

The Russo-Japanese War – Perceptions of War through a Forgotten Pictorial Archive



1.0 Preface

In November of 2017, during the planned relocation of the Danish Defense Library on the outskirts of Copenhagen, researchers from the Institute of Military History, Culture and War from the Royal Danish Defense College gathered in the pursuit of material long forgotten. Much like an unglamorized version of the massive government storage facility in the closing scenes of Steven Spielberg's *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, it became clear that many of these crates had in fact remained untouched since their initial placement many years earlier. Sitting on a rear shelf, several unassuming dark, dusty crates caught the attention of the researchers. They contained hundreds of early 20th-century high quality black and white photos with handwritten notes below, each meticulously placed and numbered. The setting for these pictures was the Far East, mainly Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. The pictures showed a wide array of situations, depicting everything from everyday life on the front lines, logistical infrastructural

systems, official banquets and local life in villages to the grittier side of war, with very graphic pictures of combat casualties in the trenches and the torture and executions of suspected spies. The boxes were part of the archive of Danish army officer Captain Daniel Bruun (1856-1931), who worked as a correspondent for the major Danish newspaper *Berlingske Tidende*. Initially thought to be part of his official debriefing after his experiences in Manchuria during the first year of the conflict, many of the pictures are dated *after* he left the Far East. Thorough examination, especially the strenuous process of deciphering handwriting, made it clear that the photos belonged to the Danish General Ellis Wolff (1856-1938), who himself was present during the latter stages of the Russo-Japanese War. The collection, which consists of a mixture of his own photos and photos bought from other correspondents in Manchuria, holds significant historical value, mainly due to the high photographic quality, precise dating and notes on where/from whom each photo was taken or bought. A smaller personal collection of photos from the war, belonging to Austrian military attaché General-Oberst Erwin Freiherr von Franz, who was attached to the Japanese field armies, was also found in the collection.

The war itself was the first serious encounter between two modern armies with advanced weaponry such as rapid firing artillery, reliable bolt-action carbines and not least Maxim and Hotchkiss machine guns emplaced in trenches. Combined with a massive leap in the communicational infrastructure from the mid-19th century, frontline reporting was able to bring the war into the home of people all over the world. Consequently, when war broke out in February 1904, hundreds of reporters and official military attachés flocked to the Far East. The outcome was a significant number of articles, books and most noticeably reports for enhancing military doctrines.

Even so, how did Ellis Wolff's pictures come to be simply forgotten? The quality, in many cases, far exceeds the quality of pictures taken during the Great War ten years later. In connection with his thorough reports from the Far East theatre of war – which in large parts still exist in the Danish National Archive – it is unclear whether they were to contribute to an enhancement of military doctrines or if they had a more educational purpose. Numerous personal accounts from the Russo-Japanese War written by Westerners do indeed exist, some with a clear military purpose, but quite a lot with a more individual narrative. Perhaps a more methodical approach to the lessons learned from the war between the two modern armies could have been brought home with the effect of changing doctrines in the Western armies of the Great War ten years later.

1.1 Methodology

A wide array of sources has been utilized in putting together this study. It consists of essays from multiple authors with widely different fields of expertise, renowned books and excerpts from personal diaries by first-hand witnesses. The qualitative sources include internal official debriefings, such as the aggregate attaché-report from the War Department of a given nation, and quantitative sources such as ency-

clopedias with specific numbers of journalists and attachés in a given area. In the analysis of the pictures, reports by first-hand witnesses from different situations found in diaries and official reports have been the main sources of information. Yuval Harari refers to the problem of “*flesh witnesses*”, stating that in order to truly understand war, as the author himself knows, one has to have experienced war.¹ Most of the reports are drafted shortly after – or during – the sometimes highly dramatic events, and often convey an emotional stance towards what is experienced. In this context, I am well aware of the subjective nature of these accounts which are produced on the basis of individuals’ sensory experiences and perceptions of a situation.

I have chosen a small selection from the hundreds of pictures. These are used to analyze certain aspects of the war where the pictures form a relevant foundation for the written word. With the exception of some explanatory photos, such as maps, sketches, official portraits etc., all photos utilized in the analytical section are from Wolff’s – or in some cases Frantz’ – archive.

The pictures not included in this article do not necessarily hold a lesser historical value. Many of these are travel pictures, differently angled versions of photographs that are included (mainly of military hardware or soldiers displaying personal equipment etc.).

This article seeks to assess two things. First, I will clarify key elements in the roles of military and civilian personnel deployed or travelling to the theatre of war in Manchuria 1904-05, with a main focus on the archive of Ellis Wolff. Herein the multifaceted military intelligence gathering process and subsequent utilization – or relinquishment – of the obtained information is examined. Second, the article seeks to shed light on the Russo-Japanese War itself, through a series of historical analyzes based on the photographs in Wolff’s archive and the reporting by the aforementioned people.

As of October 2020, a platform to publically digitalize the photos is under consideration. For the reader’s convenience, the reference point of the pictures is seen below. It is my hope that the pictures will be free to access in an online database by the time of publication.

Ellis Wolff’s pictures came in seven boxes all marked “*War Travel 1905*”:

- A. *Military Pictures. Early events of War.*
- B. *Military Pictures. My stay with the Russian Army. The field of battle in general.*
- C. *Military Pictures. My stay with the Russian Army. Russian troops and institutions.*
- I. *Travel Pictures. Russia-Siberia. Manchuria-Vladivostok.*

1 Morillo, Stephen and Michael F. Pavkovic: *What is Military History?*, 3rd Edition. Polity Press: Cambridge, 2018, pp. 57-58.

- II. Travel Pictures. China.
- III. Travel Pictures. Sea voyage. Vladivostok-Hong Kong-Singapore-Ceylon-Genoa.
- IV. Travel Pictures. China. Large images.

Erwin Frantz' personal photo collection was found in a leather-bound album:

- *Aufnahmen im Russische-Japanische Krieg 1904-05.*

2.0 The Russo-Japanese War

2.1 Prelude to War

“The Russo-Japanese War still remains the classic example of a conflict waged for purely imperialistic motives. There was no sentiment, no tradition involved. The Japanese and the Russians were equally disliked by the population of the territories which they desired to control. At bottom it was merely a question of which nation should victimize the moribund Korean and Chinese Empires.”

William L. Langer, 1926.²



A contemporary 12-piece map placed on a canvas showing the areas, which were to become the theatre of war in the Far East in 1904-05.³

- 2 Langer, William L.: *The Origin of the Russo-Japanese War*, University of Michigan, Worcester, Massachusetts, 1926, pp. 3.
- 3 *Kort over Krigsskuepladsen i Østasien 1904 / Kartografisk materiale*, Denmark, 1904.

Langer's quotation is imperative for understanding the imperialistic motives that sparked the Russo-Japanese war. American military strategic expansion resulted in the annexation of Hawaii in 1898 and the US gained control of several former Spanish colonies, most notably the Philippines. Employing a *casus belli* of civilizing the native people in these resource-rich territories, the European Great powers led massive campaigns in Africa and Asia in the latter part of the 19th century. Despite a few close calls in the "Scramble for Africa", the Great Powers managed to stay out of a major armed conflict with each other, as the price of a conflict was deemed to exceed the gains. Their eyes then turned eastward towards China and, through armed and diplomatic coercion, they managed to gain control over large parts of the Chinese market and a series of strategical ports towards the end of the 19th century. In the eyes of several empires, including Russia and Japan, China seemed ripe for the picking.

The newly formed Empire of Japan had recently joined the list of industrialized nations, but was now ready to stake its own claim. The country had gone through the Meiji-restoration from 1868-69, rapidly transforming the nation from a feudal and pre-industrial society into an industrialized one. Western military advisors furthermore helped transform Japan's military, in doctrine as well as in material modernization. These military developments proved valuable in the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895, where the numerically superior Chinese empire was soundly defeated. In the Shimonoseki Treaty of April 17, 1895, the Japanese won large indemnities and territory, and Korea became a Japanese vassal state. One of the important gains was the city of Port Arthur. However, after intense French, German and Russian pressure, Japan was forced to abandon the city in return for monetary benefits. A Russian supported coup in Korea also limited the Japanese influence on the country. Japan perceived this as a hostile move and a threat to its national security.⁴

Russia had its own problems of expansion. Imperial Germany and Austria-Hungary naturally limited westward expansion and the British and French empires had furthermore sworn to protect the Ottoman Empire after the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-1878, which effectively eliminated hope of Russian expansion through Ottoman territory. Imperialistic ambitions had to be fulfilled eastwards, more specifically in northern China (Manchuria) and Korea. Through skillful diplomacy with the financially strained Chinese Empire, Russia had obtained the rights to expand infrastructure in Chinese territory in return for loans to China to complete their war reparations to Japan. Most importantly, the Russians constructed a network of telegraph lines and the East Chinese Railway (1897-1903), which shortened the route to their eastern naval base, Vladivostok,

4 Schimmelpenninck, David van der Oye: "The immediate origins of the war", In: Steinberg, John, Bruce W. Menning, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, David Wolff and Shinji Yokote: *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective. World War Zero, History of Warfare* Vol. 29, Brill: Boston, 2005, pp. 26-29.

by 550 kilometres.⁵ In short, the years after the Shimonoseki Treaty saw the major expansion of Russian presence in Manchuria, governed from the centrally located city of Harbin, all under very favourable leasing terms. Port Arthur saw Russian occupation from the end of 1897 and after the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901), a Russian presence was maintained throughout the Manchurian provinces.⁶

Russia had indeed been a key player in the diplomatic aftermath of the Sino-Japanese War, which had resulted in an agreement where the Japanese territorial gains were returned and Korean influence shifted to Russia. Japan watched in reluctance as their former territorial gains and sphere of influence were replaced by the very nation that had obstructed them in their objective. The Great Powers had noticed the Russian strategic maneuvers in the East, resulting in defensive treaties with the US and Great Britain in early 1902, stating that they would intervene on Japan's behalf, if either Germany or France interfered in the brewing conflict between Russia and Japan.⁷ Except for Russia, who continuously provoked the Japanese in the political and strategic sphere, none of the Great Powers were interested in armed conflict over territorial wars in the Far East. Moreover, despite the presence of both hawks and doves in both Japan and Russia, it was generally thought that an Asian nation would not dare to confront a Western Great power. However, on February 4, 1904, Japan broke diplomatic relations and 4 days later, they launched a surprise attack against the Russian Pacific fleet stationed at Port Arthur.

2.2 The War

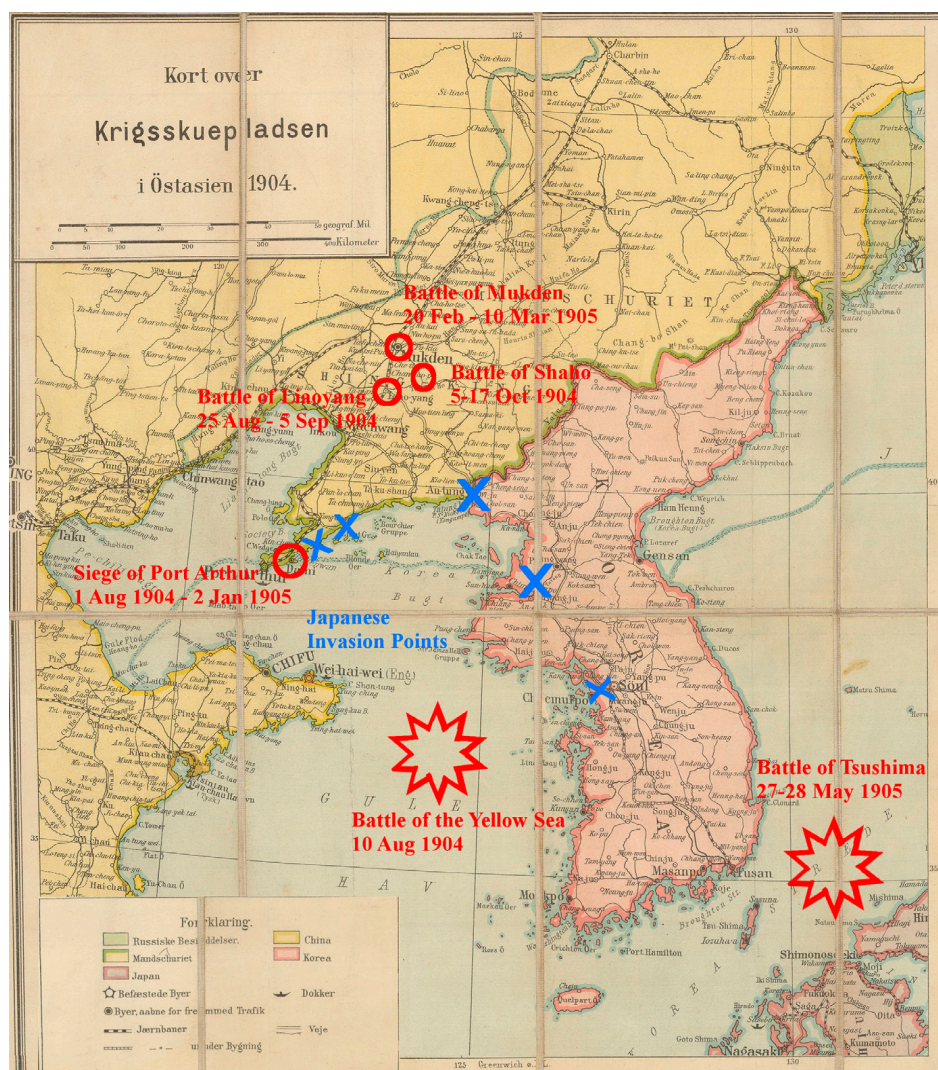
War broke out on the night of February 8-9, 1904, and caught the Russian Navy completely by surprise. Although the damage to the ships was relatively light, the surprise attack stunned the Russians and shattered their morale. Japan maintained naval supremacy during the entire war and their domination of the sea made it possible to conduct amphibious landings and resupplying close to the front lines. With shorter supply lines to their homeland, more initiative in their battle doctrines, better trained – and specialized – units (e.g. artillery crews), the majority of land battles resulted in Japanese victories. However, the victories won were often of a pyrrhic nature because high casualties weakened Japanese ability to commit to a long war. Despite emerging almost completely victorious in terms of battles won, the fighting devastated the Japanese military, and domestic disturbance was on the rise because of necessary – and highly unpopular – war taxes to accommodate the mounting war debt.⁸ Russia, too, saw itself hampered by the losses in the East, as well as by internal strife, and was thus unable to fully commit

5 Ibid, pp. 30.

6 Ibid, pp. 34-38.

7 Jacob, Frank: *The Russo-Japanese War and its Shaping of the Twentieth Century*. Routledge: London, 2018, pp. 17.

8 Ibid, pp. 49, 105.



The aforementioned map zoomed in to highlight the major land and naval battles of the Russo-Japanese War. The markings have been digitally inserted by the author.

to a total war. Notably, the majority of the navy, including all but three of the 38 ships from the reinforcing Baltic Fleet in the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905, was lost.⁹ The dissatisfaction in Russia grew larger, resulting in a series of large clashes, throughout both civilian and military ranks, in what became known as the 1905 Russian Revolution. For the Russian people, the lack of a clear fighting ob-

⁹ Jacob, Frank: *The Russo-Japanese War and its Shaping of the Twentieth Century*, pp. 83.

jective, especially in the light of domestic instability, mounting war debts and the attrition of its armed forces, led to a general war weariness and diminishing support for the continuation of hostilities. Throughout the conflict, the Great powers observed the war in the East without interfering, effectively holding each other in check. Both empires sought a resolution and on September 5, 1905, after approximately 1 year and 7 months of fighting, the war ended in a peace deal brokered by the US. Coincidentally, the diplomatic negotiations of the peace treaty was the only battle that the Japanese clearly lost. They neither got the indemnities they had sought, nor did they gain any significant territorial expansion.¹⁰ Several scholars argue that the fact that the war had been so costly and gained them so little sparked the already rising Japanese mistrust of the West, which remained a factor in the later militarization of the society and the expansionistic campaigns – eventually leading to military confrontation in World War II.¹¹

Even so, the Russo-Japanese War was a war with global ramifications. It was the first war where two essentially equal armies, in terms of modern weaponry and developed military doctrines, stood toe-to-toe. Belt-fed machine guns took a massive toll on charging troops, rapid-firing artillery devastated positions and even relatively simple naval mines sank multiple warships.¹² It was a war where the casualties, just from taking a single tactical objective, were counted in the thousands. The scenes on the battlefields served as a grim preamble to the mass casualties of World War I.

3.0 Observers in Battle – War Reporters and Military Attachés

3.1 A historical perspective

In the field of frontline reporting, two categories of people are recurring.

The first category, the representatives of the press – journalists, photographers, sketch artists etc. – have to represent a news organization to be considered war reporters. In a historical perspective, it is important to remember that reports from battlefields have always existed, before there was such a thing as journalists and a developed doctrine within the field, dating back to Thucydides, Herodotus and Homer. These were exhilarating battle stories more than frontline reporting, and often written several years after the events. The Napoleonic Wars most likely

10 Saul, Norman E.: “The kittery peace”, In: Steinberg, John et. al.: *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective* (2005), pp. 485-509.

11 Jacob, Frank: *The Russo-Japanese War and its Shaping of the Twentieth Century*, pp. 90-107; Steinberg, John: “The operational overview”, In: Steinberg, John et. al.: *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective* (2005), pp. 128.

12 Ibid, pp. 105, 113.



"The dangers of reporting a war"

"Les dangers du reportage a la guerre – Deux opérateurs de cinématographe qui l'ont échappé belle."¹³

provided the first identifiable war correspondent, John Bell. As the owner of the London based newspaper *Oracle*, he pioneered the field of war corresponding as he followed the British army from 1794. His reports from the Battles of Courtrai and Tourcoing from the same year were detailed and exciting for the common citizen and were not just statistical explanations like the official reports. His articles even preceded the official reports, as they were published only a few days after the battle.¹⁴ Modern war journalism emerged in the 19th century with the invention of the camera, improved printing techniques and the commercial viability of the telegraph. During the Mexican-American War of 1846-48, all these technologies coalesced and journalists from newspapers and freelancers from

¹³ *Le Petit Journal*, Paris, 3 November 1912.

¹⁴ Mathews, Joseph J.: *Reporting the Wars*, University of Minnesota Press Minneapolis, 1957, pp. 39-43.

different parts of the US went to the frontlines.¹⁵ The emergence of the mass-produced and cheap penny press newspapers meant that a broader segment of the American public could read eyewitness reports, see sketches and – for the first time – look at photographs from the war. With the ever-expanding network of telegraphs and easily accessible sources of information available to the broader population – cheap newspapers accompanied with pictures from the actual scene of the event – the demand for news was indeed increasing. From approximately 10 journalists in the Mexican-American War,¹⁶ the number rose to over 500 in the American Civil War 12 years later,¹⁷ 3000 in World War I¹⁸ and as many as 5000 during the Vietnam War.¹⁹ Today, it is expected that war correspondents maintain an objective point of view, but at the dawn of war journalism, that was not the case. It was the rule rather than the exception that a reporter's opinion would reflect the side of the war for which he was reporting.

