

日本  
萬歲  
百撰  
百笑

○手酷漬一形 骨皮道人  
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いざ競下あつてんし目下ハ世界の  
中。屈指の強國也あハ露國と  
餘やと上なる沖スラ人種あを爪  
の垢も及ぶものぞか之と評言てんべ  
ま故滅法界を太きをも廣けて上  
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蓋平金州南山南関嶺青泥窪得利  
寺旅順港何なる彼まを片端か  
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と云々其の愈々セントピタスフルと云  
やふ順序をゆくがナント向様はこ  
う愉快な事ハあるやあつさうか  
我々もこの西平く片端の合併  
共勢ひハ愚者裏と一掴みのまて露西  
の不恰なる何様ある成さう甲は  
知れぬ残りすむつ形はあものか





# JAPAN THE VICTOR

In a surprise upset of Russia in ‘the first great war of the 20th century,’ Japan established itself a world power

BY EUGENE FINERMAN

**In 1837, an American ship sailed** to Japan with the intent to return home seven shipwrecked Japanese sailors. Japanese imperial officials responded with cannon fire—warning shots but sufficient to drive the unarmed ship away. Japan wanted no contact with the outside world and would not even accept its own subjects once they had been “contaminated” by foreigners.

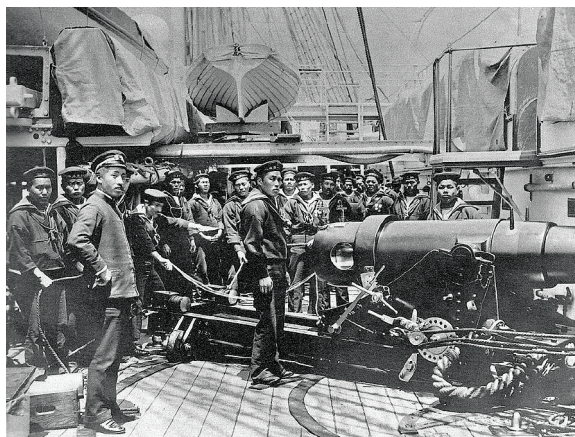
For more than two centuries, Japan had imposed upon itself a strict isolation. However, a medieval Japan could not keep the modern world at bay forever. In 1854, more American ships arrived, an armed squadron commanded by Commodore Matthew Perry. His “Pacific overture” was in fact a threat; Japan could either open its door to the West or see it blasted

open. If the Japanese were humbled by superior force, they also marveled at it—and then set out to master the industry, technology and weaponry of the foreigners. Scarcely 50 years after Perry roused a feudal society from stagnation, Japan would go on to emerge a world power.

Japan transformed itself, through a chain of events that

would come to be known as the Meiji Restoration. Quaint, charming Kyoto had been the old capital, but this new Japan needed a capital that reflected the dynamic spirit of the times. The government and the imperial court would relocate to Japan’s largest city, Edo. It would be renamed Tokyo—meaning eastern capital. Japan was eager to have all the West had to offer: the

Gregorian calendar, railroads, telegraphs, heavy industry, a modern army modeled upon Germany’s, a modern navy modeled upon Britain’s, a system of public schools with compulsory education. The country sponsored students to study abroad. Even clothing was to reflect Japan’s ambitions; the old styles would be left to Shinto priests and



**Left:** Published in 1904, a colorful woodcut by artist Kiyochika Kobayashi depicts a large Japanese hand crushing Port Arthur. Japanese soldiers prepare for battle in their war against the Russians.



A print published in 1904 shows a Japanese official reading a document in front of captured Russian soldiers at Chemulpo, Korea. Japanese soldiers near Chemulpo, Korea, in the summer of 1904. The battleship *Mikasa*, preserved today at Yokosuka, played a key role in the conflict, reportedly surviving some 20 direct hits.

geishas, but the rest of the population should dress like the West.

Yet, even as Japan seemed to be assimilating, it also was forging an identity in the minds of its people. For centuries, the Japanese had maintained a stronger bond with their region or local aristocratic family than with a distant emperor. Now, through public works and education, they felt part of a nation.

By 1890, Japan could apply one more lesson it had learned from the West: imperialism. With a modern army and navy, led by Western-trained officers and manned by educated conscripts, with industries that supplied its weapons and munitions, Japan was ready for war. Its object was the conquest of Korea. Separated from Japan by only a narrow strait, the Kingdom of Korea had coal and iron that Japan needed. Korea was militarily weak but it was a vassal of China, and Japanese aggression would likely lead to war with China. But the Japanese welcomed the prospect.

Indeed, the Sino-Japanese War, fought between 1894-1895, was one Japanese victory after another. The Chinese Empire also had attempted to modernize its armed forces but had failed abysmally. Its officers were inept or corrupt, its troops untrained. The Chinese navy had purchased new ships, but had no one to operate them. Japan soon had control of Korea and then invaded Manchuria, a region of north-

eastern China. The Japanese seized the strategic Liaotung Peninsula with its deepwater harbor of Port Arthur. With control of Liaotung, the Japanese army had an open road to the Chinese capital of Peking. China had no choice but to sue for peace. Korea would now be the vassal of Japan. China also acknowledged the new overlords of the Liaotung Peninsula, and the defeated empire was forced to cede the island of Taiwan. The Japanese Empire now would extend south, toward the Philippines. Furthermore, China was obliged to pay Japan an indemnity of 15 million pounds of silver.

ness. In 1898, Russia extorted from China the control of Port Arthur and the Liaotung Peninsula. With that southern expansion, Czarist Russia now loomed as a prospective threat to Korea. Japan's response was to triple its military expenditures, doubling the size of its navy. Shipyards in Britain were constructing battleships named *Asashi* and *Mikasa*. (The British government appreciated both the business and a prospective ally against Russian expansion.)

