

THE BATTLE OF TSUSHIMA: The Russo-Japanese War

HISTORY AS GAME

To fully understand the following sidebars and the main article, it requires the reader to first look at the game *Tsushima*. Specifically, open it up to the roster sheets. This will give you a complete organization chart and understanding of the two combatants. Becoming familiar with the divisional and squadron order of battle will make the articles more understandable.

Next look at the individual ships. You may want to read the section of rules that covers the ship logs layouts (4.2 will help explain certain sections, as well as 3.4 in the rules). Now study each ship type present in the battle. A close study of the log sheets will explain aspects of each fleet. For example, many of the Japanese ships are of uniform construction, thus giving them an element of homogeneity, while ships in Russia's 2nd and 3rd battle divisions are an odd collection of older ships gathered up from the yards in the Baltic.

THE BATTLE OF TSUSHIMA

We do not like the Japanese. I know some Japanese that I like much; but taking them as a nation — no. Their navy is good — too good; but they would never fight Russia fairly. They would invite us to a dinner, and poison us, or something like that! Treacherous: you cannot trust them.

...Anonymous Russian opinion

Brutal savages.

...Anonymous Japanese opinion
of the Russians.

Both opinions as quoted in 1899 in F.T.
Jane's *The Imperial Russian Navy*.

By the 26th of May, 1905, Russia was about to play her last card in the naval war. The Japanese, under Admiral Togo, knew the Russians were out there and heading north, but were unsure as to where their exact position was.

The reality of this battle is that, barring an unforeseen surprise such as a "lucky" shot, the Russians had already been defeated before entering the battle. Togo and his fleet were rested, repaired, and trained for the showdown. The Russians were poorly trained, poorly led, and somewhat exhausted after the long voyage to the Far East. Under the circumstances, Admiral Rozhdestvenski should not have fought the action.

But orders and an inept Russian Admiralty and national government had sent the fleet on to its death. So with resignation, national honor was to claim yet another victim.

The Japanese commander knew that the Russians had only one base they could proceed to — Vladivostok. But there were several approaches to it. The Russian fleet could steam the direct route through the Sea of Japan via the Korean Straits, or, alternatively, the Russian fleet could steam through Tsugaru Straits between Honshu and Hokkaido, or La Perouse Strait between Hokkaido and Sakhalin to Vladivostok. Tsushima is the largest island that lies directly in the middle of the Korean Straits (sometimes called the Straits of Tsushima, too). Togo had to assume that the direct, and most dangerous, route would be the logical approach. Togo was in a position of interior lines, so that if the Russian fleet steamed up the Japanese coast to pass through one of the alternative straits Togo would know of this in time to shift his forces north and respond to that challenge.

Unknown to the Japanese, and unfortunately for the Russian's, the Russian fleet had no alternatives. A lack of coal forbade them using an alternative route. The fleet had to steam directly north on the shortest route to gain safe haven at Vladivostok. Admiral Rozhdestvenski decided to concentrate his fleet into one compact mass

and simply fight his way through. In this he can be faulted as he did not try to send auxiliary cruisers up the Japanese coast in an attempt to feint Togo out.

Togo established a line of four auxiliary cruisers as the tripwire, with several others covering the alternative passages. Behind it he placed his 3rd Cruiser Squadron reinforced by two other cruisers. The rest of the fleet was stationed in two ports, awaiting word of the enemy.

On the night of the 26th/27th the Russian fleet, steaming at nine knots, finally began to penetrate the Korean Straits. Initially Admiral Rozhdestvenski's fleet, without lights, pushed deeply into the straits and passed through the auxiliary cruiser line. Unfortunately for the Russians, a hospital ship of the fleet several miles to the rear of the main Russian fleet, fully lit up according to the rules of war, was sighted by the auxiliary cruiser, *Shinano Maru*. After proper identification, the *Shinano* radioed this information and, judging the course of the hospital ship, proceeded north to find the main Russian fleet.

The radio was still a very new invention, but the Japanese fleet made excellent use of it, allowing them to quickly alert their fleet and thus get the main fleet underway. By 5:00 a.m. Togo's main fleet had all hands on deck with engines belching clouds of black smoke in preparation for getting underway for the decisive daylight gunnery action. The Russians also had the radio but its main use was listening to the Japanese transmissions, so Admiral Rozhdestvenski knew quite well that his fleet had been sighted. The auxiliary ship *Ural* had a powerful radio system on board, but no attempt was made to jam the Japanese broadcasts.


The Japanese 3rd Division arrived on the scene about 5:30 a.m., sighting the same hospital ship, but it continued southward until 6:40 when a radio message from the old *Idzumi* (built in 1884, she had an original speed of 18 knots), shadowing the fleet since dawn, informed the 3rd Division that the Russians were 25 miles to the northeast. Admiral Dewa, commander of the 3rd Division, now hurried north at full speed and sighted the Russians at 10:30 a.m.

Meanwhile, the Russians had recalled the line of two scout cruisers and one auxiliary cruiser spread out in front of the fleet to protect the transports and roughly assumed the positions relative to each other as shown in the historical set up of *Tsushima*. At 6:45 a.m. the Russian main fleet had sighted their first Japanese ship when the weather cleared enough for them to sight to slow *Idzumi* about five miles away. No serious effort was made to drive this scout off and she continued to send regular radio messages for the next several hours to the main Japanese fleet.

When Admiral Dewa finally arrived on the scene, he closed the range to such an extent that the Russians opened fire on the 3rd Division. This occurred about 11:30 a.m. Dewa drew off and eventually pulled ahead of the Russian fleet, along with the other Japanese scouts, so that around noon there were no Japanese ships in sight.

Admiral Rozhdestvenski attempted at this time

one of the very few tactical moves made by the Russians that day. He attempted to deploy the fleet into a 'line abreast' from their 'line ahead' formation. From a line ahead, which would appear like this:



going to a formation like this:

X X X

The advantage to Admiral Rozhdestvenski would have been that he could have turned his fleet 90 degrees eitherway when the Japanese fleet appeared and could have crossed their T, if Togo had continued steaming straight on. Crossing the T is simply the ability of one fleet to have its battle line lie perpendicularly to the enemy fleet so that the enemy fleet can bring a minimum of guns to bear against the maximum broadside power of the other fleet.

Logically Togo would have simply turned one way or the other when he sighted the Russian line approaching, to avoid having his T crossed. But the immediate impact of the maneuver, at minimum, would have been a delay in the Japanese coming to grips with the Russian fleet in a gunnery duel. At maximum, the Japanese might have steamed on into the concentrated fire of the Russian fleet, and no one knows what the result might have been.

But the Russian fleet simply did not perform the maneuver properly, and only the 1st Division ended, in line ahead no less, away from the the rest of the Russian main battle line, to find itself as you will find it in the historical scenario of the game.

So, finally, at 1:19 p.m. the Japanese, in somewhat rough seas, saw through the haze the approaching Russian fleet.

THE FLEETS

The hours of tension which immediately preceded the last great act of the war afford an opportunity for a comparison of the forces ranged on either side.

... The British Official History

Both fleets had identical numbers in the battle line—12 ships each. But the comparison between the two ends here. First let us look at the first class battleships of either side. The four Japanese battleships, with the exception of the *Fuji*, were individually superior to the four Russian battleships in the 1st Division. In design there was little to choose between either of the frontline ships, on paper. But the reality of it was that these four Russian ships were overloaded and rode too deep in the water. This made them unstable if damaged at the waterline, and their belt armor was literally partially submerged instead of offering protection from shell fire.

