In May, another warning was published in *Kainan shinbun* on the eve of the lantern parade (*chōchin gyōretsu*) to celebrate a military victory,

The Lantern Parade is a celebratory parade arising out of the nation’s enthusiasm. As a result, men and women should restrain themselves from behaving indecently as though it is a festival. On this occasion, there must be great caution not to overdress stupidly. Moreover, it is necessary to warn especially against getting drunk and disrupting others by shouting. These behaviors will indicate the barbaric conduct of the triumphant nation, and as a result, should be strictly avoided, and all are asked to ensure that there will be no misconduct.⁷²

Possibly, the stern official warning worked this time as the lantern parade that took place on 4 May in Matsuyama went without any trouble, with hardly any women participating.⁷³ In the case above, it is quite clear that the official concern for proper conduct during the parade derived from the political concern of the possible effect of such rowdy behavior from the public on the image of Japan as a “civilized” nation. Not only that, the authorities became concerned that the noisy celebrations might have an adverse psychological effect on the POWs, especially the ill, and ordered the parade to avoid the route along which POWs were housed. Therefore, the many lantern parades celebrating each Japanese victory became objects of the state’s continuous effort to control international images of Japan during the war.

One cannot but wonder whether there was an element of wanting to show the Russians the best of Matsuyama, out of a sense of local pride. Ehime Prefectural Matsuyama Higher Women’s School (Ehime kenritsu Matsuyama kōtō jogakkō), which stood next to the Seishōji Temple, a POW camp, was frequently visited by Russian POW officers and their wives. Tamura Fusayo, a student, wrote in the class journal, “It is the strangest thing in this world that the strangers from a far away foreign country should be here in Matsuyama and visiting our school.”⁷⁴ Mizuno Hironori, the aforementioned naval

⁷¹ Kyakuno Sumihiro, *Meiji hyakunen rekishi no shōgendai* (Matsuyama, 1967), 93.

⁷² “Chōchin gyōretsu nitsuite,” *Kainan shinbun* (3 May 1904).

⁷³ “Ichi sakuya no chōchin gyōretsu,” *Kainan shinbun* (5 May 1904).

⁷⁴ Hamada Yūsuke (ed.), *Meiji no hanazono: Ehime kenritsu Matsuyama kōtō jogakkō kyōshitsu nishū* (Matsuyama, 1995), 73.

officer, derided the authorities for promoting such visits as part of national propaganda: "... using the prisoners of war as a means of introducing to the world how developed our educational system is, is more foolish than giving fertilizer after having plucked the roots. Oh!"⁷⁵

Another example of this was the generous invitation extended to POWs by the Chairman of the local Iyo Railway to go for a ride on the special service train so that they could enjoy the view of the Japanese countryside, and visit pottery factories at nearby Tobe.⁷⁶ He even suggested the invitation of POWs to a performance of the Noh theatre.⁷⁷ Such a tendency was exacerbated once the peace negotiations started in summer 1905, when the Japanese increasingly treated the Russians as "accidental" tourists.

There was no doubt that the large influx of POWs brought a commercial boom to the provincial city and that the townspeople perceived the Russians as an important source of income. The lucrative trade with POWs generated some half million yen during their stay in Matsuyama.⁷⁸ The local newspaper even reported that the Matsuyama municipal authorities were under pressure to bring as many POWs as possible to the city because of economic benefits.⁷⁹ As the Matsuyama merchants were not used to catering to the Russians, the more entrepreneurial Nagasaki and Kobe merchants, selling merchandise that the westerners liked, such as tortoise shell and ivory crafts, soon invaded the city. Even the low-key merchants of Matsuyama became stimulated by this competition, and started producing expensive Western-style sweets, as well as high-collared Western clothes and shoes. One very entrepreneurial shoe merchant in the Sanbanchō district even employed a Polish POW to manufacture "totally European-style" shoes. Soon, the Minatochō-district became known as "Russia town."

The most lucrative sector of the local economy was undisputedly populated by rickshaw pullers. They earned anywhere from two yen to five yen a day on average, and this, in turn, boosted the businesses of cheap drinking holes in the city.⁸⁰ In early August 1905, the association of merchants in the Dōgo area hosted a bicycle race for the

⁷⁵ Mizuno, 164.

⁷⁶ "Furyo ihō," *Kaiman shinbun* (18 September 1904).

⁷⁷ Ibid. (5 October 1904).

⁷⁸ Matsuyama furyo shūyōjo, 328–34.

⁷⁹ "Furyo ihō," *Kaiman shinbun* (11 June 1905).

⁸⁰ Matsuyama furyo shūyōjo, 337–8.

POWs of other ranks, since these troops were more restricted in their range of activities than officers.⁸¹ This event, which was also in part to thank the Russians for their patronage of local businesses, was held in Dōgo Park and attracted some 1,000 Russians and 2,000 Japanese.⁸²

Judging from the reception of the POWs in Matsuyama, popular reaction to the Russians ranged from curiosity and sympathy to commercial opportunism. In the minds of the local military and municipal authorities, the “civilized” treatment of POWs became their top priority, even to the extent that the Russians overshadowed local soldiers who went out to fight against those very Russians. In the *Kainan shinbun*, there was a daily column on the life of the POWs, but no similar column for local soldiers from the 22nd Regiment. How must the locals have felt, having to suppress negative emotions towards the same enemy who took away their loved ones, for the sake of “civilization”? Moreover, the relationship between the Japanese wardens and the POWs was not without its problems, as it became clear that the official policy of “civilized” conduct was more easily stated than carried out in practice.

Conclusions

“Civilization” was the key word in the context of Japanese images of Russia during the Russo-Japanese war. In the sphere of domestic public opinion, Japanese pundits were deeply concerned that Japan’s belligerency should not be labelled the Yellow Peril by Western public opinion, and they carried on impassioned debates on the justifications of war. However, the crucial importance of having to portray themselves as the “civilized nation” led most editorialists to use “uncivilized” rhetoric to construct images of Russia as the enemy “Other.” In the treatment of Russian POWs in Matsuyama, there was often a gap between the idealistic humanitarian policy of the state and its implementation on a daily level by local military officials. Although the Japanese wardens at the POW camp claimed that they had bent over backwards to accommodate the demands of the “honorable

⁸¹ “Furyo ihō,” *Kainan shinbun* (19 July 1905).

⁸² “Furyo jitensha kyōsō,” *Kainan shinbun* (8 August 1905).

POWs,” cultural and linguistic barriers, as well as a generally condescending attitude towards the POWs meant that the official policy of civilized humanitarianism was only partially carried out into practice. On the one hand, the *Matsuyama Record*, which was an unauthorized publication, subverted the official discourse of “civilization” as the wardens frankly recorded their prejudices against the Russians. On the other hand, the popular response to Russians in Matsuyama demonstrated a more practical approach, centering on commercial opportunism. All in all, beneath the veneer of the “civilization discourse” there lay many different layers of reality, some of which lived up to the official discourse with only moderate success.

CHAPTER EIGHTEEN

BATTLING BLOCKS: REPRESENTATIONS OF THE WAR IN WOODBLOCK ART

James Ulak

Within a few weeks of the start of hostilities between Japan and Russia in February 1904, both domestic and international audiences were treated to Japanese woodblock print renderings of the early naval forays on the Russian stronghold at Port Arthur (see Fig. 1). Eventually, the major events of the war on land and sea were all recorded in the traditional woodblock print format. Of course, the woodblock print was not the only medium of visual record available. Photography, photolithography, chromolithography, moving film, and illustration were the major tools used to convey the progress of the war. Visual communication in the fin-de-siècle favored the exploration of multiple formats. Nevertheless, the matrix of meanings, old and new, borne by the woodblock print offered the viewer a unique perspective. An examination of the war prints suggests that their special qualities of historic visual familiarity and accretions of thematic nuance supplied a level of meaning unavailable either to the photograph or to the illustration. These qualities served multiple purposes in reporting the conflict that placed Japan firmly and irreversibly on the world's stage.

Press coverage of the Russo-Japanese War, both by the Japanese and the international media, followed a pattern prevalent in the late nineteenth- and early twentieth centuries. That blueprint reflected a time when reportage of events used a range of options for visual communication. Indeed, during the decade or two at the turn of the twentieth century there was a remarkably satisfying potpourri of reportorial image-making (often connected with colonial or imperial wars), in which the distinctive values of diverse forms of description were on comparative display. The varied visual records of the era's other conflicts, such as the Spanish-American War and the Boer War, provide interesting comparisons. Furthermore, they remind us that the Japanese

were not unique in immersing themselves in full ranges of available visual explications of events. It was an exceedingly rich and imaginative time.

It was in this context that the woodblock print, a barely surviving feature of pre-modern Japanese visual culture, experienced its final assertive moment.¹ The Russo-Japanese War would prove to be the last occasion for the widespread use of the broadsheet Japanese woodblock print as a vehicle of mass visual communication. The ultimate dominance of the photograph as a mass media form of visual representation in the twentieth century was a victory of technology, but the woodblock enjoyed a last dramatic burst of activity as a popular medium.

The relatively recent interest in Russo-Japanese War prints evidenced in scholarly publications and exhibition catalogues has paid greatest attention to the standard art historical matters of authorship and style, but, to date, no systematic consideration of the prints has suggested a study of the unique thematic features tied to the purposes and perceptions of the war that emerge from an examination of the prints.² This essay is intended to suggest a potentially productive direction that may lead to greater understanding and appreciation of the propaganda purposes of the prints.

In Japan the Buddhist establishment originally used the woodblock print as an economical means of mass proselytizing. The production of iconic images and sacred texts through print was vastly less expensive than commissioning paintings of such works. Rather more secular patrons of the art arose in the early seventeenth century, as the “floating worlds” of pleasure, principally the theater and the brothel, were developing in the empire’s major cities. The print became

¹ Virtually at the time of the Russo-Japanese War, and in addition to the role of the print as a war propaganda tool, two new and quite distinct schools of print-making were born. One group, called the *sosaku hanga* (creative print) movement emulated European etching and engraving techniques. Its prints were impressionistic rather than precise and typically the whole production process was handled by the artist rather than by a multi-handed guild. The other movement, revivalist in intention and rather explicitly commercial, was the *shin hanga* (new print) movement. Artists in this lineage revisited the pre-modern themes of female beauty, landscape and bird-and-flower and re-framed them for a more contemporary sensibility. In both instances, the prints produced were directed toward a collector or fine arts clientele, removing them from the pre-modern populist tradition.

² See, for example, the catalogue for the exhibition at the Arthur M. Sackler Gallery in 2000, Frederic A. Scharf and James T. Ulak, *A Well-Watched War: Images from the Russo-Japanese Front, 1904–1905* (Newbury, MA, 2000).

the medium of choice to commemorate and to interpret the unique aspects of the demimonde.

The well-documented evolution of the print from early ink monochrome impressions to complex multi-blocked full color productions of the late eighteenth century was paralleled by shifts in theme. From the late eighteenth century, landscape, bird-and-flower studies, as well as themes inspired by literature and history were increasingly popular. The medium followed client tastes into the larger world and, by the last quarter of the nineteenth century, began to fill reportorial roles.

It was precisely at its moment of socially expanded function that the woodblock print was felled by competition from images available in mass-circulation newspapers. The technology of rapid reproduction had outpaced the time-honored format. Illustration, chromolithography, and eventually photo-reproduction began to satisfy the needs of a mass clientele. Publishers were quick to realize that, when given the choice between speedily available images of modest quality and the elegant, painstakingly produced woodblock print, the market would readily accept the former. By contrast, in military photography the issue was not only technical: photographs could effectively offer views of battlefields before and after action; even the moment of a shell blast could be captured. But the drama inherent in moments of gallantry, anger, terror, and grief were largely beyond the range of the camera. And these were the things that a mass audience wanted to see. At the same time, the alleged objectivity of the camera was less powerful as a tool of propaganda.

At the close of the nineteenth century, Japanese audiences were emerging from the Meiji Restoration, their twenty-five year forced march to adopt Western modernity. On the cultural plane, this effort included absorbing a range of previously unfamiliar visual media, including oil painting and photography. The traditional woodblock print was an important transitional medium in this process. Japanese images from the war zone were supplied through photography and illustration, but the polychrome woodblock print would remain a unique albeit endangered vehicle of mass image distribution for a few more years.

Woodblock prints had played an important role during the earlier Sino-Japanese War (1894–95), essentially waged over the same territorial issues. In competition with the mass press, the print still provided drama, theatricality and, most notably, color. However, by

the time of the conflict with Russia, the technique of chromolithography had advanced to the degree that it could be visually and economically competitive with the woodblock print. Though the ability to offer mass distribution of color images on newsprint was still years in the future, artists rapidly found themselves forced to adapt to vagaries of technological innovation. Many worked both as illustrators for the increasing number of daily newspapers and periodicals, while at the same time continuing to serve an audience for the print format that had been a staple of popular culture for centuries.

The creations of Kobayashi Kiyochika (1847–1915), one of the most productive print artists during the Sino-Japanese War, are a good example of these changes.³ During that conflict he turned out seventy triptych images. Ten years later, he was responsible for slightly more than twenty triptychs of the Russo-Japanese War. However, his output of single-sheet cartoons occasioned by the war, often dense with satirical text, ranged to over sixty. It is also noteworthy that the burst of creative print production brought on by both wars was preceded by lengthy periods when Kiyochika was not significantly involved in any traditional print production.

Japanese prints helped to keep up morale on the home front, where news of casualties was constant. At the same time, they showed the outside world that the bond issues that financed the war, which were sold in London and New York, were helping to win the war. Indeed, Japanese prints produced during the war with Russia frequently had over-printed titles in English and were obviously aimed at Westerners. In Meiji Japan, the government tightly controlled printmaking. Not surprisingly, the images are always favorable to the Japanese.

The woodblock print industry in Tokyo took telegraphed reports and turned them into images that could be distributed shortly after the newspaper accounts they illustrated. There was tremendous competition among printmakers to be the first to publish, and inevitably some prints were based on incorrect information. For example, a woodblock print designed by Ohara Koson (1877–1945) depicts the death of Lieutenant General N.A. Kashtalinskii in a clash during the Battle of the Yalu River (April 26–May 1, 1904). The Koson print, produced only a few weeks after the battle, was drawn according to

³ More details about the artist are in Henry D. Smith II, *Kiyochika—Artist of Meiji Japan* (Santa Barbara, 1988).

battlefield information allegedly passed on to the Japanese from captured Russian officers. Kashtalinskii was in fact wounded, but he went on to command Russian forces later in the war and played an important role at the Battle of Liaoyang. Similarly, the *Japan Weekly Mail* reported the death of more than eight hundred Russians on 26 March 1904 when their transport train was said to have crashed through the ice on Lake Baikal. Woodblock prints offering renderings of the horrific loss were soon available. However, this event cannot be corroborated by any other source.

The quality of the prints produced varied widely, ranging from compelling compositions of dramatic force and high technical skill to poorly printed, uninventive images that were no better than sketches rendered in a newspaper. Indeed, what counted as an “effective” print very much depended on the critical perspective of not one, but several audiences. A bold, theatrical presentation of an event, such as the sinking of the *Petrovsk* or the death of Commander Hirose, had inherent dramatic value not found in the historically important but visually prosaic moments such as Stessel’s surrender of Port Arthur to Nogi. A visually unwieldy mix of text boxes and descriptive image often compounded the reportorial aspect of these prints. If the former were the visual heir to print renderings of climactic scenes in kabuki plays, the latter (for want of a better term, here called “reportorial”) was a hybrid that reflected both pre-modern print expectations with those more recently nurtured by newspapers and magazines, i.e., illustration with text and or photography.

Among the more traditional prints there were, of course, the standard valedictories for Japanese heroes of rank. Perhaps the most celebrated action was that of Hirose Takeo (1868–1904), who died on March 27, 1904 while serving as the commander of four ships that were to be exploded and scuttled to form a partially submerged blockade at the entrance to Port Arthur. After setting charges and shoving off from the prepared vessels, Hirose again returned to his command ship, the *Fukui Maru*, to search for his missing warrant officer. It was then that Hirose was felled, either by the explosion or by Russian guns. His subsequent funeral in Tokyo was a major event covered by the international press. A particularly attractive and cosmopolitan figure, Hirose had studied in Russia after graduating from the Japanese naval academy. His love for Russian literature and apparent reluctance for his own nation to be in conflict with a people and culture for which he had great affection, allowed for the posthumous creation

of a larger-than-life heroic persona who had the demonstrated qualities of physical courage, loyalty, dramatic personal conflict and cultural sophistication.⁴ Woodblock prints depicting Hirose's final moments were produced by the major artists of the day. The two most frequently encountered compositional models show Hirose astride the exploding deck of the *Fukui Maru* or in his launch about to turn back to rescue his warrant officer (see fig. 2).

Standing as an interesting parallel to the death of Hirose was the loss of the distinguished Russian Admiral Stepan Makarov (1848–1904). With a reputation as a scientist, inventor, explorer and inspirational leader, Makarov was placed in command of the Russian Pacific Squadron in March 1904. On April 13th he took his flagship, the *Petropavlovsk*, just beyond the harbor at Port Arthur to rescue a disoriented Russian destroyer. Turning back, the *Petropavlovsk* struck a Japanese mine and within a minute went down with a crew of more than six hundred. Japanese witnesses recalled watching the sudden demise of a huge vessel and respected admiral in stunned, almost embarrassed silence, noting the sad irony of the tragic loss of so gallant a figure to the blunt anonymity of modern war technology. Images of the loss of Makarov and the *Petropavlovsk* soon became the subject of prints, some featuring the valiant commander stoically balancing on a dramatically tilting deck and others eschewing the individual moment in favor of a long-distance view of the sinking ship.

The sympathetic portrayal of Makarov signaled the arrival of a new subgenre, that of the “valiant enemy.” Prints produced ten years earlier during the Sino-Japanese War routinely depicted a barbarous and villainous foe that was, with good reason, subdued without mercy. By comparison, images of the Russian adversary were more nuanced. To be sure, some prints depicted a subhuman Russian aggressor who, if allowed to reach the Japanese archipelago, would rape and pillage. However, it was more common to see the Japanese illustrator's fascination with the splendid regalia of this Western enemy. Print makers strove to communicate the seemingly inherent elegance

⁴ Hirose Takeo (1868–1904) studied in Russia from 1897 until 1902 as part of Japan's overall strategy of gleaning as much information as possible about potential rivals. He was supposedly quite popular at the court. Hirose's appreciation for the West was a key element in his hagiography for it played the chords of conflicting loyalties and ultimate sacrifice. Hirose was awarded the great honor of the posthumous title of *gunshin*—a martial spirit or god of war.

and panache of the Russian warrior, particularly those of the officer class. Even in the renderings of violent clashes, striking visual values of color and pageantry seen in Russian uniforms and flags captured the Japanese artist's vivid imagination.

Whether depicting the charge of dashing cavalry officers or a vanquished Russian battalion on the verge of annihilation, artists strove for a near theatrical level of production values in an apparent reference to Western painting composition models for the slain leader, heroic defeat, and valor under siege. Makarov and others like him represented a respected enemy. Any engagement with them reflected well on the Japanese; victory over them all the more so. The similarities between the print hagiographies of Hirose's and Makarov's deaths even suggest a level beyond that of worthy foe. This image of the sacrificed cosmopolitan and intellectual high-ranking hero conveyed, whether intentionally or not, the quality of lives squandered on either side of the conflict.

The appearance of a visual vocabulary able to accommodate depictions of a gallant foe was further nuanced by the suggestion that Hirose represented a new breed of warrior, who had gone beyond his national borders to appreciate someone he now fought. This hero genre was further developed as noticeably greater attention was given to the achievements of low-ranking soldiers and sailors. Elevation and adulation of the Japanese rank-and-file might be understood as an effective way to honor genuinely heroic acts and thereby justify the sacrifices of conscription and high casualty rates.

The first recognized Japanese hero of the conflict was a very early loss, the chief gunnery officer of the destroyer *Fuji*, who fell in an exchange at Port Arthur on the morning of February 9, 1904. His action portrait, with hand raised to command firing, included a cartouche with both Japanese and English text. This bilingual feature, seen to some degree in the Sino-Japanese War, appeared much more frequently on prints from the Russian conflict. The surprising number of these prints with English text suggests the wider audience to whom the Japanese sought to present their side of the story.

Other images of the valor of anonymous common soldiers and sailors left no doubt of their individuality. In an incident on March 10, 1904, reported in the Japanese press five days later, the Japanese ship *Sazanami* seized and boarded the disabled Russian destroyer *Steregushchii* just off Port Arthur. A wonderfully retributive image that virtually bristles with righteous satisfaction shows an unnamed Japanese sailor booting

the Russian commander off his deck (see fig. 3). The siege and subsequent seizure in late May 1904 of Jinzhou, a city of great strategic importance situated on one of the narrowest stretches of the Liaodong Peninsula, was effected by the work of bold Japanese engineers who braved gunfire to set an explosive charge at the city gate. A depiction of that moment, showing two unnamed Japanese coolly placing the charge as the earth around them is kicked up by gunfire.

Another new theme that emerged in the war prints produced in the 1904–5 period was that of the Japanese as compassionate warrior. Following the capture of Jinzhou, the Russians retreated to their bulwarks on the adjacent mountain, Nanshan. The Japanese overran that defense in short order but with vicious close range engagements. One Private Ueda, a soldier from Nara, distinguished himself by stopping to aid a wounded Russian only to be fired upon by retreating Russians (see Fig. 4). The text on the print that describes this event leaves the reader unclear as to the fate of Private Ueda. This dramatic incident was used to underscore the selfless compassion demonstrated by the Japanese and the cruel response by the Russians.

Both Japanese and Western sources, whether written and visual, remarked on the effectiveness of Japanese battlefield medicine and the support offered by the Japanese Red Cross. Japan had joined the Red Cross in 1886, and in 1899 commissioned two large hospital ships that saw extensive supporting action in the Russo-Japanese War. A correspondent covering the advance of the Japanese army for the *London Daily Mail* described the Japanese medical corps' action at the Yalu River in late April and early May 1904,

Field hospitals were run up; the German trained medical men, alert and cool, opened their cases of instruments and their quick work began. No time for delay or finicking hesitation here . . . a Cossack in grey shirt lay still beside his erstwhile adversary in blue coat. The Japanese was carried along on a stretcher close to the Siberian infantryman, the one shot through the leg, the other in the side. Here was a Russian officer, his silver-laced coat ripped off and thrown by the doctors lightly over him, his face graven with pain, every half-conscious thought merged in the one determination not to show signs of his agony before his nation's foes.

A number of woodblock prints also detailed the work of the Army Medical Corps. In addition to the British text quoted above, interesting and helpful corroborative versions of the apparently egalitar-

ian actions of the Corps are found in illustrations in Western journals. The gouache drawing by the prolific illustrator Max Cowper (active c. 1892–1911), probably based on a photograph, shows a Japanese surgeon examining a wounded Russian soldier at a battlefield hospital. A naïve though powerfully direct watercolor rendered by an artist simply signed “Shunko” presents a young Japanese soldier in summer uniform giving water to a wounded Russian. These, and a proliferation of woodblock print images, did much to advertise the reality of a high level of Japanese medical professionalism and humanitarian action during the war.

Nearly two thousand Japanese Red Cross army nurses served with distinction in the war. Depictions of these women and their work in the format of the woodblock print carried the nuance of historical usage. Traditionally, women had usually been depicted in Japanese art, most especially in woodblock print, as entertainers and prostitutes. In the late nineteenth century, as the print format began to show women involved in a range of domestic settings, artists had difficulty in shedding their atavistic habits of evoking pre-modern sexual fantasies. At least one series of erotic prints featuring Red Cross nurses has survived.

Along with portrayals of ministering nurses, woodblock print bookplates also depicted female protagonists of novels and short stories of the period. Renderings of wives and lovers fretting over the fate of their loved ones on the battlefields of Manchuria were commonplace. These often took the form of beautiful women daydreaming as an image of a far-off battle floated above their heads. While such prints were intended to elicit feelings of patriotic sacrifice and loyal devotion, the artists were often unable to do more than to rely on traditional depictions of jealousy, passionate longing and unrequited love. There was no established visual tradition to advise in the sympathetic portrayal of the anxiety or grief experienced by the wife or the betrothed of a soldier or sailor.

Each of the general categories discussed above, heroism, Japan the compassionate internationalist, and the visual complexities of women in a war-torn society, were new subjects for the Japanese print in the first decade of the twentieth century. While quite distinct as topics, and probably not the only innovative uses of the medium as Russo-Japanese War propaganda, they suggest common thematic threads. In their relative degrees of success, each topic challenged

the effectiveness of a traditional medium to escape the cliché of expected reaction and convey complexity. As a propaganda tool, the woodblock print medium was at its best in providing a comfortable, familiar visual setting within which to convey the unfamiliar. Through the use of time-honored visual conventions, it could depict the dramatic action of a split-second, something not yet within the power of the photograph.

CHAPTER NINETEEN

RUSSIAN REPRESENTATIONS OF THE JAPANESE ENEMY

Richard Stites

Iaponiia: the Intellectual Environment

One might say that negative and transferable orientalist images of the Japanese found a place among the Russians long before the conflict of 1904–5. Nothing is easier than to adapt clichés about one group of people to another. One need only recall, taking two examples, the nearly identical American popular depiction of Nazi spies in the early 1940s and Soviet agents in the late 1940s; or the similar application of the “gook” formula to the Japanese in World War II, the North Koreans and Chinese in the 1950s, and the Vietcong in the 1960s and 1970s.¹ British colonists in the days of the high empire freely wielded the term “wog” in reference to Arab, Persian, Turk, and any number of nationalities of the Indian subcontinent. Russians had been fighting against Asians for centuries prior to the clash with Japan: the steppe nomads of the Kievan period, followed by Mongols, Tatars, Ottoman Turks, Caucasian peoples, and Central Asians—to name only the most important. At the turn of the twentieth century, Russian forces in Beijing and Manchuria made little distinction between genuine Boxers and other Chinese who were liquidated as bandits. In 1904, many Russians saw the Japanese as just another “Asiatic” race to be properly disciplined and subdued by a superior European (Russian) force.

In spite of many episodic and fragmentary contacts with Japanese, to Russian society of the nineteenth century, Japan remained an exotic island kingdom shrouded in mystery. Writing about it first hand, the novelist Ivan Goncharov in the 1850s had depicted Japanese

¹ Since 9 September 2001, the American media has largely avoided the “rag-head” image that had often been applied indiscriminately to Palestinians, Iraqis, and Iranians. I wish to thank the many critical and helpful comments of my colleagues at the Washington, D.C. Seminar on Russian Studies at Georgetown University, February 13, 2004.

society as an “ant heap” in his book, *The Frigate Pallas*.² Asian languages including Japanese were taught at the Vladivostok Eastern Institute but their graduates were not strategically deployed. For example, Japanese was not offered at the General Staff Academy until 1905, and the Russian army remained grossly under-informed about matters Japanese.³

The dynasty discovered Japan through the sly invocation by Kaiser Wilhelm of the alleged Yellow Peril and through the unfortunate 1891 voyage to Japan of the Tsarevich Nicholas, during which a would-be assassin assaulted him. All this was heated up in the years of Russia’s ill-considered expansion into Manchuria and Korea. When the Russo-Japanese war broke out in 1904, Nicholas II, now the commander-in-chief, “failed to perceive that Japan’s army was more than a band of ‘little brown monkeys’ (macaques), as he called them”⁴ in contrast to private expressions of admiration for certain aspects of Japanese life. Given the negative cue from on high, the official *Pravitel’svennyi Vestnik* (Government Messenger) was bound to follow suit and it painted an unambiguously negative picture of the enemy right up to war’s end.⁵

The mass circulation press however did not always follow suit, and ignorance at the top failed to ascend to a level of massive self-mystification. Only a few of the bigger papers, such as A.S. Suvorin’s *Novoe Vremia* (New Times), kept up the beat of the war drums and anti-Japanese mockery all through 1904. The boulevard press also engaged in angry discourse about Russia’s “historical mission” and the Japanese maniacs who resisted it. The nastier papers demonized the enemy in the crudest possible way, constantly speaking of *iaposhki* (Japs) instead of *Iapontsy* (Japanese) even in news stories.

² Barbara Heldt, “‘Japanese’ in Russian Literature: Transforming Identities” in J. Thomas Rimer (ed.), *A Hidden Fire: Russian and Japanese Cultural Encounters, 1868–1926* (Stanford, 1995), 172. For the earlier encounters, see David Goldfrank, “Contrasting Contributions to the History of Russo-Japanese Relations,” to appear in *Kritika*.

³ David Wolff, “Winning a Thousand Daily Tsushimas: Russian Orientology in the Far East, 1899–1917,” ms.; David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, “Russian Military Intelligence on the Manchurian Front, 1904–05,” *Intelligence and National Security*, XI, no. 1 (1996) 26. For the background, see also Schimmelpenninck’s *Toward the Rising Sun: Russian Ideologies of Empire and the Path to War with Japan* (DeKalb, 2001); and David Wolff, *To the Harbin Station: the Liberal Alternative in Russian Manchuria, 1898–1914* (Stanford, 1999).

⁴ Schimmelpenninck, “Russian Military Intelligence,” 29.

⁵ Louise McReynolds, *The News Under Russia’s Old Regime* (Princeton, 1991) 192.

The content—as often happens in patriotic rhetoric—offered a predictable combination of sanctifying reverence for the Russian side and insulting abuse for the enemy in tones that were almost interchangeable from the output of 1812 and 1877 (and, beyond, of 1914 and 1941). But even here, messages were often mixed. Fiction contained more hysterical atrocity stories than the editorials; Japan-bashing was balanced by assaults on the ungrateful Europeans (i.e. Britain, Japan's ally) whom the Russians had allegedly saved from the Mongol devastation in the Middle Ages. Patriotic outrage sometimes alternated with more moderate views of the enemy. Since the thirst for news in rural Russian grew rapidly in this war, the stereotypes were distributed along with it as literate peasants on the home front read newspaper dispatches to other peasants.⁶

The star journalists of I.D. Sytin's *Russkoe Slovo* (Russian Word), Vlas Doroshevich and V.I. Nemirovich-Danchenko (brother of the famous director), sent back dispatches from the front in which they denied the Yellow Peril thesis, spoke of the Japanese forces with respect, and openly criticized the government's ineptitude. Nemirovich-Danchenko called the struggle a "blind war." Sytin's paper tried to combine a position of patriotism with a critique of the autocracy and its war management (although his pamphlets voiced a far more chauvinistic view). His journalists assumed a posture familiar in our own time: Unconditional support of "the boys at the front" and condemnation of the war itself.⁷ A more radical and cohesive stance among intellectuals, socialism, clearly disassociated itself from a racist perspective on the Japanese during this war. The Socialist-Revolutionaries and both branches of the Marxist Social-Democratic Party (Bolsheviks and Mensheviks) preferred to distinguish between the workers-and-peasants-as-soldiers of both Japan and Russia on the one hand, and the warlords and capitalists of those countries on the other.⁸

⁶ McReynolds, *News*, 168–97; Jeffrey Brooks, *When Russia Learned to Read* (Princeton, 1985) 28–9; *Vestnik znaniia*, 11 (1904) 105–20.

⁷ McReynolds, *News*, 168–97 (qu. 187).

⁸ Kharuki Vada [Haruki Wada], "Solidarnost iaponskikh i russkikh sotsialistov vo vremia russko-iaponskoi voiny," *Japanese Slavic and East-European Studies*, 2 (1981) 1–14 for their positions on victory and defeat.

Fiction, Stage, Graphic Arts

Russian literature, the vaunted conscience of the nation, often set the tone of cultural and moral discourse. In this war, the literary community divided roughly into moderate opposition, “transcendents,” and patriots. The patriots or chauvinists who held no truck with philosophical or literary nuances ruled at the lower end of the mass press and the popular media. Opposition to the war took a number of different forms, most of them far removed from imagery of the Japanese. Leonid Andreev’s famous anti-militarist novella *Red Laugh* (1905) focused on the “madness and horror” of combat. War itself, not Japan, was the real enemy. It not only crazed its participants but turned decent men into Kurtz-like figures who reveled in the bloodbath. Leo Tolstoy’s “Bethink Yourselves” (1904, published abroad) sympathized with the combatants on both sides. Tolstoy used his still burning literary flair to identify the foppiness of tsarist military uniforms with false values and corrupt minds. And yet, when the news of Russia’s disastrous defeat in the naval Battle of Tsushima arrived, Tolstoy displayed a particle of his sometimes submerged vestigial Russian patriotism by saying that non-Christian peoples won wars because their “highest ideal is patriotism and military heroism.” Among the more humane of the anti-war literary accounts were those of Vikentii Veresaev, a physician and writer who actually served on the Manchurian Front. Aside from offering the usual critique of Russian military corruption, Veresaev berated the Russian troops for pillaging Chinese villages in Manchuria in actions unrelated to the war against Japan. Veresaev also rather touchingly reported (or invented?) how Russian soldiers could be converted instantly from ridiculing a Japanese prisoner by that prisoner’s laughter.⁹

The Symbolists and related schools of literature whom I call “the transcendents” dominated Russian letters for the most part right up to 1917. Anticipating their response to World War I,¹⁰ they tended to see the 1904–5 war as hardly more than a reflection of a larger reality, a dream world of apocalypse and/or regeneration. In the words of

⁹ David Wells, “The Russo-Japanese War in Russian Literature” in David Wells and Sandra Wilson (eds.), *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective, 1904–1905* (Basingstoke, 1999) 118–24, 127–29 (qu. 119, 124).

¹⁰ Richard Stites, “Days and Nights in Wartime Russia” in Aviel Roshwald and Richard Stites (eds.), *European Culture in the Great War* (Cambridge, 1999) 9–11.

David Wells, they possessed and expressed an “idealized and aestheticized vision of the world” and thus of the war. Some poets attempted to voice their aloofness to the actual fighting by publishing Japanese art works in one of their journals, *Vesy* (The Scales), during the course of the hostilities. Others took sides. Valerii Briusov saw Russia’s eastward thrust to the Pacific Ocean as a natural act of “manifest destiny” and both he and Viacheslav Ivanov sang a dirge over Russian losses at Tsushima. At the opposite pole stood Fedor Sologub who wondered why Russians would lament the loss of a useless place such as Port Arthur. Konstantin Balmont’s opposition to the war was mainly a cry against the government. Zinaida Gippius, in line with some leftist writers, saw war as the murderer of sanity. Before his death in 1900, the philosopher Vladimir Solovev had floated the notion of Japan leading a “Pan-Mongolian” war against Western civilization. Although no direct allusions were made to this later influential trope, the Symbolists of the wartime era seemed to combine the specter of defeat with the idea of transcendent, purifying hope.¹¹ Generally speaking, as Yuliya Mikhailova has stressed, the intelligentsia tended to see the Japanese (and any Asian) foe within a philosophical (or historiosophical) context, often as something inevitable like a cleansing storm, rather than as satanic.¹²

One of the most popular modes of entertainment in late tsarist Russia was the so-called People’s or Popular Theater, organized by religious, philanthropic, anti-alcohol, and business groups. These stages were host to spectacles as well as drama and musical shows. When their directors entered the realm of patriotism, they merely recycled themes and devices from previous wars, notably the Russo-Turkish War of the 1870s. Shortly after the outbreak of war with Japan in 1904, a Moscow Popular Theater run by temperance groups put on *Glory to All for the Faith, the Tsar, and the Fatherland*, a musical extravaganza set against a huge map of East Asia. At each evening performance, actors read out news telegrams from the front to the audience. In St. Petersburg, actors depicted a naval battle between Russia and Japan off the coast of Korea as *The Heroes of Chemulpo*. In spring and summer 1904, with victory fever still in the air, *Port*

¹¹ Wells, “Russo-Japanese War,” 109–118 (qu. 109, 110).

¹² Yuliya Mikhailova, “Images of Enemy and Self: Russian ‘Popular Prints’ of the Russo-Japanese War,” *Acta slavica iaponica*, XVI (1988) 31, 45.

Arthur and Japan's *War with Russia*, were big hits. Such productions fell off in 1905 when the revolutionary turbulence of that year and Russian defeats in the war diluted the open display of patriotic fervor.¹³

On the visual front, the camera—first baptized in fire during the Crimean War in the 1850s—was very much in evidence in 1904–5. The poor reproductions of a dozen or so photographs from the period reproduced in I.I. Rostunov's well-known 1977 book on the war contain no pejorative imagery, either in framing, composition, or lighting; and they show no signs of major retouching. These are outdoor campaign pictures, probably made by war correspondents or their photographers, perhaps from both sides. Japanese infantrymen, gunners, and sailors are presented as well dressed and orderly, with no sense of pose. The candid angle of shot suggests a lack of rehearsal, and there are no parade lineups or eyewash. The Japanese infantry uniforms may jar or amuse the modern gaze because they might suggest bellhops with footwraps, but they were of their time. Smallness of stature in these pictures of Japanese footsoldiers is not an issue even when set beside their Russian opponents. This juxtaposition occurs once when Russian soldiers make a breach in a Japanese gallery resulting in hand-to-hand combat. The Japanese sappers wield rifle, spade, and pickaxe against the bearded intruders whose facial hair make them look older than their adversaries. In a river-crossing scene, the Japanese troops move smartly at an awkward right or left shoulder arms, instead of the safer and more logical position of port arms. The picture of a reconnaissance detail would, except for the uniforms, hardly differ from a hunting photo of the period. The cease-fire scene contains nothing like arrogance, morose submission, or mutual hatred in the visual surface of the photo.¹⁴ Neither the Russian nor the Japanese fighters are heroized or demeaned. The presumably patriotic Russian cameramen had yet to learn or to employ the art of photographic falsification that would be so eagerly used by the British in World War I.

How utterly differently propaganda artists approached the foe. Liberated from the constraints of the lens and armed by prior commitment, they eagerly demonized the foe and lionized their own.

¹³ Anthony Swift, *Popular Theater and Society in Tsarist Russia* (Berkeley, 2002) 125, 163, 167 (and passim for other patriotic shows).

¹⁴ I.I. Rostunov (ed.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskoi voyny, 1904–1905 gg.* (M, 1977) passim.

Artistic representation obviously differed from the photographic in several ways. Photography was produced on the ground and had to be sent back to the capitals for distribution. The medium itself was inherently limited in its ability to distort. Popular graphic art was largely produced in Moscow and Petersburg, which allowed for rapid production and distribution. The imaginative element in the construction of imagery, in cartoon and print, was set free by its distance from the front. Furthermore, as Yuliya Mikhailova has stressed, the artist could repeat images over and over again and thus convert them into icons.¹⁵

Of all the graphic media, the “*lubok* cartoon” contained the most lurid scenes. *Lubok* or popular print (sometimes called “folk picture”) was a centuries old art form, originally fashioned from woodblock, later by means of copper plate, and then lithography, including chromolithography. The raw colors and primitive lines of *lubok* underscored the sharpness of the mockery aimed at the enemy—whether of Prussian “cockroaches” in the 18th century, French dandies in 1812, sluggish Turks in the 1870s, or minuscule Japanese warriors in 1904.¹⁶ Over 300 prints dealing with the Russo-Japanese war appeared in hundreds of thousands of copies, but only in the first six months of that war.

Historian Stephen Norris’ extensive study of wartime *lubok* shows that in the Russo-Japanese War, stock figures of patriotism, such as the Cossack and the peasant, reemerged with a vengeance. The tsar rarely appeared, and the only high-ranking military leader featured as a hero (and martyr) was Admiral Stepan Makarov, who perished in the sinking of his warship. The images Norris offers reveal a national stereotyping far more vicious than those of previous wars.¹⁷ The fantasy and exaggeration of some of these pictures—in contrast to the then current tendency for more realism in *lubok*—speaks of a desire to match visual shock to the trauma of war and, thus, to appeal to wartime consumer tastes.

A few samples from the Helsinki University Slavonic Library Collection of Graphic Materials from the Russo-Japanese War may give an inkling of their format and content. They consist of original pieces, each published by a different typography, three of medium

¹⁵ Mikhailova, “Images,” 31.

¹⁶ Mikhailova, “Images,” 33.

¹⁷ Stephen Norris, “Russian Images of War: the *Lubok* and Wartime Culture, 1812–1917” (University of Virginia Dissertation, 2002) 284–352.

size, one very large, all in rather florid colors. Enemy imagery in them ranges from a certain *Schadenfreude* at their injuries and suffering to extremely hostile contempt. *The Sinking of Four Japanese Ships* has the unlucky crews with European-looking faces and “slanted” eyes falling or floating amid the debris of shattered timbers and twisted metal of the merchant ships sunk by shore batteries and the Russian battleship, *Retvizan*.¹⁸ A scene featuring the same victorious Russian warship transforms it into a minotaur with the body of a sturdy ear-ringed and smiling Russian sailor protruding from the prow with a fist in the face of his counterpart, Togo Tashi, whose beastly ape-like face is suffering a bloody nose and knocked-out teeth (see fig. 5).¹⁹ *A Japanese Crosses the Yalu* shows a rather natty and delighted Russian cavalry trooper, with a mustache like that of an Italian tenor of the era, dragging the enemy soldier across the river with a rope (see fig. 6). The victim is grotesquely wrought, with almost vertical eyes and tongue bulging from a terrified face.²⁰ The cheerful visages of the Russian figures seem to suggest the happy optimism of good-natured warriors easily beating their inferiors, images designed to feed confidence about an easy Russian victory.

The only land battle treated in this sample of posters is that of Chong-zhou in March 1904 (see fig. 7). The Japanese troops, clearly outlined, are either dead, wounded, or in full retreat from the onrushing mounted soldiers of the tsar, sabers aloft—with various kinds of “Slavic” faces ranging from a bearded peasant to a figure resembling the Yalu dandy noted above. This bloody tableau contains well over a hundred figures and shows a good deal of gory detail.²¹

The depiction of Japanese in all these posters nevertheless pales in comparison with the sadistic violence shown in the once famous and popular collection of American war cards entitled “The Horrors of War” (1935–39), completed two years before Pearl Harbor. In this collection, interspersed with scenes from the Italo-Ethiopian War of 1935 and the Spanish Civil War of 1936–9, are cartoon representations of the Japanese fire bombing of the Chapai District of Shanghai, the Panay Incident, and the Rape of Nanking (Nanjing) in 1937.

¹⁸ *Russko-iaponskaia Voina: potoplenie 4-kh Iaponskikh parakhodov* (M, 1904).

¹⁹ *K voine Rossii s Iaponiei* (M, 1904).

²⁰ *Iaponets lezet na Ialu* (M, 1904).

²¹ *K voine Rossii s Iaponiei: Russko-Iaponskaia Voina—Boi pri Chonchzhu 15 Marta 1904 g.* (M, 1904).

Needless to say, the American wartime images (1941–1945) surpassed even these in primitive and hateful imaging of the Japanese enemy.²²

In the 1904–5 war, a much more sober and fair-minded approach to the enemy in graphic art than that of the posters can be found in *The Russo-Japanese War on Land and Sea* (1904), an eight-volume collection in album format with pictures and text.²³ Graphic art alternates with photography. Volume I opens with a triptych of pro-war demonstrations on St. Petersburg's Nevskii Prospekt, near the Winter Palace, and a few other places. This and all subsequent representations of the tsar and his commanders employ a standard pious dynasto-patriotic style, the colors varying to provide either jingoist or lachrymose effects.

The hard and soft combination of course was de rigueur in all European war imagery in order to promote both “the terror and the pity” of any tragedy: on the one hand, savage hatred or contempt for the enemy; on the other, the official devotion and love for tsar, faith, and fatherland as well as the more personal compassion for soldiers lost and families devastated. Oval-shaped tinted photo cameos of the leaders are presented in the manner of the “parade portrait” of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries which was adapted from painting to photography at the very moment of its birth: full dress uniform replete with medals, erect posture, sober facial expression, and a classical frame of laurels or drapery.²⁴

At the other end of the social-military scale, certain common soldier “types” are singled out for color sketches, such as the Siberian Taiga or the Buriat Mongol soldiers,²⁵ suggesting that these local figures—“good Asians” so to speak—are well set for a war against fellow Asians because they know the terrain, are used to its rigors, and are genetically tough. In this sense, they are the Far Eastern equivalents of the Cossack who had always played the role of the most indomitable of Russian warriors. The artwork in these albums is generally poor but not garish, and there are no gory scenes or atrocities on either side. What distinguished their contents from the more lurid

²² “Horrors of War”: author’s collection; John Dower, *War without Mercy: Race and Power in the Pacific War* (New York, 1986).

²³ *Russko-iaponskaia voina na sushe i na more*, ed. Capt. M.N. von Krit, 8 vols. (SPB, 1904) I, 1, II, pl. xx, and passim.

²⁴ For the parade portrait style, see *Portret v russkoi zhivopisi XVIII–XIX vekov* (M., 1988).

²⁵ *Russko-iaponskaia voina na sushe*, III, 44.

cartoon graphics of the time is the relative respect given visually to the enemy. Japanese troops, when being pushed back are shown in fear or in agony from wounds, but not as cowards. The portraits of General Ito and Admiral Togo are crude, but objective; and that of General Kuroki displays stature and dignity.²⁶ Similarly, Japanese POWs are represented as clean-cut, glowering at their captors, but in no way cringing.

The religious element can be found all through the graphic collections, mostly of Orthodox clergy blessing the troops. One, from April 1904, stands out for its melodramatic energy. Father Stefan Shcherbakovskii commissioned this print of himself, standing atop a hill amid the forward lines of advancing Russian infantry. In a canonical triangular composition, the Orthodox cross held aloft in the priest's right hand provides the apex, and the sides are formed by his standing body, the soldiers, and the hill over which they are attacking with bayonets—indicating an imminent hand-to-hand engagement. Shcherbakovskii is looking back with turned head to see if the men are following him.²⁷ Missing from Russian propaganda was an attack upon the enemy's religion, in vivid contrast to the "paganizing" of Napoleon in 1812 or the mocking of Islamic symbols in the Russo-Turkish Wars.²⁸

Dread: Rising Sun and Yellow Peril

Alexander Kuprin's novel *The Duel* (1905), conceived before this war, bitterly indicted the cruelty and perversion of the Russian military. His "Staff Captain Rybnikov" (1905) wrapped a critique of the army around a spy plot featuring a Japanese agent so skillful that he is able to pass as a Russian officer in St. Petersburg. The irony in Kuprin's perspective lies the apparent blindness of his Russian characters to Japanese physical features at the very moment when graphic art was featuring Japanese monkey cartoons. The officer is unmasked by utter-

²⁶ For example, *ibid.*, V, 102–3. In another work, an unbound photo collection, the Russian captors are no taller than their Japanese prisoner: *Russko-iaponskaia voina, 1904–1905 g.g.* (N.p., n.d.), tab. 70.

²⁷ *Russko-iaponskaia voina na sushe*, III, pl. xxii.

²⁸ Norris, "Russian Images," *passim*. Japanese prints, in contrast, lacked the kind of hatred found in the Russian product. Personal communication from Jordan Sand, professor of Japanese and History, Georgetown University.

ing the word “banzai!” in the arms of a Russian prostitute. Kuprin’s has his Japanese spy Rybnikov described as “malicious, mocking, intelligent, even noble, but not human, animal instead, or more precisely of a face belonging to a being from a different planet.” Kuprin also employs the words “yellow, monkey, machine, inhuman.”²⁹ And the inclusion of “machine” in this catalogue of insults clearly exhibits the belief among many Russians that the Japanese were to be distinguished from the faceless “hordes” of old by their dangerous and “modern” skills. To paraphrase the Russian radical Alexander Herzen’s mid-nineteenth century nightmarish metaphor of modern destructive power, Japan was Chinggis Khan with a fleet of destroyers.

The representation of “peril” in the popular graphics came in two forms. One, the allegorical, featured in a 1904 print, *On the War of Russia and Japan*. It juxtaposes the familiar ultra-pious female figure of “Russia”—closely resembling Columbia, Britannia, Germania, and Marianne—to a ferocious but stylized Japanese dragon with the exaggerated “slanted” eyes and sharp teeth. In a print depicting a naval battle, the text compares the Japanese to the Mongol devastators of Russia in the Middle Ages.³⁰ Much more direct was an illustration, in the picture collection, *The History of the Russian Soldier from Peter the Great to Our Times*, of the peasant soldier, Vasili Riabov, on his knees awaiting execution at the hands of the Japanese military.³¹

Contempt: Macaques in Uniform

But the theme of Japanese power and danger to Russia was rarely apparent in Russian views of Japan, especially in the early phases of the war. Bravura was the natural pendant to contempt. The enemy was seen to be physically small in stature and weak in state power. It possessed a military force that was, in the view of a non-Japanese-speaking Russian military attaché in Tokyo, “[although] no longer the rabble of an Asiatic horde . . . [sic] it is nevertheless no modern European army.”³² Such judgments, reinforced by the tsar’s derisive

²⁹ Heldt, “‘Japanese’ in Russian Literature,” 175–5. See also the discussion in Wells, “Russo-Japanese War,” 126–7.

³⁰ Reproduced in Mikhailova, “Images,” 35, 47.

³¹ Dmitrii Dubenskii, *Istoriia russkago soldata ot Petra Velikago do nashikh dnei* (SPB, n.d.), pl. 12.

³² V.P. Vannovskii cited in Schimmelpenninck, “Russian Military Intelligence,” 26.

view of the Japanese, and popularized in mass culture, seemed to bode well for the stalwart peasant host rattling its way to Manchuria.

Stephen Norris found in the Russian archives a cartoon titled "Regarding Russia's War with Japan: Napoleon Visits the Japanese." It "depicts a ghostly French emperor standing in front of a table full of surprised Japanese officers. The text of the image has Napoleon warning the Japanese about the dangers of provoking the Russians into an attack."³³ This idea proved irresistible: Virtually the same scenario featured in a propaganda short film of World War II, *Incident at a Telegraph Office*, which showed Napoleon sending Hitler a wire, warning him not to try it.³⁴ But the 1812 precedent had no analogue in 1904–5 any more than it did in 1915, when it was again invoked at the time of the "great retreat."

During the war, Alexander Pasternak (brother of the poet Boris) recalled that "the Japanese were uniformly portrayed as knock-kneed weaklings, slant-eyed, yellow-skinned, and, for some reason, shaggy-haired—a puny kind of monkey, invariably dubbed 'Japs' and 'macaques.'" He described seeing a poster with terrified, spider-like Japanese soldiers trying desperately to crawl out from beneath an enormous imprisoning papakha (large Caucasian fur cap) with the caption "Catch them by the capful!"; and another of a huge hand crushing a bunch of Japanese-as-monkeys.³⁵ A contemporary *lubok*, *A Cossack's Breakfast*, shows the huge Cossack devouring a tiny Japanese, a notion paralleled by a popular song containing the line "I'll tear your hide with my teeth."³⁶ Yet another features a Cossack lancer impaling Japanese soldiers as on a spit—a device elevated to a national icon in World War I.³⁷

The relative stature of the two nations' people served as a contrastive theme as it had done in the past. In a popular tract issued during the Napoleonic invasion of Russia in 1812, the Moscow chauvinist Fedor Rostopchin had one of his fictional Russian men-of-the-people say of the French invaders: "Your soldiers are little dwarves and

³³ Norris, "Russian Images." My thanks to the author for this material.

³⁴ Stites, *Russian Popular Culture: Entertainment and Society Since 1900* (Cambridge, 1992) 112–13; Argyrios Pisiotis, "Images of Hate in the Art of War" in Stites (ed.), *Culture and Entertainment in Wartime Russia* (Bloomington, 1995) 141–56.

³⁵ Pasternak's descriptions cited in Heldt, "'Japanese' in Russian Literature," 174.

³⁶ Brooks, *When*, 314.

³⁷ Hubertus Jahn, *Patriotic Culture in Russia During World War I* (Ithaca, 1995).

dandies.”³⁸ While the insult “dandy” added specificity to Rostopchin’s gallophobia, the “dwarf” designation both demeaned and discounted the enemy and physically magnified the Russian warrior. And so it did in 1904. A print of that year, *The Russian Hero-Knight [Bogatyr] in the East: the Knight and the Yellow Pygmies*, blended the mystique of size with the myth of history, as the Russian warrior on a white horse menaces with his lance a myriad of tiny Japanese troops, while modern warships in the background open fire.

Dragging old heroes onto modern battlefields is a familiar device, used by the propagandists and morale builders of many nations, notably by the Soviet Union in World War II when on posters the shadow of Prince Alexander Nevskii was planted behind the Red Army fighter at the front. An image from the Russo-Japanese War, *The Enemy is Terrible but God is Merciful*, has an overconfident Russian Gulliver striding across the Sea of Japan with miniature Japanese sailors sticking out of his hand, his belt, and his boots (see fig. 8). A bit more artful was *The Cossack Petrukha*, who is calmly dismembering and beheading doll-like enemy soldiers. Another print, while revealing one of Russia’s devastating losses—the sinking of the warship *Variag*—has the tragedy being observed sympathetically by a group of other nationals. The caption warns that “there is no place for ‘barbarian Asians’ in the international club of civilized nations.”³⁹

After the first six months, this flood of imagery in prints began to ebb. Apparently, they were too conventional to counterbalance the evidence of defeat, not to mention the 1905 tremors of revolution (though the dry run started in October 1904). A similar thing happened in Russia in the first year or so of World War I: A period marked by both vigorous propaganda and a fairly widespread patriotism followed by a diminution of both.⁴⁰

Worthy Adversary

The mask of illusion did not cover every face or remain intact through the war. Many publications of the military or by organizations close

³⁸ Quoted in Alexander Martin, *Romantics, Reformers, Reactionaries: Russian Conservative Thought and Politics in the Reign of Alexander I* (DeKalb, 1997) 127.

³⁹ Mikhailova, “Images,” 47, 49, 37.

⁴⁰ Jahn, *Patriotic Culture*.

to the military addressed the Japanese foe as a “normal” enemy, one to be respected on the battlefield. And this image, after a year of warfare and hysterical Japanese-bashing, was conveyed to the new recruits in a little handbook published in 1905 by the Staff of the Moscow Military District, *Memo to Men in the Ranks on their Way to War with the Japanese*.⁴¹ Aside from taking a new and kinder tone about the treatment of the local Chinese population in Manchuria, the handbook provided a realistic description of the Japanese opponent. “The Army of Japan is a good one; its soldiers are bold, brave, hardy, and cunning.” The last word, in this context, does not resound with its usual negative overtones of calculating, cheating, or dishonest—but rather conveyed the image of savvy fighters, people to contend with, something close to a worthy adversary. The remaining instructions in the handbook catalogue in a business-like way the weaponry and practices of the Japanese army. Even more vivid is the testimony of a Russian held as prisoner of war who denounced the racist stereotyping of the Japanese. When converted to a different view by the kindness and humanity of his captors, he wrote that “the application of such a term [monkey] to a brave enemy was both undignified and shabby.”⁴²

In looking back at the variety of responses in print and in the arts, it becomes crystal clear that stereotyping propaganda had very little impact on the conduct or the outcome of the war. The years 1904–5 saw nothing like the anti-German hate propaganda of World War I that resulted in pogroms against and arrests of Russians with German (or Jewish, or Scandinavian) names. Neither the fanatical and malicious images of the enemy on the home-front nor the more respectful descriptions of them in the Russian army seem to have had the slightest effect on war fighting, victories, or defeats on the battlefield. Tactics, supply, leadership and a dozen other military factors completely overshadowed the cultural construction of that war.

⁴¹ *Pamiatka nizhnim chinam otpravliaiushchimsia na voynu s Iapontsami* (M., 1905). I am indebted to Don Wright of Tulane University who found this in the Helsinki Military Library.

⁴² Cited in Norris, 332.

Peace and Reconstruction

The images in the photos of well-run Japanese units were, to the Russian army at least, far more lasting in impact than those of satire. Russian military leaders were able to read from the organizational skills of the men in the field the deeper efficiency of the Japanese nation as a system. On the cultural front, a more complex picture emerged. On the one hand, we have a people who were pictured to be the modernizing and artful vanguard of a historiosophical Asian swarm. In the words of Barbara Heldt, "Japan stood both for the generalized Asiatic hordes and for a peculiarly cunning, intelligent, and disciplined form of evil against which good-natured old-fashioned Russian heroism was of little use."⁴³ On the other, we have admirers of Japanese poetry and the arts among the Russian figures of the Silver Age. Such cultural or symbolic ambivalences would not survive a major war to the death such as the two World Wars. Refined and nuanced evaluations of one nation by another in these wars quickly gave way to simplified and reductionist ones embedded in the effigies of hate.

And the reverse is true as well. Foes can quickly be converted into friends (cf. the Germany and Japan of 1945 and 1949, from the American point of view). Mikhailova, in a fine article on enemy imaging, writes that "enmification" tends to become permanent and difficult to erase, correctly citing the Soviet cartoon treatment of the Japanese during the frontier skirmishes of 1938 and 1939.⁴⁴ But one must not overlook the contrary example of World War I when Japan and Russia were allies. How easily nasty stereotypes could be erased is evident from the 1915 publication, *Our Allies in the Great War: Japan*.⁴⁵ The exoticism and orientalism are still there, but the demonization of 1904–5 has been replaced by a quaint romanticism in airbrushed photos of the emperor and other national leaders. This contrasts vividly with the demeaning wartime print of 1904, *Clever Wife*, which has the Mikado being henpecked by a vituperative empress.⁴⁶ In the 1915 presentation, benevolent pictures of the Japanese

⁴³ Heldt, "'Japanese' in Russian Literature," 174.

⁴⁴ Mikhailova, "Images," 30, 45–6.

⁴⁵ *Nashi soiuzniki v Velikoi Voyny: "Iaponiya"* (M, 1915).

⁴⁶ Mikhailova, "Images," 52.

troops are framed by colorful and clichéd drawings of samurai, chrysanthemums, silk-screen designs, and praying Buddhists. Many of the figures are smiling and some of them are “de-Asianized.” In fact those with the kepi and neck veil could hardly be differentiated from Russian forces in Central Asia or the French Foreign Legion in Morocco. The transformation cannot be surprising when we recall how this is done again and again from war to war by every nation engaged in building wartime images of friend and foe.

CHAPTER TWENTY

IMAGES OF THE FOE IN THE RUSSIAN SATIRICAL PRESS

Tatiana Filippova

On the night after Admiral Togo's raid on the Russian Pacific Squadron off Port Arthur, Empress Alexandra sighed, "How right cousin Willi was when he warned us about the danger of an attack by the yellow race." Her remark reflected one of the clichés of the time, a manifestation of broader fin-de-siècle anxieties then current both in Russia and in Europe about decline, decadence, and *Gottterdammerung*. But notions of a "Yellow Peril" were simply too vague and too broadly diffused in the cultural and political thought of the day to have aroused concerns about the potential threat posed by a dynamic new power off Russia's Pacific shores in the years before the war. Much more typical of tsarist assessments of any imminent danger was the advice given by the tsar's Viceroy of the Far East, Admiral Evgenii Alekseev, when in January 1904 he sent his bastion's chief engineer on holiday, reassuring him, "we don't expect any trouble here."

It comes as no surprise that the unexpected outbreak of hostilities in East Asia traumatized the Russian collective consciousness and called for a speedy psychological sublimation. One of the most immediate remedies for this injury to national pride was the satirical press, which quickly directed its energies towards inspiring its readers to a quick victory over the perfidious foe. In this way, these periodicals were enlisted along with other elements of the war's agitational propaganda, including posters and *lubki*, to denigrate the conflict as a nothing more than a local "small war," and confirmation of the empire's superiority over the Asian "other." At the same time, this attempt to stereotype and trivialize the enemy in the satirical press assumed some decidedly unexpected forms.

The source for this inquiry into how tsarist lampoons of the Oriental adversary evolved over the course of the conflict is the popular St. Petersburg weekly, *Oskolki* ("Splinters"), a humorous periodical with moderately liberal leanings founded in 1881. Aspiring neither to a leading role in public opinion nor to intellectual profundity, it was

aimed at a wider urban audience. With its “average,” middle-class (*meshchanskii*) readership, the weekly affords a good window into the views of the general public in the imperial capital at the time of the Russo-Japanese War.

*

*Had it not been for Nicholas II's belief that
the Japanese are an unpleasant, contemptible,
and powerless people . . . we would never have
become involved in this war . . .*

—Sergei Witte, *Memoirs*.

Satirical magazines naturally based their humor on the general public's clichés and stereotypes about Japan and the Japanese. Silver Age literature, *Japoniste* aesthetic, philosophical musings about “Pan-Mongolism,” and the fruits of Russian Orientalology were far removed from the quotidian consciousness of *Oskolki*'s average reader. The latter's perceptions, if any, about the distant island empire were linked to such exotic phrases as “Geisha,” “Banzai,” and “Mikado,” which conjured up the fairy-tale images on which conceptions of the enemy were based.

Scholars have stressed two features of Russian wartime caricatures of the Japanese—contempt for the foe's martial abilities and overt racism.¹ While the first of these two elements is incontrovertible, it requires some qualification. Rather than being representative of the public mood, such light-minded and almost good-naturedly dismissive attitudes towards Far Eastern events were clumsy, ill-conceived attempts to compensate for the conflict's unpopularity, in hopes of somehow diminishing the devastating blow to national pride inflicted by the “yellow-faced *macaques*” attack. Writers accordingly often seized upon any incident, no matter how minor, which might instil optimism in their readers.

When Russian cruisers sank some Japanese transports during an insignificant skirmish in early June 1904, one poet, with the macabre pseudonym of “Lucifer,” penned this verse,

¹ Two recent examples of this literature are Yulia Mikhailova, “Images of Enemy and Self: Russian ‘Popular Prints’ of the Russo-Japanese War,” *Acta Slavica Iaponica*. XVI (1998), and S. Norris, “Russian Images of War. The Lubok and Wartime Culture, 1812–1917” (Ph.D. Thesis, Univ. of Virginia, 2002). Based on extensive analysis of *lubki*, they both emphasize the racism of contemporary attitudes. For a more nuanced view, see Richard Süttes' chapter in this volume.

The dismal end of these transports
 Was shared by one and all:
 Hoping to reach their ports,
 Instead, alas they sailed to their fate.²

The cover of an issue in July was decorated with an image of Fortune, in the style of Alphonse Mucha, abandoning a Japanese dropping his broken rifle (see fig. 9). The caption strangely contrasts with the *Art Nouveau* graphics:

Japanese: My dear Fortune! Where are you going? Don't leave me!
 Fortune: Stay where you are, you yellow mug! I'm bored with you!³

Another typical example of the crudely optimistic caricatures of the enemy is the doggerel that frequented the pages of *Oskolki* during virtually the whole war. One rhyme, characteristically unfounded in the grim reality of the East Asian campaign, gloated,

The yellow foe foolishly clambers towards Port Arthur.
 Hey, it's no use . . . So dangerous! Save your hide!
 The yellow rats throng on the landmines
 And blow up, their numbers melting away . . .
 Where's their fortress, brother!⁴

In the mouths of the Japanese in one cartoon is the unintentionally ironic caption, "Our bravery is nothing but a fairy tale, our resolve but ranting."⁵

Even in September 1904, when Japanese shells were already breaching Port Arthur's concrete fortress walls, satirical poets continued their *agitprop* therapy, portraying the Japanese, not the Russians, as thoroughly unenviable: "The Japanese is nothing but a hummingbird among people—Attacking us, albeit all in tiny calibre: Troops, guns, and treasury . . ." A little further, a collection of propagandistic clichés about life in the enemy's homeland follows: Conscripting children in the army, spiralling taxes, beggars collectively committing *hara-kiri* out of despair but compelled by the authorities to yell "banzai!"⁶

The characteristic bravado and underestimation of the enemy on the pages of *Oskolki* in the earlier phase of the war gradually gave

² *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 24, 2.

³ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 28, 1.

⁴ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 28, 5.

⁵ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 34, 5.

⁶ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 38, 5.

way to a stubborn reluctance to acknowledge Russian defeats. The silence about one's own casualties and an emphasis on enemy losses became a main theme of the magazine. By the same token, caricatures, articles, and rhymes all invariably stressed the falsehood of reports of Japanese victories, along with descriptions of hunger and disease among Japanese troops, political crisis in their homeland, and a desperate desire among them to conclude peace.

One report in rhyme, supposedly from Admiral Kamimura, explains the reasons for his inability to defeat the Russians (and this in the wake of two unsuccessful efforts by Russian ships to make their way from Port Arthur to Vladivostok!),

On Monday in the Korea Strait I fostered a plan to attack the Russians
But . . . from this courageous impulse a dreadful fog hindered me.
The minesweepers were already gathered;
But . . . I was kept from sailing to sea by waves in huge, unseen form,
And all Tuesday raged the storm.⁷

Other satirical couplets, linked two images of the Japanese—the boastful, conceited commander and the ailing soldier fleeing combat,

To Manchuria set off the marshal
But there, for Oyama awaits a hole (*iama*) the Russians have dug him.⁸
On stilts the Japanese General Nogi had some success . . .
With them he quickly flees the bullets and breaks both his legs (*nogi*)⁹
Cholera and malaria exhausted the Japanese,
As a pariah the soldier of the “Sunrise” is depressed.¹⁰

When describing conditions among the adversary's army, hunger was a more popular theme. In one account, when Russian troops capture a Japanese officer, the latter's first question is about mealtime, and regiments of drunken Japanese soldiers give themselves up to get a snack from the Russians. Meanwhile, a Japanese officer explains to his captors that his superiors ordered an attack while the Russians were having dinner, and now his troops, “as POWs enjoy a meal too, I dare say, how lucky!”¹¹

Things were not much better on the home front, *Oskolki* assured its readers. The island empire's economy was in shambles as a result of

⁷ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 38, 5.

⁸ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 25, 5.

⁹ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 29, 5.

¹⁰ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 29, 5.

¹¹ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 33, 5.

the war, while opposition to the war was mounting. In a parody of his Japanese journalist colleagues, one writer portrayed an imaginary publication critical of the Meiji government's costly war effort, "The regime is losing the confidence of the people: This is not the way to wage war! A great power like Japan dared to think that a war like this would take a maximum of two months, take Arthur with the fleet and conquer all of Manchuria, but it didn't expect a half year! Japan is too rich with intelligent people to permit those in power to rule so incompetently. This is an unforgivable mistake."¹²

Another tactic for poking fun at the East Asian enemy was to make light of the poet Vladimir Solov'ev's apocalyptic fears of the Yellow Peril: A fictitious Japanese brochure calling on Russian troops to surrender, offering rice and the charms of geishas and the promise of leisure, since "the Mikado's government requires the Japanese people to maintain all Russians who come to their side." But the most powerful incentive for coming over the enemy, according to this lampoon, was the promise to promote every Russian to colonel in the Japanese army, when the Mikado "declares war on all Europe."

Despite the occasional folkloric element of local color, such efforts to belittle the enemy differed little from representations of adversaries in wartime propaganda, whether Turk some thirty years earlier or German ten years later.¹³ It is striking that, in this respect, these satires did little to focus on specifically Japanese characteristics.

*

*It was not your cultural or political youthfulness
that vanquished us. Instead, we were defeated
by some insane outburst, an epileptic fit . . ." The
staff captain suddenly seemed small, exhausted
and disturbingly sad.*

—A.I. Kuprin, "Staff Captain Rybnikov"

¹² *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 34, 4. For obvious reasons, as dissatisfaction with Nicholas II mounted in the wake of worsening news from the front, such satires soon disappeared from the magazine's pages.

¹³ For an overview of tsarist caricatures of military foes, see Norris, "Russian Images." More detailed study of Russian perceptions of the Germans are in Hubertus Jahn, *Patriotic Culture in Russia during World War I* (Ithaca, 1995) and T. Filippowa. "Von der Witzfigur zum Unmenschen—Die Deutschen in den Kriegsgaben von 'Nowyj Satirikon' und 'Krokodil'," in: *Traum und Trauma. Russen und Deutsche im 20. Jahrhundert*. (Munich, 2003), 116–142.

Several scholars have alluded to the racist character of Russian depictions of their East Asian foe. As evidence for such claims, they refer to frequent slurs in the popular culture of the war, such as “yellow mug,” and “slant-eyed,” not to mention exaggerated facial features supposedly typical of the Japanese in caricatures. To be sure, racist stereotypes were a common theme in the doggerel and *lubki* pressed into the war effort. Nevertheless, the question remains whether racism played a decisive role in shaping perceptions of the enemy. Indeed, the feature that stands out most prominently in satires of Japan and Japanese would be more accurately characterised as their “otherness,” a people so alien, exotic and inscrutable that anything can be expected of them—right up to a sneak attack in peacetime.

The curious way of life of the Japanese became a popular butt of jokes. Ignorance and misperceptions inspired claims that authorities encouraged divorce, since fees for this procedure supported the war effort.¹⁴ There were hints about marriage being a form of camouflaged prostitution, based on legislation about dowries and the ease of dissolving such unions.¹⁵ And one writer had fun with the notion of gender emancipation by suggesting that, under their kimonos, Japanese women wore Western-style trousers, while studying fortifications and the art of mining, and longing for a forbidden cigarette.¹⁶

Japanese history, especially when it came to its relations with the West and modernization, likewise was a favorite object of humorists. According to one parody of the empire’s history,

Japan also had its Peter the Great, but since its inhabitants are not very tall, they just call him “Peter the Half-Great.” His reign saw the dawn of a new Japan, but this rising sun was so intense that by now it wouldn’t take much to fry ‘em. Anyway, the first Europeans who reached the island’s shores back in 1550 were Jesuits, and it is they who inspired their “Europeanization.”¹⁷

The gibes about the empire’s history, with its colorful and ancient traditions (combined with a disparaging attitude towards its Europeanisation) were clearly intended to serve as a powerful means of criticising the adversary. The sociology and aesthetics of Japanese traditions and rituals likewise became objects of ridicule. The high drama of

¹⁴ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 25, 6.

¹⁵ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 30, 5; no. 36, 5.

¹⁶ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 39, 4.

