

JCC: Russo- Japanese War

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NOVEMBER 16-19, 2017 | MONTRÉAL, QUÉBEC



JCC: Russo-Japanese War: Russia

Dear delegates,

I welcome you into the service of the almighty and divine Romanoff dynasty. We may regard ourselves with true distinction, for we are among the few chosen by His Majesty to lend our ears to his privy council. Our empire knows no frontiers and no ends. Should we succeed in our holy duty of service to the Tsar, perhaps one day we will witness the day when all peoples of the world will be graced to bow before Him. The challenges you'll have to endure will prove to be complex, intriguing, unpredictable, and most certainly Russian. While the provincial settlements to the West coin themselves Emperors of new lands and seas, we must remain dignified and not let Russia keep up, but lead. It is our duty to sustain progress, growth, and expansion of all that is ours. The Tsar has vested his trust in our council to see through Russia's rise to the top of the world, and how this is achieved relies solely on our broad Russian shoulders. Lest we ever forget the manifest destiny of all Russians; Russia is a land that knows of no borders.

My name is Alex Sirois and I am extremely proud to serve as chair for the Russian side of the Russo-Japanese War committee in this jubilant 25th Secondary Schools United Nations Symposium. My vice-chair, Luke Andersen, and I will hopefully lead Russia to new heights with your selfless assistance. I am a fourth year political science and sociology student, looking to pursue a master degree in International Security and European Affairs. To my dismay, this will be my fourth and final SSUNS. I am originally from Zagreb, Croatia - Russian speakers in committee, watch out, I understand you. I enjoy long walks on the beach and the craftsmanship of the world's best football midfielder, Luka Modrić.

I hope you are as excited for this committee as I am, but please do keep in mind the importance of research. This will be a history intensive committee and from experience as both a delegate and dais member at all levels, I can tell you the worst is to come unprepared. Please stay on top of your research, both for the sake of yourself and the flow of committee. The beauty of MUN is the seemingly endless flow of knowledge we acquire through research. I hope you enjoy taking a passionate stance on topics and duking it out verbally. Some of you may have had me as your chair last year, but for those of you who did not, I want to give you a heads up that we will debate until we drop. For anyone new to MUN or Crisis, don't worry! We are here to help you grow as MUNers, but most importantly, as wholesome individuals. Please do not ever hesitate to ask any of us any questions.

Words cannot explain the excitement on our side. Luke and I look forward to being met with equal enthusiasm and fulfilling the wildest dreams of our Tsar and Tsarina.

Best regards,

Alex Sirois
Luke Anderson



Introduction

The military conflict between Japan and Russia dragged on from February 8th, 1904 until September 5th, 1905. After Japan defeated Russia, a peace conference was held in Maine, with President Theodore Roosevelt as a mediator. The resulting Treaty of Portsmouth formally ended the war. The Russo-Japanese War is a crucial moment in history, as the war set the stage for many more conflicts to follow. Japan was the first Asian power to defeat a European power in modern times. With WW1 breaking out less than a decade after the Russo-Japanese War, the conflict is often overlooked or tends to be looked at as a simple bilateral engagement between Japanese and Russian military forces. However, it is controversial whether this is actually the case. Wasn't the Russo-Japanese War more than just a regional conflict? Could it in fact be a precursor to WW1 – a first demonstration of the newly developed capacity of industrialized powers to wage war and interfere in conflict on the international stage? To answer this question, it is necessary to look at the issue of why the conflict broke out.

Port Arthur Tensions

Port Arthur first came into international prominence during the First Sino-Japanese War (1894–1895). Following Japan's defeat of Chinese troops at Pyongyang in Korea in September 1894, the Japanese First and Second Armies converged on the Liaodong Peninsula by land and sea. Japanese war planners, ambitious to control of the Liaodong Peninsula and Port Arthur and also cognizant of that port's strategic position controlling the northern Yellow Sea routes and the passage to Tianjin, were determined to seize it. On April 23, 1895, a delegation of representatives of Germany, Russia, and



France visited Tokyo to urge Japan in the name of their respective government, to relinquish possession of the Liaodong Peninsula. The main argument was that Japanese possession of said peninsula would endanger peace in the East Asian region¹. It would threaten the security of Beijing, the Chinese capital and would “render Korea’s independence purely nominal.” After considering their options, which included seeking support from Britain and America, Japan agreed to change the terms of the treaty and abandon their claims over the Liaodong Peninsula. Over the course of the next 4 years, China would go on to lease territory out to all three powers involved in the Triple Intervention. Russia’s exhibition of power in Liaodong serves to demonstrate our superior position among global powers compared to the Japanese, who witnessed great humiliation after forfeiting their possessions. As of 1897, the Chinese have granted us access to their railways, opening up Port Arthur as a key trade hub for most of Manchuria and the Amur settlements². This railway from Port Arthur to Harbin became a southern branch of the Chinese Eastern Railway. All this has been an additional goad to an already seething Japan. We have served them a hard earned lesson in international geopolitics and the Tsar hopes they will not forget their place. Nonetheless, Russia looks to continue their expansions into Manchurian lands and seeks new markets for goods entering through Port Arthur and Vladivostok. The Russians also began to make inroads into Korea. By 1898, they had acquired mining and forestry concessions near the Yalu and Tumen rivers, causing the Japanese much anxiety. Japan and Britain had signed the

¹ Lynch, George. In many wars, by many war correspondents. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 2010, 6-24

² Ibid.