But it was with the Russian IInd and IIIrd divi-

sions that the differences between the fleets came through. The Japanese had eight armored cruisers armed almost exclusively with four 8-inch guns and a secondary battery of 12 to 14 6-inch guns. The newest armor cruiser, built in Italy, the *Kasuga*, was the only exception, had two 8-inch guns and one 10-inch gun. None of these eight armored cruisers had been laid down earlier than 1896 and none was slower than 20 knots in speed.

The Russians, however, had ships in their two divisions that were fit for museum collections. The flagship of the IInd Division, the *Oslibia*, was superior in armament to any of the Japanese armor cruisers, being laid down in 1895 and weighing in at over 12,600 tons. But it was poorly armored and one of the largest, if not the largest, targets in either fleet having an immense superstructure. From here they went down.

The *Imperator Nikolai I* had a speed when built of only 15 knots. Her 12-inch guns were 30 calibers and, frankly, little better than modern 6-inch guns. So, while she fired a heavy shell, she fired it quite slowly and with little penetrating power. The *Admiral Nakhimov*, though rebuilt in 1899, was laid down in 1884. The three armored coast defense ships (a type of small scaled down coastal battleship favored by navies like the Swedes, Danes and Dutch in the late 19th century), the *Admiral's Ousakov*, *Seniavin*, and *Graf Apraksin*, were all under 5,000 tons and with a low freeboard, rough steamers in stormy seas. But even the *Graf Apraksin* is deceptive, as her 10-inch guns were not of the same type as carried on the *Oslibia*, in other words, inferior.

So to simply total up the number of guns and their caliber and then compare the two forces is a mistake. Next you have to look at the fact that the Japanese had spent the last few months repairing all battle damage to their ships, getting bottoms cleaned of barnacles to allow for best speed possible, and receiving further training. The ships also received a new High Explosive shell (HE) made with *Shimose* powder for the larger guns which would prove effective in the coming battle in starting fires on board the Russian ships. Plus the Japanese were all veterans of the past months of war, which the Russians were overwhelming not. The Japanese crews had been handling their ships under wartime conditions and then rested, while the Russians struggled to the Far East in an modern voyage of the damned. The Russians had hardly left the Baltic when they became involved in a international incident at Dogger Bank which almost brought Great Britain into the war: Admiral Rozhdestvenski's fleet fired on British fishing trawlers, thinking they were Japanese torpedo boats in the North Sea! Denied bases to stop at (except for their neutral allies the French), the Russians were greeted by terrible news from the front at each port of call. When finally arriving in the Far East, Admiral Rozhdestvenski was forced to accept the IIIrd Battle Division and some other miscellaneous light ships that he really did not want. They had been sent out from the Baltic, largely at the urging of Captain Klado and other influential voices at the Russian Admiralty, to "reinforce" Admiral Rozhdestvenski's fleet. Ironically, during the battle, these reinforcements would hold their own.

It will be shown that in gunnery the Russians were

not much inferior to the Japanese, but the Russians were to be totally outmaneuvered in the battle. Part of this would be due to the faster Japanese battle line being able to hang on the head of the Russian fleet. But part of it was also due to the Russians really having no tactics beyond simply staying close together and barging their way through. This would not be enough against the Japanese plan, put together by the Japanese Mahan, Commander Akiyama Saneyuki. Saneyuki had been with Togo throughout the war and even had served on board Admiral Sampson's flagship during the Spanish-American War.

Saneyuki developed a plan of attrition which would become a classic Japanese naval concept for battle. Dr. Mark Peattie states that,

drawing apparently on both modern naval tactics and the maritime concepts of medieval Japan (the Yashima ryu Kaizoku Koho or The Ancient Corsair Tactics of the Yashima School), Akiyama put together a seven-stage plan of attrition which employed daylight assault by the main fleet elements and night attacks by destroyers and torpedo boats. Battle orders for the first two stages were based on the assumption that the Russian fleet would be discovered and attacked by torpedo boats and destroyers south of the Tsushima Straits. The third stage called for a general fleet action and the middle stages for night attacks by torpedo craft. The final set of battle orders envisioned the remnants of the Russian fleet being driven toward Vladivostok where the harbor mouth had been sown with Japanese contact mines (in fact the armor cruiser Gromoboi had been mined on one on the 23rd of May)

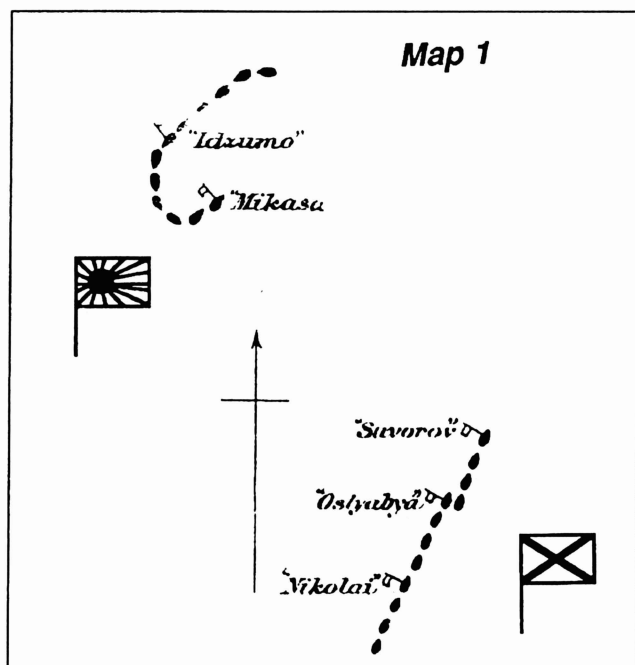
So it can be seen that the Japanese were ready to crush the Russian fleet. Nor must it be forgotten that Admiral Togo no longer had to worry about more Russian ships arriving on the scene. The only remaining fleet was the Russian Black Sea fleet and it was bottled up in the Black Sea; it would not be allowed to pass the Dardanelles. Togo had not been able to really throw his fleet at the Russian fleet at Port Arthur. Now he could and he wanted a glorious victory for the Japanese navy. He was to get it.

So while there may have been some thinking that it was an even battle if one looked simply at the data on each fleet, the reality was that the Russians were defeated before they arrived on the battlefield, barring a lucky turn of events.

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THE BATTLE

As the Japanese battle line bore down on the Russians, Togo decided to reverse the direction of his fleet. He could order his fleet to individually turn 180 degrees, or he could have them follow in line behind his flagship.



The former maneuver would place the *Mikasa* at the tail of the line and Rear Admiral Shimamura in the *Iwate* at the fore. The latter would leave Togo leading the line but would allow the Russians to fire at the turning point, which is basically a fixed point, with the Japanese unable to really return effective fire. Togo decided on the latter as he wanted to be able to lead the Japanese fleet, and as the Japanese fleet began the loop, the Russian fleet opened fire with the *Suvorov* firing at 1:48 p.m. at a range of about 7,400 yards.

Russian shooting was good at this time. Much of the fire was directed at the *Mikasa* and the armor cruisers. The *Mikasa* was repeatedly hit between first fire and the first crisis of the battle ending at 2:50 p.m., for a total of six 12-inch and nineteen 6-inch hits. But they did very little to the *Mikasa*. In fact, the only Japanese ship to be heavily hit at this time was the *Asama* which had an 8-inch gun knocked out and her steering affected (note the *Asama* on battle maps).

Not so for the Russian ships. Fire was concentrated on the *Suvorov* and *Oslibia* and the latter was the first to suffer a grievous blow. The rate of Japanese fire would increase as the range was found. At about 2:18 she was hit by a heavy shell at the waterline and serious flooding resulted, which was followed by a

second bad hit causing additional flooding in a coal bunker. A third and fourth shell hit shortly after that and as she lurched out of the battle line, down in the head, her fore turret now disabled, she was hit yet again near the first shell hit. Flooding became uncontrollable and she sank shortly after at about 3:10 p.m., level, fortunately for her crew, as the Russian destroyers saved 385 men out of a total crew of 899 men.