¹⁷ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 37, 5.

the chivalrous custom of seppuku was treated as a perverse readiness to kill one's self for any trivial reason.¹⁸ And mockeries of Japanese festivals unexpectedly combined themselves with satires about the cults of espionage and militarism:

"Spy Day" is the newest and most festive holiday in Japan. On this day every Japanese considers it his duty to denounce a neighbour or relative, in other words, to reveal what he had been able to uncover about his intimate over the past year. And the more treacherous this denunciation, the higher the praise.¹⁹

The rituals for preparing and blessing Samurai weaponry likewise did not escape the satirist's attention as one of the empire's many savage superstitions.²⁰

The curious and alien appearance of the Japanese, as depicted by the satirist, became more menacing when specific individuals were invoked. This was particularly true for one of the greatest heroes of the war with Russia, Marshal Oyama. His stature as commander-in-chief of Japan's land forces beginning in June 1904 made him the object of particularly absurd fabrications and fearsome jokes:

Oyama also stands out among the tiny Japanese by virtue of his height and build. It is said that Oyama isn't even Japanese, but instead landed in Japan as an itinerant athlete, and the chauvinist Japanese promptly transformed him into their commander. Oyama is even more cruel than the notorious Togo. In Japanese "oyama" means cannibal. His ferocity has become proverbial among the Japanese. During the Satsuma Rebellion he ripped off the heads of some of the leading insurgents with his bare hands.²¹

Oskolki's author naturally did not expect even his more naïve readers to believe such nonsense, but the very way in which he ridiculed the marshal is characteristic of the satirical image presented of the enemy.

The imaginary proverbs presented in another issue of the magazine nicely illustrates the various clichés about the foe's pathological otherness:

The Japanese is in Asia to keep the European from sleeping.
The Japanese never tells the truth, all the better to lie.

¹⁸ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 25, 6.

¹⁹ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 29, 5.

²⁰ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 35, 5.

²¹ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 29, 4.

The Japanese is the great enemy of the Chinese.
 The geisha was created to dance, and the Japanese—to make war.
 Every Japanese is doubly sly.
 The Japanese is to espionage as Alexander the Great was to war.
 Even the shark gives way to the Japanese.²²

This is one set of images *Oskolki*'s pages presented of the Japanese—as the aggressive warrior, the clever spy, and the disloyal relative, all ready to slice open their bellies on the slightest pretext. But there were other ways the satirist belittled Russia's enemy as well. One approach was to make light of Japan's maturity, both at the personal level and as a civilization. Entirely ignoring the empire's millennial antiquity and its venerable cultural and religious traditions, the magazine instead stressed the enemy's childishness. Such articles pictured Japan as a callow youth, rash, boastful, swaggering, and militarist, thoroughly discombobulated by the strains of Europeanization and imperial ambitions, much as a pubescent teenager is by hormones.

A series of caricatures and jokes titled "Japanese nobility" jested about the practice of awarding titles to military men as well as the haughty attitudes of such men towards non-titled compatriots. Thus one recently ennobled gentleman refuses to yield his daughter's hand in marriage to a "commoner," another repudiates an old friendship on similar grounds, while a third complains that the war with Russia is creating too many new aristocrats, thereby diminishing his status.²³

A similar infantile arrogance combined with cowardice underscored the conduct of the Japanese during their campaign, as one collection of stories and cartoons, "Japanese lies," tried to demonstrate. In one article, a Japanese soldier childishly boasted that "one of our men killed fifty Russians," but as for himself, he had never ventured from his camp. Meanwhile his unit's chief falsely claimed to have taken out three Russian regiments, a claim that was inflated to four by his superior, and a Japanese deserter told his sweetheart that he had been forced out of the army because he had not single-handedly killed all Russians. (see fig. 10)²⁴

The cover of an issue in July 1904 made light more generally of the immaturity of Japanese civilization on its cover, with a cartoon of a Russian boyar lady taking a runny-nosed tyke in Japanese uni-

²² *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 32, 6.

²³ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 26, 7.

²⁴ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 34, 7.

form by the ears out of a room. An elderly couple, representing Europe, was seated around the dinner table, which boasted a steaming samovar with the inscription "International Law." The caption read, "Out, out, off with you, you worthless child! It's obviously too soon for you to sit at table with the grown-ups . . . You haven't learned how to behave yet." (see fig. 11).²⁵

The enemy's puerility was a favorite subject in wartime posters as well. One of the first to appear, already in February 1904, portrayed a sturdy *muzhik* against the backdrop of Port Arthur's walls slaughtering Japanese, while a few weeks later another broadside was published illustrating a Cossack thrashing a young Japanese soldier with the caption, "Don't rush to Port Arthur, keep your yellow skin." In both cases the posters clearly dealt with the punishment of errant children, rather than grown-up soldiers. Another variation on this theme was "The Cossack's Breakfast." An enormous bearded Cossack is about to devour a tiny Japanese, as he remarks, "You dropped by for a visit, so may I ask you kindly, and without anger, for a little bite." The reference to the classical child-devouring ogre of European fairy tales is clear, but by satirical inversion, the cannibal is now portrayed positively, reflecting Russia's maturity and might in contrast to the youthful weakness of the adversary.

To be sure, not all Russians saw the Japanese as an alien species, as Alexander Kuprin's prose suggests. His short story, "Staff Captain Rybnikov" caricatured the Russian military as reckless and, rather than seeing the enemy as foreign or infantile, described the Japanese spy who figures in the piece as "charming, with fierce and reckless courage" and "endowed with the highest patriotic heroism."²⁶

*

*Rot—you cuss pit!
Collapse—people of Russia!
Soon Marshal Oyama
With bands will enter the city.*

—Andrei Bely, "Japanese Take It"

The rapidly evolving images of the enemy on the pages of *Oskolki* soon began to be linked to the magazine's commentary about domestic

²⁵ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 29, 1.

²⁶ A.I. Kuprin, "Shtabs-kapitan Rybnikov," *Sobranie sochinenii*, (M, 1958), 12–25.

affairs as well, ranging from daily life to more important socio-political questions. As reports of the unexpected difficulty of the campaign on the Pacific and its mounting toll in casualties began to reach the capital, writers turned their attention to the good-natured equanimity of the public towards both the war and the Japanese. In his column "Ladies' War Talk", one author with the pseudonym "Swift" bitterly joked about the empty-headed silliness of two women who were chattering away about the quality of Russian artillery:

- I would dearly like to know how wide the largest round is . . . I am told that it is twelve inches . . . Why don't they give the measurements in centimeters? Then I would know how it compares to my waist!
- Is it true that they can shoot them for a great distance? They say that they can fly eighteen *versty*.²⁷
- Right. That is, for example, how far Petersburg is from Pargolovo . . .
- Ah yes! That means that combat is not as terrible as I thought. So we don't even have to cover our ears when the guns go off . . .²⁸

Along with such criticism about the overly relaxed attitudes at the home front about the dramatic events in East Asia, the column also comments about the effectiveness of Russian weapons, subtly disguised to escape the censor's attention,

- But . . . if they now use smokeless powder everywhere, what's happening with regular gunpowder?
- Oh, that's only for fireworks!²⁹

But if some writers excoriated their compatriots for belittling the war, others were guilty of the same offense. Thus in a number of articles satirists mockingly inserted Japanese words alluding to samurai traditions into common Russian speech. One sketch describes a shopper expressing doubt to a fishmonger about the freshness of his wares. He reassures his customer that his fish, "is ready to perform hara-kiri right now." Another portrays a passionate lady seated under a canopy of trees embracing a surprised gentleman as she exclaims, "I've got him! Banzai! Banzai!"³⁰

Cartoons in the series "Near the War" illustrate peaceful activities during a brief respite from the fighting: A European war corre-

²⁷ A *verstu* is roughly equivalent to a kilometer.

²⁸ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 25, 5.

²⁹ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 29, 5.

³⁰ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 27, 8.

spondent's efforts to stay as far away from the front as possible; a sly Chinese trader, clearly a Japanese spy in disguise; wartime inflation; and ladies of easy virtue *d'un certain age* who have only just "mobilized" themselves for the war effort, to entertain the officer corps (see fig. 12).³¹ As the latter example shows, *Oskolki*'s authors did not shy away from the risqué. In one issue (published as enemy shells were already dropping on Port Arthur's inner harbor), a humorous sonnet describes amorous adventures according to military drill. One verse will suffice to give a flavor of the poet's talents,

Strolling in the garden I once came upon you.
My heart awoke with strong passion;
I prayed that you might love me.
And you gave in to me . . . "Present arms!" (Na ple-cho!)³²

The artillery became a popular subject in August 1904, as the outer fortifications around Port Arthur were breached after two days' bombardment, and as heavy Japanese shelling preceded an infantry assault on Russian positions at Liaoyang. A strange blend of dark humor and possible presentiments of revolution in the Russian metropole characterised one article, "Under the Protection of Peace." It tells of a future when disarmament is universal,

A provincial stopped in the middle of a road, and remarks,
– How odd are your streets in St. Petersburg. The cobblestones aren't cobblestones.
– What do you mean cobblestones? The surface is made of artillery shells. Of course, they have been deactivated . . . We have no other need for them . . . [and] they make it very easy to pave our roads.³³

Another favorite theme on the pages of *Oskolki* was the prisoner of war. Writers' attitudes wavered from vaguely uncomfortable admiration or even puzzlement at the common peoples' good-natured reception of Japanese POWs to biting satires of more refined society, where captive officers became sought-after guests. A good example is a rhyme by the pseudonymous "Niko-Niki,"

Marshal Oyama's children emerged from the train, so puny . . .
Behind their backs the ladies whispered, "My how charming they are!
Just like monkeys.

³¹ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 29, 5.

³² *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 32, 5.

³³ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 34, 6.

Behind their backs the psychopaths whispered, "My how glorious they are! Just as tall as little birds!

Behind their backs the neurotics whispered, "My how beautiful they all are!"³⁴

A column that appeared at the height of the siege of Port Arthur invoked the cliché of Russian hospitality. Kuz'ma Ilich reprimanded Ivan Petrovich for not going to the train station to welcome the arriving POWs, going on to describe the reception his little provincial town provided them: Everyone became inebriated, proceeded to embrace each other in friendship, and went off to the baths where they thrashed each other with the customary birch twigs. The story goes on to tell of two ladies who gossip about a third, who was making great efforts to employ a Japanese officer as tutor for her two children, as well as for herself, "to play duets." Meanwhile the head of a well-born family organized a dinner party for three captive Japanese officers, for "both international good manners and Russian hospitality demand it." His wife, fretting that an inadvertent *faux-pas* by one of her guests might cause him to perform seppuku, conscientiously cleared all knives from the dinner table. And the provincial lotharios, hoping to win the charms of captive Japanese "maidens," were jealous of the local impressario, who has already engaged them as geishas as *apres-theatre* entertainment for his patrons. The piece ends with an emotional scene, which, as the war's losses mount, invokes both laughter and sadness,

A lady to her kitchen-maid,

- Marva! Once again there is a soldier in the kitchen! How often have I told you that I forbid this, that . . .
- Ma'am, he isn't just a soldier . . . He's a Japanese . . . He asked for something to eat . . . But don't worry, ma'am, he's gentle . . . And he's helping me out in the kitchen by cleaning pots and pans, polishing the samovar, etc. He even spends hours mending.
- But how do you talk to him?
- In Russian, of course . . . He speaks Russian . . . Not very well, but enough to make himself understood . . . And when he starts talking about the war, it's so sad that I'm reduced to tears . . . Four of my godsons were taken prisoner by the enemy . . . He offered to write letters to them . . . He knows where they are being held.³⁵

³⁴ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 37, 1.

³⁵ *Oskolki*, 1904, no. 37, 5.

What is remarkable about such satirical tales is the variety of attitudes about the foe among the public, some of whom, despite having relatives at the front, can be moved to tears by the plight of an enemy POW. While not of the same caliber as Alexander Kuprin's prose, these stories nevertheless reflect a similar ambivalence about Russia's adversary.

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The satirical press began to lose interest in the war by early 1905, as revolutionary disturbances in the capitals not only became a more immediate topic, but also interrupted publication. The unpopularity of the fighting, the succession of reversals on land and at sea, the shock of having so strongly underestimated the foe all thoroughly disillusioned St. Petersburg's humorists. Artists likewise stopped drawing posters belittling the enemy. Right at the same time that Grand Duke Vladimir Aleksandrovich famously remarked, "We didn't look before we leapt; we have to stop," someone scrawled on a poster hailing the exploits of Cossack Ivan, "Alas, it's now the second year of war. It's no longer time for caricatures or jokes. Holy Week 1905."

As peace returned to the Far East, satirists gradually began to see the Japanese in entirely different terms, as objects of a much more tangible danger as well as of bitter disappointment. The former theme was also adopted by a number of Silver Age poets, such as Andrei Bely, who came to regard the Asian victor as a threat not just to Russia, but to the West more generally.³⁶

As for caricatures of the enemy in the early stages of the war, the dominant themes were its naïve militarism, its childish boasting, and its immature aggressiveness. While such images of the enemy as a spoiled child were naturally meant to belittle the foe, their emphasis was on Japan's level of development, not its race. The *racial* elements of the Russian satirical press' depictions of the Japanese were not *racist*, in the sense of being based in contemporary Western racist theories. If the yellow-skinned Japanese appeared as "subhuman," they were not *inhuman*. Rather, they were underdeveloped.

As a number of Western observers noted, racist thinking was alien to the Russian mentality at the turn of the twentieth century.³⁷ Perhaps

³⁶ This theme is apparent in his novel, Andrei Bely, *Peterburg* trans. Robert A. Maguire and John E. Malmstad (Bloomington, 1978).

³⁷ See, for example, Albert J. Beveridge, *The Russian Advance* (New York, 1904).

one of the more remarkable manifestations of this phenomenon was the service of Archbishop Nicholas (Ivan Dmitrievich Kasatkin), the founder of the Orthodox Church of Japan, and later canonized by the Russian Orthodox Church. During the war, St. Nicholas remained in his new homeland. He urged his flock loyally to serve the Meiji Emperor and to fulfill their patriotic obligations in the campaign—as the Orthodox Christian General Nogi so effectively did in Manchuria.

*Translated by David Schimmelpenninck
van der Oye*

More recently, a scholar of Sino-Russian relations made the same observation, Rosemary Quested, “*Matey*” *Imperialists? The Tsarist Russians in Manchuria 1895–1917* (Hong Kong, 1982).

CHAPTER TWENTY-ONE

THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR AND THE RUSSIAN LITERARY IMAGINATION

Barry P. Scherr

Although the Russo-Japanese War resulted in only a modest literary response, both in terms of quantity and quality, the items treating the conflict suggest that the lasting effect on the cultural imagination was hardly insignificant. The list of works by Russia's writers has already been chronicled in detail, beginning with P.S. Vykhodtsev's detailed examination of prose works that appeared during and immediately after the war, continuing with Avril Pyman's discussion of the Symbolist reaction (which was largely through verse) and reaching a synthesis in a survey by David Wells, who discusses both prose and poetry in addition to mentioning some later literary reflections.¹ As Wells points out, writers up to the present day still refer to that conflict at least occasionally, so that the body of literature influenced by the war continues to grow. For those who grew up during the Soviet era, perhaps the best-known works on the war did not appear under its immediate influence but were instead historical novels written during the Stalinist period and afterwards.²

¹ P.S. Vykhodtsev, "Russko-iaponskaia voina v literature epokhi pervoi russkoi revoliutsii," in *Revoliutsiia 1905 goda i russkaia literatura*, ed. V.A. Desnitskii and K.D. Muratova (M-L, 1956), 280–320; Avril Pyman, *A History of Russian Symbolism* (Cambridge, 1984), 246–52; David Wells, "The Russo-Japanese War in Russian Literature," in *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective, 1904–05*, ed. David Wells and Sandra Wilson (New York, 1999), 108–33. P.M. Toper, *Radi zhizni na zemle: Literatura i voina: Traditsii. Resheniia. Geroi* (M, 1985).

² Wells (108) notes that Valentin Pikul', a popular historical novelist who gained renown during the Brezhnev years, used the war as the setting for several of his works. The works better known to older generations of Russians include Aleksandr Stepanov's *Port Arthur (Port-Artur, 1940–41)*, which takes what might be termed a Stalinist view of the war, attributing the Russian failures to defeatists and subversives within the Russian officer ranks, while lauding the bravery of ordinary soldiers. More satisfying is Novikov-Priboi's *Tsushima (Tsusima, 1932–35)* based on his own experiences as a young sailor during the war as well as documentary accounts from others.

The focus here, however, will be on significant prose works, mostly fiction but a pair of non-fictional pieces as well, that appeared during the Russo-Japanese war or shortly afterward. The intent is not to examine once again all that has been written on that conflict, but to explore the way the war became refracted, as well as reflected, through the consciousness of leading figures writers from the era.³ The Russo-Japanese War was Russia's first major conflict of the twentieth century, indeed its first since the war with Turkey some twenty-five years earlier, and therefore it offers a foretaste of how modern warfare came to affect not just the literary but also the popular imagination.

Although less was written at the time than might be expected about a war that cost Russia many thousands of lives, this relative neglect turns out to have a ready explanation. Just as the subsequent Civil War resulted in the First World War having less of a lasting influence on the arts in Russia than it did in the West, so too did the political events of 1905 serve to detract from the impact of the Russo-Japanese War on Russian literature. And, of course, neither that war nor World War I witnessed the kind of Russian victory that would make either the likely subject for a work with nationalistic appeal. Thus, even when they are mentioned, they often remain in the background.

Andrei Bely's novel *Petersburg*, certainly one of the true masterpieces of twentieth-century Russian literature, is symptomatic in this regard. Set during the second half of 1905 in St. Petersburg, the novel, composed during the 1910s, depicts the swirl of events and ideas that were tearing at the fabric of the ruling order and threatening to bring it down. Bely alludes often to Russia's historical and literary past, provides numerous references to Western and Russian thinkers who influenced the currents of the day, and situates Russia as the mid-point between the East and West. While hints of a subversive "Eastern" element appear, there is surprisingly little specifically about the Russo-Japanese War, which was just concluding as the

Novikov-Priboi published accounts about the battle under a pseudonym as early as 1907, but his serious work on the novel followed the rediscovery, over twenty years later, of his notes that had been hidden away and then lost.

³ And thus I do not discuss many of the writers mentioned by Vykhodtsev; as he points out (299–300), many of these were little known, or virtually unknown, to the public even in their own day. These figures did little to influence the literary imagination.

events in the novel unfold. Tsushima is cited—though only along with the river Kalka, where the Russians were defeated by the Mongols in the 13th century, to create a broader historical reference to threats from the East.⁴ The narrator also lists Port Arthur's fall as an event from the recent past, and he provides a rather oblique allusion to Count Witte's role in concluding the peace negotiations at Portsmouth.⁵ But there is not much else. Thus an article devoted to the role of 1905 in the novel does not find it necessary to mention the Russo-Japanese War, nor does L.K. Dolgoplov's book-length study of the novel give the war prominence.⁶

Of the prose from that era in which the Russo-Japanese war does play a central role only Leonid Andreev's long story, "The Red Laugh" (*Krasnyi smekh*) continues to receive extensive critical recognition. Written in late 1904 and published in 1905,⁷ it was one of the very first literary works to be influenced by the war and remains the item that most people would probably cite first when asked for an example of the war's reflection in Russian literature. Yet even this work, an accomplished story in many ways and certainly one of Andreev's finest creations, hardly ranks among the best-known works of Russian literature today, while much of the other fiction on the war is now familiar only to literary scholars.

Nor (and perhaps not surprisingly, given the distance of the front from the centers of population and culture) can the war be said to have attracted observers whose experiences were to serve as the basis for writings that went on to bring them fame, in the manner of Erich Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front* or Norman Mailer's *The Naked and the Dead*. Of the writers to be discussed here—Andreev, Lev Tolstoy, Aleksandr Kuprin, Vikentii Veresaev, Zinaida Gippius, and Maksim Gorky—only Veresaev wrote about the war from direct experience as a military doctor in the Far East. His literary reputation was to remain modest, though his writing on the war arguably

⁴ Andrei Belyi, *Peterburg* (M, 1981), 99.

⁵ Belyi, 26 and 110.

⁶ M.A. Nikitina, "1905 god v romane Andreia Belogo 'Peterburg'." *Revoliutsiia 1905–1907 godov i literatura*, ed. B.A. Bialik (M, 1978), 181–93; L.K. Dolgoplov, *Andrei Belyi i ego roman "Peterburg"* (L, 1988).

⁷ A description of Andreev's work on this story appears in the notes to Leonid Andreev, *Povesti i rasskazy v dvukh tomakh*, I: 1898–1906 gg. (M, 1971), 677–81.

deserved greater acclaim. Tolstoy of course based many of his earlier writings on his service in the military. However, that was all long in his past; his essay on the Russo-Japanese War deals more with general moral and religious issues than with the war itself. While Kuprin also had served in the army, by the time of the Russo-Japanese war he was a full-time author and his story inspired by the war concerns a spy back in St. Petersburg. Both Andreev and Gorky compose stories that take place, at least in part, within the war theater, but neither had any direct military experience. Oddly, then, Zinaida Gippius, whose story draws its inspiration from seeing officers who had been wounded and evacuated, had as much or more direct contact with soldiers who served in the campaign as most of the writers discussed here.

Veresaev is thus the exception, though his presence at the war front was not by choice. He had first studied history and philology, and then completed a medical degree a few years later. Thanks to his career choice, he was drafted to serve as an army doctor in June 1904; from that September until December of the following year he was in Manchuria. A near contemporary of Gorky, he shared with him a Marxist political orientation. They were close in literary leanings as well, with both participating in the writers' circle "Sreda" and Veresaev similarly composing realistic tales that depicted various social ills and injustices. His works on the war consist of several stories, most of which he wrote while he was still on active duty, along with a long memoir, "In the War" (*Na voine*, 1906-07; in more recent editions published as "In the Japanese War").

The stories are quite varied in their ostensible subject matter, but each in one way or another captures the intense atmosphere of the front and also the inability of those fighting to see any higher meaning beyond the present moment. Typical of the stories is "From Afar" (*Izdali*, 1905). Veresaev conveys the tension of soldiers dug into trenches while shelling goes on between their own forces and the enemy. Unable to do anything, they simply wait, day and night, while an occasional comrade falls wounded or dead. Equally incomprehensible is the charge into battle, which turns into a withdrawal and then a rout. The bulk of the narrative focuses on two soldiers, one of whom was wounded during the battle, as they take part in the disorderly retreat. Near the end of the story they sit exhausted on a rock by the side of the road, where they see the head of a soldier who had been crushed by an overturned wagon and a mangled

body that had been run over by the wheels. A detachment of retreating Cossacks warns them that the Japanese are just behind them; the tale concludes with the two men getting up and trudging on.

Sean Braswell has noted that literary texts that purport to offer a “true” depiction of war bear remarkable similarities, despite the differences in the actual conflicts they describe. No amount of training or preparation readies people for what they undergo at the front; hence the shock and incomprehensibility felt by combatants. War tends to be experienced in disjointed fragments, and the would-be chronicler gets at the larger sense only by stringing together a varied set of particulars. Indeed, particulars are at the center of the text; characters are more aware of their physical surroundings, of specific objects and feelings. Braswell’s broad point is that the overwhelming sensation of war results in a breakdown of our ability to understand it; hence the concentration not on unifying elements, but on seemingly random and disorganized fragments.⁸

These traits characterize both “From Afar” and the cycle as a whole. The only point of view is that of the characters; if the wounded soldier and his comrade cannot comprehend the broader picture of the battle, the reader shares in their confusion and lack of knowledge. We learn no more about the soldiers they come across than they do, and we sense their growing exhaustion, along with the toll that the heat and dust, and then the rain, take on their endurance. For all that the story deals with a single event, it feels episodic, with each moment distinguished by a particular description: of the charging soldiers coming upon totally deserted trenches, of Japanese prisoners who amaze the Russians by their small stature and seeming ordinariness, of Russians trying to avoid a Japanese searchlight. Thus Veresaev’s stories adhere closely to the form described by Braswell. At the same time, these works are distinguished from the best examples of the genre by their lack of psychology and the relative shallowness of the characterization. The two figures at the core of “From Afar” remain shadowy; we learn little about their past or even about their outlook in the present. They are treated little differently from the various physical objects in the story that are described from without.

“Fulfillment of the Earth” (“Ispolnenie zemli,” 1905), where a general comes to visit a wounded officer of high social background,

⁸ Sean M. Braswell, “War Stories: ‘Truth’ and Particulars,” *WLA [War, Literature & the Arts]*, 11 (1999), no. 2, 148–56.

attacks officialdom directly. The general's continued position is ascribed to influence: "Decrepit and inept, he covered himself in shame in every battle, but nonetheless he was on solid ground in the army because of an extremely important person in St. Petersburg."⁹ His distracted visit to the makeshift hospital highlights the purposelessness and the unskilled conduct of the war, recurrent themes in this series of stories. In drawing on his knowledge as a doctor and very possibly taking specific details from events that he witnessed, Veresaev imparts a powerful sense of immediacy and genuineness. He describes the reality of dealing with shrapnel wounds, given the medical treatment available at the time: although the doctors manage to extract the bits of shrapnel from Ramenskii, the wounded officer, they are powerless to deal with the inevitable onset of infection, followed by gangrene. Along with the highly realistic medical details, Veresaev further enriches this story with Tolstoyan musings on the significance of life. As death approaches, Ramenskii becomes increasingly indifferent to the outcome of the war; what is important is not who controls this bit of the land, but the darkness that looms over him.

Had Veresaev written more works as striking and as acutely observed as "Fulfillment of the Earth," he might well be a more widely read author today. Because the characters and the events largely derive from his direct experiences they display a greater veracity and precision than is found, for instance, in "From Afar." In keeping with Braswell's formula, Veresaev also includes "particulars": the shell fragment that Ramenskii wants to have preserved and that sits still carefully wrapped in a newspaper after his death, the nurse who is seen at various times writing out prescriptions in the background, the shining sun that provides a counterpoint to the suffering and dying of war. These episodic elements comprise the framework for recreating the overwhelming and disjointed sensations of the front. At the same time Veresaev includes the fictionalized thoughts of his protagonist to provide a larger musing about the significance that life assumes when confronted with a meaningless death. By setting the philosophical theme against the vivid war imagery, he creates a powerful and convincing tale.

The grim picture of the conflict that emerges from the stories is

⁹ V. Veresaev, *Sobranie sochinenii v piati tomakh* (M, 1961), 2: 419. Translations from the Russian in this article are mine.

complemented by Veresaev's memoir. While the fictional works focus on individual suffering, with the failures of the Russian command emerging from various aspects of the incidents that comprise the narrative, the memoir contains more general observations about the corruption of those who were supposed to be leading the army. For instance, Veresaev notes at one point that there seemed to be a shortage of officers, with many of those who were wounded sent back to the front when they were barely healed, while at the same time other officers held comfortable positions in the rear and were paid far more for their efforts than those at the front. He concludes that it was mostly lower-ranking officers leading the Russian forces into battle, while others, "the picture of health," spent their time serving as hospital supervisors or were placed in charge of supplies behind the lines.¹⁰ He tells of officers who crowded the hospitals, especially when a major battle was brewing, in order to escape any fighting. One had volunteered for the front, thinking that it would be a short war and that he could advance in ranks by such a gesture; another, stating that he had a family and property and was no longer young, complained of unsanitary conditions in the trenches.¹¹ And for those who stayed there were medals, so many thousands of them that it was rare for an officer not to receive at least one, and those in the rear, once again, seemed to be rewarded at least as generously as those who fought in battle. The situation reached a point at which one general felt it necessary to issue an order stating that only those truly deserving of awards should receive them.¹²

While Veresaev's remarks about officers are the most striking, the entire picture of the campaign is negative in virtually every regard. At each stage of his adventures—from the time he is drafted and told to report in the city of Tambov, through the end of the war and the chaos of the demobilization in the Far East—he shows a badly organized and generally dispirited force. The ordinary soldiers are poorly led and ill-prepared to fight an enemy that turns out to be stronger than anyone had imagined. Veresaev captures the gradually falling mood of the Russians, as they find themselves constantly pushed back by the Japanese and as the casualties and exhaustion mount. The occasional glimpse of a more dedicated individual or

¹⁰ Veresaev, 3: 103–104.

¹¹ Veresaev, 3: 135–36. On this topic see also Vykhodtsev, 305–08.

¹² Veresaev, 3: 215–16.

successful effort only serves to underscore the frequent failures. The cowardice and self-interest of the officer corps is matched by its incompetence. He notes, for instance, that the Japanese, who never had to retreat during the campaign, nonetheless always seemed to be fully prepared for such an eventuality. Conversely, for the Russian army, which had to regroup again and again, retreat always came as a surprise and found the forces unprepared.¹³

What makes the memoir especially striking is its literary quality. Very much as in his stories, Veresaev manages to convey sharp sensations of war: the seemingly endless waiting while little or nothing happens, the sudden activity when battles break out and the wounded stream into the hospital tents, the inability to see the larger picture as individuals are overwhelmed by the rush of the battle and try to respond to apparently arbitrary commands. He eloquently describes the growing desperation; noting, for instance, that people "earlier said that the Japanese were born sailors and we would beat them on land; then they began to say that the Japanese were used to the mountains and we would beat them on the plain. Now they were saying that the Japanese were used to the summer and we would beat them in the winter. And everyone tried to have faith in the winter."¹⁴

Veresaev's were not the only first-hand accounts of the war, but he was the only significant prose writer to compose fiction at the front, and his reportage clearly benefited from the same artistry that he brought to his stories.¹⁵ Both Kuprin and Andreev provide interesting contrasts to Veresaev; the former as a one-time military person who deals with the war only indirectly, and Andreev for composing a work that brought home the horrors of war to the masses of Russians despite his lack of any first-hand military experience.

Kuprin's novel *The Duel* (*Poedinok*, 1905) does not deal with the Russo-Japanese War in any direct way but is forever associated with the conflict by its date of publication: in May of 1905, right around the time of Russia's disastrous defeat in the battle of Tsushima. The commentary in Kuprin's collected works notes that the first sketches

¹³ Veresaev, 3: 183.

¹⁴ Veresaev, 3: 88.

¹⁵ Vykhodtsev, 294–314, in examining works by those who witnessed the war discusses fiction only by Veresaev and K.A. Kovalskii. Among the non-fictional accounts, while paying the most attention to Veresaev, he also examines works by N. Garin, Vasilii Nemirovich-Danchenko, and several others.

for the novel date from 1902, but then claims that after an interruption Kuprin again set to work on the novel "in spring 1904, with the Russo-Japanese War going on, when depictions of the army had become especially topical."¹⁶ However, F.I. Kuleshov, in his extensive discussion of the novel's creation, points out that Kuprin originally conceived of the work in the early 1890s, while he was still in the army, and that his work on it in 1902 was quite extensive; indeed, in December of 1902 the appearance of the novel was announced for 1903.¹⁷ This is not to say that Kuprin did not do more work on the novel in 1904, but only that the conception of the novel in fact predated the Russo-Japanese War, and its theme—the boredom, the petty cruelty and the dehumanizing nature of army life—was meant to apply generally to the Russian army, and not specifically to this conflict. Nonetheless, it was impossible for critics on all sides of the political spectrum as well as the general public to see this biting critique of the army outside the context of the war, where the Russian military had met a series of defeats. Indeed, its image of an army that was backward and thoroughly unprepared for serious fighting very possibly provided many of its readers with an explanation of the disastrous campaign in the Far East. As a result all 20,000 copies of this work's first edition sold out within a month.

When Kuprin does write a work inspired by the war, it takes place entirely in the civilian world. "Staff-Captain Rybnikov" is essentially a spy story. It begins on the day when reports of the Russian defeat at Tsushima reach Petersburg, and tells of efforts by the journalist Shavchinskii to unmask Rybnikov, who claims to be a Russian officer but whom Shavchinskii suspects of being a Japanese spy. Enough people within the Russian Empire were of eastern origin that the story's premise is not entirely far-fetched. Indeed, the story is partly based on real events. Kuprin actually knew a Rybnikov from Siberia whom he, half-jokingly, tried to convince to admit being a Japanese spy.¹⁸ As the critic Kornei Chukovskii, with this story

¹⁶ A.I. Kuprin, *Sobranie sochinenii v devyati tomakh*, 4 (M, 1964), 481.

¹⁷ F.I. Kuleshov, *Tvorcheskii put' A.I. Kuprina, 1883–1907* (Minsk, 1983), 203; the account of the novel's writing and publication can be found on 198–214.

¹⁸ Kornei Chukovskii, *Sobranie sochinenii v shesti tomakh* (M, 1965–69), 2: 186. Chukovskii talks of meeting this Rybnikov (who was not a spy) in the company of Kuprin. See also Kuleshov, 302–03.

among others in mind, has noted, one of Kuprin's special talents was to make "the most unusual, eccentric and improbable plot seem to his readers true to life and completely natural."¹⁹ By focusing on the psychological struggle between Shavchinskii and Rybnikov, Kuprin gets his readers to overlook the unlikely aspects of the story. In addition, a scene in a brothel, in which Kuprin depicts the life of a prostitute with the incisive realism that foreshadows his later novel *The Pit*, furthers the tale's believability.

What is most interesting about the story in terms of the war, though, is Kuprin's applying some themes of *The Duel* specifically to the Russo-Japanese conflict. As Nicholas Luker has remarked, Rybnikov's talk about the war contains sharp attacks on the Russian officer corps.²⁰ In relating stories about officers' card playing and in telling about a botched reconnaissance mission by a colonel, Rybnikov echoes the view of army life found in *The Duel*. Nor does the rest of officialdom fare any better; at the beginning of the story, Kuprin satirizes the government administrators who are readily taken in by Rybnikov's pose as a wounded officer and willingly impart information to him about the Russian army. Any story about spying carries hints of an inner enemy, but Kuprin does not dwell on this point nor do readers come away with the sense that Russia's main problem in the war is subversion. The war itself is only of secondary interest here, a mere backdrop to the narrative. Kuprin considered "Staff-Captain Rybnikov" to be his best story,²¹ but for reasons other than its references to the hostilities. In addition to delineating the personal battle between Shavchinskii and Rybnikov, Kuprin devotes some fine pages to the Petersburg milieu (the restaurant where writers gather, the brothel, etc.). The war offers the impetus for the psychological drama at the center of the story and brings into sharp relief the rather decadent aspects of civilian life that Kuprin shows as continuing in the midst of the far-off conflict.

Andreev's "The Red Laugh" bears similarities to *The Duel* in its reception and to "Staff-Captain Rybnikov" in its actual relationship to war. The story was an enormous success, with some 60,000 copies

¹⁹ Chukovskii, 6: 84–85.

²⁰ Nicholas J.L. Luker, *Alexander Kuprin* (Boston, 1978), 113.

²¹ *A.I. Kuprin o literature* (Minsk, 1969), 311; this statement appears in an interview originally published in the newspaper *Odesskie novosti*, 8 September 1909.

sold after it appeared early in 1905 in a volume of the miscellany *Znanie* (the same publication in which *The Duel* appeared shortly afterwards and, still later, Veresaev's memoir as well). Andreev was already a well-known writer, but the reading public's enthusiastic response no doubt owed much to the general perception that the story was based on first-hand observation of the war. The writer Boborykin, describing a reading of the story, remarked that Andreev had "just returned from the bloody fields of Manchuria." By contrast, Veresaev, after referring to Boborykin's account, comments that when he and others at the front read Andreev's work to the accompaniment of artillery fire and exploding shells, they simply laughed. "The basic tone of the story was so untrue: lost from sight was the most terrible and the most life-saving of human traits—the ability *to get used to anything*."²² In a letter to Osip Dymov, Andreev pointed out that those who did not know that he had never been to the front assumed otherwise, and they were disappointed once they found out that "The Red Laugh" was not based on actual experiences. In that letter Andreev defended his story's accuracy, noting that a person who was not part of the events could keep a certain distance in showing how the mind reacts to the violence of war. An eyewitness, he noted, is not always accurate and an observer is not always a good judge.²³

Andreev's letter gets to the key point of the misunderstanding about his work; in James Woodward's succinct phrasing, critics failed to see that he "is presenting not war, but a specific response to war."²⁴ The plot is fairly simple, even if the narrative structure is complex. A soldier who had been witnessing the sufferings of the wounded in war is badly wounded himself and has both legs amputated. He is sent home, where he soon goes mad and dies. In Part II, his brother then assumes the narration, but he too becomes insane due to the horrors of witnessing his sibling's decline and hearing from him and others about the war. Only in Part II does it become clear that the first-person narration in Part I has also been written by the brother who did not go to war. The work is further divided into "fragments," rather than chapters. In Part I this rubric is in keeping with the disjointed nature of what the soldier narrated, and,

²² Veresaev, 5: 397–98.

²³ Andreev, *Povesti i rasskazy*, I: 679.

²⁴ James B. Woodward, *Leonid Andreyev: A Study* (Oxford, 1969), 107.

in Part II, it fits the incoherence of the narrator's observations as he steadily goes insane. Madness also strikes many of the other figures in the story, from the marching soldiers near the beginning, to the doctor at the front who treats the wounded, to the second brother's former schoolmate, now back from the war, who lost his mind during a bayonet charge. A kind of insanity characterizes as well a third first-person narrator in the story, the dead fiancé of the brothers' sister, who, before being blown to pieces by a shell, had written a letter to the first brother—a dead man writing to a dead man, as the main narrator notes.²⁵ In his letter the sister's fiancé describes the descent to pure savagery on the part of himself and his colleagues: he had bayoneted sleeping enemy troops and even killed people with his bare hands.

If the story is simply seen as a depiction of the Russo-Japanese War, then the response of Veresaev and of other critics who asserted that the images of the war were exaggerated and not realistic are justifiable.²⁶ The story offers a relentless portrayal of madness and chaos. The intensity and brutality of the imagery, along with the disconnectedness of the "fragments" that comprise the story, give the whole a dream-like (or perhaps nightmare-like) quality that is difficult to relate to the specifics of the Russo-Japanese, or any other, war.²⁷ However, as Andreev makes clear in a letter to his then close colleague, Gorky, to whom he had sent the story for publication in *Znanie*, he had little interest in the specifics of the war. Gorky had offered a critique of the story and suggested several changes; in particular, he was bothered by some of the inconsistencies in the narrative and did not like the second half of the work, which deals with madness arising from the knowledge of war rather than as a direct consequence of

²⁵ Andreev, *Povesti i rasskazy*, I: 522.

²⁶ Andreev, *Povesti i rasskazy*, I: 680–81 and Woodward, 106 both contain citations to works in which Andreev was criticized on these grounds.

²⁷ "The Red Laugh" is frequently compared to a famous story by the nineteenth-century writer, Vsevolod Garshin, called "Four Days" ("Chetyre dnia," 1877), where a wounded soldier is shown perishing on the battle field. As P.M. Toper notes in his *Radi zhizni na zemle*, 73, Garshin created a concentrated, first-person narration which showed the senselessness of war and contrasted it as sharply as possible to ordinary life. Where the two differ is in the relentlessness of the fear and madness that characterize Andreev's story; its extreme, fable-like depiction aligns "The Red Laugh" with twentieth-century, rather than nineteenth-century, sensibilities.

battle.²⁸ In his letter back to Gorky, Andreev defends his choices and reveals much about his aims. He essentially paraphrases the very brief third fragment of the story, stating that his theme is madness and horror. "A healthy war is a thing of the past; a war of madmen with madmen is in part a thing of the present, and in part a thing of the near future." In response to Gorky's concern that one section of the story could be seen as presenting anti-Japanese propaganda, he notes that he intended to show neither Russians nor Japanese; only two opposing sides, each capable of atrocities.²⁹

This last point is especially significant. Unlike Kuprin, Andreev does not offer any specific critique of the military or of the government. Indeed, there is nothing directly in the story about politics and no attempt to interpret the events in the story from a social perspective. "The Red Laugh" offers not analysis, but a mood, an outcry.³⁰ The very writing of the tale was in keeping with this quality; Andreev completed the entire draft in a paroxysm of work lasting some nine or ten days, followed by a period of complete exhaustion during which he claimed could not write at all.³¹ He clearly sensed something about modern war that resonated with the reading public, for whom the "madness and horror" of warfare seemed all too real. To recall Braswell's key points, the overwhelming nature of war results in an inability of people to comprehend the whole; narratives therefore become fragmentary, with a concentration on disconnected objects. Readers need to construct meaning out of the parts; the work itself does not directly interpret what is being described. Thus if the Russo-Japanese War was the first major international conflict of the twentieth-century, then Andreev may well be considered the author of the first truly twentieth-century literary work on war.

The difference between the nineteenth and twentieth centuries comes out clearly in comparing Andreev's response to the war to that

²⁸ *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 72: *Gor'kii i Andreev: Neizdannaiia perepiska* (M., 1965), 243.

²⁹ *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 72: 244–45; cf. Andreev, 1: 481, the story's third fragment, which begins with an ellipsis followed by the words "madness and horror," and goes on to mention that there are many instances of mental illness both in "our army and the enemy's."

³⁰ L.A. Iezuitova, *Tvorchestvo Leonida Andreeva, 1892–1906* (Kursk, 1983), 167.

³¹ See, for instance, his letters to Veresaev, 5: 406, and to Gorky (*Literaturnoe nasledstvo*), 72: 235.

of Tolstoy, who composed an essay, generally known in English under the somewhat awkward title of “Bethink Yourselves!” (“Odumaite’s!”), which was in print by spring 1904.³² Andreev wrote that the “Christian-utilitarian” notions of Tolstoy about the harm of war were no doubt more comprehensible at the present than his own story. But Tolstoy represents only yesterday and today; Andreev claims the future for himself: “war as misfortune—that’s today; war as madness—that’s tomorrow.”³³

Andreev may slightly exaggerate the differences, but Tolstoy, rather than dwelling on the horrors of war, appeals rather to moral considerations as well as to individuals’ self-interest. Although he does address the specific conditions of the Russo-Japanese War, little in the piece was new for Tolstoy’s thought. Throughout the latter decades of his career he devoted less of his writing to fiction and far more to religious, moral, philosophical, and political essays. Ideas that he had worked out in some of these previous writings, especially those on religion, the topic on which he was working when he learned about the outbreak of the war, found their way into “Bethink Yourselves!”³⁴

The title comes from two passages in the New Testament where Christ warns the people to bethink themselves (i.e., repent), for destruction is at hand. Tolstoy’s basic notion is that people have strayed from the teachings that would tell them to do good: “The evil from which people of our day suffer stems from the fact that the majority of them are living without that which provides rational guidance to human activity: religion.”³⁵ Note the emphasis on “rational”; to Tolstoy, religion is not something based on dogma, but the outcome of logical thinking about the moral bases for determining the way to live in human society. All the chapters except the twelfth and last (which was written after he had initially thought the essay complete) begin with lengthy epigraphs from the Bible,

³² The title is taken from Biblical passages that contain this word; some English versions of the Bible use “repent” rather than “bethink yourselves.” See Wells, “The Russo-Japanese War,” 132, n. 36. Due to censorship, the essay could not be published in Russia, but a Russian-language edition quickly appeared abroad.

³³ *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 72: 242.

³⁴ On the writing of this essay, see L.N. Tolstoy, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 36 (M-L, 1936), 604–13.

³⁵ Tolstoy, 36: 122.

from philosophers of every era, or from writers (including Tolstoy). It is possible, in fact, to glean the direction of his argument just by reading these quotations. He no doubt included so many references (which in some cases take up more than half of his short chapters) not just to fill up space, but to show that major thinkers over the centuries supported his ideas. The first few chapters, which deal directly with the conflict, are prefaced by quotations that decry war, both in the abstract and by citing specific instances of cruelty and suffering. He then introduces passages that extol religion as a necessary guiding force for people, and begins Chapter 9 with lengthy testimonies about ordinary Russians who refused to fight.

Chapter 12, which contains addenda to the original article, not only lacks any epigraphs, but is the longest and appeals the most to pure emotion. Tolstoy dwells less on his more abstract reasons for opposing the war and instead turns to concrete examples. He refers to those in leadership positions on either side who send people off to war and also to the ordinary people who get caught up in the suffering. Toward the end of the chapter he cites instances that would not be totally out of place in Andreev's story. A peasant shares with him a telegram describing what is apparently the boarding of conscripts at a train station: "The strangers looking on were in tears. A woman from Tula gave a cry and died right there; she had five children. They were shoved off into various orphanages, but the father was forced to go all the same."³⁶ Tolstoy goes on to tell of hearing about three reservists who had been called up and then hanged themselves, about a woman left without her husband abandoning her children at an army office, and about another woman who had hanged herself in the yard of a military official.

Commentators have noted an odd paradox in Tolstoy's attitude toward the war. For all that he was strongly opposed to it in principle, and for all the passion of "Bethink Yourselves!", he was something of a patriot at heart and was troubled when he learned about Russia's defeats.³⁷ The diary of Dushan Makovitskii, who was Tolstoy's private physician from late in 1904 until Tolstoy's death illustrates the varying attitudes. In the very first diary entry (26 October 1904)

³⁶ Tolstoy, 36: 146.

³⁷ On this point, see Wells, 123–24; see also Ernest L. Simmons, *Leo Tolstoy* (Boston, 1946), 643–44.

Makovitskii quotes Tolstoy complaining about Kropotkin's failure to see the good that is in the Japanese, and the next day he expresses disapproval at hearing how a Russian soldier boasts of killing Japanese and Chinese soldiers. However, by February of 1905 he is talking of how the Japanese are more deliberate and precise than the Russians. After the defeat of the Russians at Tsushima he talks openly of the Japanese people being the more militaristic, and then, a short while later, mentions the events in the war that were most painful for him because they involved specifically Russian deaths.³⁸ That Tolstoy would feel compassion for his fellow Russians is not surprising; that he would come to see the Japanese people as more militaristic and less religious than the Russians is less in character. Nonetheless, if he is, in his personal views, more sympathetic to the Russians, he cannot see war as resulting in good for those on either side. When in December of 1904 a visiting correspondent submits that a Russian defeat might at least result in reforms, Tolstoy expresses doubts.³⁹

In a profound way, Tolstoy and Andreev are similar in their view of war, seeing it as resulting in the degeneration of the individual. To Tolstoy war is all about forcing people to act in a way that goes against their reason as well as against their natural inclination to do good. War is finally a cauldron of death, in which people lose or ignore the traits that make them moral beings. Andreev, of course, does not deal with the causes of war or with the roles of the leaders, and he is ultimately less interested in the moral decline of the individual than in the psychological abnormality that arises both at the front and for those who are back home. Yet he too finds that war robs people both of their individuality and of the defining traits that make them members of civilized society.

As is already clear, opposition to the war was rampant among the leading prose writers of the day.⁴⁰ Tolstoy was among the oldest writers still active. The populist Vladimir Korolenko, perhaps the most popular of the living writers from the very next generation, when asked by the leading newspaper *Birzhevye vedomosti*, for his views

³⁸ *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 90: *U Tolstogo 1904–1910: "Iasnopolianskie zapiski D.P. Makovitskogo"*, part I (M, 1979), 94, 98, 184, 288, 294.

³⁹ *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 90, part I: 113.

⁴⁰ It should be noted, though, that nationalist motifs appear in the poetic responses by some of the writers associated with the Symbolist movement. See Pyman, 246–52 and Wells, 109–18.

on the war, wrote, in July 1904, that he considered Port Arthur and Manchuria to be “unnecessary and burdensome” for Russia. He called the conflict a “fearsome, bloody and ruinous struggle for a worthless goal” and a “historical mistake.”⁴¹ Veresaev, Kuprin and Andreev were younger still, all having begun their literary careers within a decade or so of the war. All were at one time associated with the Sreda group, whose most prominent member was their contemporary, Maksim Gorky. Toward the end of July or in early August of 1904 Gorky wrote a letter to Veresaev, who had already been called up and by then was preparing to leave for the front. He expressed sympathy for Veresaev, who was to be involved in “this idiotic, unfortunate, and shameful war—an absurd nightmare.” While Gorky wished that it were someone else going instead, he expressed satisfaction in knowing that with Veresaev there the events would have “a sober and honest witness”—a prediction borne out by Veresaev’s stories and memoir. Toward the end of the letter Gorky lends support to Tolstoy’s claims about the mood on the home front. He refers to chaotic scenes at the train stations where soldiers are mobilized, and mentions “numerous suicides and cases of mental illness, especially among the women.”⁴²

In terms of his literary work, Gorky was one of those whose attention was soon diverted by the 1905 revolution, which resulted in his temporary imprisonment, followed by his trip to America and then exile in Italy. The Russo-Japanese War appears in his work only several years after it was over, in the first section of a four-part cycle called “Complaints” (“Zhaloby,” 1911). In sending off this first section to Aleksandr Amfiteatrov, the novelist who was also the editor of the journal where this was to appear, Gorky expressed his typical doubts about his work, worrying that he had not shown with sufficient clarity the confusion in the thinking of the military officer who does the complaining in that section.⁴³ His concern is understandable. Other than a few instances when the “author” describes the officer and his movements as he speaks, the story is told entirely

⁴¹ V.G. Korolenko, *Sobranie sochinenii v desiati tomakh*, 10 (M, 1956), 397. The newspaper did not publish the letter.

⁴² Maksim Gor’kii, *Sobranie sochinenii v tridsati tomakh*. (M, 1949–56), 28: 316–17.

⁴³ *Literaturnoe nasledstvo*, 95: *Gor’kii i russkaia zhurnalistskaia nachala XX veka: Neizdannaiia perepiska* (M, 1988), 226.

through the words of this military man, whose views are not those of Gorky himself. All four sections of the work use a similar "confessional" form, which links the "Complaints" to many of Gorky's earlier stories, all the way back to his first published work, "Makar Chudra."⁴⁴ Since the confessor gets to relate the events from that individual's own point of view, there is the danger that readers will sympathize with a negative figure if that character is also narrator.

Yet in this case Gorky need not have worried; the common soldier Shvetsov, to whom the officer is contrasted over a good portion of this narrative, serves to show the close-mindedness and conservatism of the officer, who claims to want to know the Russian people, but who remains apart from them. The interaction of the two takes place in the context of the Russo-Japanese War. The officer first comes across Shvetsov at a mobilization, which resembles Tolstoy's description in his essay or for that matter Gorky's in his letter to Veresaev. "Soldiers are being boarded onto the train, women are howling, drunks shouting, and those who are sober look as though they are going to be flayed in an hour."⁴⁵ Shvetsov, who has caught the officer's eye amidst this chaos, turns out to be someone who could have stepped out of the pages of Tolstoy's essay. When told by the officer that he needs to have a fighting spirit and to expect to come home with victory and glory, Shvetsov responds that he and his fellows will do what is ordered, but that they do not care about victory and would prefer not to fight at all. Later, when the officer gives a speech about Russia's objectives in the Far East and the need to defend the homeland, it is again Shvetsov who points out that peasants everywhere are the same and that if one village goes to fight against another there will be no advantage to anyone, but only fighting and bloodshed.⁴⁶ The differences between the two continue until both are wounded in battle; Shvetsov surprises the officer by insisting that the Japanese medics look after the officer first. Shvetsov,

⁴⁴ L.F. Garanina, "Khudozhestvennaia pravda M. Gor'kogo v tsikle rasskazov 'Zhaloby'." In *Rannii M. Gor'kii: Gor'kovskie chteniia 1992 g.*, ed. G.S. Zaitseva (Nizhnii Novgorod: Izdatel'stvo Nizhegorodskogo universiteta, 1993), 58–59. For more detailed remarks on the confessional mode and how it is reflected in a novel that Gorky wrote not long before "Complaints," see my "God-Building or God-Seeking? Gorky's *Confession* as Confession," *Slavic and East European Journal*, 44 (2000), no. 3, 448–69.

⁴⁵ M. Gor'kii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii: Khudozhestvennye proizvedeniia v dvadtsati piati tomakh* (M, 1968–76), 11: 9.

⁴⁶ M. Gor'kii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 11: 12.

perishing from his wounds, then faces death in a calm and matter of fact way. All of this leads the perplexed officer to exclaim: "It's necessary to say something to them, something that would move us closer to these folk. You have to understand your own people!"⁴⁷

Thus, the war serves as the backdrop for a very Tolstoyan tale of peasant wisdom. On the one hand, the officer displays a mindless devotion to duty, an all-consuming belief in the importance of victory, and an urge to fight simply because that is what he has been taught to do. On the other, Shvetsov, for all his naiveté, possesses a matter-of-fact understanding that the life and death of an individual are more important than abstract victory in battle, along with a basic instinct not to harm others and a desire to live in peace. Gorky's chief point, to which Tolstoy certainly would have been sympathetic, is that the patriotic slogans used by the government and the army to inspire the masses do not speak to the reality of ordinary Russians, who greet them with a mixture of incomprehension and skepticism.

If Gorky's treatment of the Russo-Japanese conflict is reminiscent of Tolstoy in its emphasis on war's incompatibility with the intuitive propensities of ordinary people, then Zinaida Gippius, in concentrating on the psychological effects of war, more closely recalls Andreev in her story "No Return" ("Net vozrata," 1909).⁴⁸ The work was inspired by a specific event: in the spring of 1905 she and her husband, Dmitrii Merezhkovskii, stayed for a few days in Odessa, where one of the ships in the harbor was carrying home Russian soldiers from the war. Several wounded officers had been put up at the hotel where these two writers were staying. Gippius, who became acquainted with them, was left with the impression that all those who came back from the war were insane. Her husband, who disliked all wars, commented that their insanity was only to be expected.⁴⁹

Thus, like Andreev, Gippius equates war with madness, but rather than the nightmarish visions of "The Red Laugh" she offers a comparatively more down-to-earth depiction of alienation from civilian life. Grisha and Nadia, a brother and a sister, come back to European Russia at about the same time from the war theater. The first to

⁴⁷ M. Gorkii, *Polnoe sobranie sochinenii*, 11: 20.

⁴⁸ Wells, 119 and 121, also cites the similarity of Andreev's "The Red Laugh" and Gippius's "No Return."

⁴⁹ Zinaida Gippius-Merezhkovskaia, *Dmitrii Merezhkovskii* (Paris, 1951), 136.

appear is Grisha, who arrives at the family farm where his father, Petr Mikhailovich, and his younger sister, Lelia, have been impatiently waiting. But from the moment he arrives he distances himself from his family—both physically, by going off every evening, and emotionally, by his distracted manner of speaking with them. “Although Petr Mikhailovich knows perfectly well that this is Grisha, it suddenly seems to him that it isn’t Grisha.”⁵⁰ He soon starts courting all the eligible young women “at once, as though he was courting one,” and indeed not only does he become engaged to a young woman whom he knew less than the others, but later he cannot quite remember her name.

In turning to Grisha’s sister, Gippius relies directly on her Odessa encounter with evacuated officers. Nadia is a nurse who returns with wounded soldiers on a ship to Odessa; her family comes to stay at the hotel where she and several of the officers from the ship are quartered. She turns out to be as distant as her brother and constantly has a wooden expression; Nadia’s father and sister at first have a hard time recognizing her. While Petr Mikhailovich and Lelia feel increasingly isolated from the military society in which they have found themselves at the Odessa hotel, Grisha now seems more at home than he had been ever since arriving from the front. At the end Lelia passes judgment on what she has seen, saying that all the returnees are crazy, while admitting that perhaps to them she and her father all the crazy ones. She notes that it was the soldiers’ experience at war that makes them different: “Wounded, or not wounded, or recovered—that’s not the point, it makes no difference. Every one of them has been wounded in the soul, and the soul has not recovered.”⁵¹

Gippius’s theme, then, is war as psychosis, war as doing something to the human mind that separates forever those who have taken part in it from those who have not. If her characters continue to live and function in society in a way that Andreev’s do not, her work is in a certain sense even gloomier. Andreev writes a fantasy; both the violence and the mental breakdowns in his story are so extreme that it is easier for readers to distance the narratives from their own experience. The one moment in Andreev that foreshadows “No Return” occurs in “The Red Laugh” toward the end of Part I, when

⁵⁰ Zinaida Gippius, *Sobranie sochinenii*, 4: *Lunnye murav'i: Rasskazy, p'esy* (M, 2001), 67.

⁵¹ Gippius, *Lunnye murav'i*, 79.

the narrator realizes that his family sees him as someone totally different from the person who went off to war. In Gippius, Grisha and Nadia, while hardly typical, are more realistic than Andreev's characters, while their father and younger sister are presented as quite normal people who are bewildered by the changes they see in those they love. The notion that war affects its participants in ways that they cannot overcome and that separate them entirely from those left behind is ultimately every bit as frightening as anything conjured up by Andreev.

With Gippius it becomes evident that, for all the differences in manner and approach, a unifying thread runs among these prose treatments of the Russo-Japanese War. Granted, a sense of looming or actual defeat hangs over all these works, but the authors are less interested in the national cause than they are in individual fates. Veresaev would argue that people can get accustomed to everything, and therefore he did not agree with Andreev (and probably not with Gippius) that those who participate in war are necessarily insane. However, he does suggest that the military life hardly brings out the best in soldiers, that those caught up in a conflict are at the mercy of forces far beyond their control, and that war ultimately isolates people from others. This essentially dehumanizing quality of war is behind Tolstoy's protests and is the feature to which Gorky objects in his depiction of the officer. The same theme lies at the very basis of Kuprin's *The Duel* and appears early in "Staff-Captain Rybnikov." Ultimately the question of national victory or defeat is not important; for all these writers the key is the individual and the suffering that war imposes.

And yet, for all that writers remained concerned with individual drama, the Russo-Japanese War could not help but have an effect on both the national psyche and the attitudes of writers. As Andreev correctly noted, there was something new and different about this war and about all future wars. It was, as he could not then know, a harbinger of the large-scale conflicts that were to characterize the twentieth century. The large losses suffered by the Russian forces in a struggle that many had expected they would win easily came to affect the popular imagination in a way that brought home the horrors of war to those who were far from the front. The overriding theme in these stories, though, is less the madness depicted by Andreev than another topic that underlies his story as well: alienation. Whether for the protagonists of Gippius who no longer know their own family

members, or for Gorky's common soldier who has no feeling for patriotism, or even for Kuprin's confused journalist, the war does not so much terrify, but leads to estrangement, a sense that their lives are out of joint—this is a conflict that people do not understand and that tears them apart from their fellows.

And these themes in turn come to have an effect on the manner of writing, on the way in which writers conveyed to readers their perception of the outside world. The fragmentary narratives associated with much modernist fiction can serve as a formal reflection of the unknowability and disruptiveness of war, as well as a means to mimic the mind's inability to absorb at once, in any kind of totality, the brutal consequences of twentieth-century warfare.⁵² The modernist trends at the turn of the century had already caused many writers to turn away from large, coherent narratives and to describe experience in smaller segments, often without clear links between the disparate parts. War, with its essential violence that shatters the coherence of experience, with the seeming randomness and meaninglessness of its individual moments, gave further impetus to the tendency toward fragmentariness in the writers discussed here: be it in the episodes of Veresaev's tales, the literal "fragments" into which Andreev divided his story, or the two distinct halves of the work by Gippius. Thus the impact of the Russo-Japanese War furthered what was to become a dominant mode of expression for Russians in both literature and the other arts. While the number of works that focused on the conflict was not great, in terms of both the themes and the literary manner that came to the fore during subsequent years the war had a lasting effect on the Russian literary imagination.

⁵² On this topic see the introduction to Margot Norris, *Writing War in the Twentieth Century* (Charlottesville, 2000), 1–32.

PART IV

THE IMPACT

CHAPTER TWENTY-TWO

RUSSIAN MILITARY EXPENDITURES IN THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR, 1904–5

Boris Ananich

The year 1897 marked the beginning of a new period in the history of finance, both in Russia and Japan. In that year, both countries introduced the gold standard and thus became equivalent monetary partners with the main European countries in this respect. Monetary reform in Russia helped stabilize the ruble and opened the door to foreign capital. Foreign investments and loans became an important source for Russian industry and railroad construction. Apart from this, Finance Minister S.Iu. Witte undertook a whole series of measures to accumulate internal resources and increase state income. The key sources were indirect taxes and the introduction of an alcohol tax. By the end of the 1890s, the Witte economic program became clear: accelerated industrial development that made use of both domestic and foreign capital in the form of loans and investments as well as customs protection for Russian industry and export encouragement.

By this last measure, Witte tied Russia's economic development to a battle for export markets near its Eastern reaches. In the second half of the 1890s, the Finance Ministry undertook its "peaceful" economic penetration into Manchuria, Korea, Persia and Mongolia. With the help of state and "neutral" foreign investments, the government thought that by not skimping on necessary expenses, it could do what weak national initiative could not. Witte hoped that in the course of a few years Russian industry would reach a sufficiently high level to make Russian goods competitive on the markets of Central and East Asia. This would permit the payment of "interest on capital received in Europe from the payments for exports to Asia."¹

¹ More detail in B.V. Anan'ich and P.Sh. Ganelin, *Sergei Iul'evich Vitte i ego vremia* (SPB, 2000) 83–97; B.V. Anan'ich, et al. (eds.), *Vlast' i reformy. Ot samodержavnoi k sovetskoi rossii* (SPB, 1996) 414.

The "Witte system" did bear fruit. The Russian economy rose, especially railroad construction and related industries. The state budget also grew rapidly from 415 million rubles in 1867 to one billion rubles in 1897. However, the boom was cut short by a global economic downturn beginning in 1900, which deeply affected Russia. Until the crisis, it had appeared that the foreign policy part of Witte's program had met with success. Russia confidently occupied positions in East Asian markets, blocking out competitors. But costs were high, and they were borne by the Russian taxpayer. Tensions with the English and Japanese were also heightened. Russia had to defend its economic expansion in Asia. At the same time, Russia was dragged into the naval arms race in the Pacific. By the end of 1902, Russia's balanced budget was already under attack. The empire's finances entered a crisis at a moment when the tax system was already stretched to the limit. The government either had to cut expenses or seek salvation on foreign stock exchanges.² And this in time of peace.

Beginning in February 1904, the Russo-Japanese War required the use of all financial means by the tsarist government, but it soon became clear that foreign loans would be necessary. The war cost Russia 6.554 billion rubles.³ As B.A. Romanov noted, more than half of this total, or 3.944 billion rubles, paid the interest on domestic and foreign loans to cover war costs. The capital sum of the debt for war costs paid off in 1904–9 was 2.176 billion rubles. Thus, Romanov showed that from the very beginning the financing of the war depended on foreign markets and the war was therefore of an international nature.⁴

Russia's financial unpreparedness for war became clear at the end of the first month of combat in the Far East. Already in the second half of February, the necessity for a new Russian loan was bruited about in Paris. At the beginning of the war French investors held three million rubles of the four owed by Russia to foreigners.⁵ In

² On August 13, 1903, three days before Witte left office under attack from his political opponents, a decision was taken to cut 1905 expenses on state railway building. See Anan'ich and Ganelin, *Sergei Iul'evich Vitte i ego vremia*, 97.

³ G.D. Dement'ev, *Vo chto oboshlas' nashemu gosudarstvennomu kaznacheistvu voina s Iaponi* (Petrograd, 1917) 32–33.

⁴ B.A. Romanov, *Ocherki diplomaticheskoi istorii russko-iaponskoi voiny, 1895–1907. Izdanie vtoroe, ispravlennoe i dopolnennoe* (M-L, 1955), 283.

⁵ Ibid.

1902 Witte had also secured a major loan from Germany, but Russia's main creditor remained France, so St. Petersburg was concerned about Russia's credit on the Paris money market.

Meanwhile, Russian solvency soon became the object of steady attention in the press as Western European papers widely speculated about tsarist financial difficulties. Russian creditworthiness came under particularly virulent attack from the English press, which had played its part in inciting the Russo-Japanese conflict as well. In light of these chilly relations with England, in early 1904 the Russian Finance Ministry could hardly approach bankers in London's financial center, the City. The English press' campaign caused concern in Russia, because of the influence it might have on public opinion in America and, especially, France, thereby jeopardizing access to their money markets. As a result, the information war became one of the more important battles to be waged during the struggle with Japan.

Speculation about the near-term inevitability of a new Russian loan in France could only upset the Paris Bourse. The Russian Finance Ministry accordingly ordered its foreign agents to combat such rumors and convince foreign investors that the Russian treasury's resources were sufficient for a long war. But the agents were also told, in preparing denials, to bear in mind that a loan might become possible, should "the war drag on and expand."⁶

On March 30, 1904 the Finance Committee discussed the new Finance Minister V.N. Kokovtsov's memorandum on the country's financial situation and war-related measures. Kokovtsov spoke out against extraordinary measures, in particular, limiting the exchange of currency for gold. Against his advice, a decision was taken to "limit pay out in gold."

Until the Russo-Japanese war, the State Bank had the opposite policy. After the monetary reform, a specified amount of the payments made by the State Bank were required to be made in gold in order to guarantee a turnover in metallic currency (*zvonkoi money*). With this goal in mind, one, five and ten-ruble notes were removed from circulation and the production of three-ruble notes was limited. Around 1899, as turnover of gold developed, forced measures became unnecessary. Nonetheless, the State Bank used gold in the summer months when increases in grain deals made the lack of paper currency

⁶ *Russkie finansy i evropeiskaia birzha v 1904–06 gg.* (M-L, 1926) 31.

felt. This saved the government from being forced to issue more notes. Now, in connection with the beginning of the war, Kokovtsov considered it necessary to change this policy. He decided to issue five and ten-ruble notes and to the east of Baikal to make payments "only in notes, especially in small denominations" and not to use gold.⁷

Although at the Finance Committee's meeting Kokovtsov painted a positive picture of Russian finances, in early March he asked the Russian ambassador to France, A.I. Nelidov, to sound out the possibility of borrowing three to four hundred million rubles in France, the equivalent of one billion francs.⁸

What was the state of Russian finances in spring 1904? On February 16th, the tsarist treasury had 905.8 million rubles in gold on hand. At the same time, some 680 million rubles of paper currency were in circulation. Since, according to the law of 1897, the emission of the first 600 million rubles was to be covered by 300 million rubles in gold, with additional issues covered ruble by ruble in gold, the State Bank could still print another 200 million. At the beginning of the war, the Russian government had an additional 157 million rubles available; budget cuts, including 149 million taken from railroad construction, also freed up much-needed cash.

The military prospects in spring 1904 boded well for Russia, and the tsarist government clearly had enough funds for the next months without having to resort to borrowing abroad. According to the March 1904 calculations of P.A. Saburov, a member of the Finance Committee, more than 700 million rubles could be mobilized, enough for war until January 1905 at the cost of two million rubles a day. But in case of military defeats or a protracted war, the tsarist government would be facing bankruptcy in early 1905. To avoid this danger, Kokovtsov decided to start by paying from a foreign pocket, saving Russian money for the following year.

Negotiations began in April 1904 with Edouard Noetzlin (Banque Parisbas) and Baron Hottinguer (Hottinguer et Cie.), when the two bankers arrived in St. Petersburg. Their presence in the imperial capital seemed to confirm all rumors about a new loan. Combined with the disastrous loss of the *Petropavlovsk* off Port Arthur, these events caused Russian bonds to plummet on the Paris Bourse. As a

⁷ Ibid., 59–60.

⁸ B.V. Anan'ich, *Rossia i mezhdunarodnyi kapital 1807–1914* (L, 1970) 101.

result, the finance minister's negotiations in Paris and St. Petersburg did not begin under the most auspicious conditions.

In St. Petersburg, the French bankers were delighted to learn that, along with Kokovtsov, the redoubtable former finance minister, Sergei Witte, would also participate. The sides agreed swiftly on the type of loan, with a relatively short five-year term. But the bankers found a billion francs too much for the Paris market. Witte's suggestion to bring in German bankers did not meet an enthusiastic response from his Gallic counterparts, and the negotiations dragged on.

On May 2, Kokovtsov met with the French ambassador to St. Petersburg, Maurice Bompard. They discussed the conditions of the loan as agreed upon between the bankers and the French government. The sum of 800 million was authorized under the condition that only 400 be made available immediately. In case of an unfavorable market, the operation would be halted.⁹

Kokovtsov was against splitting the loan into two tranches, but was willing to reduce the loan total to 600 million, as long as it was limited to a single transaction.¹⁰ The French government would not budge and Kokovtsov was forced to agree to a high interest rate of 6.5 percent as well as preference for French companies in foreign purchases.¹¹ Until the very last moment, Witte kept trying to include German banks, but, under pressure from Ambassador Bompard, the French financiers refused to budge on this question. French diplomacy did not want to give Germany an additional opportunity to help Russia, especially at the moment when France's ally, England, was placing a Japanese loan in London with the participation of the New York exchange.¹² On May 7, Kokovtsov reached a preliminary agreement with the bankers, and five days later, on May 12, the loan was signed in Paris and sent by mail to St. Petersburg.

⁹ These conditions were communicated in a letter from the French Finance Minister Rouvier to the Foreign Minister Delcassé on 28 April 1904. *Documents diplomatiques français 1871-1914* (DDF). Ser. 2. no. 72, 81-82. The conditions of the loan would have been sent to Kokovtsov through the Paris-Netherlands bank, but Rouvier asked Delcassé to send it through the French ambassador as well. On the same day, Delcassé telegraphed Bompard to alert him to the contents of Rouvier's letter.

¹⁰ *Russkie finansy i evropeiskaia birzha*, 97-98.

¹¹ Romanov, *Ocherki diplomaticheskoi istorii russko-iaponskoi voiny*, 315.

¹² *Ibid.*, 315-6. For more on the Japanese finances, see the chapter by Edward Miller.

By borrowing 800 million, the tsarist government now had the means to wage war until the end of 1904, winning much-needed breathing space before continuing negotiations for future loans. With a budget of 325,000 francs to influence the French press, Arthur Raffalovitch, the finance minister's agent in Paris, used the time to improve Russia's reputation among the public of its chief creditor.

The Russian Finance Ministry was under no illusions about negotiating a loan in London or Washington, so when the issue of a next major foreign loan arose in late 1904, the only possibilities were Paris and Berlin. The new round of negotiations began in October 1904, when the French bankers took the initiative of offering another loan. The Germans followed suit and Russia was again drawn into the preparation of a major bond issue to pay for the war in 1905. Although the Russians continued to suffer defeats in the increasingly protracted East Asian campaign, Paris continued to be confident of an eventual Russian victory. The May loan had been enormously profitable for those who had taken part and, now, *Crédit Lyonnais* also sent its representatives to St. Petersburg.

The French initiative came six to eight weeks ahead of the Russian plan, but Kokovtsov was ready to begin when the head of the Berlin bank, Mendelssohn and Co., arrived to continue talks broken off in early 1904.¹³ The Russo-German trade agreement on July 15 had also included Russia's right to place a loan on the Berlin exchange until April 1905. But after the large loan from France, Kokovtsov was not in a rush, obviously hoping for good war news and a better political situation in which to negotiate. But now he had to start in a less favorable climate than in summer 1904.