In the second category, we find the military attachés. Contrary to their civilian counterparts, their objective was to report military factors for the benefit of their particular branch within their respective armies. The idea of sending trained military personnel to observe and learn from foreign wars and armies was not new at the beginning of the 20th century. During the Napoleonic Wars, the use of officers for this role increased, for instance the exchange of *Fligeladjutants*²⁰ between Prussia and Russia in the later stages of the war. These mostly had their military education as royal guardsmen, or similar elite units loyal to their monarchs, and would report their findings directly to their regents. Their roles were therefore defined directly by their rulers and often included organized spying. A prominent example of this was the British General Sir Robert Wilson, who was attached to the Russian field army in 1807 and was deported for spying and interfering in internal affairs. Wilson's poor example later became part of the standardized set of rules of what not to do as an observer. Observers were not allowed to act or interfere, but only to observe and study the tactics and the experiences gained from the battles. Military and political intelligence gathering was, however, still part of the job. After 1815, the role of the military observer was standardized and the French name *attaché militaire* became universal. During the course of the 19th century, use of military attachés increased, not just by the major powers, but also by the minor European states. Officers who had specialized in a specific technical

15 Roth, Mitchel P.: *Historical Dictionary of War Journalism*, Greenwood Press: London, 1997, pp. 361.

16 Ibid, pp. 201-2, 361.

17 Ibid, pp. 5-6.

18 Ibid, pp. 352.

19 Ibid.

20 Jones, David: "Military Observers, Eurocentrism, and World War Zero", In: Wolff, David, Steven G. Marks, Bruce W. Menning, David Schimmelpenninck van der Oye, John Steinberg and Shinji Yokote (Eds.): *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective. World War Zero*, Volume II, History of Warfare, Vol. 40, Brill: Boston, 2007, pp. 139.

military field, i.e. the ever-advancing arsenal of artillery, engineering or combat triage, gradually replaced the aristocratic military attaché and would most likely be younger non-aristocratic officers. For them, it was an opportunity to gain military advancement – due to the unique expertise they could bring home – and important diplomatic relations with other attachés. For their respective countries, intelligence gathering was still their primary mission. Around the beginning of the 20th century, the deployment of carefully organized delegations of specialists in theatres of war had become common practice in most nations. Each person would possess a specific knowledge in different fields of expertise, such as artillery, engineering, medicine, but also regular cavalry, infantry and naval officers were part of the organized delegation. The idea prevailed that practical experience in the field provided the most valuable results, combined with the fact that transnational mingling between military experts provided valuable results in terms of both material and doctrine.²¹

The end results of these missions provided the War Ministries with detailed reports, i.e. general military intelligence on the given nations' militaries, how to operate in a harsh environment, a given rifle caliber projectile's effect on a given body part, pros and cons with airburst artillery shells, medical procedures in direct combat situations etc.²²

Walther Schuyler is generally cited as the author of the US military's interdisciplinary *Reports of Military Observers attached to the Armies in Manchuria, Part I-V*. However, the work does consist of five parts with different contributors. For the reader's convenience, I have chosen to simply refer to "Schuyler", highlighting the page of a certain part (e.g. Schuyler, *Part I*, pp. 198).

3.2 Observers in the Russo-Japanese War

In the time leading up to the Russo-Japanese War, international correspondents and Western military attachés found themselves interested in the impending conflict in Asia. Many of these people had been a part of or covered contemporary conflicts, such as the Spanish-American War of 1898, the Boxer Rebellion of 1899-1901 and the Second Boer War of 1899-1902. Those employed were correspondents from major newspapers, people who had lived in the Far East and worked as freelancers, career officers seeking rapid advancement and a pool of adventurers, found qualified by private sponsors (mostly newspapers or magazines), to work on their behalf in Manchuria. They often found themselves attached to different army units, since venturing out on their own proved logistically difficult and, above all, dangerous. Their subsequent reports, articles and personal diaries show that a certain bond of unity existed between them. They lived

²¹ Ibid, pp. 139-149.

²² Schuyler, Walter S., John F. Morrison, Carl Reichmann and Peyton C. March: *Reports of Military Observers Attached to the Armies in Manchuria During the Russo-Japanese War*, Parts I-V. U.S. War Department: Washington, 1906.



"At our departure from General Linevich's Staff, September 26, 1905."²³ The picture shows the multinational community of military attachés in General Nikolai Linevich's (19) army, including several high-ranking officers. Colonel Ellis Wolff (5) is present and so is the Italian Lieutenant Filippo Camperio (3), who provided many of the photos in Wolff's collection.

together in foreign lands, worked under strenuous conditions (including the excruciating official Russian and Japanese bureaucracies) and sometimes died together.

The participating officers were generally of a very high standard and, in the words of military historian, Theodore Ropp, represented "*some of the world's ablest soldiers*".²⁴ Attached to the Japanese were e.g. the Americans John J. Pershing, Peyton C. March, Enoch H. Crowder, Carl Adolf Maximilian Hoffman (from the German Empire), Ian Hamilton (from Great Britain) and Enrico Caviglia (from the Italian Empire), who all later became part of their respective military high commands. Attached to the Russians were, amongst others, Otto von Lausten (16) and Jules Cheminon (20), both prominent German and French generals during World War I, and Richard Thomas Barry (18), who as a Major General later commanded all US troops in China and in the Philippines (all 3 sitting on the front row on the attaché picture on the previous page). These high-ranking officers were attached to the general staff of either the Russian or the Japanese armies, while the junior officers were attached to regular units or to other loca-

²³ Wolff, *Military B*, pic. 260.

²⁴ Ropp, Theodore: *War in the Modern World*, Duke University Press: Durham, N.C., 1959, pp. 202.

tions of relevance to their particular field. The experiences of the various military attachés often conveyed major differences in their conclusions. Several became highly subjective in the after action reports following major combat operations, where they often were exposed to fire and came to regard the opposing side as their enemy. Some were proponents of an existing doctrinal approach in regard to the execution of a battle plan and disregarded the lessons that might have challenged these.²⁵

In addition to the military attachés, there was the other category of observers, the representatives of the press. These correspondents worked for a number of major newspapers and featured several highly renowned journalists, who had covered countless wars and conflicts. Among the prominent correspondents were Richard Harding Davis (USA, *Colliers Weekly*),²⁶ Luigi Barzini (Italy, *Corriere della Sera*),²⁷ Bennet Burleigh (Scotland, *Daily Telegraph*),²⁸ Fredric Villiers (England, *The Graphic*)²⁹ and the legendary sketch-drawer Melton Prior (England, *Illustrated London*), who during his 30 years as a war correspondent allegedly only spent a total of one year in Britain.³⁰ The first wireless transmission from a war zone was carried out by the London-based *Times* reporter Lionel James, from the chartered Chinese steamer SS Haimun.³¹ In total, about 200 people covered the Russo-Japanese War – the majority on the Japanese side – and several of them lost their lives during the campaign, either during battles or from diseases. It was the first war in which journalists could use overseas telegraphs to report to their respective newspapers. The high expenses from using this new technology made coverage of the war the most expensive up to that time and was generally frowned upon by local authorities, as they had less control of the outgoing information.³² Many correspondents chose to mail their reports home, which could take as long as 4 months and entailed the risk of severe revision by censor boards.³³

25 Bailey, Jonathan, "Military history and the pathology of lessons learned: The Russo-Japanese War, a case study", In: Murray, Williamson and Richard Hart Sinnreich (eds.): *The past as prologue. The importance of history to the military profession*. Cambridge University Press: Cambridge, 2006, pp. 185.

26 Roth, Mitchel P.: *Historical Dictionary of War Journalism*, pp. 79-80.

27 Ibid, pp. 23.

28 Ibid, pp. 47-8.

29 Ibid, pp. 327-8.

30 Ibid, pp. 241-2.

31 Slattery, Peter: *Reporting the Russo-Japanese War 1904-5: Lionel James's first wireless transmissions to The Times*. Global Oriental Ltd.: Folkestone, pp. xii.

32 Jessen, Franz von: *Mennesker jeg mødte*, Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag: København, 1908, pp. 267, 201.

33 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, Gyldendalske Boghandel: København, 1905, pp. 50.



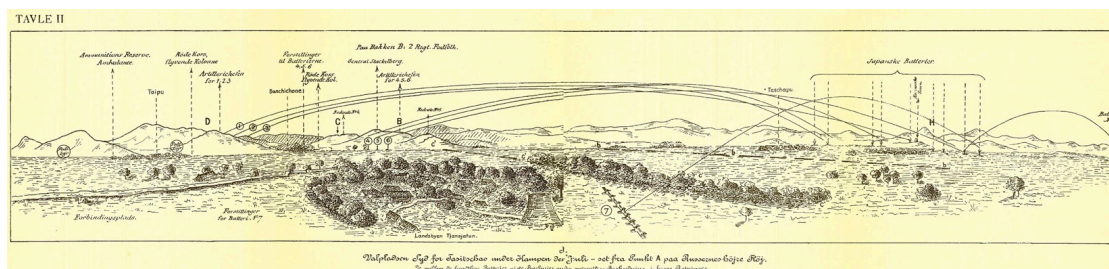
The group photo shows Danish correspondent Franz von Jessen, (the middle row on the left, in a leather jacket) with a prominent group of foreign war correspondents.³⁴ Note that some are uniformed, indicating that they were officers and had obtained a special permit from their respective ministries to wear their uniforms.

Front row sitting from the left: Charles E. Hands, *Daily Mail*; A. Hamilton, *Manchester Guardian*; James. F.J. Archibald, *Colliers Weekly*.

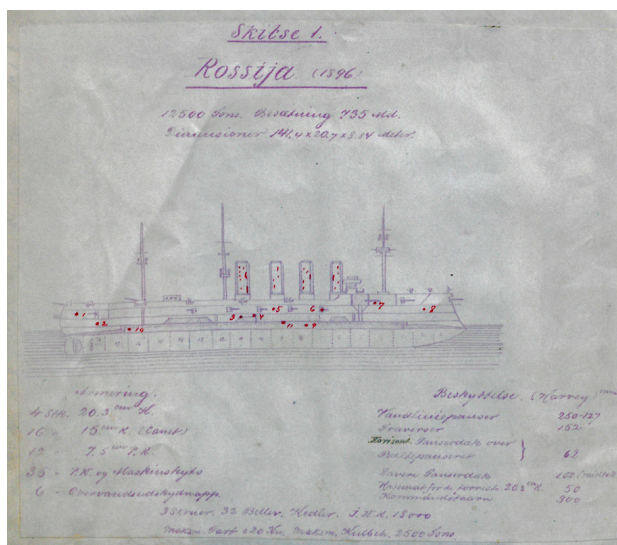
Middle row sitting from the left: Franz von Jessen, *Nationaltidende*; R. Gädtke, *Berliner Tageblatt*; Raymond Recouly, *Le Temps*; Georges de La Salle, *Agence Havas*.

Back row standing from the left: George Denny *Associated Press*; O. von Schwartz, *Lokal-Anzeiger*; Lord Brooke, *Reuters Agency*; Ludovic Naudeau, *Le Journal*; Maurice Baring, *Morning Post*; Richard H. Little, *Chicago Daily News*.

³⁴ Dansk Pressemuseums archive No. 193/1956, now located in Mediemuseet, 5000 Odense, registered under object number 00888F033422.



(Above)³⁵ Daniel Bruun's sketch of his version of the Battle of Tashihchiao, July 24-25, 1904. An example of how observers would depict a land battle; in this case, the counter-battery tactics have made quite an expression.



(Left)³⁶ Extract from Danish naval attaché First Lieutenant Louis Tvermoes' comprehensive report of damage done to the Russian cruiser the *Rossiia* during the Battle off Ulsan on August 14, 1904. The sketch and the following analysis are good examples of how a military trained professional would work. The report distinguished between various kinds of shells and the amount of damage that each had done. As an example, Tvermoes wrote that: "shot no. 6", a 150 mm high explosive shell, killed or wounded the gun crew of the side of the ship and "shot no. 7" nearly destroyed the large 203 mm guns of the ship. The *Rossiia* participated in naval clashes from the early stages of the war until she was badly damaged during the Battle off Ulsan in mid-August 1904. His sketch is a damage overview of all major registered hits on the starboard side of the ship.



(Left)³⁷ "Hang in Comrades! – The Hill is ours!" Drawing made for the newspaper *The Graphic* from a sketch by an officer of the Imperial Japanese army. An example of how the magazines would depict battle situations based on the reports of eyewitnesses. The caption of the drawing describes how the Japanese artillery excelled by its mobility and was able to pass impassible terrain and open fire only minutes after reaching their position.

35 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, appendix table II.

36 National Archive: *Militære rejserapporter 1746-1966*, no. 0028 (309), Danish Defense Ministry, Tvermoes XXIX 290.

37 *Illustreret Familie-Journal: Fra Krigsskuepladsen*, no. 33, October 11, 1904, pp. 5

3.2.1 Danes in the War

There exist several accounts of Danish citizens, who found themselves playing a part in the Far Eastern theatre of war, both as military and civilians. As for the military attachés, it is not altogether clear how many of these were dispatched by the Danish State with a specific objective in mind, and how many simply went there as part of their education. Throughout Ellis Wolff's pictorial collection, several pictures show him in the presence of uniformed Danish officers in the Far East, indicating that several others were present on official state business. This is, however, not an established fact since correspondents representing newspapers could obtain permission to wear their officer uniforms from their respective foreign ministries.³⁸ For the civilians, many had volunteered as correspondents for newspapers or magazines and several found – or already had – employment with local contractors, the latter typically in maritime-related ventures.

The Russo-Japanese War was undoubtedly an interesting scene of events regarding military intelligence purposes, and with numerous Danish citizens present in the area this would have proved an opportunity for the Danish War Department to gather information. By 1904, this was to be done in two ways. By the aforementioned military attachés, who existed in a state of extraterritoriality that exempted them from the jurisdiction of their host countries, or by the use of secret agents, who were willing to take the necessary risks and could be denounced by the state if compromised. Should the War Department choose the latter method to gather intelligence, the Foreign Ministry noted that: "*The affairs of the nature of these events, must be considered quite without interest of the Foreign Ministry, and the embassies and consuls must be kept unrelated to the agents*".³⁹ No matter their purpose, the Danish nationals' affiliation with the Russian and Japanese armies and navies provided them with unique access to valuable military intelligence. Their time spent in close relations with military units or staffs gave them a thorough understanding of organizations, doctrines, tactics etc., and official military observers such as Wolff's and Tvermoes' – and even correspondent Daniel Bruun's – empirical gatherings are characterized by very useful military intelligence. One example of a Danish national working for the military intelligence during the Russo-Japanese War is that of navigator Svend Ammitsbøl, who conducted a "*special mission*" under Russian auspices in 1905 for "*intelligence purposes in the East*", but the details of this mission are, unfortunately, unknown.⁴⁰

38 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 5

Daniel Bruun, for example, was a Danish officer of the reserve, which permitted him to wear his uniform.

39 Bruhn, Kristian: *The Secret State. Organizational and Legal Studies in the Making of the Danish Intelligence Service from the First Schleswig War to the Outbreak of World War One*, Ph.d. dissertation, University of Copenhagen, Faculty of Law, 2017, pp 290-91.

40 National Archive; C.F. Schiøpffe's archive; *Danske Officerer i fremmed Krigstjeneste 1815-1965*. S. Ammitsbøl. H. Nr. 1538.

The observers' accounts from the Russo-Japanese War were widely published in Danish newspapers and journals during the war, sometimes even in details that could be considered sensitive from tactical, operational and strategic perspectives. But the war was indeed looked at with profound interest in the Danish public, and every Tuesday, beginning on March 1, 1904, the magazine *Illustreret*



The following section contains a short presentation of notable participants in the war.

192 *Jesper Sahl Nielsen*

Familie-Journal would publish a special edition called “Fra Krigsskuepladsen” (“From the Theatre of War”).⁴¹

3.2.1.1 Military observers

Ellis Wolff (1856-1938).

It is unclear whether Ellis Wolff (photographed in 1906)⁴² operated as an official military attaché of the Danish Ministry of War or simply undertook the journey as a “*fact finding mission*”.⁴³ As he was not employed by the Danish legation in Saint Petersburg, he most likely undertook the assignment because of his role as a teacher of the art of war for the senior classes at the military general staff course. In a testimony from Major General Christian of the general staff, dated May 2, 1905, it says that: “*Assured of this, Danish Captain Wolff has been ordered by his government to the theatre of war operations. Regarding his passage to the staff of the supreme commander over the troops in the Far East, the main staff sees no objections.*”⁴⁴ To Wolff, this was nothing new as he had previously performed similar duties with infantry regiments of the French and Austrian armies as part of his education.⁴⁵



His tour of duty in the Russo-Japanese War spanned roughly 4 months from early June until early October 1905, during which time most major hostilities had ended. Wolff's activities in the war included reconnoitering the battlefields and military camps, interacting with the large multicultural gathering of officers and correspondents and not least producing intelligence reports. He produced a large number of reports, which described the organizational structure of the Russian Army, logistical capabilities, structural establishment of military bases and combat logs (casualty lists, battalion records, etc.). These were based on Russian intelligence reports and his own inspirations.⁴⁶

Throughout the next 20 years of his successful military career, he held several high-ranking positions, retiring as commanding general.⁴⁷ In his obituary, which,

41 *Illustreret Familie-Journal: Fra Krigsskuepladsen*, no. 7, April 12, 1904.

42 Royal Danish Library, accession number 1946-385.

43 *Militært Tidsskrift* 1938. (ed.): Oberstløjtnant Jens Johansen. Bind 67. Aargang. 1. udg. Det Krigsvidenskabelige Selskab: Copenhagen, 1938, pp. 178. His obituary states that he acted as a military attaché.

44 National Archive; Wolff's Archive 4+06529 and 3+1015-305, annex 1a, document no. 557.

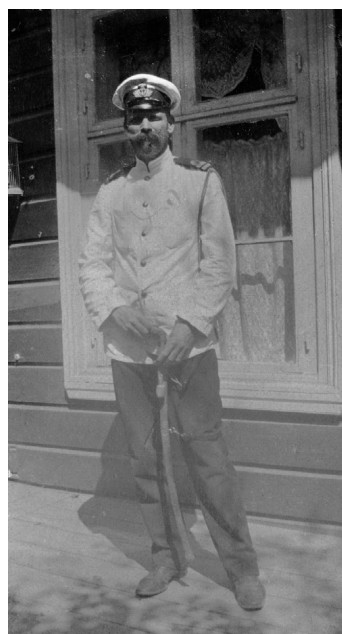
45 *Militært Tidsskrift* (1938), pp. 177-79.

46 National Archive; Wolff's Archive 4+06529 and 3+1015-305.

I will elaborate on these findings more specifically in a later section.

47 Pontoppidan, Axel: *Den Kongelige Livgarde*, vol. I, Nordisk Landes Bogforlag: Copenhagen, 1941., pp. 343-5.

in testimony to his character, is some 8-10 pages, several curious facts are mentioned. The somewhat sloppy handling of the camera in many of Wolff's pictures – i.e. the blurriness, significant backlight exposure, etc. – stands in contrast to his colleagues which, as it seemed, were more technically gifted in this aspect. In this context, the obituary states: "*It is said, that General Wolff was a magnificent theorist more than he was a Prakticus, as he would often the lack of reveal certain abilities within the practical field*".⁴⁸ In short, other people have taken many of the photos used in chapter 4, which shows in their better quality. Wolff's "late arrival" in Manchuria, after the major battles had taken place, does contribute to the argument that a lot of the militarily relevant photos come from other sources, who were present at the time.