The *Suvorov* was frequently hit, and Admiral Rozhdestvenski and her captain were wounded at 2:35 p.m. She was temporarily out of control with her helm jammed shortly after this, but control was regained by steering by her engines. Her aft 12-inch turret was destroyed at this time as well, but, though covered in smoke, she fought on.

This stage of the action was fought at ranges of about 6,500 to 5,500 yards. The Russian were steaming at about 10 knots, while the Japanese fleet was

moving at about 15 knots. Due to the Japanese speed advantage and faulty Russian tactics, this meant that the IIIrd Russian Division saw little of this action.

The *Suvorov* was so damaged at this point that she hauled out of line and the *Aleksandr III* came next up to bat. *Aleksandr III* continued the Russian fleet northward, while the Japanese fleet maneuvered about their head, at one point temporarily masking the Japanese battleships from the enemy as the armor cruisers of Admiral Kamimura closed the *Aleksandr III*. She now received the con-

centrated attention of the six rear Japanese armor cruisers as Vice Admiral Kamimura closed to 3,000 yards on the head of the Russian line. Fires were now burning fiercely on the *Borodino*, the *Aleksandr III* and the *Sissoi Veliky*.

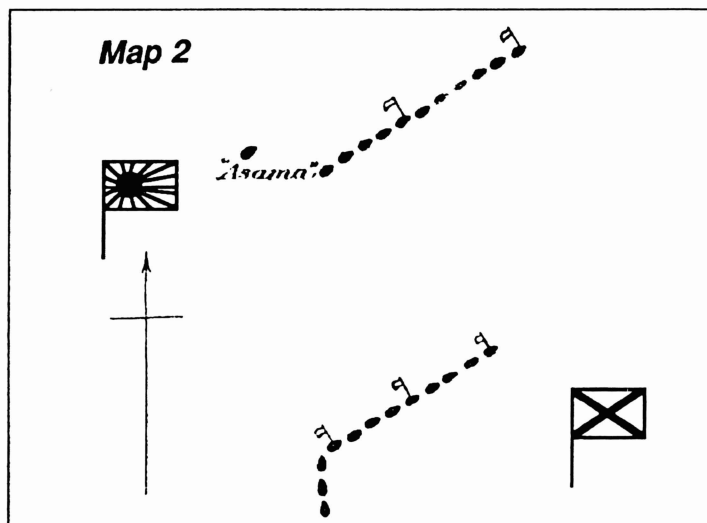
No torpedo attacks were made by the destroyers of either side, but the little *Chihaya* closed to 2700 yards and fired two 14-inch torpedoes at the *Orel*, both missing. Both the *Fuji* and *Asama* (yet again) were hit, the *Asama* quite badly by two 12-inch shells, while the *Fuji* lost a 12-inch gun.

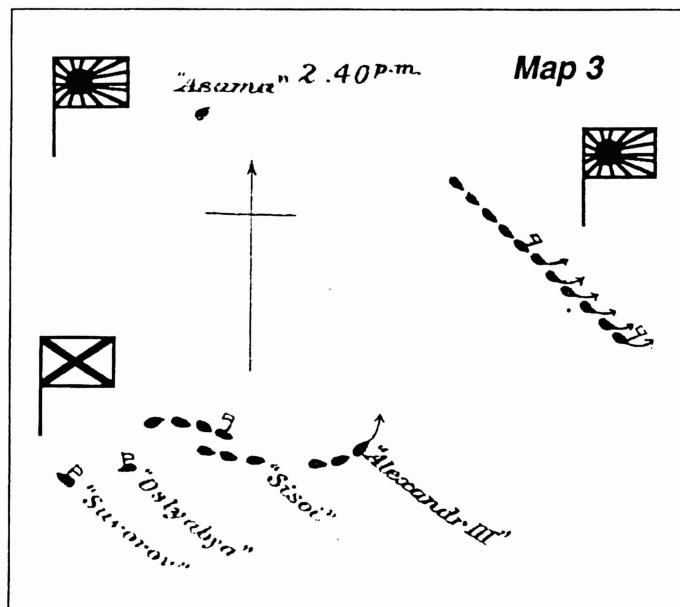
The next stage of the battle, considered to begin about 3:00 p.m., witnessed the *Oslibia* slipping beneath the waves and the Russians continuing to vainly push their way north. The *Aleksandr III* had received enough damage in this period to relinquish the lead to the *Borodino*, and the *Aleksandr III* would eventually sink from damage incurred. The *Suvorov*, no longer part of the battle line, with a badly wounded Admiral Rozhdestvenski on board, continued to limp on, sometimes being engaged by Japanese battleships at a range of 2500 yards! The Russian battle line now started with the *Borodino*, then the *Orel*, *Aleksandr III*, *Nikolai I*, *Graf Apraksin*, *Seniavin*, *Sissoi Veliky*, *Navarin*, *Nakhimov*, and ended with the *Ousakov*.

Virtually all the Japanese capital ships received hits at this stage, but little serious damage resulted. Admiral Misu on the *Nisshin* was wounded about this time by splinters in the conning tower. Admiral Togo enjoyed the battle from the open bridge and was not to be wounded.

THE CRUISER ACTION

Meanwhile, the 12 Japanese protected cruisers had been detailed to attack the Russian transports and cruisers. Admiral



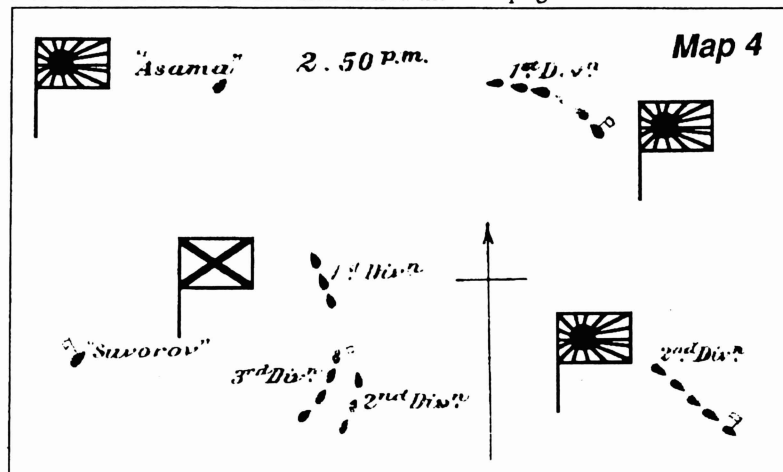


"Just before 2nd Division closes on Russian van"

Rozhdestvenski had ordered his light ships to the disengaged (starboard) side of the battle line. Admiral Enkvist commanded them and watched the early part of the main battle action while the Japanese cruisers slowly looped the rear of the Russian line and then chased the

THE FINAL DAYLIGHT ACTION

Togo's 1st and 2nd divisions had joined up again and the Russian fleet was momentarily lost in the haze of the afternoon.



Russian light ships. Finally the *Oleg*, *Aurora*, and *Vladimir Monomakh* engaged the 3rd and 4th cruiser divisions.