Beginning with the tragic events of "Bloody Sunday," on January 22, 1905, the first Russian revolution revealed the internal crisis of the autocracy. But the events of January had little effect on the Russo-German negotiations. Already in late December, Tsar Nicholas II had approved the loan. The operation was written into the state debt book as "The Russian 4.5 percent State Loan of 1905," and had a nominal capital of 231.5 million rubles, equivalent to 500 million German marks. The loan was made by German and Dutch bankers through the house of Mendelssohn. Russian banks bought 24 percent of the loan. The term was for 80 years, although holders had the

¹³ *Russkie finansy i evropeiskaia birzha*, 115–21.

right to redeem their bonds in 6.5 or 9.5 years. At the same time, the Russian government had the right to retire or convert the loan after 12 years. Thus, the loan could be for either a long or a short term, the first time Russia had concluded such a foreign loan.¹⁴ The 4.5 percent loan was so profitable for the German bankers that the Deutsche Bank's board met in the last days of March to discuss a larger loan to Russia through a different consortium of bankers. But the loan of 1905 turned out to be the last major Russian operation on the Berlin exchange.

Foreign loans in Paris and Berlin did cover the war's mounting cost. Kokovtsov's report to the tsar of December 1904 stressed his reliance on foreign markets. The finance minister hoped to raise 500 million rubles in 1905, but this would only be enough for eight months of war. Kokovtsov did not expect additional resources from within Russia, nor did he anticipate changes in the tax system, such as an income tax. The only alternative was to tap Western European money markets.

The emphasis on foreign loans was confirmed in 1905. In early February, Eduard Noetzlin returned to St. Petersburg and asked Kokovtsov to take measures against a crash of Russian securities on the Paris market, in particular by boosting subsidies to the press for positive coverage. Noetzlin met with Nicholas II, who reassured him that revolutionary unrest was on the wane. Anyway, the emperor added, Admiral Rozhdestvenskii's Second Pacific Squadron would turn things around when it arrived in Pacific waters.¹⁵

In the second half of February, representatives from three French banking houses arrived and negotiations began. The basic terms were reached on March 12. The next day, the French bankers met with D.M. Solskii, the head of the Finance Committee, and then dined with Kokovtsov. They agreed that the loan would be signed two days later at eleven in the morning. The French bankers never showed up, sending word instead that they had been ordered to return to Paris without closing the deal.¹⁶ One of the main reasons for their recall was news of the Russian reversal at Mukden.

¹⁴ Ibid., 377.

¹⁵ V.N. Kokovtsov, *Iz moego proshlogo*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1933), I, 62.

¹⁶ A five-percent loan for 600 million rubles was under discussion. DDF/Ser. 2, no. 142, 187. Romanov, *Ocherki diplomaticheskoi istorii russko-iaponskoi voiny*, 358–59.

After the three plenipotentiaries left St. Petersburg, Kokovtsov demonstratively refused to look for money from any French institutions. The finance minister was also forced to pause by a controversy that blew up in *The Times*. The newspaper had published an article by the English journalist Lucien Wolf, in which the author questioned Russia's creditworthiness. The first part of the article appeared on March 11, right in the middle of the French-Russian negotiations, and the second part came out on March 14.¹⁷ Using Russian accounts by G.B. Butmi and S.F. Sharapov, as well as official reports of State Comptroller P. Kh. Schwanebach, Wolf laid bare the inevitable bankruptcy of the autocracy's finances. With the support of editorials in his paper, Wolf warned Russia's creditors to be wary.

The departure of the French bankers on the next day was taken as a sign that the negotiations had failed. The fact that even its main ally was reluctant to lend more money hardly inspired confidence among investors about Russia's creditworthiness. Tsarist officials were concerned by *The Times*' attack, and the authoritative *Novoe Vremia* countered by blasting the London daily as "the main organ of the Japanophile party," not only in England, but also in all of Europe. The motives were characterized as "preparing the way" for the next Japanese loan, while putting Russia under pressure to conclude peace on Japan's terms.¹⁸ Kokovtsov invited the editors of *The Times* to visit St. Petersburg and see the gold with their own eyes. However, this invitation only gave the paper another excuse to continue their attacks on Russian finances.

Since the continuation of negotiations for a foreign loan precisely when Russia's creditworthiness was under attack in the European press weakened the finance minister's standing among foreign bankers, Kokovtsov now turned to domestic resources. On 24 March, the Finance Committee discussed a five percent domestic bond issue for 200 million rubles. Kokovtsov proposed a 49-year tax-free loan. He noted that "under the present extraordinary conditions, a loan at a high interest rate is the only possible credit operation." Kokovtsov stated that the rates were lower than the previous foreign loans, but last-minute demands by the Russian banks raised commissions further and jeopardized this claim. The high rate made clear the government's dire situation and the Finance Committee accepted the loan

¹⁷ L. Wolf, "Is Russia solvent?" *The Times*, 14 March 1905.

¹⁸ *Novoe Vremia*, 21 March 1905.

for lack of other options, despite the knowledge that it would have further deleterious effects on credit rates.¹⁹

This loan did little to shore up the regime's shaky finances, and Kokovtsov was forced to turn to Mendelssohn immediately. In the course of these negotiations, it became clear that long-term credit operations in Germany would affect the value of previously placed Russian stocks and bonds. Therefore, only short-term loans would be possible. The Finance Committee authorized Mendelssohn to raise up to 200 million rubles, but in the end only 150 million could be placed, at a steep effective yield of 7.28 percent.²⁰

The issue on Berlin's Börse inevitably aroused the jealousy of French political and financial circles, especially after rumors spread that the loan papers had been carried to Paris and resold. The possibility of a next loan was now being mooted, but the navy's disaster at Tsushima delayed further negotiations right until the conclusion of peace. Raffalovitch reported from Paris that, "heated by jealousy of Mendelssohn and his successes," the French were ready for a major new operation, but he warned: "Behind this is a hidden thought that peace is inevitable." French creditors were seriously worried by the tsarist government's weakened state and the growth of the revolutionary movement. The French government insisted on more political stability in Russia to guarantee French investments and the Franco-Russian alliance. St. Petersburg had no alternative but to comply with the wishes of both the French government and society.²¹

One of the first advocates for peace was Sergei Witte. He warned Nicholas in late February,

To continue the war, we will need much money and a broad draft. Further spending will distort the financial and economic situation in the empire, the main artery of all states. Poverty increases and, in parallel, anger and depression. Russia will lose her credit rating and all foreign holders of our securities (such as the entire French bourgeoisie) will become our enemies.²²

¹⁹ Anan'ich, *Rossia i mezhdunarodnyi kapital 1807–1914*, 140–41.

²⁰ The Russian government issued short-term obligations only in extraordinary situations. They were first issued in 1812 and most-recently before the Russo-Japanese war in 1876–1886. Ibid., 141–42.

²¹ See, DDF/Ser. 2 no. 6, 395. *Russkie finansy i evropeiskaia birzha*, 187.

²² S.Iu. Vitte, *Vospominania*, 3 vols. (M., 1960), vol. II, 573–74.

Only after Tsushima did Russia realize that no further loans could be placed until peace was concluded. Then, both the Paris and London markets would welcome her back, as Lord Revelstoke, the head of Baring Brothers assured Count Benckendorf, Russia's ambassador to the Court of St James' in late June.²³

By early July, loans and the future finances of Russia were dependent on the outcome of the peace talks in Portsmouth, New Hampshire. When Witte left for America as Russia's plenipotentiary on July 19, he noted that the war was "running up the debt, that the finance minister can no longer raise serious money in Russia, since all means are already exhausted, and no one will give money any longer overseas." A continuation of the fighting was possible only "at the price of complete financial, and then economic collapse."²⁴ Meanwhile, the situation became more and more critical. On arriving in the United States, Witte received Kokovtsov's request to stop in France on the return trip to "insist on the necessity of a loan as the only means to not push us into financial recklessness (*bezrassudstvo*)."²⁵

Once in America, Witte renewed his 1902 negotiations with J.P. Morgan about opening the American market to Russia, and Morgan agreed to participate in the next loan. Shortly after Witte returned home, Kokovtsov invited the French bankers to St. Petersburg. In mid-October, the members of the international financial consortium (including Lord Revelstoke) travelled to Russia to discuss the new loan.

Some of the bankers were caught in the first wave of railroad strikes, and felt the hot breath of the revolution upon them. The trains stopped and waited, sometimes in stations, sometimes in open fields. Even St. Petersburg's fashionable Hôtel de l'Europe, where the bankers were staying, was blacked out as electricity failed.²⁶ Under this first impression, some were prepared to return home without even beginning discussions, but under pressure from Noetzelin and the Crédit Lyonnais' representative, talks continued for ten days. Hopes that the revolutionary movement would die down were not realized and the excitement even penetrated the walls of the State Bank. On October 29, the employees threatened a strike, unless the Bank suspended operations, and on the next day a demonstration was held on the

²³ Romanov, *Ocherki diplomaticheskoi istorii russko-iaponskoi voyny*, 477.

²⁴ Ibid., 399. Kokovtsov, *Iz moego proshlogo*, I, 96.

²⁵ *Russkie finansy i evropeiskaia birzha*, 201.

²⁶ Kokovtsov, *Iz moego proshlogo*, I, 96.

bank's grand staircase. Only the announcement of the October Manifesto on the evening of the 30th finally headed off the strike.²⁷

The incipient strike at the State Bank was just a stroke on the revolutionary canvas, but a very typical one. What significance could the negotiations have, when the finance minister was in danger of losing control of the country's central financial institution, the State Bank? In fact, the last meeting took place after all participants had realized that the undertaking was doomed. The operation would have to be postponed to some future date. The consortium members and the Russian representatives agreed to renew negotiations when conditions would permit. This agreement was reached on the same day as the Manifesto.²⁸

The scale of revolution in November and December 1905 led to a deepening crisis in tsarist finances. The spectre of bankruptcy became quite real by early December. According to the currency printing law of 1897, the Bank was only allowed to issue 300 million unbacked rubles. During the war, the amount of paper currency in circulation had risen, and with the outbreak of revolution many demanded gold in exchange. Between November 29 and December 14, 48 million rubles were drawn from savings accounts in gold. Between December 14 and 29, additional withdrawals of 62.8 million rubles were made. Foreign exchange operations also increased as investors sent their money abroad.²⁹ The gold standard came under an expected blow when Berlin bankers, who had long cooperated with the Russian treasury, demanded fifty million rubles in gold bars. The sum was sent to "Mendelssohn and Co." in late November.³⁰

In October 1905, a united government was created in Russia. Sergei Witte was appointed Chairman of the Council of Ministers. After the negotiations for the international loan were broken off, Witte still had to find 200 million rubles to carry on until the end of the year. For both financial and political reasons, Finance Minister Shipov did not consider a long-term domestic loan. Instead, on December 1, the finance committee decided to increase short-term obligations up to a total of 400 million rubles.³¹

²⁷ Anan'ich, *Rossia i mezhdunarodnyi kapital 1807–1914*, 150.

²⁸ Romanov, *Ocherki diplomaticheskoi istorii russko-iaponskoi voyny*, 601.

²⁹ Anan'ich, *Rossia i mezhdunarodnyi kapital 1807–1914*, 153–54.

³⁰ Ibid., 154–55.

³¹ Ibid., 156.

The Russian Finance Ministry first looked to Berlin, hoping to place a 200 million ruble loan through Mendelssohn to pay off the 150 million the bank had taken in April. The remainder would shore up the Russian treasury's foreign currency reserves. But Mendelssohn did not find many takers and the loan was undersubscribed.³² But, clearly, even the full 200 million would not have solved the Russian financial crisis, and stabilized repayment of the war loans.

On December 16, Shipov recommended that conversion of paper currency into gold be stopped. Witte stated that "he did not protest the suggested measure, although he recognized all the sad consequences to follow." After further speeches for and against, it was decided to put off a final decision of the issue and create a special commission on monetary exchange and ways to avoid bankruptcy, consisting of I.P. Shipov, V.N. Kokovtsov and Deputy Agriculture Minister Schwanebach.³³ But the Finance Ministry took immediate steps to limit redemption of paper currency into gold in provincial areas, where a circular memorandum instructed branch offices to announce that "the bank is unable to satisfy fully the demands for gold unleashed by the agitation of the radical parties."³⁴

Meanwhile, the commission concluded that the State Bank's authority to print currency was almost exhausted, since bank notes already considerably exceeded gold reserves. Nonetheless Kokovtsov and Schwanebach convincingly argued for continued free exchange. On December 22, the decision was made to strengthen gold reserves to buy time to suppress the revolution.³⁵

At the finance committee meeting on December 27, Schwanebach stated outright that stopping payments in gold might be used as revolutionary propaganda. Therefore, he urged avoiding this step "despite all the indications of financial science" not to give "the revolutionaries the chance to tell the people of their finance victory over the government as well."³⁶ However, since the legal limit for currency print-

³² Ibid., 156.

³³ Kokovtsov, *Iz moego proshlogo*, I, 113–15. See also Zhurnal komiteta finansov 3/16 dekabria 1905 g. published in A.L. Sidorovym, *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, no. 2 (1955), 125–26.

³⁴ Tsirkuliar o poriadke kassovykh vydach ot 7/20 dekabria 1905 g. no. 9a. Rossiiskii Gosndarstvennyi Arkhiv (RGIA), f. 587, op. 56, d. 104, l. 51–51 ob.

³⁵ *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, no. 2 (1955), 127–28. Kokovtsov, *Iz moego proshlogo*, I, 116.

³⁶ *Istoricheskii arkhiv*, no. 2 (1955), 130.

ing had been reached, it was decided to issue credit obligations for up to 150 million rubles without any gold backing. They were to be taken out of circulation at the first opportunity. Two days later, Nicholas II authorized the operation, although his decree was never published to hide it from the public. After two years of secrecy, on December 13, 1907, the emperor personally destroyed the decree.³⁷

The Finance Committee's extraordinary measures to save the gold standard were only a means to hang on until help would come from abroad. Accordingly Kokovtsov soon went to Paris for a new loan, arriving there on New Year's Day, 1906. After two days of fruitless discussion with the bankers, Kokovtsov went to the Quai d'Orsay, where he met with Prime Minister Rouvier. Rouvier agreed to organize a small loan immediately and a larger loan later in exchange for absolute support for France's position at the upcoming Algéciras conference. After soliciting the tsar's consent, Kokovtsov agreed.³⁸

Kokovtsov's fifth day in Paris witnessed a "complete change of the décor." The French bankers Noetzelin, Hottinguer and three others were invited to the Foreign Ministry. Rouvier led the negotiations by himself. He suggested to the bankers that they satisfy the Russian government's request. An objection that France was no longer so concerned about defending the gold standard in Russia caused Rouvier to express "decisive disagreement . . . and after such an energetic statement that France and her government needed stable Russian finances, all opposition was silent."³⁹

On January 11, 1906 a contract for 100 million rubles was signed with the French bankers, paying an annual interest rate of 7.82 percent per year. The Russians would receive the loan in four tranches during the spring-summer of 1906. St. Petersburg followed these negotiations with trepidation. On January 5, 1906, paper emissions exceeded their lawful limit by 50 million, increasing pressure to cut off gold exchange. In these difficult days, the Witte government was almost ready to publish the tsar's decree authorizing currency printing beyond the previously established norms.⁴⁰

Three weeks later, on January 26, 1906, Nicholas II approved the decisions of the series of joint meetings between the Finance Committee

³⁷ RGIA, f. 563, op. 2, d. 454, ll. 56–57.

³⁸ Kokovtsov, *Iz moego proshlogo*, I, 119–22.

³⁹ Ibid., 124–25.

⁴⁰ Anan'ich, *Rossia i mezhdunarodnyi kapital 1807–1914*, 161; B.A. Romanov, *Rossia v Man'chzhurii (1892–1906)* (L, 1928) 529.

and the State Council's Department of State Economy, which included immediate measures to prevent the outflow of gold.⁴¹ Having taken these measures, almost immediately after Kokovtsov's return from France, the Witte government focused on a major foreign loan, preferably of an international nature. The main preparations were left to the French stock exchange and government, which would not begin negotiations until Algeciras ended. Meanwhile, Russia teetered at the edge of financial ruin.

When the Algeciras conference ended, Witte said, "Don't let anything happen in these next weeks to put off the matter again! Then we'll be finished." On March 31, the French Finance Minister Raymond Poincaré permitted the Russian ambassador to meet with the French bankers. Kokovtsov soon arrived and all was ready in late April. Signed the day after a new agreement between the French and Russian general staffs, the 5 percent loan was concluded for 2.3 billion francs, or nearly a billion rubles. Reflecting the European political constellation, the lenders were roughly aligned with the Entente: French investors absorbed some 1.2 billion and England 330 million. Dutch, Austro-Hungarian and Russian banks picked up the rest, whereas German, Italian, American and Swiss institutions refused to participate.⁴²

Despite this enormous loan, tsarist finances remained shaky. The value of Russian securities had still not risen to pre-war levels as of late 1906. The Russian economy turned around in 1907, but it only stabilized in 1909, after P.A. Stolypin paid off the war debts. To retire this pressing obligation, a new foreign loan would be necessary, and Finance Minister Kokovtsov once again took on the task. On January 14, 1909, Nicholas signed a decree on accepting a loan for 525 million rubles, underwritten by almost the same consortium as the 1906 loan (with the notable exception of the Dual Monarchy). After 1909, Russia did not borrow abroad until World War I. A new era began with government-guaranteed railway bonds traded on the Paris, London, and even Berlin exchanges.

The cost of the Russo-Japanese War for the state treasury can be measured as total payments on all war loans. Russia took 1.9 billion rubles and paid out 6.1 billion, more than triple the original sum. The difference was in largest part the interest on the loans. (See Table 1)

⁴¹ *Istoricheskiĭ arkhiv*, no. 2 (1955), 148.

⁴² Romanov, *Rossia v Man'chzhurii (1892–1906)* (L, 1928), 634.

Table 1: Payments made for loans used to cover war expenditures

LOANS	Nominal Capital	Interest t/b paid	Total Repaid
5% Loan of 1904	_____	75.000.000	75.000.000
Treasury Bills		90.200.000	240.200.000
	150.000.000		
4% Loan of 1905	231.500.000	746.699.377	978.199.377
5% domestic loan of 1905 (First Issue)	200.000.000	339.071.611	539.071.611
5% domestic loan of 1905 (Second Issue)	200.000.000	329.721.029	529.721.029
5% Loan of 1906	843.750.000	1.502.604.000	2.346.354.000
5% domestic loan of 1908 (Third Issue)	200.000.000	306.355.570	506.355.570
4% Loan of 1909 (Used in part to pay off the 5% Loan of 1904).	350.877.187	553.938.953	904.816.140
Total	2.176.127.187	3.943.590.540	6.119.717.727

Source: Dement'ev, *Vo chto oboshlas' nashemy Gosudarstvennomu kaznachestvy voina s Iaponiei*, 32.

Table 2: Division of War Expenses by Year (in millions of rubles)

Year	Regular Budget			War	Percent of Total War Expenditure
	Income	Expense	Excess (+) Or Deficit (-)	Expenses	
1904	2018,3	1906,8	+111,5	526,3	22,9
1905	2024,6	1925,2	+99,4	1099,7	47,9
1906	2271,7	2061,1	+210,6	486,7	21,2
1907	2342,5	2196,0	+146,5	115,5	5,0
1908	2147,8	2387,8	+30,0	39,0	1,7
1903,1909–14	—	—	—	27,7	1,3
	—	—	—		
				2294,9	100

Sources: Iu. N. Shebaldin, "Gosudarstvennyi biudzhets tsarskoi Rossii v nachale XX v." *Istoricheskie zapiski*, LXV (1959), 164; Dement'ev, *Vo chto oboshlas' nashemy Gosudarstvennomu kaznachestvy voina s Iaponiei*, 9.

The year 1909 was the last page in the history of the financial operations linked to the Russo-Japanese war, but this theme long remained an object of attention in the St. Petersburg press. At least until World War I, the main actors in the tragic history, Sergei Witte and Vladimir Kokovtsov, carried on unending polemics regarding the origins of the Russo-Japanese War and the subsequent revolution. Financial affairs occupied an important place in these polemic, in particular the question: What put Russia on the verge of bankruptcy in 1905, war or revolution?⁴³

Translated by David Wolff

⁴³ Anan'ich and Ganelin, *Sergei Iul'evich Vitte i ego vremia*, 349–83.

CHAPTER TWENTY-THREE

JAPAN'S OTHER VICTORY: OVERSEAS FINANCING OF THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

Edward S. Miller

Japan stunned the world not only by defeating Imperial Russia in 1904–05 but also by adeptly financing most of the nearly-billion-dollar war with foreign loans originated by U.S. bankers. Its financial success was the capstone of a forty-year struggle to attain prime international credit standing. But the war left an important legacy to the United States as well, since Japan's war loans also marked the coming of age of Wall Street in global finance. At the peace settlement in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, America's power of the purse coerced Japan to forego demands for a huge indemnity from Russia. Japan did not solicit American loans for another twenty years until necessity required its return to the new capital of international finance.

I. *The Antebellum Struggle for Creditworthiness*

When Japan opened to world trade in 1859 it had no credit standing, nor even a national currency. The *fukoku kyohei* policy of the governing oligarchs—"rich country, strong military"—relied on foreign materials, machinery and weapons. But Japan had little to offer in exchange except green tea, fish, and silkworm cocoons, while luxury imports flourished under "unequal treaties." Dire trade deficits resulted.¹ Nevertheless, a brief window of opportunity opened after the Meiji Restoration of 1868 and the launching in 1872 of the silver yen worth approximately one U.S. dollar. The young imperial government borrowed \$5 million in sterling from London to build a Tokyo-Yokohama

¹ Trade and monetary data from Japan Statistical Association, *Historical Statistics of Japan*, vol. 3 re foreign trade, vol. 5 re finance and specie (Tokyo, 1987).

railroad.² The coupon rate of 9 percent for a nine-year term was effectively 11.2 percent, because of rapacious issuing costs and early prepayments. Three years later Japan floated another sterling loan of \$11 million, secured by the rice tax, to pension off samurai stripped of hereditary stipends. The 7 percent coupon rate effectively cost 9.75 percent for seventeen years. These loans, in modern parlance junk bonds, were humiliating in an era when the British and U.S. treasuries paid 3 percent or 4 percent. Finance minister Matsukata Masayoshi vigorously opposed foreign loans by a weak Japan. By 1881, when interest and redemption payments exceeded the borrowings, Japan's fortunes soured and the window slammed shut. It could not again tap foreign credit for twenty-six years.³

From 1859 through 1881 Japanese exports covered only 50 percent to 60 percent of imports. Japan expended perhaps ninety percent of its gold and silver patrimony, which I estimate at \$300 million, accumulated during centuries of hardscrabble mining and sparse Tokugawa trade.⁴ For an economy with one-twentieth the GDP of advanced powers the loss was devastating. As a government commission sighed, "This is a source of lamentation . . . Could there be any worse crisis than this for Japan?"⁵ The country faced international ruin and the crumbling of *fukoku kyohei*.

After 1881, however, Japanese fortunes turned due to three circumstances. Historians often attribute the recovery to Matsukata's austerity and fiscal reforms that firmed the yen and curbed the flood of imports. Meanwhile, in America women of the rising middle class coveted "broad silk" taffeta gowns with lavish bustles, trains and petticoats

² Dollar amounts herein are calculated at then-current exchange rates and rounded to the nearest million.

³ Yield-to-maturity calculations by the author. Harold G. Moulton, *Japan: An Economic and Financial Appraisal* (New York, 1931), 488–95; Haru Matsukata Reischauer, *Samurai and Silk* (Cambridge, Mass, 1986), 94.

⁴ Mining data of old Japan is scarce and unreliable. See for example A. Kobata, "The Production of Gold and Silver in Sixteenth- and Seventeenth-Century Japan". *The Economic History Review*, 2nd Series, vol. 18 1965, 245ff. Coinage data and government specie holdings are available for 1870 and later. Specie outflow is inferred from trade imbalances as Japan had no other significant means of servicing its international deficits. Matsukata estimated the loss through 1871 at ¥150 million, approximately \$150 million. Matsukata private papers cited in Reischauer, 91–112. Trade, balance of payments and specie data from Japan Statistical Association vols. 3 and 5; Shin'ya Sugiyama, *Japan's Industrialization in the World Economy, 1859–1899: Export Trade and Overseas Competition* (London and Atlantic Heights, 1988), 46–47 and passim; Norihisa Suzuki, *A History of Japanese Finance* (Tokyo, 1938), 4–7.

⁵ Sugiyama, 8.

that consumed ten square yards of silk fabric. Exports of raw silk, largely to America, tripled to \$40 million by 1904.⁶ Finally, discovery of the fabled Comstock Lode led to a silver mining boom in the Rocky Mountains. U.S. silver output soared.

Silver, or paper backed by silver, was the commercial money of trading nations, except England. The price of silver, historically steady at \$1.33 per troy ounce, began to sink. European powers adopted the gold standard, melted silver coins and dumped the metal on the exchanges. The United States turned to gold despite Treasury purchases of silver. The price shriveled to \$1.15 in 1881, 65¢ in 1895 and 50–60¢s until the First World War.⁷ The fall was a *de facto* 50 percent devaluation of the yen against gold-standard currencies. Japanese exports grew cheaper and imports more expensive. Foreign trade came into balance. Yet it took another windfall to render Japan creditworthy in the eyes of foreign bankers.

Japan was unique among emerging states in its appetite for a navy to secure independence and ultimately an empire. It needed foreign exchange to acquire the powerful warships entering foreign fleets. (The army, while about equal in national budgets, required little hard currency because Japanese arsenals quickly learned to produce small arms and field artillery.) Shipyards had been forbidden to build ocean-going ships in Tokugawa times. By the early 1880s they managed to build a 1,000-ton wooden side-wheel steamer, no match even for Commodore Perry's 4,000-tonners of 1854, and a royal yacht. Not until 1894 did the yard at Yokosuka complete, after six years, a 4,217-ton protected (lightly armored) cruiser with French ordnance. Guns, engines and armor of the naval revolution lay far beyond Japan's infant industries. It had little choice but to shop abroad. In the 1870s the navy barely afforded a few small cruisers and torpedo boats, and three British corvettes of 3,700-tons, queer wood-metal hybrids with antique barque rigs costing \$1 million each that were obsolescent before the Sino-Japanese War.

In the 1880s stabilized finances permitted naval upgrades but Japan could not yet afford battleships. After a commission visited England

⁶ *Silk* (27 December 1913), 795.

⁷ Donald McDonald, "The History of Silver," Allison Butts (ed.), *Silver: Economics, Metallurgy and Use* (Princeton, 1967), 1–15; Allen V. Heyl, et al., "Silver," Donald A. Brobs and Walden D. Pratt (eds.), *United States Mineral Resources*. Geological Survey Professional Paper (Washington, DC, 1973), 820, 581–604; Sugiyama, 21, chart.

it ordered a pair of sleek protected cruisers of 4,150 tons mounting a 12.6-inch turret gun, costing \$1.7 million each. Two more protected cruisers from France cost \$2.2 million a copy. From England, Japan ordered the *Yoshino*, the world's fastest cruiser and at last, too late for the war with China, a true battleship of 12,450 tons, costing \$4 to \$5 million. Ships, equipment, ammunition, training, and steel for dockyards probably cost at least \$20 to \$25 million of foreign exchange, a huge gamble on technologies untested in battle anywhere.⁸

The payoff came in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95 when Imperial cruisers demolished the Chinese fleet. China sued for peace. The Treaty of Shimonoseki ceded Taiwan, but European powers intervened to deny Japan's claim to Port Arthur, in Manchuria. A sullen Japan vowed to build a larger fleet to dispute Russia in Manchuria. More important was the Chinese indemnity. Nineteenth century victors who held enemy capitals hostage were bought off with money. Japan extracted a \$185 million gold indemnity from China. The war had been a bargain, costing \$100 million raised entirely by domestic loans and taxes. In one swoop Japan recovered 60 percent of the specie it had lost since Perry arrived and pocketed the wherewithal to join the gold standard club of great powers.⁹ In 1897 Japan pegged the yen at 0.75 grams of gold, equivalent to £2.57 or \$.49, values it maintained for thirty-five years.¹⁰ The powers yielded their control of Japanese tariffs, and the empire's borrowing power was rehabilitated.

After the Sino-Japanese War exports of raw silk and cotton textiles grew rapidly but imports rose even faster. Japan's trade balance slumped into deficit again, with exports covering 82 percent of imports, although the shortfall was partly offset by shipping income and emigrant dollar remittances from America.¹¹ Yet the chronic deficit did not lead to another crisis because Japan enjoyed access to foreign capital. First, of course, came the indemnity from China. Second,

⁸ Ushisaburo Kobayashi, *Military Industries of Japan* (New York, 1922); Keiichi Asada, *Expenditures of the Sino-Japanese War* (New York, 1922); T.A. Brassey, *The Naval Annual*. (Portsmouth, UK, various dates 1880s to 1904); Kozo Yamamura, "Success Illgotten? The Role of Meiji Militarism in Japan's Technical Progress," *Journal of Economic History* vol. 37, no. 1 (March 1977), 113–38; Hansgeorg Jentschura, Dieter Jung, and Peter Mickel, *Warships of the Imperial Japanese Navy, 1869–1945* (Annapolis, 1970), 12–14, 71, 88–99.

⁹ Moulton 498–99; Asada, *passim*; Japan Statistical Association, vols. 3 and 5.

¹⁰ *Japan: An Illustrated Encyclopedia* (Tokyo, 1993), 1746.

¹¹ Japan Statistical Association, vol. 3, 162–63.

now-creditworthy Japan tapped long-term capital markets abroad. The government paid off the remnants of the old expensive loans while municipalities tested the London market. In 1899 the national government proudly floated \$43 million in sterling bonds at gratifying terms: an effective interest rate of 5.2 percent and a 55 year final maturity—triple the amount at half the cost and several times the tenor of the trembling 1870s loans.¹²

Between the two East Asian wars the indemnity and loans exceeded the current account deficit by about \$120 million. Part of the money entered official reserves and some migrated to coffers of trading and banking concerns and to private hoards, but most of the funds disappeared into national accounts under mysterious labels. Much was invested in military preparations. (Meiji Japan published military budgets but did not disclose how much was spent abroad in foreign exchange.) Domestic shipyards had acquired machinery and know-how to build mid-sized ships with imported steel and equipment. By the late 1890s, however, a 14,850-ton foreign battleship cost about \$5 million. The *nouveau riche* Imperial Navy bought four of them, and six first-class cruisers of 9,800 tons, mainly from Britain.¹³

By the eve of war with Russia, Japan had marched ahead in industrialization, stabilized the gold-linked yen, and replenished its reserves a bit, while building world-class military power. Trade surpluses with the United States had taken a back seat to the capital injections from China and Britain. Japanese leaders had no reason to suspect they would desperately need American financial support.

II. *Japanese Finance at War*

On the night of 8 February 1904 the Japanese navy attacked the Russian Far Eastern fleet at Port Arthur. A declaration of war followed two days later. Japanese troops landed on the west coast of Korea and marched to the border of Manchuria for a series of great

¹² Raymond William Goldsmith, *The Financial Development of Japan, 1868–1977* (New Haven, 1983), 57; Norio Tamaki, *Japanese Banking: A History, 1859–1959* (Cambridge, 1995), 95. The bonds were paid at maturity in 1953. The effective interest cost in yen was ultimately much higher because of the devaluations of 1931, 1939, and World War II. Japanese corporations were not yet mature enough to finance abroad.

¹³ Brassey *passim*. Kobayashi.

battles. It was obvious that the war was going to be vastly more expensive in foreign exchange than the Sino-Japanese War. Former Prime Minister Okuma Shigenobu presciently estimated a total of \$600 million for a two-year war or \$1 billion, including postwar costs.¹⁴ In 1904 alone the cost was \$284 million with the massive campaigns of 1905 still ahead. The war ultimately lasted eighteen months and cost Japan almost one billion dollars in local and hard currency combined, approximately what Britain spent on the recent Boer War.¹⁵ Japan's need of foreign munitions, supplies and shipping would exhaust its paltry \$40 million exchange reserves in short order.¹⁶ Japanese bond prices slumped. To make matters worse, silk prices had fallen 30 percent since 1903 due to a world recession.¹⁷ In those days no Japanese understood how to raise huge sums. There was chatter of national bankruptcy.

Japan had already dispatched Viscount Takahashi Korekiyo, vice-governor of the Bank of Japan (and a future minister of finance and prime minister) as a commissioner to raise \$50 million overseas. Passing through New York, Takahashi learned that Americans were "still unaccustomed to foreign investments".¹⁸ The United States was a net importer of foreign capital. Wall Street bankers rarely operated abroad except to lend—\$15 million was considered a large amount—to Caribbean and South American governments, under the wing of U.S. diplomacy and gunboats.¹⁹ Of Japan they knew nothing.²⁰

In March 1904 Takahashi sailed for London, the sovereign of world finance. In an average year "The City" floated \$800 million of bonds

¹⁴ Address to bankers in Tokyo. *New York Times* (6 October 1904), 6; (12 October 1904), 2.

¹⁵ *Wall Street Journal* (27 November 1905), 5.

¹⁶ Statistical Association of Japan, vol. 3, 162.

¹⁷ *Silk* (January 1913), 35, chart.

¹⁸ Korekiyo Takahashi, Memorandum to Cyrus Adler, n.d., probably 1922 to 1928, 213. Reprinted in full in Cyrus Adler (ed.), *Jacob H. Schiff: His Life and Letters*, vol. 2 (New York, 1929), 213–14. After a lifetime of distinguished service in government Takahashi was assassinated in 1936 at the age of 92 by nationalist radicals because of his anti-rearmament stance.

¹⁹ Investment in foreign loans by U.S. investors through 1899 was about \$500 million of which only \$60 million outside the Western Hemisphere including \$5 million in Asia. Robert William Dunn, *American Foreign Investments* (New York, 1976), 2; Vincent P. Carosso, *Investment Banking in America* (Cambridge, Mass., 1970), 79–81. A rare exception was a large Morgan-led participation in a loan to the British government during the Boer War, 1900–01.

²⁰ Takahashi, 213.

for governments and businesses, typically half for domestic borrowers and half for the empire and foreign countries. Investors in France, Germany and Holland loaned lesser amounts overseas. In 1904 British market conditions were favorable; 1903 issues had been the lowest since 1895, the bank rate had fallen to a low 3 percent, and foreign demand was sluggish.²¹ Takahashi expected generosity from the nation whose alliance of 1902 warned other powers from joining Russia. But he collided with harsh reality. Few western observers thought Japan could beat the world's largest army and a fleet with more battleships. Prime Minister Arthur Balfour worried about offending Russia, the ally of England's other ally, France. Conscription and taxation were recipes for political unrest so, win or lose, Japanese securities might become worthless.²² At Parr's Bank, Japan's pre-war financier, Takahashi learned that his request was too large and no terms were acceptable. Might Japan settle for a token issue of short-term treasury bills? Strenuous negotiations teased out a tentative deal for \$50 million if half the drawdown were deferred to an indefinite date.²³

Takahashi was in a corner. Japan needed huge sums, for munitions and for prestige to dishearten the cash-poor enemy. He could not approach Paris, the second-ranking international capital market, because France was allied with Russia and French bankers were considering helping its war effort. German bankers were followers, not leaders, as were those in smaller European capitals.

One day in London Takahashi was seated at dinner next to an unknown gentleman who expressed "uncommon interest" in Japan's plight. Jacob H. Schiff, he soon learned, was head of the New York banking house of Kuhn, Loeb and Co. who happened to be visiting. Schiff was Jewish. He seethed over the tsar's treatment of Jews, especially a 1903 pogrom at Kishinev where, with official connivance, Jews accused of ritual murder and drinking the blood of children had been slaughtered. Schiff had had close ties with President Theodore Roosevelt since Roosevelt's days as governor of New York. At his urging Roosevelt had fired off a protest to St. Petersburg. Schiff prided himself on barring Russian access to the U.S. loan market

²¹ "Commercial History and Review of 1904." *Annual Review Supplement to The Economist*, vol. 63, no. 3208, 18 February 1905, 4-7.

²² Raymond A. Esthus, *Theodore Roosevelt and Japan* (Seattle, 1966), 30.

²³ Takahashi, 213-14.

and considered the barring a personal mission of protest against Russia. Schiff also felt Russia had abused Japan.²⁴

Kuhn, Loeb was a substantial private bank. It had arranged \$50 million of loans for U.S. railroads in 1903. However, extraordinary Wall Street deals required the sponsorship of J. Pierpont Morgan. The imperious Morgan, an Anglophile with close ties to London, had no interest in helping Japan. Perhaps he chose not to challenge his British friends, or to spurn Schiff because of his well-known anti-Semitism, or to snub Roosevelt whose trust-busting populism he detested.²⁵ Morgan knew that the president was cheering for Japan's success. Russia had violated America's Open Door Policy in Manchuria. Japan, Roosevelt thought, "was playing the game of civilized mankind. . . ."²⁶

Schiff astutely assessed both the military odds and American investors' appetite for good securities paying generous yields. He told an amazed Takahashi that he would raise in America half the \$50 million. Of course, Schiff knew he would have to play on his reputation to place most of the bonds with banks and insurance companies, but he believed London's reluctance would melt into greed when New York led the way. As his colleague Sir Ernest Cassel later remarked, "after all, business is business with a banker."²⁷

What ensued during the war was an international financial coup. Meiji Japan, a minor league borrower that had raised only \$60 million abroad since its origins thirty years earlier, tapped into global lending markets by issuing bonds with a face value of \$408 million that netted it, after discounts and charges, \$343 million, about half the debt-funded cost of the war.²⁸ With a show of deft sophistication Japan floated four bond issues, one every four to six months, each larger and at lower cost. (Table 1.) Four characteristics of the financing campaign stand out:

²⁴ During the Portsmouth peace conference Schiff and other bankers called on Count Sergei Witte, the Russian plenipotentiary, to plead the case for Jewish rights, to no avail. During the First World War, Kuhn, Loeb declined loans to England and France lest they support Russia indirectly, until the collapse of the tsarist regime. Adler, vol. 2, 116–23. Takahashi, 214–17; Carosso, 204; Ron Chernow, *The House of Morgan* (New York, 1990), 196.

²⁵ Chernow, 47–48, 74, 89–90, 103–04.

²⁶ Esthus (1966), 37.

²⁷ Takahashi, 215, 217.

²⁸ Japan raised \$860 million for the war of which \$675 million (78 percent) from foreign loans including postwar refundings, \$34 million from domestic loans, and \$68 million from taxes and fees. Suzuki, 12.

JAPAN'S FOREIGN LOANS DURING RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

Month issued	May 1904	November 1904	March 1905	July 1905
Face Amount, dollar equivalent	\$50,000,000	\$58,000,000	\$150,000,000	\$150,000,000
Net proceeds to Japan	\$45,000,000	\$50,000,000	\$124,000,000	\$124,000,000
Placement	50% New York 50% London	50% New York 50% London	50% New York Some French buyers. 50% London. Sub-distributions in Germany, orders from all of Europe. 70% of London issue sold to continental investors.	1/3rd New York 1/3rd London 1/3rd Germany Many Austro-Hungarian buyers in Germany. French borrowers in all locations.
U.S. underwriters	Kuhn Loeb and 2 N.Y. banks	Kuhn Loeb and N.Y. syndicate, some western U.S. banks	Kuhn Loeb and wide national syndicate of banks.	Kuhn Loeb and wide national syndicate of banks.
Final Maturity	1911	1911	1925	1925
Final life	7 years	7 years	20 years	20 years
Early redemption option	None	None	5 years	5 years
Drawdown period	Several months	4 months	Several weeks	Several weeks
Interest rate, nominal	6.00%	6.00%	4.5%	4.5%
Issue price, percent of par	93.5%	90.5%	90%	90%
Commission	3.5%	3.75%	3.25%	3.25%
Effective interest rate	7.72% (a)	8.65% (b)	6.49%	6.47%
Collateral	"First charge" on Japanese customs duties	"Second charge" on Japanese customs duties	"First charge" on revenue of Japanese government tobacco monopoly	"Second charge" on revenue of Japanese government tobacco monopoly
Collateral coverage as percent of annual interest	233% (c)	387%	237%	136%

Table (cont.)

Month issued	May 1904	November 1904	March 1905	July 1905
Subscriptions as a percent of offering	New York 500% London 3300%	New York 500% London 1300%	New York 700% London 1100%	New York 500% London 1000% Germany 900%
War situation	Russian fleet damaged in surprise attack. Japanese army takes Korea, advances into Manchuria, wins border battles.	War stalled. Port Arthur held out. Russian fleet sorted but escaped back to base. Dogger Bank incident unnerved London	Fall of Port Arthur. Russian Pacific Fleet scuttled. Japanese army redeploys. Battle of Mukden great Japanese victory.	Battle of Tsushima May 27. Russian Baltic Fleet annihilated. Quiet in Manchuria. June: Roosevelt's mediation offer accepted.

- (a) Effective rate was actually 9.59% due to refunding in September 1907.
- (b) Effective rate was actually 11.84% due to refunding in September 1907.
- (c) Higher after duties levied in October 1904.

Sources of data: National City Bank, in *Wall Street Journal* (29 July 1905), 5. *New York Times* (3 September 1905), 13. Other news reports in text of articles. Korekiyo Takahashi, Memorandum to Cyrus Adler, n.d., probably 1922 to 1928, in Adler (ed.), *Jacob H. Schiff: His Life and Letters*, vol. 2, 213–14.

- (1) War news was the dominant factor in Japan's bounding successes. In 1904 a stalemated offensive impaired Japan's funding hopes but the great victories of 1905 enthused investors to subscribe to previously unimaginable amounts at generous terms to Japan.
- (2) U.S. bankers set the pace throughout. Although they underwrote only 44 percent of the foreign bonds, Kuhn Loeb's determination set the conditions for every issue.²⁹
- (3) Market reaction to each issue laid the groundwork for the next. Success bred success.
- (4) The pace of Japan's money-raising vitally influenced the strategies to win the war and negotiate the peace.

In 1904 two medium-sized borrowings barely kept Japan's war effort afloat. The Takahashi-Schiff discussions meandered along until Japanese

²⁹ All four issues were denominated in sterling. The dollar had not yet achieved stature as an international currency. U.S. investors paid and received dollars at a fixed exchange rate of £ = \$4.87 and bore no risk of currency fluctuations.

forces broke through from Korea into Manchuria and landed on the Liaodong Peninsula to besiege Port Arthur and bottle up the Russian Pacific Fleet. The news overcame the qualms of British bankers. A group headed by Barings Bank joined Schiff's promotion. In May the bi-national syndicate floated a \$50 million bond issue.³⁰ It was oversubscribed and rose to a 3-1/2 percent premium in the market.³¹ But during the rest of 1904 the war bogged down. The Japanese army failed to reduce Port Arthur while the navy blundered into minefields and let fleeing Russian ships survive. War costs were overrunning estimates and Japanese bonds slumped to 90.³² A second flotation of \$58 million in November kept Japan going a few months longer.

The terms of the first loan were tough on Japan and the second even worse. Discounts and underwriting fees creamed off 10% of the first issue and 13.25 percent of the second.³³ Leery of a Japanese defeat, the bankers limited maturities to a scant seven years so they could take a firm hand in postwar financial policy if necessary. The effective interest costs to Japan were 7.69 percent on the May loan and 8.65 percent on the November loan, a far cry from the 5.2 percent for 55 years of Japan's last prewar borrowing.³⁴ Japan netted only \$95 million of the nominal \$108 million face value,³⁵ slim nourishment for campaigns approaching \$1 million per day. Collateral was another awkward matter. Risky foreign loans were customarily backed by pledges of reliable revenues two or three times greater than the interest payments. The bankers extracted a "first charge" pledge of the government's import and exports duties.³⁶ Japan had to double its tariffs suddenly for a "second charge" large enough to support the November issue.³⁷

The severe terms assured placement of the issues, half in New York and half in London. Schiff snared a few sophisticated New

³⁰ Takahashi, 215–16.

³¹ *New York Times* (5 May 1904), 2; (7 May 1904), 2; (16 May 1904), 8; *Wall Street Journal* (12 May 1904).

³² Takahashi, 215–19. *New York Times* (9 November 1904).

³³ Terms of the war issues were reported in prospectuses and in the financial press. For an overall summary see analysis of four wartime loans by National City Bank, *Wall Street Journal* (29 July 1905), 5.

³⁴ Yields to maturity are calculated by the author using standard formulas. In 1907 with its credit standing improved Japan refinanced both issues at lower rates. The effective price of money for the three years before refinancing had been about 10 percent to 12 percent annually.

³⁵ Author's calculation.

³⁶ *New York Times* (16 May 1904), 8.

³⁷ London correspondent, *Japanese Finances* (23 October 1904), in *New York Times*, (6 November 1904), 1.

York banks into the first underwriting syndicate. After its proven success he had no trouble adding Midwestern banks to the second syndicate. The lush rates attracted speculative "punters." Buyers oversubscribed both issues many fold.³⁸ The psychology of oversubscription was excellent for Japan. The foreign public noted the enthusiastic demand rather than the stingy amounts and rough terms. Japanese won respect and prestige,³⁹ whereas Russians felt demoralized as their borrowing attempts floundered.⁴⁰

Early in 1905 the war turned spectacularly in Japan's favor. In January Port Arthur fell. Trapped Russian battleships were sunk. Marshal Oyama's troops took Mukden, the key city of south Manchuria, after a ferocious battle that cost the Russian army 97,000 men. Jacob Schiff was "joyous" at the victories. Japan sensed the moment for psychological and military advantage to raise the largest possible amount, up to \$150 million. Takahashi had returned to New York, by now his first port of call, where investor enthusiasm ran high. Nevertheless, in spite of assembling a coast-to-coast syndicate, Schiff was unsure of selling half until British bankers committed. He advised Takahashi to take the proposal to London, assuring him he could move the American half on any terms fixed there. Far from Schiff ceding leadership, Takahashi reported, "a great deal of time and trouble was saved by Mr. Schiff's generous undertaking."⁴¹

Japan scored a financial masterstroke. The issue of March 1905 was almost three times as large as either previous deal. After discounts, Japan netted \$124 million at a lower effective rate of 6.49 percent. The final maturity of 1925 was three times longer. The lenders turned soft on collateral, accepting a first charge on revenues of the government's tobacco monopoly (in preference to liens on land or railroads, or the tax on alcoholic sake). Investors' reactions in London and New York were incredible. In London seventy percent of the

³⁸ *New York Times* (17 November 1904), 5. The minimum subscription for the Japanese war issues was \$500 face value, equivalent to more than \$5,000 in year 2000 dollars. However, subscribers paid only 5 percent of the cost immediately and the rest in installments. Many anticipated a quick profit on their highly leveraged positions in the "when issued" market. They subscribed to five- or ten-fold more than desired to be sure of allocation of enough bonds to cover their dealings.

³⁹ Takahashi, 219–20.

⁴⁰ Takahashi, 226. Raymond A. Esthus, *Double Eagle and Rising Sun* (Durham, 1988), 64, 98, 134; *New York Times* (22 March 1905), 15; (24 August 1905), 1.

⁴¹ Takahashi, 220–21.

crowd had come over from continental Europe. In New York long lines wound around the buildings of offering banks as stockbrokers jostled with fashionable women and humbler folk to put down bets. Police were called to keep order. Bystanders had to be assured there was no "run" on the banks. Inside, said a Kuhn, Loeb clerk, "they fairly tore us to pieces." Partners' hands ached from signing certificates. In America, fifteen thousand small savers clamored for a slice. No security had ever enjoyed such popularity.⁴² The bonds soared to a premium. Frenzied after-market trading comprised half the turnover of the entire U.S. securities markets in the following days. To avoid currency market disruption Japan left funds in New York to pay for war goods. Japan had spectacularly demonstrated that it could gather the wherewithal to carry the battle beyond Mukden, disheartening the enemy as its Baltic Fleet steamed around Africa to do battle.⁴³

Japan scored one more financial coup. On 27 May 1905 Admiral Togo Heihachiro annihilated the Baltic Fleet in the Battle of Tsushima. It was a global sensation, the first major clash of steel battleships. Japanese bonds soared in price. Nevertheless, the burdens of possible new land battles and reconstructing postwar Manchuria induced Japanese leaders to seize the moment. Takahashi made his customary voyage to seek another gigantic loan. At Schiff's summer home he received lively encouragement. The terms set were identical to the previous loan in amount and terms except that the banks smilingly accepted a thin second charge on tobacco as collateral. The British, however, felt uncomfortable at Japan returning to the table so soon, before final pay-in of the prior loan. This time Schiff played a trump card. He announced that if London backed down his American syndicate would raise all the money in cooperation with a German financial group experienced in Asia, led by M. Warburg and the Deutsch-Asiatische Bank. Japanese leaders were pleased to include the Germans, and perhaps the French, as a diplomatic blow to demonstrate Russia's financial desolation. The Kaiser personally favored the deal. German bankers had clamored for a piece of the May 1905 deal but had settled for the crumbs of sub-distributorships when Japan remained loyal to its Anglo-American friends. French

⁴² The financial press did not mention whether Jewish investors participated in large numbers. A brief survey of the vernacular Yiddish press yielded no clues.

⁴³ Takahashi, 220–22. *New York Times* (28 March 1905), 2; (29 March 1905), 2; (30 March 1905), 6; (30 March 1905), 8; (18 June 1905), 13.

financiers had also sniffed about for a piece of that deal but got none. When the outmaneuvered British came aboard the sale was placed in equal thirds in America, Britain and Germany.⁴⁴

On 7 June 1905 the Russian government cautiously responded to Roosevelt's offer to mediate a peace. In the afterglow of the news the fourth war loan of 11 July was a blowout of oversubscriptions. Crowds again thronged the banks. More than twenty thousand American investors bought the bonds. Rejected subscribers snapped them up in the aftermarket in heavy trading. Takahashi was hailed as "the Pierpont Morgan of Japan" whose financial skills spelled the difference between "success or defeat for our nation" and made possible Togo's naval victory.⁴⁵ Baron Kaneko Kentaro, a Harvard classmate and informal emissary to President Roosevelt, crowed that he had expected all along "this triumphant entrance of the United States as a world power into international finance."⁴⁶ Japan approached the bargaining table with coffers bulging with hard currency. Russia, financially moribund, had nowhere to turn.

III. *The Economics of Treaty Negotiation*

Russia's eastern empire dreams were shattered, yet Tsar Nicholas II and his war party hoped to improve their bargaining position by fighting to a stalemate in Manchuria with fresh levies of troops. After Tsushima, however, rumblings of revolution and mutiny forced a change of mind. Russia's penury prohibited more war. Its bonds traded far below par despite propping by French bankers. A rumored cache of tsarist gold was "comic opera" nonsense.⁴⁷

Theodore Roosevelt had undergone a change of heart. Japan's lopsided victories aroused his concern about "a great new force in eastern Asia" as a formidable competitor. A too-sweeping victory put the Open Door policy at risk of a Japanese challenge to U.S. political, military and trade interests in East Asia.⁴⁸ Through his contact

⁴⁴ Takahashi, 222–25.

⁴⁵ *New York Times* (18 June 1905), 6.

⁴⁶ Kentaro Kaneko, interview, *Wall Street Journal* (13 May 1905), 6.

⁴⁷ Esthus (1988), 26. Kentaro Kaneko, interview, *Wall Street Journal* (13 May 1905), 6. *Economist* (1 April 1905).

⁴⁸ Esthus (1966), 37. In 1906 Roosevelt asked the General Board of the U.S. Navy, chaired by Admiral George Dewey, to draw up war plans in case Japan attacked

in Washington, Minister Takahira Kogoro, and his own confidant, Kaneko, Roosevelt had signaled to Tokyo his desire to broker the settlement. When ambassador George von L. Meyer conveyed Roosevelt's offer to St. Petersburg, the tsar accepted.

Some histories claim that Japan was exhausted. It is true that the army, having suffered 80,000 deaths from combat and disease, was short of junior and noncommissioned officers. Older reservists had to be called up. Ammunition shortages prevented pursuit beyond Mukden. On the other hand, the Imperial Navy was stronger than ever and the exchequer was certainly not exhausted as \$175 million of foreign loans remained unspent.⁴⁹ The war chest was ample for another six months of fighting.⁵⁰ Trade had not suffered as silk demand perked up. Tokyo recognized that, for the moment, its financial strength assured favorable peace terms. The cabinet decided to accept U.S. mediation.

Prime Minister Katsura Taro had drafted two essential demands. First, Japan demanded unfettered freedom in Korea, control of Port Arthur and the Manchurian railroads, and neutralization of the rest of Manchuria. Desirable but negotiable were Sakhalin Island to the north of Japan and fishing rights off Siberia.⁵¹ Japan's second "absolute" demand was a vast payment of money. The history of its profitable war against China and Bismarck's levy of \$1 billion to lift the siege of Paris in 1871 inclined Japanese leadership and public opinion to seek recoupment of debts incurred, say \$600 million. Figures up to \$1 billion were concocted by adding pensions, care of Russian prisoners, and rebuilding Manchurian railways and rolling stock. But Russian reserves and credit were exhausted. The historical indemnities had been paid by solvent foes cowering in besieged capital

American possessions. The immediate cause of the request was a "war scare" drummed up by the press of both countries over mistreatment of Japanese immigrants in San Francisco after the earthquake of 1906. A plan known as War Plan Orange was the result. Plan Orange was perfected as the U.S. grand strategy in the Pacific between 1906 and 1914. It was upgraded over subsequent decades and was, in essence, the strategy used to defeat Japan, 1941–1945. Edward S. Miller, *War Plan Orange: The U.S. Strategy to Defeat Japan, 1897–1945* (Annapolis, 1991).

⁴⁹ *Wall Street Journal* (1 September 1905), 5.

⁵⁰ At \$1 million per day. *Wall Street Journal* (1 September 1905), 5.

⁵¹ Extravagant demands for removal of all warships from the Pacific, demilitarizing Vladivostok, and dominion over all of Siberia as far as Lake Baikal were wisely dropped. Japan could never afford to police so extensive a territory, nor would Russia ever concede such cessation.

cities. Russia had never paid an enemy, not even Napoleon, and the Japanese were far away from St. Petersburg. The tsar said, "I shall never consent to this."⁵²

Roosevelt believed that the Japanese had a moral right to Russia's colonies yet he understood the tsar's dilemmas of money and pride. He worried about a Russian war of revenge. If Japan fought on for money it would disgust world opinion. He pointed out to his Japanese friends that the United States had paid Mexico and Spain compensation for territory it won from them in wars.⁵³

The peace conference convened on 9 August 1905 behind the closed gates of the U.S. Navy yard in Portsmouth, New Hampshire, away from muggy Washington. Roosevelt did not attend but pulled strings by receiving delegates of both sides at his summer home in Oyster Bay, New York. Within a week Russia conceded the territorial claims. Predictably, the conferees deadlocked on the indemnity. Japanese trial balloons of a billion dollars or more collided with the zero tolerance of chief negotiator Sergei Witte. Tokyo allowed Komura Jutaro, its plenipotentiary, latitude to accept less. Roosevelt toyed with a subterfuge of Russia ceding Sakhalin (the only Russian territory held by the Japanese) and then repurchasing the northern half of the island from Japan. On 21 August, anxious for a compromise, he appealed to Nicholas II to pay \$300 to \$450 million if not labeled an indemnity. Tokyo agreed but the tsar would not yield. On 23 August Nicholas told Ambassador Meyer that he was breaking off negotiations. In Portsmouth, Witte rejected all money schemes no matter how disguised. He packed to leave.

When news of the impasse reached Japan the cabinet and the *genro* of five elders convened on the morning of 28 August. Officials returning from the Manchurian front reported pessimistically the lack of officers. The finance minister and elders honored for their financial knowledge, Matsukata Masayoshi and Inoue Kaoru, worried that despite the flush treasury monetary uncertainties might soon make peace imperative. Foreign loans imposed a heavy postwar burden of interest. Tense discussion continued in front of the Emperor Meiji. No records were kept so one can only speculate whether a damaging withdrawal of Roosevelt's tacit support for American financing

⁵² Esthus (1988), 61.

⁵³ Ibid., 148 and chs. 10–12.

influenced them. Whatever the case, the Japanese caved in. The next day final peace terms were agreed in Portsmouth. Japan got no indemnity.⁵⁴ Schiff cabled his friend Takahashi "a heartfelt *banzai*."⁵⁵

A tantalizing question about the Treaty of Portsmouth was whether American leaders threatened to cut off financing of renewed fighting. Roosevelt had tried to dissuade or limit the Japanese leaders' demands for an indemnity but there is no record that he overtly threatened them. Although he lacked executive authority over the bankers, the president's displeasure would surely have dampened investors' appetites. American reticence would have undermined European confidence. On 25 August Schiff sent Takahashi a direct warning in a letter. If war continued, U.S. and European investors would spurn new issues. Japanese bond prices would plummet. He stood by his pledge of support, he vowed, while passing reports of hidden Russian gold reserves, a disingenuous allusion to rumors about plundering monasteries.⁵⁶ Did Roosevelt prompt Schiff's warning? Privately, he had sniffed that the Japanese had swelled heads and did not deserve an indemnity. Perhaps so, or perhaps Schiff was just offering advice to a friend. Evidence of possible pressure turned up later in remarks in sophisticated British circles. The U.K. ambassador in Tokyo, Charles Hardinge, wrote to a colleague, "I think myself that the American financiers got at the Japanese plenipotentiaries and said they would not lend any more money for war purposes." The foreign affairs editor of *The Times* inquired, "I should like to know what kind of pressure he [Roosevelt] finally applied to Tokio. I am told it amounted almost to a threat of the financial boycotting of Japan." Sir George Clarke, a prominent former parliamentarian, confided to Prime Minister Balfour his suspicion that Roosevelt "went so far as to threaten a financial boycott of future Japanese loans. . . ."⁵⁷

Whether or not the rumors were true, Japan put on a good face. Riots by nationalists disappointed over the peace terms cost several lives in Tokyo but the furor was not aimed at the United States and quickly died down. Japan awarded Jacob Schiff a medal. The emperor

⁵⁴ In 1907 Komura, then ambassador to Britain, told the British press that Japan was bluffing about money and wanted only territory. The historical record does not support this.

⁵⁵ Takahashi, 227.

⁵⁶ Schiff to Takahira, 25 August 1905, in Adler, 1928, I:231–32.

⁵⁷ Esthus (1988), 171–72.

granted him The Order of the Rising Sun when he and his wife visited Japan in 1906. Roosevelt, called by Takahashi "the greatest man of his age,"⁵⁸ won the Nobel Peace Prize for his mediation.

Whether or not Japan felt betrayed, it turned away from the U.S. money market for twenty years. Three months after the Treaty of Portsmouth Japan tapped the European money markets for a postwar loan of \$107 million in sterling. The terms were the best ever: 4 percent bonds at 90 to yield 4.6 percent, due in 1931. France, at last admitted to a syndicate and led by Rothschild Frères, gobbled up 48 percent of the issue. London and Berlin took most of the rest. New York took a skimpy 13 percent, none by Schiff's former syndicate. In 1906 Schiff, E.H. Harriman and other financiers failed in their hopes to invest in Manchurian railroads and industries. In 1907 Japan again flexed its excellent credit standing to refinance in London the two expensive war loans of 1904 three years before their maturity. Schiff apologized to Takahashi that the financial panic of 1907 had closed New York underwriting of foreign issues. Kuhn, Loeb acted only as an order taker. He had no idea how much of the old issue was still held in the United States because many buyers had resold overseas at a profit.⁵⁹ America's absence made no difference. Japan successfully refinanced with 5 percent bonds sold at 99.5 to yield 5.02 percent, due in 1947.⁶⁰ *The Economist* of London sneered that the American market was "not generally ripe enough for foreign investments."⁶¹

IV. *Wall Street Comes of Age*

The Economist notwithstanding, the Russo-Japanese War loans marked Wall Street's coming of age in international finance. U.S. underwriting of \$133 million of Japanese paper was not surpassed until a \$500 million Anglo-French war loan of 1915 syndicated by J.P. Morgan, Jr. That huge loan, at about 6 percent interest, cost the highly rated borrowers only slightly less than Japan's 1905 war issues.⁶²

⁵⁸ *New York Times* (17 June 1905), 1.

⁵⁹ Schiff to Takahashi, 6 March 1907, in Adler, 239.

⁶⁰ *New York Times* (6 March 1907), 11.

⁶¹ "Commercial History and Review of 1905." *Supplement to The Economist*, vol. 64, no. 3260, 17 February 1906. Takahashi later repeated this verbatim. Takahashi, 228.

⁶² Chernow, 198–202. Carosso, 204.

But to Japanese leaders the U.S. money market remained unripe. They did not tap it again until another crisis. From November 1905 through 1913 Japan governments and businesses floated twenty issues in Europe, raising \$535 million—more than the \$359 million of 1904–1905 international loans—for refundings, railroads, industries, and colonial development. During World War I, Japan prospered by selling ships and goods to the Allies and accumulated so much gold that it did not have to borrow again until after the devastating Kanto earthquake of 1923. By then New York had eclipsed London as the premier source of international finance. From 1923 to 1931 Japan raised abroad \$719 million for reconstruction and electrical utilities. Led by Morgan, 68 percent of it was raised in the United States.⁶³ In 1931, however, Japan seized control of Manchuria and, deferring to U.S. government opposition to aggression, Wall Street closed its doors to Japan. They remained closed until after World War II. Nevertheless, Japan honored its Russo-Japanese War obligations and the subsequent refundings. A final payment wiped the slate clean in 1970. Japan's credit standing has never since been doubted as Japan itself joined the ranks of major international financiers.

⁶³ Carosso, 488–95. Suzuki, 24–25.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FOUR

THE KITTERY PEACE

Norman E. Saul

The Russo-Japanese conflict, on land and especially at sea, resulted in a clear Japanese victory, but this came at a considerable cost in men and materiel on both sides. Nor was it clear what the next moves by either side would be, strategically, in the summer of 1905. Japan had proved dominant in Manchuria, though this was not technically Russian territory. It had annihilated one of the largest fleets in the world in Japanese waters at Tsushima Strait in May. And Russia was weathering a storm of internal upheaval beginning with Bloody Sunday in January 1905, when workers' demonstrations against factory conditions and anti-war sentiment culminated in considerable bloodshed on Palace Square in the center of St. Petersburg. The Japanese capture of Port Arthur soon after removed the deepest penetration of Russia into China. A later occupation of Sakhalin Island, considered only symbolically important by both countries, was considered by many as the last nail driven into the coffin of Russia's early twentieth century Asiatic ambitions. It would soon re-emerge, but at the time both countries were ready to call a halt to a costly war and salvage what they could at a peace conference. An early French effort, in January 1905, to bring the two parties to a peace table failed, since both were still expecting decisive military results in their favor.

More than any other neutral in this "imperialist" conflict, the United States was very much interested in the passage of events in the Far East. With the recent annexations of Hawaii and the Philippines, that country had become a new Pacific power as well as Russia and Japan. Even before the Russo-Japanese conflict American sentiment was very much in favor of Japan, not only out of suspicion of Russian expansionist aims, but also out of sympathy with the liberal and radical opponents of a repressive regime in Russia, nurtured by justified and widely publicized Jewish anti-Russian views. This sentiment was especially fostered by the well-known journalist

and traveler George Kennan, who had dramatically exposed Russia's brutal treatment of political prisoners two decades earlier and was now covering the war from Japan with an obvious bias in favor of that country.¹ Into this arena marched an aggressive American president, a gladiator with a big stick but speaking softly, with the main objective of protecting Chinese sovereignty from both Russia and Japan and, of course, America's new interests in the whole region. Due to his close association with Kennan and wide reading, he was probably better informed about both of those countries than any other president before and after.²

An acknowledged anti-Russian influence was Roosevelt's Secretary of State, John Hay, one of the few survivors of the preceding William McKinley administration. Responding to the public uproar over the Kishinev pogrom in 1903, Hay wrote the president, "They [the Russians] are a strange race, and you may expect anything of them except straight-forwardness,"³ and a week later, "Four years of constant conflict with them have shown me that you cannot let up a moment on them without danger to your midriff." To a State Department colleague, Hay confided, "They are a nasty lot to deal with. Sometimes I think it will be a valuable lesson to them if Japan does fly at their throat."⁴ A few months later, he bemoaned Associated Press director Melville Stone being "deeply grieved at our treatment of Russia. He seems to have been lubricated and swallowed by the Russian officials in St. Petersburg."⁵ And Hay wrote to his protégé Spencer Eddy in St. Petersburg, "Every time the Russians get a kick from the Japanese they turn and swear at us. If they would devote their energies to their real enemies and stop nagging and quarrelling

¹ Frederick P. Travis, *George Kennan and the American-Russian Relationship, 1865-1924*. (Athens, 1990), 258-65.

² Roosevelt had considerable prior knowledge of the countries he was dealing with. For example, in the summer of 1901 he conferred with Frederick Holls just after his return from Russia and sought the advice of Secretary of Interior Ethan Allen Hitchcock, a former ambassador to Russia. Roosevelt (Oyster Bay) to Hitchcock, 21 August 1901, box 1, Hitchcock Papers, RG 316, National Archives and Records Administration [hereafter NA].

³ Hay to Roosevelt, 14 July 1903 (c), vol. 4 (reel 4), Hay Papers, Manuscript Division, Library of Congress [hereafter MD, LC]. And on the 16th: "What inept asses they are, these Kalmucks!" Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., 22 July 1903.

⁵ Hay to Roosevelt, 12 March 1904, vol. 5 (roll 5), ibid.

with their friends it would be better for them.”⁶ The Secretary of State later noted “Eddy tells me Baron [Roman] Rosen regards me as especially hostile,” but refuted this, claiming a deep friendship “for Russia, in America, and the President and the State Department share it.”⁷

Russia was handicapped by an ambassador, Count Arthur Cassini, who annoyed both Roosevelt and Hay with his persistent requests for interviews and his attacks on both actual and perceived opponents of Russia in the United States and was quick to accuse, with some justification, New York establishment Jews—and the British—for encouraging the Japanese war preparations. He, nevertheless, strongly advised Foreign Minister Vladimir Lamsdorf⁸ to appease American Asiatic interests, especially in regard to Hay’s demand for an “open door” in Asia, and specifically to guarantee free port access and consular offices for the United States in Manchuria and Korea both before and after hostilities began.⁹ Cassini perceived that Hay’s policy was instigating Japan to military action, though the Secretary of State assured him of strict American neutrality in the case of war.¹⁰ Clearly frustrated, Cassini reported that Hay “is more English than the English, more Japanese than the Japanese.”¹¹ He had already forced the issue over the diplomatic threshold with Hay’s assistant, Francis Loomis: “You pretend to do everything to maintain peace but you are doing everything to push Japan to war. . . . You say your only aim in the Far East is to safeguard your commerce and open two ports. . . . You do everything to provoke suspicions that you are on the side of our adversaries.”¹² Hay, however, became increasingly ill with a nervous condition in the summer of 1904 and

⁶ Hay to Spencer Eddy, 7 June 1904, *ibid.*

⁷ Hay (Paris) to George von Lengerke Meyer, 1 June 1905, box 4, Meyer Papers, MassHS.

⁸ Lamsdorf, variously Lamzдорff, Lambsdorf, etc., is the simplified spelling found in most Russian sources.

⁹ Roman Rosen, *Forty Years of Diplomacy*, 2 vols. (New York, 1922), I, 256–57.

¹⁰ Cassini to Lamsdorf, 10 February and 9 March 1904, *ibid.* According to Cassini, Hay was forced to endure an hour and a half of his diatribe on the subject on 13 February, concluding that he did not expect Hay to be pro-Russian but hoped he would not be pro-Japanese. “The eyes of American public opinion are temporarily blinded.” *Ibid.*, 24 February 1904.

¹¹ Raymond A. Esthus, *Double Eagle and Rising Sun: The Russians and Japanese at Portsmouth in 1905* (Durham, 1988), 21–22; Kennan to Roosevelt, 30 March 1905, roll 53, Roosevelt Papers, LC.

¹² Roosevelt to Taft, 8 April 1905, series 4A, roll 320, Taft Papers, LC.

well into 1905 with Cassini perhaps contributing to it. Roosevelt thus increasingly becoming his own Secretary of State though relying for assistance on Secretary of War William Howard Taft.

In the meantime, on the repeated urging of Lamsdorf,¹³ Cassini launched his own public opinion campaign, cultivating especially the *New York Herald* and Stone's Associated Press, and reported some gains at least in Roosevelt's own demeanor, perhaps, he guessed, over his concern to court the Irish (and anti-British) vote in the 1904 election. But Cassini felt that his efforts had been undermined by the aggressive, imperialistic statements of Prince Esper Ukhtomskii, the tsar's personal friend and unofficial agent, during his month long visit to the United States in the summer of 1904.¹⁴

The road to Kittery was still a long one that led along two paths, the low one through a succession of Russian defeats and Japanese victories, and a high one through complex international channels that were ultimately dominated by the American president. Obstacles had to be overcome, however. The president could not stand the arrogant and pompous Cassini, or the charming and cultivated Robert McCormick, his representative in the Russian capital. He solved part of the problem in December 1904 by asking George von Lengerke Meyer, an old friend and fellow Harvard classmate, as a personal sacrifice to move from his comfortable post in Rome to St. Petersburg.¹⁵ This strategic diplomatic transfer would prove essential to the conclusion of a peace. The president also enlisted three "outside" friends and associates, Herman Speck von Sternberg, the German ambassador

¹³ Roosevelt to Taft, 20 April 1905, *ibid.*

¹⁴ Cassini asserted that Ukhtomskii's careless comments and a provocative article clearly indicating Russia's desire to dominate Asia in *The Independent* had aggravated pro-Japanese views. Cassini to Lamsdorf, 15 June and 12 July 1904, f. 133, op. 470, d. 129, AVPR. Ukhtomskii had superintended Nicholas II's Asiatic tour when he was still grand duke in the 1880s that featured a celebrated assassination attempt in Japan, and he remained a key member of an inner circle that promoted Asiatic expansion. At his time he was also chief editor of the official government newspaper, *Sankt Peterburgskie Vedomosti*. Norman E. Saul, *Concord and Conflict: The United States of Russia, 1867-1914* (Lawrence, KS, 1996), 470, 482-83.