Louis Wilhelm Otto Tvermoes (1869-1953): Tvermoes, photographed in 1903 (top)⁴⁹ and again in Vladivostok in September 1905 (below)⁵⁰ was born into a military family. His father, Carl Madsenius Wilhelm Tvermoes, was an officer and politician, who had played a key role in establishing the General Staff intelligence-section in 1873 when it took over the existing activities from the War Department.⁵¹

In 1904, the 35-year-old First Lieutenant Tvermoes of the Royal Danish Navy presented himself as an obvious candidate for becoming an official military attaché.⁵² He had previously served in the Russian Navy from

48 *Militært Tidsskrift* (1938), pp. 181

49 Topsøe-Jensen, Theodor Andreas: *Personallistoriske oplysninger om Officerer af det danske Søofficerskorps 1. Januar 1801 – 19. September 1919 udgaaet fra Søfartsakademiet, Søofficersskolen eller Kadetskolen*, Gyldendalske Boghandel: Nordisk Forlag, Copenhagen, 1920, pp. 398.

50 Wolff, *Travel pictures I*, pic. 209.

51 Bruhn, Kristian: *Den hemmelige stat*, pp 231-3.

52 Brooke, Leopold Francis Maynard Greville: *An eye-witness in Manchuria*, Eveleigh Nash: London, 1905, pp. 1, 4.

1901-03 and his proficiency with the Russian language permitted him to translate various documents and speak the language.⁵³

During the war, he served as an official naval attaché with the Russians, mainly in Vladivostok, but since no special representative had been appointed to follow the Russian army, he also occupied this post for some time.⁵⁴ Tvermoes likely encountered the British Reuters representative, Lord Brooke, on the Trans-Siberian railway in May 1904 heading to the front. Brooke mentioned that: “*Except for the Danish attaché and a Russian naval officer, the passengers seemed suspicious of their English companions and shunned our company.*” Danish correspondent Daniel Bruun met Tvermoes – with whom he had a great time – at the railway station in Mukden in mid-June 1904 and mentioned that he was the only foreign attaché at this early stage.⁵⁵

Tvermoes’ reports continued to come through from Manchuria throughout the rest of 1904 until early 1905 and consisted of classified and non-classified materials. His detailed reports with sketches and translated notes mostly referred to naval-related issues, such as the damage-effect of various ordnance or approximate casualty statistics during certain types of warfare, but there are several other intelligence reports amongst these. His report on Port Arthur from December 1904 specified the defensive organization and how it operated during the siege, for example detailing how messages got out via carrier pigeons to an office in Liaoyang 330 kilometres away.⁵⁶ Several of his reports from the Far East were edited and published in the *Danish Journal of Naval Affairs* while the war was ongoing, with the exemption of classified material.⁵⁷ His comprehensive work went to the Danish Ministry of War after his return.⁵⁸

Before retiring from the navy in 1918, he worked as an authorized Russian translator and held deputy commands on the coastal battleships *Skjold* in 1913-14 and *Herluf Trolle* in 1917.⁵⁹ Towing the line as the 3rd generation of military intelligence officers, his daughter Agnes Tvermos went on to marry Volmer Gyth (1902-65), who later became a key member of the Danish army intelligence agency and liaison officer to the SOE during World War II.⁶⁰

53 Topsøe-Jensen, *Personallistoriske oplysninger om Officerer af det danske Søofficerskorps*, pp. 398. and *Tidsskrift for Søvesen 1904-06*. Red.: Schultz, J. H., Vol. 77, Sølieutnant-Selskabet, Thieles Bogtrykkeri: Copenhagen, 1904-1906, pp. 465.

54 Harboe, Harald. 1905. *Krig & Fred: Aktuel Illustreret Tidende: Supplement til "Illustreret Familie-Journal"*. January 24, 1905. København: Carl Aller.

55 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 18, 50. Bruun and Tvermoes would cross paths several times during 1904.

56 National Archive: *Militære rejserapporter 1746-1966*, no. 0028 (309), Danish Defense Ministry, Classified except for report No. 210 Port Arthur, 29/12 1904.

57 Schultz: *Tidsskrift for Søvesen*, vol. 75-77.

These have several entries, which summarize events from the maritime frontlines of the war.

58 National Archive: *Militære rejserapporter 1746-1966*, no. 0028 (309), Danish Defense Ministry, Tvermoes XXIX.

59 Topsøe-Jensen: *Personallistoriske oplysninger om Officerer af det danske Søofficerskorps*, pp. 398

60 http://denstoredanske.dk/Dansk_Biografisk_Leksikon/Forsvar_og_politi/Officer/Volmer_Gyth (acc. 18/09-19)



(Left)⁶¹ Seated far right in his white naval uniform, Tvermoes is seen with fellow military observers in Manchuria.

3.2.1.2 Civilian correspondents and various participants

Daniel Bruun (1856-1931):

Daniel Bruun (photographed 1904 in Manchuria),⁶² who initially was thought to be the photographer and contributor of the pictures used in this paper, reported on the war for *Berlingske Tidende* from early June to late August 1904. His past as a soldier in the French Foreign Legion in 1881-82 and later as an officer in the Danish Army made him an ideal candidate for frontline reporting. His journey with the Trans-Siberian railroad took 19 days from Saint Petersburg to Mukden and afterwards, he journeyed home via Japan and, then across the Pacific Ocean in September/October 1904.⁶⁴ Many of his journal entries are that of a military trained professional, i.e. sketches of camps and battlefields, equipment specifications and logistical considerations. Bruun's diary would form the basis for articles published in the papers, military journals and finally



As previously stated, civilians could obtain special permission to wear their uniform. Daniel Bruun is wearing his Danish M/1903 Battle Dress Uniform with a captain's kepi (indicated by the three horizontal lines), cavalry boots and an M/1858 sword. The uniform seems, however, slightly improvised according to the standards of the day.⁶³

61 Swedish National Archive: Krigsarkivet, Marinstaben, utrikesavdelningen, f.d. H, E I:8 (Otto Lybeck's archive).

62 National Archive; *Bruun's Archive*, National Defense Archives (FOARK), Generalia, ref. 3+1001-002.

63 Skøtt, Ole: *Vaabenhistoriske Aarbøger* 2006, No. 51, pp. 111, 122-23, 137.

64 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 16, 145.

in its complete form in 1905 in his book titled *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet* (*With the Russians in Manchuria*).

During his career, he published an impressive amount of books and articles about various subjects in his many fields of expertise, which included archeology, military history and ethnographical surveys. He became a prominent member of the Danish minority in Southern Schleswig, and due to his close ties to French military officials, he played a key liaison role in the Danish-French intelligence network in the time before and after World War I.⁶⁵

Front/back of Daniel Bruun's original Russian Laissez-passer (diplomatic clearance) for largely unobstructed movement in Manchuria.⁶⁶ It states that it is a "formal photographic card for the Danish National War Correspondent, Captain Bruun, attested by the governor's headquarters on behalf of His Majesty in the Far East with addition of the State Seal, 6th of June 1904." Censor of the General Staff, Colonel Tesinin.



Front/back of Daniel Bruun's original ticket for the East Chinese Railway from Harbin to Mukden.⁶⁷

For the travel:
13 rubles, 15 kopek

For the luggage:
27 rubles, 50 kopek

The cost for the entire train ride (approximately 40 rubles) through China was not a major expense at the time.⁶⁸



65 Clemmesen, Michael H.: *Sønderjyllands forsvar og Lembourns spionage*, Syddansk Universitetsforlag: Odense, 2019, pp. 103, 115

66 National Archive; *Bruun's Archive*, National Defense Archives (FOARK), Generalia, ref. 3+1001-002.

67 Ibid, ref. 3+1001-002.

68 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 13.

Franz von Jessen (1870-1949): von Jessen (photographed on a horse in Mukden in December 1904)⁶⁹ reported on the war for the Danish newspaper *Nationaltidende* and was present during several military encounters from 23 May to 3 December 1904.⁷⁰ His memoirs *Egne jeg saa, Begivenheder jeg oplevede* and *Mennesker jeg mødte* (*Regions I saw, events I lived through and people I met*) were published between 1906-08 and contain several hundred pages dedicated to his experiences in the Russo-Japanese War. Daniel Bruun had the utmost respect for Jessen: “He was always on the move, always in good spirits, always gracious and welcomed by all. He never held back, not under fire nor anywhere else. He did himself and his country honour.”⁷¹



Over the two decades following the war, Franz von Jessen worked as a correspondent and reporter for a variety of newspapers and magazines. His assignments often took him to foreign countries for longer periods of time, for example when he covered the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Versailles at the end of World War I, which led to the employment with *Le Temps* in Paris. In 1930, he returned to Denmark where he died in 1949. During his life, von Jessen authored a long series of books, many of which were on the subject of international politics, as well as writing several memoirs of his travels.⁷²

69 Scanned at Mediemuseet, 5000 Odense, registered under object number 00888F046011.

70 Jessen, Franz von: *Begivenheder jeg oplevede*, Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag: Copenhagen, 1907, pp. 67-194. This part of the book is entirely dedicated to the experiences of his time in the war. Jessen, Franz von: *Mennesker jeg mødte*, pp. 172.

71 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 116.

72 Seidenfaden, Erik and P. Stavnstrup: “Franz v. Jessen” in *Dansk Biografisk Leksikon*, 3rd Edition, Gyldendal: Copenhagen 1979-84.



(Bottom) The armband worn by Franz von Jessen during the Russo-Japanese War. It bears the monogram of Col. Pestitsj and the Russian/Chinese abbreviations for “War Correspondent”.⁷³ Daniel Bruun noted about this armband that it was especially practical for non-uniformed personnel, who otherwise constantly had to identify themselves.⁷⁴

Other Danes in the war:



(Left) Karl Andreas Poulsen-Nors was a correspondent during the war and later covered South African rebellions.⁷⁵



(Middle) Martin Georg Hartung, a survivor of the Battle of Tsushima on May 27-28, 1905.⁷⁶



(Right) Lieutenant Philipson. Besides appearing in Wolff's pictures, his story is unknown.⁷⁷

⁷³ Photographed at Mediemuseet, 5000 Odense, registered under object number 00355F049547. The Russian letters B.K./V.K. in Cyrillic are an abbreviation of военный Корреспондент/Voennyj Korrespondent, which translates to “War Correspondent”. The Chinese characters roughly translate into “He, who observes”.

⁷⁴ Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 19.

⁷⁵ *Vort Land* (Linck, Olaf), May 16, 1905. København: Københavns Trykkeri. *Berlingske Tidende*, October 20, 1919. København: Berlingske Bogtrykkeri.

⁷⁶ National Archive; C.F. Schiøphffe's archive; *Danske Officerer i fremmed Krigstjeneste 1815-1965*. M.G. Hartung. H. Nr. 427.

⁷⁷ Wolff, *Military B*, pic. 178.

Denmark's longstanding tradition as a nation of seafarers brought several Danes into the service of the Russian and Japanese navies. The majority found themselves in Russian service, likely because of the closer cultural and geographical bond – and more importantly in this period – the close dynastic ties between Denmark and Russia. Prominently, the Danish commander, Anders Johan Rønberg, was awarded the highest Russian military decoration, the Order of Saint George. His knowledge of the waters around the besieged city of Port Arthur was crucial in getting highly classified military intelligence out of the city in hazardous courier operations to which he lost several men and nearly his own life.⁷⁸ First Lieutenant Ivar Weinschenk served as an engineer on the *Pomtsck* and was captured by the Japanese.⁷⁹ Civilian captain Jes Toft earned a large appreciation and a decoration for breaking a Japanese blockade⁸⁰ and M.G. Hartung served aboard the support vessel the *Koreya*, which barely escaped the annihilation of the Russian fleet during the battle of Tsushima in May 1905. After arriving in Shanghai, he wrote a detailed letter of the harrowing experience to his mother:

*“... alongside my crew, I have escaped death, whereas thousands of others have perished ... A shell detonated very close to the Koreya, punched a large hole near the waterline of the ship, which riddled all of our boats on starboard side and lightly wounded a man ... The armoured ships the Alexander III and the Borodina quickly sank and so did the flagship Knjas Suvarow ... The Captain escaped the torpedo boats under cover of darkness ... On the morning of the 30th of May we happily arrived in Wusung, but the events of the 27th of May are not easily forgotten.”*⁸¹

Captains Waldemar Schierbæk⁸² and Immanuel Sommer⁸³ served in the Japanese navy, both on transport vessels. They were not volunteers for combat operations, but happened to work onboard the ships when hostilities commenced. Viggo Juul Nerlind, on the other hand, volunteered for the Russian army and was decorated for valour⁸⁴ and Sophus Falck effectively ran Russian field hospitals during the war.⁸⁵ Falck's experiences in the war encouraged him to found the still existing, and today multinational, rescue service “Falck”, better known internationally as G4S.

78 National Archive; C.F. Schiøphff's archive; *Danske Officerer i fremmed Krigstjeneste 1815-1965*. Rønberg, H. Nr. 61. and Bruun, Daniel: *Fra De Sidste Tredivte Aar*, Gyldendalske Boghandel: Copenhagen, 1927., pp. 133.

79 *Berlingske Tidende*, July 11, 1960.

80 *Danmarksposten*, January 1941. Toft's obituary.

81 Harboe, Harald. Carl Aller (ed): *Krig og Fred*, August 29, 1905, pp. 278-9

82 *Illustreret Familie-Journal: Fra Krigsskuepladsen*, July 12, 1904.

83 Harboe, Harald. Aller, Carl (Ed): “*Krig og Fred*”, pp. 178, 182.

84 *Berlingske Tidende*, June 4, 1964. Viggo Nerlind's obituary.

85 *Berlingske Tidende*, November 15, 1924.



(Left) Captain Immanuel Sommer, commander of the Japanese ship *Kamo Maru*.⁸⁶

(Middle) Captain Waldemar Schierbæk, commander of the Japanese ship *Kaga Maru*.⁸⁷

(Right) Ship commander Anders J. Rønberg in his Russian naval uniform.⁸⁸

3.2.2 Observers with the Japanese Military

Censorship was extensive, especially on the Japanese side. They did not have the same level of experience with foreign attachés as the Western nations had built up throughout the previous centuries of conflicts. Access to the theatre of war was only permitted for Western observers from June 1904 and even then, they could go no closer than 5 kilometres from the front. There was a strong distrust towards the Westerners, as the Japanese feared they would spy on the army and write damaging articles. The restrictions resulted in many of the journalists feeling like they had no purpose being there, and so they went home. Western journalists had massively damaged the Japanese reputation 10 years prior, during the First Sino-Japanese War 1894-95. During the war, the commanding general Ōyama Iwao had reminded his troops to follow the Geneva Convention of 1864 and they “... *must never forget that however cruel and vindictive the foe may allow himself to be, he must nevertheless be treated with the acknowledged rules of civilization*”.⁸⁹ Initially, Western correspondents reported that the Japanese army acted in a very civilized manner. However, after several brutalities from the Chinese, the Japanese committed a massacre in Port Arthur, which was reported by Western journalists. Following this incident, the international community questioned whether the meticulously obtained reputation as the one civilized nation in the Far East

86 C.F. Schiøphff's archive; National Archive; *Danske Officerer i fremmed Krigstjeneste 1815-1965*. I. Sommer. H. Nr. 864.

87 Ibid, Nr. 2653.

88 Royal Danish Library, accession number neg. 43846

89 Paine, Sarah C.M.: *The Sino-Japanese War of 1894-1895: Perceptions, Power and Primacy*, Cambridge University Press: New York, 2003, pp. 209-10.

was merely a veil hiding an imbedded “Oriental barbarism”. The Japanese army made an internal inquiry into the massacre and claimed that they had given Western correspondents good working conditions only to be betrayed by them.⁹⁰

In the aftermath of this experience with the Western press, it is perhaps easy to see the logic behind the friction towards the journalists and attachés at the start of the Russo-Japanese War. For months, the frustrated Westerners were kept from the front, distracted by Japanese flattery conducted by the clever diplomat and ex-attaché, General-Major Fukushima Yasumasa, who knew the European jargon and served the Westerners exclusive banquets and dinners.⁹¹ Some stayed and waited for their opportunity to go to the front, while others sought permission to attach themselves to the Russian army instead. Some would even let their frustrations out on the Japanese civil servants. An example of this was the American writer Jack London, whose attacks on his Japanese assistant led to him being imprisoned 3 times in 4 months.⁹²

One of the journalists, who left for Manchuria in frustration over the Japanese restrictions, was the Daily Express journalist Douglas Story, who on his arrival in Mukden met Danish correspondent Daniel Bruun.⁹³ Story mentioned that: “... to assure me that the war plans of the Japanese had no place for attachés or correspondents ... war risks no interruptions from the indiscretions of spectators”.⁹⁴ As he points out, the Japanese need for secrecy could be explained by their fear of leakage of military secrets. The Japanese critically wanted to keep the planned landing of troops on the Liadong peninsula in southern Manchuria confidential. The plan was to break the Russian defenses and subsequently place Port Arthur under siege. However, it depended on them establishing a bridgehead. It was of utmost importance to keep the invasion plan a secret, for obvious tactical and strategic reasons. After a successful landing at Pitzuwo, approximately 100 kilometres northeast of Port Arthur on May 5, 1904, the restrictions on the journalists and the attachés were diminished to such a degree that they in many cases had an even easier time than the ones attached to the Russians.⁹⁵

90 Ibid, pp. 210-6.

91 Jones, David, “Military Observers, Eurocentrism, and World War Zero”, pp. 151-52

92 Kowner, Rotem: *Historical Dictionary of the Russo-Japanese War*. (Historical Dictionaries of War, Revolution, and Civil Unrest), 2nd Edition, Rowman & Littlefield Publishers: London, 2017., pp. 251-2.

93 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 19.

94 Story, Douglas: *The Campaign with Kuropatkin*, T. Werner Laurie Publishing: London, 1904, pp. 44.

95 Jones, David: “Military Observers, Eurocentrism, and World War Zero”, pp. 153.



(Left) Two military attachés with the Japanese 2nd Army; Australian Colonel John Hoad (left) of the Australian Army Chief of Staff, with a characteristic “slouch hat”, and Austrian Captain Scandella.⁹⁶



(Right) Two French military attachés with the Japanese army are seen observing from cover during the Battle of Mukden in February/March 1905.⁹⁷

3.2.3 Observers with the Russian Military

At their arrival in Manchuria, foreign observers had to report to General Aleksey Kuropatkin's military headquarters in Mukden to be granted permission for movement throughout the region.⁹⁸ The process differed a little from that of the Japanese. However, it was required of the foreigners to furnish a guarantee for good behaviour and fully establish their identity and objective.⁹⁹ The American Captain Carl Reichmann from the 17th US Infantry Division described how the attachés received a memorandum in French at their arrival (front page pictured):¹⁰⁰

96 Erwin Franz's personal album, pp. 11. and Kowner, Rotem: *Historical Dictionary of the Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 197.

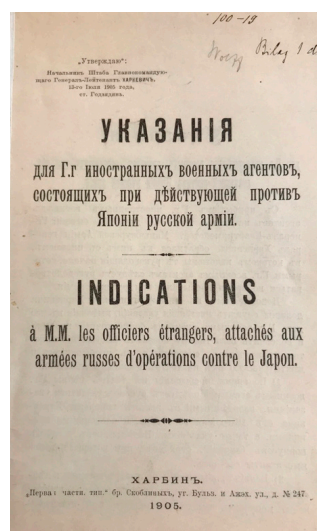
97 Erwin Franz's personal album, pp 40.