But war was not inevitable. In 1903, Japanese diplomacy repeatedly sought an understanding with Russia: Japan's unchallenged control of Korea in return

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But Japan could not relish its victory for long. Six days after the signing of the peace treaty, an alliance of Russia, France and Germany demanded Japan's return of the Liaotung Peninsula to China. As consolation, Japan was offered another ton of silver. The Japanese were furious but in no position to fight three European powers.

It seems that the world did not yet respect Japan; the war was simply regarded as evidence of China's weak-

ness for Russia's acknowledged hegemony in Manchuria. However, the Russians were not interested. They already had Manchuria and did not need Japan's permission. Furthermore, the Russians had an obvious contempt for the Japanese; the czar himself referred to them as "monkey men." As for a war—tiny Japan against their great empire—the Russians could not imagine the idea. But the Japanese were meticulously plotting it.





Japan had a population of 46 million and a standing army of 270,000 men. Russia's population was approximately 130 million and the czar's army numbered 1 million men. Yet the actual logistics were in Japan's favor. Its full force could quickly be brought to bear against Manchuria. Only 80,000 Russian soldiers were in eastern Asia, and half of them were garrisoned at Vladivostok and Port Arthur. Most of the czar's army was 5,700 miles away in Europe. The Trans-Siberian Railroad, a single line of train track linking Moscow to the Pacific, was not yet completed; and its service would be sporadic during the long Siberian winters. So the Russian army would be outnumbered and with only a tenuous link to supplies and reinforcements. Russia's Pacific fleet was also at a disadvantage; half was stationed at Vladivostok and icebound a third of the year. So, if war were merely a matter of numbers and meteorology, then Japan made a logical decision.

On Feb. 8, 1904, the Japanese navy launched a surprise attack on Port Arthur. The harbor was mined and the port blockaded, trapping the Russian ships there. The Japanese had command of the sea. A Japanese army disembarked in Northern Korea for the invasion of Manchuria. Another army landed in the Liaotung Peninsula to besiege and take Port Arthur; the Russians rushed what troops they had to hold it. Elsewhere the Russian strategy was to avoid battle, slowly retreat and wait for reinforcements. The last

hundred miles of the Trans-Siberian Railroad now was hurriedly being constructed. Yet, even then, the single track could only transport at most 40,000 troops in a month. It would take a year before the Russian army had numerical parity with its enemy. The Japanese were not likely to wait.

To challenge the Japanese naval

supremacy, Russia decided upon a dramatic strategy. Its Baltic fleet would sail 18,000 miles to break the Japanese blockade of Port Arthur. Unfortunately, the fleet was not as impressive as the plan. Many of its ships were outmoded—cruisers with sailing masts. The more modern ships had to travel at the same speed as the old ones. Leaving the Baltic in October 1904, the Russian ships sailed around Africa and reached Madagascar in January 1905; there they learned that Port Arthur had fallen to the Japanese. The fleet now had no mission but was ordered to sail anyway to Vladivostok. However, there was no need to rush; Vladivostok would be icebound until the end of April. While the Russian fleet cruised to Asia the Japanese had captured Mukden, the capital of Manchuria. The Russians had nothing left to defend but they still weren't ready to negotiate with the Japanese, so the Baltic fleet sailed on.

Sailing north along the coast of China, the most direct route to Vladivostok was through the Straits of Tshushima that separate Japan and Korea. The Russian fleet entered it on May 27, 1905—and found the Japanese fleet waiting. Of Russia's 45 ships, only 12 avoided being sunk or captured: some 4,000 sailors were dead and 5,000—including the admiral—were taken prisoner. The Japanese lost three torpedo boats and 117 men. Now Russia had to sue for peace; the news of the consequent defeats had incited protests and demonstrations through-

out the czar's empire. The Russian people were demanding reforms, and the imperial government was unsure of the loyalty of the army. Japan also was ready for peace; however victorious, the war was bankrupting the economy.

At the invitation of President Theodore Roosevelt, Japanese and Russian diplomats met in August at Portsmouth, N.H., to negotiate a peace treaty, which returned the sovereignty of Manchuria to China (while acceding some key port and rail resources to Japan), and shifted ownership of the southern half of the Island of Sakhalin from Russia to Japan.

The treaty was signed in September 1905. For his successful arbitration, President Roosevelt won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1906. The treaty did not go over well with the Japanese public however, which had expected all of Sakhalin and a monetary indemnity.

Japan had won an empire—Korea and Southern Manchuria—and earned the status of being a world power, an Asian nation equal to any Western one. Such pride was justified, but it encouraged an arrogant and dangerous ambition. Japan saw itself as the master of Eastern Asia and the Pacific ... and within just a few decades, that would lead to disaster: World War II. ■



Map during Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905)