Cassini emphasized the critical American commentaries about Admiral Evgenyi Alekseev's instigating the Japanese attack on Port Arthur without making preparations for it, but that this was a thousand times better, he claimed, than Ukhtomskii's current shenanigans. To Lamsdorf, 5 October 1904, f. 133, op. 470, d. 129, AVPR.

¹⁵ Meyer to Henry Cabot Lodge, 3 April 1905, box 3, Meyer Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society [hereafter MassHS]. Lodge responded, "Your account of Russia is as perspicuous as it is terse and well put." Meyer diary, 24 May 1905, box 2, Meyer Papers, LC.

in Washington, Cecil Spring Rice, who was secretary to the British embassy in St. Petersburg, and Kennan, who, as a war correspondent, had glorified “Teddy’s” Cuban achievements in the Spanish-American War.¹⁶ This unlikely trio set the stage for American mediation.

On behalf of Roosevelt, Sternberg conferred with Nicholas II in late January 1905, after Bloody Sunday and the fall of Port Arthur, and found the emperor open to concluding “a peace with honor” but adamantly opposed to a “congress”, because the one at Berlin [in 1878] had treated Russia so badly. He wanted Roosevelt to “give a warning to Japan” that a long war of attrition was at hand and that Russia held the advantage.¹⁷ From Washington Cassini sounded a more positive note in describing the president’s inauguration and the reception of a contingent of Russian naval officers being repatriated through the United States.¹⁸ In March Roosevelt “summoned” Spring Rice from St. Petersburg for a personal conference at the White House to receive his advice on the Russian situation; the consultation was brief but thorough, for the British diplomat returned to his post by the same ship.¹⁹ Regardless, the president had learned through the Japanese envoy that Japan was not yet interested in any compromise in a negotiated peace.

Roosevelt then tried another informal approach to Japan. He asked a Japan-bound journalist, Richard Barry, to relay his peace initiative to George Kennan, covering the war from Japan, who in turn would meet with leading Japanese officials. Kennan recalled the president’s views as conveyed by Barry: “I have, from the beginning, favored Japan and have done all I could, consistent with international law, to advance her interests. I thoroughly admire and believe in the Japanese. They have always told the truth and the Russians have not.”²⁰ Kennan was asked through Barry to use this candid statement to convince the Japanese not to moderate but also not to make exorbitant demands. He obtained a two-hour interview with Foreign Minister Taro Katsura that had no clear result. Kennan’s own extreme views—that Japan should have Vladivostok and that

¹⁶ Diary, 12 April 1905, box 2, Meyer Papers, LC.

¹⁷ Meyer to his wife Alice, and to Roosevelt, 13 April 1905, box 3, *ibid.*

¹⁸ Meyer diary, 20 April 1905, box 2, *ibid.*

¹⁹ Rosen, I, 256–57.

²⁰ Meyer to Hay, 1 May 1905, DUSM, Russia, vol. 63 (roll 63), M35, RG59, NA.

Russia should not be allowed a single naval station in the Pacific—made him a less than satisfactory envoy.²¹

Pressures for peace increased with the spread of revolutionary disorders in Russia and after a crucial Russian defeat in Manchuria in March. The potential for a major balance-of-power shift in East Asia energized an American impetus for a negotiated peace. Every world power was concerned. Meyer consulted with Wilhelm II and a former ambassador to Russia, Charlemagne Tower, in Berlin, while the French foreign minister, Théophile Delcassé, advised Japan against insistence on an indemnity and cession of territory. Feeling the international heat, Japan turned to Roosevelt who would be neutral. But further movement toward peace was stalled, awaiting the outcome of the Baltic armada that was sent to restore Russian supremacy along the Pacific coast. Roosevelt too had set sail. Having departed in early April for a western tour and a reunion with the Rough Riders in San Antonio, from afar he voiced his exasperation:

As for the Japanese demands, I have been expecting that they would be materially increased after the smashing overthrow of Kuropatkin at Mukden. My own view is that the Russians would do well to close with them even now; but the Czar knows neither how to make war nor to make peace. If he had an ounce of sense he would have acted on my suggestion last January and have made peace then. There is nothing for us to do now but to sit and wait events.²²

Following up, he asked Taft to insist to the Japanese that direct negotiations on the terms of peace were essential and added, "As to what those terms should be neither I nor anyone else can at the moment definitely advise; but I am clear that those terms should be directly between Russia and Japan and should include all the possible terms of peace."²³

Secretary of War William Howard Taft, following Roosevelt's instructions, in his absence on a tour of the West, conversed regularly with the Japanese minister in Washington, and stressed that peace negotiations should proceed directly between the two parties without the intervention of other powers and without preconditions

²¹ Esthus, 21–22. Kennan to Roosevelt, 30 March 1905, reel 53, Roosevelt Papers, MD, LC.

²² Roosevelt to Taft, 8 April 1905, series 4A, reel 320, Taft Papers, MD, LC.

²³ Roosevelt to Taft, 20 April 1905, *ibid.*

regarding terms. The Japanese, however, quickly volunteered their demands: Port Arthur (now captured), recognition of control of Korea, restoration of Manchuria to China, the return of Sakhalin Island (relinquished to Russia in 1875), and a sizable indemnity. Roosevelt thought all were reasonable except the last two and returned early to Washington to devote more attention to peacemaking.²⁴

In the meantime, Meyer sojourned in Rome and Paris, where he saw Russian Ambassador Aleksandr Nelidov and gained the impression that "The indifference of Russia to events that have transpired is amazing. They seem to be less impressed or disturbed than outsiders,"²⁵ while arranging for a new Mercedes to be shipped ahead to St. Petersburg, where he finally arrived on 7 April. At his first audience with Nicholas II on 12 April, he tendered the president's good offices in securing peace, but he felt that any clear response was restrained by the presence of the empress, who "watched him like a cat—She is for continuing the war."²⁶ The new ambassador was also disappointed by the formal nature of the occasion and that Nicholas II seemed disconcerted when the matter of arbitration was raised.²⁷ Making the rounds of the grand dukes and officials and taking the pulse of St. Petersburg society,²⁸ Meyer found the war sentiment still high and listened to claims that internal troubles had been exaggerated by the press. Minister of Navy, Grand Duke Alexis, familiar with the United States from a celebrated tour in 1871–72, seemed to be fiddling while Rome burned, reminiscing with Meyer about shooting buffalo on the American prairie.²⁹ But Meyer detected

²⁴ To Taft from Glenwood Springs, 18, 20, 27 April, *ibid.*; Cassini to Lamsdorf, 4/17 May 1905, f. 133, op. 470, d. 121, pt. 1, AVPR. Cassini also reported that one Congressman suggested that the United States resolve the Sakhalin issue by purchasing the island from Russia, *a la* Alaska.

²⁵ Meyer to Henry Cabot Lodge, 3 April 1905, box 3, Meyer Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society [hereafter MassHS]. Lodge responded, "Your account of Russia is as perspicuous as it is terse and well put." To Meyer, n.d., quoted in Diary, 24 May 1905, box 2, MD, LC.

²⁶ Diary, 12 April 1905, box 2, Meyer Papers, MD, LC. He reported to the president that Nicholas seemed embarrassed by the mention of arbitration and shifted the conversation to another topic.

²⁷ Meyer to his wife Alice, and to Roosevelt, 13 April, box 3, Meyer Papers, MassHS.

²⁸ Meyer ordered polo ponies from Prince Beloselsky, noting to a friend, "I would rather you would not say anything about it, because the papers make so much talk, but I have got to have some exercise this summer and that is the only way I can get it." To Craig Wadsworth, 15 April 1905, *ibid.*

²⁹ Diary, 20 April 1905, box 2, Meyer Papers, MD, LC.

an air of foreboding as well: "The Czar does not seem to realize the importance of doing something to relieve his people."³⁰ He instructed his consuls to report weekly on conditions in their areas and was soon besieged with information on unrest, insecurity, and alarm.³¹ As a result Meyer was among the first in St. Petersburg to receive a graphic, detailed description of the Battleship *Potemkin* steaming slowly into Odessa harbor in June 1905 with red flags flying.³²

As a result Meyer portrayed to Washington a clear sense of an empire in dissolution: "The prisons are full to overflowing, but the authorities do not seem to be able to get at the roots, and snipping off the branches only intensifies and exasperates those who are at the bottom of the movement."³³ Similar accounts from other sources created the impression in Washington that Russia was becoming more and more unstable, "drifting without a pilot," in Meyer's words.³⁴ One bright spot was the appointment, with Meyer's urging, of Roman Rosen, the current Russian minister to Japan and a veteran of several years of prior service in the United States, as the new Russian envoy to Washington to replace Cassini who had clearly outworn his welcome. Meyer described in his diary impressions of his first meeting, that Rosen will be a great improvement over Cassini, a "very agreeable man of the world, speaks English perfectly."³⁵ According to Sternberg, Takahira did not agree and thought Rosen "lacked strength, influence, and personality."³⁶ The diplomatic stage was now set for constructive negotiations.

In the meantime, everyone in Europe, America, and Asia, was awaiting the outcome of the sending of the Russian Baltic naval armada to the Pacific. In the hiatus, Meyer rode polo ponies, went on several hunting expeditions, was lavishly dined by the Americano-

³⁰ Ibid., 16 April 1905.

³¹ Consular Reports, 1905, vols. 4558-4559, in Diplomatic Post Records [hereafter DPR], Russia, RG 84, NA. RG 84 contains the files, in bound volumes, kept at US embassies, legations, and consulates. They thus contain many valuable inter-agency communications not included in the regular diplomatic records (RG 59), most of which are readily available on microfilm.

³² Thomas Heenan (Odessa) to Meyer, 16 and 22 June 1905, vol. 4559, DPR Russia 1905, RG 84, NA.

³³ Meyer to Hay, 1 May 1905, DUSM, Russia, vol. 63 (roll 63, M 35), RG 59, NA.

³⁴ To Hay, 23 May 1905 (c), box 3, Meyer Papers, MassHS.

³⁵ Meyer diary, 19 May 1905, box 2, Meyer Papers, MD, LC.

³⁶ Sternberg to Roosevelt, 11 June 1905, reel 52, Roosevelt Papers, MD, LC.

phile Russian nobility, leisurely toured the surrounding area—as far as roads would allow—in his Mercedes, and aired out the Kleinmichel Palace for his wife's arrival on 20 May—with two maids, several birds, three turtles, and over twenty-five trunks.³⁷ Superficial as it may seem, this ostentatious display helped give the United States more clout at the imperial court than it had probably ever had—a new imperial power had arrived at the Russian capital.

Back in Washington, Roosevelt thought privately that the odds on the expected naval encounter favored Japan, “so I guess there is nothing to do but watch them fight it out.”³⁸ The battle in Tsushima Strait at the end of May produced a stunned shock in the Russian capital—as well as in Washington. As Meyer reported, “Everyone is in the dark as to the Emperor's future policy. Procrastination, lack of decision, no plan of action appears to be the order of the day.”³⁹ Even Roosevelt was surprised by the extent of the Russian disaster, as he wrote to “Springy” (Spring Rice):

It seems to me that the Russian bubble has been pretty thoroughly pricked. I thought the Japanese would defeat Rojestvensky; but I had no conception, and no one else had any conception . . . that there would be a slaughter rather than a fight, and that the Russians would really make no adequate resistance whatever. I have never been able to persuade myself that Russia was going to conquer the world at any time . . . and I suppose this particular fear is now at the end everywhere.⁴⁰

After a long interview, Cassini reported that the president thought the disaster “ended any chance of Russian success,” that peace would be in the best interests of all great powers, and that he intended to offer formally his service as mediator. The ambassador added that he believed the president was “seriously alarmed” and had become suddenly more favorable to Russia. He advised that his good offices be quickly accepted and requested “urgently” instructions in that

³⁷ Alice Meyer journal, box 3, Meyer Papers, MassHS.

³⁸ Roosevelt to Meyer, 24 May 1905, *ibid.* This message was either intercepted or transmitted to the Russian foreign ministry, for it appears in Russian translation in the ministry archives, along with a number of others, f. 138, op. 467, d. 689, AVPR.

³⁹ Meyer to Roosevelt, 5 June 1905 (c), box 4, *ibid.* Much of the diplomatic correspondence for this period is found, not in State Department records, but in private papers.

⁴⁰ To Spring Rice, 16 June 1905 (confidential), vol. 56 (roll 338), Roosevelt Papers, MD, LC.

regard.⁴¹ Meanwhile, Meyer reported that “St. Petersburg for the first time since war commenced really moved by fleet’s defeat.” He followed this up by emphasizing that the emperor was bent on continuing the war.⁴² But Hay from Paris correctly predicted that the naval disaster will “make them end the war.”⁴³ Russian officials may have gained some solace from the offer of Philadelphia businessman Wharton Barker’s offer to conduct a publicity campaign on behalf of the Russian cause—for \$300,000.⁴⁴

As the president expected, the diplomatic deadlock for a peace negotiation was indeed broken by the Russian naval debacle. Not only was this a severe blow to the tsar’s great pride in his navy, it also produced an unusually bitter and public criticism of the government and its conduct of the war. Meyer cabled, “Indignation and wrath is poured out freely upon Bureaucracy, which is alone held responsible for all misfortunes of war.”⁴⁵ Sternberg reported that Cassini had suddenly turned contrite: “He came of [sic] his horse and confessed that the position of Russia was hopeless.”⁴⁶ Roosevelt personally urged Cassini to call for peace negotiations (which he had already done).⁴⁷ He also asked Kaiser Wilhelm to push for peace, arguing that Japan’s terms were “extremely moderate.”⁴⁸ Responding, Wilhelm wrote Ambassador Tower “strictly confidential” that he feared for the life of his cousin “Nicky”, and that he was pressing the tsar to accept mediation without delay.⁴⁹ The astute Secretary of State John Hay from his sick bed thought that after Tsushima Russia would come to terms, noting that Cassini had “hooted” at the suggestion of an earlier peace. He regretted in retrospect that

⁴¹ To Lamsdorf, n.d. telegram, f. 133, op. 470, d. 121 (II) 1905, AVPR.

⁴² Meyer telegram to Roosevelt, 2 and 5 June 1905, roll 54, Roosevelt Papers, MD, LC.

⁴³ Hay to Meyer, 1 June 1905, box 4, Meyer Papers, MassHS. Meyer also had the advantage of having instructed American consuls to report weekly in detail on their posts. Thus, he had graphic descriptions of the battleship *Potemkin* in mutiny entering Odessa port. Heenan to Meyer 29 June 1905, Diplomatic Posts Russia, RG 84, NA.

⁴⁴ Wharton to Cassini, 22 May 1905, Box 10, Wharton Papers, MD, LC.

⁴⁵ Meyer to Hay, 2 June 1905, DUSM, Russia, Vol. 63 (roll 63, M 35), RG 59, NA.

⁴⁶ Sternberg to Roosevelt, 31 May 1905, roll 54, Roosevelt Papers, MD, LC.

⁴⁷ Cassini to Lamsdorf, 13 June 1905, f. 133, op. 470, d. 121, pt. 1, AVPR.

⁴⁸ H.W. Brands, *T. R.: The Last Romantic* (New York, 1997), 539–40.

⁴⁹ “William” to Tower, 4 June 1905 (c), in Tower’s cable to Roosevelt of same date, roll 54, Roosevelt Papers, MC, LC.

the Russians considered him hostile, but claimed he had a deep friendship for Russia, "and the President and the State Department share it."⁵⁰

Roosevelt instructed Meyer by cable on 6 June to seek an audience with Nicholas II at once. The ambassador immediately approached Lamsdorf, who informed him that the emperor was very busy, especially with preparations for his wife's birthday the following day. But within hours, the emperor invited Meyer for an interview at 2:00 P.M. the next day, 7 June.⁵¹ At this historic meeting in Nicholas's private study at Tsarskoe Selo, the emperor agreed to negotiations without intermediaries, to be arranged by President Roosevelt in strict secrecy and to be held in Europe at Paris or The Hague. The vulnerability of Sakhalin Island after Tsushima was a key factor in his readiness for peace. Nicholas II also expressed the hope that by his consent the old friendship with the United States would return, thus dealing a card that would be played at the eventual peace negotiations. Lamsdorf delivered a formal confirmation on 12 June,⁵² but a problem arose over the location. Roosevelt at first favored The Hague, but Japan's acceptance was premised on Washington as the conference site. To the Russians this city was not only infamously hot and uncomfortable in summer but also saturated with pro-Japanese sentiment, but the emperor and Lamsdorf reluctantly agreed to an American venue.⁵³

With Russia's objections in mind but also with an eye to their own comfort, Roosevelt's staff sought a more hospitable American environment for the peace talks, first considering Atlantic City, New Jersey, Newport, Rhode Island, and Bar Harbor and Portland in Maine. Newport was rejected, according to the future head of the Russian delegation Sergei Witte, because of fear "that the 'smart set' . . . would cultivate the Russian representatives and fete and pamper them, while the "exotic" Japanese would be neglected."⁵⁴ After

⁵⁰ Hay (Paris) to Meyer, 1 June 1905, Meyer Papers, box 4, MassHS.

⁵¹ Meyer diary, 6, 7 June 1905, box 2, *ibid.*

⁵² Meyer to Roosevelt (c), 9 June 1905, box 4, *ibid.*; and to Hay, 12 June 1905 (cable), 13 June (letter), DUSM, Russia, vol. 63 (reel 63, M 35), RG 59, NA.

⁵³ Meyer records in his diary quite a heated discussion with Lamsdorf on the location of the conference, 17 June 1905, box 2, Meyer Papers, MD, LC. Enclosed in the diary is an official letter from Lamsdorf of the same date reluctantly supporting this arrangement. The tsar quickly assented the next day. *Ibid.*, 18 June 1905

⁵⁴ Avrahm Yarmolinsky (ed.), *Memoirs of Count Witte* (Garden City, 1921), 147.

a hurried search, they finally decided that the US naval yard in the Portsmouth, New Hampshire, harbor relatively free from local distractions, and cool and isolated, though actually in Kittery, Maine, was the best site, possessing another essential—excellent communication links. From Oyster Bay, Teddy's long fish pole could stretch to the Maine coast. A newly built storehouse (currently the main shipyard administration building) could be quickly converted for the formal meeting rooms.⁵⁵ Not far up the Piscataqua Bay coast in the Portsmouth suburb of New Castle was the Wentworth Hotel, a resort and social center for wealthy Americans summering in the area.⁵⁶ It would house the delegations with appropriate (i.e. barely adequate) charm and scenery, notwithstanding the swarms of mosquitoes and the awkward and uncomfortable daily transit—by land or by sea—to Kittery.⁵⁷

In the meantime, both parties had difficulty naming a head of delegation that would command respect and could be trusted with plenipotentiary powers. At first senior diplomat and ambassador to France Aleksandr Nelidov was named by Nicholas II, but his age, health, and bare knowledge of English forced his withdrawal. Veteran Russian diplomat Aleksandr Izvolskii, then in Denmark, also declined. The next choice, Nikolai Muravev, Russian ambassador to Italy, was summoned from Rome and named to head the delegation but withdrew for reasons of poor health after being discouraged by interviews with Witte and the emperor.⁵⁸ Reluctantly, but with Lamsdorf's

⁵⁵ Correspondence relating to preparations for the conference is in General Records of the Navy Department, box 732, RG 80, NA.

⁵⁶ Peter E. Randall, *There are No Victors Here! A Local Perspective on the Treaty of Portsmouth* (Portsmouth, 1985), 11–12. This valuable portrait of the conference is based on local newspaper reports.

After being closed for nearly twenty five years, "Wentworth by the Sea" reopened in the spring of 2003 for a new summer season and just in time to celebrate the hundredth anniversary of its hosting the peace delegations. "Economic Upturn Disrupts Democrats' Campaign Plans," *New York Times*, 2 November 2003: 18. The context, featuring a nice photograph of the Wentworth, was the upswing in tourism in Howard Dean's home state that was aiding his campaign in the Democratic Party primaries.

⁵⁷ The area around Portsmouth reminded one Russian delegate of the Finnish coast. *Korostovetz Diary*, 8 August 1905, as cited in Eugene P. Trani, *The Treaty of Portsmouth: An Adventure in American Diplomacy* (Lexington, 1969), 68.

⁵⁸ Meyer diary, 28 June, 13 July 1905, box 2, Meyer Papers, MD, LC. Minister of Finance Vladimir Kokovtsov, who met with both Murav'ev and Witte, thought Witte intentionally cleared the way for his own appointment. V.N. Kokovtsov, *Iz moego proshlago: vospominaniia 1903–1919 g.g.*, 2 vols (Paris, 1933), I, 73–74.

urging, the emperor in mid-July turned to his former economic strategist, Sergei Witte, who had opposed the war from the beginning. Witte was bright, apparently wise and sophisticated in world affairs, but arrogant and opinionated, often betraying surprising gaps in knowledge of the world.⁵⁹ Calling upon the American ambassador the same day, however, Witte made a forceful impression: Meyer thought he would come to an understanding with the Japanese in an hour.⁶⁰

Witte would employ his large stature (nearly two meters tall) and outgoing personality with skill and would be ably supported by veteran diplomat Roman Rosen, who had already left his post in Japan to replace Cassini in the United States and was thus knowledgeable about both countries. He thus preceded the main delegation clearing Cassini from its path. The other important members of the large Russian delegation were Fedor Martens, an expert on international law, Major General Nicholas Ermolov, G.A. Plançon, secretary to the delegation, and Ivan Korostovets, Witte's private secretary, who recorded a valuable but mundane diary of the events. Konstantin Nabokov, an uncle of the later well-known author, had a minor role as assistant to Plançon.⁶¹ Russia was well staffed for Kittery affairs. Lamsdorf warned Witte, however, not to rely on Martens and that the emperor was much resolved to continue the war after his meeting with cousin Wilhelm II on 10 July.⁶²

Japan's equivalent of Witte was elder statesman Ito Hirobumi, who had also championed a peace policy, but he declined the nominal offer to head the delegation. Foreign Minister Komura Jutaro was then designated as expected. His natural right hand man would be Takahira Kogoro, the Japanese minister to the United States, who had established an excellent working relationship with the president. Another important member as a special assistant was Kaneko

⁵⁹ Henry Adams, after meeting him in St. Petersburg, came to that conclusion. Edmund Morris, *Theodore Rex* (New York, 2001), 402–03. Witte, however, had sponsored studies of American industry, agriculture, transportation, and administration, especially by sending a number of special agents to the Chicago World's Fair in 1893. Saul, 365–74.

⁶⁰ Meyer diary, 16 July 1905, box 2, Meyer Papers, LC.

⁶¹ Esthus, 69–70.

⁶² Lamsdorf to Witte (Paris), 16 and 21 July 1905, f. 138, op. 467, d. 691, AVPR.

Kentaro, a Harvard classmate of the president's and a university professor, who had been sent in advance especially to cultivate American public opinion.⁶³ Both Komura and Takahira were a diminutive five foot four and in official photographs would appear meekly well under the armpits of Witte. They were assisted by naval attaché Takashita Isamu, Koishi Kotaro, and by an American advisor, Henry Denison. The Japanese were fluent in English while the Russians, excepting Rosen, relied on French. The delegations were perhaps not ideal but well matched with perhaps some initial advantage to the Japanese.

The stage managers on the American side were handicapped by the death on 1 July of Secretary of State John Hay. He was not formally replaced—by Elihu Root—until the conference was over.⁶⁴ Theodore Roosevelt was the master of ceremonies in any event. The technical diplomatic duties thus fell upon Third Assistant Secretary of State Herbert H.D. Pierce, who at least had the advantage of several years of service at the American legation in St. Petersburg in the 1890s and was well known and respected by the Russian delegation.⁶⁵ A cottage near the Wentworth was vacated for his use. Rear Admiral William W. Mead, commandant of the shipyard, was in charge of transportation, security, and local arrangements at Kittery. He adroitly restricted access to the shipyard from the curious, the knowing as well as the unknowing, and the usual summer tourists,⁶⁶ but, outside his control, a host of local politicians and journalists—and sensation seekers—descended upon the Wentworth Hotel like the flies that also besieged the New Hampshire/Maine coast in late summer. Governor John McLane of New Hampshire, for example, decided on a timely one-month vacation at the Wentworth to coincide with the negotiations, but it is doubtful that anyone who managed to get a room there found the situation very comfortable. Witte, for one, would constantly complain about the accommodations and the food. His staff had meals and teas at odd times in their rooms while the Japanese delegation joined the public for dinner but appeared uncomfortable.⁶⁷

⁶³ Trani, 19–21.

⁶⁴ Thus two potential candidates for a Nobel peace prize missed a good opportunity.

⁶⁵ Saul, 431–32.

⁶⁶ Randall, 13, 20–21

⁶⁷ Pierce to Roosevelt, 31 August 1905, reel 59, Roosevelt Papers, LC. He added that Rosen insisted that there were no complaints.

The president-superintendent of the whole affair spent the period of the negotiations in relative comfort at his summer home, Sagamore Hill at Oyster Bay on Long Island, directing his show from the wings. He hoped to have a meeting with the Russians first, writing to Rosen, "Do you come to see me before Mr. Witte comes, or shall I wait and get you to bring him out informally before the regular presentation?"⁶⁸ Delays ensued, and the impatient president was not optimistic about results, confiding to Taft, "I think it is a toss up whether we have peace or a continuance of war, and I am rather inclined to think it will be the latter because Russia seems wholly unable to look facts in the face."⁶⁹ Rosen duly arrived at the president's "dacha" on 31 July for a two-hour session, from which he gathered only that New York bankers might press Japan to demand an indemnity to pay off their loans. Roosevelt invited him and Witte for a private lunch the following week.⁷⁰

The Japanese delegation, though traveling farther, arrived first, settling in for a few days at the Waldorf Astoria in New York, where Kaneko met Komura and, pessimistic about success at Portsmouth, hatched a plan for a quick retreat from the negotiations in Kittery back to New York to allow Roosevelt to apply pressure on the Russians. On 2 August they called at Sagamore Hill an hour early in formal attire including high silk hats. This allowed time for the president to change to more suitable but still informal dress for a reception that seemed to go well. Komura presented the terms for peace that included the stickiest point, an indemnity, and Roosevelt stressed the importance of compromise but seemed to grant that the Japanese terms were reasonable.

Witte, having dallied in Paris—while courting American opinion with an interview with Associated Press, "For Peace but Not at Any Cost"—arrived a few days later, following in the trail of the Japanese to greet his American host; not a good omen. The president was somewhat put-off by the demeanor of Witte at their first meeting, as was the Russian representative by the informality of the occasion. This was not only the president's style but also probably a conscious, if misguided, effort to loosen up the delegations prior to their first

⁶⁸ Roosevelt to Rosen, 18 July 1905 (original), f. 138, op. 467, d. 689, AVPR.

⁶⁹ To Taft, 29 July 1905, Taft Papers, 4A, reel 320, LC. Taft was in Japan at the time. His role there remains to be explored.

⁷⁰ Rosen to Lamsdorf, 1 August 1905, f. 138, op. 467, d. 690, AVPR.

joint meeting. Roosevelt understood from their conversation that Russia might be willing to pay something, for example, for the cost of the Japanese care of prisoners of war, but not as an "indemnity." This was also the understanding of Rosen, who, however, opposed even that concession and was flatly opposed to a compromise peace. Roosevelt was obviously disappointed, confiding to Henry Cabot Lodge, "I do not think the Russians mean peace."⁷¹ The preliminaries for the conference did not signal success.

The two delegations met "informally" for the first time on 5 August, again at Oyster Bay, under the more formal invitation of the president, but this time in the confined quarters of his yacht, the *Mayflower*, having been brought from New York on the cruisers *Tacoma* (Japanese) and *Chattanooga* (Russians), the president taking advantage of the opportunity to show off the "new" American navy. For the sake of protocol the Japanese boarded first, having arrived in the United States first. To avoid precedence in seating, however, a stand-up luncheon was served.⁷² Having survived that and the awkward introductions and formal photographs ashore, the Russian and Japanese delegations boarded the *Mayflower* and the *Dolphin*, respectively, for the trip to Portsmouth.⁷³ Witte, however, debarked at Newport to travel on a special train, arranged by J. Pierpont Morgan, who had ulterior motives in mind—a large loan to the Russian government. In the meantime, Admiral Mead was pressed 200 workmen working day and night to partition the large second floor the naval stores building in Kittery into a central conference rooms and suites of three rooms for the delegations on each side, appointed with newly polished floors and Persian rugs and three carloads of new furniture. A dining room was created for an initial breakfast and daily lunches, but the food was imported from Boston and warmed in a new electric oven on the spot. In the likely event that all of this was insufficient, the admiral ordered three truck loads of wine and liquor.⁷⁴ Apparently the oven did not work, since Witte

⁷¹ Roosevelt to Lodge, 4 August 1905, in Lodge, *Selections from the Correspondence of Theodore Roosevelt and Henry Cabot Lodge, 1884–1918*, 2 vols. (New York, 1925), II, 171–72.

⁷² Rosen thought, perhaps to satisfy SPB, that Witte created a good impression. Rosen to Lamsdorf, 6 August 1905, f. 138, op. 467, d. 690, AVPR.

⁷³ Randall, 21–22. The vessel assignment was apparently based on the ethnicity of the servants, the ones on the *Dolphin* being Japanese, those on the *Mayflower* Chinese. *Ibid.*, 22.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 20–21.

complained of the regular cold lunches and would, therefore, eat nothing but bread and vegetables.⁷⁵

Lamsdorf, expecting the negotiations to fail, instructed Witte to tour “the middle states” “cultivating favorable inclination of public opinion regarding relations with Russia,” but a few days later rescinded this.⁷⁶ While those going by sea encountered heavy fog and no coastal scenery to view, Witte enjoyed a pleasant tour of Boston and the Harvard campus, rejoining his delegation for the formal greetings of Pierce and Mead at Kittery and by local dignitaries in Portsmouth.⁷⁷ More problems quickly emerged. The Wentworth was crowded with reporters and sensation seekers and the delegations were confined to limited and somewhat exposed space. At the navy yard, the renovated warehouse left much to be desired, while the work of the yard went on with whistles, steam engines, and shouts of workers, so that windows, despite the heat and flies, had to remain closed. Some of the delegates might have preferred Manchurian trenches, where hostilities had ceased, to the long days at Kittery and restless nights at the Wentworth.

The opening session of the negotiations was also not auspicious. The Japanese, trying Witte’s patience, presented their terms in the form of articles on Thursday morning, 10 August, slowly, hesitantly, and in no particular order: 1) Japan would have special rights and powers in Korea unobstructed by Russia; 2) withdrawal of Russian forces from Manchuria and restoration of full Chinese sovereignty; 3) Japan would restore occupied territory in Manchuria, excepting the Port Arthur enclave, to China; 4) neither country would hinder Chinese efforts to restore and advance the internal affairs of Manchuria; 5) the cession of Sakhalin Island to Japan; 6) transfer to Japan of the Port Arthur lease; 7) transfer to Japan of the Port Arthur-Harbin railway; 8) Russia to retain the trans-Manchuria (i.e. Chinese Eastern) railway but only for commercial and industrial purposes (i.e. demilitarized); 9) payment to Japan (avoiding the term “indemnity”, as Roosevelt recommended) of Japan’s actual expenses of the war; 10) surrender to Japan of warships that had taken refuge in neutral ports;

⁷⁵ *The Memoirs of Count Witte*, translated and edited by Sidney Harcave (Armonk, NY, 1990), 436–37. He also complained of the local college students serving as waiters and of the visiting young ladies dating them late in the evenings unobserved.

⁷⁶ To Witte, 10 and 13 August 1905, f. 138, op. 567, d. 694 (1905), AVPR.

⁷⁷ Ethus, 76–78.

11) a negotiated limitation on the size of Russian naval forces in the Far East; and 12) Japanese fishing rights along the shores of Russia in the Japan Sea, Sea of Okhotsk, and Bering Sea.⁷⁸ Again, upon Roosevelt's advice, any demands on Vladivostok, or restrictions of its use as a naval base, were omitted.

The main points of contention, as expected, were the payment of Japan's war expenses (an indemnity) and the cession of Sakhalin Island. The Russian response, already in preparation as the proposed terms were recited, took up the afternoon session and until 7:00 in the evening. Provisos were added to nearly every article. On Korea, for example, Russia insisted that its citizens have the same rights as other foreigners in the country, that the Korean emperor remain sovereign, whatever that could mean, and that the Russian border not be threatened in any way.⁷⁹ The transfer of Port Arthur was accepted but on condition, properly legal, that China agreed. Other matters pertaining to Manchuria took up some time, but Russia basically agreed to the Japanese terms. On Sakhalin, however, Witte was adamant, "Russia cannot agree to the cession of this island."⁸⁰ In consolation, Russia would grant Japan fishing rights around the island. An interesting but confusing proposal was to allow China to "redeem" the Chinese Eastern Railway, and the payment would be transferred to Japan, a sort of indemnity by proxy.

On the other main issue, war reparations, the Russian delegation delivered a heated response. Witte said it could not be discussed, that reparations were paid only by a defeated nation, and that was far from the current situation. In summation, Russia refused four of the twelve Japanese terms: cession of Sakhalin, any reparations/indemnity, surrender of the interned naval ships, and any limitation on Russian naval forces in the Pacific. To sweeten the rejections, Witte proposed a military alliance with Japan, a suggestion that had little support from others in the Russian delegation and seemed extraneous to the matters at hand, though it planted the seed of later consideration and not long afterwards became a reality. Subsequent drawn-out sessions revolved around these rejections with lengthy diversions into the less controversial and generally agreed terms. A major obstacle, perhaps presaged by a sense of Roosevelt's support,

⁷⁸ Ibid., 84–86.

⁷⁹ Ibid., 90–91.

⁸⁰ Ibid., 85.

was Komura's treatment of both the "indemnity" and cession of all of Sakhalin Island as "absolutely indispensable."⁸¹

The Russian counter terms were formally presented on Saturday morning, 12 August. Their opponents were apparently surprised by the quickness of the reply. Much acrimonious debate resulted, especially over Korea, with Witte insisting vehemently on the sovereign rights of the Korean emperor, catching the opposing delegation off guard and leaving them bewildered by the time of the discussions ended that evening.⁸² Witte, meanwhile, telegraphed the Japanese terms to Nicholas II but not, tactfully, the Russian response, emphasizing that this was in accordance with his instructions. Prospects for peace still were not promising.

Sunday, 13 August, a traditional day of rest in New England, briefly suspended the talks. Witte took advantage of the occasion to lead the entire Russian delegation to services at the Episcopal Christ Church in Portsmouth, scoring another point over his non-Christian opponents. Belatedly, the latter attended evening services at a Christian church in Kittery.⁸³ No progress during the following week left everyone disappointed, especially the president, bothered by persistent appearances by Komura at Oyster Bay. In the meantime, thanks in part to Witte's shrewd manipulation of the press, American opinion shifted dramatically. An indemnity was now seen as unreasonable, especially in conjunction with the insistent demand for Sakhalin.⁸⁴ After all, the United States had settled for territory in place of indemnity at the conclusion of the Spanish-American War. Roosevelt became increasingly exasperated: "I am having my hair turned gray by dealing with the Russian and Japanese peace negotiators. The Japanese ask too much, but the Russians are ten times worse than the Japs because they are so stupid and won't tell the truth."⁸⁵ Lamsdorf conveyed the "last" terms on 22 August: no kind of money payment but consent to a temporary occupation of Sakhalin by Japan.⁸⁶ Meanwhile at the Wentworth, Witte was ready to settle his

⁸¹ This relies on Ethus' excellent discussion. *Ibid.*, 88–89.

⁸² *Ibid.*, 92–93.

⁸³ Planson, *Portsmutskaia miraia konferentsiia 1905 goda*, 33–35.

⁸⁴ Arthur W. Thompson and Robert A. Hart, *The Uncertain Crusade: America & the Russian Revolution of 1905* (Boston, 1970), 90–105.

⁸⁵ To Kermit Roosevelt, 25 August 1905, Roosevelt Papers, MD, LC.

⁸⁶ Cable to Witte, 22 August 1905, f. 138, op. 467, d. 694, AVPR.

bill on 26 August and sent a secretary to secure rooms in New York.

The black storm cloud that hung over the waters of Portsmouth involved finances. Japan's American bankers wanted an indemnity granted by Russia to help repay their loans. Russia, suffering internal turmoil as well as an expensive war, desperately needed foreign loans, the only two possibilities being France and the United States. Russian Finance Minister Vladimir Kokovtsov pressed his former mentor to pursue a loan in the United States, that only his personal influence could achieve it,⁸⁷ and argued simply that Russia could not afford paying an indemnity but could afford ceding territory.⁸⁸ Witte insisted that he present this case to the tsar immediately and employ all possible agents, including Konstantin Pobedonostsev, the tsar's former tutor. "I trust in your energetic measures and confidentiality."⁸⁹ The minister quickly did so and reported confidentially that "the Emperor told him yesterday" [24 August] that he is prepared to give up half of Sakhalin but not to pay for keeping the northern half.⁹⁰

With negotiations at an apparent impasse a few days earlier, Meyer also conferred directly with Nicholas II at his summer cottage at Tsarskoe Selo for two hours on 23 August, much to the annoyance of Lamsdorf who naturally felt left out. They agreed that the "indemnity" was the key issue, Meyer reported. "It depends now entirely on whether Japan continues to insist on a war indemnity, which Russia will not pay, as he claims that Japan is getting all she went to war for and a great deal more than she ever expected under any circumstances to obtain."⁹¹ He was obviously becoming more and more a supporter of the Russian position and that may have caused Roosevelt to put even more pressure on the Japanese to back down. Both Meyer in St. Petersburg and the president at Oyster Bay argued for a compromise—no indemnity but the cession of the southern half of Sakhalin Island, which they both pointed out to the Russians had formerly been considered Japanese and, therefore, was not really a loss of Russian territory. After a flurry of cables and after his meet-

⁸⁷ Kokovtsov to Witte, 16 and 17 August 1905, d. 691, *ibid.* In fact, Witte had already met in New York with Thomas Perkins, a close associate of J.P. Morgan, about a loan.

⁸⁸ Kokovtsov to Witte, 21 August 1905, *ibid.*, d. 691, AVPR.

⁸⁹ Witte to Kokovtsov, 18 and 24 August 1905, *ibid.*

⁹⁰ Kokovtsov to Witte, 25 August 1905, *ibid.*

⁹¹ Meyer to Julia Meyer (daughter), 25 August 1905, box 1, Meyer Papers, MD, LC.

ings with Meyer and Kokovtsov, Nicholas II formally consented to relinquish half of Sakhalin.⁹² The combined and simultaneous appeals of Meyer, Witte, and Kokovtsov had brought results. This was the breakthrough that made peace possible and rescued Russia from an unpopular and costly war in the midst of revolutionary upheaval. Late in the session at Kittery, expected by Witte to be the last, he received news of the Meyer compromise. Komura asked for a formal statement and a delay to confer with Tokyo.⁹³

Another hurried avenue was arranged by the president with Melville Stone, manager of the Associated Press, to play the German card once more, using Kaiser Wilhelm, who was still basking in the glow of his surprise "Baltic yacht alliance" with Russia at Björkö that summer. Meanwhile, Roosevelt's urging of the Meyer compromise on the Japanese produced a flurry of communications with Tokyo. Though Lamsdorf's instructions were still in contradiction with that settlement, Witte, backed by Kokovtsov, viewed it as the best way out. At a tense session on the afternoon of 28 August the Japanese delegation quietly agreed to drop the indemnity from the terms and to a new article nine: "The Imperial Government of Russia cedes to the Imperial Government of Japan, in perpetuity and full sovereignty, the southern part of the island of Saghalin, and all the islands adjacent thereto, as well as all the public works and property there situated. The fiftieth parallel of north latitude is adopted as the limit of the ceded territory."⁹⁴ This territorial settlement would remain in force until 1945 and the unconditional surrender of Imperial Japan to the World War II allies. Crossing the t's and dotting the i's took a few days before the formal signing of the "Treaty of Portsmouth" at Kittery on 5 September. Nicholas II did not wait for this to convey on 31 August his appreciation to Roosevelt: "Accept my congratulations and warmest thanks for having brought the Peace negotiations to a successful conclusion, owing to your personal efforts. My country will gratefully recognize the great part you have played in the Portsmouth peace conference."⁹⁵

⁹² Lamsdorf to Witte, 26 August 1905, f. 138, op. 467, d. 694, AVPR.

⁹³ Trani, 152–53.

⁹⁴ The text of the treaty is available in several sources, for example, *ibid.*, 161–70.

⁹⁵ Nicholas II (Peterhof) to Theodore Roosevelt, 31 August 1905, roll 59, Roosevelt Papers, LC. A few months later, at the traditional New Years' reception, the tsar confided to Meyer that he would never forget what the American president had done and repeated it with feeling. Meyer diary, 14 January 1906, Meyer Papers,

As a concluding gesture, both governments presented Governor McLane of New Hampshire with \$10,000 each (nothing for Maine). The state invested the money on government bonds of the two countries, those of Russia becoming of no value after 1917. The Japanese bonds, however, remained valid and were even reinstated after World War II, accruing to around \$40,000 and currently earning around \$3500 interest, donated for a variety of causes, including organ transplants and drug rehabilitation programs.⁹⁶

The treaty was initially greeted by outcries of opposition in both countries. Japan felt cheated by being denied Russian largess to help repay its war loans, while Russia was incensed by the first voluntary loss of territory in its modern history, half of a large but remote island. The tendency was to blame the interference of other powers, especially the United States. Meyer recorded the Russian reaction from a conversation with an unnamed official. "He said war never would have taken place but for England and America, and that Witte should never have given up half of Saghalin! Whether he really knew that that was settled by the tsar and myself, I don't know, but in his entire talk he was neither rude nor offensive. It interested me very much to get his real expression and feeling upon the subject, because it is the first direct case I have experienced." When the official claimed that the United States had urged Japan on with money and ships, Meyer responded that this was done by private interests, not by the government. The Russian official claimed that "the press had undoubtedly been influenced by the Jews, who were always acting in whatever they thought would be best for their monied interests." Meyer added, "The Russian always puts the blame on someone else, and never learns by experience."⁹⁷

On the post peace low road Witte deplored the home front criticism of "his give away" and even more resented the pressure from Kokovtsov to complete his mission with a substantial loan guarantee. Delegating this task to Rosen and suggesting that the finance minister might come in person,⁹⁸ Witte hurried home to deal with an even more urgent problem, bringing an end to the 1905 revo-

MD, LC. Meyer also credited the tsar's brother, Grand Duke Michael, with contributing to the compromise. *Ibid.*, 16 September 1905.

⁹⁶ Randall, 79.

⁹⁷ Meyer to daughter Julia, 13 February 1906, Meyer Papers, MD, LC.

⁹⁸ Witte to Kokovtsov, 18 August 1905, f. 138, op. 467, d. 691, AVPR.

lution by convincing the tsar to grant new civil government rights in the October Manifesto. In his memoirs Kokovtsov stressed Witte's friendly persuasion to secure his assistance in pressing the tsar for acceptance of the terms but returned as a vicious and surprise opponent of his conduct of the finance ministry.⁹⁹ Both the American president and the Russian emperor could take the high road for having jointly ended the war and by the surprise announcement of Nicholas II's calling for a new international peace conference at The Hague, one of the president's pet projects.

In fact, both Japan and Russia had learned from experience and adjusted to their new international positions. Russia's aggressive Asian expansion was curtailed for the time being, but it retained an economic position in Manchuria and Vladivostok through control of the Chinese Eastern Railway. While both countries felt let down from their expectations in the war, they soon formed a quasi bond and alliance that would basically keep the Far East out of World War I and supply lines to Russia open across the North Pacific through 1919 and crucially during World War II. The real hero, the person who was most instrumental in making peace in the best way possible was George von Lengerke Meyer. In two crucial personal meetings with Nicholas II he first brought about Russian acceptance to peace negotiations in America, where a strong-willed president could effectively arbitrate, and in a second meeting convinced the tsar of giving up a token amount of territory to avoid an indemnity. Meyer probably deserved the Noble peace prize as much as the president who would receive it.

Russian-American relations slowly improved after the Kittery peace, despite the clouds looming over the horizon of the "Jewish Question," which had only been exacerbated by the Russian assertion that American Jewish bankers had financed the Japanese during the war. A new Russian foreign minister, Aleksandr Izvolskii, proved amiable toward both Japan and the United States, and even Lamsdorf in retirement mellowed toward Meyer, who reminisced, "I went through some occasions with him but he was always the gentleman and we became excellent friends."¹⁰⁰ The same could be said for most of the hosts and participants at Portsmouth-Kittery in 1905.

⁹⁹ Kokovtsov, *Iz moego proshlago*, I, 74–81.

¹⁰⁰ Meyer diary, 22 November 1906, MD, LC.

CHAPTER TWENTY-FIVE

THE WAR IN RUSSIAN HISTORICAL MEMORY

Dmitrii Oleinikov

Were it possible to accompany this chapter about Russian historical memory of the war with Japan with a soundtrack, the obvious choice would be one of the nation's favorite waltzes, "On Manchurian Headlands" (*Na sopkakh Manchzhurii*). In the collective consciousness this composition, along with "The Amur's Waves" (*Amurskie volny*) and others that have come down to us from the conflict's folklore, is evoked as a tune without words, even though the lyrics clearly exist—even in a number of different versions.¹ This is intriguing, since it suggests that thinking about the war occurs more at the emotional rather than the rational level of the Russian mind. And even when details do exist, they tend to be mythological, shaped by three revolutions and two world wars. How these myths came about is the subject of this essay.

I. *The Constructed Past*

The great early twentieth-century Russian philosopher Semen Frank once observed that, regardless of any academic schemes for periodization, the human memory invariably divides the past into three categories:

1. From Adam to my grandfather
2. From my grandfather to me
3. Me, my time, and everything that proceeds from it.²

¹ According to the recollections of A.F. Sergeev, the son of the prominent Bolshevik Artem, *On Manchurian Headlands* and *Variag* were among Joseph Stalin's favorite songs. *Zavtra*, no. 51 (368) (2002), 2.

² S.L. Frank, *Svet vo t'me. Opyt' khristianskoi etiki i sotsial'noi filosofii* (Paris, 1949). Idem, *Dukhovnye osnovy obshchestva* (M, 2000), 449.

In other words, history is entirely dependent on one's own recollections. The contemporary era concerns events that we experience directly. The period "from my grandfather to me" is made known to us by people who personally experienced these events and therefore, albeit to a lesser extent, has a personal link. However, events that occurred "from Adam to my grandfather," constitute abstract, scholarly history about which we are aware indirectly, through inanimate sources. Therefore, such abstract, "bookish" history is that component of our memory most vulnerable to ideological and other pressures that can deform the "objective" past, or, as the Prussian Leopold von Ranke put it, "Wie es eigentlich gewesen ist." For many Russians today the war with Japan fought a century ago belongs to the distant past, beyond the horizon of our own experience; a period that no longer has a living link to the present; the last veteran of the Battle of Tsushima, Fr. Maxim (in his secular life Maksim Khomutov, a sailor of the frigate *Svetlana*), died in 1975 at the age of 95.³ As a result, the war belongs to Semen Frank's first category, as something known to us only by texts: We can no longer ask eyewitnesses to tell us what happened. After their passage, we are left solely with perceptions that have already been shaped by others. Accordingly, we must understand how such perceptions were shaped.

A recent sociological survey, "The Historical Memory of Russia's Population," provides some insight into the ways people learn about the past. When asked, "From which sources do you know about Russian history" 70.3 percent answered "textbooks;" 60.3 percent—movies; 54.6 percent—television programs; 42.5 percent—memoirs and literature. Less than a quarter, or 23.6 percent, mentioned scholarly works.⁴ And so for the vast majority the primary source for understanding history throughout their lives remains their school-day textbooks. It is precisely this category that forms so-called preconceptions, or, to use Hans Gadamer's words, "pre-judgments," or "judgments that ultimately shape all particular moments."⁵ Such preconceptions influence political and military decisions in various ways, and shape public opinion. Analyzing textbooks accordingly constitutes a good way to scan the memory of the current generation.

³ *Pravoslavnaiia gazeta*, 1995, no. 14, 27.

⁴ *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, no. 3 (March 2002), 194. Respondents were able to choose more than one category.

⁵ G.Kh. Gadamer, *Istina i metod* (M, 1988), 322–323.

“Movies” are not a very satisfactory category for studying views about the Russo-Japanese War. Over the past century only one well-known film dealt with the subject—*The Cruiser Variag*, a 1946 production, and runner for the 1947 Stalin Prize. Appearing in the wake of the Soviet Union’s brief war with Japan, it reflected a very particular era and should be considered apart. Studying popular literature is more fruitful. There are three popular novels that deal with various aspects of the conflict: Aleksei Novikov-Priboi’s *Tsushima* (1932), Alexander Stepanov’s *Port-Artur* (1944), and Valentin Pikul’s *Kreiserá* (1985).⁶ One veteran, Iurii Gribov, recalled the publication of *Port-Artur*:

With one voice the critics hailed [the novel] as a deafening literary salvo of the largest caliber and predicted that Alexander Stepanov, despite being relatively unknown, was destined to great glory and the love of his readers. And they were right . . . his book was often published and republished. Nevertheless, copies of the book were always hard to find, and I remember that in our modest army libraries it was always in the hands of majors and colonels, while we, the lieutenants, patiently waited in line . . . And how often, after reading the book, were our passionate conversations about the officers Boreiko and Zvonarev, about General Kondratenko, about the troops and lower ranks. The novel evoked an important epoch of Russian history and told us about the heroism of the fortress’ defenders, the psychology of the war, aspects of military art, and in vivid colors portrayed the trenches, the officer corps, patriotism and treason, and the incompetence of higher command.⁷

Contemporary accounts of Russian sailors’ reading habits likewise show the impact of these novels on their imagination.⁸

II. *The Textbook of all Textbooks*

There are textbooks and then there are textbooks. Their impact on the generations vary, but they all have something in common as lifeboats for students cast adrift in a sea of information. A friend of

⁶ According to a survey in the reputable paper, *Knizhnoe obozrenie*, 29 April 1988, 2. Valentin Pikul’ donated the proceeds from the prize his novel won in 1988 to a charity set up for victims of the Armenian earthquake.

⁷ *Krasnaia zvezda*, 2 February 2002, 2.

⁸ *Severnaia nedelia* (Severodinsk), 12 March 2002, 2.

the nineteenth-century poet Alexander Pushkin, Petr Viazemskii, once quipped that bad laws have one effective remedy—their bad execution. It would appear that bad textbooks similarly have their balm—bad study. But it is not quite so simple. Russians have one, dominant “super” textbook, which during the mid-twentieth century enjoyed as much authority as the Catechism had before 1917. All Soviet citizens were expected to know it, if not by heart, at least extremely well. Virtually every pupil from the early 1930s until the late 1950s had to pass an exam based on this textbook. It was written with the direct involvement of Joseph Stalin and was titled *A Short Course of the History of the All-Russian Communist Party (Bolsheviks)*. Even after Stalin’s death, right up to the 1980s the section dealing with the pre-Revolutionary era remained practically unchanged. I remember well, as a student in the early 1980s during the late Brezhnev era, that studying the *Short Course* was still the best way to prepare for the obligatory exam about the history of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union.

As the history of the ruling party, the textbook was the final authority on all events in the past, including the Russo-Japanese War. All Soviet history textbooks were required not only fully to adhere to the *Short Course*’s interpretations, but also even to repeat them verbatim, with the addition of a few details here and there. The classic example is the first Soviet school book about the history of the USSR, edited by Andrei Shestakov and characteristically titled, *History of the USSR: A Short Course*. This book taught the generation that created Perestroika, and the text remains a typical exposition of the way attitudes toward the Russo-Japanese War were formed.

The short section on “War with Japan” was nothing more than a brief preface for the more important sections about the 1905 Revolution.⁹ Identifying the passage’s many factual absurdities would be like shooting fish in a barrel. Among the more outrageous is the list of key points, which correspond directly with the *Short Course*: the attempt to head off revolution—Japan’s unexpected attack—incompetent and corrupt generals—defeat—the ignominious peace. This thumbnail sketch was engraved into the historical consciousness of several Soviet generations, and remained the dominant scheme for

⁹ A.V. Shestakov (ed.), *Istoriia SSSR. Kratkii kurs. Uchebnik dlia 4-go klassa* (M, 1945), 150.

understanding the Japanese war for much of the twentieth century. The *Short Course*'s legacy was passed on from Shestakov's book to its successors, and was maintained with surprising consistency right up to the present. Let's take a closer look at this canonical text, which still dominates, albeit indirectly, the way most Russians who do not specialize in the subject understand the war.

The main feature of the *Short Course* is the unusually high emotional intensity of the prose. As we shall see, words that carry negative associations are particularly prevalent. It should also be borne in mind that some expressions now considered neutrally, such as "tsarist," in Soviet days were highly pejorative.

The brief section about the Russo-Japanese War has four words with favorable emotional connotations: *construction (railway)*, *reinforce*, *popular uprising*, *assistance*.

But the same passage contains close to fifty subjective words and expressions that evoke negative feelings:

imperialist regime, intensified struggle for domination, with unexpected ferocity, suppress (uprising), underwent military occupation, tsarism stalked (Korea), bourgeoisie, seizure, plunderer, imperialist state, strained to conquer, dreamt of conquest, incited to war, generally reactionary class of land-owners, unprepared (enemy), unexpectedly attacked, suppress (revolution), war, shattered tsarism, poorly supplied (Russian army), incompetent and corrupt generals, profited (from the war), thievery, poorly (armed), mockery, greed, succession of defeats, rout (of the Russian Army), utter defeat and destruction, reversal, catastrophe, sinking and destruction, captured, the war was ultimately lost, ignominious peace, defeats, rottenness (of tsarism), hatred (of the population to tsarism), fall (of Port Arthur).

This review clearly demonstrates the standard Soviet literary and ideological stance on the war, calculated to arouse negative views among the population. And this text was long considered to be the most faithful record of the past, the foundation for historical memory.

III. *The Short Course's Heirs*

A survey of the most widely distributed Soviet and, more remarkably, post-Soviet textbooks, reveals the *Short Course*'s deep roots. Among the latter is *In Service of the Motherland*, published in 1995 by the Armed Forces of the Russian Federation to instill patriotism among the lower ranks. Interspersed with examples of heroic acts by Russian soldiers and sailors, this modern text still carries on the legacy of

the *Short Course*. If the latter taught that “tsarism *confronted* another *plunderer*, Japan,” according to the military’s book, “Japanese *plundering*” was “*confronted* by the great power exertions of Russia.” But if, according to another passage in the *Short Course*, defeat in Manchuria was caused by “incompetent and corrupt generals,” *In Service of the Motherland* attributes it to “indecisive and unskilled leadership.” With regard to the Battle of Tsushima, both texts use the noun “ruin” (*gibel’*), and describe the outcome as a “total rout” or “total catastrophe.”

The word “plunderer” (*khishchnik*), when associated with Japan at the turn of the twentieth century, readily made its way from the pages of the *Short Course* into Russian thinking. The term appears in S. Semanov’s biography of Admiral Makarov, “the young Japanese plunderer was more aggressive and, so to speak, more hungry than its northern neighbor.”¹⁰ And in his account of General Kondratenko’s life, S. Kulichin writes, “A plunderer even more dangerous than Japan appeared in the form of Germany.”¹¹ Appearing in the popular series “The Lives of Remarkable Men” (*Zhizn’ zamechatel’nykh liudei*), these biographies of Russian military leaders enjoyed a wide readership.

Another good example of the way contemporaries now see the war was the episode on 28 May 2003 about Nicholas II’s reign in Parfenov’s popular television series, “The History of the Russian Empire.”¹² It would not be going too far to describe this program as the most widely-disseminated video-textbook of Russian history. The brief segment devoted to the Russo-Japanese war contained a number of standard inaccuracies: Admiral Makarov as “Russia’s commander-in-chief,” the spelling “RozhDestvenskii” rather than “Rozhestvenskii,” and the claim that all Russian ships were sunk at Tsushima. The screenplay’s writer was so convinced about tsarist defeat that he confidently asserted more Russians than Japanese lost their lives during the fighting (when, in fact, the reverse was true).¹³

Such texts are, of course, grounded not in ideology but on sources, facts, and the logic of events. Nevertheless, even if based on adherence to facts and the logic of events, the interpretation can vary.

¹⁰ S.N. Semanov, *Makarov* (M, 1988), 240.

¹¹ S.V. Kulichkin, *Kondratenko* (M, 1989), 101.

¹² Andrei Shilov of Russian Independent Television kindly supplied me with the transcript.

¹³ *Rossiiia i SSSR v voynakh XX veka. Poteri vooruzhennykh sil. Statisticheskoe issledovanie* (M, 2001), 43–59.

This becomes all the more evident when we compare these works to other categories of texts, such as accounts written either outside the Soviet Union or before the Revolution. One good example is Sergei Ol'denburg's *Reign of Emperor Nicholas II*. Written in emigration over half a century ago, it remains one of the more reliable histories of the last decades before 1917.¹⁴ Here the primary cause of the confrontation with Japan was not some "attempt to head off revolution" but Russia's quest for a warm water port in the Pacific. Rather than focus on "Japan's unexpected attack," Ol'denburg described a two-sided competition for regional hegemony. Instead of finding fault with "corrupt and incompetent generals," he discussed both the merits and shortcomings of leadership and saw the outcome of the fighting as anything but predetermined right up to the end. Meanwhile, the Portsmouth Treaty was no "ignominious peace," but a logical step necessary for both combatants.¹⁵

IV. *The Winners and the Losers in Literature*

The press hailed the publication of Novikov-Priboi's novel, *Tsushima*, in 1932. As a critic in one popular journal exulted,

There is no doubt that *Tsushima* reveals the truth about tsarism and about the Russo-Japanese War; it is undeniably a realistic account . . . *Tsushima* is a model of Socialist Realism. The author succeeds in creating a work of Socialist Realism because his portrayals of his heroes and events are true to history. By depicting the characteristic traits of the conflict between advanced Asia and reactionary Europe and revealing the imperialist contradictions as well as the link between tsarism and imperialism, the author provides a full understanding of international relations at that stage. The most important conclusion of *Tsushima* for the USSR's proletariat is the need to master technology and science . . . *Tsushima* plays an important role—it mobilizes the masses for the victory of socialism over international reaction.¹⁶

Even in the 1990s schoolbooks of "post-Perestroika" Russia recommended the novel, "When you read Novikov-Priboi's *Tsushima*, a

¹⁴ S.S. Ol'denburg, *Tsarstvovanie imperatora Nikolaia II* (Washington, 1981). Completed in 1940, it was first published in 1947. The book only became accessible in Russia when it was republished in SPB in 1991.

¹⁵ Ol'denburg, *Tsarstvovanie*, 225–300.

¹⁶ P. Rozhkov, "Tsushima," *Novyi Mir*, 1932, no. 12, 97.

canvas displaying the weakness of the Russian army [sic!], the horror of war is revealed to you."¹⁷

Before the Revolution, only the novel *Rasplata* (Retribution) matched Tsushima's popularity in Soviet times. Written by Captain V. Semenov, another veteran of Rozhdestvenskii's ill-fated mission, the work lapsed into obscurity after 1917.¹⁸ Nevertheless, Novikov-Priboi did not refrain from lashing out at his literary rival on the pages of his own book:

Short, tubby, with a plump pink face and a patch of hair instead of a beard, he always had a self-satisfied look about him, as if he had just discovered a new law of gravity. The sailors nicknamed him "the walking bladder" . . . The officers disliked Semenov for his slyness and pushiness . . . Semenov held the station of court belle-lettrist to the commander, whose role it was to sing praises to all glorious exploits of the Second Squadron, as well as its admiral. This is why Rozhdestvenskii favored him, and [Semenov] took advantage of this to undermine not only his superiors but also his comrades.¹⁹

This negative portrait of Semenov on *Tsushima's* pages is hardly exceptional. Very much in the style of the *Short Course*—indeed surpassing it—the former storeman (*bataler*—a non-commissioned function whose responsibilities included distribution the vodka ration to sailors, and therefore highly respected) painted a tragic-comic picture, which caricatured the admirals and most of the other officers. And, much like the Soviet ur-text, Novikov's descriptions are suffused with a highly subjective emotional negativity. Among his images of the officers are "ancient polishing wax," "swollen by sloth," "cruel, sly mien." He also targeted individuals: "It was not his intellect, but the stars on his epaulets that shone," (Admiral Aleksei Birilev) "Comically fat and plump appearance" (Admiral Oskar Enkvist) "pathologically proud, unbelievably conceited, irascible, incapable of restraining his own will" (Admiral Zinovii Rozhdestvenskii). The latter's subordinates accept his unending insults "without protest, in silent submission, like beaten horses." As for Tsar Nicholas, he appears

¹⁷ I.I. Dolutskii, *Otechestvennaia istoriia. XX vek. Chast' 1* (M, 1994), 87.

¹⁸ Republished in SPB in 1994 in a small print run, the novel once again has become a bibliographic rarity.

¹⁹ A.S. Novikov-Priboi, *Tsushima* (M, 1986), 29.

as a non-entity, a dull and colorless “Tsarsko-Selo gopher.”²⁰ Novikov-Priboi tried to anticipate potential criticisms:

Among our officers there were those with progressive views. People like Rozhestvenskii and Kurosh disturbed them, but they were powerless to interfere with the latters’ arbitrariness. The problem wasn’t just with some bad individuals, but with the whole disorder that reigned within the fleet.²¹

Another popular novel, *Port Arthur*, repeated the charges leveled against the tsarist regime in the *Short Course* and in *Tsushima*. Also a best seller in its day, the book was written by the son of an artillery captain stationed at the Russian base, and who had witnessed its siege as a fifteen-year-old. He began to write his memoirs of the dramatic events some thirty years after his release from Japanese captivity. Nevertheless, his authority as a “participant” bestowed an aura of veracity on his work, all the more so since Socialist Realism, which dominated Stalin-era literature, was meant to portray life as it actually was. As a result, no Soviet citizen publicly criticized the author for any errors, let alone outright falsifications. But these began literally with the opening sentences, which describe a mythical ball supposedly held at the Navy Club on the eve of the Japanese raid on Port Arthur.

Veterans living in emigration were less in awe of the best seller. “The slanders about the ‘ball’ were renewed in even more vivid hues in Mr. Stepanov’s novel,” a former naval surgeon, L.I. Kefeli, observed in his memoirs, adding somewhat later, “Stepanov’s fantasies know no limits . . . In Paris, at one of the dinners of survivors of the siege it was said that Stepanov had only been a boy at the time, that he heard a great deal . . . but was mistaken about everything.”²² Other eyewitness accounts published abroad, and therefore entirely inaccessible in the USSR, likewise painted a picture of the Russo-Japanese War very different than the one familiar to Soviet readers. For example, officers were portrayed in rather less negative light. One contributor to a collection of reminiscences about the Baltic Fleet that

²⁰ Ibid., 29, 39, 45, 59, 60.

²¹ Ibid., 62.

²² I.L. Bunich, *Port Arturskaia lovushka* (SPB, 1999), 376. Selected memoirs of veterans of the siege published in emigration were added as a supplement to the novel, making them accessible in Russia for the first time.

appeared in Paris in the 1930s described the navigator of the *Svetlana*, V.V. Diakonov: "A navigator in love with his craft, a splendid naval and combat officer, linguist and explorer, knowledgeable about the five continents and the best professional guide of Europe, a gentleman to the bone."²³

The most popular writer of historical fiction in the late Soviet era, Valentin Pikul', tried in his own way to correct the collective consciousness of the war in his novel *The Cruisers*. His treatment of the events was already very different in one important respect, since the authors of *Tsushima* and *Port Arthur* had fought in the disastrous war, and therefore bore its psychological scars. By contrast, Pikul' was from a very different generation, and he had participated in the victorious campaign against Hitler. His age had seen Port Arthur seized in a few hours by some 200 Soviet paratroopers on 22 August 1945, Japan's capitulation, and Stalin's famous speech of 2 September that year. The latter justified the campaign against Japan as revenge. The Soviet leader explained,

The defeat of Russian forces in 1904 during the Russo-Japanese war remained a difficult memory in the minds of the people. It cast a dark stain over our nation. Our people believed and knew, that the day would come when Japan would be beaten, and the stain would be removed. Forty years we, men of the old generation, waited for this day. And now the day has come.²⁴

Pikul' saw the war as a tragedy, but for a very different reason: While he bemoaned the senseless loss of life and destruction, he did not belabor the incompetence of commanders and political leaders. Pikul's generals and officers were in another category. Rather than uniformly vile, they were a diverse group, with a variety of characteristics. Even the details, such as the fact that Admiral N.K. Reizenstein sports "a beard spade-shaped like Kuz'ma Minin's"²⁵ or that in the stateroom officers of the *Riurik* keep song-birds, leave a much more positive impression. Paradoxically, the novelist who had taken no part in the fighting thereby created a much more realistic cast of characters.

²³ I.I. Bunich, *Port-Arturskaia lovushka*, 387.

²⁴ *Pravda*, 3 Sept. 1945.

²⁵ Although, in contrast to what was written in the novel, the fleet in Vladivostok was not commanded by Reizenstein but by Rear Admiral Evald von Shtakel'berg.

Reviewers were quick to see the book's main source as Professor V.E. Egor'ev's monograph, *Operations of Vladivostok's Cruisers in the Russo-Japanese War of 1904–1905*, published in 1939. However, the vast majority was and remains entirely ignorant of this work. It is the novel, with all of its errors and deficiencies (and there are hundreds of them) that remains the most important means of informing historical memory, by the lengthy path of event-scholar-academic monograph-author-novel-mass consciousness. Pikul', explaining that he wrote "about love of the Motherland and loyalty to military duty,"²⁶ tried to depict pre-Revolutionary Russia as a troubled land, but not irredeemably flawed, adding that he saw his perspective as "intelligent patriotism."

Soviet readers did not detect any difference between his approach and the standard stereotypes about the war. According to a typical review of *Cruisers*, by an historian,

Among the materials of the Seventeenth Congress [of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union] is a directive to instill patriotism in Soviet people. It seems to me that the novel *Cruisers* is a means to carry this out by literary means . . . Before us unfolds a panorama of the tragic fate of Russian sailors . . ., who were victims of the inherently flawed Russian autocracy. One is left with an impression of the inevitability of revolution.²⁷

V. *At the Movies*

The film, *The Cruiser Variag*, directed by Viktor Eisymont according to Georgii Grebner's screenplay, occupies a special place in the collective memory of the Russo-Japanese War. Like Pikul's novel, the movie was produced by the generation of victors. It was shot in 1946, riding a wave of patriotic fervor generated by the Soviet's and its Allies' triumph in the Second World War. This was the brief moment when love of the motherland had not yet been distorted by the Kremlin's campaign against "cosmopolitanism and obsequiousness," and when military history could be seen as elements of the USSR's heritage rather than "the gloomy era" of tsarism.

²⁶ S.M. Kamenev, *Liubov' k istorii pitaia. Portret pisatel'ia Valentina Pikulia* (M, 1990), 78.

²⁷ Kamenev, *Liubov' k istorii*, 122.

It goes without saying that such a film could not have been made without approval at the highest political level. The studio was even permitted to cast as the *Variag* one of the holiest Soviet vessels, the *Aurora*, which also participated in the Russo-Japanese War and survived the Battle of Tsushima. Even to the modern viewer there is a contrast between the officers portrayed in the movie and the stereotypes of the *Short Course*, as well as of the novels of Novikov-Priboi and Stepanov. In the former the *entire* officer corps, from the most junior midshipman to the captains of the *Variag* and the *Koreets*, Rudnev and Beliaev, appears in an entirely favorable light. Whereas Soviet films typically portrayed priests negatively, in this production, the *Variag*'s chaplain is a "spiritual doctor," an intellectual who not only understands Asian languages, but is capable of interpreting the most complicated Chinese poetry. The officers and the sailors operate more as a brotherhood rather than a strict hierarchy, and join together in the evening to sing Russian folksongs and to engage in spirited discussions about the Motherland and duty.

The question "Who is guilty?" is answered only indirectly: Higher command was responsible both for war and defeat. To avoid any uncomfortable parallels with Germany's surprise attack on 22 June 1941, not one word was spoken about the central government or the emperor. The entire blame was squarely placed on the shoulders of the staff, which on the eve of the war only asked the *Variag* for "reports, threads, buttons and wax," and expected only an urgent despatch wishing the wife of the Pacific Squadron's commander a happy name-day (a reference to the mythical ball held at the Navy Club in Port Arthur). The director's dominant cinematic metaphors include the St. Andrew's standard—Captain Rudnev—Russia—faithfully fulfilling one's duty—refusing to surrender to the enemy.²⁸ They contrast dramatically with the themes that dominate the *Short Course* (the attempt to head off revolution—Japan's unexpected attack— incompetent and corrupt generals—defeat—the ignominious peace), although they do not contradict them outright. Consequently, there was no major change in the popular consciousness about the war. At the same time, the film *Variag* anticipated the "intelligent, patriotic line" adopted about the Russo-Japanese War by Pikul in *The*

²⁸ I.Ia. Boiarskii, *Literaturnye kollazhi* (M, 1995). Cited in <http://www.pereplet.ru/text/boyarskiy.html>.

Cruisers as well as in textbooks, such as the aforementioned *In Service of the Motherland*.

Many attribute Moscow's decision to decorate surviving veterans of the Battle of Chemulpo on the occasion of its 50th anniversary to the film's influence. On 8 February 1954 they were awarded a medal inscribed "For Courage" (*Za otvagu*) and—characteristically—"For the Victory over Japan." None of those who participated in the siege of Port Arthur or in the Battle of Tsushima were honored, surely a testimony to the "prejudicial" power of film and literature. During the same year work began on a monument to the *Variag's* commander, Admiral V.F. Rudnev, in Tula (nor far from the Rudnev estate in the village of Savino). Completed in 1956, the statue is one of the most popular memorials to the Russo-Japanese War. Every year, on the anniversary of the *Variag's* last battle, flowers are left at its base, and navy veterans gather at the site. To this day, the best naval conscripts of the Tula District are sent to serve on the current *Variag*, the Pacific Fleet's flagship. Tula is something a regional center for the memory of the Russo-Japanese War.