98 See Daniel Bruun's “passport” in chapter 3.2.1.

99 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 18.

100 National Archive; *Wolff's Archive*, annex 1d. (Pictured) Original issued pocketbook, 1905. It states: “For foreign agents who find themselves members of the Russian Army's operations against Japan”, approved by the Chief of Staff, Lt. General Kharkevitch, July 13, 1905.

“We receive you in the most hospitable way possible; we bid you welcome. Study our army in all its details, the conditions surrounding our troops, criticize the warlike events from the standpoint of the general staff officer and of the representative of military science ... The world is kept informed of the warlike events by the numerous press correspondents, but minor details of the movements of troops and strength of the detachments, the character and strength of the fortified positions, escape them ... I trust, therefore, that you will abstain from communicating such facts as we desire to keep secret for the time being, and that you will not touch upon them even in your official reports. The military agent sees all that is of interest to him and makes notes, but he does not write the history of the war until it is over.”¹⁰¹



By all accounts, there was but little friction between the Russians and the multinational diplomatic community of foreign observers. Nevertheless, the Russians had censorship for all attached persons, military as well as civilians, and free movement was to a large extent restricted. Lord Brooke, representing Reuters, found it strenuous up until the point where he got his permission from Kuropatkin's representatives. After that "... he had practically *carte blanche* – could go into the firing line and get killed if he chose.”¹⁰²

Later in the campaign, when Brooke tried to telegram his “after action report” of the Battle of Shaho, he watched in disbelief as the Russian censor obliterated his dispatch with red marks before finally simply ripping it apart.¹⁰³ Although Russian censorship was strict, the amount of freedom the Westerners had to observe the armed forces and gather information of all sorts was plentiful. When the time came for the departure, there were certain difficulties in persuading the Russian military authorities to travel home any other way than with the Trans-Siberian railroad through the vast empire. By taking the train through Russian territory, it was believed that the observers would remain in the Russian sphere of influence for longer and it was calculated that any information breach could be used no sooner than 3 weeks after their departure. By taking “the southern route” through

101 Schuyler, Walter S., John F. Morrison, Carl Reichmann and Peyton C. March: *Reports of Military Observers Attached to the Armies in Manchuria During the Russo-Japanese War: Parts I-V*. U.S. War Department, Washington, 1906., *Part I*, pp. 173-74. Reichman's direct translation from the French section of the pamphlet.

102 Brooke, Leopold G.F.M.G.: *An eye-witness in Manchuria*, pp. 18.

103 Ibid, 204.

China and the oriental shipping lanes, Westerners would be exposed – voluntarily or involuntarily – by enemy intelligence hunters after roughly 36 hours.¹⁰⁴

Kuropatkin's staff had provided the observers with adequate housing at the Mukden headquarters; however, the de facto centre of social activity was the bars at the Liaoyang railway station.¹⁰⁵ The observers (Russian liaison officers included) would participate in social activities together, which often included large amounts of alcohol and stories of personal exploits. "Rivalry" amongst the observers would likely lead to exaggerated tales or even mistaking the exploits of others for one's own. It also worked the other way around, when for example a military attaché would leave certain elements out of the official report to his superiors. During the Battle of Wafangkou, fought on June 14-15, 1904, the two American attachés Captain Carl Reichmann and Colonel Schuyler witnessed the obliteration of Russian units by effective Japanese artillery. Daniel Bruun heard the story through their liaison officer, who was badly wounded during the battle.



Western military observers in the Russian army enjoying a moment of relaxation with their liaison officers at a hunting party in August 1905. Even today, official directives state that the role of military attachés is to establish excellent diplomatic relations with their counterparts from other nations.¹⁰⁶

104 Jessen, Franz von: *Begivenheder jeg oplevede*, Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag: København, September 1907, pp. 188.

105 Jones, David: "Military Observers, Eurocentrism, and World War Zero", pp. 156.

106 Wolff, *Travel pictures I*, pic. 156.

After the incapacitation of the Russian officers, the two Americans actively stepped up as commanding officers of the few remaining Russian soldiers operating the guns.¹⁰⁷ Captain Reichmann's official reports merely mention the situation by stating: "*Here our guide was wounded*".¹⁰⁸



Danish naval attaché Lieutenant Tvermoes (left) spent well over a year as military observer with the Russians. Swedish military attaché Niels Edlund (right) was – like Tvermoes – an experienced Russian translator with several deployments to Russia in the 1890s and early 1900s. Note Edlund's m/1903 three-cornered hat, which from this angle looks like the Australian slouch hat.¹⁰⁹

107 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 42-43.

108 Schuyler, *Part I*, pp. 198.

109 Photo: Harboe, Harald. Aller, Carl (ed.): "*Krig og Fred*" 24/1 1905.

4.0 The Pictures of Wolff's Archive



(Left) Ellis Wolff (1856-1938) photographed in Manchuria September 3, 1905 on his horse "Yellow Chinaman".¹¹⁰



(Right) Ellis Wolff photographed by Captain H.C. Holman on September 27, 1905.¹¹¹

The multinational gathering of soldiers and civilians did indeed collect an impressive amount of material during the war. One such product is that of Lieutenant Colonel Ellis Wolff, who took or acquired hundreds of photos and various pieces of information during his journey to the Far East.¹¹² The photos show a broad spectrum of nearly every possible aspect of the war. Combined with Wolff's comprehensive reports regarding divisional/brigade/regimental organization, tactical organization of military strongholds and general reports on equipment, morale etc., the pictures help form a valuable addition to an overall picture of the war.¹¹³

The first passage in his pictorial archive is from June 2, 1905 from the deck of a ship, shortly before it docks in Åbo (today Turku in Finland). Throughout June, he journeyed on the Trans-Siberian Railway and arrived in Manchuria at the end of June and beginning of July 1905.¹¹⁴ He was granted a pass from the Russian liaison officer for free passage and permission to take pictures of everything, unless it was strictly guarded.¹¹⁵ In the course of his tour, he travelled alongside military attachés from the US, Great Britain, Germany and many other countries. For ex-

¹¹⁰ Wolff, *Military B*, pic. 263.

¹¹¹ Wolff, *Military B*, pic. 267.

¹¹² My empirical foundation rests mostly on Ellis Wolff's archives, donated by his wife in 1940, after his death. Archive number 4+06529 and 3+1015-305 in the National Archives.

¹¹³ National Archive; *Wolff's Archive*, annex 5, 7, 8, 9 and 26. Annex 26 is marked "Report no. 100", which shows the daily learnings/observations in his several relevant fields.

¹¹⁴ Archive Travel pictures I, pic. 1-7 & 21-60.

¹¹⁵ National Archive; *Wolff's Archive*, annex 16. Translated testimony dated June 25, 1905, signed by Lt. Col. Basarof of the General Staff.

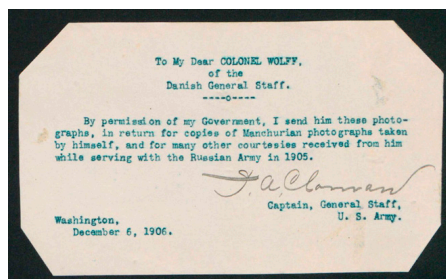
ample, he met the Italian Navy Lieutenant Filippo Camperio (1873-1945, pictured right),¹¹⁶ whom he travelled with even after the war.¹¹⁷ Wolff received or bought many of the pictures, which Camperio had taken and vice versa. In a letter sent from Wolff to Camperio after the war, he thanks Camperio for the letter and the photographs he sent him and promises to send back some photos that he considered particularly interesting.¹¹⁸ This was standard procedure among the attachés and correspondents.

He departed from Vladivostok on October 1, 1905 and journeyed towards Europe by boat and train. He documented his trip home with his camera and most of October he went through China and along the Chinese coast.¹¹⁹ After departing from Shanghai in late October, he had several shorter layovers before sailing from Hong Kong and Macao in early November, Singapore and Ceylon (today Sri Lanka) in mid-November, the Gulf of Aden and the Suez Channel in late November and final arriving on the coast of Napoli on December 3. His final entry is two rather blurry pictures of the Staglieno Monumental Cemetery in Genoa on December 5, 1905.¹²⁰

The following sections utilize the pictures from Wolff's archive as a backdrop for the themes discussed regarding the Russo-Japanese War.



Italian Lt. Filippo Camperio, who took a large number of the photographs in Wolff's collection. Bruun described Camperio as a "... joyful man who was always telling stories, never afraid of combat and rode like a proficient cavalry officer".¹²¹



The letter sent to Ellis Wolff by US Captain Amos Cloman thanking him for their cooperation in Manchuria.¹²²

¹¹⁶ Wolff, *Military B*, pic. 269.

¹¹⁷ http://www.lombardiabeniculturali.it/fotografie/autori/14195/?sort=sort_date_int (acc. April 5, 2018). Several of Camperio's (and some of Wolff's) pictures are available here on the Official Lombard Archives. Some images are likewise available in books and open sources online, for example Pinterest.com.

¹¹⁸ The Official Lombard Archives, *accession number b.41, fasc. 35/2*.

¹¹⁹ Wolff's Appendix "Travel pictures 2", possibly landing in Tianjin and by train through Beijing (mid-October), pp. 231-69.

¹²⁰ Wolff's Appendix "Travel pictures 3", the last two pictures 492 and 493.

¹²¹ Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 51.

¹²² National Archive; *Wolff's Archive*. An example of this exchange of photos is seen in the letter from Captain Sydney Amos Cloman (1867-1923, who is seen on the photo with the attachés (6) in section 3.2). Captain Cloman's photos are still present in Wolff's archives.

4.1 Faces of War



(Left) Legendary Cossack general Fyodor Keller in Liaoyang shortly before his death in July 1904. Photo taken by Camperio.¹²³



(Middle) A dead Japanese soldier after the battle of Shaho near the Putilov Heights on the morning of October 17, 1904. Bought in Harbin, August 1905.¹²⁴



(Right) “*Big and small Russian*”, photo by Captain H.C. Holman, October 1905. Russian liaison officer to the foreign observers Lt. Prebilsky, who seemingly had a close relationship with all representatives of the Western countries, is seen enjoying a cigarette with a small boy.¹²⁵

Since the emergence of written history, tales from the battles have been a key element in telling the story of war. However, large-scale modern war reaches far deeper than the struggles of the frontline soldier. The societies of the contending nations have to effectively gear up for war, and as their armed forces are mainly drawn from a system of universal conscription, the war affects the entire population. This yields hardship as well as opportunities, and in the theatre of war, every imaginable story of such is present. Whether that be the story of the struggling frontline peasant-turned-soldier in the trenches, the volunteer female nurse from the upper stratum of aristocratic society or the local merchant trying to make a living in the combat zone. Through the pictures in Wolff’s collection, the following section seeks to explore some of these fates during the Russo-Japanese War.

¹²³ Wolff, *Military A*, pic. 32

¹²⁴ Wolff, *Military A*, pic. 48

¹²⁵ Wolff, *Military B*, pic. 253.

4.1.1 Frontline troops in the Sipingai Heights



“Redoubt no. 20, 55th Regiment, near Mukden”. Acquired from the regiment commander, September 25, 1905.¹²⁶

This photo is part of a set of several pictures from the 1st Siberian Army Corps from the positions in the Sipingai (Xipingkai) Heights near Mukden (today Shenyang). The Battle of Mukden, which took place from February 20 to March 10, 1905, was one of the largest modern land battles before World War I. During the battle, the Russians had committed slightly more fighting men than the attacking Japanese field armies. With both sides in total numbering roughly 600.000 men, the Russians suffered 90.000 casualties and the Japanese 70.000 in a battle that ended with a tactical Japanese victory, but yet another failure to annihilate the Russian armies as they retreated to the Sipingai Heights, which is pictured above.¹²⁷

The effectiveness of modern weaponry in the Battle of Mukden became evident in the staggering casualties and spent ammunition. In comparison to a then recent conflict between modernly equipped armies in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, the Prussians consumed 25 million rifle rounds during the 7 months of fighting. During the Battle of Mukden’s 11 days of fighting, 20.110.000 rifle and machine gun rounds plus 279.394 artillery shells were used.¹²⁸ In short, the fighting in Mukden surpassed the entire Franco-Prussian War in terms of ammuni-

¹²⁶ Wolff, *Military B*, pic. 206.

¹²⁷ Steinberg, John: “The operational overview”, In: Steinberg, John et. al.: *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective* (2005), pp. 125-6.

¹²⁸ Haruo, Tohmatsu: “Approaching Total War”, In: Wolff, David et. al.: *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective*. Volume II (2007), pp. 191.

tion consumption. After the defeat at Mukden, the retreating Russian army dug in around the Sipingai Heights. At the end of the war, 6 months later, this defensive line had been strongly fortified with 446,500 troops organized in depth and improved military training, a large number of howitzers and machine guns (374 instead of the 36 during the battle) and organized military infrastructure. This included telegraph lines and 12 trains instead of the 3 trains at the start of the war.¹²⁹ Russian general Anton Denikin – later a leading commander in the White Armies during the Russian Civil War – was present at Sipingai Heights and pondered the question about a possible outcome of a Russian offensive from the Sipingai positions:

*“I said then and I say now, “Victory!” Russia had not been defeated. Her army could have continued fighting. It was St. Petersburg that was tired more than the army. Alarming signs of approaching revolution – more and more frequent terrorist attacks, agrarian disorders, strikes and unrest – deprived the government of its will to decide and to dare and forced it to sign a premature peace.”*¹³⁰



(Left) “Japanese infantry men of the 21st Regiment”, from the other side of the battle, found among Erwin Franz’s photos. Taken during the Battle of Mukden, March 8-10, 1905.¹³¹



(Right) Russian soldiers receiving medical treatment in the Sipingai Positions after the Battle of Mukden.¹³²

A soldier’s view is often unencumbered by the realities of the bigger picture. The fact is that Russia was close to bankruptcy in 1905, prompting the notion of the finance ministry in early July that a continuation in fighting would come “*at the*

129 Denikin, Anton Ivanovitj and Margaret Patoski (eds.): *The Career of a Tsarist Officer: Memoirs, 1872-1916*, 1st Edition, University of Minnesota, 1975, pp. 151-53.

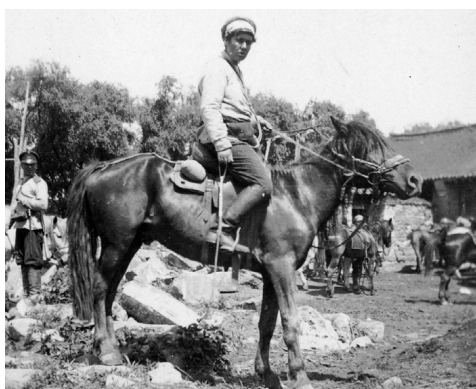
130 Ibid, pp. 153.

131 Erwin Franz’s personal album, pp. 32.

132 Wolff, *Military B*, pic. 205.

price of complete financial, and economic collapse”.¹³³ Russia had taken out war loans of 1.9 billion rubles and ended up paying back 6.1 billion, more than triple that amount, mainly in interests.¹³⁴ But for the battle-ready soldiers in the redoubts of Sipingai, whether their personal objective was glory, redemption or the safety of their hometowns beyond the Ural mountains, the final push never came.

4.1.2 Women in the War



(Left) “Female Interpreter in Count Kellers Riding Detachment”, photo by Camperio, June 1904.¹³⁵



(Right) “Empress Maria Feodorovnas Sanitary Train”, photo by Wolff, August 20, 1905.¹³⁶

During the Russo-Japanese War, there were several early examples of women on the very front line. An interesting case is that of Elena Smolka. She had spent her childhood in Nikolsk-Ussuriisk, north of Vladivostok, where she had learned several languages, including Chinese. Believing that her knowledge of languages could benefit the army, she completed training at the school of military interpreters in Vladivostok and served with distinction in skirmishes against Chinese rebels in 1901, using the male identity Mikhail Nikolaevich. She was proficient with a horse, sword and rifle, which cleared the way for her entry into a Cossack reconnaissance unit at the start of the Russo-Japanese War.¹³⁷ The picture above on the left very likely features Elena during her service in the 2nd Nerchinks regiment in the Trans-Baikal Cossack Division under General Paul von Rennenkampff, in which

133 Ananich, Boris: “Russian War Financing”, In: Steinberg, John et. al.: *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective* (2005), pp. 458.

134 Ibid, pp. 462.

135 Wolff, *Military B*, pic. 231.

136 Wolff, *Military C* pic. 457.

137 Mikhailova, Yulia and Ikuta Michiko: “Forgotten Heroes: Russian Women in the War”, In: Kowner, Rotem: *Rethinking the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-5. Volume 1: Centennial Perspectives*, Brill: Leiden, 2007, pp. 208-09.

the renowned military commander Count Fyodor Keller served.¹³⁸ Serving as an interpreter, her language skills reportedly saved many lives and she participated in several dangerous operations.¹³⁹ Although the Cossacks, who knew her real identity, treated her in a friendly fashion, she did become the subject of mockery in the female community in Harbin, when she appeared wearing men's clothing.¹⁴⁰

The vast majority of women in the Russian military in the Russo-Japanese War served in supporting roles. Russian women had accompanied armies as rear echelon personnel before the war, especially inspired by the stories of nurses contributing in the war against Turkey in 1877-78.¹⁴¹ Besides 720 nurses from the Sisters of Mercy working in the military hospitals, the Red Cross had 439 nurses, five doctor's assistants and one female surgeon,¹⁴² who worked near the front lines under hazardous conditions, and a number of them were killed or wounded in the process. The women would volunteer for medical duties for many reasons, including breaking out of their traditional roles in the family, patriotic fervour and some would even sign up to accompany their husbands to war. Highly regarded members of the aristocracy, such as Baroness Osten-Saken and Princess Urosova, participated as nurses¹⁴³ and the Empress Maria Fyodorovna, better known in Denmark as Princess Dagmar, was president of the Russian Red Cross, which she had been since the Russo-Turkish War.¹⁴⁴ The women of the Red Cross were widely praised by the Westerners who observed their work and reporting officer for the US Chief of Staff Valery Havard noted that "*The Red Cross hospitals, in a general way, appeared to be more comfortable and better managed than the regular military hospitals ...*".¹⁴⁵ The Red Cross volunteers aboard the trains reassured the Russians by their professionalism, hygiene and effectivity, thus illustrating the ability of the railway to bring regularity and civilization to even the most distant corners of the world. According to Bruun: "*The transport of the wounded was executed in such exemplary fashion as had it been arranged for parading.*"¹⁴⁶

Today, women serve in practically all branches of the military, as infantry, pilots, nurses, physicians and a number of vital support roles. Before gender studies began their rapid growth in the mid-1980s, female participation on the battlefield had been widely overlooked. The somewhat recently discovered fact that women actively participated in historically male dominated "activities", such as military battles, has opened up the debate of the female warrior. As a very recent example,

138 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 66-67.

139 Mikhailova, Yulia and Ikuta Michiko: "Forgotten Heroes: Russian Women in the War", pp. 209.

140 Ibid, pp. 209.

141 Ibid, pp. 203-04

142 Ibid, pp. 204.

143 Ibid, pp. 207-08.

144 Tisdall, E.E.P. and Dagny Riis (transl.): *Dagmar. Prinsesse af Danmark. Kejserinde af Rusland*. 4th Edition, Sesam: Copenhagen, 1987, pp. 79 & 276.

145 Schuyler, *Part II*, pp. 58.

146 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 28.

