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THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR  
IMPACT ON WESTERN MILITARY THOUGHT PRIOR TO 1914

by

CHARLES T. PAYNE

B.S., Campbell University, 1985

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IMPACT ON WESTERN MILITARY THOUGHT

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## INTRODUCTION

Ten years before the outbreak of World War I, Russia and Japan fought a war in the Far East that generated avid world interest and served as a prelude to the events of August, 1914. Initiated by the Japanese with a naval attack against the unsuspecting Russian fleet at Port Arthur, the Russo-Japanese War erupted during a period of intense worldwide political, economic, and military uncertainty; moreover, all the major powers had either political or economic agreements with one or the other of the belligerents. Thus, the situation in the Far East in 1904-1905 was somewhat akin to the Middle East today--a volatile region where a war between the principal belligerents could have easily involved others of the Great Powers and precipitated an all-out general war in Europe or elsewhere.

*Full quote:  
Japan  
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The war was fought on a large scale on land and sea, with most of the fighting on land occurring in Manchuria, while the naval engagements took place in the Yellow Sea and the Sea of Japan. The Battle of Tsushima, fought on May 27, 1905, where Admiral Togo's Japanese fleet defeated the luckless Russians under Admiral Rozhdestvensky, probably stands as the most popularly-known battle of this war.

The contest on land was waged over great distances by huge armies which employed the latest technologies in armament, communications, and transportation.

Hostilities broke out at a time when some military analysts were questioning traditional views on warfare.<sup>1</sup> The average officer during this period, at least in Western armies, looked upon the proliferation of modern instruments of war with a mixture of curiosity, disdain, occasional fascination, and uncertainty. The dismal performance of the British Army during the Boer War, in which British units employing standard tactics of the day suffered severely at the hands of Boer marksmen and artillerymen, seemed to some British officers, at least, to indicate that technological changes were having a decisive beneficial effect for the defensive.

Most armies in 1904 embraced the primacy of offensive forms of warfare; the defensive was viewed as the weaker and more passive doctrine.<sup>2</sup> Though defensive measures might occasionally be necessary for short periods, most military analysts felt that the attacker's freedom of maneuver would foster greater initiative, morale, and flexibility than would the static nature of the defense. Most officers in Western Europe and the United States subscribed to this view. While not disregarding the increasing lethality of the battlefield due to technological innovations in firepower, these officers insisted that daring leadership, proper training, and a vigorous

martial spirit, or élan, would enable the attacker to overcome any obstacle. To the majority of officers accepting this doctrine, psychological preparation for war was as important, if not more so, than any physical or technological preparation.

A few officers felt otherwise. They, like British Major Baden Baden-Powell, who wrote a book after the Boer War arguing for a reevaluation of traditional thinking, stressed the technological side of the debate.<sup>3</sup> In their view, magazine-rifles, machine guns, and rapid-firing artillery were additions to the arsenal that would drastically alter events on the battlefield in favor of the defensive. Pointing to incidents during the Boer War, advocates of the defensive tried to demonstrate how the British regulars, highly trained in the old tradition, frequently suffered numerous casualties inflicted by Boer irregulars fighting behind cover. As a minimum, those officers favoring a defensive/firepower orientation toward warfare sought to instill within their respective armies a greater appreciation for the potential of firepower, while arguing for at least a review of offensive tactics in light of modern weaponry.

After the First World War, hindsight afforded many writers the luxury to claim that the blunders of that conflict could have been avoided if the leadership of the period had heeded the numerous 'lessons' provided by earlier wars. The American Civil War is usually cited as

the first of many wars presaging the horrors of 1914-1918. Other wars occurring after 1865 that are habitually mentioned as having provided clues as to what to expect in future campaigns include the Russo-Turkish War of 1877-78, the Spanish-American War, the Boer War, and the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>4</sup> Of all these conflicts, the Russo-Japanese War was the latest, occurring just a decade before the First World War, and the largest, excepting the Civil War, in terms of both men and material. Michael Howard states that Europeans had this war foremost in their minds in the summer of 1914: "It was neither the Boer War nor the American Civil War nor even the Franco-Prussian War that European military specialists had in mind when their armies deployed in 1914: it was the fighting in Manchuria."<sup>5</sup> While most modern historians seem to agree that the war was vast and bloody, and that machine guns, trenches, and futile frontal assaults were all prominent features of this conflict, some disagreement obviously remains concerning just what the armies of 1914 should have gleaned from it. Theodore Ropp, for instance, writes: "Even after the Russo-Japanese War it was hard to predict the effects of the new fire weapons...which had reached maturity after the introduction of smokeless powder."<sup>6</sup>

The catastrophic events of 1914-1918 seem to indicate that the majority of military thinkers learned nothing from the war in Manchuria. Despite the staggering casualties which offensive tactics cost the Japanese, whom the

Europeans had praised, the German, French, and Russian armies all put great faith in their offensive strategies; each believed that its respective recipe for victory--Schlieffen Plan, Plan 17, or Plan 20--would enable it to achieve quick and decisive victory when the inevitable clash came.<sup>7</sup> Since Russia had suffered significantly during the Manchurian war, and the other major belligerents of 1914, as well as the United States, all had observers there during the war, the question becomes: What impact did the Russo-Japanese War have on the major armies prior to the Great War? Did not anything that they witnessed in 1904-1905 affect them? What did they say about it among themselves and in their professional journals or other literature? What influence might the war have had on thinking on tactics, weapons, and other topics? What was the thread of the arguments, and who were making them--generals or lower-grade officers? This thesis attempts to relate how events in Manchuria influenced Western military thought within the three combat arms--infantry, artillery, and cavalry--between 1905 and the outbreak of World War I. Hopefully, the material presented here may help in understanding the mentality of military professionals at the turn of the century when technological innovations were slowly but surely contributing to the demise of lingering Napoleonic concepts of war.

## NOTES

1. T.H.E. Travers, "Technology, Tactics, and Morale: Jean de Bloch, the Boer War, and British Military Theory, 1900-1914," Journal of Modern History 51, no. 2 (June 1979): 264-286; Brian Bond provides good background information in this regard for the twenty-year period leading up to the Russo-Japanese War in War and Society in Europe 1870-1970 (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 40-71.
2. An extremely interesting study that describes in detail the development of continental offensive thought from the 1870's through the First World War is Jack Snyder, The Ideology of the Offensive (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1984.)
3. Major B.F.S. Baden-Powell, War in Practice (London: Isbister & Co., Ltd., 1903).
4. Richard A.Preston and Sydney F. Wise, Men in Arms (New York: Praeger, 1970), 260-261; A.J.P. Taylor, The Struggle for Mastery in Europe 1848-1918 (London: Oxford University Press, 1954), 500.
5. Michael Howard, "Men Against Fire: Expectations of War in 1914," International Security 9, no. 1 (Summer, 1984): 53.
6. Theodore Ropp, War in the Modern World (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1981), 179-194.
7. Snyder discusses these in detail in his book; see 44-56, 132-147, 179-194.

## CHAPTER ONE: BACKGROUND

The situation in the Far East in late 1903 was delicate. Russia and Japan were both pursuing expansionist policies in the area. Russian gains in Manchuria after the Triple Intervention, which forced Japan to relinquish the winnings that she had acquired following the Sino-Japanese War, were further consolidated when the Chinese agreed in 1898 to Russian use of Port Arthur. Japanese outrage at this move, in addition to Russian intrigue in Korea--personified by the Bezobrazov affair--provided the Japanese war party with more than enough justification to push for a military response to Japan's reversals in the region.<sup>1</sup>

The Japanese, however, wary of Russian strength, initially sought a diplomatic solution. They attempted to get the Russians to agree to a compromise, whereby each country was to consider Manchuria as within the Russian sphere of influence while recognizing Korea as being within the Japanese sphere. The Russians, lacking a cohesive policy in the Far East and acting on the tsar's whimsical prerogatives, failed to conduct the talks in good faith. Frustrated, the Japanese prepared for war as the negotiations continued.<sup>2</sup> Finally, on 4 February 1904,

almost three weeks after they had transmitted their third diplomatic proposal to the Russians and received no reply, the Japanese Imperial Council decided to act; on the 5th of February, Japanese sailors made final preparations for getting underway as they readied for the long-awaited clash. Thus, while the tsar and tsarina enjoyed themselves at the opera on the evening of 8 February 1904<sup>3</sup>, Admiral Togo's destroyers launched their attack against the unsuspecting sailors of the Russian Pacific Squadron whose vessels lay at anchor in Port Arthur.

On 10 February the world received the shocking news that tiny Japan had dared to strike the colossal Russian empire. The Times, in its cover story describing the events at Port Arthur and the Russian reaction, accurately described the atmosphere by remarking: "The news created the profoundest impression in naval and military circles. Its suddenness stunned them."<sup>4</sup> Military and government officials from Warsaw to Washington were incredulous at both the audacity and the success of the attack. The military correspondent of the Times articulated what was on everyone's mind when he wrote:

How the Russian squadron, with all its ships under its commander's hand, with ample warning, with plenty of small craft and all the resources of naval science, allowed itself to be surprised under the close fire of its shore batteries, and further permitted its puny adversaries to escape unscathed...will be a chapter to be read and pondered by all...<sup>5</sup>

Japan thus established the pattern that this remarkable war was to follow. Her preemptive attack,

deliberately conducted prior to a declaration of war, clearly demonstrated the political and military resolve with which she intended to achieve her national objectives in the Far East.

While there was astonishment with Japan's initial success, world opinion was that Japan would be crushed.<sup>6</sup> This attitude reflected several realities, including Russia's vast population and resources, the enormity of her territory, and her potential economic strength, all of which dwarfed Japan's. Racism figured prominently in the assumption of Russia's ultimate victory throughout the war, while later hindering post-war discussion of its relevance to Europe. Although completely surprised and embarrassed by Japanese temerity at Port Arthur, the Russians continued to look down upon the Japanese, whom Nicholas referred to as 'monkeys', until events on the battlefield convinced them to change their minds. Russian General Kuropatkin, himself acutely aware of Japanese abilities, recalled that before the war one of the so-called 'Japanese experts' at Vladivostok asserted that one Russian soldier was as good as three Japanese. A month after hostilities broke out, this same expert stated that if Russia was to win, it needed to field three men for every Japanese!<sup>7</sup> In another instance, when a Russian officer who had been appointed military attaché to the United States and had passed through Japan on his way home to receive his final instructions reported that the

Japanese army was efficient, his appointment to Washington was cancelled on the grounds that no such fool should be allowed to represent Russia in Washington.<sup>9</sup> Then-Captain Peyton C. March, who served as one of the U.S. observers in Manchuria with the Japanese, also received a glimpse of this attitude prior to his departure from the United States. While walking down Connecticut Avenue the day after he was notified about his new assignment, he met the Russian military attaché. The Russian congratulated him, then commented: "The only question in my mind is whether you will be able to get out there in time...It will be only a local affair."<sup>10</sup> Until the battle of the Yalu River--the first significant ground clash between the belligerents--the Russians maintained their opinion that the Japanese were mad in declaring war, and persisted in ridiculing them.<sup>11</sup>

But the Russians were not the only ones with a feeling of occidental superiority. Kaiser Wilhelm II of Germany had inflamed public opinion in both Germany and other nations with his rhetoric concerning the 'Yellow Peril'. His infamous exhortation to the German contingent sent to Peking in 1900 to deal so harshly with the Chinese that "no Chinaman...will dare to look a German in the face"<sup>12</sup> in some respects represented what many in western Europe felt toward all non-white races. The very first page of the German official history of the Russo-Japanese

conflict provides an interesting insight into the ethnocentrism prevalent in Germany, as well as in many other parts of the Western world during this period; in describing events leading to the war, it states:

Japan had but one choice, either to remain inactive in the face of progress of European civilization and power, like her Chinese neighbor, or to boldly take up the struggle for existence by adopting the means on which the superiority of the white race is based.<sup>13</sup>

The initiation of hostilities at Port Arthur and Chemulpo (Inchon) surprised the naval and military specialists of Europe and the United States, as well as their governments, all of whom were deeply concerned with the changes that this war could effect in the power balance of the Far East and its possible consequent impact on Europe.<sup>14</sup> Coming so quickly after the controversial Boer War, which many military officers felt offered nothing worth studying for use in a European conflict, the war in Manchuria seemed more pertinent. The Russian Army was one of the foremost in Europe, and the Japanese Army had been trained by German experts as its navy had been by the British.<sup>15</sup> Both forces were equipped with the latest armaments, including machine guns, magazine rifles, quick-firing artillery, and mobile heavy artillery. Both sides possessed that interesting and ancient missile, the hand grenade, which was to be used with regularity around Port Arthur. Other items of modern technology, such as mines, search-lights, and barbed wire were also employed. Each side possessed balloons, but seldom used them. Also

figuring prominently in this war for the first time was the large-scale use of field telephones. These devices had a tremendous impact on the traditional way of doing things, especially in the defense. There they were used to connect strongpoints with headquarters and supporting artillery batteries, while in artillery units they allowed the guns to remain masked while conducting fire missions through wire contact with the forward observers--about which more will be said later. But one of the most visible aspects of this war, the extensive use of trenches by both the offense and the defense, generated some of the most heated debate between the end of hostilities in 1905 and the outbreak of World War I.<sup>16</sup> Ironically, while the participants in this war possessed all the modern weapons which the Europeans would initially go to war with in 1914, minus the airplane, the Japanese were to win the most sensational contest of the war--Port Arthur--by eventually resorting to siege warfare.<sup>17</sup>

It was with great anticipation, therefore, that military observers and correspondents from throughout the world trekked to Manchuria. The political, military, and naval significance of the conflict attracted a larger number of foreign military observers than any previous war.<sup>18</sup> By far it was the most closely, extensively, and professionally observed war of the pre-1914 era because "on sea as on land the Russo-Japanese War was the one large-scale full-blown conflict between 1871 and 1914 to test

all the theories which had been confided in innumerable papers to service magazines of half a dozen countries, expounded in books or argued over the mess or wardroom tables."<sup>19</sup> A clear idea of the amount of international military attention focused on Manchuria can be gained from the number of observers sent there during the war; as of 20 July 1904, a little over five months after the war began, there were twenty-five foreign military and six naval observers attached to the Russian forces there; a similar number of observers were with the Japanese armies.<sup>20</sup> While all the major European nations were represented and the United States (who, with four observers per army had more than any other nation) as well, other countries sending representatives included Argentina, Chile, and Canada. At least eighty-three observers from fifteen countries had an opportunity to witness some aspect of this war. Indeed, it seemed as though international prestige, as well as professional curiosity, required a country to have an observer or two in Manchuria.<sup>21</sup>

Many of those officers participating as observers later achieved distinction or rose to positions of high rank in their respective armies. Besides March, who later became U.S. Army Chief of Staff in World War I, other well-known American officers serving in Manchuria included Colonel Enoch Crowder, later Judge Advocate General of the U.S. Army, Provost Marshal General, and head of the Secret Service; and Captain John J. Pershing, who commanded the

American Expeditionary Forces in France and afterwards also served as Army Chief of Staff. Several of the European officers later rose to high rank and positions of responsibility as well; Lieutenant General Sir Ian Hamilton commanded the ill-fated Dardanelles expedition in 1915; Lieutenant General Sir William Nicholson became a Field-Marshal and Chief of the Imperial General Staff; French Colonel Corvisant and the Prussian Major von Etzel, observers with the Japanese First Army in Manchuria, later squared off against one another at Verdun as corps commanders; Captain Max Hoffmann, who established a firm friendship with Peyton March while in Manchuria, later became Chief of Staff of Germany's eastern front command and handled the crucial Brest-Litovsk negotiations for the Germans; and Major Enrico Caviglia later commanded an Italian corps in World War I and then served as Minister of War. Coincidentally, all these officers were attached to the Japanese armies during the war, compelling Alfred Vagts, author of The Military Attaché, to state that "the intellectually most impressive group of such observers ever assembled was on the Japanese side in the war of 1904-1905."<sup>22</sup>

