

THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR; PART I

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The Russo-Japanese War; Part I by Various

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VARIOUS

**THE
RUSSO-JAPANESE
WAR; PART I**

THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR.

PART I.

COMPILED BY

THE GENERAL STAFF, WAR OFFICE.

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A general map of Manchuria will be issued with Part II.

PREFACE.

As a considerable time must necessarily elapse before either of the combatants in the late campaign in Manchuria produces an official history of the operations, it has been thought advisable to prepare a narrative of which the present publication is the First Part.

This work, which has been compiled by the General Staff, lays no claim to be complete and accurate in every respect, but all available information, with the exception of such matter as it has been considered necessary to withhold, has been utilized.

Criticism has been excluded, as it is necessarily of doubtful value when based upon imperfect knowledge, and naval operations have only been touched upon in so far as they affect movements on land.

The Part, now published, deals with the causes of the war, and the opening events up to and including the battle of the Ya-lu. Other parts to complete the work will be issued from time to time.

GENERAL STAFF,

WAR OFFICE.

August, 1906.

NOTE.

The additional information given below was received too late for insertion in the text.

Page 48. The footnote should read :—The flank guard, which was under the command of Major-General Sasaki, marched to Chyangsyong on the Ya-lu.

„ 57. Line 26, for “a battalion” read “two battalions.”

„ 62. The second footnote should be expunged.

„ 63. Last line, for “Siojo” read “Chyangsyong.”

„ 63. The third footnote should read :—This detachment (see p. 47) had originally covered the right flank of the First Army in the advance from Anju, and had marched to Chyangsyong on the Ya-lu. When it was ordered, prior to the battle, to rejoin the 12th Division, one squadron, one battalion (believed to have been the 1st Battalion 14th Regiment) and one battery were left at Chyangsyong.

„ 75. On the 17th April, General Kuroki received the following instructions from Imperial Head-Quarters :—

“The Second Army will begin landing at the mouth of the Ta-sha Ho on the 1st May, and its disembarkation will take about forty-five days to complete. The First Army will therefore advance as far as Tang-shan-cheng [midway between An-tung and Feng-huang-cheng], and having entrenched itself will wait there till the Second Army has finished its disembarkation. The two armies will then co-operate.”

In consequence of these instructions and the difficult nature of the ground, General Kuroki decided not to pursue the Russians after their defeat on the Ya-lu.

CHAPTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

ON the 14th November, 1860, six days after the withdrawal of the allied forces of Great Britain and France from Peking, a treaty of the highest importance was concluded between Russia and China, whereby the eastern coast of Manchuria from the Amur to the Korean frontier, a district which subsequently became known as the *Primorsk* or Maritime Province, was ceded to the Tsar. Nearly three centuries earlier, the Cossack Yermak, acting under Imperial auspices, had led his motley band of freebooters eastward across the Urals to subjugate Siberia, and his successors in expansive effort now found themselves established on the far-distant shores of the Sea of Japan.

The advance to the dreary confines of the Asiatic continent, though at times spasmodic, had been rapid, conquest had led to conquest, and the treaty signed at Peking marked a stage, but not the last, in the absorption of vast regions into the Russian Empire. Checked again and again in her efforts to reach the Mediterranean, Russia had followed the line of least resistance, and though it led her far afield, she now possessed a scientific frontier on the sea. The Peking treaty was a veritable triumph of Muscovite diplomacy, extracted as it was from the Chinese at a time when, smarting from the lesson lately taught them by the Allies, they were in no humour to resist demands. But though Russia's eastward boundary was now washed by the same sea that half surrounds the Empire of Japan, her aspirations in those distant regions were unsatisfied. Along the coast line of her new possessions no ice-free port exists, and Vladivostok at its southern extremity, whither the Russian naval headquarters were moved from Nikolaievsk, lying ten degrees to the north, is closed by ice for three months of the year.* From that port, too, admission to the Pacific mainly depended on the goodwill of Japan, for the two principal avenues which open on that ocean were practically in her hands.† On the north-east, between Yezo (Hokkaido) and the main island of Hondo, is the narrow Tsugaru channel, while on the south are the straits between the southern shore of Korea and the Japanese island of Kiushu or Nine Provinces. The northern route is under Japanese control, and within the southern straits, which measure little more than

* A passage sufficient for naval vessels is now maintained by means of ice-breakers.

† See Map I.

six score miles across, are the islands of Tsushima and Ikishima well situated for guarding the passage east and west.

The problem of securing freedom of navigation to and from Vladivostok through these straits, under all conditions, could not be satisfactorily solved by Russia unless she could obtain a foothold in Southern Korea, or debar her island neighbour from acquiring one. The time for further territorial expansion on the mainland was not opportune, but there remained other means, direct and easy, that would afford the necessary access to the ocean. The island of Tsushima, which possesses several good harbours, might be occupied and added to the Tsar's domains; and with this intention, in 1861, a Russian warship landed there a party of marines. Remonstrances from the alarmed inhabitants proved of no avail, but on the appearance of a British squadron, backed by a protest from the British Minister at Yedo (Tokio), the intruders were withdrawn. Several years passed and no other attempt like that on Tsushima was made, but the necessity for an ice-free port was not lost sight of by the Russian Government.

In 1885, the situation in the Far East rendered the possession of a port in eastern waters accessible throughout the year indispensable to the Russians, and with this end in view, they entered into negotiations for the lease of Port Lazarev in North-Eastern Korea. This project was, however, subsequently abandoned, and Russia announced her intention "never to occupy Korean territory under any circumstances whatever." In the meantime the British Government had occupied Port Hamilton, in the Korean Straits, but after the Russian declaration with regard to Korea, the island was again evacuated.

The gradual approach of Russia was viewed with apprehension in Japan. Many years prior to the incidents just mentioned, and before Russia had gained possession of the Maritime Province, her settlers in Kamchatka, striving to push southwards, had given tokens of that spirit of aggression which culminated, in 1806, in depredations committed in the island of Yezo. Half a century later differences which arose regarding the ownership of Saghalien

reached a crisis and, though compounded at that time by a partition of the island, the weaker Power found herself, in 1875, forced to give up the southern half, accepting in exchange what was practically her own—the Kurile group of islands.

The shame of this surrender, though unavoidable, sank deep into the hearts of the *Samurai*, and in the minds of Japanese statesmen the dread of Russia grew. They knew that China had proved in 1860, and before, her inability to protect her own interests, and that though she posed as Suzerain of Korea, whose north-east frontier was conterminous with that of Russia, the task of keeping that dependency inviolate was beyond her strength.

To avert the danger of a Russian occupation, partial or complete, two courses were now open to the Japanese. Either Korea, whose attitude towards them from ancient causes was far from friendly, must be conquered or, failing that, made independent. The first course, for which all preparations had been made, was