Middle Eastern women have garnered international attention for their combat effectiveness in the aftermath of the rise of the so-called Islamic State. Here, the world witnessed an unprecedented phenomenon in the Middle East of women joining military ranks and actively participating in combat with their male counterparts. In response to IS' military conduct, the Kurds established YPJ in 2012 as an autonomous all-female brigade, which as of 2016 constituted around 35 per cent of the total Kurdish forces.¹⁴⁷ The brigade has had great success in fighting IS as they are skilled soldiers and, even though the Kurdish men and women are separated into different camps during night, they train and fight alongside one another, which has challenged the notions of the traditional gender roles in the Middle East.¹⁴⁸

4.1.3 China and the civilians



(Left) "Mongolian Horseman", photo by Erwin Frantz. Although seemingly simple merchants, these, were often part of the feared Honghuzi-raiders.¹⁴⁹



(Middle) "A reporting Chinese officer", photo by Erwin Franz. Whether the Chinese officer was present for intelligence purposes in support of the Japanese army or to form an overview of Japanese activities on Chinese soil is unknown.¹⁵⁰



(Right) "Chinese boy wearing Papakha", photo taken by Camperio. A young boy with a profound smile on his face as he wears the standard Cossack hat, a "papakha".¹⁵¹

With the Chinese neutrality act of February 12, 1904, China had officially declined taking sides in the war between Russia and Japan and forbidding its citizens from taking an active part in the war. However, land warfare would soon turn the Chinese Northeast into the first combat ground between modernly

147 Bengio, Ofra: *Game Changers: Kurdish Women in Peace and War*, The Middle East Journal, Volume 70, Number 1, Winter 2016, Middle East Institute, pp. 39.

148 <https://edition.cnn.com/2019/01/27/homepage2/kurdish-female-fighters/index.html> (acc. August 24, 2019).

149 Erwin Franz's personal album, pp. 16.

150 Erwin Franz's personal album, pp. 38.

151 Wolff, *Travel pictures*, pic. 132.

equipped armies, and the fighting of over a million foreign soldiers would leave a vast number of Chinese dead or homeless in the process. It is estimated that the war caused 20.000 Chinese civilians' deaths while hundreds of thousands became homeless.¹⁵² It was not in the interest of the Chinese government to choose side in the conflict as choosing the wrong side would be disastrous. A military stalemate between the warring sides would have been preferable to a decisive victory for one side, as this would likely have meant further influence over Chinese territory.¹⁵³

In the eyes of several Westerners and troops from Russia and Japan, who were present during the war, many civilians saw an opportunity for profit by working with the warring sides. Delivering supplies, mercantile ventures, prostitution and not least intelligence operations – including espionage and sabotage – were widespread activities amongst the civilian population.¹⁵⁴ General Kuropatkin favoured the good relationships with Chinese suppliers of local goods, who “... assisted [the Russian armies] considerably in getting supplies, and, notwithstanding the great hardships we ourselves occasionally suffered ...”, and generally stvired toward a working relationship.¹⁵⁵ There was an equally well established scene of operations regarding prostitution where “entrepreneurs” administered women of all nationalities, but increasingly Chinese women as the war went on.¹⁵⁶ Daniel Bruun indirectly tells of a major Russian intelligence-breach in troop movements because when the “promiscuous women” were sent somewhere, the Russian army would certainly soon follow.¹⁵⁷

Partisan activity was an increasingly big problem for the Russian and Japanese armies. Most prominent were the Honghuzi gangs, which consisted mainly of unemployed Chinese labourers and former soldiers. These were a serious threat, mainly to Russian logistical issues and had already gained a certain notoriety during the initial stages of the construction of the Russian railroad in Manchuria in the 1890s, where they harassed construction progress. During the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese took advantage of their antipathy towards the Russians, and it is estimated that up to 10.000 Honghuzi were employed by the Japanese to

152 Wolff, David: “Intelligence intermediaries: The competition for Chinese spies”, In: Steinberg, John et. al.: *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective* (2005), pp. 306.

153 Müller, Gotelind: *Chinese perspectives on the Russo-Japanese War*, University of Heidelberg, 2013, pp. 9-10.

154 Jessen, Franz von: *Egne jeg saa*, Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag: Copenhagen, 1906, pp. 212-27. Sakurai, Tadayoshi: *Human Bullets: A soldier's story of Port Arthur*, Houghton, Mifflin and Company: Boston, 1907, pp. 35, 75.

155 Kuropatkin, Aleksei Nikolaevich: *The Russian Army and the Japanese War: Being Historical and Critical Comments on the Military Policy and Power of Russia and on the Campaign in the Far East*, E.P. Dutton: New York, 1909, pp. 190-1.

156 Jessen, Franz von: *Begivenheder jeg oplevede*, Gyldendalske Boghandel, Nordisk Forlag: Copenhagen, 1907, pp. 179

157 Bruun, Daniel: *Fra De Sidste Tredive Aar*, Gyldendalske Boghandel: Copenhagen, 1927, pp. 109-11.

conduct guerilla activities, often commanded by Japanese officers.¹⁵⁸ This tied up a large number of Russian troops in the protection of the railroad lines and they had to spend considerable efforts to protect these. Virtually all foreigners noticed the activities of the Honghuzi, and generally despised their actions. Bruun noted that:

*"[The Honghuzi's] actions at the bridge shows just how dangerous they are. The Russians' mildness towards the villages that aid these robber gangs results in an increased confidence that they can safely continue their assaults – likely paid for by the Japanese. Troops of other nations would likely have burned down villages and cut down or shot a number of inhabitants."*¹⁵⁹

This was just one factor that made the Westerners carry mixed feelings towards the Chinese civilians, mostly infused with underlying racism. They widely acknowledged the hardships of living in the midst of a warzone, but they increasingly became frustrated with what – they felt – were opportunistic and capricious attitudes.¹⁶⁰ This is a general notion in their reports and memoirs and the British reporter Lord Brooke, as an example, got fed up with locals on several occasions and almost shot one with his revolver and physically attacked another in frustration.¹⁶¹ As he noted in his memoirs: *"I have on two or three previous occasions given particulars of the kindness and hospitality I experienced from the Chinese in Manchuria, but they are not all and not always celestial in their behaviour. They can be exasperating beyond words ..."*¹⁶² This is not only a Western viewpoint, but one that also existed among Japanese officers. Japanese army lieutenant Tadayoshi Sakurai noted that: *"They are ignorant and greedy survivors of a fallen dynasty; they know only the value of gold and silver and do not think of national or international interests ... Money is the only god they worship."*¹⁶³

For the Russian officers, bad behaviour towards the local population was punished and General Kuropatkin made it clear to his sub-ordinates that it was in the best interest of his army that good relations were maintained.¹⁶⁴ Douglas Story encountered a drunk Russian captain causing a stir among local Chinese girls, which resulted in him being almost immediately demoted by General Keller, and a Cossack officer was sentenced to death for raiding civilian stores. He notes that:

158 Kowner, Rotem: *Historical Dictionary of the Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 198.

159 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 131.

160 Baring, Maurice: *With the Russians in Manchuria*, Methuen & Co.: London, 1905, pp. 48. Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 84-5.

161 Brooke, Leopold G.F.M.G.: *An eye-witness in Manchuria*, pp. 203-208, who does note that albeit effective, this method is "Not recommended for general adoption".

162 Ibid, 202-3.

163 Sakurai, Tadayoshi and Masujiro Honda (transl.): *Human Bullets: A soldier's story of Port Arthur*, pp. 105.

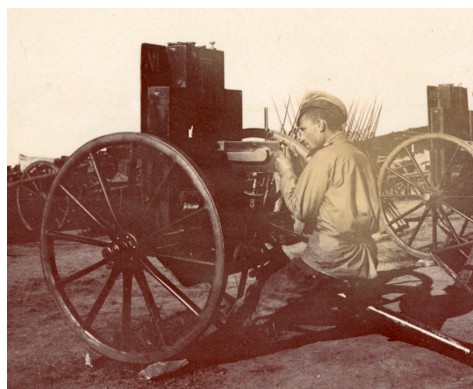
164 Kuropatkin, Aleksei Nikolaevich and Alexander Bertram Lindsay, (transl.): *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, pp. 190.

*“Regulations [in the Russian Army] to prevent trouble, and to regulate the punishment for it, were the earliest drafted and the most rigorously adhered to in the War.”*¹⁶⁵ Maurice Baring from the London-based *Morning Post* further noted that *“... if he [a Russian soldier], drunk or sober, maltreats a Chinaman he is liable to be hanged.”*¹⁶⁶

4.2 The Equipment

The photos in this section shed light on one of the primary tasks of the military observer, which is the research of modern equipment in a combat environment. Ellis Wolff himself is an excellent example of a thorough army officer, who would reports nearly every imaginable detail of a given weapon platform.¹⁶⁷ The pictures were taken from multiple angles, often with a soldier posing in different effective firing positions etc.

4.2.1 The Machine Gun



(Left) A Russian soldier of the 34th Mobile Machine Gun Regiment, posing with a Maxim machine gun. The photo is taken by Ellis Wolff on September 3, 1905.¹⁶⁸



(Right) The Japanese initially deployed the Maxim machine gun, but quickly switched to the Hotchkiss design above. Photo taken by Erwin Franz, date unknown.¹⁶⁹

The Russo-Japanese War was not the combat debut of the machine gun. It had been deployed with great effect in the colonial wars, particular by the British in Africa. Since the 1880s, Japanese military doctrine had proscribed the use of mass infantry assaults against enemy positions, which in some cases did occur in

165 Story, Douglas: *The Campaign with Kuropatkin*, T. Werner Laurie Publishing: London, 1904, pp. 146-8.

166 Baring, Maurice: *With the Russians in Manchuria*, pp. 47.

167 National Archive; *Wolff's Archive*, annex 31. This is an example of a complete mathematical “firing-table”, which illustrates artillery shells’ technical statistics, effective ranges etc. on a Russian field gun, 1904.

168 Wolff, *Military C*, pic. 291.

169 Erwin Franz’s personal album, pp. 20.

the war against the Russians. Nevertheless, in the face of Russian machine guns, spewing 600 rounds per minute, Japanese officers concluded that mass frontal assaults reflected incompetence rather than ruthless brilliance.¹⁷⁰ 25-year-old army lieutenant, Tadayoshi Sakurai, serving in the Port Arthur campaign, remembered the deadly effect of the Russian machine guns during the Battle of Nanshan on May 25-26, 1904, where an outnumbered Russian force with just ten Maxim machine guns provided effective crossfire on the attacking Japanese soldiers.¹⁷¹

*“They were wonderfully clever in the use of this machine. They would wait till our men came very near them ... and just at the moment when we proposed to shout a triumphant Banzai, this dreadful machine would begin to sweep over us as if with the [broom] of destruction, the result being hills and mounds of dead ... Whenever our army attacked the enemy’s position, it was invariably this machine-gun that made us suffer and damaged us most severely.”*¹⁷²

Although successfully incorporated in defense tactics, it was scarcely used in the offense. According to doctrine, which was supported by the fact that machine guns at the time were heavy and hard to maneuver, they were often massed into batteries and functioned as a form of artillery. General Aleksey Kuropatkin, commander in chief of the Russian armies in the Far East, saw their weight and lack of adaptability to the outpost lines as a major problem, as their tactical requirement was better used on these key points. Based on his experiences with the machine gun in the Russo-Japanese War, he indirectly advocated the invention of the light machine gun, as lighter models could also effectively support offensive maneuvers.¹⁷³

As for the Western observers witnessing the effectiveness of the machine gun, several of them urged doctrinal development in the field. Major Joseph E. Kuhn of the US Corps of Engineers noted that:

*“Machine guns, used sparingly at first, rapidly demonstrated their value and were employed in increasing numbers in the later stages of the war. It seems certain that this weapon will play an important part in the future, and the equipment and tactics of machine guns should receive serious and prompt consideration for our army.”*¹⁷⁴

170 Matsusaka, Yoshihisa Tak: “Human bullets, General Nogi and the myth of Port Arthur”, In: Steinberg, John et. al.: *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective* (2005), pp. 179-81.

171 Ibid, pp. 189. The casualty rate was approximately 1000 Russians and 6.200 Japanese soldiers.

172 Sakurai, Tadayoshi and Masujiro Honda (transl.): *Human Bullets*, pp. 153.

173 Kuropatkin, Aleksei Nikolaevich, Alexander Bertram Lindsay, (transl.): *The Russian Army and the Japanese War*, pp. 136-37.

174 Schuyler, *Part III*, pp. 230.

Unfortunately, as the Great War a mere ten years later would show, few considered bringing the devastating effect of the machine gun into serious doctrinal development. A good example is the British Army that would learn the hard way, when large scaled mass assaults charging across No Man's Land were pointlessly obliterated by sweeping machine guns on the fields of France. Although several British observers called for a doctrinal development regarding the machine gun, it fell on deaf ears, even to the point where the infantry regulations of 1911 tightened formations. Although exercises had shown the vulnerability in front of gun-fire suppression, the British General Staff still felt they had a winning formula with mass assault tactics and disregarded the lessons of Manchuria, seeing the machine gun as tactically unnecessary.¹⁷⁵ The general conclusion of the countries of Europe and the US was that the machine gun was optional rather than essential in the inventory and it would not be a deciding factor in land warfare, and so they focused the funding and doctrinal development elsewhere.¹⁷⁶

4.2.2 The Artillery

The Russo-Japanese War saw a significant increase in the use of artillery compared to earlier large-scale conflicts, both in relation to the number of guns and the extent to which they were used. Both sides relied heavily on artillery for both offensive and defensive purposes, and military observers explained how the power of modern artillery was used to its fullest. The rapid fire of the new guns and the serious damage, which shrapnel could cause unarmored targets, made effective entrenchment of troops an utmost priority in defensive positions throughout the war. The increased range of the guns enabled several batteries to concentrate fire on a given target, and to switch target without changing one's own position, thus further increasing the possible intensity of artillery fire compared to earlier wars.¹⁷⁷

While the Russian 76mm Putilov M1900 gun was technologically superior to the Japanese Type M31 75mm gun in regards to range and rate of fire, the Imperial Japanese Army made up for this by the way in which they managed their artillery.¹⁷⁸ The professional Japanese artillerymen were specialized in their functions and were able to maneuver their artillery pieces faster and deliver more accurate fire than the Russian conscripts could.¹⁷⁹ Furthermore, Russia was at the time undergoing reforms in the use of artillery and could only equip half of the

175 Kenda, Daniel J.: *Lessons learned from the use of the machine gun during the Russo-Japanese War and the application of those lessons by the protagonists of World War I* (dissertation), University of Colorado, Boulder, 1992, pp. 34-40.

176 Ibid, pp. 83-92.

177 Schuyler, *Part I*, pp. 270.

178 Payne, Charles T.: *The Russo-Japanese War. Impact on Western Military thought*. Master Thesis, University of Georgia, Athens, 1990, pp. 68; Schuyler, *Part I*, pp. 266-67.

179 Schuyler, *Part I*, pp. 245-46.



(Left) Russian troops in winter equipment operating a 3-inch (76mm) Putilov M1900 field gun. The workhorses used for pulling the guns are visible in the background, likely removed from the gun crews because of the threat from Japanese counter battery fire to which the horses were especially vulnerable. Photo taken in the Kautulin Pass near Mukden by Camperio, March 1905.¹⁸¹

units in the Far East with the guns needed, which meant that the Japanese artillery was numerically superior and better equipped for the task.¹⁸⁰

The difference of the power of the artillery between Russia and Japan resulted in the employment of different doctrines. The Japanese made effective use of their numerically superior firepower, generally commencing their attacks by bringing forward their artillery and initiating an overwhelming amount of fire until the point of attack.¹⁸² Observers often pondered the question of why charging infantry still used close formations, as these tactics seemed contrary to the lessons learned from earlier experiences, where the soldiers had been easy targets for artillery fire. Two Russian officers scoffed at his input, one brushing it aside as inconsequential theory, another stating that whether the infantry advances in tight or wide formations does not matter; “... *the artillery fire will find you anyhow*.”¹⁸³

180 Schuyler, *Part I*, pp. 277.

181 Wolff, *Military A*, pic. 88.

182 Schuyler, *Part I*, pp. 265-6.

183 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 48.

The importance of artillery meant that to protect one's own troops, and to support the advance of the infantry, one would have to prioritize silencing the artillery of the opponent. The result was the doctrinal incorporation of *Counter Battery Fire*, where the opposing artillery batteries tried to put each other out of action.¹⁸⁴ When the enemy artillery was suppressed or destroyed, it was possible to support friendly infantry units, a task regarded as the artillery's main objective.¹⁸⁵ Effectively managed and concentrated artillery fire, silencing enemy artillery and halting their infantry, was a deciding factor in the outcome of several battles, for example the Battle of Wafangkou on June 14-15, 1904.¹⁸⁶ To gain this upper hand, armies would conceal their artillery batteries, a tactic used by both parties in the war, but the Japanese seem to have done it first and with the greatest success.¹⁸⁷ Sir Ian Hamilton, general staff officer and one of the highest ranking British military attachés in the Japanese army, noted:

*"... the first essential of hitting an enemy is to see him, and a captain of one of the Japanese howitzer batteries told me that throughout the artillery action of April 30th the Russians never had a notion of his whereabouts. Not one single missile of any description came within 300 yards of the Japanese howitzers, whose shooting was carried out, therefore, as calmly as if they had been at practice camp."*¹⁸⁸

Situations like these, coupled with the long range of the guns and new long-distance communication equipment, resulted in artillerymen of both sides incorporating indirect fire tactics.¹⁸⁹ This meant placing the artillery out of sight of the enemy and out of harm's way and then directing the artillery fire by means of a forward observing party.¹⁹⁰ The telephone became increasingly important to the artillerymen during the war as the tactic of indirect fire and amassing a high concentration of fire for maximum effect required timely and accurate communication.¹⁹¹

184 Menning, Bruce W.: *Bayonets before Bullets – The Imperial Russian Army, 1861-1914*, Indiana University Press: Bloomington and Indianapolis, 1992, pp. 158

185 Payne, Charles T.: *The Russo-Japanese War. Impact on Western Military thought*, pp. 71.

186 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 48.

187 Schuyler, *Part I*, pp. 267 and Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 47.

188 Hamilton, Ian: *A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book during the Russo-Japanese War*, Edward Arnold: London, 1905, pp. 127.

189 Menning, Bruce W.: *Bayonets before Bullets – The Imperial Russian Army, 1861-1914*, pp. 176

190 Schuyler, *Part I*, 267.

191 Payne, Charles T.: *The Russo-Japanese War. Impact on Western Military thought*, pp. 82.



Perfectly displaying a thousand-yard stare, a Japanese soldier stands next to a wooden mortar during or after the Battle of Mukden. Wooden mortars were used on both sides of the war and were more easily maneuvered in the rough terrain than heavier weapons. Note the improvised field cover and fallen soldiers lying in the background.¹⁹²



Japanese 11-inch (280mm) howitzer readied for transport. The Japanese forces positioned several batteries of these long-range artillery pieces at a key hilltop vantage point during the Siege of Port Arthur, most notably Hill 203. From here, they were able to reach the city nearly unopposed, sinking four Russian battleships and two cruisers while damaging a battleship, thereby forcing the Russians to scuttle it themselves.¹⁹³

4.3 The Battlefield – Casualties, Prisoners of War and Tactics

It is unlikely that Japan and Russia had envisioned the war to produce the number of casualties it did. Often overlooked by the larger conflicts of the 20th century, it is important to remember that it was a relatively short war with few large-scale battles. Battles did produce huge number of casualties, but it must be kept in mind the fact that – mainly – the land doctrines of both nations still dictated fundamental elements that had existed before the introduction of modern ma-

¹⁹² Erwin Franz's personal album, pp 36.