A confused action resulted in which several Russian transports were disabled. At one point the rear of the Russian battle line engaged the Japanese cruisers (at about 4:30 p.m.) at 4,500 to 9,000 yards range. This caused, in addition to severe damage received in the earlier cruiser action, the *Naniwa*, *Takachiho*, *Chitose* and *Kasagi* to withdraw from the action. Later, near sunset, the 4th, 5th, and 6th divisions, reinforced with the *Niitaka* and *Otawa*, pounded on the *Suvorov* but could not sink her. It should be noted that the 5th Division fired very little (a total of 10

heavy gun rounds) ammunition in the battle (though the *Matsushima* had a steering gear breakdown forcing her out of the battle). This may have been due in part to the division's slow speed and the difficulty of working the old style gun positions (barbettes as opposed to turrets) in heavy seas. The *Suvorov* would only finally be sunk in the night by torpedo boats of the 11th Torpedo Boat Flotilla.

only going to need the 1st Division in this final daylight action.

The Russian fleet, after this respite, was still game and in decent fighting order. The *Borodino* led, followed by the *Orel*, the *Nikolai I*, *Apraksin*, *Seniavin*, *Aleksandr III* (she had just rejoined the line after some repair of damage), *Sissoi Veliky*, *Navarin*, *Ousakov*, and *Nakhimov*. The cruisers and transports, with destroyers, were on the disengaged side. At 6:00 Togo's 1st Division was 6,900 yards away, and reopened fire.

Fire was concentrated on the *Borodino* and fell to 6,000 yards. The setting sun obscured the fall of shot for the Japanese, but finally, around 6:30, the *Borodino* was hit hard and blanketed in smoke, causing fire to be shifted to the *Orel*. The *Aleksandr III* was hit again and flew a distress flag as she dropped out of the line, in flames and listing heavily to the port. Suddenly, lurching, the *Aleksandr III* capsized at about 7:00 p.m. Four only were saved, a total of 836 going down with the ship.

The *Borodino* was shortly to follow. The sun set at about 7:00 p.m. and, even though range had opened to 8,000-9,000 yards the Japanese fire improved with the sun no longer dazzling their eyes. Two shells from the *Shikishima* hit the *Borodino* at about the same moment, badly hurting her after secondary battery and engulfing the ship in flames. Then, with the sun setting and Togo drawing off to allow the torpedo craft to take over the attack, the *Fiji* fired a final broadside at about 7:23 p.m. The 12-inch round penetrated the forward secondary turret and apparently ignited the magazine. Smoke poured forth from the holds and she slid beneath the waves, taking all but one crew member to their deaths.

Togo's 1st Division had been hit, but not very hard. A few guns were disabled and a few killed and wounded. The Japanese 2nd Division under Kamimura had caught back up the main action but contributed very little in this period. Now would come the next stage. Commander Akiyama Saneyuki's plan was to be implemented. The night of the torpedo boats was about to begin.

THE NIGHT ACTION

The Russians were their own worst enemies here, but it was in part due to the lack of experience at night actions. Those who left their search lights off suffered little, those who used their searchlights suffered. During World War I this lesson was learned and the British and the Germans used searchlights sparingly due to the experience of the Russians on this night. Like moths to lights, the torpedo craft were drawn to the lights to launch their attacks.

First let us clear up the fate of the *Suvorov*. Admiral Rozhdestvenski had been transferred to a destroyer in the early evening, but the *Suvorov* crew had no thought of surrender despite the fact that there were virtually no guns left and the darkening sky was reducing visibility. Four torpedo boats crept up and fired seven 14-inch torpedoes. Two, possibly three, hit causing the *Suvorov* to capsize, float for a bit bottom up, and finally go under at about 7:30 p.m.

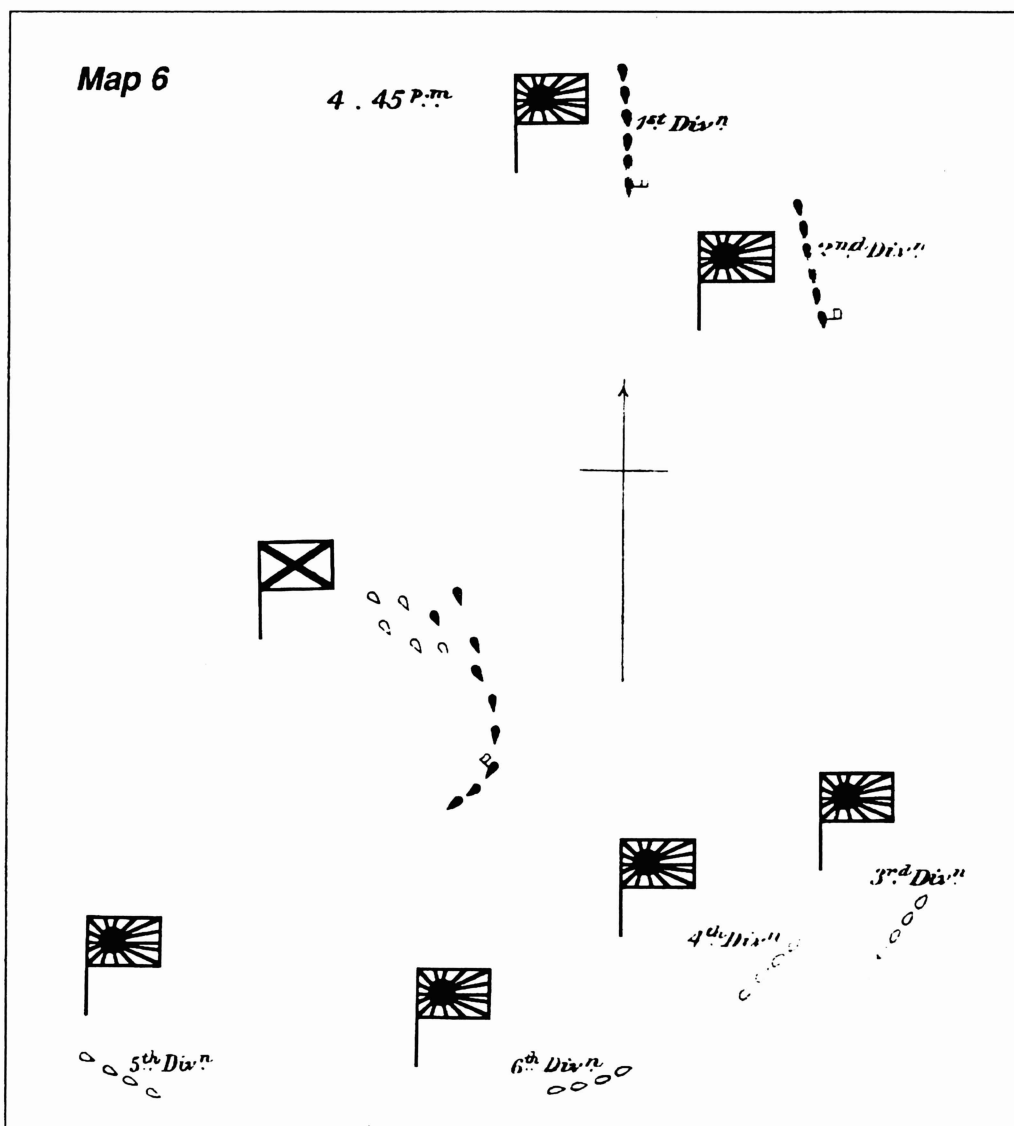
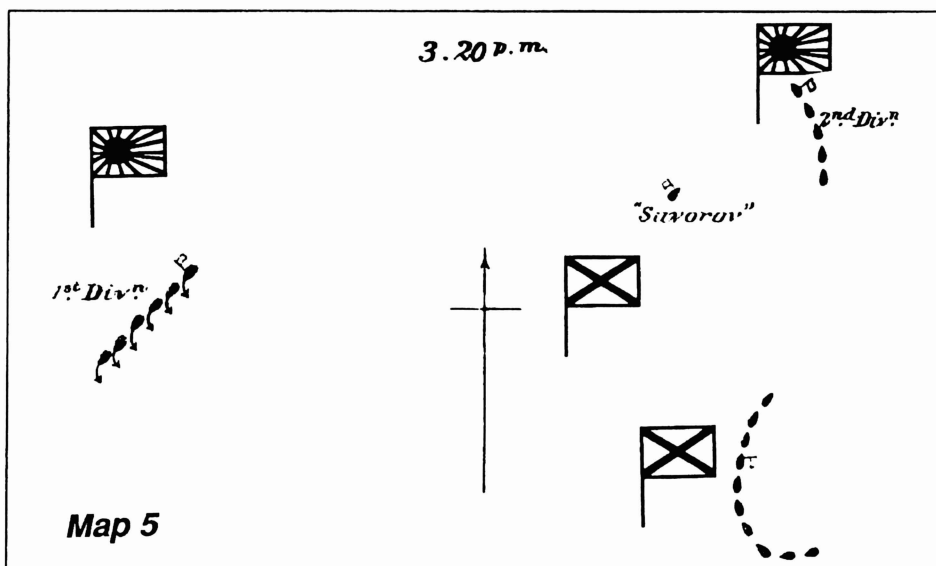
Fortunately for the Japanese, the weather moderated some so that it was not nearly as rough as it had been during the day, thus allowing the torpedo craft a better shot at inflicting hurt to the enemy. More than 35 boats would attack in the night. About 23 18-inch and 31 14-inch torpedoes would be fired. The *Admiral Nakhimov* and *Vladimir Monomakh* were both hit (both crews thinking the attacking ship was a Russian destroyer) and crept off to the island of Tsushima where they were both beached. The *Sissoi Veliky* was hit, and she too headed for Tsushima.