VI. *Mythologies Old and New*

Despite today's clichés about having surmounted the mythologies of the Soviet era, it is evident that the efforts of scholars to present a more realistic version of the course of the Russo-Japanese War have yet to make a major impact on popular consciousness. Hopes for lasting change can only be placed on major educational efforts linked to commemorations of the conflict's centennial. Igor Bunich's novels of the 1990s, such as *Port-Arturskaia lovushka* (The Port Arthur Trap), *Muchenik Tsusimy* (The Martyr of Tsushima), and *Dolgaia doroga na Golgoфу* (The Long Road to Golgotha) were published in smaller print runs and sold fewer copies than those of Stepanov and Novikov-Priboi in their day. Even the recent sensational claim that the battleship *Petropavlovsk* went down as the result of a terrorist act by the Socialist Revolutionaries attracted little notice.²⁹ Meanwhile, more serious works published to mark the tercentenary of the founding

²⁹ S.N. Semanov, *Taina gibeli admirala Makarova. Novye stranitsy russko-iaponskoi voyny 1904–1905 gg.* (M, 2000).

of the Russian Navy, such as the journal *Morskoi Sbornik*, have only been read by specialists. But then again, this narrow category has always had access to alternative histories of the war, albeit in pre-revolutionary editions.

Textbooks today tend to adhere to two new, or, more accurately, “renewed” mythologies of the Russo-Japanese War: the patriotic³⁰ and the progressive.³¹ Each basically adheres to the respective interpretations of the film *Variag* and the *Short Course*. And so, “modern” textbooks follow in the footsteps of their predecessors, shaping a historical memory among the population based not on understanding the past, but from the perspective of either justifying or condemning it.

Translated by David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye

³⁰ See, for example, the chapter by A.N. Bokhanov in *Rossia v nachale XX veka* (M, 2002), 330–40.

³¹ See, for example, Dolutskii, *Otechestvennaia istoriia*, 86–88.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SIX

COMMEMORATING THE WAR IN POST-VERSAILLES JAPAN

Frederick R. Dickinson¹

[The Russo-Japanese War] was Japan's war of self-defense against Imperial Russia's invasion south from Siberia. Had we lost this war, Japanese independence would, unquestionably, have been lost. Togo Heihachiro contributed most to our victory. Given this remarkable sea battle, he is known throughout the world as an accomplished admiral on a par with Britain's Nelson.²

—Hayashi Kentaro, 1988

Few with a passing acquaintance of the early twentieth-century would find surprising a lingering Japanese deference for the Russo-Japanese War. The 1905 victory catapulted Japan from an international curiosity to a regional power and enthralled a generation of influential on-lookers. President Theodore Roosevelt described Togo's obliteration of the Russian Baltic Fleet as "the greatest phenomenon the world has ever seen."³ Vietnamese patriot Phan Boi Chau spoke of the "tremendous impact" of the war, which spurred his fellow independence fighters "to wake up with a start."⁴ And Vladimir Lenin hailed

¹ The author would like to thank the Japan Foundation, the University of Pennsylvania Center for East Asian Studies, the Hoover Institution, the Lauder Institute of Management and International Studies and the Kyoto University Foundation for generous financial assistance in support of research for this project in Japan. Special thanks go to Sasano Tomotaka and Kikuike Sachio (Mikasa Preservation Society) and Takamura Satoshi (Yokosuka City Archives) for their kind assistance with materials related to the Mikasa memorial. Thanks also go to Professors Ito Yukio and Nakanishi Hiroshi and other members of the Modern Japan Seminar at Kyoto University for their helpful suggestions and criticisms of a preliminary version of this paper.

² Hayashi Kentaro in *Chishiki* (Sept. 1988); cited in Bungei shunju (ed.), *Nihon no ronten* (Japan's debates) (Tokyo, 1992), 601.

³ Shumpei Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War* (New York, 1970), 119.

⁴ David G. Marr (ed.), *Reflections From Captivity* (Athens, 1978), 23.

the enormous blow delivered “by a progressive Asia against a reactionary Europe.”⁵ The powers conferred official recognition upon Japan’s accomplishment by elevating their legations in Japan to embassies and ministers to ambassadors following the war.⁶

The legacy of Japan’s victory endures today in such unlikely places as “Admiral Togo” beer, brewed in Finland.⁷ But despite the above remarks by former Japanese Upper House MP and man of letters Hayashi Kentaro, the celebration in Japan remains contested. When Hayashi hailed Togo’s accomplishment in 1988, he was, in fact, engaged in an uphill fight to resurrect the admiral’s name from over forty years of obscurity. Togo and the Battle of the Japan Sea (known in the West as the Battle of Tsushima Straits) had, after all, become targets of censorship in the occupation-era effort to purge Japanese texts of references to war and national glory. After 1945, it was the anti-war poetry of Togo contemporary Yosano Akiko, not the famous sea battle, that introduced the 1904/5 years to Japanese children.⁸ When the Japanese Ministry of Education in 1988 raised Togo in a list of historic figures recommended for inclusion in primary and secondary school texts, it sparked a firestorm of protest half a decade before America’s own heated exchange over National History Standards. “This is exactly like prewar textbooks,” groaned the *Mainichi Shinbun*. “If this were the immediate postwar years, it would be the target of black ink (*kuro nuri*).”⁹

As described by its proponents, the 1988 initiative to resurrect Togo was part of a larger effort to reorient the emphasis upon a “dark past” to the creation of a history “that the youth of tomorrow may be proud of.”¹⁰ In so doing, it closely resembled efforts by Japanese soldiers, bureaucrats and conservative pundits to battle a new wave of peace advocacy following the First World War.

⁵ Cited in Inoue Kiyoshi, *Nihon teikokushugi no keisei* (Formation of Japanese imperialism) (Tokyo, 1968), 265.

⁶ Oka Yoshitake, “Generational Conflict after the Russo-Japanese War,” in Tetsuo Najita and J. Victor Koschmann (eds.), *Conflict in Modern Japanese History* (Princeton, 1982), 202, note 11.

⁷ Bungei shunju (ed.), *Nihon no ronten*, 596.

⁸ As reported in the *Asahi Shinbun* (May 16, 1988); cited in *ibid.*, 601.

⁹ Editorial from *Mainichi shinbun* (June 5, 1989); cited in *ibid.*, 600. Guiding Japanese school children to blacken portions of wartime textbooks with brush and ink remains an enduring image of Allied Occupation censorship policy.

¹⁰ Editorial from *Mainichi shinbun* (June 5, 1989); cited in *ibid.*, 600.

I. *The Russo-Japanese War in Japan*

Given the overwhelming international response to Japan's victory in 1905, the necessity of two campaigns in the twentieth century to rehabilitate the legacy of the Russo-Japanese War is surprising. In the context of contemporary Japanese responses to the war, it is remarkable. As the first major military victory over a Western empire by a former victim of Western imperialism, the war was widely greeted in Japan as an extraordinary feat. As Prime Minister Katsura Taro declared in 1905, "The Japanese people, who at the beginning of the war were anxious about the nation's fate, now, as a result of our successive victories, are puffed up with pride and regard the great Russian army as no more than a paper bear."¹¹

As with the earlier engagement with China, the "war of Meiji 37/8" spurred an enormous cultural production generally considered a defining moment in the rise of Japanese national consciousness.¹² Boosted by coverage of the war, the number of newspapers in Japan tripled between 1897 and 1911.¹³ Advertisers used references to the war and its heroes to sell anything from cold remedies to bicycles.¹⁴ As in 1894, glorified scenes of battle and battle heroes gained wide distribution in colorful woodblock prints.¹⁵ Postcard mail, originally authorized by the Ministry of Communications in 1900, rapidly spread with the issuance of twelve commemorative sets of war images between 1904 and 1906.¹⁶ And the centrality of the preeminent new

¹¹ Quoted in Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, 148.

¹² For more on this, see David Wells and Sandra Wilson (eds.), *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective, 1904–05* (New York, 1999).

¹³ Carol Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths: Ideology in the Late Meiji Period* (Princeton, 1985), 171.

¹⁴ For a sample of some of these ads, see Machida Shinobu, *Senji kokoku zukan* (Illustrated collection of war advertisements) (Tokyo, 1997), 26–39.

¹⁵ For coverage of some of these images, see Elizabeth De Sabato Swinton, "Russo-Japanese War Triptychs: Chastising a Powerful Enemy," in J. Thomas Rimer (ed.), *A Hidden Fire: Russian and Japanese Cultural Encounters, 1868–1926* (Stanford, 1995), 114–32.

¹⁶ Kashiwagi Hiroshi, *Shozo no naka no kenryoku* (Power in portraits) (Tokyo, 1987), 86–7. Also, Ubukata Toshiro, *Meiji Taisho kenbunshi* (Observations of the Meiji and Taisho eras) (Tokyo, 1978) (originally published in 1926), 170. Many of these postcards issued during the Russo-Japanese War may be found in The Leonard A. Lauder Collection at the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston.

national symbol, the emperor, was guaranteed by 7,526 poems published and attributed to him during the year and a half of the war.¹⁷

If the enormous print and visual media production surrounding the war helped cultivate a sense of national purpose, so too did public memorials to war casualties. Echoing the official effort to make Shinto shrines a dominant site for state rituals, local shrines replaced Buddhist temples in hosting funeral rites for fallen local heroes.¹⁸ And Yasukuni Shrine, the principal Japanese monument to the war dead, welcomed double the number of visitors in 1904 as in 1903, and nearly two more times the 1904 figure again in 1905. Attendance at the war museum on the grounds of Yasukuni reached its peak in 1905, with 11 million visitors.¹⁹

National and local authorities expressly kindled the patriotic fervor by sponsoring large-scale public celebrations throughout the nation. From October 1905, Japan's major cities hosted a series of triumphal returns, where Japan's military commanders and war-hardened troops paraded under triumphal arches and filed past large crowds. In Tokyo, the processions began at the main triumphal arch at Shinbashi station and ended in a formal report of victory to the emperor in his palace.²⁰ The emperor, himself, led a series of grand military reviews. His nearly four-hour review of over 160 ships in Yokohama harbor on October 23, 1905 marked the fourth Naval Review of Imperial Japan and the largest to date.²¹ On April 30, 1906, the emperor presided over the climactic public celebration of the war, the Triumphal Military Review of 31,203 troops and a huge cache of arms, conspicuously displayed in the newly reconstructed plaza in front of the Imperial Palace.²²

¹⁷ Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 89.

¹⁸ Ubukata, *Meiji Taisho kenbunshi*, 167. According to a 1906 report of the Shrine Association, the Sino- and Russo-Japanese wars "brought the shrines to public attention." Cited in Gluck, *Japan's Modern Myths*, 140.

¹⁹ Takashi Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy: Power and Pageantry in Modern Japan* (Berkeley, 1998), 126–7.

²⁰ Fujitani describes the triumphal return of Admiral Togo in October 1905 in *ibid.*, 127.

²¹ Ishii Kendo, *Meiji jibutsu kigen* (Origins of Meiji things), 8 vols. (Tokyo, 1997), VI, 500. For a detailed description of this ceremony, see, Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, 130–1. Also, Nomura Minoru, *Nihonkai kaisen no shinjitsu* (The Truth about the battle of the Japan Sea) (Tokyo, 1999), 193–6.

²² Fujitani describes this plaza as a pivotal symbol of the transformation of Tokyo into a massive state theater in the early twentieth century. Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, 131–8.

If wartime and immediate postwar ceremonies accentuated the enormity of Japan's accomplishments and sacrifices, the raising of monuments ensured a prominent place for the Russo-Japanese War in Japanese national memory. Mammoth concrete arches, adorned with flags, swords, cannons and anchors, were erected near train stations throughout the country to welcome the numerous triumphal returns.²³ In Ishikawa prefecture, home of the Seventh Regiment that had led the bloody frontal assault on Port Arthur, unusually large headstones marked the graves of fallen soldiers in the smallest of villages.²⁴ Joshoin Shrine in Okabemachi, Shizuoka Prefecture enshrined over two hundred wooden soldiers representing the total war deaths in Shida County.²⁵ The most spectacular monuments to Japanese success and sacrifice graced Japan's new continental acquisition, the Liaodong Peninsula: the stone and bronze spire at the summit of 203 Meter Hill outside of Port Arthur; the 218-foot stone tower marking the Jan. 5, 1905 meeting place of commander of the Japanese Third Army, General Nogi and the Russian commander of Port Arthur, General Anatolii Stessel'; and the victory bridge at the center of Dairen, named "Nihonbashi" (Japanese bridge) and modeled after the famous landmark in the most bustling area of downtown Tokyo.²⁶

If the Russo-Japanese War marked a milestone for the Japanese nation, it was celebrated, in particular, as an accomplishment for the country's new modern military. Both the Imperial Army and Navy promoted their own symbols of valiant sacrifice and achievement. Commander Hirose Takeo, who had perished in the early effort to blockade Port Arthur, was resurrected in bronze in the Kanda section of Tokyo, enshrined at Hirose shrine in his native Oita prefecture, and celebrated in the tune, "Commander Hirose," included by the Ministry of Education in elementary school songbooks. Major Tachibana, who had fallen in the battle for Liaoyang,

²³ For images of Tokyo's two principal arches, see Fujitani, *Splendid Monarchy*, 128–9. For images of the Shinbashi arch and one in Kumamoto, see Showa no rekishi kankokai, *Ōusetsu Showa no rekishi* (Showa history through pictures), 12 vols. (Tokyo, 1979), I, 96–7.

²⁴ Shimana Masanao, *Nogi "shinwa" to Nisshin, Nichiro* (The Sino- and Russo-Japanese Wars and the "myth" of Nogi) (Tokyo, 2001), 215.

²⁵ Unno Fukuju, *Nisshin, Nichiro senso* (The Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese Wars) (Tokyo, 1992), 203.

²⁶ For images of "Nihonbashi" in Dairen and the spire at 203 Meter Hill, see *ibid.*, 158, 170, respectively. For the 218-foot stone tower in Port Arthur, see Machida, *Senji kokoku zukan*, 150.

was immortalized in bronze at the military preparatory school in Nagoya where he had served as principal and boasted his own song, "Major Tachibana," in the official songbook.²⁷

Among living heroes of the war, none was more celebrated than the victor of Port Arthur, General Nogi and the genius behind the Battle of the Japan Sea, Admiral Togo. Recipients of personalized Imperial Rescripts for their valor, both men played a conspicuous role in the series of military reviews following the war. They would, as well, preside over annual celebrations of Army and Navy Commemoration Day, institutionalized after the war to remember two of the most celebrated battles of 1905, Mukden (March 10) and the Battle of the Japan Sea (May 27). The national stature of these men was confirmed when they accompanied Prince Higashi Fushimi-nomiya to the coronation of Britain's King George V in 1912.

II. *Post Russo-Japanese War Tumult*

The Russo-Japanese War marked the pinnacle of the nation-building effort begun by the founders of Imperial Japan some four decades earlier. In a December 21, 1905 address upon the dissolution of the Japanese combined fleet, Admiral Togo exhorted his countrymen "to advance the outcome of this war to eternity, to sustain the prosperity of the nation ever more."²⁸ But no number of tributes to the war could brace against the seismic shocks of peace. If Japanese subjects cheered the fall of Mukden and the Russian Baltic Fleet, they condemned the meager spoils granted Japan at the Portsmouth Peace Conference. If the Imperial Army in 1905 hailed Japan's new position in Manchuria, it fretted the failure to further expand Japanese continental power following the 1911 Chinese revolution. If Japanese statesmen in 1905 basked in their new authority as prosecutors of a successful war, they winced in 1913 at the first destruction of an oligarchic cabinet by a coalition of political parties. If all heads had turned to the Meiji Emperor as the principal source of Japanese

²⁷ Unno, *Nisshin, Nichiro senso*, 164–6.

²⁸ It is rumored that President Theodore Roosevelt was so impressed by this speech that he had it translated and distributed to American soldiers and sailors. Nomura, *Nihonkai kaisen no shinjitsu*, 197–8.

splendor in 1905, they drooped with the news of the sovereign's death in 1912.

The August 1914 outbreak of war in Europe was initially greeted in Tokyo as "divine aid."²⁹ It might, it was thought, restore the auspicious domestic and international trajectories that had propelled Japan to victory in 1905. By 1919, Japan did win international recognition of new territorial gains in China's Shandong Province and German Micronesia in the South Pacific. But Japanese statesmen fretted about the implosion of Japan's principal national model, Imperial Germany, and feared the harbingers of an entirely new world order. While Woodrow Wilson in 1917 proclaimed a new era of "democracy" and "internationalism," Japanese soldiers, bureaucrats and opinion leaders wondered what the new trend meant for Imperial Japan's heavy emphasis upon military might and bureaucratic rule. "The tidal wave of world thought," declared Prime Minister General Terauchi Masatake in April 1917, "may destroy all order and damage the essence of our National Polity."³⁰ As the contemporary observer C.K. Webster remarked, the Allied victory forced Japan, as a nation, to "reconsider her whole scheme of life."³¹

III. *Celebrating Peace after World War I*

The national reevaluation following World War I assumed a variety of forms. Politically, the destruction of the world's authoritarian regimes (China, Russia, Germany, eventually the Ottoman Empire) and proclamation of a new, democratic age spurred a nascent political party movement. From 1924 to 1932, a succession of party cabinets ruled Japan for the first time in history. In foreign affairs, Tokyo reduced the Imperial Japanese Navy by stipulations of the Washington

²⁹ "Divine aid" was the phrase of elder statesman, Inoue Kaoru. Inoue Kaoru ko denki hensankai, *Segai Inoue ko den* (Biography of the late Lord Inoue), 5 vols. (Tokyo, 1968), V, 321-2.

³⁰ Terauchi Masatake kankei monjo 441-10; "Oshu taisen to kokumin no kakugo," April 1917, in Yamamoto Shiro (ed.), *Terauchi Masatake naikaku kankei shiryō* (Documents relating to the Terauchi Masatake cabinet), 2 vols. (Kyoto, 1985), I, 888.

³¹ C.K. Webster, "Japan at the Cross Roads," *The Peking Leader*, Apr. 19, 1928, 4; from Stanley K. Hornbeck Papers, Box 255, file titled "Japan: Webster, C.U., 'Japan at the Cross Roads,' 1928," Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace.

(1921–2) and London (1930) Naval Conferences, and pared the army by four divisions. In 1922, Japanese imperial reach receded for the first time in a withdrawal of troops from Siberia and Shandong province in China. And administration of Japan's colonies (Korea and Formosa) shifted toward greater political, economic and educational opportunities for colonial subjects under the rubric of “cultural rule” (*bunka seiji*).

Accompanying this new Japanese thrust toward democracy and internationalism was a new national commemoration. In 1922, Japanese League of Nations Association (JLNA) member Honda Masajiro noted that, “Japanese history is a history of combat and slaughter. Weapons are displayed everywhere in shrines and parks.”³² Uncomfortable in a Japan, “suffering great power ridicule as the second Germany,”³³ the JLNA and other groups seized upon world events to fashion a new Japanese tradition. Underscoring its aim to address outstanding issues of peace, the Washington Conference opened on Armistice Day in 1921 with a solemn ceremony at the tomb of the unknown soldier in Arlington, Virginia. On the same day, some 150 peace activists gathered in Tokyo to send their best wishes for successful deliberations at Washington. Having earlier urged several thousand Japanese schools, religious, cultural and commercial institutions to commemorate Armistice Day in some way, the JLNA distributed several thousand peace posters throughout Japan for the occasion.³⁴ “Peace poster” exhibits subsequently lured audiences in Tokyo, Osaka and Kagawa prefectures.³⁵

Although a modest beginning, this marked the start of annual Armistice Day celebrations in Japan through the 1920s. By 1922, the event had become a genuine public celebration. In that year, a marching band performed “familiar songs of peace” (*heiwa no meikyoku*), followed by a series of addresses by Foreign Minister Uchida, Educa-

³² “Nihon kokusai renmei kyokai dainikai sokai kiji” (Proceedings of the second general assembly of the Japanese League of Nations Association), *Kokusai renmei*, II, no. 6 (June 1922), 145.

³³ “Kysen joyaku no kinenbi ni: Hibiya de heiwa undo” (Armistice day as memorial day: peace movement in Hibiya), *Yomiuri shinbun*, Nov. 9, 1922, in Watanabe Katsumasa (comp.), *Shinbun shuroku Taishoshi* (Newspaper compilation of the Taisho era), 15 vols. (Tokyo), X, 417.

³⁴ “Saikin Nihon no heiwa undo” (Japan's recent peace movement), *Kokusai renmei*, I, no. 9 (Dec. 1921), 64.

³⁵ In November 1923, December 1923, and February 1924, respectively. “Nihon kokusai renmei kyokai no katsudo” (Activities of the Japanese League of Nations Association), *Kokusai chishiki*, IV, no. 3 (Mch. 1924), 105.

tion Minister Kamata, president of the JLNA Shibusawa Eiichi and University of Pennsylvania professor Pierson and the release of 250 doves in Hibiya Park (Tokyo). With the onset of evening, a slide show of the European tour of the crown prince (then under way) and the Washington Conference (recently concluded) delighted the crowd.³⁶ As Shibusawa would explain in a 1926 radio address, “peace-loving peoples throughout the world have strengthened their conviction to prevent future war by remembering November 11.”³⁷

It was clear what Shibusawa considered the principal challenge to establishing this new tradition in Japan. “The Russo-Japanese War lasted for 548 days and produced 160,000 combat deaths,” he observed. “In other words, about 300 combat deaths per day. But the World War lasted 1,560 some days and produced more than 10 million combat deaths, destroying about 6,400 young men of promise daily . . . How to prevent war and how to solidify the foundations of peace have, in other words, become critical questions of the day.”³⁸ Conscious of the contradictory function of celebrations of the Russo-Japanese War, Shibusawa labored to transfer that war from its centrality within the national narrative of success to a subordinate place within an international discussion of the destructiveness of war.

IV. *Japan's New Heroes in an Age of Internationalism*

Accompanying the new celebration of Armistice Day in interwar Japan was a new roster of heroes. If empire, war and national construction had benefited Japan's military-bureaucratic elite, the growing momentum for political and diplomatic change raised the stock of Japanese reformers. China specialist and Tokyo University professor Yoshino Sakuzo had stood at the vanguard of liberal reform since the publication of his celebrated appeal for democracy in Japan in the January 1916 issue of the *Central Review* (*Chuo koron*).³⁹ By the

³⁶ Editors, “Heiwa kinenbi no undo” (Movement for a peace memorial day), *Kokusai chishiki*, II, no. 12 (Dec. 1922), 119.

³⁷ Shibusawa, “Heiwa kinenbi ni tsuite” (About armistice day), *Kokusai chishiki*, IX, no. 1 (Jan. 1927), 146.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, 146–7.

³⁹ Yoshino Sakuzo, “Kensei no hongii o toite sono yushu no bi o sumasu no michi o ronzu” (On the essence of constitutional government and its perfection), *Chuo koron*, XXXI, no. 1 (Jan. 1916).

end of the First World War, he had become the principal champion of Japanese adherence to the new world order. "A new year replete with enthusiasm for the war victory!," declared the January 1, 1919 *Yomiuri shinbun*. "Upon whose shoulders does the enthusiasm of this year rest? . . . Especially notable are the activities of Law Professor Yoshino Sakuzo, who formed the Dawn Society (*reimeikai*) with Fukuda Tokuzo to eradicate the obstinate and dangerous antiquated thought (*kyu shiso*)."⁴⁰

As the most prominent international spokesperson for the new world order, Woodrow Wilson had attracted enormous attention in Japan from the April 1917 American declaration of war on Germany. Yoshino Sakuzo remarked in May 1917 that Wilson's ideas would "have an important bearing on the advance of civilization after the war."⁴¹ On the Imperial Diet floor in January 1918, Kenseikai party orator Ozaki Yukio hailed Wilson's aim to "destroy militarist politics like that of Germany and decide matters based upon the popular will."⁴² Not surprisingly, Wilson's death brought a moving expression of sympathy in Japan. In a special issue of the journal of the Japanese League of Nations Association, *Kokusai chishiki*, eleven scholars and members of the Japanese House of Peers offered heartfelt eulogies to him. "[Wilson] attempted to make the ideal of world peace a political reality," noted Wilson friend and sociologist Tsurumi Yusuke. "Our Woodrow Wilson was truly a powerful figure with countless blessings."⁴³

V. *Memories of Meiji as Antidote to Taisho Era Tumult*

Japan's dramatic turn toward democracy and internationalism after the Great War did not go uncontested. The Privy Council only reluctantly acquiesced to universal male suffrage in 1925 to prevent the

⁴⁰ "Tonon ninki otoko" (The most popular men of the year), *Yomiuri shinbun*, Jan. 1, 1919, in *Shinbun shuroku Taishoshi*, VII, 2-3.

⁴¹ Yoshino Sakuzo, "Beikoku sansen no bunmeiteki igi" (Significance for civilization of America's declaration of war), *Chuo koron*, XXXII, no. 5 (May 1917), 95.

⁴² Otsu Junichiro, *Dai Nihon kenseishi* (Constitutional history of greater Japan), 10 vols. (Tokyo, 1970), VII, 163.

⁴³ Tsurumi Yusuke, "Uiruson no omoide" (Remembering Wilson), *Kokusai chishiki*, IV, no. 4 (Apr. 1924), 49.

spread of “dangerous thought.” Imperial Army officers debunked party politicians as “degenerate.” Members of the House of Peers decried the principle of non-intervention and cooperation in China as “weak and soft.” And the Seiyukai Party and Navy General Staff damned the London Naval Treaty of 1930 as a “violation of supreme command.” Indeed, by raising the fortunes of previously disenfranchised groups (political parties, private entrepreneurs, labor, rural tenants), the new national trajectory after 1919 marked a direct political challenge to a wide range of established elites within Japan (members of the civilian and military bureaucracies, peers, Privy Council members).⁴⁴

Japanese enemies of the new world order would use a variety of tools throughout the 1920s to contest the new national trajectory: political challenges to the majority Kenseikai/Minseito Party, talk of chaos in China, promotion of military education in schools, censure of the reform agenda in specialty journals, even assassination. Special effort was also made in the arena of public memory. Just as the champions of reform had begun a new commemoration and celebrated new heroes, opponents of the new national trajectory after 1919 constructed their own pantheon of celebrations and idols.

By far, the most popular site of public memory in the 1920s was the recollection of the vast accomplishments of the Meiji era. Although not a direct challenge to the new liberal turn of the national polity, interwar commemorations of the Meiji era aimed, at the very least, to combat the uncertainty of the new age. As such, they were widely popular. Thus, the November 1920 enshrinement ceremony of the Meiji Emperor at the newly constructed Meiji jingu shrine in Tokyo brought out over 500,000 onlookers.⁴⁵ For the first official public celebration of the Meiji Emperor’s birthday on November 3, 1927, over 850,000 Japanese subjects paid their respects.⁴⁶

⁴⁴ For a detailed exposition of this development, see Frederick R. Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention: Japan in the Great War, 1914–1919* (Cambridge, 1999), 247–56.

⁴⁵ Ito Yukio, *Seito seiji to tenno* (Party politics and the emperor) (Tokyo, 2002), 175.

⁴⁶ Again at Meiji jingu. Ibid., 295.

VI. *Russo-Japanese War Commemorations as
Antidote to the New World Order*

If the Meiji era and its principal symbol, the Meiji Emperor, were the main repositories of Japanese public reflection on the past, the Russo-Japanese War continued to hold special place in the memory of Meiji. And efforts to resurrect the glory of the war against Russia more explicitly aimed to counteract the liberalizing trends of the 1920s.

Members of the Japanese armed forces had chafed under the pacific trends of the postwar world. General Terauchi, as we have seen, had expressed concern about the new popularity of democracy and internationalism as early as 1917. On the eve of the Washington Conference, Navy Commander Mizuno Hironori vigorously criticized the appeal for arms reductions as “a fool’s dream.”⁴⁷ On the day Japan agreed to a 3/5 ratio of capital ships vis-à-vis the United States at the conference, the Naval General Staff’s Kato Hiroharu declared, “our war with the United States began today.”⁴⁸

Nor did the era’s new commemoration and heroes go uncontested. Armistice Day clearly rankled many. That the U.S. had chosen November 11 to open the Washington Conference, grumbled the Japanese military attaché in London, undoubtedly aimed at “emotional propaganda” to place Japan at a disadvantage.⁴⁹ Yoshino Sakuzo was vilified in the Imperial Army as a “treacherous rebel” (*ranshin zokushi*).⁵⁰ And rumors circulated that some Japanese officers were speaking of an imminent US-Japan war and that anti-war and arms reduction posters were disappearing from their postings.⁵¹

Japan’s champions of reform may have had international trends in the tangible form of the Paris peace and Washington naval con-

⁴⁷ Mizuno, “Gunbi teppai mata wa seigen = shukushoron” (On the appeal for an abolition or limitation/reduction of arms), *Kaizo*, Mch. 1921, cited in Seki Shizuo, *Taisho gaiko: jinbutsu ni miru gaiko senryakuron* (Tokyo, 2001), 179.

⁴⁸ Asada Sadao, *Ryo taisenkan no Nichi-Bei kankei* (US-Japan relations in the inter-war period) (Tokyo, 1993), 159.

⁴⁹ Malcolm D. Kennedy, *The Estrangement of Great Britain and Japan, 1917–35* (Berkeley, 1969), 53.

⁵⁰ Yoshino Sakuzo, *Yoshino Sakuzo zenshu* (Complete works of Yoshino Sakuzo), 15 vols. (Tokyo, 1996), XIV, 178 (diary entry of Jan. 19, 1919).

⁵¹ “Henshushitsu kara” (From the editors), *Kokusai chishiki*, III, no. 2 (Feb. 1923), 128.

ferences on their side. But the more immediate national experience of Meiji modernization and the Russo-Japanese War provided a formidable symbolic tool for Japan's conservative elites. While the Japanese League of Nations Association sought to fashion a new commemoration from scratch, the Imperial Army and Navy could tap into important anniversaries of events already well established within the national ethos. Whereas Shibusawa Eiichi still labored in 1925 to impress upon his countrymen the significance of November 11, Japanese generals leapt at the ready opportunity presented by the twentieth anniversary of the Russo-Japanese War.

As we have seen, the Imperial Army had institutionalized celebrations of the Russo-Japanese War with the creation of Army Commemoration Day. But anguished by the pressures of peace upon their budgets and prerogatives, Japanese generals viewed the twentieth anniversary of the Battle of Mukden as a chance to transform a parochial service commemoration into a national celebration. Thus, March 10, 1925 brought a festival worthy of a national holiday. Under the commanding gaze of Prince Suminomiya, 50,000 Japanese school children turned out to witness troops from the Konoe Division perform drills in the parade ground outside the Imperial Palace. Meanwhile, several planes from the army air force performed aerial stunts to highlight Japan's budding aviation prowess. At Yoyogi, near the Meiji shrine, the entire First Division mustered to drill, shout three "banzais" to the emperor and proceed to the shrine to pay their respects. The crown prince consecrated the ceremony by observing a commemorative sumo tournament at Yasukuni Shrine, and by meeting with other members of the imperial court.⁵²

The aim of such grand ceremonies was unmistakable. As Minister of War Ugaki Kazushige observed, "only twenty years have passed since we were impassioned and united in our strength, since our victory brought us acclaim and status as a great power." But, he continued, "the increasingly conspicuous decline of military spirit, degeneration of public morality into languor and frivolity and normalization of weak and deceitful habits is truly alarming . . . it is time for our people to rise."⁵³

⁵² "Kyo rikugun kinenbi" (Today is army commemoration day) *Jiji shinpo*, Mch. 10, 1925, in *Shinbun shuroku taishoshi*, XIII, 111-2.

⁵³ Ugaki Kazushige, "Nichi-Ro sen'eki niju shunen kinenbi ni okeru kankai" (My deep impression on the commemoration of the twentieth anniversary of the Russo-Japanese War), *Kaikosha kiji*, no. 607 (Apr. 1925), 1-2.

Imperial Navy commemorations assumed a new character in the 1920s, as well. Mandated by the Five Power Treaty to scrap ten of their existing capital ships, Japanese admirals devoted Navy Commemoration Day in 1924 to exposing the tangible consequences of arms reductions. On that day, they invited 300 students from the Peers' School, 800 from the First Normal School of Kanagawa Prefecture, 1,000 members of Yokosuka youth organizations and 150 dignitaries to witness the sinking of the warship *Tsugaru* in Yokosuka Harbor.⁵⁴ Although mandated by the Washington Treaties, this was not evidence of ready acceptance of the new world order. Rather, it was the prelude to a more elaborate ceremony marking a new level of reflection upon the splendor of the Russo-Japanese War.

One day after Armistice Day in November 1926, the crown prince (now imperial regent) joined Prince Fushimi Hiroyasu, Prince Takamatsu Nobuhito (the crown prince's brother), Director of the Yokosuka Naval Yard Kato Hiroharu, Naval Minister Takarabe Takeji and others for a solemn dedication at Yokosuka. If the assembly two and a half years earlier had observed the destruction of the *Tsugaru*, on this occasion, the 500-plus crowd of dignitaries gathered to preserve one of Japan's most celebrated battleships.⁵⁵

Like the *Tsugaru*, the *Mikasa* had originally been slated for demolition under the Washington agreements. But as Admiral Togo Heihachiro's flagship at the Battle of the Japan Sea, it was the best known of Japan's pre-dreadnought force and remained a powerful symbol of Japan's rise on the international stage. Two and a half weeks after the *Mikasa* was stripped of all armaments in February 1924, the newly formed Mikasa Preservation Association, headed by honorary chairperson Togo Heihachiro himself, had vowed "to impress upon the Japanese public the historic value (of the battleship) and to cultivate the national spirit (*kokumin seishin*)."⁵⁶ After seventeen months, several hundred thousand yen, and the labor of 6,600 men,

⁵⁴ "Kyo no kinenbi ni iyoioy Tsugaru chinbotsu" (Sinking of the *Tsugaru* for today's commemoration), *Miyako shinbun*, May 27, 1924, in *Shinbun shuoku Taishoshi*, XII, 210.

⁵⁵ "Sessho no miya o mukaete kinenshikiten" (Crown Prince attends commemoration) *Osaka mainichi shinbun*, evening edition, Nov. 13, 1926; reprinted in Taisho nyusu jiten hensan iinkai (ed.), *Taisho nyusu jiten*, 8 vols. (Tokyo, 1989), VII, 683.

⁵⁶ Ozaki Shuzei, *Seisho Togo to reikan Mikasa* (The holy general Togo and sacred ship Mikasa) (Tokyo, 1935), 100–101.

the ship was anchored, in concrete, in a permanent docking in what was named “Mikasa Park.” For the dedication ceremony, Admiral Togo led the crown prince on a tour of the new memorial, then posed for photographs in front of the *Mikasa*’s forward guns.

Following a rendition of the national anthem dedicated to the emperor, “kimigayo,” by a naval band, the assembly listened to brief remarks by Kato, Takarabe, Togo, and the chairman of the Mikasa Preservation Association, Sakatani Yoshiro. Togo described the *Mikasa*’s accomplishments as “the greatest glory (*ichidai kosai*) of the history of our Navy.” “And the unanimous support, at home and abroad, that has culminated in the preservation (of the Mikasa) will display its gallant figure in perpetuity, enhance the prestige of the Empire (*kokoku*) and convey the achievements of our patriots and their loyal spirits.”⁵⁷ Naval Minister Takarabe led the crowd at the subsequent banquet in three “banzais” for the emperor, followed by three more for the *Mikasa* led by Kato Hiroharu. Fireworks concluded the spectacle on the Shirahama coast.⁵⁸ The effect of this commemoration was real. According to the Finance Ministry’s Shimazaki Choji, “following the memorialization of 1926, the annual Navy Commemoration Day on May 27 became particularly eventful, enticing a continuous wave of ordinary visitors.”⁵⁹

VII. Russo-Japanese War Heroes as Antidote to the New World Order

If Army and Navy Commemoration Days thus assumed new significance in interwar Japan, so too did the heroes of the Russo-Japanese War. The war, as we have seen, had elevated the commanders of Japan’s principal ground and maritime campaigns to national celebrities. The presence of Admiral Togo and General Nogi bequeathed an authority to public events second only to that of the emperor.

⁵⁷ “Sessho no miya o mukaete kinenshikiten,” in *Taisho nyusu jiten*, VII, 683.

⁵⁸ Account of the ceremony based on *ibid.*, and “Hare no Mikasa kaikanshiki” (Commemorative opening of the Battleship Mikasa on a clear day) *Hochi shinbun*, Nov. 13, 1926, reprinted in *Shinbun shuroku Taishoshi*, XIV, 401; and “Fukyu ni nokoru, sensho no kinen Mikasakan” (The victorious memorial Battleship Mikasa will remain for eternity), *Yokohama boeki shinpo*, Nov. 13, 1926, 3.

⁵⁹ Shimazaki played an important role in the rehabilitation of the Mikasa memorial after it was disarmed again following the Second World War. Shimazaki Choji, “Mikasa no hozon shori ni tsuite” (On the preservation of the Mikasa), Shimazaki choji monjo, Yokosuka City Library archives.

Their ties to the emperor and state, moreover, were secured through postwar positions intimately tied to the imperial court: Nogi as president of the Peers' School from 1907, Togo as head of education for the crown prince from 1914 to 1921.

General Nogi secured his image as absolutely loyal subject when he and his wife committed ritual suicide following the Emperor Meiji's death.⁶⁰ And with the demise of both the emperor and General Nogi, Togo came to symbolize the ultimate living spirit of the Meiji era. Throughout the 1920s, he played a central role not only at such important naval celebrations as the consecration of the battleship *Mikasa*, but at pivotal national commemorations such as the enshrinement of the Meiji Emperor in 1920.

The rise of Togo's image throughout the 1920s and 1930s bordered upon deification. Serving as Togo's chief secretary during the latter's service to the crown prince, Rear Admiral Ogasawara Naganari inaugurated the admiral's lionization with a larger-than-life biography. Rather than highlight the long process of trial and error leading to the famous 45-minute Battle of the Japan Sea, for example, the 1921 *Biography of Fleet Admiral Togo* described the brilliant T-formation maneuver that had decimated the Russian Baltic Fleet as a spur-of-the-moment stroke of genius by Togo.⁶¹

Togo's stature only expanded with time. On Armistice Day in 1926, one day before the commemoration of the Mikasa Memorial, the admiral received the highest state honor, the Imperial Order of the Chrysanthemum, from the emperor. His death was marked by an even more monumental biography. The 1935 *Fleet Admiral Togo of the World* measured one foot in length, two inches in depth and was prefaced by twenty-three color paintings by the most celebrated contemporary artists and the calligraphy of 72 of Japan's most renowned soldiers and statesmen, brushed in Togo's honor.⁶²

With each rise in status, Togo became an ever more critical pillar of the growing resistance within Japan to the new world order. Kato Tomosaburo, who had served as Togo's chief of staff during the Russo-Japanese War and had obtained the rank of admiral in

⁶⁰ As Ito Yukio notes, Japanese public sanction of this act was symbolized by the 100,000 mourners who turned out for Nogi's funeral. Ito, *Seito seiji to tenno*, 29.

⁶¹ Nomura, *Nihonkai kaisen no shinjitsu*, 202–4.

⁶² Togo gensui hensankai (ed.), *Sekai Togo gensui* (Fleet Admiral Togo of the world) (Tokyo, 1935).

1915, had, in contrast to Togo, sounded a voice of moderation within the Imperial Navy after 1905.⁶³ With Kato's death in 1923, however, came a lifting of restraints upon the aggressive fleet faction represented by Togo.

Togo served the fleet faction well. As chair of the naval council in 1930, he presided over an official naval objection to the London Naval Conference treaties, which extended the Washington Conference naval limits. And his public references to the sacrifices of the Russo-Japanese War increasingly shrouded hopes for peace with an air of irresponsibility. "The unprecedented victory obtained at the Battle of the Japan Sea is already twenty-five years old," he told a national radio audience on the occasion of a special naval exhibit in 1930. "When I reflect upon the fallen heroes of this battle and upon the large number of our battle comrades ever since, I cannot help but feel sympathy. These heroes, who continue to protect our indestructible imperial house, no doubt see the popularity of this exhibit and are weeping at the zeal of you, our countrymen, and are increasingly feeling the glory of their sacrifice."⁶⁴

VIII. *Russo-Japanese War as Prelude to Future War*

If commemorations of the Russo-Japanese War and its heroes increasingly contested the trend toward democracy and internationalism in interwar Japan, by 1930, references to the war, particularly within the Imperial Army, assumed the character of a preparation for renewed conflict. The Military Reservist Association released a special issue of its journal, *Kaikosha kiji*, for the twenty-fifth observance of Army Commemoration Day in March 1930. Included were reminiscences of those who had participated in the Battle of Mukden and the important contemporary lessons of that engagement.

For those who did not appreciate the new national trajectory after 1919, the change of decade appeared to bring no relief. "The result of the long-lasting and overripe peace culture" since the end of the war, declared General Machida Keiu, "is a wide-spread dallying,

⁶³ Most critically, he had served as Japanese plenipotentiary to the Washington Conference.

⁶⁴ Togo gensui hensankai (ed.), *Sekai Togo gensui*, 192-3.

extravagance and weakness. The spirit of frugality, courage and patriotic service is gradually being extinguished.”⁶⁵ For Machida, who had served in the general staff of the Fourth Army in 1904, the most important lesson of the war against Russia lay in the fundamental source of Japanese success. “The principal reason for our military victory,” he noted, “lies in the opportune moment, the justice of our cause and the harmony of our people (*hito no wa*). Russia did not at all have this.”⁶⁶

Ono Minobu had served as aide-de-camp to the commander of Japan’s Manchuria forces, Oyama Iwao. For him, the critical lesson of the battle with Russia was that “war is not won in wartime. The contest is already decided in peacetime, on the organization of military discipline, basic policy of strategic research, and philosophy of training. To postpone military preparation in the conviction that war will not break out for some time is already sowing the seeds for failure in the next war.”⁶⁷

If Machida lamented the decline of patriotic duty and Ono appealed for military preparedness in time of peace, Fukuda Masataro, a member of the First Army general staff during the war, stressed the military’s obligation to sway a reluctant public toward an inevitable military conflict. “At the time,” General Fukuda noted of the lead-up to the 1904 engagement, “public opinion was 70/30 against going to war. Politicians naturally try to avoid war, so they were wholly against it. But we argued that we must fight in response to such national humiliation. In a time of crisis, it is usual that soldiers are the first to act, followed by the people, then the politicians . . . For a year before the war, we made strenuous efforts, night and day, to realize our objective.”⁶⁸

⁶⁵ Machida Keiu, “Dai-yon gun” (The fourth army), *Kaikosha kijō*, no. 666 (Mch., 1930), 62.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁶⁷ Ono Minobu, “Manshu soshireibu yori mitaru hotensen” (The Battle of Mukden from the perspective of Manchurian army headquarters), *Kaikosha kijō*, no. 666 (Mch., 1930), 28.

⁶⁸ Fukuda Masataro, “Nichi-Ro kaisen ni itaru made” (The road to the Russo-Japanese War), *Kaikosha kijō*, no. 666 (Mch., 1930), 13.

IX. *Russo-Japanese War as Reference Point, 1931–1945*

Several months after Fukuda's talk of leading the nation to war, Japanese troops from the Kwantung Army sparked an explosion along the South Manchuria Railway. Contrary to the expectations of the perpetrators, the Manchurian Incident did not replicate the quick victories of the Sino- and Russo-Japanese Wars. Rather, September 18, 1931 marked the start of fourteen years of conflict against China and ultimately the United States that would end in the destruction of Imperial Japan. Memories of the Russo-Japanese War continued, nonetheless, to sustain Japanese faith in ultimate victory.

If commemorating the war against Russia had, in the 1920s, challenged the increasing centrality of peace in Japanese national life, in the 1930s, it championed unity in time of national crisis. As in the earlier decade, Russo-Japanese War commemorations centered around the Army and Navy Commemoration Days, now celebrated as national holidays and marking increasingly elaborate military displays and expressions of resolve.⁶⁹ "The word national crisis (*kokunan*) is frequently used of late," declared an official Army pamphlet published for the 28th commemoration of Army Day in 1933. "Faced with the characters 'national crisis,' today's public does not seem to have a real sense of such crisis. But the war of Meiji 37/8 was a national crisis for Japan in the true sense of the word . . . Japan resolved this unprecedented national crisis through sheer unity of spirit." It was a battle waged through "complete devotion of national strength."⁷⁰ Borrowing a page from the peace advocates of the 1920s, the Ministry of War embellished each Army Commemoration Day in the 1930s with a colorful series of paintings, converted to posters, of army activity in Manchuria.⁷¹

Befitting the long history of inter-service rivalry in Japan, commemorations of the Russo-Japanese War, like grand strategy itself, became in the 1930s an open arena for competition between the

⁶⁹ See Takahashi Bonsen (ed.), *Nihon nenju gyoji kowa* (Lectures on Japan's annual festivals) (Tokyo, 1939), 126–8, 239–47.

⁷⁰ Rikugunsho, *Nichi-Ro sengo niju hachinen Manmo wa heiwa no kensetsu e* (Twenty-eighth anniversary of the Russo-Japanese War: toward the construction of a peaceful Manchuria and Mongolia) (Tokyo, 1933), 2–5; Saito Makoto monjo 190–72, reel 240, National Diet Library, Tokyo.

⁷¹ Several of these posters may be found in the JA series of the Hoover Institution Poster Collection, Hoover Institution on War, Revolution and Peace, Stanford, CA.

Imperial Army and Navy. The history of the Russo-Japanese War provided an ideal context within which Japanese generals could publicize the renewed advance of Japanese troops in Manchuria after 1931. Anxious that another continental drive would relegate the navy to the sidelines, Japanese admirals looked to the annual celebrations of May 27, in part, to accent their own centrality in Japanese national defense. "Today is the navy's commemoration of the Russo-Japanese War," declared the Navy Ministry in 1933. "The 'destiny of the Empire' (*kokoku kohai*) was, in fact, decided with this one battle (of the Japan Sea)." It was the navy, in other words, that had played the decisive role in the conflict. "How were we able to crush Russia's will to fight and bring about peace? The ground forces of both powers in Manchuria stood at a standoff. To break the balance of power was not easy. We were able to do so because both powers looked for a solution on the sea."⁷²

Conclusion

Sojourning in Europe from 1936 to 1938, Japanese historian Oka Yoshitake was struck by the "indescribable face of sorrow" of a gentleman paying respects to the tomb of the unknown soldier at the *Arc de Triomphe* in Paris. Almost twenty years had passed since the end of the "war to end all wars." "Does the Great War," Oka observed, "continue, nonetheless, to carve such deep wounds in men's hearts?" He could not help but sense "a world of difference between the feelings of Europeans and Japanese toward the Great War—no, toward war itself."⁷³

To Oka, the key to the difference in sensibility toward war lay in the contrast in styles of commemoration. A visit to the Imperial War Museum in London revealed a "realistic" rendering of the suffering of war. The grounds of the museum were, moreover, blanketed simply with grass and flowers. Japan's principal monument to war, the Yasukuni Shrine, by contrast, promoted "heroic and stirring" (*yuso*

⁷² Kaigunsho, *Nichi-Ro senso to teikoku kaigun* (The Russo-Japanese War and the Imperial Navy) (Tokyo, 1933), 1; Saito Makoto monjo 196–22, reel 254, National Diet Library, Tokyo.

⁷³ Mitani Taichiro, *Kindai Nihon no senso to seiji* (War and politics in modern Japan) (Tokyo, 1997), 355.

kappatsu) visions of battle and the “pleasure” (*kaikan*) of victory, with no reference to war’s miseries. And upon the grounds of the shrine, Oka observed, was spread an array of armaments.⁷⁴

The principal contrast between Japanese and European sensibilities toward war in the 1930s, no doubt, lay in a dramatic difference in war experience. Nine million deaths between 1914 and 1918 seriously muted the nostalgia in Europe for earlier military victories. At less than 2,000, Japanese deaths in the First World War were, by contrast, exceptionally light.

Combat deaths during the Russo-Japanese War had surpassed 60,000 Japanese soldiers. But the hardships of 1904/5 had been amply compensated by the dramatic rise in Japanese international standing. Despite efforts in the 1920s by the Japanese League of Nations Association to appeal to the World War I record of suffering in Europe, public monuments and references in classroom texts to the accomplishments of the Russo-Japanese War remained.⁷⁵ And they were actively fostered by those for whom a new national respect for peace only meant a serious loss of domestic political power.

Occupation authorities in 1945 rightly faulted references to the Russo-Japanese War in Japanese textbooks. By the 1930s, after all, though Japan no longer celebrated Armistice Day, all school-aged children knew of Admiral Togo, the Mikasa, and the pivotal importance of the Battle of the Japan Sea.⁷⁶ And the memory of Admiral Togo’s spectacular decimation of the Russian Baltic Fleet would play a pivotal role in stoking the fires for war against an enemy that Japanese commanders knew they could not defeat.

⁷⁴ Ibid., 355–6.

⁷⁵ The Medievalist Ienaga Saburo vividly recalls the centrality of Russo-Japanese War stories in his elementary school textbooks in the 1920s. Saburo Ienaga, *The Pacific War, 1931–1945* (New York, 1978), 25–7.

⁷⁶ According to Nakamura Koi, member of the Port Affairs Bureau in the Navy Ministry. “Kinenkan ‘Mikasa’ kaikodan (I)” (Remembrance of the commemorative battleship Mikasa) *Nanshin shinbun*, Nov. 1960, courtesy of Yokosuka City Library Archives. Finance Ministry official Shimazaki Choji also speaks of hearing of the Mikasa and its glorious history as a youth. Shimazaki, “Kyu gunkan Mikasa no omoide” (Recollection of the old battleship Mikasa), 6, in Shimazaki Choji bunsho, “Mikasa no hozon shori ni tsuite.” Yokosuka City Library Archives.

CHAPTER TWENTY-SEVEN

TSUSHIMA'S ECHOES: ASIAN DEFEAT AND TSARIST FOREIGN POLICY

David McDonald

The battle of Tsushima in May 1905 put paid to any prospects for victory in what many, like V.K. Plehve, had once anticipated as a short victorious war. Faced with military catastrophe in the Far East and a burgeoning revolution within the empire, Nicholas II conceded to his adversaries at home and abroad with the capitulations of Portsmouth and the October Manifesto. Both acts signaled a bitter end to policies pursued by the emperor over the advice of many of his own appointed officials, particularly in the Far East.¹

The emperor's accessions to Japanese claims in the Far East and to demands for a semi-constitutional regime in Russia also inaugurated a period of enduring crisis for the autocracy in all areas of its activity. In addition to rebuilding land and sea forces shattered by defeat and demoralization, the imperial government had also to restore order within the empire, having conceded unprecedented prerogatives—including civil rights and an elective legislature—to a rebellious population. In foreign policy, the mere prospect of external conflict triggered fears of renewed domestic unrest, with important consequences for Russia's diplomacy, including the 1907 entente with age-old adversary Great Britain, as well an unaccustomed passivity following the Dual Monarchy's annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina in 1908 and the crises engendered by the Balkan Wars of 1912 and 1913. Russian policy in response to the mounting Balkan crisis demonstrated decisively the degree to which officials subordinated the empire's foreign interest to the project of domestic reform, especially since it concerned an area of particular interest to Russian officials, but also to the newly assertive "public opinion" composed of the

¹ David MacLaren McDonald, *United Government and Foreign Policy in Russia, 1900–1914* (Cambridge, MA, 1992), chapters 2–4.

educated elites—noble and intelligentsia—that had driven the old “liberation movement,” who now confronted the government in the Duma and a vocal press. These circles saw suggestive parallels between their own struggles for a variously imagined Russian “nation” and those of their fellow Slavs in the Balkan states. Throughout official and unofficial spheres, Mukden and Tsushima became powerful symbols, associating foreign defeat with the autocracy’s viability as a political order.

In balancing the demands of domestic reconstruction with the protection of Russian international interests in a period of rising tensions, imperial officials sought through institutional reform—most notably the “unification” of the Council of Ministers—to forestall a repeat of the circumstances they recalled as having brought about the disasters of 1905. More important, as the risk of foreign complications increased, memories of 1905 drove ministers not charged with foreign policy-making to demand a role in that process for the preservation of peace and the pursuit of domestic stability. As conservative critics observed, these efforts amounted to an attempt to limit the autocrat from whom officials’ authority derived. After the death in 1911 of Petr Stolypin, “united government’s” most successful proponent, Russia’s rulers faced a series of mounting foreign crises, while Nicholas II, whom many faulted for the Asian defeat, became more active. These developments served to invert the lessons of defeat, helping create the conviction among imperial policy-makers by early 1914 that, in order to avoid domestic unrest, the imperial government had to defend Serbia against Austrian aggression. Thus, although the Russo-Japanese War and the revolution it quickened often occur as mere preludes to the Great War and the revolutions of 1917, one cannot adequately account for the demise of the Romanov order without reference to the Asian conflict and the consequences it wrought.

The Portsmouth peace and the October Manifesto marked Nicholas’s withdrawal, with infrequent exceptions, from active politics, as his officials dealt with the ongoing revolutionary threat. His retreat opened a field for initiative from many of those same officials who had lived through the run-up to the war, which they associated variously with the rise of “Bezobrazov & Co.” or general disarray in the imperial government. Most significant, Sergei Witte, the once-ascendant finance minister who had fallen in August 1903, now found himself the

“coming man.”² Restored to authority by Nicholas’s necessity, Witte took a leading part in all the measures that framed the post-1905 order. He led the Russian delegation at the peace talks, negotiated emergency loans in France *en route*, and helped shape the governmental reforms that responded to the October Manifesto, which he succeeded in urging on Nicholas.

During the months that followed Witte’s return and even after his forced departure from government in April 1906, a broad consensus coalesced among senior state officials about the lessons to be drawn from the war, its origins and its apparent consequences for Russia’s domestic and foreign policies. The first major element in this consensus concerned the relationship between the besieged Emperor and his ministers, an issue that had preoccupied many imperial officials in the years after 1902, as Nicholas had fostered division among some of his ministers—notably Witte and Plehve—while also working around his senior officials in favor of consulting on policy matters with such “unofficial” advisors as “Bezobrazov & Co.”³

Throughout 1905, governmental committees had discussed the necessity of properly coordinating ministerial activity, to avoid the disunity that had abetted the rise of domestic unrest.⁴ These discussions received a new impetus on August 19, 1905—the same day that Nicholas announced his decision to summon an elective, consultative Duma—in the form of a memorandum urging the creation of a “uniform ministry or, as it is accepted to call it in the language of political doctrines, a Cabinet.”⁵ This body would function under a chairman who would direct domestic policy and who could also “influence the selection of other ministers,” although the emperor would make the actual appointments. Notably, the author deplored the fragmentation among Russia’s ministries, remarking that the recent past offered many examples of interministerial conflict. Comparing the Russian state’s current situation with that confronting

² Haus-, Hof- und Staatsarchiv [HHSA], Politisches Amt [PA] X, 126/1, Bericht 59-B, Aehrenthal to Goluchowski, October 8/21, 1905, 216–18.

³ The distinction of “unofficial” from “official” [*neshtatnyi / shtatnyi*] advisors comes from the diary of Minister of War General A.N. Kuropatkin, *Dnevnik A.N. Kuropatkina*, Nizhnii Novgorod, 1923, 11–12, entry for November 29, 1902. For a detailed discussion of these issues, see McDonald, *United Government*, chapters 2, 3.

⁴ McDonald, *United Government*, chapter 4.

⁵ RGIA, f. 1544, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 3–9.

the French monarchy when it summoned the *Etats-Généraux* in 1789, the memorandum implied that the autocracy faced catastrophe at the hands of its opponents unless the government could present a unified front to the organized forces of opposition it would face in the Duma.

This memorandum guided reform discussions in the special conference chaired by Senator Dmitrii Solskii during late summer. Participants seldom referred directly to events in the Far East, echoing rather the August memorandum's implicit critique of Nicholas's style of rule and emphasizing the perils facing the government in dealing with the projected Duma. Although the conferees agreed in general terms on the necessity of a "homogeneous ministry,"⁶ the reform did not take concrete shape until Witte had returned from abroad.

Witte's arrival lent new focus to the Solskii conference debates, while his proposals demonstrated the potent link binding officials' memory of the war's origins and consensus about the structure of the post-revolutionary regime. Witte dwelt particularly on the prerogatives to be accorded the chairman of the reformed ministerial council. He insisted on unprecedented authority for the first minister, including: the right to act as an exclusive intermediary between the ruler and his ministers; the right to read all ministerial reports to the emperor; and the right to attend all audiences involving individual ministers. In early October, Witte focused his efforts by introducing into discussion a Prussian law of 1852, which had created a "minister-president" enjoying many of the same prerogatives Witte sought for the new Russian "prime minister."⁷ Witte's insistence on an exclusive intermediary role for the first minister reflected his well-known ambition, but it also represented an institutional means to forestall a repetition of the circumstances that had led to his downfall, when Nicholas had circumvented his minister of finances in Far Eastern matters through recourse to such outsiders as the Bezobrazov group and Plehve.

The conference's majority supported most of Witte's proposals on the cabinet, although many hesitated to equip the chair with the prerogatives he demanded. Some were concerned about his ambition, which had alienated so many of his colleagues—and his impe-

⁶ Aehrenthal to Goluchowski, HHSA PA X, 126/1, August 12/25, 447.

⁷ RGIA f. 1544, op. 1, d. 5, ll. 270–271. For a recent account, see B.V. Anan'ich and R. Sh. Ganelin, *Ser'gei Iul'evich Witte i ego vremia* (SPB, 1999), 209–10.

rial master—before the revolution.⁸ Others saw in his proposals the makings of a “vizierate” that would usurp the powers consigned by God or history to the autocrat himself.⁹ These reservations forced Witte to accept a diluted version of the office, which would have loosely-defined authority over individual ministers, who would continue to enjoy direct access to the emperor.¹⁰

Two days after promulgating the October Manifesto—also the product of notable pressure from Witte—Nicholas decreed the creation of a “united” Council of Ministers, with Witte at its head. The reformed Council was charged with the “direction and unification” of ministerial-level officials in legislation and administration. Likewise, individual ministers were to inform the Council Chairman on current developments in their departments and on all reports to the emperor addressing questions of “general significance.”¹¹

Like so many other features of the post-1905 political structure, the “unified” Council of Ministers and its operations reflected the necessary ambiguities that sprang from its inception at a time of political crisis. In addition, seeking a defense of state prerogative vis-à-vis the future legislature, the architects of the new institution also sought to derive their prerogatives from the “sovereign” emperor. In doing so, they ensured the continuing importance of personal-political relations between the ruler and his prime minister, however much they wished to narrow the ambit of the emperor’s use of that power. Witte found this out to his own chagrin in April 1906, when Nicholas accepted his peremptory offer of resignation, following six-odd months during which the ruler had undercut his Chairman’s authority over his ministerial colleagues.¹²

Although neither the August 19 memorandum nor the Solskii conference had addressed questions of foreign policy-making, over the first three years of the Council’s existence its chairmen claimed a

⁸ For two intimate views of these discussions, see “Dnevnik Polovtseva,” *Krasnyi arkhiv* [KA], no. 4 (1923), 65–76, which, in multiple entries, recounts conference meetings from mid-September until early October; and Aehrenthal’s remarkably well-informed reports to Goluchowski, HHSA, PA X, 126/1, Bericht 59–B, October 8/21, 1905, 216–18 and Bericht 59–C, October 8/21, 1905, 224–26.

⁹ “Dnevnik Polovtseva,” KA, no. 4, 73, entry for Oct. 4, and 76, entry for Oct. 12.

¹⁰ Ibid., 70, entry for Sept. 28.

¹¹ “O Sovete ministrov,” *Svod uchrezhdenii gosudarstvennykh* (SPB, 1903), Bk 2, 1–3.

¹² See, for example, S. Iu. Vitte, *Vospominaniia*, 3 vols. (M., 1960), vol. II, 64, 70, 263. On the circumstances of his resignation, see 270–72.

role in this arena. Thus, within days of assuming his new post, Witte inserted himself in the efforts of Foreign Minister Count Vladimir Lamsdorf to undo the ill-advised Björkö agreement that Nicholas had concluded with Wilhelm II in August, invoking his position as Council chair as the basis for his authority to do so.¹³ Witte's eventual successor Petr Stolypin—appointed to the joint posts of Council chair and Minister of Internal Affairs in summer 1906—insisted on a determinative role for the Council and its chair in the making of foreign policy.

Stolypin founded this claim on another of the lessons drawn from the war and revolution of 1905 by senior officials, as well as by the self-styled “public” (*obshchestvo*), that relatively small group of Duma deputies, *intelligenty*, party members and commentators mainly concentrated in Russia's capitals. If, public opinion mattered little in imperial discussions of foreign policy, before 1905, it now played a more important, if ill-defined role, especially since Stolypin sought the support of a viable Duma majority for his program of internal reforms.¹⁴ After 1905, educated Russians in and out of government agreed that the revolution had sprung in large part from the war and defeat in the Far East. In addition, for many commentators the debacle in Asia served as a trenchant symbol of the autocracy's decadence, much as the famine of the 1890s had helped spur the wave of *zemstvo* oppositionism that had culminated in 1904–1905. In both official and “public” Russia, the war and the revolution put into play the very viability of the autocratic order itself.

The linkage between war and revolution ran along several lines in non-governmental circles. Most immediately, for centrist and liberal critics the defeats in the Far East exemplified the state's inability to perform its fundamental duty, the protection of Russian foreign interests and its honor.¹⁵ This opinion surfaced again after the Russian government's delayed recognition in 1909 of the Dual Monarchy's annexation of Bosnia and Herzegovina, an act one Octobrist paper characterized as a “new humiliation”¹⁶ This critique, however, also

¹³ Ibid., I, 394.

¹⁴ Kaspar Ferenczi, *Aussenpolitik und Öffentlichkeit in Russland 1906–1912* (Husum, 1982) and I.V. Bestuzhev, *Bor'ba po voprosam vneshnei politiki v Rossii, 1906–1910 g.g.* (M., 1964) are still the two best treatments of this topic.

¹⁵ See, for example, V.M. Gessen's commentaries, gathered later in *Na Rubezhe* (SPB, 1906), 288–91, 205–300.

¹⁶ *Golos Moskvy*, March 17/30, 1909, cited in Geoffrey Hosking, *The Russian Constitutional Experiment: Government and Duma, 1907–1914* (Cambridge, 1973), 232–33.

advanced a set of claims on the part of liberal politicians, themselves moored in a rich and highly complex ideology they used to interpret and assess Russia's position and destiny.

Briefly, those on the liberal left and in the center fractions of the post-1905 order posed as the leading stratum of an emergent Russian "nation"—conceived in varying terms ethnically, but always as a civic and civil entity—whose interests a legitimate state power ought to protect and represent.¹⁷ In this view, the autocracy represented an isolated, self-interested and outmoded form of state organization, constitutionally incapable of defending Russia's interests or the welfare of its subjects, as the famine, the war and the revolution had all abundantly demonstrated. To regain its proper place as a major power, Russia had to rebuild and modernize its armed forces—a view advanced most forcefully in the Duma by such figures as Octobrist leader Aleksandr Guchkov—and to incorporate in its definition of national interest the aspirations of the Russian electorate.¹⁸ This latter view inspired attempts to raise foreign policy questions in that chamber—despite the proscription contained in the Fundamental Laws of 1906; it also found expression in the writings of such commentators as Petr Struve, who called for the creation of a state that truly drew on the strength and loyalty of the nation as a *sine qua non* for the pursuit of Russian's strategic interests in the Black Sea basin.¹⁹ Each turn in the empire's foreign policy—most notably the Bosnian episode and the Balkan wars of 1912–1913—provoked furious discussion in the liberal press, which dwelt on the recent Asian failures. Thus, when the Russian government failed to promote Serbian claims to an Adriatic port in late 1912, newspapers wrote of the outcome as "worse than Tsushima" and a "diplomatic Mukden."²⁰

For their part, conservatives and tsarist officials found more troubling lessons in the simultaneous unfolding of war and revolution in

¹⁷ For a good example, see P.B. Struve, *Patristika: politika, kul'tura, religiia, sotsializm. Sbornik stat'ei za piat' let (1905–1910)* (SPB, 1911).

¹⁸ V.P. Riabushinskii (ed.), *Velikaia Rossia: sbornik statei po voennym i obshchestvennym voprosam*, 2 vols. (M., 1910–1911). Particularly, G.N. Trubetskoi, "Nekotorye itogi russkoi vneshnei politiki," II, 323.

¹⁹ E.g. Struve, "Velikaia Rossia," *Russkaia mysl'*, January 1908. See also Bestuzhev's citations from P.N. Miliukov's statements in the Duma during discussion of the Bosnian crisis in December 1908, Bestuzhev, *Bor'ba*, 268–69.

²⁰ French consular press reports cited in McDonald, *United Government*, 189.

1904–1905.²¹ Conservative supporters of the autocracy and most imperial officials, whatever their views on the recent reforms, drew close connections between the possibility of war abroad and the recrudescence of revolution at home—a script they had seen play out so recently. Thus, the very idea of conflict during the Bosnian crisis led one conservative diarist to fret, “God grant there be no war, there would be another revolution.”²² One-time Minister of Internal Affairs and State Council member Petr Durnovo articulated these fears most concretely in the famous memorandum he submitted to Nicholas and circulated among senior statesmen in early 1914.²³ Urging Nicholas to reorient Russia’s diplomatic ties from the Triple Entente to the monarchies of central Europe, Durnovo warned that a conflict pitting Russia against Germany in support of the Entente would result in a popular revolution that would bring down the monarchy and the anti-monarchical intelligentsia in turn. His apprehensions that another war could bring about an even more sweeping upheaval owed as much to his experience of 1905 as to his prophetic gifts.

The association between foreign engagement and internal unrest persisted most tellingly in the highest councils of the imperial government—specifically within the “unified” Council of Ministers under Petr Stolypin and Vladimir Kokovtsov, the chairman after Stolypin’s assassination in September 1911. In high-level meetings on international questions, Stolypin emphasized repeatedly and categorically that Russia had to avoid any possibility of foreign complications until the restoration of domestic stability—only then could it resume its place as a Great Power. Kokovtsov adhered to the same view, often over the wishes of Foreign Minister Sergei Sazonov, even as the Balkans lapsed into ferment and war during his tenure as Council chairman.²⁴

Such views made Stolypin a strong supporter of the *entente* with the United Kingdom in 1907, since “our internal situation does not

²¹ Dominic Lieven, “Pro-Germans and Russian Foreign Policy, 1890–1914,” *International History Review*, II, no. 1 (1980), 34–54.

²² A.V. Bogdanovich, *Tri poslednikh samoderzhitsa* (M-L, 1924), 460, entry for March 13/26 1909.

²³ Lieven, “Pro-Germans.” David McDonald, “The Durnovo Memorandum in Context: Official Conservatism and the Crisis of Autocracy,” *Jahrbücher für Geschichte Osteuropas*, XLIV (1996), 481–502.

²⁴ McDonald, *United Government*, chapter 8.

allow us to conduct an aggressive foreign policy.”²⁵ At a special conference in January 1908—called to discuss Russia’s response to an Austrian railway project in the Balkans—Stolypin spoke even more forcefully after hearing Foreign Minister A.P. Izvolskii call for a strong Russian response. Confessing to a “panicked terror” that Izvolskii had not apprised the rest of the government of ongoing developments, Stolypin stated that the Council should discuss all significant political matters, since “the defeat in the Far East had been provoked in part by the fact that there had been no unity among state actors.” He then warned that “a new mobilization in Russia would lend strength to the revolution out of which we are just beginning to emerge.” Under such conditions, Russia could not take any initiatives in international affairs. Russia could “speak its former language” only after the government had fully pacified the country. Until then, “any policy other than a purely defensive one . . . would bring danger for the Dynasty.”²⁶

The Bosnian crisis in the autumn and winter of 1908–1909 brought Stolypin and the Council face-to-face with the risk of the complications he had sought to avoid. It also brought the first serious challenge to his interpretation of “united government” as the central instance of policy-making. Throughout the negotiations with Austrian Foreign Minister Alois Count Lexa von Aehrenthal that had resulted in Dual Monarchy’s annexation of the Turkish provinces, Izvolskii had kept Nicholas *au courant* of developments, but only informed Stolypin and the Council of Ministers at the last minute. Aehrenthal’s announcement of the annexation in mid-October, in a statement that also noted Russia’s support, immediately created a strong reaction in St. Petersburg.²⁷

Izvolskii’s actions reflected an important and enduring disagreement within the government itself, one that Stolypin and later Kokovtsov sought to control for the sake of Russia’s domestic peace. Throughout the post-1905 period, both ministers of foreign affairs—Izvolskii and his successor Sazonov—sought a more active course for Russian policy only to find these desires stymied by their Council colleagues’ insistence on adherence to a less assertive stance. Thus,

²⁵ S. Pashukanis (ed.), “K istorii anglo-russkogo soglashiia 1907 g.,” *KA*, no. 69–70 (1935), 32.

²⁶ M. Pokrovskii (ed.), “Tri soveshcheniia,” *Vestnik NKID*, 1 (1919), 24.

²⁷ Bestuzhev, *Bor’ba*, 221–31.

if Stolypin approved the stabilizing effects of the entente with Great Britain, Izvolskii saw the agreement as a way of untying his hands in Balkan matters²⁸—a view Stolypin sharply refuted in January 1908. Sazonov demonstrated a similar desire for Russian assertiveness beginning in late 1912, only to meet the opposition of his Council chairman Kokovtsov, until the latter's dismissal in January 1914.