Intense world interest in this conflict brought another equally select group of professionals to its battlegrounds--the war correspondents. Well before the surprise attack on Port Arthur, a few Western correspondents had already descended upon Tokyo in gleeful

anticipation of something, they knew not what, occurring between Japan and Russia. Within weeks of the war's declaration, over a hundred correspondents reached Tokyo--all of them clamoring for permission to go to Manchuria.<sup>23</sup> Very few Westerners sought to accompany the Russians in the field compared to the numbers crowding Tokyo; this was probably a reflection of Russian lethargy and bureaucratic ineptitude in establishing a coherent policy of encouraging and managing public affairs helpful to the war effort. The Japanese, on the other hand, diligently manipulated the press and made every effort to present matters in the best possible perspective for world consumption.<sup>24</sup> Among those who eagerly ventured to the east to cover the war were some of the most well-known and respected military correspondents of the era, including Charles à Court Repington, Sydney Tyler, Frederick McCormick, Frederick Palmer, William Maxwell, and Frederic Villiers. The well-known novelist and newspaperman Richard Harding Davis also witnessed events in Manchuria. Perhaps the most colorful personality of all who managed to cover this war was Jack London, who recklessly and illegally managed to reach Korea before any of the other Japan-bound press corps by way of a steam launch, coastal steamer, and finally, a native fishing junk.<sup>25</sup> London, despite his socialist orientation, loathed the Japanese and made no effort to conceal his disdain; he was arrested by the Japanese three times in four months, and was eventually expelled from Manchuria

after he struck a Japanese coolie whom he accused of stealing fodder.<sup>26</sup>

From the beginning, the Japanese and the Russians were suspicious of the correspondents and equally uncertain about what to do with the military observers. Both sides yearned for positive exposure in this contest, yet each was obsessed with the possibility of vital information being provided to the other side. The Japanese, while desiring to foster good relations, nevertheless took a hard line and enforced rigid standards of conduct for both observers and correspondents. The Westerners were restricted to a two-mile circle around their camp, beyond which they could not go without permission, and then only when accompanied by an officer.<sup>27</sup> When the foreigners were allowed to observe an actual battle, it was usually from some quite distant hilltop, often miles away, where the ability to distinguish clearly what was happening was nil. Frustrated correspondents and military observers often met together to socialize, dine, and compare notes. Many of the correspondents, angry at what they felt was a waste of time and incensed at Japanese insouciance, voted with their feet and left. One of those to do so was the flamboyant Colliers correspondent Richard Harding Davis, who expressed his frustration at being unable to participate first-hand in battles by comparing himself and his comrades "to the young woman who was told that she might go out to swim but she mustn't go near the water."<sup>28</sup> John Fox, Jr., a writer for Scribner's

Magazine who departed Manchuria with Davis, fumed: "of this war in detail I knew no more than I should have known had I stayed at home--and it had taken me seven months to learn that it was meant that I should not know more."<sup>29</sup>

A dramatic indication of the irritation amongst the attachés at this treatment unexpectedly surfaced during one battle when the pertinacious Captain Hoffmann requested permission from a Japanese staff officer to watch a Japanese attack from a nearby hill; the Japanese indicated in the negative by a slight smile, whereupon Hoffmann lost his temper and shouted: "You are yellow--you are not civilized if you'll not let me go to that hill!" The Japanese officer, a general, replied calmly in German: "You may not go."<sup>30</sup> Ironically, while the observers and their civilian counterparts greatly admired the Japanese soldiers and marvelled at their untiring gallantry after suffering decimating losses, they could not help but resent the restrictions placed upon them and the condescending manner with which they were handled. It is not surprising, therefore, that many westerners at war's end returned to their respective countries upset by their experiences.<sup>31</sup>

The frequent dispatches relayed by the war correspondents and the reports generated by the military observers provided the grist for the massive debates which followed concerning the lessons and significance of this war--something that had begun even while the war was in progress. The correspondents routinely sent out periodic

accounts of the fighting, while some, returning early, managed to publish versions of their experiences before the end of hostilities. As the observers returned to their respective countries, they began to write in the different service journals and to speak at the various branch schools, thus further disseminating first-hand knowledge to attentive officers. While both correspondents and observers published volumes of their individual experiences, the British, French, German, and American armies all thought it worth their while to produce multi-volume histories or reports of the war, based almost exclusively upon the information gleaned by the observers. Those that witnessed events in Manchuria, whether civilian or military, undoubtedly succeeded in furnishing their respective civilian and military audiences with a considerable amount of information on the Russo-Japanese War. This information was later crucial to debating the doctrinal issues that remained unsettled at war's end.

Officially, the Japanese declared war on 10 February 1904; the Russians followed on the 18th. The Japanese seemed to face the biggest dilemma; with their armies, supplies, and reinforcements all dependent upon sea lines of communications, they had to insure positive coordination between their land and naval strategy to guarantee success. Additionally, at the outset they had to start from scratch; General Kuropatkin possessed 100,000 men that he could commit to battle, while the Japanese, notwith-

standing many spies and saboteurs, had none in Manchuria and would have to build up their forces.<sup>32</sup> Hence, with the Russian fleet at least temporarily battered at Port Arthur, the Japanese sought to land quickly their armies, consolidate, and decisively defeat the existing Russian forces in Manchuria before the Russians could bridge the gap in the Trans-Siberian railroad around Lake Baikal. The Japanese were under no illusions about the situation; they knew that once the Russians set in motion the mechanism for sustaining and reinforcing the war effort that they, the Japanese, would be overwhelmed.<sup>33</sup> The Japanese plan was to assault and secure Port Arthur, thereby effectively eliminating the Russian naval threat, and then to concentrate the whole of their land forces in one great battle, thereby hopefully compelling the Russians to abandon the war. Japan started the war, then, to fight for a compromise and not for a total victory--which she knew was beyond her reach.<sup>34</sup>

The first encounters on land occurred in Korea where minor skirmishes between Cossacks and the advancing Japanese 1st Army precipitated the first major clash on the Yalu. There, as the fog lifted at 5:00 A.M. on 1 May, the 15,000 Russian defenders were greeted by the impacting artillery shells of the Japanese artillery; an hour later the three divisions of General Kuroki's 1st Army, roughly 42,000 strong, began to ford the Ai river, completely outflanking the Russians on the left. By the end of the

day, the Russian survivors were falling back in disorder as the Japanese consolidated their positions and moved up additional troops.<sup>35</sup> Thus, the significantly larger Japanese army defeated and routed the bewildered Russians; total losses were 168 killed and 699 wounded for the Japanese, while Russian casualties totalled 614 dead, including thirty officers, 1053 wounded, and 526 missing, most of whom were prisoners.<sup>36</sup> Despite the disparity in numbers of combatants in favor of the Japanese, the battle served as a harbinger of things to come--Japanese tactical victories followed by successful, albeit hectic, Russian withdrawals. The failure of the Japanese after each battle, including the Yalu, to conduct an energetic pursuit prevented their armies from delivering the decisive blow they sought--à la Sedan.

Following the battle of the Yalu, the ground war basically developed into two distinct episodes: (1) the siege and fall of Port Arthur, which included the destruction of the Russian squadron in the harbor, and (2) the series of Japanese victories on land, culminating in the battle of Mukden.<sup>37</sup> Fighting against time, the determined Japanese made every effort to bring the issue to a conclusion as swiftly as they could. They committed their best regulars and reservists, as well as all the available material that they could muster, into Manchuria as rapidly as their logistics system permitted. The Russians, however, considering Manchuria to be a secondary

theater, maintained their crack Guards and Grenadier units in western Russia, partly out of European concerns, and increasingly due to domestic disturbances threatening the country.<sup>38</sup> Instead, the government relied at first on lower-category reservists and Siberian units to meet the need for troops, a fact that helps to explain some of the Russian difficulties in motivating their troops as the war progressed. Bureaucratic inertia, which permitted countless incompetent, lackadaisical, and unfit officers to maintain their rank and commands, significantly complicated the situation for the Russians, something that infuriated Kuropatkin.<sup>39</sup> Nevertheless, as the war progressed, Japanese fears were realized as their first-rate officers and soldiers perished in ever-greater numbers at Port Arthur and in central Manchuria, while the strength and quality of the Russian army improved with the arrival of each train from European Russia.

The duration, ferocity, and staggering losses of the battles were unforeseen by both belligerents. The Russians primarily clung to the defensive, fired in volleys on command, and believed wholeheartedly in the bayonet--which they used very successfully against exhausted remnants of Japanese units who managed to reach their trenches. The Japanese, adhering to the rigid tactical precepts of the German infantry regulations of 1889 and 1902, massed infantry ranks during an attack as a matter of course.<sup>40</sup> The American, German, and French observers all duly noted

this fact on several occasions.<sup>41</sup> At the battle of Nan Shan, a minor defensive outpost guarding the approaches to Port Arthur, the Japanese force of about 30,000 attacked the 4,000 Russian defenders who were entrenched and strongly supported by artillery. Though gaining the position, the reckless Japanese attacks in the open cost them dearly; over 4,400 men were lost in this one-day battle--12.5% of the attacking force.<sup>42</sup> Later, as casualty lists mounted during the horrific general assaults against Port Arthur's defenses, Japanese officers became so concerned that they resorted to siege warfare, while reevaluating their offensive doctrine. If nothing else, the siege of Port Arthur vividly demonstrated that troops occupying heavily fortified positions could withstand the most punishing bombardments delivered by modern artillery and still repel a numerically-superior attacker. Completely isolated by land and sea, Port Arthur's roughly 42,000 defenders made the Japanese pay dearly for each gain; after six months of fighting, Port Arthur surrendered on 2 January 1905, at a cost to the Japanese of 51,780 men, or more than a third of the besieging army.<sup>43</sup> Japanese expectations of quick and easily-won victories were once and for all shattered on the siegeworks of the Kwantung peninsula.

The entire nature of the war had changed by February, 1905, when Marshal Oyama, commanding all the Japanese field forces, launched his four armies against Kuropatkin's

troops defending Mukden. Even as Japanese victories on land and sea occurred with more and more regularity, the fact of the matter was that Japan was rapidly wearing out. Her best troops, decimated in the first battles, were now being replaced by older men and second-rate reservists. Her material situation was deteriorating at an even quicker rate, and her economic position was rapidly eroding, despite victories. Foreign loans were becoming more difficult to obtain.<sup>44</sup> Meanwhile, though the outlook along the Trans-Siberian railway improved remarkably--with ever-increasing numbers of troops arriving every month--and Russian strength actually rising as Japan's waned, an aura of defeatism permeated the population and the Russian Army.

The events of Bloody Sunday provided proof of the considerable discontent existing in the country at the same time that disheartened soldiers continued to be bested by previously despised foes. The most damning example of morale in the Army by this time was the high number of soldiers who deliberately shot off their index finger, i.e., their trigger finger, thus forcing the army to release them due to a medical disability.<sup>45</sup>

This was the situation when the largest battle in modern history at that time commenced at Mukden, with 310,000 Russians defending against 300,000 Japanese.<sup>46</sup> For eighteen days, from 21 February to 10 March, the belligerents assailed each other over a front extending over forty miles, employing heretofore unknown quantities

of artillery and machine guns. Though Oyama's attempt to turn the Russian right and decisively defeat them failed, and Kuropatkin's army eventually fled north to reconstitute safely at Harbin, the battle clearly ended in a Japanese victory. The Japanese infantry, having suffered grievously in earlier battles by maintaining close order at all costs in the final assault, at last demonstrated their understanding of the strength of the defensive; they realized that Banzai charges alone could not overcome machine guns, and therefore in this battle made full use of the loose formation. For the first time the troops employed artificial cover: using sandbags and digging trenches during the attack. Greater emphasis was placed on achieving fire superiority before charging prepared positions, and infiltration methods were now tried, since the soldiers were fighting under fewer restrictions.<sup>47</sup> The ability of the Japanese army to attack and defeat Russian defenders who outnumbered them, and who fought from trenches with overhead cover, protected by barbed wire obstacles, mines, and artillery and machine gun support, was nothing short of miraculous. Many factors accounted for the Japanese victory, not the least of which was the incompetent Russian leadership, as well as the grim determination of the Japanese attackers.

While the scope and duration of this battle surprised many observers, the casualty figures attested to the death and destruction of the modern battlefield; total casualties

exceeded 170,000, with Japanese losses at 70,000 and those of the Russians at 100,000.<sup>48</sup> The carnage wrought by modern arms everywhere in this war was epitomized by this battle; some American observers sought to convey the scale of the fight at Mukden by describing it in ways that American and European soldiers would find compelling:

About two and one-half times as many men were engaged at Mukden as at Gravelotte, and nearly seven times as many were killed or wounded. As compared with Gettysburg, nearly five times as many were engaged, and there was about the same proportion of casualties... indeed, we cannot find battles--we must look at entire wars to find losses comparable with those at Mukden. Apparently the Russians killed equalled the total Union killed in the twelve greatest battles of the Civil War put together...<sup>49</sup>

The Battle of Mukden marked the last significant clash between the belligerents on land. The ill-fated Russian Baltic Fleet, initially dispatched from Russia months earlier to relieve pressure on the doomed Port Arthur squadron, was annihilated by Admiral Togo's fleet on 27 May 1905, in the spectacular Battle of Tsushima. Now exhausted by the conflict for wholly different reasons, both countries were amenable to negotiations. The Japanese, who had skillfully improved their relationship with President Roosevelt throughout this period, appealed to him for assistance in making the arrangements. Roosevelt, who sincerely liked the Japanese and rejoiced at the initial setbacks suffered by autocratic Russia, eagerly assented, but for different reasons; he had grown alarmed at the scale of the Japanese victories in the east and began to

see possible Japanese encroachments on U.S. interests if their ambitions were not checked; a humbled Russia would provide the appropriate counterweight in the Pacific to Japanese imperialism.<sup>50</sup>

On 6 September 1905, the historic Treaty of Portsmouth was signed, formally ending hostilities; President Roosevelt later received the Nobel Peace Prize for his efforts in mediating the conflict. Though not quite satisfied with the outcome of the negotiations, Japan had nevertheless achieved her limited objectives--she acquired Port Arthur and the southern half of Sakhalin while the Russians evacuated Manchuria and agreed to recognize Korea as being within Japan's sphere of influence.<sup>51</sup> Russia, through the skillful negotiation of the indomitable Sergei Witte, emerged with dignity, but now had to turn inward to address critical domestic problems.<sup>52</sup> Thus, with the war over in the Far East, military analysts could now study its campaigns objectively and see what, if any, lessons could be ascertained. Nine years would elapse between the Treaty of Portsmouth and the 'Guns of August.'

## NOTES

1. A recent source that fully discusses the situation leading to this war is Ian Nish, The Origins of the Russo-Japanese War (New York: Longman, 1985). Nish's book covers all aspects of the situation in the Far East, including involvement by the Great Powers, leading to war between Russia and Japan. Based largely on primary source materials from both nations, it is essential reading for anyone attempting to understand fully this war.
2. Shumpei Okamoto, The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War (New York: Columbia University Press, 1970), 48.
3. Nish, 218.
4. Times (London), 10 February 1904, p.3.
5. Ibid., p.7.
6. Cyril Falls, A Hundred Years of War (London: Gerald Duckworth & Co., Ltd., 1953), 150.
7. J.N. Westwood, Russia Against Japan 1904-05 (New York: State University of New York Press, 1986), 1.
8. General Kuropatkin, The Russian Army and the Japanese War, vol. I, trans. A.B. Lindsay (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1909), 216.
9. Hoffmann Nickerson, The Armed Horde 1793-1939 (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1942), 218.
10. Edward M. Coffman, The Hilt of the Sword: The Career of Peyton C. March (Madison: The University of Wisconsin Press, 1966), 27.
11. Frederick McCormick, The Tragedy of Russia in Pacific Asia, vol. I (New York: The Outing Publishing Co., 1907), 123.
12. Michael Balfour, The Kaiser and His Times (London: The Cresset Press, 1964), 226-227.
13. German General Staff, The Russo-Japanese War, vol. I, trans. Karl Donat (London: Hugh Rees, Ltd., 1908), 1.
14. Michael Howard, "Men against Fire: The Doctrine of the

Offensive in 1914," in Makers of Modern Strategy, ed. Peter Paret (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1986), 517.

15. Ibid.; Ernst L. Presseisen, Before Aggression: Europeans Prepare the Japanese Army (Tucson: University of Arizona Press, 1965), 140. This book deals exclusively with the European involvement in reshaping Japan's military after 1870.

16. Ibid., see also Michael Howard, "Men Against Fire: Expectations of War in 1914," International Security 9, no. 1 (June 1979): 52-53; Westwood, 32-33; "Mines and Entanglements in the Russo-Japanese War," Scientific American (17 June 1905): 482.

17. For a fascinating and detailed study of the siege of Port Arthur, including character studies of the key belligerents involved, see Edward C. Diedrich, "The Last Iliad: The Siege of Port Arthur in the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-1905," (Ph.D diss., New York University, 1978).

18. John T. Greenwood, "The American Military Observers of the Russo-Japanese War (1904-1905)," (Ph.D diss., Kansas State University, 1971), 108.

19. Ibid.

20. Ibid., 110.

21. Ibid., 110-113. Greenwood's dissertation is the only source which could be located after an exhaustive search which gives any substantial information on this subject in one reference. He provides the name, rank, branch of service, country, and army attached to for each observer. For an interesting article on the only Canadian observer, see J. Mackay Hitsman and Desmond Morton, "Canada's First Attaché: Capt. H.C. Thacker in the Russo-Japanese War," Military Affairs 34 (October 1970): 82-84.