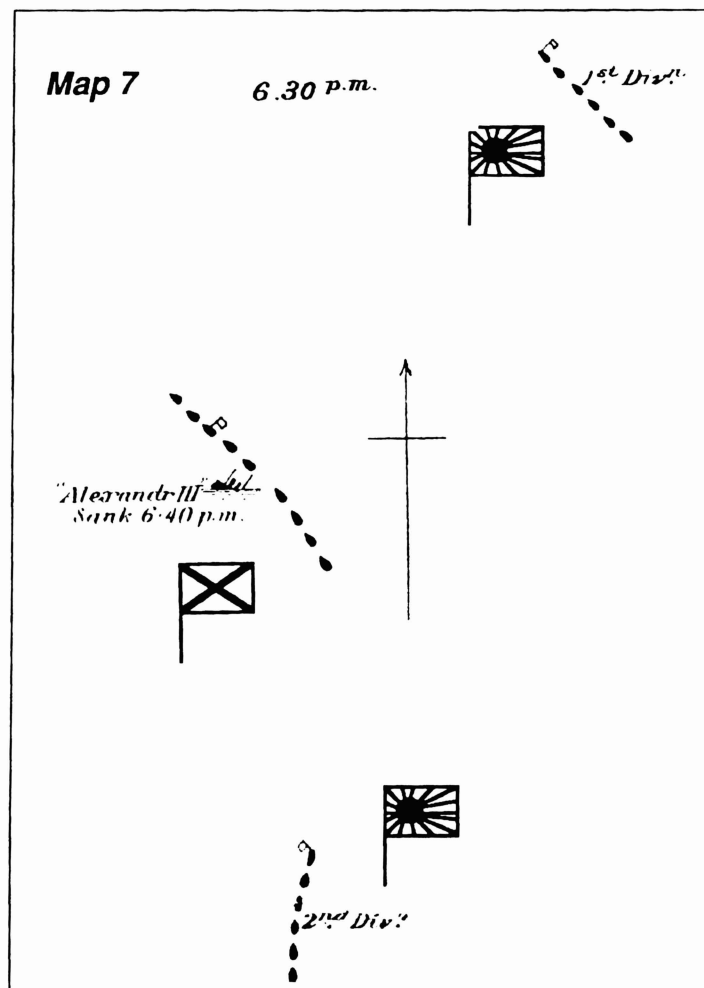
The damaged *Navarin*, low in the head, was hit while stopped, and while proceeding ahead met the Japanese 4th Flotilla. This flotilla also carried mines and dropped some in front of the *Navarin*, causing her to sink. Only three were saved out of a crew of 674.

At this point, dawn was approaching and the Japanese had suffered three torpedo boats sunk and some damage to the others. The Russian cruiser *Admiral Enkvist* had taken the *Oleg*, *Aurora*, and *Jemtchug* and headed off for Manila, abandoning the field of battle. But worse was to follow.

THE SURRENDER

Admiral Nebogatov had with him the *Nikolai I*, *Orel*, *Apraksin*, *Seniavin* and *Ousakov*, and the cruiser *Izumrud* when the Japanese battle line found him about mid-morning. Togo opened fire at 10:34 at 8,000 yards and the Russians did not reply — they had surrendered. Togo continued to fire, his eyes riveted on the Russian fleet, and his staff had to persuade him to cease fire, which, finally, at 10:50, the Japanese did. All surrendered except the *Admiral Oushakov* and the *Izumrud* which headed north, finally to run aground and be lost.





THE FUTURE

There are two things which made it possible to abandon the secondary battery. The first is that we have improved our shooting so as to enable the 12-inch gun to hit with reasonable certainty at ranges over 6,000 yards, the range at which the 6-inch gun begins to be effective. The second is that the rate of fire of the 12-inch has been so much increased.

would all prove too late, for 1917 was approaching.

Ironically, Russia's land forces were in a position to win the war at this 11th hour of the war. They had been steadily reinforcing the Far East and even after the defeat at Mukden were in a numerical position to crush the exhausted Japanese armies facing them. But where the flesh might be capable, the will was lacking. Imperial Russia had suffered too many military and naval defeats, had faced too much rampant political unrest at home, diplomatic isolation and financial exhaustion to make this final attempt to wrest victory away from the Japanese nation. Thus the first major defeat of a European power at the hands of an Asian nation was assured. The stage for the eventual liberation of all Asia from the colonial powers was now prepared. The economic revolution would follow.

When Japan has succeeded in completely taming Russia's pride, all the Asiatic peoples will recognise her supremacy, and the peaceful conquerors who go to China, Indo-China, India, and the Philippines will gain laurels in abundance; in other words, they will do a thriving trade.

... A Japanese destroyer captain in 1904

The *Admiral Oushakov* refused to surrender and was forced to duel with the *Iwate* and *Yakumo* on the evening of the 28th. After 30 minutes of action the *Oushakov* was sunk without having inflicted any damage on the enemy.

A couple of destroyers and the *Almaz* made it to Vladivostok, while all the other minor ships were sunk or interned. The destroyer *Byedovi* would surrender with Admiral Rozhdevskii on board. He was terribly wounded, but he would survive the war to suffer in silence after a court martial in which he was acquitted.

The Russian losses in men were 4,830 killed; 5,917 taken prisoner. The Japanese lost 117 killed and 583 wounded (one being Admiral Yamamoto of World War II fame, who received a minor hand wound). It should be noted that the Russians did hit the Japanese, they just did not hit them enough nor in the right places. For example, according to N.J.M. Campbell in his excellent article in *Warship Volume II*, the *Mikasa* was hit 40 times, including 10 12-inch shell hits.

...Admiral Slade in his 1906 Naval War College lectures

The battle of Tsushima had somewhat the same impact that the Falklands had on us today. As it made us think about naval tactics today, so it did back then. One British officer remarked after reading naval attaché notes on the naval war, "It made a greater impression upon me than I realized at the time. I read all the current literature and began to understand that naval war was something more than a gladiatorial contest between two opposing fleets."