This difference arose, most likely, from several sources. Before the Bosnian crisis, these included Izvolskii's personal ambition,²⁹ the cloistered and personalized circumstances involved in international diplomacy itself—particularly the personal animus between Izvolskii and Aehrenthal, his Austrian counterpart³⁰—and also the traditional independence the ministry of foreign affairs had enjoyed in charting the empire's diplomacy, and, less concretely, the widespread sympathy for the "Slavic cause" among ministry officials.³¹ The controversy provoked by the annexation, in public and within the government—and the role played by Izvolskii in this episode—marked an important *tournure* in the making of Russian foreign policy, as Stolypin used it to argue that, under the Fundamental Laws, the Council must play an active role in framing Russian diplomacy, thus institutionally underscoring the subordination of foreign policy to domestic requirements for peace.³²

The apprehensions evoked by the Bosnian episode only reinforced the connections Stolypin and other senior officials drew to two previously distinct sets of "lessons" drawn from the Russo-Japanese war. On one hand, the controversy over an area of such acute interest to educated Russian opinion demonstrated the potential for domestic political instability from an activist foreign policy. Indeed, Stolypin only managed to defuse criticism from within the Duma—most notably, the ranks of the Octobrists and moderate right deputies

²⁸ See, e.g., Pashukanis, "K istorii," 16.

²⁹ For highly critical characterizations, see E. de Schelking, *Recollections of a Russian Diplomat* (New York, 1919), 169, and S.E. Kryzhanovskii, *Vospominaniia* (Berlin, n.d.), 91.

³⁰ HHSA, PA X, 129, Bericht 39 A–E, Aehrenthal to Goluchowski, August 1/14 1906.

³¹ See Taube on Sazonov, memoirs MS, Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University, 201.

³² Kokovtsov and Stolypin had already stated this view in the January 1908 special conference reported in *ibid.* Stolypin repeated it at a Council of Ministers meeting called for October 25/November 7 to discuss the annexation after Izvolskii's return from Europe. Minutes in GARF, f. 601, op. 1, d. 755, ll. 15–16.

whose support Stolypin cultivated in domestic affairs—by stressing the importance of avoiding any foreign entanglements that might provoke renewed social unrest, as had occurred in 1905.³³

On the other hand, fears for the domestic consequences of foreign adventure necessitated the accommodation of both policy spheres within the “united” Council of Ministers. These arguments also contained an implicit reproach of Nicholas for yet again conducting on his own initiative—in connivance with Izvolskii—policies that could imperil the autocracy’s very existence. By the denouement of the crisis in the spring 1909, Kokovtsov could tell foreign diplomats that the Council of Ministers played a decisive role in foreign policy.³⁴ This outcome received further ratification when, after a decent interval, Izvolskii resigned his portfolio for the embassy in Paris, giving way in 1910 to the relatively inexperienced Sergei Sazonov, Stolypin’s brother-in-law. In 1912, Stolypin’s successor Kokovtsov gained the emperor’s explicit approval for integrating the discussion of foreign policy matters in the Council of Ministers since, “there is without doubt an organic link between a state’s foreign and domestic policy.”³⁵

At the center of this entire web of consequences emanating from the defeat in the Far East stood Nicholas II. Officials dealing with Nicholas and post-1905 Russia confronted a doubly daunting task. First, they had to defend the prerogatives remaining to the autocracy from the encroachments of a “society” that had wrested through revolutionary violence the creation of the elective, legislative State Duma.³⁶ Moreover, representatives of state power had willy-nilly to frame their positions on all matters of policy—including those formally reserved to the crown’s exclusive purview, like military and foreign affairs—with an eye to a new, vocal public opinion. Second, however, officials had sought an institutional means by which to prevent the recurrence of the events they identified as causes for the twinned occurrence of war and revolution in 1904–1905. Accordingly, they had devised the Council of Ministers reform both to present a

³³ Bestuzhev, *Bor'ba*, 78.

³⁴ Public Record Office/Foreign Office, 371/729, confidential dispatch, Nicolson to Grey, May 1, 1909, 147.

³⁵ RGIA, f. 1276, op. 1, d. 29, Kokovtsov to Nicholas, November 14/27, 1911, l. 264ob.

³⁶ See Witte’s remarks to this effect in “Tsarskosel’skie soveshchaniia,” *Byloe*, no. 4 (1917), 216–17.

unified front to the State Duma, but also, and more delicately, to oblige the ruler to exercise his power through his institutions of state, rather than resorting to “unofficial” advisors like Bezobrazov, as he had before the war with Japan. From the very inception of this reform, not a few officials had recognized the implicit limitations the new council would place on the emperor’s supposedly sovereign power, but revolution’s rising tide had largely overborne these objections in the Solskii conference.

Inevitably, the viability of the new order rested on Nicholas’s assent. This fact became clear at several junctures in the immediate aftermath of the revolution, when Nicholas began increasingly to move against Witte, culminating in the latter’s resignation in April 1906. The challenge posed by Nicholas’s personal views arose also in discussions during the same month surrounding the revision of the Fundamental Laws to account for the constitutional changes of the last year; there, Nicholas demonstrated a marked reluctance to strike the word “unlimited” from the legal description of his powers.³⁷

To judge from his actions—given the reticence of his diaries and correspondence—Nicholas seems largely to have accepted the reading placed on the pre-war years by many imperial officials. Faced with the Solskii report, and pressure from both his uncle Nikolai Nikolaevich and Witte, Nicholas reluctantly acquiesced to the promulgation of the October Manifesto and to the Council of Ministers reform, despite an almost desperate search for more acceptable alternatives.³⁸ After ridding himself of Witte and dissolving the stormy First Duma in late spring 1906, Nicholas settled upon a chairman he could trust in the person of Stolypin, who also played an instrumental role in the restoration of order from his position as minister of internal affairs.

During most of the period from 1906 until early 1911, Nicholas appeared content to accept Stolypin’s claims to an authoritative role for the Council chair. Even during the Bosnian *imbroglio*—which the ruler’s complicity helped to provoke—Nicholas ended by agreeing to Stolypin’s insistence that “united government” play a part in the discussion of imperial diplomacy.³⁹ Likewise, he offered no objections

³⁷ Ibid., 204.

³⁸ Andrew Verner, *The Crisis of Russian Autocracy: Nicholas II and the 1905 Revolution* (Princeton, 1990), 233–45.

³⁹ McDonald, *United Government*, chapter 7. For more recent discussion of the same issue, see, V.A. Emets (ed.), *Istoriia vneshnei politiki Rossii: Konets XIX-nachalo XX veka*

to Stolypin's consolidation of authority within the council, despite the revival in some quarters of charges that the first minister was fashioning a "vizierate" at the sovereign's political expense.⁴⁰

Nicholas's acquiescence to the new order, however, proved curiously short-lived. As the appearance of routine returned to Russian political life with Stolypin's gerrymandered Third Duma interacting civilly with a functioning "united government"—and as Stolypin's domestic policies brought social order and the promise of a yeoman peasantry—Nicholas gradually shed the passivity he had exhibited after the military and domestic disasters of 1905. Thus, he had shown a determined resistance to Duma intervention in the "Naval Staffs" controversy in 1909. The same year, he appointed as his war minister General Vladimir Sukhomlinov, who held little brief for cooperating with Duma involvement in ongoing military reforms. Certainly, by the beginning of 1911—in the course of the "western zemstvo" controversy—Nicholas sanctioned conservative opposition to Stolypin in the State Council, prompting a wrenching confrontation from which the latter concluded that his days as premier were numbered.⁴¹ After Stolypin's assassination in September, Nicholas chose as his successor the career functionary, Vladimir Kokovtsov, who enjoyed none of his predecessor's authority at court, in the senior bureaucracy, or the Duma.

The period linking Stolypin's decline to the outbreak of the Great War saw a gradual but thoroughgoing unraveling of the knotted lessons that had governed imperial politics since 1905. Despite granting Kokovtsov formal permission to discuss diplomatic questions be discussed in the Council, Nicholas began to loosen the bonds of "united government" by several means, which, taken together, saw him return to a style of rule he had exercised before 1905. These developments included the appearance of new favorites—this time, fatefully, in the person of Rasputin.

If Stolypin had used his authority to appoint ministers sympathetic to his program, Nicholas began to populate Kokovtsov's cabinet with figures such as Nikolai Maklakov and Baron M.A. Taube, who

(M, 1997), 79–89, and A.V. Ignat'ev, *Vneshniaia politika Rossii 1907–1914: tendentsii, liudi, sobytia* (M, 2000), 26–33.

⁴⁰ Bogdanovich, *Tri poslednikh samoderzhitsa*, 480, entry for October 5/18, 1909.

⁴¹ RGIA, f. 1662, op. 1, d. 325, l. 1.

opposed the new chairman and the post-1905 constitutional order.⁴² Additionally, Nicholas began to leave Kokovtsov out of critical decisions, most notably during the early phases of the first Balkan war in 1912, when Sukhomlinov secured Nicholas's assent to a potentially provocative mobilization on the Austrian frontier without Kokovtsov's knowledge, a move that the latter undid only after great effort.⁴³ Predictably, discord within the Council became increasingly acrimonious, despite Kokovtsov's appeals to the principle of "united government." In early 1914, Nicholas indicated his revised view of cabinet rule when he replaced Kokovtsov with Ivan Goremykin, who had served briefly as Council chair after Witte's resignation in 1906, and who expressed little regard for the idea of a unified cabinet.

Kokovtsov's departure gave freer play to an opinion long held in the ministry of foreign affairs, but now gaining support in the Council and among a large portion of educated public opinion. This view contended that Russia should pursue a more assertive policy in defense of its interests and prestige, particularly in the Balkans. This position constituted a serious reversal of the preoccupations that had guided Russian foreign policy under Stolypin. Several leading officials, most notably Foreign Minister Sazonov and head of the agriculture department Aleksandr Krivoshein had begun to speak in this vein during the First Balkan War. Some took heart from the encouraging progress in military reconstruction, albeit this process still fell short of what the imperial command deemed adequate to the state's needs. Others, like Krivoshein, felt that the government should show more confidence in the patriotism of the Russian people.⁴⁴

Sazonov, for his part, began increasingly to fear or resent the prospect of Austrian dominance in the Balkans and German influence in the reforming Ottoman Empire.⁴⁵ Without the protection or the restraint of a powerful first minister, Sazonov may have felt vulnerable to the pro-Slavic demonstrations directed against him in spring

⁴² See Baron M.A. Taube's comments in his manuscript memoir, n.d., Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University in the City of New York, 172, 184.

⁴³ V.N. Kokovtsov, *Iz moego proshlogo. Vospominaniia 1903–1919 g.g.*, 2 vols. (The Hague, reprint 1969), II, 68–69; V.A. Sukhomlinov, *Vospominaniia* (Berlin, 1924), 217.

⁴⁴ P.L. Bark, "Memoirs," n.d., Bakhmeteff Archive, Columbia University, chapter 7, 7.

⁴⁵ Memorandum dated December 23, 1913 old style, in Sazonoff collection, Bakhmeteff Archive, 3 quarto sheets. This document proposes Russian responses to the "Liman von Sanders" affair.

1913, during the Second Balkan War. Certainly, he had a reputation as a sympathizer with the Slavic cause. More concretely, concerns about the passage of Russian ships—merchant bottoms as well as naval vessels—played a role in these considerations, particularly after the Turkish blockade of the Straits during the 1911 war with Italy.⁴⁶

Sazonov's posture hardened markedly during the controversy surrounding the appointment in late 1913 of the German general Otto Liman von Sanders to command a Turkish army corps stationed in Istanbul. In the last iteration of arguments that had carried the day in the immediate shadow of war and revolution under Stolypin, Kokovtsov had had to intervene forcefully to dissuade the foreign minister from measures likely to provoke a conflict with Turkey.⁴⁷

By early 1914, Nicholas appeared to have escaped almost completely from the restraints placed upon him by revolution, Witte, and Stolypin in turn. In the summer of 1913—buoyed by a ceremonial tour to celebrate the dynasty's tercentenary—he reportedly considered dissolving the Duma, at the height of a confrontation between the legislature and the government.⁴⁸ By the end of January 1914, he had jettisoned Kokovtsov and, implicitly, adherence to the principle of "united government." At the same time, he sanctioned the strengthening of the loose ties binding his empire and the United Kingdom, much to the dismay of conservatives in and outside of government, who had found so much else in his conduct encouraging.

Ironically, in fact, these conservatives stood as the last proponents of the argument linking war and revolutionary violence, as events in 1905 had demonstrated. The Liman affair and Kokovtsov's dismissal saw a roughly coordinated campaign led by prominent conservatives—including Durnovo, Minister of Education Taube (a former servitor in Foreign Affairs), and Witte—who sought to forestall a potential war by persuading Nicholas of the necessity to reorient Russia's diplomatic alignment from the entente to a *rapprochement* with the Germanic empires of central Europe.⁴⁹

Despite these efforts, the ruler's conduct in 1914 indicated that he shared the views of those advisors who supported both the "west-

⁴⁶ D.W. Spring, "Russian Foreign Policy, Economic Interests and the Straits Question, 1905–1914," in R.B. McKean (ed.), *New Perspectives in Modern Russian History* (London, 1992), 209.

⁴⁷ Ia. Zakher, "Konstantinopl' i proliv," KA, no. 7, 46–49.

⁴⁸ Hosking, *Constitutional Experiment*, 199–200.

⁴⁹ McDonald, "The Durnovo Memorandum."

ern" orientation and a more assertive defense of Russia's great power status in the Balkans. He agreed to the initiation of talks to strengthen Anglo-Russian ties.⁵⁰ And, as international tensions mounted following the assassination of Archduke Franz Ferdinand in late June, Nicholas—albeit with characteristic vacillation—seemed to accept Sazonov's insistence that yet another Russian failure to support the Balkan allies, in this case Serbia, would equal a "capitulation" to the central powers, for which Russia would "never forgive" the ruler and his government.⁵¹ Persuaded by these and similar arguments, Nicholas agreed to support Serbia's resistance to the Austrian ultimatum, a stance that helped precipitate the outbreak of hostilities in early August.

Superficially, it might appear that Nicholas and those who supported the reassertion of Russian interests abroad had forgotten or rejected the lessons of 1904–1905 that had governed imperial diplomacy under Stolypin and Kokovtsov. Certainly, the failure by conservatives to reorient Nicholas in early 1914 gives credence to such an impression. The same can be said about Nicholas's decision to abandon the regime of "united government," itself a direct reaction to the link in officials' minds between the war in the Far East and the subsequent revolution in the Russian heartland.

Yet, at the same time, the domestic and international environments to which Sazonov, Krivoshein, Nicholas and others responded so strongly in 1914 stemmed significantly, if collaterally, from the war and revolution of 1904–1905. Russia's evident weakness had produced nearly revolutionary changes in the alignments within the European concert—most notably the steadily improving relationship with Great Britain, Russia's traditional adversary. The same infirmity also contributed one more destabilizing element in an already tenuous Balkan *status quo*, creating the opening exploited by Aehrenthal in the annexation of Bosnia-Herzegovina. Unable to respond forcefully to this *coup*, the Russian government was obliged to seek stability in the region by sponsoring the formation of a Balkan league, whose declaration of war on Turkey in 1912, against express warnings from St. Petersburg, illustrated yet again Russia's incapacity to take a strong stance even in this area of traditional strategic interest. The Russian government's inability to gain favorable territorial

⁵⁰ Emets (ed.), *Istoriia vneshnei politiki Rossii*, 350–52.

⁵¹ S.D. Sazonov, *Vospominaniia* (Paris, 1927), 247.

compensations for its Serbian protégés at the conclusion of the First Balkan War only further inflamed revisionist sentiment and policy in the region. Moreover, Russia's subordinate status in the Triple Entente found troubling reflection in the reluctance of the French and British governments to support Russia's position in Balkan questions, even when Sazonov began to question the utility of the coalition during the Liman von Sanders affair at the end of 1913.⁵²

The deterioration of the Balkan order also cast a glaring light on the highly changed domestic environment facing the government at home after Portsmouth and the October Manifesto. Although the revised Fundamental Laws proscribed any role for the State Duma in the discussion of foreign policy, the opposition benches in that body—and their counterparts in the press and “society”—occupied an important, if undefined, position in the counsels of the imperial government. The emergence of this new conjuncture had helped foster consensus for the unification of government. Izvolskii and Sazonov made several appearances in the Duma to report on imperial foreign policy, under the cover of budget discussions. Awareness of public opinion informed the handling of the Bosnian crisis and public protests exerted palpable pressure on the government during the Balkan wars.⁵³ The critique of state actions heard from the left and centre ranks of the Duma, and echoed by the likes of Pavel Miliukov and Struve in the press, derived from the experience of the Russo-Japanese war, with its contention that the autocratic state had proven and continued to prove unable to defend the interests of the Russian “nation” in the pursuit of its historic goals during a period of increasing international contention.⁵⁴

These criticisms hit home doubly after Kokovtsov's eclipse as chair of the Council of Ministers. If Sazonov now enjoyed greater latitude to lobby for a more assertive policy, he also lost the cover afforded by Stolypin's authority and prestige with his colleagues and Nicholas. To judge from his memoirs, Sazonov now felt himself more exposed to the barbs of an opposition with whose pro-Slavic stance he sympathized.⁵⁵ At the same time, each perceived failure of the state's

⁵² Emets (ed.), *Istoriia vneshnei politiki Rossii*, 347–50.

⁵³ McDonald, *United Government*, 138–43, 189.

⁵⁴ See, e.g. P.B. Struve, “Politika vnutrenniaia i politika vneshniaia,” in *Patriotika*, 274–88.

⁵⁵ Sazonov, *Vospominaniia*, 87, 92, 104.

diplomacy served liberal oppositionists as one more particular, alongside the defeat in Asia, in a general bill of indictment against the autocracy.

Thus, the experience of the Russo-Japanese war brought three general and connected sets of effects for Russian diplomacy after 1905. First, the necessity of eliminating foreign “complications” so as to restore domestic order gave impetus to what became by 1911 a decisive recasting of the empire’s alignments, away from the other absolutist dynastic empires of central Europe and toward the Entente. This process was further impelled by the Dual Monarchy’s adoption of a forward policy in the Balkans, itself a consequence of Russia’s new preoccupations. The same necessity created a strong agreement among Russia’s bureaucratic elites that any foreign complications could provoke renewed revolution, with fatal consequences for the dynasty. Second, the conviction among senior officials that the Asian conflict had arisen from Nicholas’s abandonment of his administration for unilateral decisions or rule through favorites shaped decisively the make-up and powers of a “unified” government, designed to protect the autocracy from the new legislature and, tacitly, from the autocrat himself. Stolypin managed to persuade Nicholas and many of his fellow ministers that the threat of revolution demanded that the Council of Ministers play a decisive role in the discussion of foreign policy. Third, the catastrophe in the Far East served in discussion of foreign policy among writers and political actors, particularly in the liberal opposition, as an *entrée* to the very legitimacy and viability of the reconstituted autocracy—making its very existence a central topic of debate whenever crises arose, as they did with increasing frequency from the Bosnian annexation until the July crisis of 1914.

Until 1911, Nicholas accepted the new, if unstated, limits imposed upon him by “united government” and the constitutional order he had “granted” in October 1905. When, after 1911, he began to rule increasingly as he had before 1905, his abandonment of the new course produced curious results. If he pleased conservative supporters of a revived autocracy, he also dismayed them in his support for strengthened ties to the Entente and a deepening rivalry with Austria-Hungary in the Balkans.

While pursuing these seemingly contradictory ends—at least in the context of political debate at the time—Nicholas tried to disregard the public opinion brought to legal existence by the revolution the

Russo-Japanese war had unleashed; this, despite its influence on such leading advisors as Sazonov and Krivoshein. As P.B. Struve noted repeatedly in his essays on Russian foreign policy, the empire's ability to compete in the international sphere would require the Russian state to mobilize and command the loyalty of its population. A failure to do so would imperil Russia's existence as a great power. P.N. Durnovo argued to the contrary, contending that an ill-informed public opinion was driving Russia to a war against its own true interests in monarchical solidarity with Germany and the Dual Monarchy. Continuing that path would inevitably bring with it war, revolution and the end of all three dynasties. Ironically, both visions proved correct over the years of the First World War. Equally, both visions traced their narrative arc from memories of the causal links joining the Russo-Japanese war and the revolution of 1905.

CHAPTER TWENTY-EIGHT

INTERSERVICE RIVALRY AND POLITICS IN POST-WAR JAPAN

J. Charles Schencking

“In the budget for next year,” Navy Minister Yamamoto Gonnohyoe declared in early 1906, “nothing more has been attempted than to make provisions for replacing what had been destroyed or impaired in the war.” “But after that,” the navy’s most important bureaucrat suggested, “it would be necessary to consider . . . new undertakings.”¹ Within five years of Yamamoto’s prophetic utterance, all in Japan’s elite political circles knew what Yamamoto had alluded to by the somewhat cautious and guarded phrase “new undertakings”; massive naval expansion on a scale not previously undertaken in Japan. Conferring with Seiyukai leader Hara Kei four years later at the end of a navy-inspired, pro-naval expansion propaganda campaign, Prime Minister Katsura Taro revealed just what he felt naval expansion and the navy’s political machinations to secure large scale budgetary increases meant for politics and the nation of Japan: instability. Predicting that the navy would shortly introduce a massive expansion plan based on the purchase and construction of Dreadnought class warships, the army General turned Prime Minister claimed that the naval expansion proposal had been “hatched [by Yamamoto] out of an ambition to break up the tie between the government and the Seiyukai,” a relationship that had resulted in political stability since 1905.² Katsura’s assumptions proved correct on both counts and the navy’s political engagement to secure greater appropriations significantly influenced elite level politics after 1905.

The politics of military appropriations were, as historian Stewart Lone reflected, among the “most powerful engines driving change

¹ Yamamoto’s statement were originally published in the *Niroku shinbun* and soon after published in the *Japan Weekly Mail*, 13 January 1906, 28.

² Hara Kei’ichiro (ed.), *Hara Kei nikki* [Diary of Hara Kei], 6 vols. (Tokyo, 1965–67), 12 May 1910, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:23–26.

in Japan's political system."³ This essay therefore explores the politics behind the navy's pursuit of naval expansion in the fiscally austere post-war period. The navy's pursuit of budgetary increases after the Russo-Japanese War transformed this institution into a far more pro-active political force than it had been at any time previous in its history. Moreover, the navy's political emergence, most notably its entente with the Seiyukai political party and the resulting tension and rivalry this created with the army-Choshu faction, significantly shaped elite-level politics and fundamentally influenced two important political events that defined Meiji-Taisho politics: the Taisho Political Crisis of 1912 and the Siemens Scandal of 1914.

Unfortunately, we know little about the navy's role in politics before the tumultuous decade of the 1930s. This stems partly from the widespread notion that the navy was Japan's silent, apolitical service. The respected historian Tsunoda Jun went so far as to claim that "the navy rarely engaged in politics," and that "the words navy and politics, when put together sound odd."⁴ The distinguished military and political historian Asada Sadao furthered this position writing, "Above all, the tradition of the 'silent navy'—non-involvement in politics—lay at the base of its passive attitude toward state affairs in general."⁵

The navy, or so this line of interpretation suggests, remained aloof from politics. Nothing is further from the truth. Japanese navy officials directed a considerable degree of energy towards politics. Its leaders did so out of simply budgetary necessity as politics determined budgets and appropriations determined how quickly and thoroughly Japan's navy leaders could assemble a world-class blue water navy. In the late 19th and early 20th century, modern navies became extremely expensive state institutions, particularly after the introduction of the *HMS Dreadnought* in 1907. Continued advancements in naval technology after 1907 required naval leaders to lobby for ever increasing amounts of funding to regularly upgrade their fleets.

³ Stewart Lone, *Army, Empire, and Politics in Meiji Japan: The Three Careers of General Katsura Taro* (London, 2000), 89.

⁴ Tsunoda Jun, "Nihon kaigun sandai no rekishi," [Three periods of history in the Japanese navy], *Jiyū* 11:1 (January 1969), 90.

⁵ Asada Sadao, "The Japanese Navy and the United States, 1931–1941," in Dorothy Borg and Shumpei Okamoto (eds.), *Pearl Harbor as History: Japanese American Relations, 1931–1941* (New York, 1973), 230.

While historians have thoroughly documented the political emergence and budgetary pursuits of navies in Germany, Britain, and America in the early twentieth century, no one has yet explored the political emergence of Japan's navy and what this meant for politics and society.⁶ The individuals who have studied the close relationship between the military and politics in pre-war Japan have directed far more attention to the Japanese army. The army, led by politically active and important statesmen such as Yamagata Aritomo, Katsura Taro, Terauchi Masatake, and Tanaka Gi'ichi, or so many studies have suggested, at various times worked with, coerced, and challenged, "constitutional government" to secure its political and budgetary objectives.⁷

However, the army held no monopoly on political involvement. Using coercion, but far more often pragmatism, the navy similarly engaged in parliamentary and cabinet politics after 1905 and did so with great success. In doing so as effectively as it did, this service inexorably altered elite level politics and intra-governmental relations after the Russo-Japanese War and helped establish a pattern of military-political party cooperation that would continue throughout the Taisho (1912–1926) and early Showa era (1926–1945).

⁶ David A. Rosenberg and John T. Sumida, "Machines, Men, Manufacturing, Management, and Money: The Study of Navies as Complex Organizations and the Transformation of Twentieth Century Naval History," in John Hattendorf, ed., *Doing Naval History*, Naval War College Historical Monograph Series, 13, June 1994:35; Mark Shulman, "Institutionalizing a Political Idea: Navalism and the Emergence of American Seapower," in Peter Trubowitz, Emily Goldman, and Edward Rhodes, eds., *The Politics of Strategic Adjustment: Ideas, Institutions, and Interests* (New York, 1999), 79–101; Peter Trubowitz, "Geography and Strategy: The Politics of American Naval Expansion," in Trubowitz et al., ed., *The Politics of Strategic Adjustment*, 105–38; John F. Beeler, *British Naval Policy in the Gladstone-Disraeli Era, 1866–1880* (Stanford, 1997), 150–170 and 191–260; Eckart Kehr, *Battleship Building and Party Politics in Germany, 1894–1901*, translated and introduction by Pauline R. Anderson and Eugene N. Anderson (Chicago, 1973); and Paul E. Pedisich, "Congress Provides a Navy: The Emergence of a Modern Navy as a Force in Congressional Politics, 1882–1916," (Ph.D. dissertation, State University of New York at Stony Brook, 1998).

⁷ See works by Matsushita Yoshio, *Nihon gunsei to seiji* [The Japanese military system and politics] (Tokyo, 1960), *Nihon gunbatsu no kobo* [The rise and fall of Japan's military cliques], 3 vols. (Tokyo, 1967); Imai Sei'ichi, "Taisho ki ni okeru gunbu no seijiteki chii" [The Political Position of the Military in the Taisho period], *Shiso* 339 (September 1957), 3–21 and 402 (December 1957), 106–122. In English, see Stewart Lone, *Army, Empire, and Politics in Meiji Japan: The Three Careers of General Katsura Taro* (London, 2000).

I. *Post-War Military Expansion Plans, 1905–1907*

In October 1905, when Japan's Combined Fleet under the command of Admiral Togo Heihachiro returned to Tokyo in a well choreographed naval pageant, hundreds of thousands of Kanto area citizens turned out to welcome home Japan's victorious sailors and to celebrate what would arguably be the navy's most esteemed military achievement—the Battle of Tsushima. Beneath the public commemorations, however, many of Japan's military and political leaders comprehended the true nature of Japan's "victory" and the ramifications it would have for post-war Japan. Japan's triumph over Russia in 1904–05 came at an immense monetary cost. Put simply, the war exhausted Japan's financial capabilities and exposed weaknesses in Japan's capacity to wage war on a strategic level against a richer and stronger continental military power. The 1.8 billion yen Japan expended during this conflict, 800 million yen of which was secured as overseas loans, equalled government expenditure over the previous nine annual budgets. Though vast, this sum had still not been enough to secure total military victory.

In reviewing performance during the war and looking to potential future conflicts, army and navy leaders concluded that Japan's government must appropriate increased funds for military expenditures in the post-war period.⁸ Army leaders sought the creation of at least six new army divisions, believing that increasing the strength of Japan's standing army was the best way in which to protect Japan's continental interests from a possible Russian war of "revenge" following 1905. Navy leaders looked elsewhere, turning their attention across the Pacific. Increasingly after the Russo-Japanese War, navy leaders viewed America's expanding navy with trepidation and pursued naval increases to safeguard Japan's position vis-a-vis America. This, admirals suggested, required that Japan develop an 8–8 battle fleet, a fleet with eight Dreadnought class battleships and eight heavily armored battle cruisers at its core. Japan, however, did not possess the funds necessary to easily expand both services to the levels

⁸ For text of the Imperial Defense Policy of 1907, see Boeicho Boei Kenshujo Senshishitsu [Self Defense Agency, Self Defense Research Institute, War History Office], *Dai Hon'ei Kaigunbu, rengo kantai* [Imperial Headquarters, Navy Division and Combined Fleet Headquarters], 2 vols. (Tokyo, 1975), I, 112–18.

requested while also repaying loans, carrying out industrial expansion, and providing basic state services. This difficulty was compounded by the fact that Japan received no monetary indemnity from Russia after the war, as it had ten years earlier from China. That payment had allowed the empire to recoup its wartime expenditures and importantly to undertake massive post-war military and industrial expansion between 1896 and 1904.⁹ After 1905 therefore, Japan's political leaders faced the difficult task of balancing military requests against the fiscal realities of post-war Japan. As the economic historian Ogawa Masazo claimed, "the Government party, bureaucrats, the military authorities, and economic circles each had their own dream in the same bed."¹⁰

Concerned by Japan's weak financial position and greatly worried that both military services might pursue wildly expensive and uncoordinated post-war expansion programs, army leaders sought to create a unified defense policy for Japan as early as 1906. First suggested by Chief of the Army General Staff, Tanaka Gi'ichi, and supported wholeheartedly by *genro* Yamagata Aritomo, both men hoped to devise a plan that would clearly articulate Japan's defense priorities and importantly spell-out to Japan's civilian politicians the military force levels that would be required to implement the defense plan.

Tanaka wanted more than just a clearly defined defense policy, however. Reacting to the increased military and political independence that the navy began to exhibit even before the war with Russia, Tanaka sought a defense plan that would ultimately prioritize the army's strategic outlook, defense requests, and thus appropriations needs over those of the navy.¹¹ Thus Yamagata and Tanaka had

⁹ E. Sydeny Cawcours, "Industrialization and Technological Change, 1885-1920," in Kozo Yamamura (ed.), *The Economic Emergence of Modern Japan* (Cambridge, 1997), 101.

¹⁰ Ohkawa Masazo, "The Armaments Expansion Budgets and the Japanese Economy after the Russo-Japanese War," *Hitotsubashi Journal of Economics*, 5 (January 1965), 79.

¹¹ During 1906, General Tanaka repeatedly argued that the navy's command independence during the Russo-Japanese War had allowed this service to prioritize its own objectives during the war, thus relegating any naval assistance that the army required, particularly the transport of troops and the protection of army troop transports, to a position of secondary importance. Tanaka Gi'ichi, *Zuikan zatsuroku* [Thoughts and miscellaneous notes], 1906. Quoted in Tsunoda, "*Nihon kaigun sandai no rekishi*," 97-98. In Tsunoda's monograph, *Manshu mondai to kokubo hoshin* [The Manchuria problem and national defense policy] (Tokyo, 1967), the author claims that according to Army Vice Chief of Staff, Nagaoka Gaishi, the navy balked at

already initiated discussions on how to give the army the upper hand in post-war appropriations when the cabinet began budgetary discussion in the summer of 1906.¹² Of greater long-term benefit to the army, Yamagata supported Tanaka's recommendation that Russia be designated as Japan's primary hypothetical enemy. Yamagata therefore concluded that creating six new army divisions was the most pressing armaments need, a requirement far more critical than the warships that he expected the navy would soon request. A final insult to the navy occurred when Yamagata recommended that the navy should, as many army leaders had argued in the past, further develop its capabilities as an auxiliary to the army. The navy's priorities, he concluded, must revolve around improving and increasing logistic and communications capacities.¹³

When Yamagata presented his draft proposal to a joint committee comprised of army field marshals and navy fleet admirals in December 1906, navy leaders responded in a swift and predictable fashion led by Chief of the Navy General Staff, Togo Heihachiro. The hero of the Russo-Japanese War, Togo, argued that the navy's striking victories during the war were testimonies, in part, to the establishment and successful operation of a separate command for the navy.¹⁴ Under no circumstance, the admiral asserted, would the navy relinquish its military command independence to the army. Joining Togo, other navy delegates asserted that the navy possessed its own strategic vision for Japanese security and therefore demanded the right to select its own hypothetical enemy, just as the draft policy allowed the army to do. Navy leaders were particularly con-

the army's plan to use naval vessels in a supporting role to capture Vladivostok and hedged their support of the Sakhalin occupation even after the defeat of the Russian Baltic Fleet. Discussed in Evans, "The Satsuma Faction," 248.

¹² Tsunoda, "*Nihon kaigun sandai no rekishi*," 98. See draft defense policy in Boeicho boei kenshûjo senshishitsu, *Kaigunbu Rengo kantai*, 109–10.

¹³ An example illustrating this type of army thinking towards the navy occurred in 1894, when Vice Chief of the Army General Staff, Kawakami Soroku, devised war plans against China that emphasized the navy's support role. Yamamoto Gonnohyoe pointedly asked Kawakami a simple but loaded question, "Is it true the army has engineers?" Taken aback, Kawakami replied, "Yes . . . of course we do." To this, Yamamoto responded, with no little sarcasm, "Then it should be no trouble [for you] to build a bridge from Yokubo in Kyushu to Tsushima and then to Pusan in Korea, to now send our army to the continent." Quoted in *Yamamoto Gonnohyoe den*, 1:358–59.

¹⁴ The series of meetings began on 24 December 1906. See Boeicho boei kenshûjo senshishitsu, *Kaigunbu rengo kantai*, 110–11.

cerned that if Russia were selected as the primary potential adversary, the navy would have little justification to support its expensive 8-8 fleet program, as the Russian navy of 1907 was in no way a threat to Japan. Consequently, navy leaders declared that the Navy General Staff must retain the right to determine its own defense doctrine and specifically enumerate the forces necessary to support such plans. Anything less, Togo concluded, would simply undermine the navy and thereby Japan's national defense.¹⁵

Initially underestimating the force and determination with which the navy argued its position, Yamagata continued deliberations with navy officials for over a month. His efforts to construct a single Imperial Defense Plan, however, failed. In the end, Yamagata acquiesced to the navy's demands for an autonomous defense plan and endorsed a policy compromise whereby both military services were allowed to formulate their own plans based on separate hypothetical enemies.¹⁶ As a result, the army selected Russia as Japan's most likely future enemy and argued that the army must expand by six divisions to meet any potential war with Russia. The navy on the other hand, chose the largest non-allied naval power, the United States, as its hypothetical enemy and claimed that Japan must therefore put to sea a navy whose warships displaced a total 500,000 tons.¹⁷ Navy officials suggested that this required doubling the navy's size as it stood in 1906.¹⁸

In early 1907 Yamagata submitted the Imperial Defense Plan to the emperor and soon received imperial endorsement. Though initiated to consolidate defense planning more squarely under the army's command and to present a united front to politicians, the agreement reached in 1907 did little more than formalize army-navy rivalry at the strategic, political, and thus budgetary levels. With two distinct hypothetical enemies, defense plans, and plans which clearly articulated the force levels necessary for imperial defense, it became increasingly

¹⁵ Tsunoda, "*Nihon kaigun sandai no rekishi*," 98.

¹⁶ For text of the Imperial Defense Policy of 1907, see Boeicho boei kenshujo senshishitsu, *Kaigunbu rengo kantai*, 112-18.

¹⁷ Asada Sadao claimed that in 1907, America was nothing more than a "budgetary enemy." Asada Sadao, "The Revolt against the Washington Treaty: The Imperial Japanese Navy and Naval Limitation, 1921-1927," *Naval War College Review* (Summer 1993), 83-84.

¹⁸ See document *Kokubo shoyo heiryokuryo* [The forces necessary for defense] in Boeicho boei kenshûjo senshishitsu, *Kaigunbu rengo kantai*, 116-20.

more difficult for the army and navy to find common ground on any matter of strategic or foreign policy. More importantly, separate plans for the defense needs of Japan contributed to increased friction over military appropriations. This in turn led to acute political disputes throughout the remaining years of the Meiji state.

II. *Pursing Naval Expansion through Parliamentary Politics*

While the navy undertook a multifaceted pro-navy propaganda campaign to sell its expansionary cause to the public, its leaders also directed a significant amount of energy towards winning over the most important budgetary actor in Japan, the Imperial Diet, and specifically the most important party within parliament, the Seiyukai, to the cause of naval expansion.¹⁹ Over the course of late Meiji and Taisho Japan, no political group outside of the navy itself would prove so politically instrumental to the navy. Established in 1900 by Ito Hirobumi and drawing extensively from the former Jiyuto Party both in terms of membership and organization, the Seiyukai quickly emerged as a strong political force in Japan.²⁰

Initially under the leadership of Ito and then followed by later leaders Saionji Kinmochi and Hara Kei, the Seiyukai opportunistically pursued political power, status, and influence. Mimicking the Jiyuto's post-1894 constructive engagement policy, the Seiyukai's leadership pragmatically pursued political negotiations and accepted compromises with Japan's ruling oligarchs in earnest in 1902–03 when Ito convinced a majority of Seiyukai members to support a government-sponsored naval expansion plan put forth by Navy Minister Yamamoto Gonnohyoe and supported by Prime Minister Katsura Taro.²¹ Following this budgetary compromise, the party worked with Katsura during his first cabinet, 1901–1905, particularly during the

¹⁹ J. Charles Schencking, "The Politics of Pragmatism and Pageantry: Selling a National Navy at the Elite and Local Level in Japan, 1890–1913," in Sandra Wilson (ed.), *Nation and Nationalism in Japan* (London, 2002), 21–37.

²⁰ George Akita, *Foundations of Constitutional Government in Modern Japan, 1868–1900* (Cambridge, 1967), 124–36.

²¹ *Yamamoto Gonnohyoe den*, 1:505–510, Tokutomi Ichiro, *Katsura Taro den* [Official Biography of Katsura Taro], 2 vols. (Tokyo, 1967), 2:27–28, and Yamamoto Shiro, *Shoki Seiyukai no kenkyu* [A study on the early years of the Seiyukai] (Osaka, 1975), 225.

Russo-Japanese War and thus allowed Katsura to implement government initiatives, including the unpopular Portsmouth Peace Treaty, without attacks from the lower house.²²

Cooperation between Katsura and the Seiyukai, however, only went so far and by 1910 the pragmatic relationship between the prime minister and the party showed significant signs of stress.²³ Importantly, and not coincidentally, the weakening of the Seiyukai-Katsura relationship coincided with the emergence of another important actor in Japanese politics, the Imperial Navy. By late 1910, Hara had become well aware that the navy was a burgeoning political actor in Japan and the astute pragmatist increasingly saw the service as a potentially strong ally.

It was not just the allure of greater political power and a common adversary that drew these two actors together, however. Satsuma Province loomed large in both the Seiyukai and the navy. Though Yamamoto Gonnohyoe had purged many Satsuma line officers and administrators from the navy between 1893 and 1896, individuals from Satsuma, including Yamamoto himself, still held a significant amount of power at the navy's upper administrative echelons.²⁴ While Hara and many leaders in the Seiyukai publicly denounced "clan" or "clique" government, Satsuma was an electoral stronghold for this party: The Seiyukai held seven of eight seats in Kagoshima-ken after the 1904 election, eight of eight after the 1908 and 1912 elections, and even eight of nine after the disastrous 1915 election; for Nagasaki-ken the Seiyukai held a majority of seats from 1904 to 1915. Not surprisingly therefore, the Satsuma faction of the Seiyukai led by Matsuda Masahisa held a significant amount of power and prestige within the party as a whole and individuals from Satsuma used this power to influence navy-Seiyukai relations.

Satsuma men with connections to Hara, Matsuda, and the navy, e.g., Tokonami Takejiro, played a critical role in facilitating the for-

²² For an overview of the 1902-03 budget compromise, see *Yamamoto Gonnohyoe den*, 1:505-525, Tokutomi Ichiro, *Katsura Taro den* [Biography of Katsura Taro], 2 vols., reprint of 1917 edition (Tokyo, 1967), 2:27-33, and Najita, *Hara Kei in the Politics of Compromise*, 32-57.

²³ Katsura's reluctance to step down as Prime Minister and the implications this had with Hara and the Seiyukai is recorded in considerable detail in Hara's diary. See, for instance, 27 November 1910, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:56-56, and 1, 2, 5, 11, 12, 14, 15, 18, 23 December 1910, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:58-75.

²⁴ *Yamamoto Gonnohyoe den*, 1:333-339.

malization of a navy-Seiyukai entente. As a confidant of Hara, a Seiyukai member, and a native of Satsuma, Tokonami was an ideal facilitator between the Seiyukai and the navy, a role in which he excelled. When Tokonami began the 11 November discussion with a reference to Yamamoto Gonnohyoe's political future, Hara replied that the Satsuma faction under Yamamoto's leadership could "only prosper by allying itself with a political party" as by themselves, they were "no match for the Choshu group."²⁵ Tokonami then confessed his desire to mediate between both groups, informing Hara that both sides should further discuss the issue. The ever-ambitious Hara readily agreed and admitted that it would be "good for both him and me to keep communicating."²⁶

Elite level politics aside, other factors helped cement the foundation for a future Seiyukai-navy entente at the rank-and-file level. First, Navy Minister Saito Makoto's pragmatic, honest, and at times conciliatory approach to parliamentary negotiations convinced many legislators that the navy was willing to work constructively with the Diet. Later described by Admiral Nomura Kichisaburo as a "master of compromise," Saito often introduced massive spending requests before both cabinet and parliament only to readily accept a significantly scaled-back version with little dissent, thus seemingly endorsing parliament's political legitimacy over budgetary affairs.²⁷ As Saito confessed to Kokuminto representative Oishi Masami in January 1911, though the "navy always wished for expansion . . . we have to manage within the confines of the budget."²⁸ This accurately reflected both Saito's pragmatism and his understanding of the important role that parliament did indeed possess over the appropriations process.

Besides the Navy Minister's pragmatic bureaucratic dealings with parliamentarians, practical economic industrial concerns also brought the navy and Seiyukai closer together as political allies in late Meiji, early Taisho Japan. From 1905 onwards, Hara continually sought to expand Seiyukai power and support through pork-barrel spending programs that would benefit constituent bases in rural Japan.²⁹

²⁵ 11 November 1910, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:52–53.

²⁶ 11 November 1910, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:53.

²⁷ Ikeda Kiyoshi, *Nihon no kaigun* [The Japanese navy], 2 vols. (Tokyo, 1966), 2:21–22.

²⁸ *Saito Makoto den*, 2:137–139.

²⁹ Mitani Taichiro, *Nihon seito seiji no keisei* [Formation of Japanese party politics] (Tokyo, 1967), 163–68.

³⁰ In Kagoshima-ken, the Seiyūkai held every national parliamentary seat (9 in

While the Seiyukai may have wished to follow this type of fiscal policy, after 1905 the reality of Japan's budgetary situation restricted the ability to direct funds towards areas of pro-Seiyukai support. The emergence of a private, navy-industrial establishment, however, made appropriating funds for naval expansion far more attractive to Seiyukai politicians desirous of reinforcing bastions of electoral support through a positive industrial policy. Indeed, many Seiyukai politicians viewed naval expansion as a way in which to further industrial expansion in areas critically important to the electoral strength of the Seiyukai, particularly Kyushu, home of the Mitsubishi shipyard.³⁰

In the late Meiji and early Taisho periods, shipbuilding underwent a transformation in Japan, spurred on in large part by naval construction. Between 1906 and 1910, Japanese shipyards built 78 percent of the navy's warships, but only 2 percent of this overall 78 percent was constructed in private shipyards, the other 76 percent being produced in navy-owned arsenals in Yokosuka, Sasebo, Kure, and Maizuru. By 1913, however, private shipbuilders provided 37 percent of the navy's total production, 5 percent more than navy-owned and operated arsenals produced.³¹ As the two largest private shipbuilding firms in Japan, the Mitsubishi shipyard at Nagasaki and the Kawasaki shipyard at Kobe were the primary beneficiaries. Both contributed money to the Seiyukai, though after 1914 Mitsubishi became more closely allied with the Kenseikai party.³² Securing lucrative orders from the navy provided jobs and an influx of state money for deputies' constituent bases and stimulated industrial expansion in dependent sectors. For Seiyukai party leaders who looked to increase party support through a positive industrial policy, championing naval spending at private firms was a vehicle for stimulating economic

total) from 1904 to the 1924 election. In Nagasaki-ken, the Seiyukai held a majority of the seats (8 in total) until the 1915 election. Nagasaki was home to one of the two largest private shipbuilding firms in the country, the Mitsubishi Shipbuilding. The other large private shipbuilding firm, Kawasaki Shipbuilding of Kobe, was owned and managed by navy-Seiyukai go-between, Matsukata Kojiro.

³¹ Zosen kyokai. *Nihon kinsei zosen shi* [A history of the modern Japanese shipbuilding industry] (Tokyo, 1973), 44–59.

³² Kawasaki, whose director was the third son of Matsukata Masayoshi, Matsukata Kojiro, was particularly close to the navy, the Satsuma faction, and the Seiyukai. For a discussion on the gravitation of Mitsubishi towards the Kenseikai party, see Robert Scalapino, *Democracy and the Party Movement in Prewar Japan* (Berkeley, 1953), 282–83.

³³ 7 February 1914, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:387–388 and Kawasaki jukogyo, *Kawasaki*

growth and political support. Expanding capacity and production in private shipyards was a win-win situation both for the navy and the Seiyukai, which leaders from each side understood.³³

III. *Military Expansion, Army-Navy Rivalry, and Political Instability, 1911–1914*

The increasingly close ties the navy had begun to forge with the Seiyukai became apparent almost as soon as Saionji Kinmochi replaced Katsura Taro as Prime Minister in summer 1911. The day after Saionji formally became Prime Minister, Navy Minister Saito visited Saionji and submitted a sizeable 352 million yen expansion request previously placed before Katsura's cabinet in May.³⁴ As pragmatic as ever, Saito admitted the financial difficulties associated with the navy's proposed expansion but reiterated that without further expansion, the navy would face grave difficulties. If the request startled the prime minister, coming as it did just months after Katsura's cabinet had already endorsed 82 million yen in additional funding for the navy, the master compromiser, Saito, offered Saionji a way out. Saito offered to set the specific amount requested aside for a year as long as Saionji agreed to adopt the plan in total commencing from 1913. While Saionji accepted the efficacy of naval expansion, all he offered Saito in practical terms was that a formal decision could only be made after a more thorough investigation of state finances.³⁵

On 2 November, Saito submitted the entire expansion plan before the cabinet and again did so in his usual pragmatic fashion. Aware of the financial difficulties facing Japan, the navy minister began his presentation by admitting that an allocation of some 352 million yen was far too grandiose to request at present. Expansion at this level, Saito suggested, was necessary, but unrealistic. The navy minister

jukogyo kabushiki kaisha shi [A history of the Kawasaki heavy industry company] (Kobe, 1959), 70, and Mitsubishi *jukogyo*, *Mitsubishi zosen sogyo hyakunen no Nagasaki zosenjo tokushu* [A centenary of the Nagasaki ship works] (Tokyo, 1957), 48–55, Kawasaki *jukogyo*, *Kawasaki yukogyo kabushiki kaisha shi*, 200–205.

³⁴ 29 August 1911, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:160–161, and *Saito Makoto den*, 2:168. Military specifics of the plan can be found in *Yamamoto Gonnohyoe den*, 2:1012.

³⁵ As relayed to Hara, see 29 August 1911, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:160–161.

³⁶ 2 November 1911, *Takarabe Takeshi nikki*, 1:280 and 2 November 1911, *Hara*

thereafter submitted a scaled-back plan of roughly 90 million yen to buy three battleships.³⁶ Importantly, Saito claimed that the 90 million-yen expansion plan would require no new funding for 1912. When this raised skeptical eyebrows, Saito informed cabinet ministers that the 1.5 million yen needed to begin construction contracts could be obtained through funds saved by administrative retrenchment within the navy. All it would take from this cabinet, or so Saito concluded, was cabinet approval in 1911 to appropriate roughly 88.5 million yen at the beginning of 1913, in order to continue with the construction already under contract.³⁷

Final budgetary negotiations began in late November 1911 and the tension felt by navy officers and cabinet officials, once debate commenced, was palpable. So important was the cabinet meeting on 24 November that Vice Navy Minister Takarabe Takeshi, Yamamoto Gonnohyoe's son-in-law, abandoned the opportunity to witness live fire exercises off Yokosuka in case "something urgent happened during the day's budget assessment meeting."³⁸ Takarabe's decision was warranted. As soon as the cabinet ministers agreed on the navy's budget, Saito provided Takarabe with a hand-written memo,

The cabinet has decided that the navy preparation plan submitted to this meeting will be considered after the administrative reform is completed in 1912 (M45). This decision will be announced to the public. However, it has been unofficially decided that the plan will be commenced in 1913 (M46). There will be no problem to start [signing] secret contracts, but the cabinet's approval is required before the signing. These decisions are absolutely confidential among those who are in charge.³⁹

When presented to the full cabinet, minus Home Minister Hara, ministers engaged in minimal debate. They agreed to support naval expansion from 1913 onwards as per the "secret" 1911 cabinet agreement. The ministers did, however, object to affixing their respective stamps to a document that explicitly stated, "by signing secret

Kei nikki, 3:182–183.

³⁷ Cabinet discussions are contained within, 2 November 1911, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:182–183.

³⁸ 24 November 1911, *Takarabe Takeshi nikki*, 1:288–289.

³⁹ 24 November 1911, *Takarabe Takeshi nikki*, 1:288–289, and discussed in 24 November 1911, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:188–189.

⁴⁰ 28 November 1911, *Takarabe Takeshi nikki*, 1:291 and 1 December 1911, *Hara*

construction contracts,” and the navy accordingly removed this phrase from the final draft.⁴⁰

Before discussion concluded, however, a new and ultimately destructive political development surfaced within the confines of the debate over navy expansion in the form of army expansion. Not wishing to remain marginalized while the navy secured political commitments for future expansion, Army Minister Ishimoto Shinroku asked for and received cabinet assurances that the army would receive increases in late 1912 so as to allow this service to create two new army divisions in 1913.⁴¹ When confronted with this unexpected request and agreement, Hara asked whether army expansion would be made public to which Saionji replied, “certainly.” Ishimoto suggested otherwise and believed it would be best announced after army administrative retrenchment had taken place, to which Hara agreed. Elite level politics had thus secured political commitments from the cabinet to support both navy and army expansion at the end of 1911.

All did not go according to plan. Throughout the summer of 1912, Saionji grew more concerned about the upcoming cabinet-level budget negotiations for 1913. He did so with good reason. Both military ministries had, in late 1911, secured political commitments for further expansion beginning in 1913. The dispute over military expansion reached a crescendo in November and early December 1912 when the chief of the army affairs bureau, Tanaka Gi'ichi, informed the cabinet that army expansion was a necessity and that his service would pursue the two-division issue aggressively in the forthcoming budgetary discussions.⁴² When the cabinet refused to support the army's expansion plan but endorsed the navy's far more expensive scheme, Uehara resigned on 2 December and three days later Saionji's cabinet collapsed. The “two division issue” had, in the words of General Tanaka, been “transformed into high-level politics.” The political fallout from Uehara's actions further united the Seiyukai and the Yamamoto-navy-Satsuma factions together against the Choshu-army faction and Katsura.⁴³ The prolonged dispute over the two-division expansion issue made a formal navy-Seiyukai entente more

Kei nikki, 3:190.

⁴¹ 1 December 1911, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:190.

⁴² 9 November 1912, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:260–261.

⁴³ Quoted in Najita, *Hara Kei in the Politics of Compromise*, 100.

⁴⁴ 19 December 1912, *Takarabe Takeshi nikki*, 2:122.

attractive to both sides, more so when the *genro* selected Katsura again as prime minister.

Meeting for the first time since 1901, in late December 1912 the *genro* recommended that Katsura Taro be appointed as the next prime minister. This was a volatile choice since the pro-Choshu faction army general Katsura was Yamamoto's political nemesis and a man whose last tenure had deeply angered Hara and the Seiyukai leadership. Believing that Katsura would postpone the Seiyukai-backed naval expansion plan, navy leaders attempted to block Katsura's appointment by using the same procedure that had resulted in Saionji's demise, namely ministerial resignation. On 19 December, Saito offered his resignation, believing that this would block Katsura's return to politics. The wily Katsura, however, had anticipated just such a maneuver.⁴⁴ The astute political general had previously secured an Imperial Rescript compelling Saito to remain as navy minister, thus eliminating any serious possibility for navy officials to sabotage the new cabinet. Katsura, better than most, understood the damage a recalcitrant military minister could inflict upon a cabinet.

Party officials, however, proved more effective in their challenge to Katsura's third cabinet. Before the opening of the Diet, Seiyukai men and other committed "constitutionalists" in Japan organized protests against the new government. Importantly, many of Katsura's most vocal critiques drew attention to the different political approaches the navy and the army factions followed in their respective pursuits for greater appropriations, a factor that made a navy-Seiyukai alliance far more palatable.⁴⁵

When the legislature convened, MPs challenged Katsura's government on almost every legal and political point and after a barrage of initial verbal assaults the Seiyukai issued a vote of confidence. Anticipating such a hostile parliament, Katsura expected to battle confrontational MPs through the creation of a political party, the Doshikai, which he hoped would unite anti-Seiyukai forces behind his cabinet. This action did nothing but push the navy and Seiyukai closer together. Emboldened by a last minute intervention from navy statesman Yamamoto, Seiyukai deputies refused to abide by Katsura's Imperial Rescript-sanctioned demand that the party retract its

⁴⁵ 28 December 1912, *Japan Weekly Mail*, 760.

⁴⁶ For a discussion of Katsura's actions, see Lone, *Army, Empire, and Politics in*

no-confidence measure.⁴⁶ With the Seiyukai united in its opposition to Katsura and thus sensing certain defeat if the Diet voted on the no-confidence measure, Katsura resigned the following day, 11 February, opening a great opportunity for a navy-Seiyukai cabinet.

In the aftermath of Katsura's short-lived cabinet, the navy-Seiyukai entente matured into a formal political alliance. On 11 February the *genro* nominated Yamamoto Gonnohyoe to serve as the next prime minister. "Overjoyed," Yamamoto accepted the post only after securing a commitment from the Seiyukai to support his armament policies in parliament.⁴⁷ An astute politician, Yamamoto realized that unless he could gain the Seiyukai's parliamentary support for his future cabinet proposals, namely large-scale naval expansion, his cabinet would likely be as short lived as Katsura's. The Diet, as Yamamoto and all navy leaders well understood, possessed budgetary authority. After a week of extensive negotiations with Seiyukai leaders Hara, Matsuda, and to a lesser degree Saionji, Yamamoto thus acquiesced to Seiyukai demands that party men comprise the majority of the cabinet.⁴⁸ In fact all ministers apart from the prime minister, Yamamoto, the navy minister, Saito Makoto, the army minister, Kigoshi Yatsusuna, and the foreign minister, Makino Nobukai, joined or were members of the Seiyukai at the time of the cabinet's formation. Thus for the first time in Japan's parliamentary history, the cabinet reflected the electoral composition of the lower house and it did so because Seiyukai leaders agreed to support Yamamoto's policies, namely a massive naval expenditure program. Pragmatism had its political rewards.

Once in a position of power with his parliamentary allies, Yamamoto pursued a number of Seiyukai initiatives in exchange for party support of naval expansion. Throughout much of 1913, Yamamoto worked with Hara and Matsuda to secure many of the Seiyukai's most cherished political reforms, which greatly angered army lead-

Meiji Japan, 179–84. For analysis of the larger Taisho Political Crisis, see Banno Junji, *Taisho seihen: 1900–nen taisei no hokai* [The Taisho Political Crisis: Collapse of the 1900 system] (Tokyo, 1994).

⁴⁷ Saionji relayed to Hara that Yamamoto "accepted the nomination as if he was overjoyed." See 11 February 1913, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:289.

⁴⁸ Yamamoto Shiro, *Yamamoto naikaku to kisoteki kenkyū* (Kyoto, 1982), 59–93. Hara and Takarabe's diaries also possess a wealth of information about the week-long negotiations carried out between Yamamoto and the Seiyukai.

⁴⁹ Najita, *Hara Kei in the Politics of Compromise*, 178–79.

ers and followers of the Yamagata-backed Choshu faction. Specifically, Yamamoto's cabinet reversed the law (codified in 1899 at Yamagata's urging) governing the appointment of military service ministers.⁴⁹ Before the 1913 revision, only generals or admirals on the active military list could serve as army or navy minister. This law angered party politicians on two grounds. First, military men on the active list could not have any political party affiliation, owing to another Imperial Rescript drafted earlier by Yamagata. Second, restrictions on eligibility gave the military services even greater powers to influence and potentially blackmail cabinets to support military expansion, as a cabinet could not function without its full complement of ministers. Seiyukai leaders thus believed that expanding ministerial eligibility to include military men on the reserve list as well as civilians would restrict the military's ability to coerce cabinets and thereby further strengthen constitutional, party-based government. After securing this victory, Yamamoto next successfully revived the law that governed the appointment of vice ministers in the bureaucracy, opening up upper level positions in each government ministry to greater party influence.

In return for his pro-Seiyukai stance, Yamamoto naturally demanded parliamentary support for his naval ambitions. Within weeks of forming a cabinet, Yamamoto introduced a supplementary naval expansion bill two days after the Diet reconvened on 27 February.⁵⁰ Noticeably absent during the budgetary negotiations were any critiques or challenges issued by Seiyukai members. Few parliamentary objections surfaced later that year in October when the navy minister introduced the navy's long-cherished multi-year expansion program that would give the navy, when complete, an 8-6 fleet, a fleet that comprised eight Dreadnought class battleships and six heavy cruisers.⁵¹

Expansion on this scale was not cheap. Saito conservatively estimated that the total cost would be close to 350 million yen. On 4 November the cabinet first discussed the request and during the week of 21 November the question of naval expansion took center stage.⁵²

⁵⁰ *Saito Makoto den*, 2:230-232.

⁵¹ *Saito Makoto den*, 2:244-247.

⁵² *Saito Makoto den*, 2:247, 21, 25, and 27 November 1913, *Takarabe Takeshi nikki* 2:231-234, and 27 November 1913, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:367.

⁵³ Saito's position paper is reproduced in *Saito Makoto den*, 2:247-253.

After providing each minister present with a highly detailed position paper justifying the expansion request, Saito won over most ministers, including Finance Minister Takahashi.⁵³ Hara, however, as he had earlier in November, again voiced concern over the size of the program.⁵⁴ His worries did not stem from any dissent in his party, but rather from what he expected from the army. While Hara freely admitted that the Diet and the navy were on “quite good terms, unlike with the army,” the Seiyukai leader feared army reaction to a budget which provided funds for significant naval expansion while at the same time ignoring army requests for much smaller-scale increases.⁵⁵ Hara had, as many other political observers and participants in Japan understood, become increasingly aware that army-navy rivalry over funding jeopardized political stability. The Seiyukai leader thereafter convinced both the navy and the cabinet to introduce a scaled-back expansion plan.⁵⁶ Though less than the navy originally requested, the 160 million yen compromise was still the largest single increase package agreed upon since the Russo-Japanese War. Most importantly, naval expansion dwarfed the zero yen that the cabinet provided the army for division expansion plans.

The degree to which the Seiyukai would support their navy “partners” became clear during the following parliamentary session. On 23 January 1914, the very day that the Lower House’s budget committee began formally considering Yamamoto’s massive naval expansion program, hopes for quick acceptance of the government’s budget and a controversy-free parliamentary session evaporated. That morning, Tokyo newspapers reported on a verdict handed down by a German court against Carl Richter, a former Siemens employee in Tokyo who received a two year sentence for theft and attempted extortion from fellow Siemens employees in Japan.⁵⁷ The property in question, which Richter stole from the Siemens Tokyo office, comprised documents that revealed corrupt business practices conducted between Siemens officials and well-placed Japanese navy officers.

⁵⁴ Hara raised his concerns with Saito on 9 November. 9 November 1913, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:358–359.

⁵⁵ 9 November 1913, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:359.

⁵⁶ Kaigunsho, *Yamamoto Gonnohyoe den*, 2:1015 and 27 November 1913, *Hara Kei nikki*, 3:367.

⁵⁷ Oshima Taro, “Shiimensu-Vikkaasu jiken” [The Siemens-Vickers incident], in Wagatsuma Sakai et al. (eds.), *Nihon seiji saiban shiroku: Taisho* [Historical records of the political trials in Japan: Taisho] (Tokyo, 1981), 56–57.

⁵⁸ Parliamentary speeches from both houses can be found in *Saito Makoto den*,

Specifically, the documents detailed commissions that Siemens had given to individuals who had been instrumental in securing navy orders for the company. The publication of details concerning the Richter verdict and allusions to the stolen documents he produced at his trial called into question the scruples of Japanese navy officials and cast doubts over the efficacy of granting new appropriations to a seemingly corrupt navy. The Siemens scandal, as it became known in Japan and abroad, provided the Yamagata-backed Choshu faction located in the House of Peers with the ammunition to attack the government and destroy the alliance between the Seiyukai and the navy.

Indeed, for Yamamoto, the Seiyukai, and the navy, news of the Siemens scandal could not have come at a more inauspicious time. At the Lower House's general budget committee meeting on 23 January, Shimada Saburo of the Doshikai Party used alleged navy corruption to lash out at this institution and its parliamentary supporters. For weeks, non-Seiyukai deputies queried, needled, and attacked the navy, the cabinet, and the Seiyukai over the scandal.⁵⁸ Against these challenges and popular demonstrations launched outside the Diet building, the Seiyukai stood behind their alliance partner. Not only did Seiyukai parliamentarians refuse to "freeze" the government's naval expansion program, but also rejected by a vote of 205 to 164 a no-confidence resolution introduced by Chuseikai and Doshikai members.⁵⁹ Yamamoto's Seiyukai-backed government had survived the first challenge brought about by the disclosure of naval corruption.

The Yamamoto Cabinet and the navy-Seiyukai alliance did not survive the 31st session of parliament, however. On 14 February the House of Peers, the bastion of Yamagata's Choshu faction and thus the one institution in which neither the navy nor the Seiyukai held any significant influence, began deliberations over the government's proposed naval expansion budget. Led by Egi Senshi, Den Kenjiro, and Murata Tsuneyoshi, peers vociferously attacked the government on two grounds: one, naval corruption; and two, lack of balance in military appropriations. While critique over the Siemens scandal was predictable, a number of peers used the scandal to argue against the

3:271–349.

⁵⁹ *Saito Makoto den*, 2:303–305. See also, *Dai Nihon teikoku gikaishi*, 9:316–319.

⁶⁰ *Saito Makoto den*, 2:308.

pro-navy bias in defense appropriations that had developed since the formation of the navy-Seiyukai entente. Prioritizing the navy over the army, or so many concluded, was unwise militarily and entirely unjust politically. At a 17 February House of Peers' budget committee meeting, Baron Den Kenjiro, one of Yamagata's protégés, demanded an explanation as to why Yamamoto's cabinet had refused to appropriate funds for the army's two division increase request.⁶⁰ Weeks later, Viscount Higuchi Seiyasu claimed that the government's defense policy had been "unfair" and "prejudiced" against the army.⁶¹ Summing up his dissatisfaction with the government, its failure to support army expansion, and its ties to the Seiyukai, Baron Murata Tsuneyoshi declared, "this House proposes to cut 70 million yen out of the naval estimate because it does not like the Yamamoto Cabinet."⁶² Not surprisingly, given the influence of the Yamagata faction in the House of Peers, the upper house's budget committee pruned the navy's proposed budget by 70 million yen with a vote of 48 to 7. Soon after, the full house followed suit supporting the budget committee's recommendation by a vote of 244 to 44.⁶³

When the amended budget returned to the lower house and a bicameral conference agreed to reduce the navy's budget by only 30 million yen, the House of Peers simply refused to accept the compromise, with many peers reiterating that defense appropriations were "not balanced" evenly enough between the army and the navy.⁶⁴ Faced with a failure of his budget, which Yamamoto later lamented was "one of the most regretful events" of his life, the admiral-turned prime minister resigned, ending the navy-Seiyukai cabinet. Yamamoto's cabinet had afforded Seiyukai leaders with the opportunity to achieve a significant amount of their most sought after reforms and had given the navy the upper hand in budgetary appropriations. It came at a cost, however, namely increased tension with the army-Choshu faction.

Following Yamamoto's resignation, however, Yamagata attempted to further weaken the power of the Seiyukai and the navy and to return the Choshu faction to political pre-eminence in Japan. He

⁶¹ *Saito Makoto den*, 2:320.

⁶² House of Peers member Murata Tsuneyoshi (retired general) made this remark in the Upper House on 13 March, 1914. See also *Saito Makoto den*, 2:330.

⁶³ 9 March 1914 *Hara Kōi nikki*, 3:359 and *Saito Makoto den*, 2:327–329.

⁶⁴ 23 March 1914, *Takarabe Takeshi nikki*, 2:270 and *Saito Makoto den*, 2:332.

⁶⁵ Peter Duus, *Party Rivalry and Political Change in Taisho Japan* (Cambridge, 1968),

did so through the selection of the next prime minister. In April, the Choshu leader convened a meeting of the *genro* council to select the next prime minister and recommended Kiyoura Keigo to form the next cabinet. Kiyoura was the archetypal Yamagata faction member who had served as justice and home minister in previous cabinets led by Yamagata and Katsura. Fearing that as a pro-army, Yamagata faction bureaucrat Kiyoura would look upon naval expansion unsympathetically, the navy blocked his candidacy. Specifically, Admiral Kato Tomosaburo, the naval officer put forward to take over for Saito, demanded that Kiyoura call a special session of parliament to reinstate the naval expenditures pruned by the House of Peers. This, Kato concluded, was the chief condition upon which his service as navy minister would hinge.

Believing that Kato would back down rather than face the public wrath sure to develop when word leaked of the navy's political and budgetary intransigence, Kiyoura refused to accept Kato's demands. Here, Kiyoura underestimated Kato's resolve. Kato simply refused to serve in the cabinet, and unable to find any other eligible navy official who would serve, Kiyoura withdrew from the task of forming a cabinet. Though no longer in a position to influence politics pragmatically within the government, navy leaders still found it possible to exert leverage over cabinet politics through coercion just as Army Minister Uehara had done months earlier.

After Kiyoura's attempts to form a government failed, the *genro* nominated Okuma Shigenobu, a man backed by the Doshikai, to head the next cabinet. As a historic figure in the early party movement, Okuma enjoyed widespread public support. Most important, however, he shared with Yamagata a great deal of animosity towards the Seiyukai, a party he referred to as "a parasite."⁶⁵ But significantly, like Kiyoura before him, Okuma initially had difficulties securing a Navy Minister and the issue again revolved around naval appropriations. The likely Navy Minister, Kato, put the same demands to Okuma as he had to Kiyoura. Okuma therefore turned his attention towards other eligible candidates and with the help of his foreign minister designate, Kato Takaaki, decided upon Admiral Yashiro Rokuro, who in 1914 was the commander of Maizuru Naval District.

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⁶⁶ *Kaigunsho, Kaigun daijin kanbo, Kaigun gunbi enkaku* (Tokyo, 1970), 175–83.

Under normal circumstances Yashiro would have been an unlikely choice as he was well down on the seniority list and considered by many as an outsider of the Yamamoto faction. These attributes, along with the fact that no officer from the Maizuru district had been implicated in any scandal, played to Yashiro's advantage. Moreover, Yashiro and Kato Takaaki were good friends since their days as students at the Aichi English School in Nagoya. Most important, however, his position as an outsider who had called for rapid and thorough reform of the navy when the Siemens scandal unfolded convinced Okuma that Yashiro would not only be more willing to thoroughly "cleanse" the navy but was also an individual who might be willing to assume the Navy Minister's position without making exorbitant budgetary demands as a precondition to serving the cabinet.

But no less than Kato Tomosaburo, Yashiro was determined to advance the fiscal interests of the navy. He, like Kato before him, sought assurances from Okuma concerning navy finance as a precondition to joining the cabinet. However, whereas Kato had requested a special Diet session to restore the entire 70 million yen which the Peers had cut from the navy budget, Yashiro demanded far less, roughly nine million yen which, he argued, was necessary to carry out the construction of three heavy cruisers already under contract in Japanese shipyards. A bare minimum demand of Yashiro, and realistically anyone who would be asked to serve as navy minister, therefore, was that the next cabinet would appropriate funds for the continued construction of the warships in question. Eager to form a cabinet, Okuma accepted Yashiro's ultimatum and in June 1914, the Diet appropriated funds for the navy, as Yashiro had demanded.⁶⁶ Within a month, the navy minister sought political commitments to secure the entire amount required to complete the three battleships already under construction and to bring forth the expansion program proposed by the previous Yamamoto cabinet.

Conclusion

In a 1 August 1914 editorial, a *Japan Times* writer predicted that the estimates Navy Minister Yashiro would soon introduce to the cabi-

⁶⁷ 1 August 1914 *Japan Times*.

net would be the “Gordian Knot for Count Okuma to cut.”⁶⁷ Given the politics that had surrounded military appropriations over the previous ten years and the financial difficulties that Japan still faced in early 1914, this was an astute prediction. Soon after 1915 and continuing up until the early 1920s, however, inter-service rivalry over appropriations and political disputes arising from it lessened considerably. They did so for two inter-related reasons: One, participation in the First World War and the economic riches that Japan secured during this conflict; and two, the increased strength of the political parties and the desire of their leaders to make further inroads into the upper echelons of the bureaucracy.