22. Greenwood, 113-115; Coffman, 28; Frank E. Vandiver, Black Jack: The Life and Times of John J. Pershing, vol. I (College Station: Texas A&M University Press, 1977), 368; Alfred Vagts, The Military Attaché (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1967), 267.

23. Rupert Furneaux, News of War (London: Maax Parrish & Co., Ltd., 1964), 214.

24. Ibid.

25. Richard O'Connor, Jack London: A Biography, vol. I (Toronto: Little, Brown, and Co., 1964), 208-209; Earle

Labor, Robert C. Leitz III, and Milo Shepard, eds., The Letters of Jack London, vol. I (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1988), 410-414.

26. O'Connor, 219.

27. Frederick Palmer, With My Own Eyes (Indianapolis: Bobbs-Merrill Co., 1932), 241.

28. Vandiver, 363.

29. John Fox, Jr., "The Backward Trail of the Saxon," Scribner's (March 1905): 280. See also the article describing Davis's and Fox's return from Manchuria in the New York Times, 3 September 1904, p.2. The Japanese felt little loss at the departure of disgruntled correspondents, who they termed "wild men" and "make-trouble men."

30. Palmer, 247.

31. Jack London was so angered at the Japanese that, upon his return to the United States, he told a meeting of startled socialists that "Socialism extends only to the brotherhood of white men." See O'Connor, 220. Peyton C. March, upon his return, had an opportunity to express his dissatisfaction to the surprised President Roosevelt during a dinner reception at the White House; see Coffman, 31-32.

32. William McElwee, The Art of Warfare from Waterloo to Mons (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1974), 241.

33. J.F.C. Fuller, The Conduct of War 1789-1961 (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 1961), 140-141; see Okamoto, 108-109, for how Japanese concern increased during the war over Russian improvements on the railroad.

34. Fuller, 141; idem., A Military History of the Western World, vol. III (New York: Funk & Wagnalls Co., 1956), 144.

35. Sydney Tyler, The Japan-Russia War (Philadelphia: P.W. Ziegler Co., 1906), 167-196; McCormick, 121-123; Denis and Peggy Warner, The Tide at Sunrise (New York: Charterhouse, 1974), 264-269.

36. These figures are taken from German General Staff, 247.

37. Fuller, Conduct of War, 141.

38. McElwee, 246; Kuropatkin, 279-285, vol. II, 72-77.

39. A.N. Kuropatkin, "Causes of Russia's Defeat by Japan,"

McClure (December 1908): 220-221. For a sobering account of dismal troop morale and foolhardy officers, see V. Veresáev, In the War, trans. Leo Wiener (New York: Mitchell Kennerley, 1917), 204-207.

40. Presseisen, 145.

41. Ibid.; United States War Department, Reports of Military Observers Attached to the Armies in Manchuria during the Russo-Japanese War (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906-1907), Part I, reports by Captain Peyton C. March, 43, 52, and Captain John F. Morrison, 88, 95, and Part II, report by Lieutenant Colonel E.J. McClernand, 101-102--hereafter Reports of Military Observers; Freiherr von Lüttwitz, Das Angriffs-Verfahren der Japanen im ostasiatischen Kriege 1904/05 (Berlin: 1906), 4, 12, 14; E. Bujac, Précis de quelques campagnes contemporaines, VI, La guerre russo-japonaise (Paris, n.p., 1907), 84.

42. Lüttwitz, 4, 7; Falls, 153; Presseisen, 146.

43. Bujac, 83-86, Falls, 154, Presseisen, 146.

44. In many cases, Japanese forces did not pursue fleeing Russian units simply because the necessary material--horses, munitions, provisions--were not available for a pursuit; see Okamoto, 105-109. For an assessment of the war's impact on the Japanese national economy, see Gotaro Ogawa, Expenditures of the Russo-Japanese War (New York: Oxford University Press, 1923), especially pages 251-252.

45. Veresáev, 206-207. It is worth noting that Lenin, realizing the fatal blow to national honor and morale created by the loss of Port Arthur, wrote: "The capitulation of Port Arthur is the prologue to the capitulation of tsarism;" see V.I. Lenin, Collected Works, vol. VIII (London: Lawrence & Wishart, 1960), 53.

46. Fuller, Modern History, 165; total effective strength as listed in U.S. documents were Japanese, 325,000, and Russians, 375,000--see United States War Department, Epitome of the Russo-Japanese War (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1907), 105, 108.

47. Presseisen, 147; Cyril Falls, The Art of War from the Age of Napoleon to the Present Day (New York: Oxford University Press, 1961), 220. For detailed accounts of Japanese tactics by this stage of the war see, for instance, Lieutenant Colonel A.L. Haldane, Great Britain, War Office, The Russo-Japanese War, Reports from British Officers attached to the Japanese and Russian Forces in the

Field, vol. II (London: His Majesty's Stationary Office, 1908), 501-519--hereafter Reports of British Officers.

48. R. Ernest Dupuy and Trevor N. Dupuy, The Encyclopedia of Military History (New York: Harper & Row, Publishers, 1986), 925. Early casualty figures were greatly exaggerated, including those given by military observers.

49. Reports of Military Observers, Part V, Lieutenant Colonel Edward J. McClernand and Captain William V. Judson, 173-174.

50. An excellent source for this period is Tyler Dennett, Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War (Gloucester, Mass.: Peter Smith, 1959).

51. Dennett, 243-264; John A. White, The Diplomacy of the Russo-Japanese War (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1964), 263-309. The Japanese population, largely unaware of the realities involving Japan's perilous economic and military situation following Mukden, were outraged at the final terms of the treaty; they felt that Japan had been shortchanged. This stemmed from the widespread and fervent belief that Russia would be held to pay a huge indemnity that would have helped mitigate the financial hardships caused by the war. For more on this see Okamoto, 167-223.

52. Witte brilliantly manipulated American public opinion and even President Roosevelt by cleverly seizing the psychological initiative from the reticent Japanese envoys, Baron Komura and Mr. Takahira, Japanese Minister in Washington. Witte, who had travelled extensively and was thoroughly familiar with government officials throughout Europe, considered President Roosevelt and other American statesmen "ignorant of international politics, generally, and European political matters, in particular." See S.I. Witte, The Memoirs of Count Witte, trans. Abraham Yarmolinsky (London: Doubleday, Page & Co., 1921), 162.

## CHAPTER TWO: INFANTRY

In January, 1905, the same month that the Russians surrendered Port Arthur, Scribner's magazine published an in-depth analysis of the Russo-Japanese War up to that point. War correspondent Thomas F. Millard, who wrote the article, astutely summarized the tentative lessons of the conflict and theorized about its effect on professional military thinking.<sup>1</sup> As the work of a civilian, Millard's essay was particularly interesting for, eight months prior to the Treaty of Portsmouth, he intelligently touched upon every significant aspect of the war that was to be debated throughout military circles afterwards. One of the striking features of this article, indicative of much of the material published by the reputable correspondents at the time, was the author's total acquaintance with military tactics and strategy, and his knowledge of the major disputes attending those doctrines.

Millard skillfully outlined the reality of extended fronts, prolonged battles, and the tremendously difficult nature of resupply, especially where both belligerents were fighting far from their established logistical bases. He preceded most military writers with his call for a fresh look at tactical doctrine, while offering comments on the

various branches' conduct in the war. Perhaps the most interesting view expressed by Millard, which was later often reiterated by several war correspondents and military writers who had served in Manchuria, was that the infantry was still the 'first arm'--the instrument of decision in war. To Millard, the Russo-Japanese War continued to demonstrate that "the infantry is still the fighting backbone of an army...and must bear the brunt of all great battles."<sup>2</sup>

This particular opinion, while not clearly expressed in every discussion after the war, was certainly implied. Despite modernization, the prevailing view remained that the infantry was paramount on the battlefield. Whereas many of the issues arising from the war were later hotly contested, on this one there seemed to be tacit agreement--regardless of the observer's branch of service or country. Thus, such diverse personalities as the American engineer and observer, Captain William Judson, the French Colonel E.L.V. Cordonnier, and the German Colonel Wilhelm Balck, agreed on the subject.<sup>3</sup>

Another topic that generated widespread agreement and one in which many writers deliberately over-emphasized the point was that of moral factors. Throughout the war, the differences between the two belligerents had been repeatedly revealed, and appeared irrefutable; until after the battle of Mukden, the Japanese, on the whole, were consistently lauded for their cheerfulness, bravery, and

various branches' conduct in the war. Perhaps the most interesting view expressed by Millard, which was later often reiterated by several war correspondents and military writers who had served in Manchuria, was that the infantry was still the 'first arm'--the instrument of decision in war. To Millard, the Russo-Japanese War continued to demonstrate that "the infantry is still the fighting backbone of an army...and must bear the brunt of all great battles."<sup>2</sup>

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determination, while the Russians were characterized as stupid, devoid of initiative, listless, and unmotivated. Though doubtless true that in many cases the Japanese had been known to break under severe fire, and that many Russians--especially as demonstrated at Port Arthur--had definitely distinguished themselves in battle, the overall picture of superior Japanese esprit de corps and élan could not be denied. The dramatic performance of the Japanese in the offensive at Port Arthur and Mukden served as the model for what a determined, well-trained, and--more to the point--highly motivated army could achieve, even against all that modern technology could offer.

It is difficult to find any account of the Russo-Japanese War written between 1905 and 1914 that does not mention in some way the topic of moral factors. This subject appeared ceaselessly throughout reports by the military observers and in books written by them and the war correspondents, as well as later material produced by other writers. Napoleon's dictum that "the moral is to the physical as three to one" was used so often in this periodic literature that it becomes trite. One extremely authoritative publication in England, for instance, Hamley's Operations of War, was no exception. Following an account of the Russo-Japanese War, the narrative switched to a discussion of the influence of psychological elements, where it proclaimed:

History proves to the hilt that in all ages the moral has been to the physical as three to one. Courage, energy, determination, perseverance, endurance, the unselfishness and the discipline that make combination possible--these are the primary causes of all great success. An army imbued with these qualities...always has won--and always will--against opponents...even if they be better armed and far more numerous.<sup>4</sup>

General Sir Ian Hamilton, the senior British military observer with the Japanese, was clearly impressed with the moral qualities of his hosts; in A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book, published after the war, Hamilton drew a contrast between the Japanese and the British in this regard, and found his countrymen wanting.<sup>5</sup> In a later publication dealing with the issue of conscription, his opinion on the mental preparation for combat--influenced by the Russo-Japanese War--remained unchanged. As he saw it: "It is on moral forces we must stand or fall in battle."<sup>6</sup> One French officer, Lieutenant Colonel Montaigne, agreeing with the need to highlight the importance of stressing psychological factors, expressed it differently. In his estimate, the disappearance of traditionally massed formations robbed the individual soldier of the supports he normally derived from fighting within the midst of his comrades; Montaigne lamented the loss of the "crowd sensation," yet without explaining how, he argued that "We must bring his [the soldier's] moral powers up to a level with his military powers...which are inherent...[in] the human being and the race."<sup>7</sup>

The war provided limitless material for the analysis and discussion of numerous other topics. Among infantry officers, the subjects that drew the most attention were entrenchments (and the related issue of fortifications), tactics and attack formations, night attacks, and the bayonet. A considerable concern with ammunition expenditure was expressed in many accounts<sup>8</sup>; in Manchuria, the belligerents had expended incredible amounts of ammunition, and resupply, especially for the attacker, became a significant problem. Although the vast majority of printed material relevant to the war concerned tactical matters, therefore, subjects ranging from the handling of prisoners-of-war to the statistical analysis of battle losses rounded out the literature.<sup>9</sup>

The amount of space in the professional literature devoted to entrenchments, fortifications, entrenching tools, and the like, probably outweighed any other single topic. If any one indicator could be identified as representing, in the minds of those military writers of 1904-1914, the effect of the technological age on warfare, the need for extensive entrenchments was it. Not surprisingly, as with so many of the issues discussed, the lessons became confused and contradictory. A variety of attitudes was expressed, running the gamut from wholesale support for entrenching whenever at the halt, to calls for abandonment of the idea except in the most desperate circumstances. Establishing an appropriate doctrine for

when to dig was an important task, for it was bound up in the larger debate over whether an army would embrace the defensive or the offensive forms of warfare.

The majority of officers, however, realizing that the Japanese had entrenched while on the offensive, accepted the idea, even if reservedly. Captain Soloviev, a Russian officer who had fought at Port Arthur, remarked that "the spade takes its place side by side with the rifle, and the spade has become a purely fighting weapon;"<sup>10</sup> his comment was quoted years later in numerous articles on the subject. An American officer, delivering a lecture at the United States Army War College, declared unequivocally that "in future wars, there will be more digging and less marching."<sup>11</sup> Both the French General de Négrier and Commandant Colin acknowledged the place of entrenchments on the battlefield in light of Manchurian experience. Like many officers, de Négrier emphasized the need for soldiers to practice digging while lying down--like the Japanese--and noted the use by the Japanese soldiers of steel shields and sand bags. Colin, while admitting trenches, properly criticized the Russians for crowding them too densely, thus causing the soldiers to suffer needlessly from artillery, hand grenades, and machine guns.<sup>12</sup> Some officers unashamedly adopted the concept of digging in; a popular book among British officers of the period warned: "A position once captured must be at once entrenched no matter what may be the exhaustion of the men."<sup>13</sup>

While accepting the reality of entrenchments on the modern battlefield, however, some officers sought to limit the practice as much as possible, out of fear that the technique would become widespread; the overriding concern was that once troops went to ground, they would become enamoured of the process. Countless articles extolled the Japanese method: entrenching when necessary, yet always stressing the offensive. Thus, then-Major Balck insisted that troops should never be allowed to entrench without orders--insisting that the use of the spade must always be the exception.<sup>14</sup>

The differing approaches of the two belligerents in conducting their campaigns resulted in a diversity of opinions regarding tactical operations. The Russians, embracing the principles of Dragomiroff, waged a defensive campaign from the start. On two occasions when they did launch offensive operations (one of which was imposed on the unwilling Kuropatkin)--at the Shaho and Sandepu--they were thrown back with significant losses. Obviously disgruntled, an American observer with the Russians complained that the United States "had nothing to learn from this war for our regular infantry."<sup>15</sup> For those watching from the Russian side, especially during the earlier months of the war, when the Japanese seemed to be using traditional tactics as well, this view seemed appropriate.

The Japanese, through the summer of 1904, initially offered little that could be considered novel, either. But for the observer who cared to notice later, they reworked their tactical formations and concepts so that, by August, any discerning officer would have grasped the changes. In the early phases of the war, the Japanese routinely launched frontal attacks with multiple ranks advancing over open terrain. The devastating impact of modern firepower soon forced a reevaluation of this pattern. The prevailing method of attacking after August became small groups of men, led by officers or NCOs, rushing from covered position to covered position--the attack sometimes lasting for hours, a whole day, or longer. Frontal attacks continued, but they no longer constituted the main effort; hence, they were conducted as supporting attacks, whereas the Japanese now sought to decide the issue through envelopment.

Thus, opinion differed widely as to what lessons the war had to offer regarding tactics. Where some writers felt that the war provided abundant evidence for a reconsideration of traditional methods, others suggested that it presented nothing particularly new. As with many other issues, events in Manchuria were often compared with experiences from South Africa. Therefore, where some officers saw the extension of the infantry firing line in Manchuria as confirming what had happened earlier, others maintained that, in fact, the cry for extended formations

was premature. Those who criticized any tendency to consider extended formations usually expressed the oft-repeated concern about the control of soldiers during battle, arguing that without the moral support of nearby soldiers and the firm influence of his officers, the individual soldier would not perform as desired. Paradoxically, this line of reasoning was intertwined with the problem about the increasing lethality of the battlefield and the difficulty of crossing the fire zone--factors where the solution was sought, once again, in emphasizing the moral issue.<sup>16</sup> Pseudo-scientific Darwinist theories which attempted to explain a nation's inclination or disinclination to battle were inextricably involved in the controversy over tactics as well.<sup>17</sup> Thus, though the use of extended formations in Manchuria was employed on a large scale, a variety of opinions existed after the war about just how relevant the lessons were for western armies; a consensus on this subject, even within the same army, was unlikely.