Admiral Nebogatov would be made the scapegoat for the Russians because of his surrender. It was thought he should have fought to the end. It should be noted that the *Aleksandr III* was officered by the Russian nobility, so her loss affected the upper class in Russia adversely. The Russian bonds actually went up in value with this defeat, probably because it was felt that peace was now at hand, even a peace in which Imperial Russia would not be the victor. With revolutionary fervor sweeping European Russia, peace was needed, but it

The Official Histories and Their Offspring

The Russians, Japanese, French, British, and Germans would all produce Official Histories of this war. The British would produce a massive six volume history (three being map cases with those great oversize maps so characteristic of the turn of the century) as well as the yet to be publicly published to this day, the secret *Maritime Operations Of The Russo-Japanese War* of two volumes written in part by the famous historian Sir Julian Corbett. This secret report has never been widely circulated.

The Japanese Naval General Staff history of the maritime operations was translated into French (1909) and Russian (1910). This account, however, is colored in favor of the Japanese conduct of the war. Of course it is equally true of our Western culture: we have never produced a volume in English that has made extensive use of Japanese resource material on the war.

There are two points to be drawn from

this. First, the impact of this war on warfare of the period was massive. On land, for example, it helped push the machine-gun forward, as well as the use of entrenchments; this would impact on World War I. At sea, the war had direct influence on the design of the all big gun ship, the Dreadnought, already a fevered vision in Admiral Fisher's brain. It is interesting to study the ships produced by Russia and Japan directly after this was, a war that left both powers financially drained. The new Russian armor cruiser Rurik would be covered with armor all over, as opposed to limited areas of deep thicknesses — an answer to the use of Shimose HE shells and the fires it caused. The Japanese would go immediately to big ships with big guns.

The second point is that with all the histories out there, there is need for a comprehensive multi-volume study of the war which uses both Russian and Japanese source material. A detailed and accurate history of the maritime and land war still needs to be written. Still, about every 5 years a new book appears on this pivotal war of the 20th century.

In 1986 the State University of New York Press published the latest entry on the Russo-Japanese war entitled *Russia Against Japan: 1904-05 A New Look at the Russo-Japanese War* by J.N. Westwood. Professor Westwood, over the years, has published volumes on the Russo-Japanese War (a pictorial study as well as *Witnesses Of Tsushima*). In *Russia Against Japan*, Professor Westwood has produced a thin volume which, in broad strokes, shows the course of the war and allows him to comment on certain aspects of the it; he does this primarily from a Russian perspective and making wide use of Russian source material.

This was not the first or last time in Russian history when war operations were timed more for public relations than for tactical circumstances and, as usual in such cases, there was a price to pay.

... J.N Westwood

Westwood shows a strong suit for both the military as well as the naval aspects of the war. He will from time to time drop down into tactical detail when warranted. For example, there is a discussion as to whether the Russian ships were protected by torpedo nets (hung out from a ship when at anchor to entangle any incoming torpedoes) when surprised by the Japanese, on the night of February 8, 1904. This is an interesting point for the historian, as the Japanese have claimed that part of the reason for their poor showing in the attack was the Russian's use of torpedo nets. Westwood

shows that Russian orders were *not* to use torpedo nets.

Another interesting example of tactical detail concerns the use of Russian artillery. Westwood shows that after the first major battle of the war on the Manchurian Plain at Telissu, the Russians no longer sited their artillery (the newer pieces had a longer range than the Japanese artillery) where direct fire could hit them, but began using reverse slope (indirect fire) tactics to preserve the guns. At Telissu the senior Russian officers had insisted on artillery placement in the front lines, thus allowing the Japanese to spot their positions on the first day and to suppress them on the second day of battle. Still, Russian artillery, as so much about the Russians in this war, was at best erratic. One artillery battery would suppress the Japanese artillery in a position, while the next battery over could not manage the new longer range quickfirers, and wanted their older artillery back!

Much of the book discusses gunnery, both on land and at sea. One important point, which my reading on the topic supports, is that the Russian naval gunnery was not that bad, certainly better than Spanish gunnery in the Spanish-American War, while the Japanese gunnery was about the same for most of the war, and only slightly better by the time of Tsushima. Some of this was due to long range firing with poor fire-control instruments, but Westwood points out that at the Battle of the Yellow Sea, Japanese battleships lost five 12-inch guns owing largely to poor fuses on their High Explosive shell, which caused premature explosions in the gun barrels!

There are lots of plumbs for the war-game designer in this volume that I don't think you will find elsewhere. Westwood makes an excellent point on how the Russians simply did not exploit advantages that they had, both at sea as well as land. For example, I never realized that the Russian armor cruiser *Ros-siya* once took 13 days to coal. As an aside, it is interesting to note that hardcore early 20th century naval wargamers like to see coaling in a game. This was apparent during playtesting of *To The Far Seas*. I think that there is an element of "O.K. let's shut the game down for two days (gametime) while everybody coals." This shows the struggle that sometime goes on between the hardcore type versus the guy who wants to play a game as opposed to studying it — *Campaign In North Africa* versus *Rommel In The Desert*.

One area of weakness, especially for one who has had an opportunity to go through the map cases in the various Official Histories of the war, is the lack of maps. Professor Westwood supplies only one, showing the general area of the conflict, and no battle maps.

There is a nice photograph section, many of them not ones usually seen.

Westwood concludes that Russia should not have sought peace in 1905 until one more land battle had been fought, for the Russian army in the Far East now numbered over a million men. Professor Westwood states,

A victory would almost certainly have been won, thanks to the increased Russian strength and the exhaustion of Japan's resources. Such a victory would immediately have boosted the government's popularity at home and its credit-worthiness abroad. The generals had strongly expressed this view, and generals seeking to restore their reputations are not always wrong.

This, however, was not to be, and *Tsushima* was the final and climatic battle of the war.

THE SHIP TYPES

The rapidity with which naval science and technology advanced increased greatly towards the end of the 19th century. This made it difficult for the British Admiralty to decide which naval inventions it was wise or necessary to introduce into the fleet. The displacement of ships and the caliber of ships' guns could not be decided purely on the grounds of scientific feasibility, hence the desire for practical guidance from recent wars.

...Professor Philip Towle

There were three main types of ships available to the combatants in the Russo-Japanese war. Battleships, cruisers and torpedo craft. A sort of rock, paper, scissors relationship existed between them all.

THE BATTLESHIP

The queen of the naval battlefield in 1905 was the battleship, the penultimate Iron-clad born in 1854, matured in the American Civil War, and developed through the rest of a century that saw many rivalries and arms races but very few wars in which to prove one system or type of battleship superior to another. After the *HMS Dreadnought*, laid down

in 1905, all battleships from the Russo-Japanese war would be referred to as pre-Dreadnoughts. The Russo-Japanese war did not cause this change, but it did fuel and accelerate this revolutionary change in the battleship, a change that has survived down to our own Iowa.

The basic design of the battleship of this period was a 10,000- 15,000- ton ship with four heavy guns, usually capable of firing one round every minute to 30 seconds, though seldom was this rate maintained. A higher rate of fire was not maintained both because of the slowness of supplying ammunition to the turret from the magazine and the desire to see where the last shell landed before adjusting and firing the next round. Usually 12-inch in caliber, the armor piercing round would weigh in at about 850 pounds. Though a range of 12,000 yards were possible with such a gun, practical range-finding equipment kept battle

ranges down to 7,000 yards. These four guns would usually be housed in turrets, one twin turret forward, and one twin aft.