¹⁹³ Erwin Franz's personal album, pp 25.

chinery. Neither Russia nor Japan have released entirely reliable casualty statistics after the war, but various sources estimate the military deaths as being around 130.000 to 150.000 and roughly 20.000 civilian deaths.¹⁹⁴



A Japanese advance as envisaged by the Danish journal *Illustreret Familie-Journal* from March 1, 1904. The caption reads “**Japanese infantry attacking with bayonets.** The Japanese infantry excels in attack with great violence. Parts of the firing line approach the enemy position in small bounds until within 200 metres of the enemy. After persistent fire the cry “Attack!” is heard, and then the entire force leaps up and swarms forward in tight formation.”¹⁹⁵

¹⁹⁴ Statistics and sources are explained on the following page.

¹⁹⁵ *Illustreret Familie Journal: Fra Krigsskuepladsen*, no. 1, March 1, 1904.



A 15 cm High Explosive (HE) artillery round detonates 100 paces (100 *schritte*) in front of the Japanese positions during the Battle of Mukden.¹⁹⁶ Another photo, not printed in this report, shows the same situation, but only 20 paces away.

Sources for the statistics ¹⁹⁷	Russia	Japan
Mobilized for the war	1.365.000 men (699.000 were deployed in the theatre of war)	1.200.000 men (around 650.000 were deployed in the theatre of war)
Killed in action	28.800-52.623	47.400-60.500
Died of disease	9.300-18.830	27.200
Total deaths (including death from wounds)	43.300-71.453	80.378-86.100 88.429¹⁹⁸
Wounded	141.800	173.100
Prisoners of War	71.947	2.088-2.687
Civilian deaths	Estimated 20.000 (Chinese, Manchurian and Korean civilians)	

¹⁹⁶ Erwin Franz's personal album, pp 37.

¹⁹⁷ Dumas, Samuel. K.O. Vedel-Petersen and Harald Westergaard, (eds.): *Losses of Life Caused By War*, Clarendon Press: Oxford, 1923, pp. 57-9; Miller, Ed: "Japan's Other Victory: Overseas Financing of the War", In: Steinberg, John et. al.: *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective* (2005). pp. 371; Shimazu, Naoko: "Love Thine Enemy: Japanese Perceptions of Russia", In: Steinberg, John et.al.: *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective* (2005), pp. 479-80; Kowner, Rotem: *Historical Dictionary of the Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 100-1; Drea, Edward J.: *Japan's Imperial Army. Its Rise and Fall, 1853-1945*. University Press of Kansas: Lawrence, 2009, pp. 119.

¹⁹⁸ Kowner, Rotem: *Historical Dictionary of the Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 101. A good indicator of an accurate number as 88.429 souls was enshrined in the Yasukuni Shrine following the war.

An overview of the battles fought in the Russo-Japanese War shows that basically all major battles were won by the Japanese. There are far too many factors in this equation for a thorough analysis in this article, but deciding factors were evident in preparatory, strategic and tactical Russian shortcomings. Although facing a major power, Japan was by all accounts better suited for war in the Far East by 1904 compared to Russia. Japan had a well-organized army and – as earlier stated – excelled in certain aspects of modern warfare in terms of specialized weapon crews. Furthermore, they had a large and powerful navy and the geographical advantage of being close to their home islands. Russia on the other hand had the bulk of their military capacity centred in another part of the world and an army under Kuropatkin that lacked organization and a detailed plan of operational execution.¹⁹⁹

Initial Russian naval defeats and the catastrophic loss of Admiral Makarov on 13 April, 1904 provided the Japanese with almost absolute naval supremacy and the strategic initiative to perform landings and resupplying troops along the Manchurian periphery. A string of humiliating defeats followed for the Russians, but also a war of attrition for the Japanese ground forces, where costly offensive battles created a shortage of manpower and logistical over-extension. The continuous Russian defeats and, vice versa, attritional Japanese offensive thrusts created severe casualties for both empires, with Japan taking a lead on that front.

The photo collections of Ellis Wolff and Erwin Frantz contain many photos of battle casualties. Most are taken shortly after battle with the victims still clinging to their rifles surrounded by spent cartridges in a foxhole. Certain photos are hard not to notice, due to the artistic grimness of the human tragedy of the situation; these are included in the following section.



(Left) Japanese soldiers lie dead on Putilov Hill after the Battle of Schaho on the morning of October 17, 1904. Photo bought by Wolff in Harbin, August 1905.²⁰⁰



(Right) Fallen Russian soldiers from the Battle of Mukden are lined up before their burial. Photo bought by Wolff in Harbin, August 1905.²⁰¹

199 Airapetov, Oleg R.: "The Russian Army's Fatal Flaws", In: Steinberg, John et. al.: *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective* (2005), pp. 175-6.

200 Wolff, *Military A*, pic. 49.

201 Wolff, *Military A*, pic. 78.

4.3.1 “Russian dead at Sandepu, January 1905”



Bought in Harbin, August 1905²⁰²

As disturbing as it is fascinating, the grim image of a Russian soldier (left) caught in a rather unlikely posture, lies frozen with his skull exposed on the silent battle-grounds at Sandepu. A fine art reproduction of the picture exists by artist G. Backmanson, in A.V. Martynoff's collection, titled “*Sous Sandepou. Mort de Froid*” (*During Sandepou. Frozen to Death*).²⁰³ Artistic liberties have been taken by the artist, including the addition of a Mosin Nagant 1891 service rifle and a beast of the wild – most likely suggesting that it has eaten the flesh of the soldiers face.

As the photo has been the subject of an artist's interpretation, it is likely that it has been in circulation and furthermore has had some kind of effect on people. Besides underlining the very horrors of war itself, it also reflects on the severe and – to many people pointless – losses inflicted on the Russian military in the Far East. Initially, the Russian satirical press had drawn caricatures and jokes, mostly in the spirit of “yellow peril” style racism, but mounting losses in the face of a massively underestimated enemy had silenced the humorists. In art and most other sectors of Russian culture regarding the war, things became increasingly bleak and emotional.²⁰⁴

The postwar waltz *Na sopkah Manchzhurii* (*On the Hills of Manchuria*) from 1906 by I.A. Shatrov defined the national sentiment in its haunting tune and lyrics:

202 Wolff, *Military A*, pic. 69.

203 Martynoff, pic. 77. Found in The Official State Public Historical Library of Russia, the collection consists of 389 photos and artworks by a variety of Russian artists and photographers. Many of the artists were in fact present in the war – among the more prestigious was Ilja Repin – and illustrated situations. The album was sold at the price of 30 rubles and 10% of this amount went to support veterans of the war. Above information translated from GPIB and pictures can be accessed through GPIB: <http://elib.shpl.ru/ru/nodes/20715-mandzhuriya-russko-yaponskaya-voyna-hudozhestvennyy-albom-spb-1906#mode/inspect/page/155/zoom/4> (Acc. 04/06 2018)

204 Filipova, Tatiana: “Images of the Foe in the Russian Satirical Press”, In: Steinberg, John et. al.: *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective*. (2005), pp. 419-23.

*"Around us it's calm; The wind blew the fog away
Warriors are asleep on the hills of Manchuria
And they cannot hear the Russian tears."*²⁰⁵

4.3.2 Prisoners of War



"Dying Russian in a street ditch." Around the time of the Battle of Mukden, Erwin Frantz 1905.²⁰⁶

How one chooses to look at this photo is a personal matter. Some see the human tragedy and the gruesome nature of the war, where troops irreverently pass by a young soldier in the final stages of his life, while a photographer documents the ordeal. Lying in the middle of a dirt road in the bitter cold of the Manchurian winter, the man has been robbed of his boots and no measures are seemingly been taken to ease his passing by making him comfortable. Others process the experience in a less emotional manner, critically examining the elements of the photo. Besides the accompanying text stating that the man is dying, it is not an established fact that he is not dead already.

All speculation aside, Erwin Franz was attached to the Japanese field armies and his caption "*Sterbender Russe im strassengraben*" does raise the question of the treatment of Russian prisoners of war. The huge number of Russian POWs was mainly due to Japan's offensive in the course of the war, as thousands of Russians fell into captivity when major military strongpoints like Port Arthur and Mukden capitulated. In strong contrast to the horrendous Japanese treatment of allied POWs in World War II, it is widely acknowledged that the treatment of

²⁰⁵ <https://thesession.org/tunes/4033> accessed on June 27, 2018.

²⁰⁶ Erwin Franz's personal album, pp. 35.

Russian prisoners during the Russo-Japanese War was textbook exemplary. Japan aspired to be recognized as a civilized nation and the treatment of captured personnel was a good way of showing this. Twenty-nine POW camps were built to accommodate the Russian soldiers and display to the international community that the captives were well treated as “honoured guests” with access to private housing (for officers), marketplaces, sports, religion and even prostitutes.²⁰⁷ At one point in most Western attachés’ writings, the underlying racism becomes evident. For example when Ian Hamilton mentions that: “... it gave me a sharp pang – to see white men as prisoners of Asiatics. I must struggle against this feeling; but it is instinctive, and deeply rooted ...”.²⁰⁸ Based on several accounts, they agreed that the conditions for Russian POWs were not as bad as could be feared, some mentioning that: “... they found they got food and drink from the Japanese instead of the mutilation and torture they seemed to expect.”²⁰⁹ And escaped Russian soldiers reported that: “... [the Japanese soldiers] were “*nichevo*,” meaning they were all right.²¹⁰ Tensions would occasionally rise between the Japanese officers and their Russian captives, where Japanese culture fundamentally reflected upon the fact that surrender was dishonourable. This mildly tainted the international community’s view of Japan as a civilized nation, but overall the Japanese government was formally praised for the humane treatment of prisoners.²¹¹



(Left) “Captured Russians at Suhopi, March 4, 1905”²¹²



(Right) “Wounded Japanese”, captured by Russian soldiers, Camperio 1904.²¹³

207 Shimazu, Naoko: “Love Thine Enemy: Japanese Perceptions of Russia”, pp. 370-82.

208 Hamilton, Ian: *A Staff Officer’s Scrap-Book during the Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 217.

209 Ibid, 159.

210 Baring, Maurice: *With the Russians in Manchuria*, pp. 96.

211 Shimazu, Naoko: “Love Thine Enemy: Japanese Perceptions of Russia”, pp. 373-4, 383-4; Drea, Edward J.: *Japan’s Imperial Army. It’s Rise and Fall, 1853-1945*, pp. 120.

212 Erwin Franz’s personal album, pp 38.

213 Wolff, *Military B*, pic. 230.

For the approximately 2-3000 Japanese soldiers taken prisoners by the Russians, the biggest concern often was returning to their homeland alive. The army had ritualized death in combat the year before the war and the concept of death before dishonour was officially incorporated in Japanese society through the ancient principles of *Bushido* and *Yamato Damashii*. It was preferable to die in battle – or at least commit suicide if caught alive – to avoid shame and the stigma of cowardice.

Except for a few officers, who were forced to resign and return their decorations, official punishment was extremely humiliating, but not officially punishable by death sentences. As names were officially published, former prisoners often saw themselves ostracized by their communities and had to move elsewhere, and there are even examples of relatives who could not bear their sons' shame and committed suicide in their place. The rumours about the dishonoured soldiers circulated in the society and were instrumental in creating a postwar myth wherein the disgrace of surrender was unthinkable.²¹⁴

4.3.3 Tactics and preparations



(Left) “Siberian Cossack”, photo by Camperio 1904.²¹⁵ The Cossacks had a fearsome reputation and had fought with distinction in several wars and conflicts. Described by Bruun as born warriors, they never found an effective role on the modern battlefields in Manchuria, they suffered horrendous casualties and were largely ineffective.²¹⁶



(Right) “Japanese 12 inch shell, unexploded”, bought by Wolff in Harbin in August 1905.²¹⁷ Perhaps not so relevant in the tactics section of this paper, the handling of UXOs (Unexploded Ordnance) could perhaps shed a small light on the educational level of certain elements of the Russian armed forces.

214 Drea, Edward J.: *Japan's Imperial Army. It's Rise and Fall, 1853-1945*, pp. 119-20

215 Wolff, *Military C*, pic. 325.

216 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 10, 66. Many Cossacks came from upper levels of society and Bruun even met a man who claimed to have paid 3000 rubles for having another man tend his farm while he was in the Far East.

217 Wolff, *Military A*, pic. 107.

Russia was not ready for war by 1904. Large-scale army maneuvers, mostly semi-staged by Kuropatkin to gain support for his position, in the years prior to the outbreak of war had revealed several flaws in the army. The tactics were in most cases severely outdated and, according to high-ranking staff officers, Kuropatkin lacked strategic innovation and an understanding of modern weaponry and its impact on the battlefield.²¹⁸ The majority of the Russian army consisted of reservists called up for active duty without much coherent unit exercise. Call-up service in Russia began at the age of 21 and required 5 years in the active service. Many troops of the newly mobilized X Army Corps had as little as 10 days of training (out of a minimum recommended 3 months) before heading for the front in May 1904. And by the time of the Battle of Mukden in February 1905, 75% of the army's manpower consisted of reservists between 35 and 40 years of age.²¹⁹ This meant that many of the soldiers arriving at the front had not seen active service for over 10 years, which came to show by their lack of familiarity with the newer weapons (and how to take advantage of their qualities), for example the magazine-fed bolt-action Mosin Nagant 1891 rifle.²²⁰ This combined with the fact that the Russian military was not properly geared for war, and its commander in chief, General Kuropatkin, with his passivity, caution and lack of large-scale organizational talent, was unable to effectively conduct military operations.²²¹

In the words of the noted military theorist Henri de Jomini: "... a cherished cause, and a general who inspires confidence by previous success, are powerful means of electrifying an army..."²²² Necessary components in successful warfare, but these were not present in the Russian army. Initially, the Japanese attack on Russia sparked a patriotic fervour, but the soldiers on the frontlines and civilians on the home front gradually lost their enthusiasm for war with the mounting losses and constant defeats.²²³ Land doctrine was for the Russian part based on entrenchment followed by tactical retreats. Kuropatkin used the experiences from the French invasion of Russia in 1812 during the Napoleonic Wars and incorporated the idea of causing massive attrition to the enemy and stretch his supply lines. The constant retreat, no matter the outcome of the battle, proved demoralizing for enlisted men and officers in the Russian army.²²⁴ Another evident

218 Airapetov, Oleg R.: "The Russian Army's Fatal Flaws", pp. 158-61.

219 Ibid, pp. 163-6.

220 Hamilton, Ian: *A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book during the Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 303. Hamilton mentioned that Russian POWs did not understand the magazine rifle. The previous model would be the single-shot Berdan rifle that severely limited individual fire rate, resulting in small arms suppression of the enemy.

221 Airapetov, Oleg R.: "The Russian Army's Fatal Flaws", pp. 176-7.

222 Jomini, Antoine Henri and G.H. Mendell, (transl.), W.P. Craighill, (transl.): *The Art of War*, El Paso Norte Press: El Paso, 2005 (org. published in French in 1836), pp. 35.

223 Yoshifuru, Tsuchiya: "Unsuccessful National Unity: The Russian Home Front in 1904", In: Wolff, David et. al.: *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective*, Volume II (2007), pp. 350-1.

224 Bailey, Jonathan, "Military history and the pathology of lessons learned: The Russo-Japanese War, a case study", pp. 174.

problem with the Russian tactical approach, with its rigorous top-down management, today known as *Befehlstaktik*, was evident to many of the Western observers, for example Bruun, who noted that:

*“The mistake is that subordinate officers are not given the necessary freedom of action in their execution of orders. Individual initiative is not encouraged, on the contrary, it is considered reckless when a subordinate at his own discretion and without direct order acts upon it, even if it is, according to our concepts, indeed is rightfully motivated”.*²²⁵

Opposite the Russians stood the Japanese army, which had modelled its ground forces on Prussian tactical elements from the latter half of the 19th century. The main elements were offensive actions backed by high infantry morale, maneuver and initiative. Today known as *Auftragstaktik* or *Mission Command*,²²⁶ the officer would understand his mission and decide for himself – within his commander’s overall intent – how best to achieve a given objective.²²⁷ This allowed for local initiative and effectiveness in unit engagements at all tactical levels, and for the Japanese soldiers, who had based their doctrine upon these learnings, the advantage was clear. US army attaché Captain Reichmann quoted an unnamed Russian staff officer,²²⁸ who had addressed this difference:

*“When our skirmish line had abandoned the village of Laishengpu on February 19, after a bloody contest, the Japanese in the space of twenty or thirty minutes had not only occupied but also fortified it, so that the immediate counter attack met with severe resistance. The Japanese skirmishers had entered the village at once, had quickly oriented themselves without the help of officers, cut loopholes in the walls of houses with their bayonets and entrenching tools, and had thrown up trenches... Such an operation on our part would probably have required the presence of a general staff officer to direct the work and a sapper officer with large details to execute it... It is a sad fact, neither our officers nor our soldiers are habituated to the initiative. Nothing is done without orders.”*²²⁹

The Japanese land doctrine was in many aspects more suited for modern warfare compared to the Russian land doctrine, but the Prussian learnings did have major drawbacks. German military advisors had taught the Japanese the doctrine of mass and momentum in the offensive, which saw a widespread use under the of-

225 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 91-2.

226 HRN 010-001: *Feltreglement I*, 1.6.3, 2017, pp. 128. Today this is widely used in Western military doctrine, including being a basic element in Danish Army training and education.

227 Bungay, Stephen: *Alamein*, Aurum Press: London, 2003, pp. 32.

228 From the Saint Petersburg Zeitung, May 12, 1905.

229 Schuyler, *Part I*, pp. 245-6.

ten suicidal banzai charges against fortified positions.²³⁰ The myth of the bayonet or sword-wielding infantryman was actively encouraged by the army and the Japanese soldiers often charged the Russian positions like “human bullets”, suffering extreme casualties in the process: “... if we could not utilize our firearms, our only and last resource was to shoot off human beings, to attack with bullets of human flesh.”²³¹ To several officers who witnessed the carnage on the battlefield, the tactic was regarded as unnecessary bloodshed and a failure to incorporate lessons learned.²³² The difference in fire-supported military engagements was evident. At the Battle of Nanshan on May 24-26, 1904, the Japanese Second Army commenced a hasty assault on fortified Russian positions without waiting for their artillery detachment, which cost them 4.300 of their charging infantrymen. The amount of dead and wounded from this single battle far surpassed the entire battle casualty list of the First Sino-Japanese War of 1894. The Japanese First Army, however, demonstrated effective use of heavy artillery during the Battle of Yalu River from April 30 to May 1 and rapidly advanced through Manchuria with relatively few casualties.²³³



(Left) “Infantry attack on Ta-Wanghopu, March 3, 1905”²³⁴ Charging Japanese infantrymen during the Battle of Mukden.

230 Bailey, Jonathan, “Military history and the pathology of lessons learned: The Russo-Japanese War, a case study”, pp. 174.