Surprisingly, however, the argument over tactics--types of formations, placement of the reserves, at what distance the final assault should be delivered, density of the firing line--did not extend completely to the question of frontal attacks. Some officers, while wholeheartedly embracing the cult of the offensive, condemned the frontal attack.<sup>18</sup> These officers recognized the frightening devastation which modern weapons could inflict upon head-on

attackers; they wanted to retain the doctrine of initiative--the offensive--while simultaneously conceding the destructiveness of modern firepower. The answer for them was to use frontal attacks only as holding actions--like the Japanese--while stressing that the decision be made by use of flanking or enveloping attacks. British officers appeared to be the most vocal on this subject, but even the respected Commandant Colin remarked: "The impossibility of taking a naturally strong and well-prepared position frontally shows itself everywhere."<sup>19</sup> Nevertheless, as with nearly every single issue, contrary views were expressed; in an editorial in the Journal of the United States Infantry Association, a writer declared that "this war has proven that a frontal attack against an intrenched position can be successfully made."<sup>20</sup>

While contributing to offensive rhetoric, many writers--fully aware of the firepower dilemma--offered suggestions on ways to improve the chances of success in the attack. Considerable attention was devoted to cover, concealment, and personal protection.<sup>21</sup> These officers felt that troops should not be hindered whatsoever by archaic drill regulations; they wanted attacking soldiers to have the benefit of using every fold in the ground, rock, crevice, or other natural or artificial feature, to allow them to reach the objective intact. Advocates of this view emphasized the power of initiative, citing Japanese successes in Manchuria. An Austrian officer thus wrote:

Face to face with the efficacy of modern fire, it is not possible to mass, to concentrate the troops before the attack, and such a procedure is, moreover, based on the false idea that a body of troops is more ready for the fight in an assembled than in a march formation.

There was no uniformity in the march forward of the Japanese until upon the position where they opened fire....and they tended to get as close as possible to the enemy before opening fire...thus utilizing all the cover that the ground offered.<sup>22</sup>

The most ardent supporters of the offensive stressed the importance of suppressing the objective as much as possible--achieving fire superiority was recognized as imperative for success. Artillery preparation, machine gun support, and tactical deception were all deemed necessary. Tactical reconnaissance, something at which the Japanese excelled and the Russians did not, was correctly mentioned in numerous accounts as vital to any attack. Consequently, officers like Colonel Balck extolled the Japanese for their performance while devoting considerable attention to the subject.<sup>23</sup> Some writers began to discuss the possibilities of systematic aerial reconnaissance; occasionally an article on aeronautics appeared which analyzed the future role of aerial reconnaissance and referred to what might have been in Manchuria if greater use of balloons had been made or if aircraft had been present.<sup>24</sup>

The subject of night attacks produced lengthy commentary. Captain Soloviev stated flatly: "Attacks made in daytime lead to great losses, even in case of success."<sup>25</sup> His remarks were based upon experience; the belligerents had indeed resorted to night attacks with

increasing frequency as the war progressed. Observers recognized this and pondered its implications for the future. In Manchuria, not only were attacks conducted by night, but also routine troop movements, resupply operations, scouting forays, and the like--all to avoid the usually swift and unseen hostile fire which descended upon any observed target. Not surprisingly, therefore, the majority of officers appeared to accept this reality as the cost of doing business. One American observer concluded that "it seems quite certain that night attacks and maneuvers will receive a wide application in future wars, and troops should be carefully trained for this work in time of peace," while Captain Segdwick of the British army noted: "this aspect [night attacks] of modern war must not on any account be lost sight of."<sup>26</sup>

The need for night operations was obvious, but the inherent disorganization, confusion, and potential for disaster was significant; the Japanese and the Russians had each suffered needless casualties in night actions that had gone awry. Captain Niessel, a French officer, devoted several pages in his treatise on the lessons of the war to three prominent incidents in Manchuria where simple mistakes resulted in unnecessary personnel and positional losses; he warned that "it becomes more and more indispensable...to study it...and become proficient in it in advance on account of its special difficulties."<sup>27</sup> The desire to avoid the effects of powerful weapons created by

new technologies contributed immensely to night attacks-- which were in turn threatened by technological innovations. Hence, units conducting an operation at night could never tell when a searchlight or a star shell might expose them to hostile observation and throw an entire plan into disarray. The Russians used searchlights at Port Arthur for both land and sea defense; on several occasions they were instrumental in detecting Japanese naval sorties and ground attacks. Japanese troops employed searchlights as well; an engineer officer reviewing the technical aspects of the war proudly noted that "the Japanese searchlights worked nearly every dark night and interfered with the work of the Russians in their positions and likewise with the activity of the hunting detachments [scouting parties]."20 It was not unusual, then, to find many writers arguing in favor of night attacks while simultaneously warning that this kind of operation required increased control, adequate daylight reconnaissance, clearly and easily recognizable limited objectives, and a high level of training. The Russo-Japanese War demonstrated that, far from offering solutions for the problems of modern warfare, night attacks involved unique difficulties for the tactician.

Astonishingly, the bayonet emerged from the war as an object of almost religious significance. Although today it is difficult to understand how this could have been the case, the literature was nevertheless saturated with unrestrained praise for the virtues of the bayonet.<sup>21</sup>

Within the infantry, no other subject generated such impassioned rhetoric as this weapon. While a few may have cautioned that inconsequential evidence was available to make a final decision, the overwhelming majority of articles proclaimed that the demise of the bayonet, as predicted by some officers after the Boer War, was nothing but the imagination of a misguided minority. Thus, Colonel Cordonnier's declaration that "Now that fire power has asserted a preponderance over shock action with the bayonet, the column has yielded to the ribbon of rifles,"<sup>30</sup> went unheeded in the chorus over the bayonet's resurrection. Furthermore, some officers, including the future chief of staff of the United States Army, Captain Peyton C. March, recommended that the sword, as well as the bayonet, be retained for the infantry.<sup>30</sup>

Traditional attitudes regarding the bayonet made it easy for officers after the war to embellish its importance. There was no doubt that the Russians had indeed, on numerous occasions, repelled many Japanese attacks at the point of the bayonet, and that they had also disrupted final assaults on several occasions by promptly counterattacking with the bayonet at the decisive moment. Moreover, both belligerents, it is true, had profited enormously during night attacks when, having crept undetected right up to the edge of enemy positions, they launched sudden bayonet assaults which often sent their adversaries scurrying to the rear in a state of panic.

Probably the most well-known and sensational instance of this type of attack occurred at Lone Tree Hill (outside Port Arthur), where the two sides conducted continuous night attacks with the bayonet; the hill changed hands repeatedly until finally captured by the Japanese. The fights were particularly bloody; in one night's battle, as Niessel tells us: "the Japanese left 1300 corpses on the ground."<sup>31</sup> Accordingly, the bayonet came to be known as the 'weapon of choice' for night attacks. Some bayonet enthusiasts, pointing to casualty statistics which showed losses from hand-held weapons to be approximately the same as those from artillery, claimed that the value of the bayonet was at least equal to that of the artillery!<sup>32</sup>

Bound by tradition, awed by the Russian soldiers--who always kept their bayonets affixed to their rifles (by regulation)--and bolstered with the seemingly widespread use of the bayonet in many momentous battles, advocates of the bayonet felt certain that Manchurian examples proved that the weapon was as necessary as ever. Closer examination would have shown that Russian soldiers participating in bayonet counterattacks were often brutally cut down by artillery and machine guns, and that in many instances, when the Russians defeated Japanese attacks, the remnants of the attackers who reached the Russian trenches were often so physically exhausted that they fell into the trenches and lay there, gasping for air as Russian defenders rushed to bayonet them. Many writers were

selective in using examples of success to bolster the bayonet's image; usually depicting night attacks with the bayonet as great successes, they failed to detail the other possibilities, where attackers often became hung up in obstacles--usually barbed wire--on their way to the objective, alerted the defenders, and hence were massacred as they struggled to free themselves. The percentage of wounds attributable to bayonets or swords was also in doubt; an American observer, Colonel Havard, stated that many of those with bayonet wounds also had gunshot wounds, leading him to believe that many soldiers probably suffered bullet wounds first and then, immobilized, were bayoneted.<sup>33</sup> This was born out by Lieutenant Sakurai of the Japanese army; wounded and paralyzed by shell fire in one of the battles for Port Arthur, he lay sprawled, but conscious, just beyond the Russian positions. The Japanese attack having been beaten off, he watched with trepidation as Russian soldiers left their trenches to go forward and bayonet and shoot any Japanese whom they found alive.<sup>34</sup> It is important to underline these discrepancies, for they help to illustrate how those who supported the bayonet used the experiences of the war selectively to strengthen their argument.<sup>35</sup> Lessons were derived from the war, but they were not always necessarily the most correct or best ones.

Many officers commented on machine guns and hand grenades. Neither of these weapons was particularly new, but they were used extensively on the battlefields in

Manchuria in a manner that would be duplicated ten years later. The question of what to do with the machine gun remained unresolved; though the weapon had existed as a somewhat feasible weapon for modern warfare since the 1850s, the Russo-Japanese War was the first major war between regular armies in which both sides employed machine guns in large numbers, and with full fire effect.<sup>36</sup> The Russians began the war with the advantage of having adopted Maxim machine guns for their armies prior to hostilities, whereas the Japanese, incredibly, began the war without automatic weapons except for a few in the cavalry.<sup>37</sup> In initial battles, the Japanese attackers suffered grievous losses from machine guns; they had not anticipated the absolute devastation wrought by these engines of destruction. Lieutenant Sakurai said that the machine gun "was the firearm most dreaded by us;" his description of the effects of the machine gun in battle could easily have been written by a combatant of the Great War:

And the sound it makes! Heard close by, it is a rapid succession of tap, tap, tap; but from a distance it sounds like a power loom heard late at night when everything else is hushed. It is a sickening, horrible sound! The Russians regarded this machine gun as their best friend, and certainly it did very much as a means of defense. They were wonderfully clever in the use of this machine. They would wait till our men came very near them, four or five ken only [about thirty feet], 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 besom of destruction, the result being hills and mounds of dead.<sup>38</sup>

By late 1904, the Japanese needed no further convincing; the infantry was issued large numbers of machine guns.<sup>39</sup>

There was little dispute over the worth of the weapon; J. Taburno, a Russian civil engineer and special correspondent for the Russian publication Novoe Vremia, who covered operations throughout Manchuria, wrote that "There is no doubt that machine guns play an important role, especially in the defense--one machine gun being equal to a company of soldiers."<sup>40</sup> Military writers were more circumspect, but at the very least--as one member of the Aldershot Military Society put it--Manchuria had proved that "these weapons exercised a considerable influence on the battlefield."<sup>41</sup> Still, several publications did not mention these weapons at all. Strangely, some writers who waxed eloquent about the return of the bayonet remained silent on the machine gun. While many writers did not offer an opinion on the weapon, their silence on the subject while glorifying the bayonet further denotes the kind of selective analysis which all too often occurred after the war among infantry officers.

Uncertainty about the machine gun hinged upon whether it should be an infantry or cavalry weapon. Other issues centering on the machine gun such as mechanical malfunctions, protection for the gunner, and means of employment, were eventually resolved to the majority's satisfaction; improvement of design and better training resolved most malfunctions, steel shields--as with artillery pieces--were added to protect the gunner, and employment of the weapons in pairs in the defensive seemed

to address most critics' concerns about the unwieldy nature of the machine gun and its vulnerability to artillery fire. While such changes made the weapon more versatile for use on the battlefield, they did not solve the tactical dilemma of exactly how to organize the guns into units. Discussion of the machine gun after the war was always labeled separately--it was discussed in the same way as technical subjects; this highlighted the fact that most officers simply did not know how to categorize the device.

Several suggestions were submitted on ways to improve the guns and organize them, yet very few took the step of recommending definitively whether they should go to the infantry or cavalry, or both; General de Négrier advocated this latter solution.<sup>42</sup> A few artillerymen, comparing the performance of machine guns to artillery in the Russo-Japanese War, recommended that machine guns be organized into batteries and assigned to the artillery.<sup>43</sup> Other recommendations stated that the weapons should be organized into detachments, and that the personnel assigned to such a unit should receive special training, have distinctive insignia, and an officer in charge who was an indisputable expert with it<sup>44</sup>--in short, almost all the characteristics of a separate branch. Manchuria had undoubtedly demonstrated the power of the machine gun, especially for the defensive. However, the fact that in no two western armies was it employed or organized in even remotely similar fashion up to the First World War showed the

uncertainty among traditionally-minded officers about the place of this device on the modern battlefield.<sup>45</sup>

The hand grenade, which became an essential accessory to the trench fighters of World War One, was used extensively at Port Arthur, Mukden, and in other battles throughout Manchuria. One Russian officer, involved in the brutal fight for 203-Meter Hill outside Port Arthur, remarked how his men at one point lost confidence in their rifles during a particularly savage attack and resorted to hand grenades--expending 7,000 in one day.<sup>46</sup> As with the machine gun, reaction to hand grenades was mixed. Some officers discussed their use and predicted their application in future wars, some ignored them, and a few others who did consider the subject claimed that the weapon was not remarkable or worth much value; writers who expressed this view often concentrated on the frequent duds and pointed to the small bursting radius produced. Yet, even though both sides had used them with great effect, especially in lengthy and bitter fighting over fortifications and entrenchments, in most cases the literature relegated hand grenades to second-class status. Once again, the possibilities of the hand grenade as an important weapon, like the machine gun, seem to have been overlooked. What is amazing is that the supposed offensive properties of the bayonet--which required the attacker to cover the entire fire zone and then make physical contact with the enemy in order to make the kill--were indirectly

held to be greater than those of the hand grenade, which offered the possibility of halting short of the enemy's most punishing fire and engaging him from behind cover. Old traditions die hard, and the writers after the Russo-Japanese War tell us as much by what they did not say as by what they did.

Infantry writers also touched upon numerous other issues, analyzing such areas as communications, feeding arrangements, transportation, field shelter (tentage), and mobility. Most observers were tremendously impressed with the rapidity of Japanese advances during the assault; this was explained by the fact that the Japanese normally dropped their packs in designated locations prior to jumping off, and carried only their weapon, water bottle, and a makeshift bandoleer for ammunition when attacking. The other factor which enabled them to perform so quickly and aggressively in the field was their physical fitness.<sup>47</sup> Whether on the march or in the attack, the ability of the Japanese soldier to endure profound hardships was noted by numerous writers, including Jack London--who, while despising the race generally--remarked that the Japanese infantry "is simply superb" and that "it is very hard to find any equals in the world."<sup>48</sup> Noticeably absent from the discussion was any mention of the Japanese use of poison gas in the war. Frustrated by their inability to crack the outer forts at Port Arthur, the Japanese had resorted--on a few occasions--to the use

of arsenic smoke in conjunction with mining operations to gain footholds in designated forts. This was successful in at least one instance.<sup>49</sup> Thus, another significant and horrid feature of the Great War was foretold in Manchuria.

The lesson which seemed to be the most important to nearly every writer was that of preparation--both moral and physical. The embarrassing manner in which previously small and ignored Japan had thrashed Russia on the battlefield and on the ocean provided more than enough reason why this was necessary. Writers in Russia, Japan, western Europe, and the United States all trumpeted the vital requirement to be ready. Being prepared not only applied to soldiers on active duty, but also to reserves and the civilian population. Preparation meant having the latest weapons and equipment, the brightest and best officers, and well-trained, fit, and motivated soldiers. It required that the economy be prepared and capable of supporting the national effort. Countless writers criticized Russia's lack of preparation as her single greatest mistake in the war, and warned their readers that improvements were vitally necessary in their own respective countries. One writer summed up all these points when he wrote: "But above all the lessons of the War, one stands out pre-eminently; it is, "Be Ready."<sup>50</sup>

## NOTES

1. Thomas F. Millard, "New Features of War," Scribner's 37 (January 1905): 60-69.
2. Ibid., 63.
3. Judson, op. cit., 213; Colonel E.L.V. Cordonnier, The Japanese in Manchuria, vol. II, trans. C.F. Atkinson (London: Hugh Rees Ltd., 1914), 252; Colonel William Balck, Tactics, vol. I, trans. Walter Krueger (Fort Leavenworth: U.S. Cavalry Association, 1911), 19.
4. General Sir Edward B. Hamley, Operations of War (Edinburgh: William Blackwood and Sons, 1909), 406.
5. General Sir Ian Hamilton, A Staff Officer's Scrap-Book (London: Edward Arnold, 1906), 11-13.
6. Idem, Compulsory Service (London: John Murray, 1910), 131.
7. Lieutenant Colonel Montaigne, "The Teachings of the Russo-Japanese War," trans. in Infantry Journal 10 (September-October 1913): 291. Hereafter Infantry.
8. See, for example, "Consumption and Replenishment of Ammunition in the Russian Infantry and Artillery in the Russo-Japanese War," Internationale Revue über die Gesamten Armeen und Flotten, Supplement 82 (January 1906): 8-11; trans. on file at the U.S. Army War College, Military History Institute, Carlisle Barracks, PA. Hereafter AWC.
9. See, for example, First Lieutenant J.H. Pelot, "Lessons from the Russian-Japanese War, Grouping and Moving of the [sic] Prisoners of War," Journal of the Military Service Institution of the United States 45 (September-October 1909): 303-305. Hereafter JMSIUS. An interesting document which compares the losses of 1904-1905 with those of 1870-1871 is found in "From the Statistics of Losses in the East Asiatic War of 1904-1905 and in the Campaign of 1870-1871," Vierteljahrshefte für Truppenführung und Heereskunde (1st Quarter, 1908): 159-188; a separate translation is on file at the AWC.
10. Captain L.Z. Soloviev, Actual Experiences in War (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906), 29.
11. Captain Sherwood A. Cheney, "The Influence of Fortification in War, as Shown by the Manchurian Campaign of 1905-05," lecture presented at U.S. Army War College, 11 June 1908, no. 8775; on file at AWC.