Arranged up and down each side, sometimes in small turrets (the French and Russian practice) or in open batteries or sponsons (the British and Japanese practice) would be a secondary armament usually of 6-inch caliber firing a shell about 100 pounds in weight up to a rate of six times a minute.

Both of these positions would be armored, usually the secondary positions with six inches of armor, while the heavy main guns would be protected by 9 to 12 inches of Krupp armor. The older battleships would carry Harvey type armor or even compound armor which was a mix of steel and iron. The disadvantage of the older armor was that it took more to give an equal amount of protection when compared to Krupp armor. The ship would be protected by a belt of armor at the

waterline, usually of 8 to 12 inches of armor. The Russians tended to overdesign and overload their ships and add on to them during the course of their slow construction (five years was not unusual). This belt of armor would actually be below the waterline and thus not as helpful in protecting the ship! The Japanese, basing their designs on British ideas, tended to have a thinner belt of armor which was wider but did not cover the extreme ends as well as the Russian designs (which were based on French concepts). Also, usually in open and unarmored positions would be a tertiary armament of 3-inch and smaller guns down to one pounders.

There was a real discussion at this time over the concept of big guns firing heavy shells a few times every five minutes, versus smaller guns firing a "storm of shells," the latter destroying all unarmored positions on a ship, causing fires and inflicting casualties that would damage the crews morale of the enemy fighting ship. The Russo-Japanese war would not end this debate, but the fact that ranges were increasing (and many of the smaller guns could not engage at long ranges) would eventually outweigh the effect of numerous small hits on an armored ship.

The Japanese battleships would steam at 18 knots, often in company with sister ships of the same design, thus giving an element of homogeneity to their fleet. This is important to remember, as many navies in the 1880s and 1890s would be nothing more than collections of experimental battleships with all sorts of design concepts. Homogeneity gave a fleet a uniform speed, and uniform tactical concepts. Playing *Tsushima* should bring home how relatively homogeneous the Japanese fleet was in comparison to the Russian - a fleet that was made up of most of the craft that could be scraped together in the Baltic and sent out to the Far East.

While threatened in her position as queen by torpedo craft, the new submarines and mine warfare, plus the ship's enormous financial cost, the ability of the battleship to deliver a decisive blow with the big gun made her all powerful in battle. But first the enemy had to be found — which brings us to the cruisers.

CRUISERS

Cruisers came in three varieties. The armor cruiser was often times as heavy and expensive as a battleship and often used in the same role as a battleship. The usually smaller protected cruiser was used to protect the sea lanes from enemy raiders as well as to seek out and find the enemy fleet. This latter role was

Torpedoes

The inherent feature of torpedo boats which governs their use in war time is that the boats are of small value compared to a battleship or cruiser. By value is meant small cost, that they can be rapidly replaced, and the number of men they carry is small. For this reason they can be risked and if necessary lost to obtain ends which may be of great moment, without more than small relative loss to their own side.

During the night would not the admiral keep his fast craft at the enemy? Would they be kept for future scouting work which might never prove necessary? Would they not be let loose like hell-hounds to tear into the enemy's fleet - torpedoing, ramming, destroying, and using every nerve and knot to destroy, and so pave the way for the morrow's visitors?

... Captain, later Admiral, Bacon in the 1896 and 1900 Brassey's *Naval Annual* respectively

Torpedoes, the new sling of David in the Goliath world of battleships, had little decisive affect on war, until the Russian-Japanese confrontation. Almost two dozen Russian and Japanese torpedo attacks in the course of the war scored a total of 25 torpedo hits. Few ships were actually sunk; the mine had more impact than the torpedo — sinking two Japanese battleships as well as blowing up the best Russian Admiral, Makarov, while he was on board the *Petropavlovsk*. But it would be the swarm of Japanese torpedo boats and destroyers on the night after the daylight action that would disrupt, damage, and sink several Russian ships and thereby set up the final surrender of the remaining heavy Russian ships on the morning.

One area of controversy, even today after years of research, is the size of the torpedoes carried on the Russian ships. While a minor point, two of the most recent articles in English on the battle give conflicting evidence. Conway's *All The World's Warships* series gives the Russians almost exclusively 15 inch torpedoes, and this would represent fairly recent scholarship. N.J.M. Campbell is the author of that particular section and usually very reliable. Older sources give either no size acknowledgement or they state that 18-inch torpedoes were carried.

In designing the game, I followed V.M. Tomitch, a former White Russian, in his book *Warships Of The imperial Russian Navy*. He almost always shows 18-inch torpedoes as the weapon carried. While *Jane's Fighting Ships* is not a perfect source, it also supports this conclusion.

being given over to the fast scout cruiser, like the *Novik* and *Izumrud*, which would also double as a destroyer flotilla leader.

The armor cruiser usually had the same layout as the battleship but with smaller main guns — anything from 7.5-inch guns to 10-inch guns. However, the Russians and the Japanese used 8-inch guns firing shells that weighed about 250 pounds each and fired at a quicker rate. Their armor was less than on a battleship, too — a 6-inch belt of Krupp armor was quite usual. So what was the advantage of an armor cruiser? Speed. The usual speed was 21 knots, though speeds as low as 19 or as high as 23 knots were possible.

There was one other role for these ships, that of raiders. This was what the Russian large armor cruisers of the *Rurik* style were originally built for: give a ship a large coal supply and let it loose, like the *CSS Alabama*, on the sea-lanes of an enemy nation. The early Russian cruisers suffered from several problems, one of the most obvious being that of disposing of the heavy armament in sponson like positions so that only two of the four heavy 8-inch guns could bear on one broadside. The USS Navy's *Baltimore*, present with Dewey at Manila, is another example of this style of design. The Japanese armor cruisers (like Dewey's *Olympia*) used turrets, as did battleships, and so could bring all four 8-inch guns on a broadside.

"Protected cruisers" were so named because they had a thick curved armored deck which theoretically protected the vitals of a ship's internal hull area. Protected cruisers were divided into three classes: First, Second, and Third. These ships ranged in size from as little as 3,000 tons up to 14,000 tons, but usually were in the 4,000- 7,000- ton range. Their armament was almost always 4-inch to 6-inch guns (though guns as large as 9.2-inch were carried on some British monsters), with the armored deck being one to three inches thick. The gun positions were lightly armored gun shields for the most part. Their speed was seldom over 20 knots, which made the armor cruiser a deadly foe. Like the classic frigate from whence they were derived, they were designed to guard or raid the sea-lanes, scout, and show the flag. The Japanese built many of these in the 1890s as they were cheap, while the Russians had a program of building big first class types on the eve of the war as both raiders/commerce destroyers and powerful scouts. They were not designed to fight heavy ships, and did not. Interestingly enough, the Russians included large 3-inch gun batteries on her protected cruisers. This was so that more of them could be installed than the larger 4.7 inch rifles and could provide a higher rate of fire, thus delivering a "storm of shells".

Scout cruisers were new types (the Japanese did not have any while the Russians had just about invented the type with the *Novik*). Basically they were glorified destroyers, steaming at 25-26 knots and armed with two to six 4.7-inch rifles. Cheap and fast, they would have their day in the sun during World War I when both the Germans and the British built them by the dozens.

All these cruisers, along with battleships, if undamaged, could *defend* a fleet in the day from the attack of torpedo boats, but they were too slow to chase them.

TORPEDO CRAFT

The *OSA* missile boat of the 19th century, the torpedo boat, derived from the spar torpedo boat of Cushing's sinking of the *CSS Albemarle*, was the weapon of the night. Also, Admiral Markarov had made his name in torpedo craft during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-78. Small, sometimes as little as 15 tons and carried on warships, they were seldom faster than 26 knots, and more often right around 20 knots in speed. Armed with two to four torpedoes, they usually only carried a couple of rapid fire 3-pounder guns. At 100 tons for the average size, they were not really able to keep up with the fleet, and while the Japanese used them on the night of May 26th-

27th, they had no impact on the actual daylight gunnery duel.