231 Sakurai, Tadayoshi and Masujiro Honda, (transl.): *Human Bullets: A soldier's story of Port Arthur*, 1907, pp. 138.

232 Matsusaka, Yoshihisa Tak: “Human bullets, General Nogi and the myth of Port Arthur”, pp. 198.

233 Ibid, pp. 182-3.

234 Erwin Franz's personal album, pp. 33.



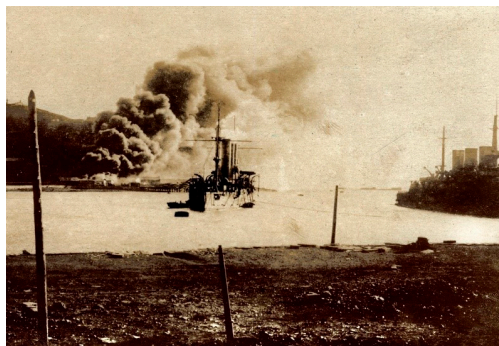
(Left) "*Infantrymen of the 21. Regiment*".²³⁵ The heavily winter-clad Japanese soldiers awaits orders in the trenches near Liutiaokao during the Battle of Mukden. In many photos from the winter fighting, soldiers from both sides are seen stuffing their uniforms with hay, likely to keep warm.

²³⁵ Erwin Franz's personal album, pp. 39.

4.3.4 The War at Sea



(Left) The destroyed Russian battleship the *Sevastopol* in the harbour of Port Arthur. Seemingly taken during the winter 1904-1905. The *Sevastopol* was badly damaged and scuttled shortly before the fall of Port Arthur on January 2, 1905 to avoid capture. Photo by Erwin Frantz.²³⁶



(Right) The Russian cruiser the *Pallada* on the left, and the battleship the *Pobieda* on the right, during the bombardment of Port Arthur. The intense bombardment, notably from Hill 203, proved disastrous for the Russian defenders. Bought in Harbin, August 1905 by Wolff.²³⁷

The Russo-Japanese War began with the Japanese surprise attack on the Russian Pacific fleet in Port Arthur on February 8, 1904, followed by a naval blockade of the city. With the Russian Pacific fleet in check, Japan denied Russia naval supremacy and could easily deploy and supply her armies by efficient naval supply lines. At the onset of hostilities, Japan was in possession of an entirely modern and very homogenous fleet, developed using British doctrine, while Russia was still building its Far East naval capacity with a mixed fleet of new and older ships.²³⁸ The almost legendary and highly competent Russian Admiral Stepan Makarov took command of the Pacific fleet on February 9, 1904, the day after hostilities commenced, and his leadership inspired hope for victory among the Russians in Port Arthur. He actively and successfully engaged the Japanese ships during the first 3 months of combat until he was killed by a Japanese sea mine during a sortie to disrupt Japanese naval movements on April 13, 1904. The loss of Makarov was a serious blow to Russian morale and leadership capabilities and the subsequent leadership of Admiral Wilhelm Vitgeft followed a much more passive and largely ineffective doctrine.²³⁹ Despite the Pacific fleet's attempts to break the blockade, it was repeatedly forced back, most notably in the Battle of the Yellow Sea on August 10, 1904, where Vitgeft himself was killed on his com-

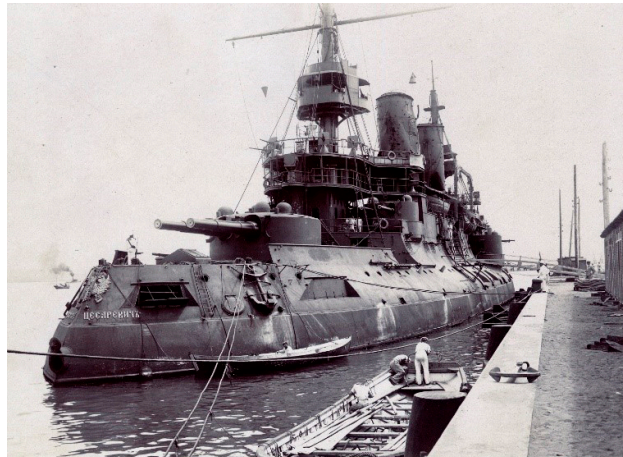
²³⁶ Erwin Franz's personal album, pp. 23.

²³⁷ Wolff, *Military A*, pic. 110.

²³⁸ Schultz, J. H.: *Tidsskrift for Søværnen*, Vol. 75, Sølieutenant-Selskabet, Thieles Bogtrykkeri: København, 1904-1905, pp. 118

²³⁹ Corbett, Julian S.: *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905*, Vol. I, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland & Naval War College Press: Newport, Rhode Island, 1914/1994, pp. 184.

Stern view of the heavily damaged Russian battleship the *Tsesarevitch* in the harbour of the German treaty port of Tsingtau where she and three following cruisers were interned and disarmed. the *Tsesarevitch* barely managed to get away after the loss of the Battle of the Yellow Sea on August 10, 1904. Note the unmistakable tumblehome hull and extensive damage to her two funnels. Photo bought by Ellis Wolff in Tsingtau on October 26, 1905.²⁴¹



mand bridge of the battleship the *Tsesarevitch*.²⁴⁰ On October 15, 1904, Tsar Nicholas II sent ships from his Baltic fleet to reinforce the struggling Pacific fleet, intending to outnumber and outgun the Japanese Navy.

He created the Second Pacific Squadron and sent it on the extraordinarily long and taxing voyage of 29.000 km from the Baltic to the Far East. During the first week of the voyage, Russian ships mistook British trawlers in the North Sea for Japanese warships and engaged them, killing three British fishermen and wounding several others. The awful Russo-British political relations prolonged the journey of the majority of the Russian ships, where instead of going through the British-controlled Suez Canal, they had to steam south around Africa.²⁴² Meanwhile at Port Arthur, the Japanese ships were slowly sinking or incapacitating the remaining Russian ships during the fall of 1904 before the city finally surrendered on the January 2, 1905.²⁴³ The Second Pacific Squadron finally arrived to link up with the remaining Russian ships in the Far East in May 1905, more than 7 months after departing from the Baltic. The exhausted Russians ships now steamed for Vladivostok through the Tsushima Strait between Korea and Japan, but unfortunately for them, Admiral Togo intercepted them on May 27, 1905, which led to the final defeat of Russian naval power in the Russo-Japanese War. The Japanese fleet had the technological advantage – not least with the effective rangefinder – rapid firing guns armed with high explosive shells and a combat proven navy.²⁴⁴ A Russian staff officer saw how the Japanese shells ignited

240 Tyler, Sydney: *The Japan-Russia war: an illustrated history of the war in the Far East, the greatest conflict of modern times*, P.W. Ziegler: Philadelphia, 1905, pp. 377.

241 Wolff, *Military A*, pic 121

242 Ibid, pp. 347-354, 362-374

243 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 91-2, pp. 137-138

244 Corbett, Julian S.: *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905*, Vol. II, Naval Institute Press, Annapolis, Maryland & Naval War College Press: Newport, Rhode Island,

everything flammable and compared the Battle of the Yellow Sea, where he was previously present, to “child’s play” in comparison to this bombardment: “*Such havoc could never be caused by the simple impact of a shell, still less by the splinters. It could only be caused by the force of the explosion [...] No! it was different from the 10th of August.*”²⁴⁵ When the Battle of Tsushima was over, the Russian Second Pacific Squadron had lost 35 warships and more than 6000 men, while the Japanese fleet had only suffered minor losses.²⁴⁶ Russia realized that any further naval operations would be futile, and the political and strategic situation allowed Japan to negotiate a peace in their favour.²⁴⁷

The elements connected to the naval engagements were examined in depth by the Danish naval attaché Lieutenant Wilhelm Tvermoes. He examined the applied naval doctrines, such as formations and efficient ranges between fleets in combat, but his main field of interest revolved around the damage effect of various types of Japanese shells and additional types of weaponry used during the course of the war. Besides traditional weapons, such as naval artillery, newly developed weapons that would hit below the surface were of particular interest to the foreign observers. The torpedo had seen simultaneous development in Germany and England during the latter part of the 19th century, by the odd coincidence of names by respectively Robert Whitehead and Louis Schwarzkopf. Still largely unproven in major naval engagements at the beginning of the Russo-Japanese War, many observed their effects with interest. Tvermoes claimed that the importance of torpedoes was overestimated with their serious lack of accuracy and damage effect, even against stationary targets, not once causing the sinking of a larger vessel.²⁴⁸ In the first torpedo attack on Port Arthur on February 9, 1904, despite the advantage of the element of surprise, the Japanese only managed 3 torpedo hits, sinking no ships.²⁴⁹ A Japanese naval officer, who commanded a torpedo boat at Port Arthur on February 9, attributed the failure of the torpedoes to malfunctioning net-cutters and Russian torpedo nets: “*I told [Admiral Togo] that if the net-cutters had worked, there was no doubt that the three Russian ships would have been sunk, as I had seen four torpedoes hung up in the net of one*

1914/1994, pp. 246, 257; Forczyk, Robert: *Russian Battleship VS Japanese Battleship – Yellow Sea 1904-1905*, Osprey Publishing: Oxford, 2009, pp. 57. The 1903 Barr & Stroud FA3 rangefinder could superimpose two images of the target onto each other and show the range on a scale – a much quicker process than the Russian counterpart.

245 Corbett, Julian S.: *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905*, Vol. II, pp. 249.

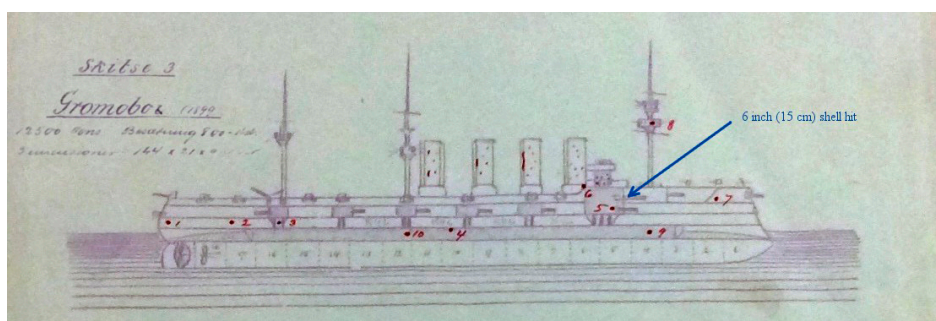
246 Forczyk, Robert: *Russian Battleship VS Japanese Battleship*, pp. 56-71; Steinberg, John: “The operational overview”, pp. 127

247 Cassel & Co.: *Cassel’s history of the Russo-Japanese War*, Vol. 5, Cassel & Co. Ltd.: London, 1905, pp. 166-168.

248 National Archive: *Militære rejserapporter 1746-1966*, no. 0028 (309), Danish Defense Ministry, Tvermoes XXIX 290. The normal range between fleets in combat was approximately 6-8 km.

249 Corbett, Julian S.: *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905*, Vol. I, pp. 99.

single ship, the *Czarevitch*.²⁵⁰ Daniel Bruun noted a similar effect on the surviving Russian ships after the Battle of the Yellow Sea: "... [the] escaped ships were of course badly damaged, but the Japanese torpedoes had not done nearly the damage as would be expected. None of the ships had serious damage below the waterline in contrast to their superstructures that been completely devastated."²⁵¹ He came to a similar conclusion from a witness to the Port Arthur siege where 40 Japanese torpedo boats continuously attacked without results, "... which proves just how bad the effect of the torpedo is against warships."²⁵² In contrast, Tvermoes noted that both Russia and Japan lost several ships to mines, but that a single mine, as with torpedoes, normally would not destroy a large vessel.



(Above) Drawing of the Russian armoured cruiser the *Gromoboi* from Tvermoes' notes, with red ink marking shell hits and shrapnel damage. The numbered hits and their effects are described in Tvermoes' reports. The blue arrow points out hit no. 5, a particularly devastating 6-inch shell hit (pictured next page).²⁵³

250 Tikowara, Hesibo and Robert Francis Sidney Grant (transl.): *Before Port Arthur in a destroyer, the personal diary of a Japanese naval officer*, E. P. Dutton & Co.: London, 1907, pp. 42

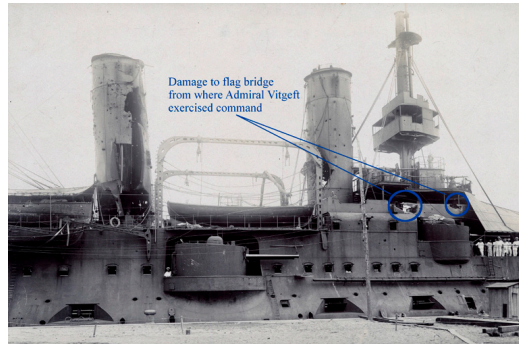
251 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 141.

252 Ibid, pp. 139. "Here [the Russian fleet] was attacked by 40 Japanese torpedo boats, but although they came forth to attack 10 times, not a single Russian ship was seriously damaged [...] In the morning, around 25 torpedoes were found on the beach."

253 National Archive: *Militære rejserapporter 1746-1966*, no. 0028 (309), Danish Defense Ministry, Tvermoes XXIX 290.



(Left) Photograph from inside the gun turret on the *Gromoboi*, showing the destruction wrought by the 6-inch (15 cm) shell hit designated no. 5 in Tvermoes' report. The shell detonated inside the turret, where the gun was in the process of being loaded, burning the artillery officer and loader alive and killing the entire gun crew.²⁵⁴ Photo bought by Wolff in Vladivostok September 18, 1905.²⁵⁵



(Right) Midship view of the Russian battleship the *Tsesarevitch* in the harbour of Tsingtau after the Battle of the Yellow Sea. The damage to her funnels is comparable to that on the *Gromoboi*, albeit more extensive, with the aft funnel (left on picture) torn to shreds. To the right is the flag bridge from where Admiral Vitgeft exercised command of his squadron. The blue circles mark the damage from the two 12-inch high explosive shells that hit the bridge and killed him, likely turning the tide of the Battle of the Yellow Sea. Photo bought by Wolff in Tsingtau on October 26, 1905.²⁵⁶

They would need to trigger explosions within the ship to destroy a large warship.²⁵⁷ The most notable example was the destruction of Admiral Makarov's flagship the *Petropavlosk*, which sank in 2 minutes after striking a mine.²⁵⁸ Torpedoes and sea mines, though often ineffective and unreliable on their own, saw extensive use. Minefields outside of harbours wrecked battleships of both navies, and the potential danger of torpedoes had a larger influence on navy doctrines than the actual damage they did.

²⁵⁴ Ibid.

²⁵⁵ Wolff, *Military A*, pic 125.

²⁵⁶ Ibid, pic 121.

²⁵⁷ National Archive: *Militære rejserapporter 1746-1966*, no. 0028 (309), Danish Defense Ministry, Tvermoes XXIX 290

²⁵⁸ Corbett, Julian S.: *Maritime Operations in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905*, Vol. I, pp. 182-184.

The following sections contains images
of very graphic content which some
readers might find disturbing

4.4 The Executions

4.4.1 “The Hanging of a Chinese Spy”



Bought in Harbin, August 1905.²⁵⁹

*“In the course of history, there have been few wars in which espionage was so widely practiced as during the Manchurian campaign.”*²⁶⁰

General A. Haldane, British attaché in the Japanese army,
July 1904-September 1905, later Head of British Military Intelligence.



(Left) Photo found online showing the exact same situation as Wolff’s pictures.²⁶¹ The series is an excellent example of widely circulated photos from the war. Note the similarity of the placement of wooden boards and the table.



(Right) “Death by slow hanging”. An example of how the Chinese took hanging to a different level. Photo bought by Wolff in Canton, November 3, 1905.²⁶²

259 Wolff, *Military B*, pictures 243, 245.

260 Wolff, David: “Intelligence intermediaries: The competition for Chinese spies”, In: Steinberg, John et. al.: *The Russo-Japanese War in Global Perspective* (2005), pp. 305.

261 <https://picturehistory.blogspot.dk/2009/09/russian-japanese-war-1904-rise-of-japan.html> (acc. 17.09.2018).

262 Wolff, *Travel II*, pic. 349.

Much like today, an effective intelligence network could prove the difference between a successful or disastrous military engagement. After the Sino-Japanese War of 1894-95, Japan had succeeded in creating a vast intelligence network in the Russian Far East, at Russian embassies in Europe and likely even into the planning section of the Russian Army Main Staff.²⁶³ The Russians were aware of this to some degree, but they did not consider it important enough to counteract it before the war broke out in February 1904.²⁶⁴ The physical similarity (at least to a Westerner) of the Japanese and the locals presented the Japanese military with the opportunity of infiltration, with staff officers as acting spies who could gain confidential information or aid in the recruitment or direction of insurgents, as, for example, the previously mentioned Honghuzi gangs. These spies would actively report troop movements, organizational structures and – in certain cases – they would even act as a kind of forward artillery observers by the simple technique of using flags to direct fire.²⁶⁵ British Lt. General Ian Hamilton, attached to the Japanese high command, mentioned the “...innumerable Chinese spies” and their importance in terms of operational planning.²⁶⁶ Daniel Bruun noted that it was “an everyday event” that spies were brought in for espionage related actions and that the locals “... from time to time would kill or wound Russian soldiers”.²⁶⁷ Chinese spies in Russian employment were likewise widespread, especially after the Battle of Mukden when a very efficient intelligence network was established.²⁶⁸ Russians recruited amongst the local populations on various intelligence gathering assignments, paying rubles for valuable information (10 to 200 rubles depending on their urgency) and rewards for capturing Japanese soldiers (100 rubles for a regular soldier, 300 for an officer).²⁶⁹ Japanese army officer Tadayoshi Sakurai remembered that: “... the Chinese would do almost anything for money. There were many who had been bribed by the Russians to become spies. They caused us a great deal of damage in spite of every possible precaution.”²⁷⁰

As a result, executions of suspected spies were widespread on both sides in the Russo-Japanese War, and most observers witnessed quite a few executions.²⁷¹ The punishment for being caught spying was generally death by hanging, which – at least for the Chinese according to their tradition – was preferably to a form of

263 Menning, Bruce W.: *Bayonets before Bullets – The Imperial Russian Army, 1861-1914*, pp. 155.

264 Wolff, David: “Intelligence intermediaries: The competition for Chinese spies”, pp. 310, 325-26, 329-30.

265 Schuyler, *Part I*, 159-60.

266 Hamilton, Ian: *A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book during the Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 341.

267 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 85.

268 Wolff, David: “Intelligence intermediaries: The competition for Chinese spies”, pp. 316.

269 Sergeev, Evgenii: “Russian military intelligence in the war with Japan, 1904-05”, in Steinberg, John et. al.: *The Russo-Japanese War In Global Perspective* (2005), pp. 296.