Fortunately for the proponents of military increases, the First World War provided not only the motives but also the means to support extensive military expansion programs. This conflict, unlike the Russo-Japanese War, infused the Japanese state with cash that could be directed towards military development. Money earned from selling manufactured goods to markets previously dominated by the European imperial powers in South and Southeast Asia and the profits earned by selling war materials to the Entente powers turned Japan from a debtor nation to an international creditor. Japan’s balance of trade between 1915 and 1918 totalled just over 1.48 billion yen in surplus while foreign specie holdings by the Bank of Japan and the Japanese government topped 1.3 billion yen in 1919. Telling too, Japan’s national expenditures rose from 618 million yen in 1914 to 1.6 billion yen in 1921.⁶⁸ In a world awash with yen, the military services did surprisingly well. Military spending as a percentage of total state expenditure rose from just under 26 percent of the national budget in 1914 to just over 36 percent in 1918. Peace, however, did not slow the pace of military expansion. On the contrary, by 1921, military expenditures alone consumed an obscene forty-nine percent of Japan’s national budget.⁶⁹ To admirals and generals who had devoted much, if not all of their time towards the pursuit of military expansion, the war must have indeed seemed like “divine aid.”⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Sorifu teikoku kyoku, *Nihon teikoku tokei nenkan* 36 (1917), 574–75, and 40 (1921), 512–17.

⁶⁹ National expenditures statistics are found in Statistics Bureau (ed.), *Historical Statistics of Japan*, 5 vols. (Tokyo, 1987), 5:525 and 528. Army and navy expenditures figures are taken from Naikaku Tokeikyoku (ed.), *Nihon teikoku tokei nenkan*, 43 (1924), 507.

⁷⁰ Quote by Inoue Kaoru, cited in Dickinson, *War and National Reinvention*, 35.

⁷¹ “Principled pacifists” is a term employed by Gordon Berger in his astute assess-

It was not just the influx of money resulting from Japan's involvement in the First World War that contributed to increased military appropriations and cabinet stability. Elected parliamentarians and party leaders quickly realized in the post Russo-Japanese world that working with non-elected elite groups, particularly the military services, was the surest way to secure elite-level political stability and power. Given the nature of Japan's political system, particularly as it developed during and after the Russo-Japanese War, it is also not surprising how quickly the navy gained allies and supporters in Japan's parliament. Japan's political system generously rewarded the formation of pragmatic vertical alliances between elites and the political parties, a point made clear to both the bureaucracy and the Seiyukai during and after the Russo-Japanese War.

In gaining parliamentary allies, none would prove to be as important or as consistently supportive as the Seiyukai, which, like the navy, emerged as a burgeoning political actor in Meiji-Taisho Japan. Seiyukai leaders, like their navy counterparts, sought to expand the political influence, stature, strength, and power of the organization they led. Allying with the politically emergent navy, which desperately needed parliamentary allies to secure large-scale expansion programs and whose leaders also saw the army faction as their chief bureaucratic rival, provided the Seiyukai with just these opportunities. The navy-Seiyukai alliance gave power and influence, if only temporarily, to both parties where each sought it most: the navy within parliament and the Seiyukai within the cabinet and elite levels of government. As such, the navy-Seiyukai entente was a near perfect symbiotic political alliance and a logical manifestation of the increasingly pluralistic post-Russo-Japanese War polity.

By the time of the First World War, however, it was not just the Seiyukai that sought to work more closely with the military services nor was the Seiyukai only willing and desirous of working exclusively with the navy. Other parties, such as the Doshikai as well as other elite leaders such as Okuma Shigenobu and Terauchi Masatake understood that cooperating with the military and backing their expansion requests was perhaps the surest means by which to guarantee cabinet and elite-level political stability—failing to back the military's expansion requests had sentenced a number of previous cabinets to premature deaths.

Working closely with the military services remained most important for the Seiyukai, despite apprehensions among conservative ele-

ments in Japan's still strong Yamagata faction towards the latter. Hara and his party came to support, champion, and later spearhead military expansion because he and other Seiyukai leaders knew that mastering military politics was the "ladder to the prime minister-ship," and that voting against military increases could have devastating political consequences. Once Hara gained the opportunity to form a cabinet in 1918, the "commoner prime minister" made certain to shore up the military's support of his cabinet and he did this by working closely with military service chiefs and by championing massive armaments expansion budgets before parliament, even during the post-First World War recession. Such engagement not only provided the military services with massive amounts of money, but it also further legitimized their pragmatic involvement in party politics. Most important to Hara, it gave the Seiyukai leader what he, and in fact all party leaders wanted, namely political stability to implement domestic political reforms geared towards strengthening the Seiyukai political party.

It is therefore not surprising that those few parliamentarians who did try to limit military spending on grounds of principle, such as Ozaki Yukio did in 1921, were unsuccessful. They did not fail, however, because of pressure or coercion from the Japanese state or military or because the military "hijacked democracy" or "overthrew constitutional government." Rather, they failed because the vast majority of parliamentarians and their party leaders opposed and rejected such arguments. Most deputies and nearly all of the important party leaders were pragmatists who sought to gain greater political power for themselves and their parties. Forging alliances and informal working relations with military men and other bureaucrats proved to be the most effective and efficient way for party men to achieve these objectives. But the military demanded a price in the form of always greater appropriations and political legitimacy. A majority of parliamentarians in 1906, 1913, or 1921, were anything but "principled pacifists" who sought to use the budgetary powers they possessed to rein in the military or at least check the massive amounts of money that flowed to each military service in late Meiji, and Taisho Japan.⁷¹ Rather, they were pragmatic party men who

ment of party politics in 1930s Japan. See Gordon Berger, *Parties Out of Power, 1931-1941* (Princeton, 1977), 354.

sought alliances with other elites in order to expand their authority and to secure and enhance their power. They would continue to follow these pursuits in early Showa Japan as they had since the Russo-Japanese War and in doing so would continue to work in tandem with the bureaucracy and military services.

CHAPTER TWENTY-NINE

“THAT VITAL SPARK”: JAPANESE PATRIOTISM, THE RUSSIAN OFFICER CORPS AND THE LESSONS OF THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR*

Donald Wright

In March 1905, General Mikhail Alekseev, the chief of operations for the Third Manchurian Army, sent a letter to his family describing the state of the Russian Army at the front. The previous month, tsarist forces had been defeated at the Battle of Mukden and Alekseev tried to explain the causes of this most recent debacle. He wrote that one of the most critical weaknesses of the army was the “backwardness of the [Russian] soldier, his apathy.”¹ Alekseev then pointed out the superiority of the Japanese, describing them as more mature and “heroically willing to lay down their lives.”² The general concluded by stating that in comparison with the Japanese, “we have little more but the indifferent.”³ In previous correspondence with his family, Alekseev had blamed the army’s deficiencies mainly on the high command, especially the commander in chief, Aleksei Kuropatkin, who he described as a “head of cabbage” who knew only one maneuver—the retreat.⁴ However, by March 1905, he had begun to focus on the Russian rank and file, comparing them with Japanese soldiers and finding them far less fervent and patriotic than the enemy’s troops.

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¹ Hoover Institution Archives. M.V. Alekseev Collection. Box Number 1, Folder 24, Letter 33 (March 28, 1905).

² Ibid.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Ibid., Letter 29 (13 February 1905).

Alekseev was not the only tsarist officer in Manchuria to criticize the army's troops. In fact, complaints about the poor attitude of the Russian soldier became commonplace within the tsarist officer corps during the war. Officers at all levels, from the General Staff to line regiments, began to question not the fighting ability of their troops but their *esprit* and patriotism—values that were often expressed by the term *dukh* (spirit). Concerns about the patriotic fervor of the Russian soldier joined the torrent of criticism and appeals for reform that poured out of the officer corps in the wake of the defeat in Manchuria. This collective demand for reform became so strong that it would eventually lead to significant change in the army's command, organization and doctrine.

These reforms have received a great deal of attention from scholars seeking to understand the vision that guided the general staff and the war ministry in rebuilding tsarist military power and how these two institutions hoped to prepare the army for the next war. Bruce Menning, for example, has documented how the senior leadership—old, indecisive and unprepared for modern warfare—was widely considered the most debilitating factor in the Japanese war. To pave the way for a new generation of leaders, the army forcibly retired over 300 of the oldest and most incompetent generals in the three years that followed the conclusion of the peace.⁵ William Fuller has demonstrated that the defeat also led to a major shift in strategic thought within the army. Recognizing that the Manchurian campaign had been greatly impaired by the severe logistical problems inherent in prosecuting a war in distant Northeast Asia, the general staff began to reposition its forces and by 1910, a large number of units had left the western border regions of the empire and relocated to interior military districts.⁶ This move promised to give the military more flexibility and shorten its response time in the case of a future Asian conflict. Other historians have discussed how the war revealed shortcomings in the way the regime mobilized its reservists and showed the army's weaponry and tactics to be dangerously obsolete. These flaws led to the rewriting of operational manuals, the

⁵ Bruce W. Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets: The Imperial Russian Army, 1861–1914* (Bloomington, 2000), 236.

⁶ William C. Fuller, Jr., *Strategy and Power in Russia, 1600–1914* (New York, 1992), 428–33.

rearming of units with modern weapons, and the modification of mobilization plans.⁷

The literature on these reforms is central to understanding the Imperial Russian Army's efforts to rebuild the empire's military power after the Manchurian catastrophe. Left largely unexplored, however, are both the great concern shared by a broad segment of the officer corps about the quality of the Russian soldier's spirit and the tsarist regime's far-reaching attempts after 1905 to reshape the *human* material from which the army was formed. The impetus that grew within the officer corps to reform the population was similar to the desire within the civil government to deal with the Revolution of 1905 and the military defeat in Manchuria. Both events had revealed critical weaknesses within the regime and highlighted the tenuous connection between the population and the monarchy.

Perhaps the strongest impulse within the official circles of the government was to prevent the recurrence of similar disasters by creating constituencies in imperial society that would actively support the regime. This goal pushed Prime Minister Petr Stolypin to introduce a program of agrarian reform that sought to create a new class of private farmers that would serve as a stable social force in the countryside.⁸ Stolypin hoped to complement this reform by expanding local self-government, broadening worker's rights and introducing universal primary education to the empire. Such changes, Stolypin and his supporters within the government believed, would change the attitudes and values of the population, giving them a stake in society and transforming them into productive supporters of the tsarist regime.

Stolypin and the reformers in the officer corps believed that the cultivation of specific attitudes would create stronger ties between society and the tsarist regime. However, the army's reformers were more ambitious than the prime minister. Because of the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War and fears of losing the next major military conflict, tsarist officers hoped to cultivate not just loyal subjects but fervent defenders of the regime who would be willing to fight for and sacrifice themselves for Russia and its rulers. This discussion will

⁷ A.M. Zaionchkovskii, *Podgotovka Rossii k mirovoi voine. Plan voiny* (Moscow, 1926), 87–88. See also Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets*, 231–34.

⁸ For a review of Stolypin's reforms, see Abraham Ascher, *P.A. Stolypin: The Search for Stability in Late Imperial Russia* (Stanford, 2001).

focus first on how perceptions of the Japanese soldier among these officers shaped attitudes toward their own rank and file, leading them to the conclusion that their soldiers' lack of certain values, especially patriotic fervor, was one of the most important reasons for the defeat in the Russo-Japanese War. Then it will briefly examine how after 1905, the widespread belief in the deficiency of patriotism led the Russian army to introduce a series of ambitious efforts to foster the growth of values such as patriotism and civic duty within its ranks as well as within society at large.

To what degree had the Russian war effort in Manchuria really suffered from the rank and file's lack of patriotic zeal? To be sure, not all of the tsar's soldiers displayed a great deal of *esprit*. Many were reservists who, resentful of having to leave their families to fight in Manchuria, had little enthusiasm for the war.⁹ The morale of both regular soldiers and reservists was damaged over the course of the war as the Russian army continually retreated in the face of the Japanese, failing to achieve anything resembling a victory. After summer 1904, the increasing number of soldiers that began choosing self-inflicted wounds, especially those affecting the trigger finger of the right hand, over continued service at the front was just one sign of the decay of *esprit* in the army.¹⁰

However, the peasant-conscripts who filled the ranks had a deserved reputation for physical toughness, obedience and courage. Russian soldiers often displayed these attributes during the Russo-Japanese War despite of the fact that most were fighting far from home for reasons that were rarely made clear to them. The bravery of the defenders of Port Arthur, who had engaged in a savage form of trench warfare that foreshadowed the horrors of the First World War, was perhaps the best-known example of heroism exhibited by tsarist troops during the conflict. But Russian troops displayed courage and *esprit* in other engagements of the war as well. In September 1904, for example, the 219th Iukhnov Regiment, a unit of recently mobilized reservists, found themselves part of an attack against the Japanese defending along the Sha-Ho. The regiment had precious

⁹ On the generally poor performance of the reservists in the war, see A.N. Kuropatkin, *Žapiski General Kuropatkina o Rusko-iaponskoi voine* (Berlin, 1909), 256–58.

¹⁰ V. Veresaev, *Na voine* (SPB, 1908), 185. Veresaev notes the increase in these injuries and includes the text of an order issued by one commander that directed officers to punish all those who sought to avoid combat by wounding themselves.

little training in modern tactics and when ordered to attack the Japanese, advanced courageously in close formation over open ground against an enemy armed with machine guns and modern artillery.¹¹ Within minutes, the unit suffered 2,000 casualties and the attack shuddered to a halt.

Why then did tsarist officers begin to make sweeping condemnations of their soldiers' courage and willingness to sacrifice? Complaints about the lack of patriotic fervor within the rank and file were almost always the product of a comparison of the Russian conscript and his Japanese counterpart. The zeal and courage of the Japanese soldier in Manchuria had shocked many Russian officers. This is not surprising given the fact that in 1904, most tsarist military officials knew little about Japan or the Japanese Army. The army's intelligence service, for example, became heavily involved after 1895 in gathering information on China and other Asian powers while it ignored Japan almost completely until 1904.¹² The War Ministry itself thought so little of Japan that until 1905, it did not teach the Japanese language in its General Staff Academy.¹³ Much of this dismissive attitude was based in the chauvinistic attitudes many Russians held toward Asians in general and the Japanese in particular. Russians tended to view the Japanese as racially inferior and the Russian press at times published racist caricatures of the Japanese. In the first months of the war, the tsarist regime eagerly fostered these racist stereotypes by encouraging the use of the term "makaki" (macaques) in Russia's state-owned newspapers to describe the empire's enemy and by printing posters that depicted Japanese soldiers as ape-like creatures running from powerful Russian warriors.¹⁴

The little information that was gathered by Russian officials about Japan reflected these assumptions and attitudes toward the Japanese. In 1900, for example, the Russian military attaché in Tokyo, a cavalry officer who spoke no Japanese, reported to the War Ministry that Japan was decades away from creating an army that resembled modern European forces.¹⁵ It was true that Japan's armed forces had

¹¹ Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets*, 183.

¹² David H. Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, "Russian Military Intelligence on the Manchurian Front, 1904–05," *Intelligence and National Security*, XI, no. 1 (1996), 25.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ S.Iu. Vitte, *Vospominaniia*, 3 vols. (M., 1994), II, 277; Orlando Figes, *A People's Tragedy* (New York, 1996), 168.

¹⁵ Menning, *Bayonets before Bullets*, 152.

been created in 1871 during the Meiji Restoration. However, the attaché, as well as the army's general staff, discounted the fact that in introducing a modern, conscript-based army, the Japanese had used the Prussian Army as a model and invited German officers to Japan as advisors. Similarly, the Japanese had designed and constructed their new navy using the British fleet as their example. And perhaps most importantly, the Japanese had brought to these new institutions the ethos of the traditional samurai warrior that was based on patriotism, courage and sacrifice. Japan's success in alloying its traditional martial values with western military techniques and weaponry was demonstrated by its rapid victory in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–95. In less than a year, the Japanese army and navy had inflicted a series of sharp defeats on the Chinese and taken control of both Korea and Manchuria. Despite these very real military accomplishments, the Russian army's officer corps remained unimpressed with Japan's military strength.

One important exception was General A.N. Kuropatkin who would become commander in chief in Manchuria once war broke out in 1904. Since his appointment as war minister in 1897, Kuropatkin had been voicing concerns about Russian foreign policy in East Asia, believing it to be a diversion of energy and resources away from the empire's more important interests in Europe. To Kuropatkin, Asia represented a great threat to Russian power; consequently, he believed that tsarist policy in the region had to be cautious. The war minister's visit to Japan in 1903 reinforced this view. During his tour, Kuropatkin became more convinced of the need to stay out of an entanglement with Japan in Korea and Manchuria. Much of this had to do with the war minister's impressions of the Japanese army. Kuropatkin was struck by the patriotic spirit of the soldiers and the support the army received from Japanese society as a whole. The trip to Japan left Kuropatkin gravely concerned about Russia's prospects in any future war with Japan, especially one fought in Korea and Manchuria.¹⁶

Unlike the war minister, most tsarist officers had entered the war confident of victory over a nation they considered weak. However, on the battlefields of Manchuria, tsarist officers encountered an enemy which had nothing in common with the assumptions and racist stereotypes held by many of these officers. Instead, in numerous engage-

¹⁶ Fuller, *Strategy and Power in Russia*, 378–80.

ments with the Japanese, Russian troops confronted soldiers that were willing to attack repeatedly in situations where their death was almost assured. The most famous case of such bravery occurred in November–December 1904 during the final stages of the siege at Port Arthur, when the Japanese launched a huge assault designed to overwhelm the well-entrenched Russian defenders. This last offensive forced the Russian commander of Port Arthur to surrender but victory cost the Japanese Army close to five thousand men per day.¹⁷ The *esprit* and willingness to sacrifice exhibited by the Japanese rank and file during this and the other battles of the war made a lasting impression on Russian commanders. Kuropatkin, in his 1906 farewell address to the officers of the First Manchurian Army, explained to his subordinates that their defeat could be partially attributed to the martial qualities of the Japanese. "We should recall," Kuropatkin told his fellow officers, "how [the Japanese], with such little regard for life, piled the bodies of their comrades on our obstacles and tried to reach our positions by climbing over this mass of corpses."¹⁸ Kuropatkin would elsewhere describe Japanese soldiers as performing "heroic feats that appeared to be inspired from on high."¹⁹

The courage highlighted by Kuropatkin contrasted sharply with the low level of patriotic enthusiasm many Russian officers perceived among their own troops. M.V. Alekseev and others had begun noting this disparity during the war itself. In the years following the war, many veterans of the Manchurian conflict openly discussed the lack of patriotism within the army's ranks and fastened on this deficiency as one of the key reasons for the defeat. For example, Colonel M.V. Grulev, who commanded a regiment during the war, argued in his memoir that the low level of patriotic fervor had adversely affected the army's efforts. Echoing Alekseev's comments almost exactly, Grulev noted that his soldiers had displayed "complete apathy, almost an indifference to the war."²⁰

More scathing was the criticism of General F.K. Gershelman, who in a 1907 article for the army's newspaper *Russkii invalid* unfavorably contrasted the Russian conscript with the victorious Japanese soldier. In Gershelman's estimation, the Japanese were "severely disciplined," "spiritually tough," and instilled with "an unusual degree

¹⁷ I.I. Rostunov (ed.), *Istoriia russko-iaponskoi voiny* (M., 1977), 238–41.

¹⁸ *Russkii invalid*, 7 March 1906, 4.

¹⁹ Kuropatkin, *Zapiski Generala Kuropatkina*, 212.

²⁰ M.V. Grulev, *V shtabakh i na poliakhs Dal'niago Vostoka*, 2 pts. (SPB, 1909), pt. 2, 440.

of patriotic feeling” that allowed them to act selflessly in all military situations.²¹ Gershelman then observed that the Russian rank and file had been inferior to their foe for the simple reason that the Russian soldier “was by no means electrified by the same type of ardent enthusiasm and patriotic upsurge displayed by the Japanese army.”²² Critiques like Gershelman’s gained great currency in the immediate post-war period and by 1911, Colonel M.V. Grulev contended the tsarist soldier’s lack of patriotic zeal had become the most widely accepted explanation in Russia for the Imperial Army’s failures in Manchuria.²³

Reinforcement of this belief came from foreign accounts of the war that were published in Russia between 1906 and 1914. The Russo-Japanese conflict was the first major war in a generation to involve one of Europe’s Great Powers. Concerned about preparing their armies for the next war, most European states sent military agents to Manchuria to observe how modern tactics and weaponry had changed the conduct of warfare. Many of these officers published their accounts after returning home, and Russian publishing houses quickly translated these reports for an eager domestic audience. One commercial press in St. Petersburg, for example, published a series titled *Foreign Observations and Opinions of The Russo-Japanese War*, which included 25 accounts written by German, French, and Austrian officers.²⁴ Like their Russian counterparts, many of these foreign observers had been impressed by the patriotism of the Japanese and were unequivocal in their criticism of the Russian soldier’s lack of enthusiasm.

The comments of Captain Niessel, a French staff officer, were typical. Niessel described the Russian rank and file as impaired by “an insufficient level of spirit” while the Japanese Army, in comparison, benefited from a high level of zeal that allowed its officers to demand “extraordinary efforts” from their men.²⁵ M.J. Shtrefler, an Austrian observer, was so struck by the patriotic fervor of the Japanese that he believed the Japanese Army had managed “the destruction of the

²¹ *Russkii invalid*, 24 January 1907, 3.

²² *Ibid.*

²³ M.V. Grulev, *Zhizn dnia v zhizni armii* (Brest-Litovsk, 1911), 162.

²⁴ *Russko-iaponskaia voina v nabliudeniakh i sozhdieniakh inostrantsev*, 25 vols. (SPB, 1906–1909).

²⁵ *Ibid.*, Vypusk III. *Iz opyta rusko-iaponskoi voiny. Takticheskie vyvody kapitana frantsuzskogo general’nogo shatba Niesselia* (SPB, 1909), 55–56.

individual," teaching it soldiers instead "to sacrifice their lives whenever possible for the good of the sovereign and the motherland."²⁶ Evidently, at least some Japanese officers shared the perception that insufficient zeal on the part of the Russian soldier had been an important factor in Japan's victories. Sir Ian Hamilton, a British general who observed the conflict from the Japanese side, described how early in the war, a high-ranking Japanese officer dispassionately explained to him that the Russians were losing because, unlike his army, they had not taken care to inculcate patriotic values in their soldiers. Hamilton agreed, tersely characterizing the tsar's soldiers as lacking "that vital spark of military fervor."²⁷

Not only did tsarist officers and foreign observers share the perception that Russian troops were missing that critical spark, they also began to view Japanese patriotic spirit as the ideal and the system that produced this *esprit* as a model to be emulated. Within the Russian officer corps, this adoption of the Japanese soldier as the paragon of the patriotic warrior actually began during the war itself. In May 1905, for example, General Alekseev explained to his family that one of the critical differences between the tsarist regime and the Japanese government was the fact that Japan took care to inculcate its soldiers with nationalistic fervor, using its schools as the "purveyors of patriotic education."²⁸ The young men who graduated from these schools and became conscripts in the Japanese Army, in Alekseev's opinion, presented "a lofty example of love for country and faithful and true service to it."²⁹ The regimental doctor Vikentii Veresaev similarly described how he and his fellow officers slowly

²⁶ Ibid., Vypusk XVI. *Izblecheniia iz vypuskov 1-i serii Avstriiskogo voennago zhurnal. Shtreflera* (SPB, 1908), 19.

²⁷ Ser Ian Gamilton, *Zapisnaia knizhka shtabnogo ofitsera vo vremia russo-iaponskoi voiny* Book I (SPB, 1906), 10. The observations of Hamilton, Niessel and others reaffirmed the fervent belief in European armies that despite the introduction in Manchuria of weapons such as the machine gun that seemingly gave the advantage to the defender, the attack remained the preferred method of winning battles and wars. This was the most important and influential lesson drawn by Europeans from the Russo-Japanese War. See Michael Howard, "Men Against Fire" in Peter Paret (ed.), *Makers of Modern Strategy* (Princeton, 1986), 510–26 and S.P. MacKenzie "Willpower or Firepower? The Unlearned Lessons of the Russo-Japanese War" in David Wells and Sandra Wilson (eds.), *The Russo-Japanese War in Cultural Perspective* (New York, 1999), 30–40.

²⁸ Hoover Institution Archives. M.V. Alekseev Collection. Box Number 1, Folder 24, Letter 42 (17 May 1905).

²⁹ Ibid.

began to admire the Japanese as the war progressed. By the middle of the war, Veresaev had become so impressed by the patriotic dedication of their foe that he began to regard the Japanese as “an ideal, a reproach, a beneficial example” that Russia should attempt to imitate.³⁰

The transformation of the Japanese from enemy to archetype during the very course of hostilities is remarkable. Perhaps more striking was the fact that in adopting the Japanese as a model, Russian officers were casting aside the previously well-entrenched racial attitudes that regarded the Japanese as “monkeys” who were vastly inferior to any modern western army. Such a radical transition in the way these officers perceived the enemy illustrates the degree to which the zeal of the Japanese soldier had shocked Russian officers and the depth of their disillusionment with their own troops.

Soon after the conclusion of the peace agreement at Portsmouth, the army began digesting the lessons of the war and took the first steps in what would become a broad campaign of military reform. The officers that became part of the reform movement came from a variety of political backgrounds and offered an equally diverse set of plans for the restructuring of the army. But as William Fuller has noted, almost all the participants in the movement agreed that military reform had to be accompanied by changes in Russia’s social and political institutions.³¹ Most of these officers had come to see modern warfare not simply as a conflict between armies but a larger struggle between peoples that demanded the full economic, political and military mobilization of the nation. In the wake of the Russo-Japanese disaster, many of these men began to believe that the preparation of the Russian Empire for a war of this type would, at the very least, require inculcating the populace with a fervent form of patriotism that emphasized duty to the nation as well as loyalty to the monarch.

Russian officers who had served in Manchuria were especially conscious of the need for these values within the army. Japan, many of these officers argued, had created the ideal modern soldier and the military intellectuals who published analyses of the Japanese victory

³⁰ V. Veresaev, *Na voine*, 199. Veresaev borrowed this phrase from the nineteenth century Russian philosopher Alexander Herzen who, as a westernizer, argued that Europe served as “an ideal, a reproach, a beneficial example” for backward Russia.

³¹ William C. Fuller, Jr., *Civil-Military Conflict in Imperial Russia, 1881–1914* (Princeton, 1985), 197.

in Manchuria attempted to pinpoint the origin of the Japanese soldier's zeal. Many began looking not only at Japan's military system but at its political and social structures as well. Most military critics came to share General Alekseev's assessment that the source of the Japanese soldier's political values lay within Japan's system of education. For example, Kuropatkin, who had served as the commander in chief of Russian forces during the war, had traveled to Japan before the war and while there had been surprised to find Japanese schools conducting a great amount of military and patriotic training. After the war, Kuropatkin gave a great deal of the credit to Japan's school system for generating the military fervor and patriotism he had witnessed in Manchuria:

In all the schools military exercises were very conspicuous, and the children and boys greatly interested in them. Hikes involved tactical tasks adapted to the localities such as turning movements, surprise attacks and moving on the double. The study of Japanese history in all the schools had strengthened the people's love for the motherland and instilled in them the conviction that it was invincible. Great attention was paid to Japan's victories and the glorification of the heroes of these campaigns. The Japanese taught [their children] that not one of Japan's military enterprises had ever failed.³²

General E.I. Martynov was similarly impressed by the military instruction conducted by Japanese schools and explained in his 1907 account of the Manchurian war that the Japanese government used this training to create a population instilled with a “strong national and patriotic spirit.”³³ Martynov contended that this training served as the foundation for Japan's success against the Russian army.³⁴ European observers of the Manchurian war often shared this interest in the relationship between Japan's education system and the patriotism of the Japanese soldier. General Ian Hamilton, for example, wrote that Japanese government used the schools to ensure that its children “began imbibing patriotism in their infancy.”³⁵ Formal military, patriotic and physical training, Hamilton asserted, gave the Japanese soldier the “vital spark” that he believed was so obviously missing in the Russian rank and file.

³² Kuropatkin, *Žapiski Generala Kuropatkina*, 203.

³³ E.I. Martynov, *Iz pečal'nago opyta russko-iaponskoi voiny* (SPB, 1907), 70.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, 74.

³⁵ Gamilton, *Žapisnaia knizhka shtabnogo ofitsera vo vremia russko-iaponskoi voiny*, Book I, 10.

Emerging from a number of Russian accounts of the war was the perception that Japan's schools had cultivated a strong sense of citizenship as well as fervent patriotic sentiments in the population. For example, I. Taburno, an officer who had served in Manchuria, praised the Japanese school for inculcating a consciousness of "civic duty to the nation."³⁶ E.I. Martynov went further, arguing that the Japanese soldier "feels himself to be a citizen in every way" and that this was a result of teaching both literacy and patriotism in the schools.³⁷ With the identity of the citizen, he suggested, came the related understanding of the nation's interests and consciousness of one's duty to protect those interests. This feeling of citizenship, Martynov suggested, increased the Japanese soldier's patriotic spirit and made him superior to his Russian adversary. Thus in Russian estimates, the victorious Japanese soldier became not only an ideal subject who selflessly served his emperor but an exemplary citizen as well, aware of and dedicated to his nation's well-being.

This construct of citizen and patriot would become the model adopted by many within the tsarist officer corps who sought a new type of soldier for the Russian army. To these officers, the Russian rank and file stood essentially as an undeveloped and malleable mass of individuals who simply lacked the proper values and attitudes. The necessary political identity, in their estimation, had at its core the ardent devotion to the monarch and unwavering loyalty to the motherland (or fatherland).³⁸ Much of the population was likely conscious of their status as subjects of a monarch who ruled from a distant capital.³⁹ But military reformers hoped to invigorate this relationship between the tsar and the people so that they would come to view their tie to the monarch as an intensely personal bond. Developing the connection between the average Russian subject and the motherland would be more difficult. The idea of belonging to a Russian nation, tsarist officers believed, was a difficult concept for most of the population to grasp. The empire was comprised of hundreds of nationalities, most of which were not Russian. And even

³⁶ I. Taburno, *Pravda o voine* (SPB, 1905), 229.

³⁷ Martynov, *Iz pechal'nago opyta russko-iaponskoi voiny*, 64.

³⁸ Russians used these terms interchangeably.

³⁹ A.V. Buganov's research suggests that by the early twentieth century, the Russian peasantry had at least basic knowledge of the monarchy and its role in events such as the War of 1812. A.V. Buganov, *Russkaia istoriia v pamiati krestian XIX veka i natsional'noe samosoznanie* (M, 1992), 115–16.

ethnic Russians, who identified mainly with their village or province, had only a rudimentary sense of membership in a national—or imperial—community.⁴⁰ However, most military reformers believed that passionate patriotic sentiment was rooted in a strong emotional attachment to a homeland and thus planned to fortify the new patriotic identity with a well-developed sense of national self-consciousness.⁴¹

A sense of commitment to the national community was also an essential element of the new patriotic identity. For many within the officer corps, Japan's success in cultivating patriotic fervor among its soldiers was largely due to the state's ability to foster an awareness of duty to the nation.⁴² The Japanese citizen appeared to Russia's officers as cognizant of the nation's interests and conscious of their shared obligation to protect those interests. What was compelling to these military men about the Japanese version of citizenship was its emphasis on duty. The Russian concept of citizenship had by the end of the nineteenth century similarly come to stress the responsibilities that each individual held to the state.⁴³ But in the eyes of tsarist military reformers who understandably looked to Japan for comparison, even this basic concept of citizenship remained almost wholly undeveloped in Russia's population.

Few tsarist officers were interested in a broader, more liberal concept of citizenship in which the citizen received specific political, economic and social rights in exchange for his or her civic commitment to serve the state. Instead, army officers hoped to expand the importance and understanding of citizenship by widely inculcating in the population the individual's obligation to be an economically productive, politically reliable member of the national community who,

⁴⁰ Many of the army's reformers tended to view the Russian empire as a multi-ethnic nation. These men believed that imparting a patriotic identity based on devotion to a Russian tsar and a Russian-dominated imperial community would serve to unite rather than divide the various nationalities of the empire. See Joshua Sanborn, *Drafting the Russian Nation: Military Conscription, Total War and Mass Politics, 1905–1925* (DeKalb, 2003), 10–12.

⁴¹ The Debol'skii Commission, established in 1909 to establish the guidelines for patriotic instruction in the empire's schools, argued that teachers needed to overcome a local or provincial identity in their children and instill in them a sense of membership in the Russian nation. RGVA, fond 400 (Main Staff), op. 3, d. 4707, ll. 90–92.

⁴² See, for example, Taburno, *Pravda o voine*, 229.

⁴³ Dov Yaroshevski, "Empire and Orient" in *Russia's Orient: Imperial Borderlands and Peoples, 1700–1917*; and Austin Lee Jersild, "From Savagery to Citizenship: Caucasian Mountaineers and Muslims in the Russian Empire" in *ibid.*, 101–14.

most importantly, was prepared for the defense of that community. In their imagined citizen, Russian officers saw an individual who first and foremost was physically, intellectually and spiritually prepared to go into combat to protect the interests of the tsarist empire. Thus, among the new qualities to be instilled in this individual would be those martial values and skills they saw as crucial in having made the Japanese conscript such an effective soldier. This conclusion led many military reformers to view rudimentary training in physical education and military knowledge as a necessary accompaniment to political instruction and critical to the transformation of the empire's population into a citizenry.

Having decided that the Japanese soldier served as a patriotic and civic example and accepted the idea that Japan's schools were the main source of his values, tsarist officers began to view the empire's military strength as greatly dependent on the ability of its teachers to play a similar role in shaping Russia's population. This belief in a direct relationship between education and success on the battlefield was not new. In fact, for many within the officer corps, the Japanese victory in Manchuria reminded them of the German victory in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870. For decades, an aphorism about the war had circulated widely throughout European society, crediting Germany's success in the conflict not to its army, but to its school-teachers who, it was believed, had successfully inculcated the virtues of selfless patriotic service into those children that later became conscripts. Such patriotic fervor, the aphorism suggested, had given the German army a significant advantage and made the swift defeat of the French possible. The veracity of this adage was questionable. But in Russia after 1905, many in the officer corps accepted the idea as a powerful truth that had been verified by Japan's victory in Manchuria.⁴⁴

Despite the widespread belief in military circles about this connection between education and military power, enlisting Russia's school system in a larger effort to inculcate specific values and attitudes would prove difficult. In 1905, the Russian educational system—a huge network of primary and secondary schools supervised

⁴⁴ The use of the aphorism about the Prussian (or German) schoolmasters became commonplace in the Russian articles about the war and the importance of military and patriotic training in Japanese and German schools. See for example, *Russkii invalid*, 14 May 1906, 7, and 28 May 1906, 6; and Martynov, *Iz pechal'nago opyta russko-iaponskoi voiny*, 74.

by a variety of institutions, ministries and local bodies of self-government—had almost no role in imparting political or civic lessons to the empire's children. Throughout the nineteenth century, school reformers had sought to integrate exactly this type of curriculum into the system. Especially during the period of the Great Reforms, the leading administrators in the ministry of education envisioned the school network as the primary means of inculcating political support for the regime and the proper attitudes of the sober and productive citizen.⁴⁵ Budget constraints and other difficulties, however, weakened the efforts to create this type of curriculum and by the time war broke out in Manchuria, efforts to impart political or civic lessons were limited to choir classes (*penie*) where students in primary schools learned to sing both religious hymns and patriotic anthems.⁴⁶

To address the absence of civic and patriotic instruction in the schools, many within the tsarist officer corps began to push the empire's education system to make changes to its curriculum. Between 1905 and 1908, military writers unleashed a flood of books, journal articles and newspaper editorials that called for political indoctrination in Russian schools. One of the earliest of these appeals appeared in *Russkii invalid* less than two months after the end of the Manchurian War. The anonymous author claimed that the shortcomings most responsible for Russia's defeat could only be addressed by using both primary and secondary schools to teach patriotic values and basic military skills to the empire's youth.⁴⁷ General E.I. Martynov, in his critique of the Russian army's campaign in Manchuria, was more adamant, stating that until tsarist schools began to conduct political and military instruction, the empire would have neither competent soldiers nor a strong army.⁴⁸

As the calls for the introduction of this type of training increased, military intellectuals, aware of the historical inability of the education system to offer patriotic indoctrination, proposed that the army itself become involved in providing teachers for the instruction. These men often expressed great passion about what they believed was a new mission for the army and sometimes used religious imagery to appeal for the participation of their fellow officers. For example, in

⁴⁵ Ben Eklof, *Russian Peasant Schools: Officialdom, Village Culture and Popular Pedagogy* (Berkeley, 1986), 478–80.

⁴⁶ Thomas Darlington, *Education in Russia* (London, 1909), 293.

⁴⁷ *Russkii invalid*, 12 October 1905, 7.

⁴⁸ Martynov, *Iz pechal'nago opyta russko-iaponskoi voiny*, 74.

the 1906 book *The New Path of the Contemporary Officer*, Colonel M. Galkin characterized the Russian officer as an “apostle” who had a calling to instill in society “the healthy spirit of true nationalism and martial character.”⁴⁹

S.A. Toluzakov, like Galkin a veteran of the Russo-Japanese War, used similar imagery in urging his colleagues to become educators of the people. In this role, Toluzakov believed, the tsarist officer should “like a monk, take vows of poverty and obedience, consecrating their bodies and spirits to the defense of the Motherland and the Sovereign.”⁵⁰ Other military critics emphasized the officer’s duty to impart civic as well as martial values to the population. For example, one commentator in the military journal *Razvedchik* reminded his fellow officers that they should use lessons in discipline, bravery and honor to shape “citizen-soldiers.”⁵¹ In a later issue of *Razvedchik*, E. Svidzinskii charged the officer corps with the duty of teaching both traditional patriotic values such as devotion to tsar and the more modern concept of citizenship that emphasized the duty of national defense.⁵² Svidzinskii suggested that if properly instilled throughout society, these ideals would adequately prepare the population for the next war.

Initial proposals in the military press focused on retired and reserve officers, a group of men who had both the time and the knowledge necessary properly to teach basic gymnastic, drill and patriotic lessons.⁵³ These plans had the advantage of offering trained instructors to the empire’s schools without taking active duty officers away from their units. However, the ardent desire within the regular army to take a direct role in shaping the empire’s population led many active duty officers to propose their own involvement in preparing the empire’s youth for service to Russia.

As the number of published appeals for military and patriotic instruction in the schools grew, the War Ministry itself became increasingly convinced that some type of indoctrination of the empire’s youth was necessary. In 1907, military officials across the empire

⁴⁹ M. Galkin, *Novyi put’ sovremennago ofitsera* (M, 1906), 15.

⁵⁰ S.A. Toluzakov *Na poliakh Manchzhurii i v Rossii posle voiny* (SPB, 1906), 203.

⁵¹ *Razvedchik*, 3 October 1906, 723.

⁵² *Ibid.*, 15 April 1908, 279.

⁵³ As examples of these proposals, see *Russkii invalid*, 24 January 1907, 3–4, 23 February 1907, 4–5, and 22 December 1907, 6.

began presenting formal plans to the General Staff for a new school curriculum that included military, patriotic and physical education. The most detailed proposal belonged to the commander of the Fifth Siberian Rifle Division, who called for lessons in gymnastics, drill exercises and games that would impart basic military knowledge to schoolchildren.⁵⁴ This officer, interested in preparing the mental attitudes as well as the physical abilities of the children, also outlined a program of patriotic songs and stories that would be embellished with "magic lantern" pictures of Russian heroes projected on school walls. A similar plan by General D.A. Skalon, the commander of the Warsaw Military District, gained the attention of both War Minister Alexander Rediger and Nicholas II. Skalon suggested that the empire's schools immediately begin teaching gymnastics and drill and hoped that eventually classes in marksmanship could be added.⁵⁵ The general hoped that civilian teachers could eventually be trained to conduct much of the instruction but he realized that in the short-term, retired and reserve army officers would have to serve as instructors. Nicholas read Skalon's proposal and wrote in the margin "This is important."

With this phrase, the tsar signaled his acceptance of the idea of using Russia's schools to prepare its children for patriotic service. But official approval for the War Ministry and the Ministry of Education to begin introducing gymnastic and drill instruction to the schools would have to wait until early 1908. Following that approval, active, retired and reserve officers across the empire began working with education officials, school directors and teachers to shape the new military and patriotic curriculum. These new programs of instruction would begin slowly. But by 1909, such efforts to instill patriotic values within the population quickly expanded into a larger campaign that would come to include paramilitary youth groups and a series of empire-wide anniversary celebrations consciously designed to develop patriotic sentiment within imperial society. Although school-teachers, gymnastic instructors, and other members of civil society would become heavily involved in this campaign after 1909, the main impetus for the efforts to foster patriotism remained within the army officer corps.

⁵⁴ RGVIA, fond 400 (Main Staff), op. 2, d. 7821, ll. 3–4.

⁵⁵ RGIA, fond 733 (Ministry of Education), op. 175, d. 401, l. 59.

In its last decade, the Russian army began an ambitious effort to shape the attitudes and values of the empire's population. Defeat in the Russo-Japanese War had convinced many tsarist officers of the need for a new type of soldier, inspired with a patriotic zeal similar to that displayed by the Japanese in Manchuria. This type of soldier, such officers believed, was critical to Russia's plans for the reestablishment of its military might, the reassertion of its great power status, and its ability to avoid future disasters like the one it had suffered at the hands of an enemy who had unexpectedly become an ideal to be emulated.

CHAPTER THIRTY

“BRAVO, BRAVE TIGER OF THE EAST!” THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR AND THE RISE OF NATIONALISM IN BRITISH EGYPT AND INDIA¹

Steven G. Marks

Many events caused rising levels of unrest in British-ruled Egypt and India in the first decade of the twentieth century. Lord Curzon's university reorganization and partition of Bengal provoked the ire of Indian Muslims and Hindus alike. Egypt under the Earl of Cromer and his successor, Sir Eldon Gorst, saw assaults on British soldiers, school strikes, and urban riots in the wake of both a Turkish-English frontier dispute in the Sinai and the Dinshawai affair, during which excessive punishments were meted out to fellahin involved in a fight with English officers. The incidents that brought forth these angry native responses were no different than previous, equally tactless, measures taken by either the British Raj or the Anglo-Egyptian occupation authority that usually generated short-lived and highly localized reactions. But there was a notably testy mood in these parts of the British Empire by 1906 and a newfound determination among its opponents. This was reflected in heated articles in the indigenous press and a greater assertiveness among native political organizations: in India, the Congress Party and various Hindu extremist and terrorist associations, especially active in Bengal; and in Egypt, the Nationalist (or Watani) Party, led by Mustafa Kamil. And, as never before, a large segment of the populace in these colonies² began to display self-conscious nationalist feelings.

¹ The title quote is from a poem in *Prakashak* (Feb. 19, 1904), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1904*, no. 9, 13, British Library, Oriental and India Office Collection (henceforth OIOC), L/R/5/159. I would like to thank the following scholars for sharing their expertise in Egyptian, Indian, Turkish, and colonial nationalism with me: Palmyra Brummet, James Burns, James Miller, Lisa Pollard, Donald Reid, Aviel Roshwald, and Michael Silvestri.

² It should be noted that technically Egypt was not a colony and did not become a British protectorate until after 1914 when its tie with the Ottoman empire was severed. Cromer's and Gorst's title was only Consul-General as the ambassador was in Constantinople. But these were all fictions.

The Russo-Japanese War was one of the sparks that ignited this new phase in the history of the British Empire.³ Although overshadowed in historical memory by World War I, with the Wilsonian promise of self-determination and Leninist appeals to national liberation and revolution, the decisive defeat of a European by an Asian power gave momentum to the colonial nationalist movements that did so much to configure twentieth-century history. As Mohandas Gandhi observed at the end of the war in his South African newspaper *Indian Opinion*, “so far and wide have the roots of Japanese victory spread that we cannot now visualize all the fruit it will put forth. The people of the East seem to be waking up from their lethargy.”⁴

This article argues that the Russo-Japanese War helped to stimulate what Partha Chatterjee identifies in the abstract as the “moment of departure” in the thought of colonial nationalists and what Sadik Jalal al-‘Azm calls “Orientalism in reverse.”⁵ These were part and parcel of the same process: Chatterjee maintains that a nationalist movement could only exist and become self-sustaining once a firm dichotomy between East and West was established in the minds of native intellectuals. Al-‘Azm defines that moment (which he, too, does not identify with any specific event) as one in which long-standing “Orientalist” stereotypes of superior West and inferior East were reversed in the perceptions of colonial subjects. Sugata Bose, Ayesha Jalal, Anil Seal, and other recent Indian historians have qualified such conceptualizations by depicting nationalist movements as exceedingly complex and diverse results of local, regional, and cross-caste or cross-religious interactions. Rather than being simply a matter of angry opposition to European authority, they also took shape jock-

³ There is only one scholarly work devoted to any aspect of this subject, a conceptually thin book by R. Dua, *Impact of the Russo-Japanese (1905) War on Indian Politics* (New Delhi, 1966).

⁴ Article of Oct. 28, 1905, in M. Gandhi, *Collected Works of Mahatma Gandhi*, vol. V (Ahmedabad, 1961), 115.

⁵ P. Chatterjee, *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World* (Minneapolis, 1993), 50–51; S. al-‘Azm, “Orientalism and Orientalism in Reverse,” *Khamsin*, no. 8 (1981): 5–26. With some differences, my application of these interpretations follows that of R. Worringer, “Comparing Perceptions: Japan as an Archetype for Ottoman Modernity, 1876–1918” (Ph.D. diss., University of Chicago, 2001).

eying for position among themselves.⁶ Chatterjee and al-ʿAzm are indeed overly schematic in reducing nationalism to simplistic dichotomies between East and West. But as Seal put it, "formed out of disparate aspirations and grievances, [colonial nationalisms] were somehow generalized into unities stronger than their own contradictions."⁷ It is my contention that the Russo-Japanese War played a major role in overriding these contradictions, by leading nationalists and their constituencies to perceive their circumstances in a nation-wide and global context and by convincing them that their dreams of taking charge in their own lands were realizable. Thus, although nationalists did not fully transcend their many differences, and multiple, often mutually exclusive, visions of the future continued to exist, the responses to the Russo-Japanese War in India and Egypt suggest that the interpretations of Chatterjee and al-ʿAzm remain valid. At a more basic level, analysis of the reaction to the war sheds light on the debate over nation, empire, and modernity that was just beginning to emerge in the non-Western world.

Why focus on India and Egypt? Within the European empires, these were the two colonies with the largest educated native populations, and the correspondingly largest oppositional intelligentsias.⁸ Although formally still part of the Ottoman Empire, Egypt was in truth an English protectorate and benefited from relatively liberal press laws non-existent in other Ottoman-controlled lands, where strict censorship prevailed.⁹ Its thriving publishing houses as well the mosque-university of al-Azhar and, after 1908, the secular Egyptian University gave its writers an unrivalled intellectual authority in the Islamic realm, from Morocco to Malaysia. The situation was similar in India (although Curzon was eager to restrict press freedom),

⁶ S. Bose and A. Jalal, *Modern South Asia* (London, 1998), chap. 11; A. Seal, "Imperialism and Nationalism in India," in J. Gallagher et al. (eds.), *Locality, Province, and Nation: Essays on Indian Politics, 1870-1940* (Cambridge, 1973), 1-27.

⁷ Seal, "Imperialism and Nationalism," 4-5.

⁸ This, perhaps, accounts for the more enthusiastic and attentive reaction to the war in these colonies than in others; cf. Paul Rodell's article on Southeast Asia in this volume. And see G. Hoston, *State, Identity, and the National Question in China and Japan* (Princeton, 1994), passim, for the extensive response Chinese intellectuals to the war—similar to that of India and Egypt.

⁹ Worringer, "Comparing Perceptions," chaps. 6 and 7.

which also comprised a large and increasingly vocal Muslim population. India influenced thinkers throughout Southeast Asia, who read what the Indians wrote and emulated their political activities.¹⁰ And Egyptian and Indian nationalists kept abreast of each other's disquisitions on the British empire, which, as we will see, bore a great deal of similarity to each other in tone and content.¹¹ Both cases are therefore fundamental to an understanding of the development of anti-colonialism elsewhere in Africa and Asia. And both spread ecstatic hopes of the deliverance that would result from the victory of the Japanese David against the Russian Goliath. *Jam-e-Jamshed*, a Gujarati paper of Bombay, summed up this sentiment: "the twentieth century could not have breathed a more . . . encouraging message of hope into the ears of the downtrodden nations of the East than that which it has whispered on the opening day of the present year through the surrender of Port Arthur by Russia to Japan."¹²

Coverage of the war was extensive in both India and Egypt. From 1904 to 1905 it was the top newspaper story, with daily and often lengthy articles on the battles, the diplomacy, and the Russian Baltic fleet's voyage around the world (to its eventual destruction by Admiral Togo's navy). From the moment the war began and continuing for several years to come, colonial papers and politicians editorialized on its repercussions. Writings about Russia, in relation to the war, the concurrent 1905 revolution, and anti-Jewish pogroms, frequently crowded out coverage of other foreign countries, including the UK. In the English-language press of Egypt, the number of articles about Russia at war far surpassed those dealing with international cotton markets, which had previously been the leading topic. Circulation figures for the Arabic-language press also soared, with Kamil's nation-

¹⁰ See, for example, J. Furnivall, *Colonial Policy and Practice* (Cambridge, 1948), 142–43, for Burmese nationalists following the Indian lead.

¹¹ For Egyptian nationalist articles reprinted in Indian papers, see, e.g., *Shams-ul-Akhbar* (April 11, 1904), in *Reports on Madras Native Newspapers, 1903–1904*, no. 16 (1904), 143, OIOC, L/R/5/111, and *ibid.*, *Reports on Madras Native Newspapers, 1905–1906*, no. 4 (1905), 29, OIOC, L/R/5/112. For Indian nationalists attending Mustafa Kamil's speeches in London, see *Egyptian Gazette* (Aug. 3, 1906), 3. For Egyptian and Indian newspapers as major sources of information about and for Muslims elsewhere, see F. Robinson, "The British Empire and the Muslim World," in J. Brown et al. (eds.), *Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. VI, *The Twentieth Century* (Oxford, 1999), 406.

¹² *Jam-e-Jamshed* (Jan. 4, 1905), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1905*, no. 1, 9, OIOC, L/R/5/160.

alist paper *al-Liwa* (The Standard) reaching at least 10,000 subscribers.¹³ No other story was so frequently covered in the Indian press, which met demand for news of the war by issuing extra editions and turning weeklies into dailies.¹⁴ Poetry inspired by the conflict also flourished. Political poetry was a well-developed tradition in Egypt, but it was evident in India as well. It sounded alike in both countries with its Victorian bombast and thrill at the reawakening of the Orient as exemplified by the Japanese victory; my title offers a sample.¹⁵

Native intellectuals and professionals were fully engaged with the war, elated over its outcome, and wonder-struck over Japan. To quote future Indian Prime Minister Jawaharlal Nehru, who was a teenager at the time, "Japanese victories stirred up my enthusiasm, and I waited eagerly for the papers for fresh news daily. I invested in a large number of books on Japan. . . . Nationalistic ideas filled my mind. I mused of Indian freedom and Asiatic freedom from the thralldom of Europe. I dreamed of brave deeds, of how, sword in hand, I would fight for India and help in freeing her."¹⁶ But awareness was not limited to the educated elites, and illiteracy proved no stumbling block to the spread of information and excitement over Japanese battlefield triumphs.

The sources indicate that the lower classes flocked to hear news of the latest events. In Egypt, newspapers were read out loud in schools, coffeehouses, barbershops, village assemblies, and people's homes for the benefit of those who could not read.¹⁷ As the journalist Edward Dicey reported, "I do not suppose that one Egyptian native in a thousand or a hundred thousand had any conception where Japan was, . . . but the tidings of Russia's defeat at the hands of a colored race . . . spread with . . . strange rapidity. . . . There is

¹³ R. Tignor, *Modernization and British Colonial Rule in Egypt, 1882-1914* (Princeton, 1966), 249.

¹⁴ See Dua, *Impact*, 23.

¹⁵ On Egyptian poetry about the war, see H. Sugita, "Japan and the Japanese as Depicted in Modern Arabic Literature," in K. Tsuruta (ed.), *The Walls Within: Images of Westerners in Japan and Images of the Japanese Abroad* (Vancouver, 1989), 300-304, and Worringer, "Comparing Perceptions," 31n42. For one of many Indian poems, see *Prakashak* (Feb. 19, 1904), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1904*, no. 9, 13, OIOC, L/R/5/159.

¹⁶ J. Nehru, *Toward Freedom: The Autobiography of Jawaharlal Nehru* (New York, 1941), 29-30.

¹⁷ Worringer, "Comparing Perceptions," 27-31, 351.

not a village in Egypt in which there is not some Mullah or Mahdi or holy man, learned in the Koran, who was only too glad to announce to his adherents that the downfall of the infidel was at hand, and that the day was coming when Islam would once more become supreme."¹⁸ It was no different in India. According to a British missionary, even in remote villages the men "talked over the victories of Japan as they sat in their circles and passed round the *hugqa* at night."¹⁹ In the newly introduced cinemas, native audiences cheered at newsreels showing Japanese battlefield victories.²⁰ And British intelligence reports from India, Afghanistan, Persia, and the Arabian Peninsula make clear that the same fascination and rejoicing was evident in bazaars throughout the wider region.²¹ The Russo-Japanese War awakened a nationalist consciousness among the masses—a precondition for the eventual mobilization of the populace at large against colonial rule. This calls into question the notion that nationalist aspirations were an exclusively elitist and minoritarian phenomenon, as some scholars have argued.²²

Not surprisingly, native observers were uncertain what kind of outcome to expect when the war broke out. They did not think it would be a pushover for Japan, which they considered the underdog. And many of those who did predict Russian weakness were convinced that the British king, despite his country's alliance with Japan, would not allow a fellow Christian ruler like the tsar to lose, on the assumption that this would hinder the supreme goal of all Europeans: sub-

¹⁸ *Egyptian Gazette* (July 1, 1906), 3.

¹⁹ Quote from C. Andrews, *The Renaissance in India* (London, 1912), 4. For interest on the part of the lower classes, see also *Tribune* (Lahore) (March 12, 1904), in *Selections from the Native Newspapers Published in the Punjab, 1903–1904*, no. 10 (1904), 51, OIOC, L/R/5/187; P. Sinha, *Indian National Liberation Movement and Russia (1905–1917)* (New Delhi, 1975), 174–75; Dua, *Impact*, 24; and N. Chaudhuri, "My Hundredth Year," *Granta* (Spring 1997), 205.

²⁰ M. Aung, *History of Burma* (New York, 1967), 277.

²¹ "Diary of Capt. A. D. Macpherson," no. 3 (Feb. 16–21, 1904), in *Political and Secret Correspondence. Letters from India, 1904*, OIOC, L/PS/7/163; "Diary of the Kabul Agency for the week ending 12 March 1904," in *ibid.*; "Diary of Capt. C.B. Winter, for the week ending 5 Feb. 1904," in *ibid.*; E.H.S. Clarke, "Secret Letter to His Majesty's Secretary of State for India," no. 78 (April 7, 1904), in *ibid.*; and "Report on the Economic and Administrative State of the Hedjaz Villayet, Oct. 1904 to Feb. 1905," in Foreign Office, *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Arabia, 1905*, Public Record Office (henceforth PRO), FO 406/22.

²² On that notion, see T. Raychaudhuri, "India, 1858 to the 1930s," in R. Winks (ed.), *Oxford History of the British Empire*, vol. V, *Historiography* (Oxford, 1999), 217.

jugation of the world's non-white peoples.²³ Once Russia's Baltic fleet shipped for the Far East some papers felt that trouble was in store for Japan.²⁴ But regardless of how they placed their bets on the war's end, the majority of editorial opinion was that Russia, from either the "lust of victory or from the anger of defeat," would put imperialist pressure on India, Central Asia, or the Ottoman Empire.²⁵ Unlike British statesmen, the concern among Indian nationalists was not so much over a Russian invasion, but that the Raj would make the most of the "Russian bogey" to expand British military forces, which would then be used to thwart the drive for independence. Of course, it would be an even worse setback for that cause if Russia were to win the war, as it would essentially prove that the European nations were invincible.²⁶

In the event, Japan won, and that, it was hoped, would spell doom for the empires. Enraged at the "Yellow Peril" concept that justified European aggression, the almost universal judgment among native papers in Egypt and India was that Japan would now put paid to the "White Peril."²⁷ As Bombay's *Gujarati* stated, "not only the Russians but all European nations have grown so selfish, deceitful, tyrannical,

²³ As argued by Hitechchhu (May 12, 1904), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1904*, no. 20, 11, OIOC, L/R/5/159. And see Basumati (May 6, 1905), in *Report on Native Papers in Bengal, 1905*, no. 19, pt. I, 467, OIOC, L/R/5/31; and many other papers.

²⁴ E.g., *Kal* (March 3, 1905), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1905*, no. 9, 15, OIOC, L/R/5/160.

²⁵ Quote by Lord Curzon, letter to St. John Brodrick (Feb. 11, 1904), in his *Correspondence with the Secretary of State, 1904*, no. 8, OIOC, MSS Eur F 111/163. Native papers agreed: see *Vrittanta Patrika* (April 7, 1904), in *Reports on Madras Native Newspapers, 1903-1904*, no. 15 (1904), 136, OIOC, L/R/5/111; *Manorama* (Sept. 9, 1904), in *ibid.*, no. 37 (1904), 311; and *Al Bashir*, in *Selections from the Native Newspapers Published in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, 1904*, no. 24, 194, OIOC, L/R/5/80—which also expressed amazement that Muslims of the tsarist empire supported the Russian war effort. And see *Egyptian Gazette* (July 7, 1906), 3. An exception in the case of Egypt and other parts of the Ottoman empire were Orthodox Christians who wanted Russia's intervention to protect them and were displeased with its defeat (*Egyptian Gazette*, [Aug. 3, 1905], 2).

²⁶ These themes are evident throughout the Indian press before Tsushima. See *Gujarati* (April 24, 1904), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1904*, no. 18, 11 (quote), OIOC, L/R/5/159; *Indian People* (Jan. 16, 1904), in *Selections from the Native Newspapers Published in the United Provinces of Agra and Oudh, 1904*, no. 4, 28, OIOC, L/R/5/80; and *Bengalee* (April 9, 1905), in *Report on Native Papers in Bengal, 1905*, no. 16, pt. II, 143, OIOC, L/R/5/31.

²⁷ My emphasis. Quote from *Vihari*, in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1905*, no. 28, 13, OIOC, L/R/5/160.

and greedy that it had become imperatively necessary to beat down their arrogance. Japan has done this.”²⁸ Egyptian nationalists shared that feeling: “this Japanese people is . . . the sole Oriental people which has put Europe in its proper place. How should I not love them?” asked Mustafa Kamil, who saw any blow against Europe as a strike against the British empire—“enemy no. 1” in his words.²⁹ The *Bharat Mitra* of Calcutta expressed the hopes of colonial subjects more concretely: “the repulse of Russia might call a halt to the European expansion in the East.”³⁰ Why they expected the retraction of empire to result from the Japanese humiliation of Russia is explained in a verse by Egyptian nationalist poet Hafiz Ibrahim (a follower of Kamil): the Mikado is “the perfect emperor who thrills us all by awakening the East and striking fear in Western hearts.”³¹ Along these same lines, a few Indian papers speculated that the Europeans would be so frightened by Japanese power in the East that they would cut and run from the colonies. They expected China, with its hundreds of millions, to join hands with its Japanese liberators and launch a world war between the races—Asians against whites—that would be the latter’s day of reckoning.³² Most did not go that far, but it was now clear to every newspaper bar none that seemingly mighty empires could in reality be weak and small nations strong.³³ The common refrain was that Japan’s victory has “opened our eyes”; “we are not the same people as we were before the Japanese successes.”³⁴

The emergence of Japan as the touchstone of resistance against European imperialism had meaning that went beyond purely strategic and geopolitical considerations. Perceptions of Japan entailed the

²⁸ Issue of June 25, 1904, in *ibid.*, no. 26, 18.

²⁹ M. Kamel (sic), *Egyptian-French Letters* (Cairo, n.d.), 202.

³⁰ Issue of June 10, 1905, cited in Sinha, *Indian*, 174.

³¹ “Japanese Maiden” (1904), cited in Sugita, “Japan,” 301.

³² *Amrita Bazar Patrika* (Jan. 14, 1905), in *Report on Native Papers in Bengal, 1905*, no. 3, pt. II, 23, OIOC, L/R/5/31; *Indian Mirror* (July 19, 1905), in *ibid.*, no. 29, pt. II, 262–63; *Musafir* (Nov. 8, 1906), in *Selections from the Native Newspapers Published in the United Provinces, 1905–1906*, no. 46 (1906), 795, OIOC, L/R/5/81.

³³ See, e.g., *Kal* (June 3, 1904), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1904*, no. 23, 11, OIOC, L/R/5/159.

³⁴ Respective quotes from *Sandhya* (March 15, 1905), in *Report on Native Papers in Bengal, 1905*, no. 12, pt. I, 290, OIOC, L/R/5/31; and *Bengalee* (June 14, 1905), cited in Sinha, *Indian*, 176.

reversal of theretofore dominant stereotypes of the non-Western world as backward and incapable. Not only did they root for Japan, they identified themselves with it. The native papers of India saw the Japanese as "kith and kin" of their own people.³⁵ They wrote that Japan's "admirable qualities . . . are peculiarly Asiatic: . . . fearlessness of death, . . . abstinence and self-control, tenderness and humanity." By contrast, "these are not the characteristics of Western nations," which they identified as aggressiveness, greed, and disregard for other peoples' rights in the name of progress.³⁶ During the war, Indian poet and nationalist Rabindranath Tagore (along with many others) attributed Japanese virtues to the historical influence of Hinduism. "India's main endeavor," he fantasized, had always been "to establish a personal relationship between man and man." This was the "way of the East," and was evident in the actions of the Japanese soldiers, who "remained related to their Mikado and their country in a reverential self-dedication." By contrast, these spiritual and humanistic ideals were lacking in the materialistic and power-hungry West.³⁷ In Egypt, the thought process was similar, although for some the associations were tortured: Egyptian Pan-Islamists had a difficult time making sense of the triumphs of a pagan people like the Japanese and urged them to convert to Islam to set this anomaly right.³⁸ But by and large, Egyptian intellectuals considered vanquished Russia to represent the West while Japan was "an eastern country like ours."³⁹ Some commentators in both regions took these perceptions to a logical extreme. For them, the Japanese had made it apparent that Easterners were racially *superior* to Westerners.⁴⁰ Such

³⁵ *Deshabhakta* (Feb. 23, 1904), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1904*, no. 9, 11, OIOC, L/R/5/159.

³⁶ *Gujarati* (March 19, 1905), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1905*, no. 11, 13, OIOC, L/R/5/160.

³⁷ Cited in S. Hay, *Asian Ideas of East and West* (Cambridge, 1970), 43; and see 69. For similar interpretations, see *Bangavasi* (Feb. 13, 1904), in *Report on Native Papers in Bengal, 1904*, no. 8, 177, OIOC, L/R/5/30; and *Sandhya* (Aug. 31, 1905), in *Report on Native Papers in Bengal, 1905*, no. 36, pt. I, 863, OIOC, L/R/5/31.

³⁸ *Egyptian Gazette* (July 19, 1906), 2; Worringer, "Comparing Perceptions," 343n4, 406–08.

³⁹ Words of Egyptian socialist Salama Musa, cited in Sugita, "Japan," 299.

⁴⁰ R. Ray, *Social Conflict and Political Unrest in Bengal, 1875–1927* (Delhi, 1984), 141. For similar reactions in the Ottoman empire, see M. Hanioglu, *Preparation for Revolution: The Young Turks, 1902–1908* (Oxford, 2001), 297, 302, 304.

was the sublime beauty of an archetypal Japanese maiden, according to Ibrahim, that it "would make a Jew forget gold."⁴¹

The flip side of these delusions was self-denigration, a strong component in the development of all nationalist ideologies and very much present in the contemporary understanding of Japan. Both Indian and Egyptian writers flagellated their countrymen for not being enough like the Japanese. Kamil blamed foreign domination, but nonetheless criticized Egyptians for being deficient in patriotism, nobility, self-confidence, self-sacrifice, and self-dignity—the very characteristics that gave strength to Japan.⁴² *Paisa Akbhar*, an Urdu paper of Lahore, lamented that Indians were slaves to their own inclinations and lacked the qualities that made Japan a great nation.⁴³ In the view of a variety of Bombay newspapers, Indians, far from displaying Japanese traits, were feeble, effete, slothful, unpatriotic, disunited by religion, and plagued by internecine feuding, all of which either stemmed from or abetted English divide-and-rule policies.⁴⁴ The *Daily Hitavadi* of Calcutta had no illusions whatsoever: "Is a chained dog to imitate a lion at large? The difference between Japan and India is the difference between heaven and earth."⁴⁵

Yet, despite these pessimistic evaluations, Egyptians and Indians alike were convinced that the tide had turned, thanks to Japan, which demonstrated that the East could determine its own fate. "If the rice-eating Jap is capable of throwing into utter rout and disorder the Russian soldier, cannot the rice-eating Indians . . . do the same [to the British]?" asked one Indian paper.⁴⁶ Ibrahim's poetry announced that Japan has taught "the Oriental to be self-confident."⁴⁷ Likewise, in the words of Tagore, "the land of the rising sun" has "infused hope" in the East, and "this hope provides the hidden fire which is

⁴¹ Cited in Sugita, "Japan," 301.

⁴² *Egyptian Gazette* (June 8, 1904), 3; Worringer, "Comparing Perceptions," 357.

⁴³ Issue of Sept. 7, 1904, in *Selections from the Native Newspapers Published in the Punjab, 1903–1904*, no. 37 (1904), 216, OIOC, L/R/5/187.

⁴⁴ *Aryavart* (Aug. 6, 1904), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1904*, no. 33, 13, OIOC, L/R/5/159; *Shri Sayaji Vijay* (Jan. 30, 1904), in *ibid.*, no. 3, 11–12; *Hitechchu* (May 12, 1904), in *ibid.*, no. 20, 11; *Baroda Vatsal* (May 21, 1904), in *ibid.*, no. 23, 12.

⁴⁵ *Daily Hitavadi* (June 4, 1905), in *Report on Native Papers in Bengal, 1905*, no. 23, pt. I, 564–65, OIOC, L/R/5/31.

⁴⁶ *Sri Sri Vishnu Priya-o-Ananda Bazar Patrika*, cited in Dua, *Impact*, 28.

⁴⁷ "The Russo-Japanese War" (1905), cited in Sugita, "Japan," 301.

needed for all works of creation."⁴⁸ For colonial subjects the key to taking control of their destiny was to develop those qualities possessed by the Japanese—the “energy, pluck, resource, and daring” that brought about their victory over the Russian empire and enabled them to take a stand for “Asiatic honor” and “Oriental civilization.”⁴⁹ “Japan,” Kamil lectured his fellow Egyptians, “is the best example for us to follow. The whole world scorned the Japanese people half a century ago, but they deserved the whole world’s esteem in more recent days. Why? Because Japan had reached the height of prosperity by a great display of energy and capacity.”⁵⁰ In one of several poems inspired by Japan’s victory over Russia, Tagore wrote in a similar vein: whereas once our “Masters of religion went to your country to teach/Today we come to your door as disciples/To learn the teachings of action.”⁵¹

Most commentators understood those “teachings of action” to begin with the lessons of patriotism and national unity. In Gandhi’s assessment, the Japanese victory could be explained by “the firm determination to win, . . . [achieved through] unity, patriotism, and the resolve to do or die.” He urged South African Indians to “emulate . . . the example of Japan” in their own struggles for justice.⁵² Kamil harped on the same theme. For him it was self-evident that “if I had not been born an Egyptian, I would have wished to become one,”⁵³ but he was burdened with the knowledge that few of his fellow countrymen would have seconded the statement. To change that he wrote *The Rising Sun*, the first book on Japan ever written in Arabic—despite having little familiarity with his subject when he started the project. “The chief reason which has pushed me to do it is to profit by the current of great sympathy that my compatriots have for the Japanese to tell them that those people are so strong only because they are patriotic. I believe that it will have a ringing

⁴⁸ R. Tagore, *Nationalism* (New York, 1917), 86.

⁴⁹ First quote in *Jam-e-Jamshed*, Jan. 4, 1905, in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1905*, no. 1, 9, OIOC, L/R/5/160; others from *Tribune* (March 19, 1904), in *Selections from the Native Newspapers Published in the Punjab, 1903–1904*, no. 11 (1904), 57, OIOC, L/R/5/187.

⁵⁰ *Egyptian Gazette* (July 26, 1906), 3.

⁵¹ Cited in Hay, *Asian Ideas*, 43.

⁵² M. Gandhi, “Japan and Russia,” *Indian Opinion* (June 10, 1905), in his *Collected Works*, vol. IV (Ahmedabad, 1960), 466–67.

⁵³ Cited in I. Gershoni et al., *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs* (New York, 1986), 12.

effect."⁵⁴ It did, selling well and inspiring others with its message of national pride and commitment as the "secret of Japanese development."⁵⁵ A more moderate nationalist, Ahmad Lutfi al-Sayyid, the leader of the Ummah (People's) Party, also stressed the need for the inculcation of Japanese-like patriotism as the precondition for eventual Egyptian independence.⁵⁶

In addition to the issue of patriotism and national unity, Egyptian and Indian writers and activists drew more explicit political lessons from the Japanese victory that reveal much about their perceptions of present and future. Kamil, for his part, was a contradictory figure, a Pan-Islamist yearning for national resurgence within the context of a revived Ottoman empire, but who gained renown for the exclusivist nationalism expressed in the motto "Egypt for the Egyptians."⁵⁷ As he (rather dreamily) envisioned, the ideal for Egypt "is an advance in prosperity, and a growth in civilization, such as was attained by [Islam's] forefathers and such as is now attained by the nations of Europe, America, and Japan." He called for the introduction of the same kinds of economic, political, and educational institutions common in those regions, but which Britain, whatever its financial or infrastructure contributions to Egypt, had not seen fit to bestow. The Japanese model was particularly relevant to Egypt as an independent nation that had risen to military greatness and equality with the West.⁵⁸ Although he had not ironed out all the inconsistencies in his program, Kamil's comments on Japan indicate that his goals were neither anti-modern nor obscurantist as we might expect from an Islamic radical; given his particular emphases, it is not surprising that he should be revered by future statist-nationalists like Gamal Abdel Nasser.

In India the political lessons learned from Japan reflected the greater heterogeneity of that society and its larger intellectual com-

⁵⁴ Kamil, *Egyptian-French Letters*, 146.