How to deal with the threat of the torpedo boat was a big question in the late 19th century. Rapid fire guns helped, but being in exposed unarmored positions, they would most likely be out of action after an extended battle. Torpedo boat gunboats were an attempt to solve the problem, but they were too slow. Finally came the Torpedo Boat Destroyer, or Destroyer. Weighing in at 300-450 tons, armed with one or two 3-inch rifles and four to six 6-pounders, they would steam from 25 to 35 knots, overtake the torpedo boats, and destroy them with their superior armament. Cheap, fast, armed with torpedoes, they in effect made torpedo boats obsolete and created an entire new weapon class that excited the imagination and added dash to a battle. Destroyers usually were massed at the van and rear of a battle line so they could dash in to force the enemy battle fleet away or to deliver the coup d' grace against a disabled enemy battleship.

Small submarines were on their way to both navies but had no impact on this war beyond worrying the rival Admiralties that the other guy had them.

So the Admirals had a selection to choose from and with which they could mix and match. A colorful period, it is often overlooked due to the scarcity of any historical examples of combat.

And If Russians Had Arrived Safely At Vladivostok?

The orders were to act as a fleet-in-being, a popular concept in the last century, and raid from the port. One key is to have a secure fortress port, which Vladivostok was. Well garrisoned, with numerous Coast Defence batteries, it could have proven just as hard a nut to crack as Port Arthur had. The idea of the fleet-in-being is that it would be a constant threat to the Japanese, especially to their shipping and supply operations. The Japanese army was dependent for its supplies on the open sea-lanes. If the sea-lanes were disrupted or closed, the army's logistics would be severely affected.

A fleet-in-being, could also, even if smaller than its Japanese opponent, could perhaps, with luck, isolate a portion of the Japanese fleet and destroy it, thus evening the balance of seapower in its favor. Admiral Rozhdestvenski may not have been the most brilliant man on the face of the earth, actually far from it, but he was aggressive. Possibly he could have changed the outcome of the war, a war that would have spilled over into 1906. But Japanese skill and Russian incompetence doomed him.

JAPANESE HIT RECORD

Capital Ships: B - Battleship; AC - Armored Cruiser; PC - Protected Cruiser

Each hit record box represents 1 Gunney Factor. Mark off hits as per gunney tables. Boxes read from left right, Bow to Stern. Arrows show directions of fire possible.

B Asahi	11		AC Kasuga	8		PC Kasagi	
B Chin Yen	5		AC Nisshin	8		PC Matsushima	
B Fuji	12		AC Tokiwa	8		PC Naniwa	
B Fuso	4		AC Yakumo	10		PC Nitaka	
B Hatsuse	11		PC Akashi	3		PC Otawa	
B Mikasa	15		PC Akitsushima	4		PC Sai Yen	
B Shikishima	11		PC Chitose	5		PC Suma	
B Yashima	12		PC Chiyoda	3		PC Takachiho	
AC Asama	8		PC Hashidate	4		PC Takasago	
AC Azuma	9		PC Idzumi	1		PC Tsushima	
AC Idzumo	10		PC Itsukushima	4		PC Yoshino	
AC Iwate	10						

Light Ships: DD - Destroyer TB - Torpedo Boat MS - Merchant Ship

Each hit record box represents 1 Ship. Mark off hits left to right. Number in DD boxes represents Gunney Factor; each DD box itself represents 2 Torpedo Factors. Number in TB boxes represents Torpedo Factor; each TB box itself represents 1 Gunney Factor. DD's and TB's can fire only torpedoes at Capital Ships. MS's cannot fire.

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6th DD Flotilla						6th MS Flotilla			

RUSSIAN HIT RECORD

Capital Ships: B - Battleship; AC - Armored Cruiser; PC - Protected Cruiser

Each hit record box represents 1 Guntery Factor. Mark off hits as per guntery tables. Boxes read from left right, Bow to Stern. Arrows show directions of fire possible.





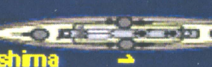









B Admiral Oushakov	8		B Suvorov	12		PC Jemtschug	2	
B Admiral Senlavin	8		B Tsesarevitch	14		PC Novik	2	
B Alexander III	12		AC Admiral Nakhimov	7		PC Oleg	4	
B Borodino	12		AC Bayan	7		PC Pallada	3	
B Graf Apraxin	8		AC Grombol	7		PC Svetlana	2	
B Imperator Nikolai	8		AC Rossia	4		PC Varyag	3	
B Navarin	11		AC Rurik	4		B Dvlenadstat Apostolov	6	
B Orel	12		AC Vladimir Monomakh	4		B Imperator Alexander II	8	
B Oslabya	9		PC Almaz	2		B Petr Veliki	7	
B Peresviet	9		PC Askold	3		B Potemkin	11	
B Petropavlovsk	14		PC Aurora	3		B Rostislav	11	
B Pobleda	10		PC Bogatyr	4		B Slava	12	
B Poltava	14		PC Boyarin	2		B Tri Svittella	15	
B Retvisan	11		PC Diana	3		AC Pamiat Azova	2	
B Sevastopol	14		PC Dmitri Donskoi	3		PC Kagul	4	
B Stssoi Veliki	13		PC Izumrud	2		PC Pamiat Merkuria	4	

Light Ships: DD - Destroyer TB - Torpedo Boat

Each hit record box represents 1 Ship. Mark off hits left to right. Number in DD boxes represents Guntery Factor and Torpedo Factor, as indicated by G and T lines of boxes. Number in TB boxes represents Torpedo Factor; each TB box itself represents 1 Guntery Factor. DD's and TB's can only fire torpedoes at Capital Ships.






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 Sevastopol 7-6
 Tsesarevich 7-7
 Dmitri Donskoi 1-6
 Retvisan 5-7

 Potemkin 5-6
 Sissoi Velki 6-6
 Navarin 5-6
 Vladimir Monomakh 2-6
 Imp Nikolai 4-6
 Petr Veliki 3-6
 Adm Oushakov 4-6
 Adm Seniavin 4-6
 Graf Apraxin 4-6
 Bayan 3-8
 Gromboi 3-8
 Rossia 2-8
 Rurik 2-7
 Diana 1-7

 Nevelskoi 4-8
 Amurski 4-8
 Izumrud 1-10
 Jemtchug 1-10
 Boyarín 1-9
 Novik 1-10
 Bogatyr 2-9
 Oleg 2-9
 Askold 1-10
 Varyag 1-9
 Pallada 1-7
 Aurora 1-7
 Svetlana 1-8
 Almaz 1-8

 Slava 6-6
 Rostislav 5-6
 Tri Svitelia 7-6
 Imp Alexander II 4-6
 Dvienadstat Apostolov 3-6
 Pamiat Azova 1-6
 Kagul 2-9
 Pamiat Merkuriia 2-9
 1st DD Flotilla 0-10
 2nd DD Flotilla 0-10
 3rd DD Flotilla 0-10
 4th DD Flotilla 0-10
 5th DD Flotilla 0-10
 6th DD Flotilla 0-10

 1st TB Flotilla 5-11
 2nd TB Flotilla 5-11
 3rd TB Flotilla 10-9
 4th TB Flotilla 10-9
 7th DD Flotilla 40-40
 8th DD Flotilla 40-40
 9th DD Flotilla 0-10
 10th DD Flotilla 0-10
 11th DD Flotilla 0-10
 12th DD Flotilla 0-10
 13th DD Flotilla 44-9