12. General de Négrier, Lessons of the Russo-Japanese War, trans. E. Louis Spiers (London: Hugh Rees Ltd., 1906), 70-71; Commandant J. Colin, The Transformations of War, trans. L.H.R. Pope-Hennessy (London: Hugh Rees Ltd., 1912), 99, 157-158.

13. Captain A.F. Becke, An Introduction to the History of Tactics 1740-1905 (London: Hugh Rees Ltd., 1909), 92.

14. Major Balck, "The Intrenchment of Infantry During Attack," Infantry 3 (1 October 1906): 152-153, trans. from Internationale Revue über die Gesamten Armeen und Flotten.

15. Captain Carl Reichmann, Reports of Military Observers, Part I, 279.

16. See, for example, Major Lawson (Greys), "How Can Moral Qualities Best Be Developed during the Preparation of the Officer and the Man for the Duties Each Will Carry Out in War?", Journal of the Royal United Services Institution 58 (April 1914): 432, 441. Hereafter JRUSI.

17. A staunch proponent of this type of thinking was Lieutenant Colonel Maude of the British army, who published several articles on the subject. See, for example, The Evolution of Modern Strategy (London: Hugh Rees Ltd., 1905), 4, 10. In reviewing the available literature, this line of thought was paramount in all armies to varying degrees.

18. See, for example, Captain H.M. Johnstone, History of Tactics (London: Hugh Rees Ltd., 1906), 212; de Négrier, 8, 9; E.M. Lloyd, A Review of the History of Infantry (Longman's, Green and Co., 1908), 286. Balck attributed English failures in the Boer War and those of the Japanese, among other factors, to frontal attacks. Tactics, vol. I, 340-343.

19. Colin, 145.

20. "Some Notes on the Japanese Infantry," Infantry 3 (1 January 1906): 28.

21. An excellent article in this regard is Major G.H.J. Rooke, "Shielded Infantry and the Decisive Frontal Attack," JRUSI 53 (June 1914): 774.

22. Captain Otto Ferjentsik, "The Infantry Attack--Lessons from the Russo-Japanese War," trans. in Infantry 2 (September 1909): 290-291.

23. Balck, Tactics, vol. I, 248-254, 346-347.

24. See, for example, Captain W.A. King, "Aerial Reconnaissance, Its Possible Effect on Strategy and Tactics," JMSIUS 53 (November-December 1913): 450-455.

25. Soloviev, 28.

26. Major Joseph Kuhn, Reports of Military Observers, Part III, 229; Captain F.R. Sedgwick, The Russo-Japanese War on Land (London: Forster Groom & Co., 1908), 142.

27. Captain Niessel, Enseignements tactiques découlant de la Guerre russo-japonaise (Paris: Henri Charles-Lavauzelle, n.d.), 81; trans. on hand at the United States Army Infantry School Library, Fort Benning, GA.

28. Captain Carl Toepfer, "Technics in the Russo-Japanese War," trans. Captain Frederick L. Knudsen, Professional Memoirs 2 (1910): 187-188. Editions of this journal, which was the precursor to U.S. Engineer, are on hand in the Special Collection at the Cadet Library at the United States Military Academy, West Point, NY. Hereafter USMA.

29. See, for example, Montaigne, 298-299; Niessel, 30-32; Balck, Tactics, vol. I, 382; Ferjentsik, 292-293; Major John P. Wisser, "The Strategy and Tactics of the Russo-Japanese War," United Service Magazine 8 (December 1905): 519--hereafter USM; Captain Cromwell Stacey, "Training in Bayonet Fighting," Infantry 10 (May-June 1914): 861.

30. Cordonnier, vol. II, 234.

31. March, op. cit., 54.

32. Niessel, 28. Of the original accounts which are available in English, Niessel's is one of the best in describing the details of the fight for Lone Tree Hill, which the Russians--whenever they possessed it--called Pontilov Hill, after the commander whose responsibility it was to retake it.

33. "Statistics of Losses," 13 (see note 9). This is one of the best sources for comparisons in this regard. The approximate ratio for casualties inflicted by hand weapons/rifle fire/artillery fire was 7%/83%/10% respectively. Colonel Havard, a military surgeon familiar with combat wounds, put the figures at 7%/85%/8%; see Reports of Military Observers, Part III, 33.

34. Lieutenant Tadayoshi Sakurai, Human Bullets, trans. Masujiro Honda (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin & Co., 1908), 244-245. Sakurai was spared this ignominious end due to the efforts of some of his soldiers, who risked their lives

under intense fire to go forward and carry him to safety.

35. See Havard, 33. On a side note, another American surgeon observed that of the thousands of wounds he had seen, bayonet and sword wounds were so rare that he had no real data on them. In fact, he had seen one sword wound, and suspected that it had been delivered after the man was shot off his horse. See Major Charles Lynch, Reports of Military Observers, Part IV, 193-194.

36. Lieutenant Colonel George M. Chinn, The Machine Gun. History, Evolution, and Development of Manual, Automatic, and Airborne Repeating Weapons, vol. I (Washington, D.C.: Bureau of Ordnance, Department of the Navy, 1951), 24-31, 145.

37. Ibid., 145.

38. Sakurai, 152-153.

39. Chinn, 145-146.

40. J. Taburno, The Truth About the War, trans. Victoria Von Kreuter (Kansas City, MO.: Franklin Hudson Publishing Co., 1905), 110.

41. Colonel J.A.L. Haldane, Some Lessons from the Russo-Japanese War (London: Hugh Rees Ltd., 1906), 16; this publication of the Aldershot Military Society is on hand at the AWC.

42. de Négrier, 54.

43. Captain J.E. McMahon, "The Role of the Machine Gun in Modern War," Infantry 2 (July 1905): 26-32.

44. One of the more technical articles on this subject was written by Lieutenant Colonel Montgomery M. Macomb, an American observer who submitted a special report on machine guns to the Second Division of the General Staff, which was later published in Infantry. See "Machine Guns in the Russian Army," Infantry 3 (January 1907): 14-21.

45. Balck's Tactics provides voluminous information on this subject; see vol. I, 259-300, and Vol. II, 133-136.

46. Staff-Captain Kostiusko, "The Final Struggle for 203-Meter Hill at Port Arthur," trans. F.E.G. Skey, Professional Memoirs 3 (1911): 95. Special Collection, USMA.

47. See, for example, Haldane, Reports from British Officers, vol. II, 513.

48. Labor, et. al., op. cit., 415.
49. E.K. Nojine, The Truth About Port Arthur, trans. Captain A.B. Lindsay (New York: E.P. Dutton and Co., 1908), 274.
50. Sedgwick, 166.

### CHAPTER THREE: ARTILLERY

Artillerymen were the most open-minded about the lessons of the war and displayed the ability to analyze the issues with considerably more objectivity and circumspection than officers in the other two combat arms, particularly the cavalry. The very nature of much of the material discussed by artillery officers demonstrated this clearly; in the journals, for instance, the articles more often than not were extremely technical, dealing with such issues as gunnery, ballistics, properties of gases, chemicals, armor composition, physics of explosives, mathematics, and the like. During the war itself, much of the literature often carried more photographs and stories of the naval engagements than of the land battles. This was partly due to the fact that the war had started with a naval attack, thus more data was initially available on naval matters, but it also reflected intense interest on behalf of artillerymen who were fascinated by the damage done to armor plate by modern shells and explosives under wartime conditions. Since Port Arthur consisted of vast coastal fortifications which were intimately involved throughout the siege in defending the fortress, it was natural that coastal artillery officers were eager to

evaluate the lessons of the campaign.<sup>1</sup> It was not unusual, therefore, to find voluminous material generated by artillery officers on such topics as harbor defense and ship specifications, with frequent mention made of Port Arthur.

Two points stand out when analyzing what artillery officers wrote about the Russo-Japanese War; the first was the seemingly widespread agreement among them about the applicability and relevance of the lessons of the war for the artillery, and the second was the absence of repeated references to the American Civil War or the Franco-Prussian War--both of which figured prominently in writings by infantry and cavalry officers. As far as interpreting any lessons was concerned, it was apparent that artillerymen everywhere found more to agree with than to haggle over. Naturally, there were some minor gradations of opinion here and there, but whenever significantly differing views were expressed, more often than not they were not those of artillerists. On the second point, that of referring to earlier wars, artillerymen generally were forward-looking; unlike their brothers-in-arms, they seemed little inclined to relive the glory of past battles. Whereas infantry and cavalry officers, especially the latter, were prone to judge events in Manchuria by past standards, artillerymen were far more swayed by the realities of modernizing influences.

For artillery officers, the most critical lesson of the war was the absolute necessity of employing indirect fire--the era of firing on the field of battle in view of the enemy was unquestionably over. Improving technology had not only perfected the ballistics and functioning of the gun and shell, but had also introduced range finders and accurate surveying equipment, thus increasing the likelihood of a devastating initial bombardment. It was the Japanese who understood this principle from the outset, whereas the Russians initially held to standard practice and employed their guns close together in the open, on forward slopes, and on hilltops.<sup>2</sup> Thus, at the first encounter at the Yalu, the Russians emplaced their artillery accordingly. David Fraser of the Times, who was present, reported that no precautions of any kind were taken to conceal the guns: "the spokes of their wheels, the gunners, and their every movement being plainly discernable with glasses from the Korean bank [Japanese side].<sup>3</sup> As expected the Japanese, who had expertly infiltrated their troops and artillery into position without being detected by the enemy, completely decimated the Russian batteries on the morning of the attack. The Russians were totally surprised, and completely demoralized by the accurate--and worse yet--unseen fire falling in their midst. General Hamilton wrote that the Japanese artillery, which remained unscathed, put entire batteries out of action in minutes.<sup>4</sup> The Russians learned fast; afterwards, observers noted on

many occasions that Russian batteries selected masked positions which afforded superb protection.

Other armies learned fast, too, and in the material written after the war, one has to search diligently for skeptics who wanted to eschew indirect fire. The irony of the situation in Manchuria contributed to the willingness to embrace this tactic. The Russians actually possessed the better and heavier field pieces, and of all the branches, the Russian artillery eventually turned out to be a match for the Japanese; the Japanese equipment was inferior in quality, although they enjoyed a numerical advantage. The Japanese also experienced problems with mounts--their draft horses were wretched animals which struggled under the weight of the guns and limbers--thus, their artillery was plagued with mobility difficulties throughout the war.<sup>5</sup> But whatever they lacked as far as the quality of their guns, the Japanese more than made up for through the superb training of their gun crews and the employment of their batteries in the indirect mode.<sup>6</sup> Manchuria convinced the overwhelming majority of artillery officers that this was now the proper way to employ the arm; they seemed eager to avoid what Russian Colonel Novikov related befell those batteries foolish enough to "position more or less in the open, [where] they were exposed to effective fire of artillery, infantry, and machine guns."<sup>7</sup>

The essential corollary to having artillery employ indirect fire was the necessity of using observers to control and adjust the fire; without them, the batteries were blind and useless. Adopting this tactic required a substantial shift in traditional thinking--not only would the gunners no longer see and identify their target, or observe the effect of their fire, but more often than not this new technique also meant that the battery commander might not even remain with his battery during the battle. Instead, he would be forward observing the battlefield. This need for observers greatly complicated the process of providing artillery support; now, men had to be trained in the details of spotting and making corrections, a system had to be designed for computing the corrections so that they could be manually applied to the guns, and means of communicating between the far-off observer and the elusive battery had to be devised. Many writers commented on the Japanese method of sending highly-trained observer teams of non-commissioned officers and orderlies forward with the advanced attacking party in order to keep the battery commander informed of the tactical situation, as well as to control the artillery fire; this practice worked well and was highly praised.<sup>9</sup> Considerable mention was made of the need for adequately equipping the observers, with telescopic sights, field glasses, and signalling devices being the minimum required equipment.<sup>9</sup> In the years just prior to World War I, some astute artillerymen began to

speak of using aircraft for artillery observation--a further indication of the broad-mindedness which characterized many officers of this branch.<sup>10</sup>

The Russo-Japanese War, by convincing most artillerymen of the need for firing from masked positions, marked the end of an era; the war demonstrated clearly that artillery duels in the open were a thing of the past, and the vast majority of artillery officers said so emphatically. The very idea of attempting to engage the enemy's artillery while unprotected now seemed ludicrous. In this respect, however, a few of the writings revealed a reluctant attitude about having to employ artillery this way, thus indicating that visions of glory and nostalgia for the past were not totally absent among officers of this branch. French Major Wallut, criticizing the traditional mentality regarding artillery fights--which obviously was still manifesting itself in the horse artillery, at least--wrote:

There still exist some few artillerymen of the old school for whom the height of the art consists, in the majority of cases, of coming into position at an increased galop [sic] and firing the first shot immediately in the air, or in the dust. They do not admit masked fire. To hide oneself is to show lack of courage.<sup>11</sup>

Despite the most fervent wishes of the glory-seekers, however, the days of artillery massing on the wings of the infantry and having it out with the enemy's artillery were over; now, the central theme was to do everything possible

to remain invisible and stay behind cover. Lieutenant Neuffer, a young German artillery officer who won an essay contest on the artillery lessons of the war, wrote: "It results logically from the experience of this war that there will be no more artillery duels."<sup>12</sup> A British journal put it succinctly: "The days of the artillery duel pure and simple are over," while the Revue d'Artillerie declared that "In future [wars] there will be no more decisive artillery combats."<sup>13</sup>

The emerging consensus about not exposing oneself to the enemy's fire and the effects of that fire if detected had a profound impact on the way artillerymen expected to conduct business in the future. Firing from masked positions in support of the infantry now entailed frequently having to fire over the heads of friendly infantry--something that both branches would have to get accustomed to. Movement in view of the enemy became more and more the bane of the artillery; writers pointed out repeatedly where both belligerents in Manchuria, after the initial lessons of the earlier battles, never moved their batteries in daylight if they could avoid it. Night operations for the artillery, as for the infantry, thus assumed greater importance. In fact, concern over being engaged while on the move in daylight was so considerable that some writers felt that once in position, a battery should not move again, no matter what, until nightfall.<sup>14</sup> The need for augmenting the concealment of the battery was

frequently mentioned, especially when the artillery had absolutely no alternative but to fire in the open or from partially exposed positions, such as from prepared gun pits on far slopes of hill-tops. Here the Japanese methods of concealment were cited again and again, and properly so, for their techniques were truly ingenious. Some books and journals, and particularly the observers' reports, contained photographs or drawings of Japanese batteries cleverly hidden behind wooden screens with tree branches tied to them, or guns sighted in folds in the ground with sand bags, bushes, and grain stalks blended together to obscure them.<sup>15</sup> These were strange ways, indeed, of fighting a war.