⁵⁵ Sugita, "Japan," 299–302 (with Kamil quote at 302).

⁵⁶ Worringer, "Comparing Perceptions," 360.

⁵⁷ *Egyptian Gazette* (May 15, 1906), 2; *ibid.* (May 31, 1906), 5. For an understanding of Kamil's thought I have relied on Gershoni, *Egypt, Islam, and the Arabs*, 4–15 *passim*; A. Hourani, *Arabic Thought in the Liberal Age, 1798–1939* (London, 1967), 200–208; F. Steppat, *Nationalismus und Islam bei Mustafa Kamil* (Leiden, 1956); and C. Wendell, *Evolution of the Egyptian National Image* (Berkeley, 1972), 245–66.

⁵⁸ *Egyptian Gazette* (June 8, 1904), 3; *ibid.* (June 2, 1906), 3 (quote); *ibid.* (July 26, 1906), 3. See also Sugita, "Japan," 300, and J. Ahmed, *Intellectual Origins of Egyptian Nationalism* (London, 1960), 65.

munity. Very few papers expressed satisfaction with the status quo. *Charu Mihir*, a Bengali paper of Mymensingh, was one that did, arguing that India would prosper more under the British than under Indian Hindu or Muslim rule, when sectarian conflict would debilitate the nation.⁵⁹ An Urdu paper, *Al Bashir*, felt everything would be fine if only King Edward VII would convert to Islam.⁶⁰ But the vast majority of moderate editorials, even while insisting that Indians were loyal British subjects, were critical of the Raj for not giving India the respect it deserved and for failing to make it as strong and prosperous as Japan by easing taxation, allowing natives to enter high political office and upper military ranks, instituting universal education, granting equal rights with whites, and reversing Curzon's draconian policies. If these demands were not granted, England would not be able to count on Indian support in case of any likely future conflicts with Japan.⁶¹ Now is the time, warned the *Bengalee*, for Britain to make itself more popular in India by eliminating all such causes of discontent and winning the gratitude of Indians by giving them an "adequate voice in controlling the affairs of their own country."⁶² At the moment, it is doing nothing but alienating them.⁶³ The Japanese government treats its people as parents do children; by contrast, the English bully Indians as conquerors do the conquered.⁶⁴

Accordingly, although many would have been satisfied with a greater voice within the empire, the pronounced trend was to call

⁵⁹ Issue of June 13, 1905, in *Report on Native Papers in Bengal, 1905*, no. 25, pt. I, 612, OIOC, L/R/5/31.

⁶⁰ Issue of July 31, 1906, in *Selections from the Native Newspapers Published in the United Provinces, 1905-1906*, no. 31 (1906), 464, OIOC, L/R/5/81.

⁶¹ *Din Mani* (Aug. 1904), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1904*, no. 33, 13, OIOC, L/R/5/159; *Vihari* (July 24, 1905), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1905*, no. 30, 16, OIOC, L/R/5/160; *Hitavarta*, in *Report on Native Papers in Bengal, 1905*, no. 9, pt. I, 192, OIOC, L/R/5/31; *Indian Mirror* (April 13, 1905), in *ibid.*, no. 16, pt. II, 143; *Daily Hitavadi* (April 22, 1905), in *ibid.*, no. 16, pt. I, 411; *Advocate* (Jan. 8, 1905), in *Selections from the Native Newspapers Published in the United Provinces, 1905-1906*, no. 2 (1905), 12-13, OIOC, L/R/5/81; *Swadesamitran* (March 30, 1905), in *Reports on Madras Native Newspapers, 1905-1906*, no. 14 (1905), 126, OIOC, L/R/5/112; *Swadesamitran* (Sept. 19, 1905), in *ibid.*, no. 39 (1905), 354.

⁶² Issue of June 10, 1905, in *Report on Native Papers in Bengal, 1905*, no. 24, pt. II, 219, OIOC, L/R/5/31.

⁶³ *Nadegannadi* (March 29, 1904), in *Reports on Madras Native Newspapers, 1903-1904*, no. 14 (1904), 132, OIOC, L/R/5/111.

⁶⁴ *Arya Gazette* (July 27, 1905), in *Selections from the Native Newspapers Published in the Punjab, 1905-1906*, no. 32 (1905), 217, OIOC, L/R/5/188.

for swaraj—literally translated as self-rule, but in effect meaning independence with a heavy dose of economic self-reliance. This notion was brought from the political fringe to the mainstream by the Japanese victory over Russia. As the extremist nationalist paper *Kesari* of Poona stated, “Knowledge of [Japanese] history has kindled in [Indian] minds a strong desire for ‘swarajya’.”⁶⁵ The *Manorama* of Madras wrote that the Japanese had risen to greatness due to their own exertions, and India should follow the same path.⁶⁶ Some understood this path of Japan’s to be a Western-oriented program of industrial and military growth, but for others it meant turning their backs on the West and creating “all the modern conditions of progress” on their own.⁶⁷ *Praja Bandhu*, an Anglo-Gujarati paper of Ahmedabad, called for barring all imports, scrapping foreign-owned industry, and relying solely on Indian national production, to be achieved with the economic assistance of Japan.⁶⁸ Relatedly, many placed a heavy emphasis on the Japanese adoption of Western weapons-production techniques.⁶⁹ Militant nationalist Bal Gangadhar Tilak, for one, believed that by following these prescriptions for swaraj India could be as powerful as Japan in as little as ten to fifteen years.⁷⁰ By contrast, there were voices, such as Tagore’s, that were skeptical of these aspects of Japanese success: “I . . . cannot believe that Japan has become what she is by imitating the West” in its love of war, power, wealth, and machines. He attributed the rise of Japan to the compassion of Buddhism and urged his nation to embrace not technology but Japanese spirituality and aesthetics.⁷¹ But Tagore was an anti-modern utopian whose thought found no echo in the newspapers of the day. Their interpretation of swaraj anticipated instead

⁶⁵ Dua, *Impact*, 40.

⁶⁶ *Manorama* (Sept. 9, 1904), in *Reports on Madras Native Newspapers, 1903–1904*, no. 37 (1904), 311, OIOC, L/R/5/111.

⁶⁷ Quote from *Bengalee* (Feb. 6, 1905), in *Report on Native Papers in Bengal, 1905*, no. 6, pt. II, 55, OIOC, L/R/5/31; and see *ibid.* (Oct. 19, 1905), no. 43, pt. II, 377.

⁶⁸ Issue of Sept. 3, 1905, in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1905*, no. 36, 11, OIOC, L/R/5/160; and see *Mahratta* (March 20, 1904), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1904*, no. 13, 11, OIOC, L/R/5/159.

⁶⁹ *Deshabakta* (Feb. 23, 1904), in *ibid.*, no. 9, 11; *Kesari* (Feb. 13, 1904), in *ibid.*, no. 8, 11; *Jam-e-Jamshed*, Jan. 4, 1905, in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1905*, no. 1, 9, OIOC, L/R/5/160.

⁷⁰ Dua, *Impact*, 37.

⁷¹ Tagore, *Nationalism*, 68–73, 84–89, 106–107, with quote at 70.

the state-led, protectionist, and industrial-oriented program forged in post-colonial India by Jawaharlal Nehru.

Few of the Indians commented on the violent aggression that was part and parcel of Japan's emergence as a great power (Gandhi and Tagore did, but that was later). If they even noticed the Japanese grab for overseas territory, they assured readers that the Mikado would be satisfied with the bits of the Far East he had won in the settlement of the war.⁷² Some were scornfully aware that the Europeans came to view the Japanese in positive terms only after they had so effectively slaughtered thousands of Russians on the battlefields of Manchuria and the waters of Tsushima: "what a nice measure of civilization," a Bengali paper of Calcutta sarcastically observed.⁷³ But the vast majority were pleased for Japan to "rush forth and maul the Russian bear;/Let vultures on its carcass feast,/To pieces all its entrails tear," as a poem in the Bombay-area paper *Prakashak* enthused.⁷⁴ And the terrorist groups just beginning to flourish in Bengal and elsewhere took heart from the violence of Japanese warfare. Political activists who became leaders of the extremist wing of the Indian independence movement, Bipin Chandra Pal, A.C. Banerjee, and P. Mitter, arranged pro-Japanese rallies; to them, Japan's victory over Russia showed that whites were not superior to Asians and that autocracies (which they perceived the Raj to be) could be beaten by use of force.⁷⁵ With the desire to import the Japanese warrior spirit to India, a Ms. Sarala Devi Ghoshal opened a martial arts academy in Calcutta, exhorting Bengali youth to learn "how to use the staff, the fist, the sword, and the gun."⁷⁶

Besides lack of concern about the brutal side of the Japanese triumph, it is also noteworthy that discussion of Japan's representative institutions was minimal in both Egypt and India. At first glance, this seems curious given how influential the Japanese Diet was (alongside the newly created Russian Duma) as a model for political

⁷² Dua, *Impact*, 20–21.

⁷³ *Sri Sri Vishnu Priya-o-Ananda Bazar Patrika* (Sept. 14, 1904), in *Report on Native Papers in Bengal, 1904*, no. 39, 907, OIOC, L/R/5/30; and see *Hitkari* (May 10, 1907), in *Selections from the Native Newspapers Published in the Punjab, 1907*, vol. XX, no. 24, 212, OIOC, L/R/5/189.

⁷⁴ *Prakashak* (Feb. 19, 1904), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1904*, no. 9, 13, OIOC, L/R/5/159.

⁷⁵ Ray, *Social Conflict*, 141.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*

reformers in Turkey, Iran, and Afghanistan.⁷⁷ But the latter were independent nations rather than colonies held in thrall by foreign occupiers. For the time being, it was the elimination of English rule that was the focus of nationalists in India and Egypt, many of whom sought out alternatives to the British parliamentary system that they associated with their oppression. Far more important for all of them, whether Indian or Egyptian, Hindu or Muslim, moderate or extremist, was the message coming from Japan that “the key of a nation’s greatness lies in its own hands.”⁷⁸

That was a message the British authorities were not happy to hear. In fact, for a while, they were in denial about the significance of the war, especially among the masses. “In the first place,” observed Arthur Godley, Under-secretary of State for India, “not one person in ten thousand of the inhabitants of Asia will ever hear of the Japanese victories, and in the second place those who hear of them will, I expect, take it very quietly.”⁷⁹ He was wrong, of course, and his views illustrate how out of touch many British colonial administrators were. Even those who recognized its impact belittled it as a sign of the natives’ unreadiness for political participation. The attitude was summed up in a memorandum written by Michael O’Dwyer of the Punjab Government which was endorsed by John Morley, the Secretary of State for India: “The success of the European in arms, in administration and in trade, has aroused jealousy among a half-educated people with little mental balance, and unaccustomed to clear and sober reasoning. The success of the Japanese has they consider demolished the European superiority in arms, and they are now setting themselves to contest it in the case of administration and trade. Hence Swadeshi [boycott of foreign-made goods] and the claim for self-government.”⁸⁰ In Egypt, English editorialists also depicted

⁷⁷ I. Spector, *The First Russian Revolution: Its Impact on Asia* (Englewood Cliffs, 1962); Worringer, “Comparing Perceptions,” 36–37 and chap. 4 passim.

⁷⁸ *Jam-e-Jamshed*, Jan. 4, 1905, in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1905*, no. 1, 9, OIOC, L/R/5/160.

⁷⁹ Letter of May 1904, cited in M. Das, *India under Morley and Minto* (London, 1964), 19. See the similar British assessment regarding Egypt in *Egyptian Gazette* (Aug. 25, 1905), 2.

⁸⁰ M. O’Dwyer to Dunby Smith, Government of India (March 23, 1907). Minto Papers, MS 12756, National Library of Scotland. And see letter of John Morley to the Earl of Minto (May 24, 1907), Minto Papers, MS 12737. I am grateful to Michael Silvestri for this documentation.

nationalists as juveniles incapable of matching the Japanese as they intended.⁸¹ Cromer denied that the "ravings" of Kamil and the Pan-Islamists expressed legitimate grievances, although his stated belief that they had no popular following was belied by his talk of imposing censorship and increasing the size of the British garrison.⁸²

As the ally of Japan and rival of Russia in the imperialist "Great Game," England aided the Japanese war effort. But the ramifications of the Japanese victory for British authority in its colonies were starting to become apparent. Sir Alfred Lyall, a former Lieutenant-Governor of the Punjab, spoke of the folly of "rejoicing over the defeat of a European power by an Asiatic army."⁸³ In the mind of another imperialist proponent, "the real causes of unrest in India . . . had no more connection with the Viceroyalty of Lord Curzon than they had with the moon. They sprang from that quickening of new aspirations which swept throughout Asia as a result of the victories of Japan."⁸⁴ Although many remained oblivious or were determined to repress dissent, others began to fear the consequences: now that "the 'slumbering East' had awakened, . . . how long would it be before the 'yellow hordes of Asia' would turn against the West?" queried the English historian A.F. Pollard.⁸⁵ On the other hand, there was also a more sober and accurate understanding of the indigenous reaction to the war: the Europeans' assertion of their superiority, according to the editors of the pro-imperialist *Egyptian Gazette*, "has now been rudely dispelled. We have seen an Asiatic people, comparatively small in numbers, inflict a smarting defeat upon the largest Empire in the world, and make peace with dignity and sagacity, as they made war with barbarity. Is it wonderful, then, that the brown man as well as the yellow, is beginning to ask himself wherein his

⁸¹ *Egyptian Gazette* (May 23, 1906), 3. For a similar comment by Curzon on the Afghan emir's desire to imitate Japan, see his *Correspondence with His Majesty the King, 1901-1905*, letter no. 103 (Jan. 25, 1905), 124-25, OIOC, MSS Eur F 111/136.

⁸² Earl of Cromer to Marquess of Landsdowne (Jan. 9, 1905), Foreign Office, *Further Correspondence Respecting the Affairs of Egypt and the Soudan. 1905*, PRO, FO 407/164, item no. 203, 362-64; *Egyptian Gazette* (July 23, 1906), 3 (quote); and see Tignor, *Modernization*, 270ff.

⁸³ Cited in Hitechchhu (June 2, 1904), in *Report on Native Papers Published in the Bombay Presidency, 1904*, no. 23, 11, OIOC, L/R/5/159.

⁸⁴ Quote by Lovat Fraser of the *Times of India*, cited in Das, *India*, 18-19.

⁸⁵ A. Pollard, *The History of England* (London, 1912), cited in R. Hyam, "The British Empire in the Edwardian Era," in Brown, *Oxford History of the British Empire*, 55.

inferiority consists?"⁸⁶ That insight accompanied a slight but growing acknowledgement that nationalism was a natural sentiment and a force that would not abate even when an imperial power conferred material benefits upon a subject nation.⁸⁷ Few in English ruling circles would have agreed at that point, but inside and outside the colonies, discussion of these issues was underway, propelled by the Russo-Japanese War. Curzon himself understood that it had initiated a new era within the empire: as he observed in 1911, in a speech before the House of Lords, "the reverberations of that victory have gone like a thunderclap through the whispering galleries of the East."⁸⁸

We cannot reproach the British for their surprise at the nationalist fervor aroused by the war, for it was something new and unexpected, even among indigenous intellectuals. It was this external event, more than anything else, that helped bring about a "semblance of coherence and structure"⁸⁹ among previously fragmented nationalist or proto-nationalist groups. Many of them remained divided over strategies and goals, but for the first time a unified movement became apparent as the war gave native elites and the masses a sense of both self-worth and the potential for political assertiveness against the imperialist power.⁹⁰

But Indians and Egyptians were not just coming to grips with the British empire. They were also thinking of their future as independent nations, and the Russo-Japanese War initiated the search for non-Western models of development. For the next few years, Japan would provide inspiration for the struggle against British power as well as for discussion of potential post-liberation economic and political arrangements. But the Japanese model turned out to be not

⁸⁶ *Egyptian Gazette* (Nov. 16, 1906), 2; and see "Letter on Pan-Islamism," in *London Times* (Jan. 21, 1908). For an equivalent appraisal of India, see L. O'Malley, *History of Bengal, Bihar, and Orissa under British Rule* (Calcutta, 1925), 526–28.

⁸⁷ *Egyptian Gazette* (May 31, 1906), 5.

⁸⁸ Cited in Sinha, *Indian*, 173.

⁸⁹ Quote by Bose and Jalal, *Modern South Asia*, 108.

⁹⁰ Seal, "Imperialism and Nationalism," 4–5, 19–21, 25, is uncertain when the process begins, perhaps because he fails to acknowledge the role of the Russo-Japanese War. Other historians have recognized the impact of the war in these respects: see Dua, *Impact*, 37–38; H. Grimal, *Decolonization*, trans. S. De Vos (Boulder, 1978), 40–41; J. McLane, *Indian Nationalism and the Early Congress* (Princeton, 1977), 364; and W. Smith, *Nationalism and Reform in India* (New Haven, 1938), 269.

much different from that of the West. Ironically, it was soon surpassed in its appeal among colonial nationalists by the example of Soviet Russia, which offered a true alternative to European capitalism as well as active support for the anti-imperialist struggle. The ground for that shift in attitude was partly prepared by the Japanese defeat of the Russians, which, together with the revolutionary movement and the popularity of Russian literature, suggested to many native intellectuals that the Russians were not Europeans after all and so acceptable as a source of ideas for the society they planned to create.⁹¹ After World War II, when Soviet communism was discredited and Japan became a success story, the Japanese experience became relevant once again, beginning with the "Asian tigers" of South Korea, Taiwan, and Singapore—but by then the singular importance of the Russo-Japanese War for the rise of nationalist movements in the colonial world was long forgotten.

⁹¹ See S. Marks, *How Russia Shaped the Modern World* (Princeton, 2003).

CHAPTER THIRTY-ONE

INSPIRATION FOR NATIONALIST ASPIRATIONS? SOUTHEAST ASIA AND THE 1905 JAPANESE VICTORY*

Paul A. Rodell

Introduction

This paper assesses the impact of the Russo-Japanese War on Southeast Asia's emerging nationalist leaders and their movements. To date, many authors have drawn the conclusion that because Japan's 1905 victory over Imperial Russia impressed the peoples of Asia, that nationalist leaders in the region were similarly affected. In fact, the people of Asia were as surprised by the Japanese victory as were the people of Europe and the United States, and many may have secretly rejoiced that a major European power was humbled by an Asian nation. But did exhilaration over the Japanese victory play a significant role in the formation of Southeast Asian nationalism? Broad assumptions about the inspirational impact of the Japanese victory and its direct and immediate impact on the region's leaders are not difficult to find. One example is this statement found in a prominent textbook:

The shining example of Japan's military victory over Russia in 1905 inspired Asian nationalists tremendously. Not only was the myth of European invincibility nurtured by colonialists and missionaries thereby destroyed, but it also held the hope that, given an opportunity, Asians could build up their country's military and economic strength to a very advanced level. Such sentiments were expressed in the autobiography of almost every prominent Asian nationalist of that time.¹

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¹ D.R. SarDesai, *Southeast Asia, Past & Present* (Boulder, 1997), 148.

But who, exactly, among Southeast Asia's nationalist leaders were impressed by the Japanese victory? Was the impact universal or were some countries and nationalist leaders affected more than others? How did the Japanese military victory translate into nationalist rhetoric or programs? Was this impact long-standing or fleeting? An assessment of the event's importance should address these issues to reveal a more complex picture than the above quotation suggests. What follows is a comparative survey of the region that tests casual assumptions about Southeast Asia's nationalist response to the Russo-Japanese War and draws more definitive conclusions than heretofore.

The War and Independent Thailand

The nationalist goal in Thailand was preserving the country's independence, which required stability rather than revolution and meant that Thais supported the status quo as centered in the royal family. Experimentation would be tolerated only if initiated by the king and carried out by his royal bureaucracy. The Thai situation also reflected the geographic reality of the country, sandwiched between the French to the east in the Indo-Chinese Union and the British, who held Burma on Thailand's western border and the Malay Peninsula to the south. With colonies on these three sides, the primary goal of the Thai monarchy was balancing off one European power against the other. This strategy was begun in 1855, when King Mongkut signed an Anglo-Thai Treaty and a similar agreement with France the following year. Later, in 1868, treaties were also entered into with other European powers. By concluding treaties with a number of European states none gained preeminent status and all were committed to maintaining the Thai state. The British and French willingness to keep Thailand as a buffer between them was finally accepted in a *modus vivendi* in 1896, when the two powers guaranteed the integrity and neutrality of the Menam basin (the central plain of the Chao Phraya River that forms Thailand's core).

In a practical sense, the individual treaties with European powers allowed Mongkut and his son Chulalongkorn, the renowned modernizer king, to institute a sort of reverse "divide and conquer" strategy that balanced advisors from competing European states and promoted reform programs that strengthened the kingdom. Under this arrangement, British advisors were prominent in the Ministry of

Finance, while French advisors dominated the Ministry of Justice, Danish advisors were assigned to the provincial police, and Germans oversaw the Railways Department.² As long as no one set of advisors seemed to gain an upper-hand, there was no cause for concern. The Thai kings were also receptive to reforming their country as long as the prerogatives of the royal family were not questioned. As a result, under guidance from European advisors, Thailand abolished debt-slavery, army recruitment was opened to all, and technologies such as the telegraph and railroads were introduced. Specific government reforms included the creation of a national court system and penal code while the bureaucracy of the national government was reorganized to penetrate all levels of society. Mongkut and Chulalongkron balked only at the possibility of introducing participatory democracy, preferring instead to appoint advisory councils to help them rule. As a result of the policies and reforms ushered in by these visionary rulers, Thailand was strengthened, rather than weakened, by its contact with the European powers. Since Thailand was already instituting a number of reforms, the example of Meiji Japan held little fascination for at least the Thai ruling elite.

In addition to their treaty strategy and modernizing agenda, the Thai kings proved very accommodating when either England or France expressed an interest in acquiring some of the kingdom's peripheral territories as additions to their neighboring colonies. Since the areas in question contained Muslim Malays, Laotians, and Khmer peoples, and not ethnic Thais, there seemed little reason not to surrender these territories to the threatening Europeans. So, in 1893, Chulalongkron acceded to the loss of all Laotian territories east of the Mekong and agreed to additional concessions in Cambodia in a series of treaties in 1907. Two years later the Treaty of Bangkok transferred four southern Thai states to British Malaya. Though the losses were painful, the king could content himself with the fact that conceding these buffer areas were the price of preserving the territorial integrity of the Thai people and the monarchy's continued existence.

One reference to the impact of the Russo-Japanese War on Thailand was made by David Wyatt, who includes it among the factors that motivated an abortive military coup in 1912. The coup was planned

² Walter F. Vella, *The Impact of the West on Government in Thailand* (Berkeley, 1955), 342–44.

by a group of ninety-one junior officers in their twenties, but the uprising, which they had hoped to mount in April, was discovered and promptly quelled by authorities in February. All of the plotters were arrested and received prison sentences of twelve years to life.³ However, the fact that the coup planning was undertaken so long after 1905 makes it unlikely that the war played a large part in the thinking of the coup plotters. A more plausible explanation is found in an additional factor. Soon after coming into power, the Oxford educated son of Chulalongkorn attempted to build a private army called the "Wild Tiger Corps," as well as a special Guards Brigade. These moves were bitterly resented by the regular military. Senior officers moved against the new units through administrative and budgetary in-fights, but the young officers were less sophisticated and chose direct action, which led to their downfall.⁴ In any event, it is clear that the Thai monarchy was closely identified with national independence and modernization, so the Russo-Japanese War made relatively little impression. There were no Thai "nationalists" opposing European domination; that was the job of the king and his ministers. If anything, the war only confirmed the correctness of the monarchy's overall strategy of reform and self-strengthening.

The War's Limited Impact on Burma, Malaya, and Singapore

If a link between the Russo-Japanese War and a coup in Thailand seven years later is a tenuous thread, the linkage between the war and the nationalist undertaking in Burma is even shakier. Quoting authors of European histories, F.S.V. Donnison notes that the 1905 Japanese victory delighted Asia and in the same paragraph makes note of the first rumblings of what would become Burmese nationalism. One of these rumblings was the religious revivalism of a Buddhist monk, while another was the founding in the colonial capital of Rangoon of the Young Men's Buddhist Association (YMBA) patterned after the Young Men's Christian Association.⁵ While the

³ David Wyatt, "Siam," in David Joel Steinberg, et al., *In Search of Southeast Asia: A Modern History* (Honolulu, 1987), 327.

⁴ Vella, *The Impact of the West on Government in Thailand*, 354–55.

⁵ F.S.V. Donnison, *Burma* (London, 1970), 102–103.

YMBA eventually led in developing a Burmese national consciousness, it did not become a radical nationalist organization until after the First World War, and even then it began by stressing religious issues, such as the desecration of temples by British troops who wore their boots inside them. It can safely be assumed that despite the fearful assumptions of European observers that young Burmese might rise up, in fact they seem to have taken little notice of the 1905 victory. In 1905, Burmese students were more concerned with Buddhist religious revival and protecting their culture from the onslaught of Western materialist and secular culture than they were with the Japanese military success.

British colonial administrators in Malaya did not disturb the pre-existing ruling Islamic sultans, but incorporated them into the government by a system of indirect rule that left traditional society untouched. With the ruling elite thoroughly incorporated into the colonial system, news of East Asia's 1905 war was little more than a source of speculation for a small group of royals whose very existence was the antithesis of nationalism. Meanwhile, Singapore was a tightly controlled British port city with a Chinese immigrant merchant population whose primary concerns were not political. However, had Singapore's Chinese residents expressed any political sentiment, it undoubtedly would have been opposed to the Japanese who had humiliated the Qing dynasty in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894–1895.

The Case of Indonesia

Indonesia's nationalist movement was composed of a number of very different individual organizations, the first of which was the *Budi Utomo* (the beautiful endeavor) founded in 1908 by a Javanese educator and his students who came from the ranks of the lesser *priyayi* (traditional ruling elite class). Though never "political" the *Budi Utomo* was critical in that it sought to retain a sense of cultural identity in the face of "Westernization," even as it pressed the government for more European-style education. The second was the *Sarekat Islam* (Islamic Union, SI) founded in 1911 by batik cloth merchants in Surakarta, central Java. Despite the organization's religious name, its members were primarily concerned about competition from ethnic

Chinese merchants and from this beginning the SI only later evolved into a diverse and multi-layered movement that stressed resistance to outside forces.⁶

The year 1911 also saw the formation of a radical socialist party, the *Indische Partij* (Indies Party), led by members of the Dutch Eurasian subclass plus a few prominent Javanese. The Eurasians were the product of a long history of mixed marriages between single Dutchmen and native women. Relations between the Dutch and their mixed blood offspring relatives deteriorated in the nineteenth century with the development of the steamship and the opening of the Suez Canal, which facilitated the migration of large number of new settler families to the hitherto remote colony. The earlier easy-going lifestyle of the predominantly male colonizers was condemned, especially by Dutch women who saw native women as potential threats to the loyalty of their spouses. Adding to changes in attitudes toward the Eurasians was the arrival of reformers who came to the archipelago to implement the new liberal Dutch government's Ethical Policy that was intended to improve the life of the natives. These reformers were often influenced by Social Darwinist ideas that required a strict differentiation of the population along rational bureaucratic lines, and they could not accommodate racial mixing. Soon a restrictive elite social network of Dutch settler families and bureaucrats emerged to exclude the Eurasian mixed bloods. In the face of rising racial discrimination, the Eurasians were forced to redefine themselves, and they did so by increasingly identifying themselves with the indigenous population and radical European politics. By the time of the Russo-Japanese War, however, the Eurasians were still in the process of trying to redefine themselves and would have viewed the Japanese advance with almost as much trepidation as the colonial Dutch.⁷

Indonesia's nationalist origins were also found in religious organizations whose inspiration came from late nineteenth century Middle Eastern reform movements. Indonesia's links with the Islamic world increased dramatically thanks to the development of the steamship, which eased the physical strain and cost of long distance travel to

⁶ Takashi Shiraishi, *An Age in Motion: Popular Radicalism in Java, 1912–1926* (Ithaca, 1990) presents the best overview of the origins and growth of the *Budi Utomo* and *Sarekat Islam* within a context of rural Javanese radicalism. See also M.C. Ricklefs, *A History of Modern Indonesia Since c. 1300* (Stanford, 1993), 164–67.

⁷ John Smail, "Indonesia," in Steinberg, 293–94; Ricklefs, 171–72.

Mecca for the annual *hadj*, or religious pilgrimage. By the turn of the century, many hundreds of Indonesian faithful had made the trek to Mecca and upon their return they enlivened the country's religious life. In 1912, a religious official of the Sultanate of Yogyakarta founded the *Muhammadiyah* (the Way of Muhammad) to reform Islam and resist the missionary efforts of Dutch Christians. Over time, the *Muhammadiyah* grew to become Indonesia's largest religious organization, and Islamic modernist teachings contributed significantly to the development of the country's national ideology. Through the *Muhammadiyah* many Indonesians looked to movements coming out of the Middle East for inspiration rather than Japan's imitation of the West.⁸

Meanwhile, Indonesia's alien Chinese had established themselves as the colony's merchant class, but they continued to follow events in China just as did the Chinese of Singapore. They were probably just as resentful about Japan's humiliation of China, but they were additionally angered that in 1899 Japanese residents of Indonesia were granted legal status equal to that of the European community. In the meantime, Indonesia's Chinese had to endure travel and residence restrictions under the "pass system" that was in force until 1908.⁹ The very diversity of the cultural, political, ethnic, and religious streams that combined to form Indonesian nationalism gave the country a political force that enabled it to repel the Dutch in the years immediately after the Second World War. In 1905, however, the native, Islamic, Eurasian, and Chinese people of the Dutch East Indies were still in the early stages of formulating their responses to European colonial rule, and there is no evidence to indicate that the Japan's victory was a source of nationalist inspiration.

In Southeast Asia only the Philippines and Vietnam had noticeable nationalist responses to the Russo-Japanese War because their nationalist movements had progressed to a point where they were prepared to break from colonial rule and were looking for a way to. By 1904, a critical core of nationalists in both countries had emerged and formed organizations that sought the removal of their Spanish, American, and French colonizers. That their initial efforts

⁸ Shiraishi, *et passim*; Ricklefs, 168–71; Smail, 299–302.

⁹ Smail, 295–97; Robert Van Niel, *The Emergence of the Modern Indonesian Elite* (The Hague, 1956), 86–87.

were frustrated by Euro-American military superiority and effective police intelligence networks, only increased Filipino and Vietnamese interest in the Japanese example.

The Philippines' Continuing Interest in Japan

Japanese nationalists and Spanish colonial officials were quite knowledgeable about each other, but usually looked to prosper at the other's expense. There were some instances, however, when personal friendships developed between individual Japanese and Filipino nationalists, which worked to their mutual benefit. An early example of the more predatory relationship was Shigetake Sugiura (1855–1924) whose 1886 booklet *Hankai Yuime-monogatari* (*Dream of Hankai, A Chinese Warrior*) proposed sending Japan's outcast people to the Philippines. Once there, they would mingle with Filipinos and wait for the opportunity to rise up against Spain. A similar proposal was made by another Japanese nationalist of the Meiji era, Sadakaze Suganuma (1865–1889) who looked to the Philippines because its colonial ruler was the weakest of the Europeans, thus making possible a revolt led by Japanese immigrants. Once a new government had been formed, the new independent kingdom could be offered to the Japanese Emperor.¹⁰ On the other hand, some Spaniards also favored schemes to bring Japanese immigrants to the archipelago to enhance the colonial economy. In 1889, the Spanish minister to Tokyo proposed a Japanese immigration plan similar to the agreement then operative between Japan and Hawai'i. The proposal did not go far, however, because powerful religious authorities in Manila voiced strong opposition to it.¹¹

In contrast to these schemes, some Japanese and Philippine nationalists knew each other as personal friends. Liberal (Jiyuto) Party founding member Shigeyasu "Tetchō" Suehiro (1849–1896) and the prominent Philippine nationalist Dr. Jose Rizal (1861–1896) met on a ship going to the United States in 1888. Rizal was already well

¹⁰ Shinzo Hayase, "Japan and the Philippines," *Philippine Studies*, Vol. 47 (First Quarter 1999) 33–35; Josefa Saniel, *Japan and the Philippines, 1868–1898* (Quezon City, 1969), 77–95.

¹¹ Enrique J. Corpus, "Japan and the Philippine Revolution," *The Philippine Social Science Review*, VI, no. 4 (October 1934) 256.

acquainted with Japan, having lived there for a time during which he had a loving relationship with a Japanese woman. The two Asian nationalists traveled across the Pacific together, toured the United States, and continued on as traveling companions as far as London. Suchiro spoke well of his Filipino friend and later published a political novel based on his travels with Rizal.¹²

In addition to these schemes and early contacts, the two respective governments, Spanish and Japanese, sought to develop formal commercial and diplomatic links during the 1868–1888 period that Philippine historian Dr. Josefa Sanial has called the “decades of probing.” However, the results of these efforts were mixed.¹³ While trade over the period 1889–1898 increased by 1,258 percent (from 227,486 to 3,294,183 yen) this figure was less than one percent of Japan’s total trade.¹⁴ While still small in an aggregate sense, the increase in trade indicates that there was real interest between the two parties, and only the Spanish-American War halted the trade growth.

A decade before the Russo-Japanese War, Filipino nationalists were well aware of Japan’s increasing military prowess. Even as the Sino-Japanese War and Japan’s subsequent annexation of Taiwan filled Spanish colonial officials with apprehension,¹⁵ the significance of the emergence of a strong Asian benefactor was not lost on Filipino nationalists. Filipinos began patronizing Manila’s small Japanese merchant community, and an increasing number of Philippine travelers went to Japan to seek political and military support for their cause.¹⁶ In early May 1896, the arrival of the Japanese naval training ship *Kongo-Maru* gave Filipino nationalist leaders what they hoped would be a valuable contact. Though the details of what transpired are murky, it appears that the Japanese owner of a dry goods store, “Jose” Moritaro Tagawa, who was married to a Filipina, served as interpreter at a meeting he arranged between the ship’s commander, Captain Serada, and prominent leaders of the revolutionary society the *Katipunan*. Included in the revolutionary contingent was the group’s supremo, Andres Bonifacio, and his close confederate

¹² Hayase, 37–38; Motoe Terami-Wada, “A Japanese Take Over of the Philippines,” *Bulletin of the American Historical Collection*, XIII, no. 1 (January-March 1985) 15.

¹³ Sanial, *Japan and the Philippines*, 36–59.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 139.

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 179–89.

¹⁶ Terami-Wada, 16–19.

Emilio Jacinto, plus Daniel Tirona and Pio Valenzuela. The Japanese officer was presented with a letter addressed to the Emperor requesting assistance for the cause of Philippine independence. He was also given gifts of fruits, such as mangos, and an ornately engraved picture frame. Since Japan was still in the process of consolidating its gains from its recent victory over China and wished to maintain good relations with Western nations, the Japanese commander is said to have made a number of non-committal remarks that left his Filipino hosts unsatisfied. Still, for propaganda purposes the *Katipunan* officials portrayed the meeting in a more positive light.¹⁷

With the outbreak of fighting between Filipino insurgents and the Spanish government in late August 1896, Japan sent two observers; Consul Shimizu of the Japanese legation in Hong Kong and Lieutenant Colonel Yoshihiko Kususe of the Taiwan Army's headquarters. These two men were followed by Sakamoto Shirō who earlier had been active in Korea, advancing Japan's interests. Sakamoto arrived in March 1897 under the guise of a newspaperman for three different Tokyo publications and as a representative of a trading firm based in Osaka. During his extended period of service, he authored 110 reports and became such a partisan for Philippine independence that in August 1898 he recommended that a battalion of Japanese marines be dispatched to assist the Philippine freedom fighters versus potential American aggression. However, his superiors quickly rejected the appeal. In addition, Tokyo sent six other military officers to observe the end of Spanish rule and the period before the outbreak of the Philippine-American War.¹⁸

In that period, Filipino nationalists seemed to have good reason to believe that Japan would welcome, and even support, Philippine independence. On October 31, 1898, Teodoro Sandiko sent a report to General Emilio Aguinaldo about an "informal banquet" given by a certain Captain Y. Tokizawa in the Japanese Consulate. Sandiko claimed that the entire Japanese community of Manila attended and that the room was decorated with crossed Japanese and Filipino flags. Impromptu speeches usually ended with shouts of "Long Live the Independence of the Philippines." More concretely, the Japanese said

¹⁷ Grant K. Goodman, "Filipino Secret Agents, 1896–1910," *Philippine Studies*, XLVI (Third Quarter 1998), 378; Hayase, 39; Terami-Wada, 20; Saniel, 189–92.

¹⁸ Saniel, 227–28; Goodman, 379; Motoe Terami-Wada, 8–9.

that should the Filipino Revolutionary Government wish to send some young men to Japan to study munitions manufacturing, they would be well received.¹⁹

Earlier, in late June 1898, a representative of the Philippine revolutionary government, Mariano Ponce, arrived in Tokyo and immediately sought permission to purchase arms. His way was prepared by Jose Anacleto Ramos, a Filipino revolutionary who had become a naturalized Japanese citizen and had taken the name J. Ishikawa. Earlier, too, Ishikawa served as an intermediary between the Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Aguinaldo's government-in-exile in Hong Kong. At first, Japanese officials in the coalition government of the Shimpoto (Progressive) and Jiyuto (Liberal) parties were very favorably disposed to the Philippine request. In 1898, the Japanese still viewed themselves as outsiders to the European dominated imperialist order and genuinely subscribed to an "Asia for the Asians" doctrine. However, it soon became evident that the United States was utterly opposed to any support for the rebels, and relations between themselves and the Filipino government under Aguinaldo were deteriorating rapidly. Due to this diplomatic pressure, Ponce's work in Japan became impossible, at least through official channels. As well, Ramos and Ponce seem to have had a falling out which negatively affected Tokyo's impression of the Philippine nationalist movement.²⁰

Later in 1899, Ponce met the Chinese nationalist leader Sun Yat-sen, who was also in Tokyo. Sun promised to assist the Filipino diplomat and through a complex and convoluted series of payments and transactions involving Japanese, German, and Chinese agents, an arms shipment was finally arranged. The shipment of arms and ammunition was sent aboard the Japanese ship the *Nunobiki-maru* in July, but unfortunately for the Philippine revolutionaries, the ship

¹⁹ A letter to E. Aguinaldo from T. Sandiko, dated (Manila) October 31, 1898, in "Communication Showing Relations of Japanese and Filipinos in the Philippine Islands," 2-3. This 24 page report is found in the [Col. Harry] Bandholtz Collection, Philippine Constabulary Reports, 1906-1913, Michigan Historical Collections, Bentley Historical Library, University of Michigan [hereafter H.B. Collection], Box 5.

²⁰ "Memorandum for the Director," January 11, 1908, by Major Rafael M. Crame, Superintendent, Information Division, Bureau of the Constabulary, Government of the Philippine Islands, H.B. Collection, Box 5, "Compilation of Papers on Japanese Propagandism, October 19, 1907 to October 31, 1909," II, 41-26. This eleven page typed report was Ramos' memory of the earlier events rather than an objective analysis of the events. See also Terami-Wada, 10-11; Goodman, 380.

had to be abandoned on the twenty-first during a typhoon off the Saddle Islands near Shanghai.²¹

In August 1899, during the height of the Philippine-American war (February 1899–July 1902) US secret police kept a close watch on Japanese agents who entered the country to meet with officials of the “insurgent” government. The supposed Japanese objective was to evaluate the Filipinos’ capability for winning independence from the North American aggressor. Should the agents return a positive evaluation, the Japanese government might consider extending aid, including arms. Japanese contacts with Philippine forces continued into the following year when T. Hojo, Chancellor of the Japanese Consulate in Manila, consulted with General Mariano Trias about battle conditions and other factors that might induce Japanese diplomatic intervention. By the spring of 1901, with the war going badly for the Philippine government, Japanese interest shifted to facilitating the departure to Japan of pro-Japanese Filipinos such as Dr. Simeon A. Villa, who had just been captured by American forces along with Aguinaldo.²²

Although these wartime attempts to gain support from the Japanese government had failed, Filipino nationalists persisted in their efforts into the early years of the American colonial regime. The more radical members of the Philippine nationalist cause mounted these efforts, individuals that the American press and government officials referred to as “irreconcilables.” In 1904, Luke Wright, the American governor of the Philippines, sent his surveyor of customs, F.S. Cairns, to Japan to investigate the activities of the Filipino expatriate community there. Cairns found that Jose Lucban, the brother of “irreconcilable” Philippine general Vicente Lucban, arrived in the fall of 1903 from Hong Kong and attempted to purchase weapons and establish friendly relations with the Japanese government. While he had a number of meetings with officials from the Imperial household and the military, Lucban accomplished neither of his missions.²³

²¹ Terami-Wada, 11.

²² Letter to “Rosalia Magdalo” (Aguinaldo) from “Paula Pardo” (insurgent agent in Manila) dated Manila, August 23, 1899, 10–11; letter, unsigned, unaddressed, dated September 10, 1899, 12; report of “Davila,” Captain of the General staff of the Insurgent Army, dated October 11, 1900, 12–13; letter from S. Narahara in Manila, to Ishikawa in Yokohama, dated March 23, 1901. The last letter was also registered in the Japanese Consulate in Manila. All correspondence in “Communication Showing Relations of Japanese and Filipinos in the Philippine Islands,” H.B. Collection, Box 5.

²³ Goodman, 383–85.

The outcome of the Russo-Japanese War re-ignited the aspirations of Filipino nationalists that Japan might help them gain independence. However, the Japan of 1905 was far different from what it had been only a few years earlier. After the earlier Sino-Japanese War, Japan seemed to engage in a pattern of diplomacy that encouraged the nationalist aspirations of its Southeast Asian neighbors. However, in the aftermath of its stunning victory over the Russian empire, Japanese government officials and military officers steadfastly refused to entertain Filipino nationalist leaders. Most Philippine nationalists quickly concluded that Japan had adopted the imperialist ideology of the era and would no longer help its fellow Asians liberate themselves from European domination. Instead, Japan realized that if it was going to succeed in the world, such sentiments were a luxury that could not be enjoyed. In 1905, Prime Minister Katsura Taro and U.S. Secretary of War William H. Taft exchanged confidential notes regarding their respective interests in Korea and the Philippines, assuring each other that they would respect the status quo. This initial exchange was followed by an open agreement in 1908 between U.S. Secretary of State Elihu Root and the Japanese ambassador to Washington, Kogoro Takahira, that expanded the area of mutual assurances to include Hawai'i, various islands in the Pacific, and the territorial integrity of China.²⁴

Still, the mystique of Japan's success versus the West continued to have a hold on at least some Philippine nationalists who remained "irreconciled" to American rule. Philippine Constabulary intelligence reports in early 1906 noted that hard core nationalist radicals hoped for the outbreak of war between China, Japan, and the United States, in which an uprising in the Philippines could help Japan and would lead to freedom.²⁵ The image of Japan as potential benefactor also continued as a theme in the nationalist press even after most Philippine political leaders had been co-opted by the United States and were focusing their energies on securing an elected seat in the recently inaugurated Philippine Assembly. On 5 March 1908, the radical

²⁴ Lydia N. Yu-Jose, *Japan Views the Philippines, 1900-1944* (Quezon City, 1999) 17.

²⁵ Excerpts of a series of spy reports by "M. Rosario," February 8 to March 5, 1906 appended to Major Rafael M. Crame's "Memorandum for the Director of the Constabulary," August 29, 1907, two page letter and three pages of excerpts, in "Compilation of Papers on Japanese Propagandism," I, February 1, 1906 to October 12, 1907, H.B. Collection, Box 5.

newspaper, *El Renacimiento*, ran an editorial of a hoped for Japanese invasion to liberate the country from American rule and cited the 1905 victory:

The proximity of Japan to the Philippines enables her to land on them, within four days after war is declared, an army of occupation, that is to say, in the first moments of the war they will be able to repeat with success the famous attack upon the Russian squadron at Port Arthur, February 8th.²⁶

Meanwhile, the 3 December issue of *El Renacimiento* proclaimed that Japan would take the Philippines thus redeeming it from American imperialism:

Filipinos, if we do not want Japan as a ruler, a people that give to their Emperor a fanatical and blind adoration, nevertheless, we want her as a leader, as a redeemer, as a guide, as breath to the existence of the nations of the Orient and of a people gathered under the same name and united by ties of fraternity and of blood more or less strong.²⁷

Of all the “irreconcilables” the most prominent was Artemio Ricarte who refused to take an oath of allegiance to the United States when he was captured in July 1900. Ricarte was deported to Guam and was then sent into exile in Hong Kong until he sneaked back into the Philippines in late December 1903. He was captured again in May 1904, after attempting to rekindle the anti-American war and was sentenced to six years of solitary confinement for sedition. Released in 1910, Ricarte went to Hong Kong where he linked up with an expatriate Japanese samurai who owned a brothel in the British crown colony. Ricarte continued his plotting and sent letters to the Japanese government asking for their assistance. While in Hong Kong, Ricarte seemed relatively harmless until he attempted to direct a rebellion in Manila in 1914 that became known as the “Christmas Eve Rebellion.” To escape deportation from Hong Kong back to Manila, Ricarte fled to Japan with the assistance of some Japanese *shishi* (“men of honor”—in opposition to the West), especially a man named Goto Shimpei. Ricarte eventually settled in Yokohama where he remained until the Second World War, when he returned to the Philippines shortly after the country fell to invading Japanese forces.

²⁶ “Japan and the United States: Philippines, Apple of Discord,” *El Renacimiento*, March 5, 1908, translation in H.B. Collection, Box 5.

²⁷ “Problem of the Orient,” *El Renacimiento*, December 3, 1908, in *ibid*.

By that time, however, he was already a forgotten man and peripheral to the new world of the occupied Philippines.²⁸

*Reactions in the Mosaic of French Indochina:
Laos, Cambodia, and Vietnam*

In 1905, French Indochina contained four administrative units that were officially protectorates: Tonkin (approximately the northern third of present day Vietnam), Annam (approximately the central third of present day Vietnam), Cambodia, and Laos. These protectorates retained a monarchy and a royal family. An additional unit was Cochinchina, an outright colony, which comprised the southern third of present-day Vietnam. In Laos and Cambodia the rulers and the general population were so thoroughly preoccupied with internal problems that the Russo-Japanese War passed almost unnoticed. Furthermore, since neither of these two French protectorates, unlike Vietnam, were witness to any military activity connected to the war, its impact was, at most, indirect. Until 1893, when the French formed a protectorate over Laos, the area had not been united as one polity since the mid-sixteenth century.²⁹ Instead, the territory was divided into a number of principalities dominated by the lowland dwelling ethnic Lao, but each also contained several different ethnic minorities, most of whom lived in the highlands.³⁰ These states were regularly threatened with incorporation into the Thai empire and were also occasionally menaced by the Burmese, Chinese, and Vietnamese.

It is doubtful that the Lao States would have managed to retain their precarious independence if a French adventurer named Augustie Pavie had not decided that they should be united under the protection of France.³¹ In 1893, the French declared that King Oun

²⁸ Artemio Ricarte, *Memoirs* (Manila: National Heroes Commission, 1963), appendixes I–L, 110–36 and appendix N, 157–216; Grant K. Goodman, “General Artemio Ricarte and Japan,” *The Journal of Southeast Asian History*, VII, no. 2 (September 1966) 48–54 and 59–60.

²⁹ NA, *Laos: an Outline of Ancient and Contemporary History* (Hanoi, 1982), 15–21.

³⁰ Walter E.J. Tips, trans. and comp., *The Pavie Mission Indochina Papers 1879–1895*, 6 vols. (Bangkok, 1999).

³¹ Thongchai Winichakul, *Siam Mapped: A History of the Geo-Body of a Nation* (Honolulu, 1994), 109–17 and 122–29; David K. Wyatt, *Thailand: A Short History* (New Haven, 1984), 202–6.

Kham of the Luang Prabang principality was the ruler of all Laos, thereby effectively disenfranchising the royal houses of three small Lao states. Oun Kham and Pavie made the other small states provinces of Laos, allowing their former royal families to hold noble titles while retaining authority over the day to day running of the provinces, and encouraging extensive intermarriage between the royal family in Luang Prabang and the noble provincial families.³² By 1904–1905 the Lao elite had only slightly more than a decade to jockey for new positions of power and influence vis-a-vis the royal family and the French. At the time of the Russo-Japanese War, the Lao elite were so preoccupied with internal Laotian affairs that the Japanese victory did not inspire them to thoughts of independence, and they continued to view the French as “benevolent protectors, or at least as a lesser of evils.”³³

It was the highland minorities, and to a lesser extent lower class ethnic Lao, who were opposed to French rule. Various of these groups staged violent protests against French taxation policies, corvée labor demands, and the usurpation of land for rubber and coffee plantations in the highland areas inhabited by groups such as the Hmong and Tai.³⁴ From 1904 through 1906, the French faced a revolt that was significant enough for them to move artillery into position to fire on the rebel’s base. The rebel leaders turned to Thailand in the hope that the Thai court would help them. Instead, the Thais turned the rebels over to the French, who executed them.³⁵ Even had this revolt succeeded, it was so focused on local concerns that greater notions of national programs of modernization and independence from the French never occurred to its leadership. Thus, Japan’s wartime success and industrial might was irrelevant. Even if they had heard of the Russo-Japanese War, Laotians had no reason to think that contact with Japan would benefit them.

The situation in Cambodia was much the same as in Laos. Cambodia’s internal troubles preoccupied the royal family and other local elite while anyone else who might have had reason to oppose the French had no reason to look to Japan for help or inspiration. Cam-

³² Steinberg, 340–1.

³³ Paul Kratoska and Ben Batson, “Nationalism and Modernist Reform,” in Tarling, 279.

³⁴ *Laos*, 45–51.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, 50; Wyatt, 205–6.

bodia became a protectorate of France in 1863, and for several generations before that the royal court had been under the thumb of either Vietnam or Thailand.³⁶ For his part, King Norodom was more than willing to accept the French offer of protection to secure his precarious hold on the throne. Indeed, in 1863, Norodom had not yet received official coronation as most of his royal regalia was held at the Thai court in Bangkok.³⁷ After 1863, the French “protected” Norodom from the Thais, as well as uprisings by rival Cambodian elite groups, and even members of his own family. When Norodom died in 1904, the French chose his successor, his half brother Sisowath who had cooperated with them against anyone who showed any anti-colonial inclination, including members of the Cambodian provincial elite and even two of Norodom’s sons.³⁸ One of these sons, Prince Yukanthor, tried to take his case to the French public in the last years of Norodom’s life and was passed over in favor of Sisowath as a result.³⁹

During the Russo-Japanese War, members of the royal family and Sisowath’s elite supporters were thoroughly embroiled in maneuvers for power and influence among themselves and with the French administration in Phnom Penh. Although it is likely that news of the diplomatic crisis over the presence of Russian ships in Indochina’s neutral waters reached some of the Cambodian elite, if that event, or the greater war, aroused any interest among the Cambodians, there is no record of that fact. Meanwhile, there was little interest in Japan’s modernization and any notion of “reform” was seen as a French imposition that had to be resisted. In fact, “the modernizing segment of the society was dominated by the French, aided by immigrants from China and Vietnam.”⁴⁰ Under this circumstance, modernization was not seen as a potential source of strength that might one day be used against the French, and the Cambodian elite clung evermore tightly to any and all antiquated traditions.

³⁶ David P. Chandler, *A History of Cambodia* (Boulder, 1983), 117–33.

³⁷ Georges Taboulet, *La Geste Française en Indochine: Histoire par les textes de la France en Indochine des origines à 1914*, 2 vols. (Paris, 1955), vol. 1, 621–35; Chandler, 140–1.

³⁸ Chandler, 145–7; Milton Osborne, *The French Presence in Cochinchina and Cambodia: Rule and Response (1859–1905)* (Ithaca, 1969), 237–46.

³⁹ Jean Hess, *L’Affair Yukanthor* (Paris, 1900); Paul Doumer, *L’Indochine Française* (Paris, 1905), 230–31.

⁴⁰ Chandler, 147.

In stark contrast to the ease by which French colonial officials were able to control the kingdoms of Laos and Cambodia, the Vietnamese steadily resisted their rule. In a sense, the Vietnamese were merely continuing a millenniums-long tradition that had pitted them against Chinese and Mongol invaders and regional enemies, such as the Thais, Laotians, Khmers, and Chams. The French annexation began with an attack on the southern port of Da Nang in August 1858. The defending Nguyen dynasty based in the royal city of Hue was split between two opposing viewpoints, one argued for granting the Europeans trade concessions so the regime could concentrate on suppressing domestic peasant uprisings and invading bands of Chinese Taiping rebels known as the White, Yellow, and Black Flags, whose very presence threatened the regime. A smaller group of officials favored resistance and properly predicted that the French were after more than mere trading ports. However, King Tu Duc sided with those in favor of negotiations in view of the many other pressing internal challenges that his government already faced. After establishing themselves in the far southern provinces of the Mekong Delta by 1862, the French demanded further concessions and in 1882 troops commanded by Henry Riviere seized Hanoi in the far north. The following year King Tu Duc died without leaving an heir, which threw the court into factional anarchy. By August, the advance of French artillery units on Hue induced the court mandarins to sign a treaty making the country into a protectorate.⁴¹

Ironically, the French victory only signaled the beginning of Vietnamese resistance led by Regent Ton That Thuyet, who controlled the newly enthroned 12-year-old King Ham Nghi. In response to French demands that the court disarm its citadel and reduce the size of the country's armed forces, Thuyet ordered an attack on the French positions on the night of July 4, 1884 while he, the boy king, and their supporters escaped to the mountains. Once safe, Ham Nghi issued an edict calling on all Vietnamese to rally to his support and re-appointed all officials who had been discharged for supporting resistance. The King's appeal sparked a national campaign that cut across all social and economic lines and became known as the Can Vuong (Save the King) movement. Meanwhile, the French gathered

⁴¹ Nguyen Khac Vien, *Vietnam: A Long History* (Hanoi, 1993), 137–50; David G. Marr, *Vietnamese Anticolonialism, 1885–1925* (Berkeley, 1971), 26–43.

the remaining members of the compliant court and enthroned a collaborator, Dong Khanh, as their new king. The Royalist rebellion was dealt a severe blow in November 1888 when Ham Nghi was captured and sent into exile in Algeria. At the time, Thuyet was in China seeking assistance for their struggle and avoided a similar, or worse, fate. Meanwhile, the Can Vuong movement continued until 1897 and was especially strong in the country's central and northern provinces.⁴²

The most impressive center of resistance was led by Hoang Hoa Tham, better known as De (or Colonel) Tham, the "Tiger of Yen-The," an area northeast of Hanoi where his forces were concentrated. De Tham combined royalist support for the legitimate monarchy with a peasant revolt that began when the French colonizers usurped native lands. Even long after French forces had systematically overwhelmed one pocket of rebellion after the other, De Tham held out, protected by the loyalty of his strong peasant base of support. By 1894, this support and clever military tactics enabled De Tham to create a "quasi-feudal" domain in this strategic area with the full knowledge of French administrators.⁴³ In 1897, the French finally negotiated a truce with De Tham, who continued to hold the Yen The area free from foreign intervention. Though De Tham's area of control was limited, it was, in the words of nationalist leader Phan Boi Chau, "like a little island of freedom after the loss of our country." De Tham's autonomous area continued until he was eventually killed by a French paid assassin in 1913.⁴⁴

As the son of a teacher in Nghe-An province of central Vietnam, Phan Boi Chau was also deeply affected by the Can Vuong movement. He and his family were spared any direct effect of the violence of the period, but Phan made friends with individuals who were part of the Can Vuong movement. Still, Phan remained apolitical until 1897 when, at the age of 30, he went to Hue. There, he expanded his horizons beyond Vietnam by befriending a number

⁴² Nguyen, 151–56; Marr, 44–73; Thomas Hodgkin, *Vietnam: The Revolutionary Path* (New York, 1981), 189–90.

⁴³ Archives Nationales de France (Paris), Section Outre-Mer [hereafter AOM], A-50 (11 & 17) carton 23 and A-50 NF 595, as cited by Marr, 73–75. See also Truong Buu Lam, *Patterns of Vietnamese Responses to Foreign Intervention, 1858–1900* (New Haven: Southeast Asian Studies, Yale University Monograph Series 11, 1967), 45.

⁴⁴ Phan Boi Chau, "Memoires" (transl. and ed. Georges Boudarel), *France-Asie/Asia*, XXII, nos. 3–4 (1968), 29–30, cited in Hodgkin, 190.

of individuals who introduced him to the writings of prominent Chinese reformer intellectuals such as Liang Ch'i-ch'ao. With the death of his father in 1900, Phan felt released from familial duties and from then on he devoted his life to political activism to free his country. Also in 1900, Phan and his new comrades developed a three-stage plan for the liberation of their country that would begin by linking themselves with remnants of the Can Vuong movement to mount a campaign of political violence. The conspirators would then find a leader of royal lineage to serve as a figurehead for the struggle while simultaneously seeking outside assistance from a strong and friendly country.⁴⁵

It took two years to build a rudimentary network and attempt an abortive attack on a French garrison. In the meantime, in the spring of 1903, Phan met "Marquis" Cuong De, the son of a prince, and won him to the cause. This addition to the group greatly expanded its base of support and Phan spent a full year traveling around the country gaining further contacts and building the organization. By May of 1904, Phan, Cuong De, and almost twenty other principal leaders met and founded the Vietnam Modernization Association (Duy Tan Hoi), which formalized the original group's earlier goals.⁴⁶ Phan and his close associate Nguyen Thanh then decided it was time to address the third goal, and that Phan should be the one to travel abroad. For centuries, Vietnamese had looked to China as their model and occasional patron, but interest shifted decisively to Japan because it had modernized its society and become a formidable military power, easily defeating China in 1894–1895 and forcing the Euro-American powers to keep their distance. It took Phan until late February 1905 to raise the necessary travel funds and secure the organization sufficiently before he and two Duy Tan Hoi traveling companions could depart. Interestingly, the final Shanghai to Kobe leg of the journey was delayed for one month until the final Japanese victory in the Tsushima Straits, a conclusion to the war that confirmed what the Vietnamese already thought of Japan.⁴⁷

At the time Phan Boi Chau was making his way to Japan, another prominent Vietnamese nationalist, Phan Chau Trinh, and two of his

⁴⁵ Phan Boi Chau, *Overtured Chariot: The Autobiography of Phan Boi Chau*, transl. Vinh Sinh and Nicholas Wickenden, SHAPS Library of Translations (Honolulu, 1999), 51–60.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 60–71.

⁴⁷ Phan Boi Chau, *Overtured Chariot*, 73–84; Marr, 106–109; Hodgkin, 195.

companions were visiting the city of Nha Trang. While Phan Boi Chau and his confederates sought to retain the traditional mandarin ruling structure, Phan Chau Trinh and his group had no faith in the old leadership and had broken with the dynastic system and dropped their own official positions. Instead, they were traveling the country to rouse their fellow scholar-gentry to the new challenge of breaking with the past in favor of founding a modern constitutional government to prepare themselves for a break with French rule. Upon arriving at Nha Trang, the three travelers learned that a Russian war fleet headed for Japan was in anchor at Camranh Bay not far away. Disguising themselves as merchants with a load of vegetables and eggs, they rented a fishing boat and went out into the bay to view the fleet. Out in the water, they tried to talk to the Russian sailors, but the lack of a common language frustrated their attempts. Despite their inability to establish verbal contact, the formidable war technology of the vessels in Admiral Z.P. Rozhdestvenskii's Baltic Fleet impressed the three Vietnamese profoundly. Only a short while later, they were astonished to learn that only three of the ships had survived the assault of the Japanese navy once the fleet reached the Tsushima Straits.⁴⁸

Meanwhile, upon arriving at the port of Kobe, Phan Boi Chau took a train to Yokohama south of Tokyo where he quickly sought out the prominent Chinese exile Liang Ch'i-ch'ao who, in turn, introduced him to important Meiji Restoration officials. The most important of these men were Count Ōkuma Shigenobu, a leader of the Shimpō-tō (Progressive Party) and twice formerly prime minister, Viscount Inukai Tsuyoshi, the party's president and former minister of Education, General Fukushima Yasumasa, director of the Shimbū Military Academy, and Kashiwabara Buntarō, an educator and member of the Japanese House of Representatives. The Japanese advised Phan Boi Chau to return home for Cuong De so he could live safely in Japan away from the French *Sûreté*, while Liang proposed bringing Vietnamese students to Japan to study and in that way build Vietnam's future. By late August, Phan had returned to Vietnam where he and his comrades quickly developed a plan to recruit and finance young boys for study in Japan. Phan went back to Japan

⁴⁸ Huynh Thuc Khang, *Tu Truyen* (Autobiography) (Hue, 1963) 27–28, cited in Marr, 158.

where he made ready for the first students who arrived shortly thereafter while Cuong De followed in early 1906. Phan placed the students in schools associated with his Japanese Progressive Party allies.⁴⁹

Phan Boi Chau had taken to the suggestion of an education program in Japan because in addition to believing that Vietnamese and Japanese were of the same race, he also thought the Japanese had a superior civilization and level of knowledge. As a product of his time, Phan was strongly influenced by Social Darwinist ideas he absorbed from a variety of contemporary Chinese writers. Recognizing Japan's superiority, he believed, was a necessary first step to awaken Vietnamese to the dangers of the modern world. He feared that Vietnam might otherwise go the way of the ancient Cham kingdom that the ascendant Vietnamese crushed in their inexorable southward expansion from the north to the Mekong Delta. Placing students in Japanese schools, especially those with a strong military education curriculum, was the best way to prepare a new generation of leaders who could save their country and culture from French annihilation.⁵⁰

Phan Boi Chau's program of study in Japan for young Vietnamese became known as the Dong Du (Go East or Eastern Travel) movement, and over the next two years upwards of 200 Vietnamese students enrolled in a variety of Japanese schools including the Shimbu Military Academy and the pan-Asianist Dobun Shoin (Common Culture School). As successful as the program was, it encountered serious problems due to the July 10, 1907 treaty between France and Japan that regularized relations between the two states. This change in Japan's diplomatic status had an immediate impact on the education program. As Japan gained increasing recognition and status among the world powers, she seemed less inclined to encourage, or even tolerate, Asian nationalists and their activities. Instead, agents of the French secret police, the *Sûreté*, were free to extend their activities to Japan. In 1908, the monitoring of public cable messages in Tokyo led to the arrest of Vietnamese couriers transferring funds from Saigon to support the young scholars in Japan. One agent infiltrated a group of Vietnamese visitors and observed their handing over of a substantial sum of money to Cuong De. When the

⁴⁹ Phan Boi Chau, *Overtured Chariot*, 85–108.

⁵⁰ Shiraiishi Masaya, "Phan Boi Chau in Japan," in Vinh Sinh (ed.), *Phan Boi Chau and the Dong Du Movement*, the Lac-Viet Series, No. 8 (New Haven, 1988), 52–64.

travelers returned to Saigon, they were promptly arrested and the information extracted from them under intense interrogation led to many further arrests, which yielded subversive literature from Japan and numerous documents.⁵¹

Thanks to the discoveries made by increased *Sûreté* activity in Vietnam as well as Japan, the French government demanded that Japan deport Phan Boi Chau, Cuong De, and the students. Because Tokyo was reluctant to take such a drastic step immediately, the government's Ministry of Home Affairs sent military police to schools with Vietnamese students and had each of them write a letter home. Anxious parents wrote back to their children pleading for them to return. As well, hundreds of parents and relatives in Vietnam were subjected to harassment and some were even arrested. By mid-1908, the students began returning, even though Phan tried to delay the returns. Then, in the fall of 1908, orders from the Interior Ministry instructed the Dobun Shoin to drop its Vietnamese students. Phan Boi Chau tried to elicit support from his supposedly influential Japanese friends, such as Inukai and Fukushima, but they were either unwilling or unable to oppose the government's new anti-Vietnamese nationalist policy. Later, Inukai was able to secure free return passage for the Vietnamese students from the Japan Mail Line. By November only a few students remained in Japan and they would henceforth be on their own.⁵²

In early February 1909, at the instance of the French, agents of the Japanese Ministry of the Interior raided Phan Boi Chau's residence. Phan was tipped off and escaped with a handful of newly printed propaganda materials, but his deportation was imminent. On March 8, he departed Tokyo for Hong Kong. Cuong De avoided

⁵¹ Phan Boi Chau, *Overtured Chariot*, 140–43. See also Phan Boi Chau, "Memoires," 104–105; AOM, A-50 NF 28(2) cited in Marr, 145. An especially important arrest was that of Gilbert Chieu whose hotels in Saigon and key provincial cities were valuable logistic hubs for the Vietnamese anti-French resistance.

⁵² See AOM, A-50 NF 451 carton 32 for the formal demand plus supporting documentary evidence against Phan Boi Chau that the French presented to the Japanese government. Nagaoka Shinjiro, "Vietnamese in Japan," in Nagaoka Shinjiro and Kawamoto Kuni (eds.), *Betonamu Bkokushi* [History of the Loss of Vietnam], Toybunko, 73 (Tokyo, 1966), 263–64 and 272–73, as cited in Marr, 146. As well, Phan Boi Chau, details the activities and accomplishments of the handful of students who chose to remain and pursue their studies as individual students in *Overtured Chariot*, 143–57. Marr, 146, also cites Phan Boi Chau, "Memoires," 106–107.

capture until late October, when he was put on a ship bound for Vietnam via Shanghai. Fearing arrest by French authorities in the Chinese port, the Vietnamese prince slipped ashore, and with the help of some Chinese students, went overland to Hong Kong where he joined Phan Boi Chau. For the next few years Phan and the prince would live in China and Thailand where they remained free to plot revolutionary schemes. Returning to Vietnam was out of the question due to the severe French repression that had eliminated their old comrades of the Duy Tan Hoi. Disappointed by the Japanese government's new diplomatic priorities that ended support for the colonized peoples of Asia, Phan Boi Chau, especially, turned his attention to Sun Yat-sen's revolutionary party, the T'ungmenghui, a predecessor to the Kuomintang, for inspiration.⁵³

Despite the immediate failure of the Dong Du movement, the idea of education for national revitalization took root in Vietnam. The first domestic attempt at setting up a nationalist school was the Free School of Hanoi (Dong Kinh Nghia Thuc) formed in 1907 shortly after a meeting between Phan Boi Chau and the school's founders. This school and another, the Quoc Hoc in Hue, were both based on the educational ideals of the noted Meiji educational reformer FukuzawaYukichi. Like the Dong Du movement, this educational initiative was destined to last only a short while, but had the effect of introducing new ideas.⁵⁴ Among the students whose lives were profoundly changed by schools such as these was a young boy from central Vietnam who would eventually lead his country's successful revolutionary struggle under his adopted name of Ho Chi Minh.⁵⁵

Conclusion

Southeast Asia's nationalist response to the 1905 Japanese victory was as variegated as the region itself, and was affected by local factors that determined each individual colony's stage of political devel-

⁵³ Marr, 148–52 and 154–55.

⁵⁴ Marr, 164–84; Hodgkins, 202–203. See also Vinh Sinh, "Phan Boi Chau and Fukuzawa Yukichi: Perceptions of National Independence," in Vinh, 101–49.

⁵⁵ Earlier Phan Boi Chau had tried, unsuccessfully, to convince the young Ho's to send his son to Japan. Later in life Ho explained that even as a child he wanted to study the West directly. See William J. Duiker, *Ho Chi Minh: A Life* (New York, 2000), 26–27; Marr, 255.

opment. By 1905, nationalism was still a distant political movement for most Southeast Asians. This is not to say that most of the subject peoples appreciated colonial rule. Except for a few local rulers who gained by collaborating with the European powers, the people of Southeast Asia recognized that they were being exploited by foreign conquerors. But resistance, if any, was still limited to simple anti-foreigner responses while most of the region was under the sway of traditional rulers and/or aligned by traditional ethnic identification.

The two exceptions to this general pattern were the Philippines and Vietnam. Of the two, it was Philippine nationalists who were relatively more advanced by the late nineteenth century, and they were very interested in the Japan that had thoroughly beaten the mighty Chinese empire in 1894–1895. During their struggle, first against Spain, and then the United States, Filipino revolutionaries looked hopefully to the emerging Japanese for assistance, but Japan played a cautious role in the conflict by limiting its involvement to observation. The bitter lesson for most Philippine nationalists was that Japan could not be counted on for substantial assistance. After their defeat by a vastly superior American army, the majority of Philippine nationalists took a pragmatic approach and chose to work with the Americans, who promised to share more and more power with Filipinos over time, working toward an eventual goal of Philippine independence. By the time of the Russo-Japanese War, a Philippine national census had been completed and electoral districts created that would soon send Filipino representatives to a national assembly as the first step in that process of working toward self-government. Filipino leaders were impressed with the Japanese victory over Russia, but they recognized that Japan had no real interest in helping its fellow Asians.

The other country that responded to Japan's ascendance was Vietnam, where the nationalist movement was built on a long tradition of resistance to foreign conquerors. Though defeated by French arms, Vietnamese gained inspiration from the Meiji regime and sought contacts at a variety of levels. The Dong Du movement was the most concrete example of Vietnamese interest in Japan, but this initiative was fleeting, as the Japanese government soon lined up with the European imperialist powers in the region. The Vietnamese, like the Filipinos before them, came to recognize that small countries had to watch over their own interests. They could learn from observation, but they had to maintain their own "agency" if they were

to avoid a future colonization by an Asian, rather than a European, power.

This regional survey has addressed assumptions about the profundity of the 1905 drama for Southeast Asian nationalism. The interesting remaining question is why some observers assumed that the Russo-Japanese War had a strong impact on the region's nationalists. Could it be that assumptions about the war's impact are more of a reflection of the profundity that the war had on Japan and the Euro-American world? We know that Japan's military prowess came as a rude shock to prevailing notions of "Western" cultural and racial superiority. Could the shock and surprise felt by the Euro-American world have been uncritically projected onto Asia, albeit with the recognition that the Japanese advance would have thrilled Asians, while their colonial masters were fearful and apprehensive? Although the Japanese advance impressed Southeast Asians, and nationalists from the Philippines and Vietnam sought Japanese assistance, Japan's own post-war policies limited the potential influence that she might have gained with the region's emerging nationalist movements.

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