Anglo-Japanese Alliance in 1902, the British seeking to restrict naval competition by keeping the Russian Pacific seaports of Vladivostok and Port Arthur from their full use. The alliance with the British meant, in part, that if any nation allied itself with Russia during any war against Japan, then Britain would enter the war on Japan's side. Russia could no longer count on receiving help from either Germany or France without danger of British involvement in the war. With such an alliance, Japan felt free to commence hostilities, if necessary.³

State of the Nations

Agriculture

Until it was abolished in 1861, serfs in Russia were bonded to their masters in a certain type of modified slavery. Known as the Russian Empire, a term coined by Peter I the Great, this time period is an era of reform for the peasant serfs in the Russian countryside. In 1721, we witness the beginning of what is known as the Russian Empire. In the year 1861, under the rule of Czar Alexander II, serfdom was abolished. After the mid 1870s, agriculture generated worse numbers.⁴ Conditions for the largest grain producers were affected by the flooding of European markets with American grain, resulting in lower prices for Russian exports – 3% of gross production. This adversely affected the financial position of the larger export-oriented noble estates that produced grain. In 1891, a particularly dry autumn had delayed the planting of the fields. That winter temperatures fell to –31 degrees

³ Nish, Ian (Ian Hill). The origins of the Russo-Japanese war. Longman Scientific & Technical, 1985.

⁴ Katherine Diaz, "Guided History." Guided History Peasant Life and Serfdom under Tsarist Russia



Celsius (−24 degrees Fahrenheit), but very little snow fell. Therefore, the seedlings were totally unprotected from the frost. When the Volga river flooded, the lack of snow caused the water to freeze, killing more seedlings as well as the fodder used to feed the horses.⁵ The seedlings that were not killed by frost were blown away along with the topsoil in an uncommonly windy spring. The summer started as early as April and proved to be a long dry one. For example, the city of Orenburg had no rain for over 100 days. Forests, horses, crops, and peasants all began to die. By the end of 1892, about a half million people were dead, mainly from cholera epidemics triggered by the famine.

Russian Army

The Russian army prior the Russo-Japanese war was the largest standing army in the world with 1.3 million men. The simple magnitude of their army led them into alliances such as the Franco-Russian Military convention of 1892⁶. However, the Russian army failed to modernize to the extent that the rest of the European armies had.”. The Russian chose to focus on a war of attrition as opposed to the strategy of technology and tactics. On July 8th, 1853 Matthew Perry busted Japan and made demands in regard to trade and US relations offering the Japanese one year to consider but retuning only six months later.⁷ The Japanese were outraged, specifically Dejima who was one of the sole ports that were previously open for trade with Europe. This brought the overthrowing of the outdated feudal Japanese system and replaced with the 1856 Meiji Restoration, which brought that

⁵ Diaz, "Guided History.

⁶ Jacob, Frank., *The Russo-Japanese War and the Decline of the Russian Image*. CUNY Academic Works, 2015

⁷ Ibid.



return of the emperor to a position of authority and not just a figure head as he previously had been. After the 1856 Meiji restoration the Japanese sought to become more Western, in their politics, industry, and most importantly, their military. The Japanese had a desire to become like the Americans who first came to Japan to open the country to foreign trade. From this the Japanese taught the new generation in the arts of war to modernize their military. Additionally, the Japanese had an insatiable desire to prove themselves on the global stage - they were eager to prove themselves on the international stage by preparing both their military and navy. Our great empire must keep an eye out for the growing threat from the East and assert the Tsar's rule in our lands.

The Completion of the Trans-Siberian Railroad

The far east of Russia in the 1860s was often forgotten and largely only important in maintaining Russia's status as the largest empire in the world. However, after the end of serfdom in 1861, the agricultural output in Russia fell dramatically. This caused the East to gain importance and increase bilateral trade within the country. After 1896, 500,000 tonnes of grain and flour were transported on average across the nation annually⁸. Notably, the newfound cost-effectiveness of building a railroad resulted in a rush for completion. The first spike was laid in 1863 and the road was largely built using prison inmates to reduce costs⁹. To this day, this behemoth is still the longest railroad in the world, stretching 9,250 kilometres and requiring over a week to traverse from

⁸ Barnaul, ASU Publishing House. (2001). *Entrepreneurs and entrepreneurship in Siberia*. Issue 3. Collection of scientific articles. Barnaul: ASU Publishing House

⁹ Victor Mote and James R. Millar, *Encyclopedia of Russian History* Vol. 4 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 1571-1580



end to end.¹⁰

It is common knowledge in Russia that an army marches on its stomach. Thus, to prevent disbandment, engineers must find a way to keep our men well fed to protect our realm from all threats. An attempt to function without a railway would be similar to trying to walk without legs. In the case of war there needs to be a balance of troop movement, food transportation, and civilian travel. If one of these falls then the entire war machine may fall.¹¹

¹⁰ James R. Millar, Encyclopedia of Russian History Vol. 4 (New York: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 1571

¹¹ Blum, Jerome. Lord and peasant in Russia from the ninth to the nineteenth century. Princeton (N.J.): Princeton University Press, 1972



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