If, prior to the onset of hostilities, professional military men did not expect to see the widespread employment of artillery using indirect fire, they certainly were unprepared for what turned out to be a bigger surprise: artillerymen erecting fortifications around their guns, digging trenches, and creating decoy batteries of wheels and logs to deceive the enemy. What was more unexpected was that these activities usually occurred whether the guns were masked or not. The fact of the matter was that improvements in all aspects of artillery, such as modern fire-control equipment, range finders, and crater analysis, had progressed to the point where well-trained artillerymen could ascertain the probable location of an enemy gun, or at least an approximate azimuth to it, within a reasonable

amount of time so as to direct counter-battery fire against it. The literature warned readers that the state of the art technology used in Manchuria had required artillerymen there to go to ground frequently in order to survive; entrenching, so prevalent in discussions involving the infantry, received an encore in artillery circles. General Hamilton's comment on Japanese artillery at one of the engagements at the Sha Ho, though meant to be critical, illustrates that the batteries he observed there firmly adhered to the entrenching philosophy: "There is no doubt that the Japanese guns are so deeply dug into the ground that they have become almost as immobile as guns of position."<sup>16</sup>

The Russians usually had the advantage for, operating primarily on the defensive, their engineers and gunners normally had plenty of time to build rugged gun pits and proper trenches, even erecting overhead cover for the gun if the materials and time were available. This was especially true at Port Arthur within the innermost forts, where the gun pits were constructed with reinforced concrete and included living quarters and ammunition magazines.<sup>17</sup> The superiority of the Russian artillery in terms of range, weight of projectile, mobility, and rapidity of fire, coupled with the advantages afforded by firing from pre-selected and prepared positions, created enormous difficulties for the Japanese. Thus, the observers' initial astonishment at seeing the Japanese

gunners digging in their guns later turned to approval when it was realized that this was the only way to endure on the modern battlefield. Perhaps most amazing of all were the bombardments that dug-in artillery units could sustain and then afterwards resume firing. This actually became the procedure in many of the Japanese batteries; whenever the Russian artillery would begin a preparation on them, the Japanese gunners would cease firing and get in their trenches. Once the shelling stopped, they would immediately prepare for action and reply with their own bombardment.<sup>18</sup> From all this an important and unforeseen lesson was learned; field artillery properly placed and entrenched was extremely difficult to neutralize, even after the most punishing bombardment. Lieutenant Colonel Hume, a British observer, noted this lesson: "except under the most favorable conditions...or with...great superiority in number or power of guns, it is practically impossible to silence an opponent's artillery if it be well-entrenched."<sup>19</sup> The most far-reaching impact of this lesson was that the artillery's ability to destroy the enemy's supporting artillery was now in question; additionally, it meant that the infantry could no longer expect to advance with the certainty that the enemy's guns had been silenced. The ante for the attacker was being further raised.

Trenches were not the only means used by the artillery on both sides to obtain protection on the battlefield--gun shields were employed on a large scale in Manchuria,

particularly by the Japanese, and most writers heartily endorsed the idea. They were deemed valuable not just for the physical protection they provided, but also for the psychological benefit as well. Gun shields became so popular with Japanese cannoneers that on those older guns which did not have them, the crews improvised wooden or light metal shields and attached them to the carriage--both above and below the axle.<sup>20</sup> Contemporary writers understood that the shields would not be effective under a heavy bombardment or the near-miss of a large shell; nevertheless, the experiences from Manchuria were unmistakable, and artillery officers felt that shields were of value for the protection they did offer against artillery fire, and that they were even more necessary for protection against rifle and machine gun fire that batteries usually encountered when forced to fire in the open. Colonel Balck's comment on shields epitomized the thinking about them after the war: "one will never be able to produce so annihilating an effect on the personnel of a battery provided with shields as on that of one without shields."<sup>21</sup> Ironically, the biggest concern about shields was with the increased weight and the attendant transportability problems involved. Even so, there seemed to be universal acceptance among artillerymen that shields were now an indispensable feature of the gun. Once again, Balck very suitably summed up the prevailing view: "The objection made to gun shields...that they [are] disproportionately

heavy...[is] outweighed by the advantage of cover they afford the cannoneers against shrapnel fire."<sup>22</sup> By adopting the use of shields, artillerymen showed once more their ability to adapt to the on-going transformations of modern warfare.

The willingness to adopt openly the concept of indirect fire did not in the least imply that artillery officers advocated the abandonment of the battlefield at the infantry's expense. In fact, artillerymen nobly reasserted their primary function as that of supporting the infantry. Essay-winner Lieutenant Neuffer remarked: "The most important lesson to be drawn from the Manchurian War is not new; that war only confirms and completes the rule: that the first duty of field artillery is efficiently to support the infantry."<sup>23</sup> Colonel Cordonnier, in a revealing passage where he castigated the Japanese artillery for what he felt was inadequate support for the infantry during a battle near Liaoyang, proclaimed: "All field artillery technique is radically wrong that has not as its first principle and motto, 'All for the infantry.'"<sup>24</sup> These sentiments were echoed throughout Europe and the United States.

Paradoxically, this duty of supporting the infantry meant firing in the open, if necessary. But unlike the rhetoric spouted by the infantry and cavalry, artillery officers wrote about this subject seriously. For the most part, they had no illusions about combat; they studied the

effects of explosives, ballistics, and all the other aspects of their trade, scientifically. It was no game to artillery officers; they knew once in the open, in sight of the enemy, that it was only a matter of time before being effectively pummeled with shrapnel and high explosive--the question was when, not if. Yet, they were still soldiers, and firmly committed to supporting the infantry. A few officers suggested having light guns advance with the infantry, declaring that "the infantry should be supported to the limit of possibility and endurance."<sup>25</sup> One officer, however, obviously imbued with the "true artillery spirit" à la cavalry, emphatically supported this approach; in his view:

Artillerymen are not meant to be immortal, and their predominant preoccupation should not be to live until tomorrow, but to do as much damage as possible to the enemy and ensure the success of the infantry assault.<sup>26</sup>

Most officers, though, seemed to think that the guns should support from masked positions as long as possible, and then displace forward to support the infantry only when absolutely essential to insure the success of an attack. These officers understood that artillery batteries trying to gallop up to a firing position in the thick of battle and then preparing their guns for action would be extremely vulnerable--they intelligently advised against it. Interestingly, Captain Niessel scrutinized Russian reports and accounts after the war and found that the Russians, who so lavishly expended their infantry in frontal bayonet attacks, did not in one instance have their artillery

accompany an attack.<sup>27</sup> The predominant theme, then, seemed to be adequately summed up by a French writer as follows:

During the infantry combat the batteries should occupy positions concealed from the enemy's view; however, they should not hesitate to take up positions in the open when that is the only means of efficaciously assisting their infantry.<sup>28</sup>

Much as artillery officers collectively approached their trade with a more pragmatic understanding of modern warfare, this in no way signified that they disregarded moral influences in battle. Hence, the debate over whether or not artillery batteries should expose themselves on the field stemmed partly from a concern that their absence might unnerve the infantry, especially if the infantry was being bombarded by enemy artillery; the problem, as many writers saw it, was that artillery firing from masked positions not only hindered the enemy's observation but also prevented friendly troops from receiving the psychological boost normally associated with watching one's own guns respond to the enemy. With this thought clearly in mind, one officer stated that "the artillery must send some of its guns to the closest ranges, from a standpoint of moral support if no other."<sup>29</sup> Another issue which received considerable attention was the displacement of the guns: when and how was the best way to do it without adversely affecting the morale of the infantry? This was a delicate issue; in Manchuria, when once the war reached the stage where most artillery displacements occurred at night, withdrawing batteries often unsettled the friendly infantry

who, although they could not usually see them, could hear the teams in the clear night air. Lateral movements along the front did not generate too much concern--these simply indicated a shift in position for better survivability or perhaps for purposes of realigning the batteries to concentrate artillery fire on an enemy target. Artillery moving to the rear, on the other hand, caused a worrisome effect among the infantry--it meant that the front was in danger of collapse or was being sacrificed for other more important points elsewhere. A bigger problem was what to do if a battery came under fire while it was supporting an attack; if the battery stopped firing and sought shelter, the attacking infantry would become demoralized and might possibly fail, yet if the gunners kept firing they might very well be destroyed and become incapable of further assisting the infantry. It was a difficult dilemma. A Russian officer with lengthy experience in Manchuria, only too familiar with these issues, voiced some particularly relevant comments on these matters. Concerning the movement of artillery, he remarked that "The premature withdrawal of artillery produced an extremely bad moral effect....The sound of guns retiring at night was a sure sign that the battle was lost...every man understood its meaning." He also warned that troops "soon estimate the true worth of a battery which is bad in action and attach no worth to it."<sup>30</sup> This meant, of course, that the infantry would not assist in moving the gun over difficult

terrain and would not protect it in battle. The lesson for the artillery was obvious.

Due to many problems being created on the battlefield by technology and the way that this influence was disrupting traditional tactics, the call for teamwork went out as an absolute must. This positive trend was voiced the loudest by artillery officers, who hoped to alleviate many of the difficulties mentioned above through greater cooperation with the other arms. Artillerymen very astutely recognized that warfare was becoming a more lethal, complicated, and mammoth enterprise than ever before; they realized that success could not be achieved by operating in a vacuum. Once again, the Japanese inspired this orientation by the splendid fashion in which they had supported their infantry.<sup>31</sup> Incidentally, the bias in favor of the Japanese artillery at the expense of the Russian after the war was somewhat misplaced; the Russian artillery performed relatively well once it learned its lessons after the Yalu, and on several occasions it played havoc with Japanese batteries. The fact that the Russians were usually on the defensive, however, obviously affected the ability of many officers later to appreciate just how well the Russians had performed. Nevertheless, it cannot be denied that in conducting their attacks the Japanese clearly demonstrated consummate skill and foresight in coordinating their various combat and support functions. Japanese artillery commanders were fully briefed on the ground tactical plan

and worked side by side with their infantry counterparts in devising the necessary fire support plan. Most impressive, however, was the actual conduct of the supporting batteries during the attack; they continued firing into the enemy trenches as the attacking Japanese infantry drew near, sometimes maintaining their fire just beyond. In searching for obvious examples of teamwork, writers after the war often referred to the way in which the Japanese infantry carried flags with them in the attack for signalling to the supporting artillery as the very essence of what they wanted to achieve in combined arms operations. An American artillery officer summed up the combined arms appeal by using a clever analogy:

The ideal is a system of tactics of the combined arms, in which each plays its part accurately; there should be no more thought of independence by infantry, cavalry, or artillery than by the strings, brass and wood-wind of an orchestra, or the steam-valve, piston and connecting rod of an engine.<sup>32</sup>

Europeans sought to instill this mentality in their armies, too; General Rohne, the respected German artillery theorist, stated that "The close combined action of the two arms will be required more than ever before," and the Revue d'Artillerie informed its readers that "Above all, the artillery must act in concert with the infantry; every other object must be subordinated to that of facilitating the forward progress of our infantry."<sup>33</sup>

Doctrinally, events in Manchuria convinced many officers afterwards that the manner in which the artillery supported the infantry needed to be revised. Previously,

the standard procedure had been for the artillery to lay down a devastating preparation prior to the infantry attack, with the assumption that the majority of the enemy's infantry would be killed or demoralized and his supporting artillery neutralized. The lessons from Manchuria refuted this premise so thoroughly that shrewd officers in many countries advised a total reevaluation of the primary mission of the supporting artillery in the attack. What is so absolutely ironical in view of what happened in Europe ten years later was the universal discussion about survivability; a considerable amount of material from 1905 to 1914 concerned the apprehensions of artillery officers about the inability of artillery fire to silence enemy batteries. The general opinion was that attacking infantry could no longer assume that once they launched their attack that they were safe from enemy artillery. Thus, the cherished doctrine of the offensive received another blow: Manchuria had demonstrated that infantry properly entrenched could survive a heavy bombardment and then repel a determined attack; it also revealed that artillery--by entrenching, using shields, firing from masked positions, and dispersing its guns--could survive an equally heavy bombardment and afterwards continue to be a threat. This was a prominent theme in the literature that obviously bothered many officers. Colonel Neznamov stated that Japanese siege guns and the monstrous 11-inch seacoast mortars--which the Japanese used at Port

Arthur and laboriously moved north later--played no decisive role in the battles at Mukden.<sup>34</sup> Such a revelation from one who had witnessed first-hand the results of these weapons had a telling effect on those who insisted that artillery fire could prepare the way as it had traditionally done before. Russian war correspondent E.K. Nojine also drew attention to this issue by recalling, with amazement, the murderous bombardments that the defenders at Port Arthur sustained throughout the campaign, yet usually recovering in time to thwart Japanese attacks. During one particularly savage battle, Nojine himself remained in the forward-most forts and wrote of how the Japanese attack was preceded by a four-day bombardment of incredible intensity, but was nevertheless repulsed by the Russians with 10,000 Japanese casualties.<sup>35</sup> Such experiences prompted one officer, in writing on the defense of an entrenched position, to remark: "They [defenders] can not be driven from their trenches by artillery."<sup>36</sup> His comments were equally applicable to entrenched artillery.

An interesting experiment conducted by the United States Army at Fort Riley, Kansas, in 1907 provided some valuable insights into the effects of artillery fire on prepared fortifications.<sup>37</sup> An experimental redoubt was constructed to the latest standards of the period and was then subjected to a variety of artillery and machine gun fire for a period of seven days. The board of officers responsible for the test included two who had served as

observers in Manchuria: one an artillery officer, the other an engineer. The redoubt consisted of galleries, bomb-proofs, and sand-bagged parapets, and was built by an engineer battalion assisted by an infantry detail. Silhouettes were placed throughout the redoubt to represent defenders. The position was completed by an outer perimeter of wire obstacles and ditches. In short, the redoubt represented a battalion defensive position that could have been completed in six days by four hundred men working in daylight only.<sup>30</sup> The artillery pieces used were the 3-inch field gun, the 5-inch siege gun, and the 7-inch siege howitzer. The results of the test were significant and highly informative of the durability of modern fortifications. While demonstrating that the heavier projectile of the 7-inch howitzer was the most effective, especially at long ranges because of the plunging fire obtained, the 3- and 5-inch guns were disappointingly ineffective. Most officers witnessing the entire demonstration were impressed with the punishment which the redoubt sustained, while remaining relatively intact. Board members evaluated the fortifications after each period of firing, and the official verdict was that the casualties would have been less than expected. Overall, the experiment further indicated just how much more difficult the artillery's job was becoming in neutralizing targets. Colonel Macomb, the testing board's artillery officer and a former observer in Manchuria, wrote that the

experiments confirmed everything that he had observed during the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>39</sup>

The recommended solution, then, for exactly how the artillery should support the infantry, was unclear. It seemed likely, however, that in future battles the infantry would have to launch their attacks without waiting for the artillery to silence the enemy's guns. A British observer noted that times were changing:

If the teaching of this war is to go for anything, it has so far proved that the complete artillery preparation introduced by the Germans in 1870 as a preliminary to the infantry attack, is no longer the absolute necessity we, in common with continental nations, consider it to be.<sup>40</sup>

While some authors did not agree with scrapping the preparatory bombardment altogether, the majority conceded to the likelihood that the defense would remain intact and that infantry should now expect to advance under the enemy's small arms and artillery fire. General Rohne, for instance--who did not abandon the idea of a preliminary bombardment--nonetheless admitted that infantry would have to begin its advance before the artillery preparation was complete; he warned that the infantry should not presume the destruction of the enemy's guns, because "a decisive result will be very hard to obtain."<sup>41</sup> The essential thrust of the debate was not to eliminate preparatory bombardments, but to recognize the limits of what shelling could and could not do.

The focus became the enemy batteries; friendly fire would still saturate the objective to assist the infantry.

but the emphasis shifted to counter-battery fire. The thinking was that once the enemy's guns were finally silenced, then all the friendly resources could concentrate on helping the infantry conclude a successful attack. Commandant Colin, pointing out that the best way for the artillery to assist the infantry was by destroying the enemy's guns, quoted the Japanese instructions on this matter in his book:

Artillery fire is only directed against the enemy's batteries. The whole of the artillery seeks to enfilade them or take them in reverse so as to extinguish their fire rapidly....So at first one devotes the bulk of the artillery to fire on the enemy's artillery; one only uses a portion of it against the infantry.<sup>42</sup>

Colonel Neznamov's comment on this subject aptly summarized what numerous artillerymen felt about their role after Manchuria: "The artillery combat, as we must now understand it, must have for its object: holding adverse artillery under the constant menace of a *rafale*, and preventing it from firing on our own infantry."<sup>43</sup>

Another important issue that emerged from the lessons of Manchuria was the manner in which artillery massed its fires. Previously, the tactic called for placing batteries close together and the guns hub to hub. After the first battles in Manchuria demonstrated that this method meant certain destruction, both belligerents experimented with a variety of techniques, ultimately perfecting their communications, coordination, and gunnery to the point where each dispersed their batteries over wide areas, and

then massed fires on selected targets. This system worked very well; it complicated the enemy's counter-battery efforts and ensured the greatest chances for survival. Although at first there appeared to be some skepticism about this practice, as time wore on the overwhelming majority of writers embraced the idea. As one writer put it, it was not the concentration, or massing, of guns which was important, but rather the concentration and massing of fire on decisive points.<sup>44</sup>

Dispersing batteries and massing fires, conducting indirect fire, and pursuing all the other myriad functions essential to the efficient operation of artillery, required adequate and reliable communications. Though writers from all branches discussed communications, artillerymen wrote more about the subject and its significance than the infantry and cavalry combined. Without effective communications between the guns and the observer, indirect fire could not be accomplished; likewise, batteries could not mass fires without timely and accurate instructions from higher headquarters. Hence, the telephone, as the Journal of the Royal United Service Institution noted: "has become indispensable to artillery for the transmission of information."<sup>45</sup> Every worthwhile article about the lessons of the war cited the need for maintaining proper communications. The telephone became as important a piece of equipment as the gun itself: without the one working, the other could not--at least effectively--either. Telephone

lines often became cut, however, and an equally important point asserted by most writers was the need to have alternate means of communication--signal flags, telegraph, and arm and hand signals. Signalling techniques with flags received considerable attention; Captain Neissel, for instance, lauded the Russians for their adaptation of the navy's semaphore system for land use. Communications, as much as firepower, was becoming as critical as ever to the conduct of modern war.