270 Sakurai, Tadayoshi, Masujiro Honda, (transl.): *Human Bullets: A soldier's story of Port Arthur*, pp. 75.

271 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 124.

execution that did not leave the body intact for the afterlife, such decapitation or *Lingchi* (described in the next section).²⁷²

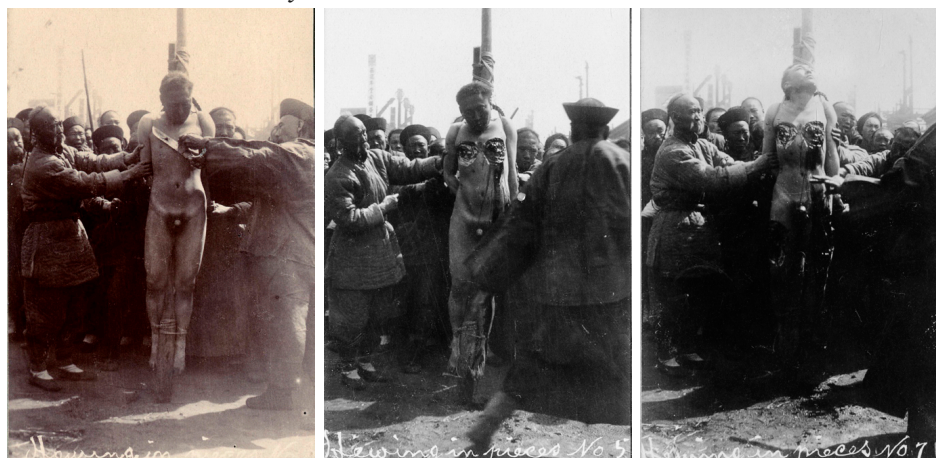


(Left) The Danish journal *Illustreret Familie-Journal* describes the final minutes of two captured Japanese officers who were convicted of espionage. The execution took place outside Harbin and was attended by a British journalist who provided the story for the journal. The picture caption states that the two officers, a colonel and a captain, were attempting to destroy a railway bridge and initially sentenced to hanging. However, this was reverted to shooting by General Kuropatkin because they were officers. They met their fate heroically, refusing to have their hands bound and the colonel allegedly donated 1000 rubles to the Russian Red Cross as a final act.²⁷³

272 Brook, Timothy. Jérôme Bourgon, Gregory Blue: *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, pp. 11-13; Bourgon, Jérôme. Christian Henriot and Wen-hsin Yeh: *Visualizing China, 1845-1965: Moving and Still Images in Historical Narratives*, Brill: Leiden, November 2012. pp. 56-59.

273 *Illustreret Familie-Journal: Fra Krigsskuepladsen*, no. 16, June 14, 1904.

4.4.2 “Dismemberment of a Criminal”



Photos bought in Peking (today Beijing) by Wolff, 1905.²⁷⁴

As stated, executions were very common during the Russo-Japanese War, and most reporters or military attachés address the subject. Maurice Baring noted that: “[The Chinese] have a rule, that for every crime which is brought to the notice of the law a criminal must perish, or someone must perish”.²⁷⁵ The Danish journalist Franz von Jessen mentioned the clichéd reporting of Westerners waiting for permissions to go to the frontlines, who would write about the “... peculiarities of Mukden, the Manchurian Imperial graves and the decapitations of roughly a dozen Chinese criminals a week...”.²⁷⁶ The British Reuters representative, Lord Brooke, was even invited to a judicial process, but left as the torture process became too grim: “...I have sought to palliate the inflicting of torture, but it is none the less revolting. The Chinese themselves appear indifferent to all this suffering, nay, the very prisoners are phlegmatic.”²⁷⁷ For the Westerners observing the public display of capital punishments and their subsequent reporting, this likely added fuel to the “Yellow Peril” rhetoric in their respective countries. The “Yellow Peril” or “Yellow Menace”, a term finding its everyday use in Western societies from the late 19th century, was a multifaceted array of racially bounded fears according to which Europe and North America was under threat from people from East Asia.²⁷⁸ The previous 10 years, prior to the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese conflict, had seen two brutal wars, the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-5) and the Boxer Rebellion (1899-1901), which – as noted in chapter 3.2.2 – had shown Western reporters

274 Wolff, *Travel II*, pic. 272, 274, 276.

275 Baring, Maurice: *With the Russians in Manchuria*, pp. 42.

276 Jessen, Franz von: *Mennesker jeg mødte*, pp. 201.

277 Brooke, Leopold G.F.M.G.: *An eye-witness in Manchuria*, pp. 26.

278 Klein, Thoralf: *The “Yellow Peril”*, in *Europäische Geschichte Online*, Leibniz-Institut für Europäische Geschichte Mainz, pp. 1-2.

the ferocious nature of war in Asia. A distinctive public voice in the “Yellow Peril” rhetoric, and arguably one of the most renowned American writers at the beginning of the 20th century, Jack London, worked as a war correspondent for the *San Francisco Examiner* during the Russo-Japanese War. Even though several racial prejudices appear in his writings from the war, these were a far cry from the more common satirical depictions of East Asians and focused more on the vast potential of a united East Asia, as seen in the essay “Yellow Peril” written in Manchuria in June 1904: “The menace to the Western world lies, not in the little brown man [ed.: the Japanese], but in the four hundred millions of yellow men [ed.: the Chinese] should the little brown man undertake their management.”²⁷⁹ According to historian Heinz Gollwitzer the effects of the “Yellow Peril” rhetoric saw its greatest dimensions and prevalence in the years 1895-1907.²⁸⁰ In those years, it is likely that the content of the horrific pictures was easier for Westerners to comprehend, in the same way as graphic pictures of Japanese war casualties during World War II were widely published in American mainstream medias.²⁸¹



The painting *Völker Europas, wahrt eure heiligsten Güter* (“Peoples of Europe, protect your most sacred values”) was used by the German Emperor Wilhelm II in his visualization of the “East Asian hordes” that threatened European Christian ideals. He even donated the paintings to troops prior to their deployment in the Boxer Rebellion to underline the ideals.²⁸²

279 Ibid, pp. 4, 7. London, Jack: *Revolution, and Other Essays*. New York: Mills and Boon, 1910, pp. 327.

280 Klein, Thoralf: *The “Yellow Peril”*, pp. 11.

281 LIFE Magazine (1944), “Picture of the week”, *LIFE Magazine*, May 22, 1944, pp. 35. A notable example is that of a young woman appearing in LIFE Magazine’s “Picture of the week”, gazing at the skull of a Japanese soldier which her US Marine boyfriend had sent her from the Pacific.

282 Klein, Thoralf: *The “Yellow Peril”*, pp. 4, 7.

The pictures of Fu Zhuli are 3 of a total of 7 pictures and shows the process of a man being led to a wooden pole, strapped tight and slowly dismembered. The unfortunate victim is the Chinese servant Fu Zhuli, and the date is April 9 or 10, 1905. Fu Zhuli allegedly killed his master – a Mongol prince – after the prince seduced his wife, and he was the last official victim of the *Lingchi* executions in Qing China as the practice was banned soon after.²⁸³ Lingchi – more commonly known in the West as “*Death By a Thousand Cuts*” – was reserved for the very worst criminals as their execution was exceptionally cruel. The photos circulated the markets in many variations (e.g. as postcards).²⁸⁴ Only 3 pictorial series of the Lingchi executions have surfaced so far.²⁸⁵ These are the only ones of the 3 series, which depict the execution method, as it was forbidden to take pictures during executions.²⁸⁶ The victims of Lingchi were often doped on opium before the procedure, which is the likely cause of the rather vacant and disinterested look in the eyes of Fu Zhuli.²⁸⁷

Wolff most likely purchased the photos in Beijing in 1905 around October or early November.²⁸⁸ Though probably not intended as postcards, the copies are on photographic paper, most likely processed in baryta layer. Of the 7 photos present, several can be found on the internet today, albeit mostly in lesser quality.

283 Brook, Timothy, Jérôme Bourgon and Gregory Blue: *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, pp. 5.

284 Bourgon, Jérôme. Henriot, Christian. Wen-hsin Yeh: *Visualizing China, 1845-1965: Moving and Still Images in Historical Narratives*, pp. 44.

285 Brook, Timothy, Jérôme Bourgon and Gregory Blue: *Death by a Thousand Cuts*, pp. 31.

286 Ibid, pp. 6.

287 Bourgon, Jérôme. Henriot, Christian. Wen-hsin Yeh: *Visualizing China, 1845-1965: Moving and Still Images in Historical Narratives*, pp. 82.

288 Wolff is in Beijing at that time.



“Pottery workshop and execution ground”, bought by Wolff in Canton, November 3, 1905.²⁸⁹

Straying far from Christian ideals, with proper burials and respect for the dead, it is not hard to imagine the effect a picture such as this had on Westerners at home. Vice versa, Daniel Bruun noted how the Chinese had little understanding of the humane way in which

the Russians treated prisoners, since they were used to a very harsh way of handling prisoners, namely with a death sentence.²⁹⁰



“Decapitation”, bought by Wolff in Beijing around mid-October 1905.²⁹¹

The short title, without further explanation, is explanatory in its nature. People are seen walking casually around, even roaming the pockets of the headless bodies, while dogs sniff at the heads of the executed.

5.0 Discussion

For the Western war correspondents returning to their homelands, the job was more or less finished. Their job had been to produce material for their employers to feed the population news from the battlefields and, as fighting commenced,

289 Wolff, *Travel II*, pic. 350.

290 Bruun, Daniel: *Med Russerne i Mantschuriet*, pp. 85.

291 Wolff, *Travel II*, pic. 277.

most of them moved on to other assignments. Several of the correspondents published journals or notes about their exploits shortly after the war. For the returning military attachés, the work had only just begun. Could – or should – the lessons learned from the Russo-Japanese War be doctrinally incorporated into their current military structure? There was a general agreement amongst the returning officers that warfare had seen fundamental changes. The significance of superior firepower in defensive and offensive tactical operations was likely the main point of interest, especially regarding indirect methods of delivering devastating ordnance. The modern artillery pieces with sufficiently trained crews had indeed proved very effective and, for example, Major J.M. Home began his official debriefing by stating that the “... importance of artillery cannot be too strongly insisted upon, for, other things being equal, the side which has the best artillery will always win.”²⁹² In light of automatized direct fire from machine guns and suppression of forces by indirect fire from artillery, 19th-century land doctrines began to show their weaknesses. Massed infantry assaults, although in many cases still leading to tactical victories, produced hitherto unseen casualty rates and the once vital cavalry units saw themselves struggling to find their place on the battlefield. Regarding the latter, Sir Ian Hamilton remarked: “...even the warmest advocate of shock tactics and swords must admit... that there was no place or opportunity where the horse could possibly have been of any value except to bring a rifleman rapidly up to the right spot”.²⁹³

As seen in the Great War a decade later, these experiences should have effected a change in modern warfare. All the battlefield elements were present in the Russo-Japanese War: machine guns, quick firing artillery, wireless communications, barbed wire, mines, chemical weapons, searchlights, aerial artillery observers (from balloons) and even motorized transport capacity in its early stages. The idea of modernized weaponry in terms of the existing nature of the battlefield was debated before the war, but the seriousness of the technology was largely overlooked by a somewhat stubborn persistence that the high combat morale was still superior to military might. In his book, “*Is war now impossible*” from 1898, Ivan Stanislavovich Bloch (more commonly known as Jan Gotlib Bloch) cited a number of factors of how future wars essentially will become an economic impossibility, create massive civil unrest and produce hitherto unseen human carnage. With statistical analyses of various directly and indirectly firing weapons, he provided a grim image for the troops on the battlefield: “*The times are passed when officers rushing on in advance led their men in a bold charge against the enemy, or when squadrons seeing an ill-defended battery galloped up to it, sabered the gunners, and spiked the guns or flung them into ditches... War has taken a character more me-*

292 Home, Major J.M and Colonel W.H.H.Waters: *The Russo-Japanese War: Reports from British Officers attached to the Russian Forces in the Field*, London: General Staff War Office, July 1907, pp. 209.

293 Hamilton, Ian: *A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book during the Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 131.

*chanical than knightly.*²⁹⁴ As the fighting in the Russo-Japanese War commenced, his general predictions did not come out short. The warfare showed that:

1. In the defense, infantry with bolt-action rifles, protected in trenches and by barbed wire, supported by rapid-firing machine guns and concealed artillery would dominate the battle against an attacking – yet high-spirited – force.
2. On the attack, the same methods of suppressing the defender with coordinated artillery and continuous rifle- and machine gun fire would allow the attacker tactical maneuverability and the neutralization of the enemy.

The reports were elaborate and thorough, but for the observers, the battlefield experience often had a rather subjective imprint on their after action reports. They experienced the carnage of war and often found themselves in the direct line of fire from “the enemy”. They saw the bravery and suffering of the soldiers in their parent army and were very much part of the community. Their often subjective standpoints were likely more fitting for the correspondents’ exhilarating stories published in the newspapers or magazines than in an analytic report from a military observer. The reports would often glorify their parent army and its tactics, especially in regard to the Japanese victories, which made for several erroneous conclusions in regard of successful warfare, both on the tactical and strategic level. Several prominent figures of the European General Staffs saw the Japanese victories as a confirmation that fire, maneuver and, most of all, brave determination were key on the battlefield. For example, Hamilton advocated for offensive determination in his book *Compulsory Service* from 1910:

“Blindness to moral forces and worship of material forces inevitably lead in war to destruction. All that exaggerated reliance placed upon chassepots and mitrailleuses by France before ‘70; all that trash written by M. Bloch before 1904 about zones of fire across which no living being could pass,²⁹⁵ heralded nothing but disaster. War is essentially the triumph, not of a chassepot over a needle-gun, not of a line of men entrenched behind wire entanglements and fire-swept zones over men exposing themselves in the open, but of one will over another weaker will.”²⁹⁶

Although the Japanese had many victories, these were often won with a disregard for human resources and the Japanese armed forces burned through their man-

294 Bloch, Ivan Stanislavovich. W.T. Stead, (Ed.) and R.C. Long, (transl.): *Is War Now Impossible? Being an Abridgement of “The War of the Future in its Technical, Economic and Political Relations”*, London: Grant Richards, 1899, pp. 352.

295 Ibid, pp. 323-5. Hamilton is referring to Bloch’s argument of the killing range of the rifle (in this case, a Mannlicher M1895 bolt-action rifle), which statistically had become 20 times more efficient than previously.

296 Hamilton, Ian: *Compulsory Service. A Study of the Question in the light of Experience*. Hazell, Watson and Viney Ltd.: London, 1910, pp. 121-2.

power reserves at an alarming rate. A fact that was evident during General Nogi Maresuke's siege of Port Arthur. His Third Army was devastated with the massive "human bullet" attacks against the fortress, but it was eventually the capture of Hill 203 where massive artillery could be placed, and not massed assaults, that made the difference. The idea of short wars fought with an offensive and determined spirit to produce the best results, largely advocated by influential military authorities, such as Hamilton, led to several questionable doctrinal revisions, where offensive tactics combined with self-sacrificing patriotic determination stood superior to the capabilities of material might.²⁹⁷ Many observers would often have their reports twisted in order to fit a certain country's offensive doctrine and their contribution acquired more of a political than a practical relevance. When the reports noted the fact that offensive high-spirited maneuvers were perhaps less significant than superior firepower, it was often declared that elements of the Russo-Japanese War was not always applicable to Europe.²⁹⁸ Historically, it might seem unfair to single out Ian Hamilton, but he does personify the problem with the lack of consideration for the observer reports, which did not disregard the extreme effectiveness of modern weaponry. Considering his statement quoted above, it stands as an unfortunate prediction of the events that were to follow shortly after, in the killing fields of France. His harsh words towards Bloch can be seen as the trained military professional's reluctance to heed advice from a person, whose opinion is disregarded in terms of field expertise. Moreover, of course, he was not the only one. Orthodox and largely traditional views on the nature of warfare hampered effective doctrinal development all over the general staffs of the Great Powers. Sir General Aylmer Haldane, attached to the Japanese field armies, bitterly wrote about the unwillingness from the military high command to adopt his and his fellow observers' suggestions.²⁹⁹ Other nations largely ignored the contents of the observer reports, refusing to implement the observed and effective elements into existing doctrinal structures.³⁰⁰

6.0 Conclusion

So, in the case of Ellis Wolff and his purpose in Manchuria, did he follow the general mindset of a military observer? His pictorial collection shows his entire tour from the train ride through the vast Russian plains to Manchuria, a few months with the Russian army, which – at this point – was not engaged in combat, to the long journey home by boat. Furthermore, he acquired a very thorough overall collection of pictures from the entire war that showed most aspects of it, method-

297 Jones, David: "Military Observers, Eurocentrism, and World War Zero", pp. 170-2.

298 Bailey, Jonathan: "Military history and the pathology of lessons learned: The Russo-Japanese War, a case study", pp. 187.

299 Ibid, pp. 184.

300 Sisemore, James D.: *The Russo-Japanese War, lessons not learned*, M.S. Southwest Missouri State University: Springfield, 2003, pp. 109-10.

ically of a rather high standard (dates, locations, photographers). Based on still existing letters and photos which show him in all kinds of social situations with military attachés from all over the world, he was very well aware of the traditional aspect of the diplomatic role of the *attaché militaire*. Wolff does not appear idle in his few months in the Far East, as he, besides travelling and interacting with the large multicultural gathering of officers, produced several hundred military reports which described the general state of (mainly) the Russian Army, its organization, logistical structure, battle-facts (casualty lists, battalion records etc.) and similar elements. The reports are generally translated Russian intelligence reports with his own inspirations and afterthoughts.

Ellis Wolff would have had a rather comprehensive militarily relevant product on his return. Although he himself was not necessarily dodging bullets and diving for cover in a faraway battlefield in Manchuria, he held close relations to people who actually were present during combat. His diplomatic relations with his military travelling companions even kept adding material upon his return, as seen in his official correspondence with the other attachés. The immediate military effect of his report is unknown, but as his reportings do not suggest radical developments to existing doctrines, the overall product has more likely served the Danish state with a military intelligence purpose. The photos serve as a backdrop for many of his written arguments, e.g. the physical structure of a sanitary station or events from the frontline. Regarding the aspect of direct doctrinal development, the reports of Lieutenant Louis Tvermoes, who was present during the entire war and saw himself attached to the fleets and armies, would probably have provided a more relevant foundation.

Ellis Wolff's pictures and reports could very well be a combined summary-product of the entire Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05. Already a prominent analyst at the Royal Danish Military Academy as head teacher in the Art of War, Wolff would have had the necessary academic and military insight to spearhead this project. Even though his tour of duty in the Far East merits a mere footnote in the many written works on him, it has likely benefited his military career, which ended with his retirement as Commanding General on October 20, 1926.³⁰¹ So today, in 2021, roughly 116 years since Wolff's return to the European continent, his pictures can perhaps serve the same educational purpose for a broader target audience, rather than only as military intelligence for the Danish general staff.

301 Pontoppidan, Axel: *Den Kongelige Livgarde*, vol. I, Nordiske Landes Bogforlag: Copenhagen, 1941, pp. 343-5.

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Summary

The article, *The Russo-Japanese War – Perceptions of War through a Forgotten Pictorial Archive*, started out as a minor research project to present selected photos from a recently discovered pictorial archive belonging to the Danish General Ellis Wolff (1856-1938). As the photos were thoroughly examined and the information that could be extracted from the archive led to several interesting stories about military attachés and civilian reporters operating in the theatre of war in Manchuria 1904-05, the project was expanded to include more than just “fun-fact photos”. Through a series of historical analyses based on the photographs in Wolff’s archive and involving the various Western participants in the Russo-Japanese War, the war itself is examined. The war drew serious attention as it was the first time in history that two modernly equipped armies, both possessing rapid firing artillery, machine guns, wireless forms of communication etc., fought against each other in an all-out war. Although the focus in this article lies mainly on selected Danish people who in one way or another participated in the war, a variety of their international counterparts are also included. In the course of the war, many of these people would report for newspapers, others sought to gain valuable military information for possible doctrinal implementation and some people would do both. The multifaceted military intelligence gathering process and the widespread subsequent relinquishment of the obtained information in the Russo-Japanese War stand – in many ways – as a shining example of failed doctrinal implementation of efficient ways of warfare.