Improper and premature artillery firing in Manchuria resulted in an inordinate amount of ammunition wastage that the foreign observers highly criticized.<sup>47</sup> Officers were quick to realize that extended fronts and hardened defensive positions could easily result in the expenditure of ever-greater quantities of ammunition. Frequent mention was made of the tendency for both Russian and Japanese batteries to engage single orderlies or small groups of soldiers--a process that was condemned as an inexcusable waste of vital resources.<sup>48</sup> The overriding message was that fire discipline was critical to mission accomplishment, and that firing wildly did nothing but waste ammunition, expose the battery to enemy fire, and further burden the supply system.

Writers further discussed such subjects as mobility, reconnaissance, and the effectiveness of various shells. An interesting tactic that was mentioned more and more was the

use of artillery to fire into rear areas to disrupt enemy logistics. The congestion created behind the front by reserves and the logistical apparatus was now recognized as a lucrative target. Artillerymen perceived that hindering the enemy's rear area activities greatly facilitated weakening his front. With so much men and material concentrated nearby, as one officer noted: "fire directed on the ground in rear of the first line and upon the reserves [would] give brilliant results."<sup>49</sup> Machine guns were also commented upon; apparently, these weapons had inflicted their share of damage on artillery batteries, and writers evinced a definite respect for them. In a few cases, ardor for the machine gun in artillery circles exceeded that exhibited by infantry writers. The artillery writers seldom disputed the worth of machine guns; most agreed that they had "rendered excellent service" in Manchuria.<sup>50</sup>

Of all the combat branches, artillerymen seem to have come the closest to realizing that a whole new era had opened in the conduct of warfare. The tone and content of their literature revealed that artillerymen were somewhat surprised by the changes necessitated by modern weaponry and other recent innovations, yet their response to these alterations was largely rational and based upon a careful analysis of the facts. One observer felt that artillery officers who had fought in the war and survived were both "scientific officers and thoroughly practical gunners"

for their ability to adapt to the rapidly-changing situation in Manchuria; those officers who studied the war afterwards, for the most part, seemed to belong to the same category.<sup>51</sup> For those astute enough to study the artillery lessons of this conflict, as the First World War so vividly demonstrated later, "Modern artillery [had] impressed its stamp on war."<sup>52</sup>

## NOTES

1. See, for example, "Operations of the Artillery and Engineers at the Siege of Port Arthur," Journal of the United States Artillery 23 (March-April 1905): 205-209, hereafter Artillery, trans. from Kriegstechnische Zeitschrift; "Notes on the Artillery Defense of Port Arthur," Artillery 27 (May-June 1907): 292, reprint from Royal Engineer Journal. For a detailed technical discussion of the artillery and sea coast defenses at Port Arthur, see Alexis von Schwartz, The Influences of the Experience of the Siege of Port Arthur upon the Construction of Modern Fortresses (Washington, D.C.: GPO, 1908).
2. Kuropatkin, op. cit., vol II, 25.
3. Warner, op. cit., 262.
4. Hamilton, Scrap-Book, 65-89.
5. Considerable information on the Russian and Japanese artillery appears in the reports submitted by the military observers; see, for example, the reports by Lieutenant General Sir W.G. Nicholson, General Hamilton, Lieutenant Colonel C.V. Hume, and Captain B. Vincent, Reports of British Observers, vol. II, 560-632.
6. Incredibly, on the other hand, the only training that many of the Russian gun crews received on their equipment was on the train that transported them to Manchuria. Russia was in the process of fielding new artillery pieces when the war broke out, and many of the gunners had never fired a single round from their assigned pieces; they did so for the first time in combat against the Japanese. Soloviev, op. cit., 18.
7. Colonel Novikov, "Questions of Artillery Tactics from the Experience of the Russo-Japanese War," Infantry 4 (January 1908): 611.
8. See, for example, Captain Ashley W. Barrett, "Lessons to be Learned by Regimental Officers from the Russo-Japanese War," JMSIUS 43 (September-October 1908): 310-311, reprint from JRUSI.
9. An article which discusses these issues in detail is Colonel Neznamov, "Teachings of the Russo-Japanese War," Artillery 25 (May-June 1905): 299-313, trans. from Rouskii Invalid; see also de Négrier, op. cit., 79.

10. See, for example, "The Utilization of Aeroplanes and Dirigibles for Observation of Fire of Coast Batteries and Battleships," Artillery 38 (November-December 1912): 373-374, trans. from Le Spectateur Militaire; Captain W.A. King, "Aerial Reconnaissance, Its Possible Effect on Strategy and Tactics," JMSIUS 53 (November-December 1913): 450-455, reprint from Royal Engineering Journal.

11. Major M. Wallut, "Employment of Rapid-Fire Artillery in the Field," Artillery 24 (September-October 1905): 215, trans. from Revue d'Artillerie.

12. Lieutenant Neuffer, "Artillery Lessons from the Manchurian War," Infantry 7 (May 1911): 958, trans. from the German.

13. "The War and Field Artillery," Artillery 23 (January-February 1905): 91, reprint from Engineering; "Artillery Concealed or in the Open," JMSIUS 44 (January-February 1909): 136, trans. from Revue d' Artillerie.

14. See, for example, Lieutenant Colonel H.M.E. Brunner, Story of the Russo-Japanese War, 1904-05 (London: Forster Groom & Co., Ltd., 1909), 125-126; Sedgwick, op. cit., 191.

15. See, for example, Colonel William Livermore, "Field and Siege Operations in the Far East," JMSIUS 21 (May-June 1905): 430, 433; Kuhn, op. cit., 32.

16. Hamilton, Scrap-Book, 345.

17. Von Scharwz and Nojine, op. cit., both discuss the system of gun emplacements and the overall network of fortifications at Port Arthur in detail.

18. Several observers commented on this. See, for example, Hamilton, Reports of British Officers, vol. I, 186.

19. Hume, 617.

20. McClernand, op. cit., 36; Kuhn, 34; Captain Tiemann Horn, "Present Method and Lessons in Regard to Field Artillery Taught by the Russo-Japanese War," Artillery 30 (November-December 1908): 259.

21. Balck, op. cit., vol. II, 220.

22. Ibid., 219.

23. Neuffer, 958.

24. Cordonnier, op. cit., vol. II, 258.

25. Horn, 262.
26. Becke, op. cit., 85.
27. Niessel, op. cit., 67.
28. Wallut, 215.
29. Captain Fox Connor, "Field Artillery in Cooperation with the Other Arms," Infantry 6 (May 1910): 814.
30. Colonel Drujinin, "The Moral of the Russian Army During the War with Japan," JMSIUS 50 (January-February 1912): 40, trans. from Obschestvo Revnitelnink Voennikh Znamie.
31. Captain Soloviev has some interesting comments on this; see 18. Also see Haldane, Reports of British Officers, 516.
32. Captain Oliver Spalding, "The Use of Field Artillery," Artillery 37 (May-June 1912): 327.
33. General Rohne, "The Progress of Modern Field Artillery," Infantry 5 (January 1909): 568, trans. from the German; "Artillery Lessons from the War in Manchuria," Infantry 5 (May 1909): 962, trans. from Revue d'Artillerie.
34. Neznamov, 301.
35. Nojine, 220, 222. Lieutenant General Tretyakov, who as a Lieutenant Colonel commanded the 5th East Siberian Rifle Regiment at the battle of Nan Shan, realized the strength of entrenchments for both infantry and artillery, and had pleaded with his superiors not to abandon the Nan Shan position. He knew that to do so, with Russian superiority in guns and a superb defensive position, was criminal. His account of the battle provides numerous instances where entrenched infantry and artillery survived determined shelling and continued to repel assaults. For a fascinating book that epitomizes many of the lessons of the war, see Lieutenant General N.A. Tretyakov, My Experiences at Nan Shan and Port Arthur, trans. Captain A.C. Alford (London: Hugh Rees, Ltd., 1911).
36. Captain Frederick B. Downing, "The Selection and Occupation of Lines of Battle," Professional Memoirs 7 (1915): 103, Special Collection, USMA.
37. "Attack and Defense of an Experimental Redoubt," Infantry 5 (November 1908): 305-368.

38. Ibid., 307.
39. Ibid., 368.
40. Hume, 617.
41. Rohne, 564-565.
42. Colin, op. cit., 48-49.
43. Neznamov, 304.
44. Becke, 86.
45. "Lessons of the War: Artillery Action," Artillery 25 (January-February 1906): 72-73, reprint from JRUSI.
46. Niessel, 87.
47. Japanese batteries were particularly denounced for this--a bitter irony in view of the fact that Japan's military supply system could not replenish the wastage, and that this reality was partly responsible for the Japanese initiation of peace negotiations; see Okamoto, op. cit., 106-107. An interesting article that sheds further light on this subject is "Consumption and Replenishment of Ammunition in the Russian Infantry and Artillery in the Russo-Japanese War," op. cit..
48. See, for example, Haldane, Lessons, 15-16.
49. Neznamov, 307. See also Johnstone, op. cit., 217.
50. "Operations of the Artillery and Engineers at the Siege of Port Arthur," 208.
51. Reichmann, op. cit., 270.
52. Ibid., 271.

## CHAPTER FOUR: CAVALRY

The Russo-Japanese War occurred during a period of considerable anxiety among cavalry officers as they pondered the future of their branch. Embarrassed and ridiculed by the arm's lackluster performance in South Africa, charged with obsolescence--principally because of ever-improving and more lethal weaponry, and constantly having to justify their expense and the necessity for longer enlistments, cavalrymen became increasingly defensive and more desirous of finding opportunities to prove their detractors wrong. More so than their peers in the artillery and the infantry, cavalry officers seemed to be firmly devoted to maintaining tradition and nineteenth-century values; they evinced an obvious tendency to believe that psychological and moral factors were still of more consequence on the battlefield than material influences. Thus, cavalrymen exhibited to a higher degree than other officers, as John Ellis has written, the view that:

war was still a matter of will, in which the grit and resolution of the individual soldier counted for much more than any piece of machinery. Anything that was not compatible with this conception, anything that seemed to threaten the centrality of man upon the battlefield, was dismissed as being an unmilitary gimmick.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, social status was at stake; as the arm of great social prestige and aristocratic associations, cavalry officers had a tremendous emotional commitment to its past glories.<sup>2</sup> While events unfolded in Manchuria, therefore, advocates of the mounted arm ardently hoped for a cavalry performance that would silence critics and vindicate those officers seeking to preserve conventional methods. All eyes, then, were on the conflict in the Far East, as cavalry officers eagerly anticipated hearing the news of large mounted clashes, daring raids, and relentless pursuits by merciless equestrian squadrons.

Instead, their worst fears were realized; the performance of the cavalry on both sides during the war was generally far below expectations, especially for the highly acclaimed Cossacks. Officers were totally crestfallen by the fact that no large mounted action took place; they were further devastated when it became known that of those battles that did occur, nearly all of them were fought dismounted and with the rifle. Perhaps the greatest disillusionment to the proponents of the old school was the total absence of the use of the *arme blanche* in Manchuria; neither the Japanese nor the legendary Cossacks demonstrated any desire to rely on the celebrated cold steel for decisive results. Because of the mostly negative lessons generated by the war, many cavalry enthusiasts after 1905 spent as much time citing the exceptional nature

and inapplicability of the events in Manchuria to Europe as they did in trying to learn anything from them.

Disappointment about the lack of any significant cavalry operations was so predominant among cavalry officers afterwards that it was essential for them to offer explanations for this inactivity while maintaining the prestige of the branch. Consequently, they ascribed the cavalry's inability to perform properly its customary mission in Manchuria primarily to the rugged terrain. Mountains and the manner of cultivation--huge fields of kaoliang, a type of tall and tough millet that existed throughout the country--were supposedly the principal obstacles which had prevented the cavalry from conducting its beloved charges. Other factors usually alleged as contributing to the cavalry's hardships included lack of roads, soft ground during the summer and fall due to rain, slippery and hazardous surfaces because of snow and ice in winter, and the presence of extensive fortifications--behind which the opponents had the frustrating habit of taking shelter for long periods. The reputable Militaer Wochenblatt moved to assuage the anxiety of its cavalry readers by stressing these points, and then went on to encourage them by remarking: "Insurmountable obstacles hardly to be duplicated in a European war were found in these conditions."<sup>3</sup> An essay by a Russian officer, which originally appeared in a French journal and was later translated for the Journal of the United States Cavalry

Association, supported this mentality with the kind of rhetorical flourish so favored by the officers of this arm:

We believe it our duty to say that if the Russian cavalry had to fight in a European war where it would not encounter the same difficulties of terrain as in Manchuria...it would be able to cover itself with glory and render valuable services to the commander-in-chief."<sup>4</sup>

These particular excuses reappeared so frequently that anyone not having recourse to differing opinions or not having an opportunity to see the country or photographs of it for himself could easily be persuaded that it was true. To be sure, differing views were expressed; the majority of cavalry officers, or at least those who were influential, however, disregarded them.

One prominent dissenter was General Hamilton. Referring to the region in southern Manchuria, he argued that the kaoliang was not a major impediment for a mounted attack, and disputed the claim that the land was too restrictive for cavalry operations: "The valleys were often over a mile wide, and in fact there was ample space and convenience for squadrons, if not regiments, to have indulged in shock tactics on a small scale." Once the Japanese pushed the Russians out of Liaoyang and were operating north of the Tai-tzu Ho River, conditions improved even more:

The country fulfills all the conditions for a successful application of shock tactics to an extent which I have never seen equalled. The theatre of operations consists of wide plains stretching for miles, unbroken by...fences, swamps, stony places or other undesirable obstacles.

A cavalry officer later reluctantly admitted to Hamilton that the country was absolutely ideal for shock tactics, and that the only improvement he could suggest was "the addition of a few more clumps of trees to give still better cover."<sup>5</sup> A quick glance at some of the hundreds of photographs which were included in the literature on the war would have amply corroborated this view. Nevertheless, as with the war in South Africa, cavalymen sought to emphasize circumstances beyond their control in explaining the arm's difficulties in Manchuria; blaming "unsuitable" terrain was a soothing palliative to bruised egos. To consider the painful possibility that the belligerents had avoided shock action because of the vulnerabilities to cavalry charges which they discovered from rifles, machine guns, and horse artillery was difficult.

The propensity of the Cossacks to dismount routinely during encounters and the tendency of the Japanese cavalry to avoid decisive combat, except on their own terms, were also recounted as factors that contributed to the absence of any meaningful cavalry action in Manchuria. Ineffective employment of the cavalry by senior commanders, while certainly true in many instances, was another prevalent hindrance said to have plagued the branch in both armies. A British officer touched upon these themes when he wrote: "The Japanese cavalry failed on account of numbers. The failure of the Russian cavalry was partly due to their leaders and want of dash."<sup>6</sup> Thus, post-war literature

tackled the above symptoms of the cavalry's malaise in the Russo-Japanese War without adequately diagnosing the existence of the disease: an anachronistic and jaundiced perspective that refused to acknowledge the on-going transformations in warfare.

At the outbreak of hostilities, it was the Russian cavalry which most observers expected to dominate the field and wreak havoc with the Japanese. Noted for their fine horsemanship and endurance, and possessing superior numbers,<sup>7</sup> the Cossacks who constituted the bulk of the Russian cavalry seemed ideally suited for the tasks at hand in the barren and rugged terrain of Manchuria. Colonel Charles Repington, writing of the Cossacks before any land engagements occurred between the two armies, reminded his readers that Napoleon had lost his cavalry in attempting to defeat the Cossacks and that much was anticipated from these warriors because "a stout heart, steady nerve, and the traditions of victory make him an enemy to be respected."<sup>8</sup> It was generally recognized, correctly, that the Japanese cavalry was the weakest branch of the army. Japanese cavalymen were not particularly good horsemen and, as with the artillery, the horses they used tended to be small and wiry. Yet in spite of these drawbacks, the Japanese performed remarkably well against an enemy possessing superior numbers and a long-standing reputation for excellent horsemanship. In fact, by adopting several measures designed to offset the Russian advantage in

numbers, such as avoiding fights when in doubt as to enemy strength and habitually combining infantry detachments with mounted patrols, the Japanese actually employed their cavalry much more effectively. Of course, the result was that the traditional mounted combat, highly anticipated by Western observers, rarely occurred. Overall, the cavalry performance in the war was remarkably unimpressive.

Many writers, both those who believed that reform was long past due, as well as those who were determined to maintain the status of the arm, thus noted with disdain the lackluster cavalry action in Manchuria, though for different reasons. While discussing the battle of the Yalu, General Hamilton noted laconically that "as for the cavalry, they did nothing...[which] was to be expected."<sup>9</sup> In a later portion of his book, while narrating the sequence of the battle of Liaoyang, Hamilton quoted a Japanese officer whose sarcastic remarks about the branch during that battle appeared afterwards throughout the literature on cavalry in the war and had to be a major embarrassment to mounted troopers everywhere:

Even at a supreme moment such as this [during a fierce battle on 3 September 1904] there was, however, one group of men who were idle. This was the cavalry. So they were employed to go back to the river and cook food for their companions of the infantry.<sup>10</sup>

A German writer, scrutinizing the battle loss statistics of the war and finding that horsemen suffered astonishingly minimal losses, asserted cynically that "the cavalry was hardly worth its keep."<sup>11</sup> General de Négrier, in analyzing

the dismal performance of the Cossacks, commented: "[Their] real impotence was a matter of amazement."<sup>12</sup> One of the most telling blows levelled against this branch came from General Kuropatkin, who blasted his own cavalry's desultory performance. Incensed by what he felt had been cowardly and inept conduct that directly contributed to the Russian defeat, he caustically declared that "Till [sic] it is educated to feel that it should fight as obstinately as infantry, the money expended on our mounted arm will be thrown away."<sup>13</sup> An American cavalry officer summed up the prevailing attitude on the issue among many Western military analysts when he remarked that "a very striking point about this war is the absence of any effective action on the part of the cavalry."<sup>14</sup> Hence, of the three combat arms, the cavalry emerged from the largest conflict of the twentieth century prior to World War I as a beleaguered and tarnished institution.

The post-war literature produced by cavalrymen reflected their heightened concern over the branch's future; much of the writing was clearly defensive in tone. A close review of the on-going debates during the period prior to 1914 reveals a struggle over reform within the cavalry ranks that appears considerably more intense than anything occurring in the other branches. While artillery officers seemed the most open-minded and most willing to accept the lessons demonstrated in Manchuria, cavalry officers, on the other hand, exhibited quite often the

tendency to ignore or undervalue some of the primary lessons from the conflict. Rather than tackling the issues confronting them directly and admitting that the battlefield was becoming increasingly more lethal to the man on horseback, many cavalry officers chose instead--more frequently than their peers in the other branches--to recount repeatedly past glories and to insist irrationally that their function was still essential for victory in war.

One way to preserve the dignity and prestige of the branch was to dismiss events in Manchuria as unimportant and unworthy of any serious examination. Some cavalry officers accomplished this with élan; they were only too eager to downplay the negative images emanating from the Far East. Many writers, however, went a step further and even advocated that the war had somehow revealed an increased role for the cavalry! One of the American military observers, a cavalry officer, while devoting considerable space in his report to explaining how the belligerents had failed to match the exploits of American Civil War cavalry leaders, noted that "we have nothing to learn from the Russo-Japanese War about the proper use of that arm [cavalry]."<sup>15</sup> An editorial in one journal asserted that the evidence coming from Manchuria "has not demonstrated the uselessness of cavalry, but its value and indispensability in modern war," whereas another writer confidently voiced the popular notion--among conservative-minded officers, at least--that "As a result of the late

Boer and Japanese wars, the opinion is unanimous that cavalry is of greater importance than ever before."<sup>16</sup>

The narrow-mindedness of many cavalry officers exhibited itself most obviously and forcefully over the issue of steel weapons and the *arme blanche*. As early as 1903, Major Baden-Powell outlined the factors that had undermined traditional mounted tactics and argued cogently that every doctrinal aspect of the arm--from the saber to the *arme blanche*--needed to be reconsidered; Colonel G.F.R. Henderson had also previously suggested that cavalymen reevaluate the importance of firepower and had urged them to rethink their opposition to dismounted fighting and to using the rifle.<sup>17</sup> Despite the evidence from Manchuria that no shock action worthy of mention had occurred there, writers again and again persisted in stressing the continued importance of the *arme blanche*. In retrospect, the one recorded instance of a clash between belligerents with steel weapons was so hilarious that it is surprising that it did not discredit the cavalry even further. This incident took place near Telissu where, for reasons unknown, a few Cossack units were issued with lances. During a chance encounter with a Japanese cavalry patrol, the Cossacks charged but--having forgotten how to wield properly the weapons, grasped them with both hands, and with the reins wrapped around their belts--rode in using the lances like quarter-staves. In this way a few unfortunate enemy riders were unhorsed and then speared as

they lay sprawled on the ground. The entire episode lasted two or three minutes at the most, after which the stunned Japanese withdrew in disorder to the south.<sup>18</sup> Predictably, the majority of cavalry officers must have felt that this encounter resembled buffoonery more than an inspiring example of martial prowess--it was hardly mentioned in the literature.

Despite the efforts of conservatives to minimize any of the negative lessons coming out of Manchuria, however, the war widened the division initiated by the Boer War between the old-liners and the reformers. Many of the latter, especially those who still felt that cavalry had a role on the battlefield, argued that the only way that the branch could retain its usefulness was by abandoning the *arme blanche*, adopting the rifle, and embracing the concept of dismounted fighting. Reformers also called for cavalrymen to acknowledge that the principal use of cavalry had changed from fighting to scouting, and that reconnaissance was becoming more and more the cavalry's *raison d'être*. But even among the reformers there was disagreement; General Friedrich von Bernhardi, for instance--one of the leading German military writers of the pre-1914 era--announced a strong faith in dismounted action while maintaining that combat with cold steel remained the cavalry's ultimate function.<sup>19</sup> Even the controversial General Douglas Haig, who wrote in 1907 that the cavalry would have an expanding role in future conflicts, suggested

that the cavalry should know how to use the rifle, though he simultaneously stated his preference for the *arme blanche*.<sup>20</sup>

Some reformers, such as the Austrian Count Gustav Wrangel, admirably called for necessary changes while obviously struggling with the reality that cherished beliefs were being swept away by the demands of modern warfare. Wrangel boldly declared that many of the standard methods "are absolutely discredited by the experiences of the Russo-Japanese War," and urged his fellow officers to incorporate a number of changes. He specified the need to accept dismounted tactics, adopt the rifle as a secondary weapon and learn musketry under the instruction of infantry officers, form bicycle detachments for the performance of minor duties, increase horse artillery, and add machine gun detachments to each division.<sup>21</sup> Still, he could not force himself to break completely with tradition; Wrangel was as bombastic and reactionary as any member of the old school in his defense of the *arme blanche*. In a complete about-face from his progressive views, he parroted the parochial notion that "it requires quite a different temperament to ride to the attack with drawn sword at the gallop than ...placidly aiming in a fire position." Like numerous other cavalry officers, Wrangel claimed that it was impossible for horse soldiers to become proficient in both rifle and sword; as he saw it, the cavalry should lay principal stress "on good dashing horsemanship and the

clever handling of the *arme blanche*." His statement about the sword provides an insight into the inherent rigidity in outlook prevalent among officers of this branch: "In spite of the experiences of the Russo-Japanese War, we hold fast to the view that the sword is the principal weapon--the *ultima ratio*--of cavalry."<sup>22</sup>

"Asiaticus," an unknown German writer whose book on the war was widely quoted, informed his readers that the conditions and requirements of modern warfare had altered the role of cavalry; reconnaissance and screening, in both a strategical and tactical sense, were now the arm's primary mission. Though he too maintained that shock action was in no way archaic, he did announce that it was unlikely, and then uncharacteristically submitted that "against unbroken infantry every [cavalry] attack will be in vain."<sup>23</sup>

Asiaticus was actually one of the more astute reformers who realized that the cavalry's performance in Manchuria was not all necessarily ineffective or improperly conducted. In fact, like General de Négrier, he saw in the Japanese methods new opportunities for cavalry operations that traditionalists brushed aside.<sup>24</sup> The Japanese had decided early on that they were not going to try to match the Cossacks in open contests; therefore, they determined to emplace an impenetrable screen around their armies that would deny the Russian Army any chance to obtain reliable information. The screen consisted of cavalry and infantry,

and was equipped with machine guns for support. Not only did the Japanese cavalry not seek out the Russians, but Japanese mounted patrols never strayed more than a day's march from their supporting infantry. Thus, Japanese leaders employed their strengths against Russian weaknesses, and the results were extremely favorable; because the Cossacks habitually violated security discipline, they often blundered unknowingly into the waiting Japanese.

Asiaticus noted that:

every collision with the enemy took the form either of an ambushade or of a surprise, with the result that the Russians...ceased all offensive activity, and either assumed the defensive or beat a retreat.<sup>25</sup>

The Russians, whether mounted or dismounted, hardly ever penetrated the hostile screen, with the result that Kuropatkin's intelligence about the enemy was usually nil. While it is true that the Japanese system prevented them from ever delivering any coups de grâce to withdrawing Russians or exploiting sudden breakthroughs, it did allow the numerically inferior and materially deficient Japanese cavalry to hold off horsemen considered to be vastly superior to them. Asiaticus outlined all this at length, and warned his compatriots that they must embrace dismounted fighting, use the rifle, and consider screening and reconnaissance--not employing the *arme blanche*--as their reason for being.<sup>26</sup>

The most outspoken of all the critics was a British writer who decided that he had had enough of the cavalry's

refusal to face up to reality and their propensity for wishful thinking. Erskine Childers, a fiery Irishman who had served as an intelligence officer and balloon observer in South Africa, was by far the most extreme and uncompromising of those urging reform. Novelist, historian, and later Irish nationalist who was eventually executed by firing squad, Childers possessed the eloquence and vigor that made him a formidable opponent. In 1910 he published the highly controversial War and the Arme Blanche, with an introduction by the highly regarded Field Marshal Earl Roberts. Childers used his book to blast the traditional mentality of cavalry officers, and to harshly attack the preference for the sword and lance over the rifle. He reiterated time and again that events in South Africa and Manchuria "consigned to complete oblivion" shock action, and shrewdly noted that "at this moment there is probably much opinion in the army...which is unfavourable to the official cavalry view of the *arme blanche*, but the opposition is neither authoritative nor effectively articulate."<sup>27</sup> His predominant theme was that "shock is incompatible with the destructive use of the rifle,"<sup>28</sup> and from that perspective he launched a scathing, relentless attack upon those advocates of the old school whose doctrine he loathed. Childers was particularly exasperated by those officers who agreed to superficial changes while standing fast against any truly meaningful reforms; therefore, General Bernhardt's stance on the rifle, he

said, "can safely be quoted without fatally injuring the case for steel." Childers believed that the cavalry's refusal to relinquish outdated tactics would lead to disaster: "It is enough to make angels weep!"<sup>29</sup>

As a civilian, Childers was able to articulate what some active-duty officers felt but could not express, especially since he directed his most acerbic comments towards senior military figures--including Bernhardt, Wrangel, and Sir John French. Were it not for Lord Roberts's explicit backing, the book may very well have been dismissed as nothing more than the rantings of a crackpot. Childers vigorously attacked Bernhardt's Cavalry in Future Wars<sup>30</sup>, which was translated and first published in English in 1906. In his book, which contained an introduction by French, Bernhardt had ridiculed those who attacked the cavalry's traditional methods and its spirit. Bernhardt and French were highly influential, and Childers knew that their views would significantly affect the ideas and doctrine of the arm, which was the case. When Childers started writing his book, he did not originally intend to analyze the Russo-Japanese War, as he considered the lessons from South Africa momentous enough to demonstrate the need for reform without further elaboration. But Bernhardt's book, then Wrangel's in 1907, and a large quantity of material in other literature, soon convinced Childers that the lessons from Manchuria were, as with South Africa, once again being misconstrued for the

advantage of the old guard. Hence, Childers incorporated a lengthy chapter on the war into his book and proceeded to explain why events in Manchuria "seals the doom of the *arme blanche*, and crowns the case for the mounted riflemen."<sup>31</sup> Childers fired salvo after salvo of criticism at both Wrangel and Bernhardi, labeling them the "enfants terrible"<sup>32</sup> of cavalry doctrine. He spared Wrangel from total denunciation by remarking that "there is less mental chaos in Wrangel than in most [hardliners]," and commented that of the several British military observers who had served in Manchuria and still believed in shock action: "It would be a comedy, if such comedies did not have tragic consequences."<sup>33</sup>

Childers's book initiated a firestorm. Those officers who comfortably assumed that the cavalry was immune to any damaging assault on its reputation were stung by his criticism. Many officers expressed their wrath by personally attacking Childers, including the offended Bernhardi, who shot back in an equally polemical article in Militaer Wochenblatt.<sup>34</sup> The British Cavalry Journal--which was founded by advocates of shock action in 1906 to defend and spread the *arme blanche* gospel--excoriated Childers.<sup>35</sup> An article in the United States Cavalry Journal, ostensibly on behalf of the General staff, also lambasted him, remarkably minimizing any suggestions that his comments on Manchuria were relevant.<sup>36</sup>

The debate was intensified in 1911, when Childers published German Influence on British Cavalry, a response to Bernhardt's Cavalry in War and Peace, that came out a year earlier in 1910. One of the few who openly supported Childers was--not surprisingly--a retired officer. Colonel George Denison, in a preface to the second edition of his A History of the Cavalry from the Earliest Times, noted the dispute between Childers and the others, and remarked that Childers's views were identical with his own, which he had expressed as early as 1877 when his book was first published. Denison further suggested the heretical notion that the cavalry proper should only consist of one-fourth of the mounted army, while the rest should be mounted infantry. He then pointed out that the Russo-Japanese War confirmed the superiority of mounted rifles and argued:

The chances are that in the next European war, whichever nation employs the mounted rifles extensively will be found winning decisive campaigns by the wise adoption of a necessary reform.<sup>37</sup>

Nevertheless, Childers was on the losing side of this issue; Bernhardt expressed what most cavalrymen wanted to hear, and he had the support of the eloquent General French, as well as a coterie of other senior and middle-grade officers. Conservatives wanted to be reassured that adverse criticism stemming from the negative lessons in Manchuria and South Africa would not destroy the arm and its traditions that they so ardently worshipped. Childers was a threat; he personified the harsh, inhuman realities

being forced upon all soldiers by modernization that cavalrymen fought most viciously to resist. Bernhardt represented the status quo, the preservationist. Thus, when Haig first inspected the Cavalry School which he founded in India, he was flabbergasted to see that a road had been named 'Childers Road.' The school commandant calmed Haig down by informing him: "Ah, sir, that is a cul-de-sac and leads to the cemetery."<sup>38</sup> For those advocates of reform, the metaphor was quite appropriate.

Cavalry officers were clearly the most rhetorical, pompous, and egotistical in their literature. Seldom did a cavalryman pen an article without some reference to "dash," "cavalry spirit," "pluck," or "the magnetism of the charge"—more often than not, all of these terms were used together in an essay. The following excerpt from a French cavalry officer's book indicates the tone and style of writing so prevalent among officers of this branch:

If you cannot sit your horse like a centaur, and have not the eye of an eagle, the courage of a lion, and the decision of a thunderbolt--About turn! For you are not worthy to command a 'hurricane' of cavalry.<sup>39</sup>

Very few cavalry writers appeared to examine critically events in Manchuria. Many, after offering a superficial analysis of the campaigns and announcing that both parties had failed to properly employ their cavalry, launched into an impassioned defense of the branch, and then proceeded to highlight the cavalry's special role and value. This attitude, which subsided somewhat for a few years after the

war, gained momentum again in the latter part of the decade, and prevailed until 1914. The cavalry's collective attention span, then, was the shortest of all the branches; its officers learned the least from Manchuria.

One of the best examples of this failure to apply any lessons occurred in the British Army. In 1903, the drill regulations cited the rifle or carbine as the "principal weapon" of the cavalry, and in the 1904 Cavalry Manual, Lord Roberts ensured that the emphasis on firearms and mounted infantry was stressed. But Roberts retired two years later, and Bernhardt's influence on Britain was substantial; in 1907, two of the three existing schools for mounted infantry were abolished. In 1909 the lance--phased out in 1903--was resurrected.<sup>40</sup> Repington, an *arme blanche* aficionado and spokesman, helped to extoll the virtues of steel weapons and traditional tactics as military correspondent of The Times and in his books. He stated that cavalry armed only with the rifle "is a chicken trussed for the spit." British cavalry doctrine, he insisted, "is sound, the spirit excellent, and the arm efficient mounted and on foot," and he spoke favorably of "the true cavalry spirit which scorns mathematical calculations."<sup>41</sup> Thus, Bernhardt and Repington--among others--despite four years of evidence to the contrary in South Africa and Manchuria, succeeded in persuading their armies to sustain an outmoded concept.

France, of course, also succumbed to the drumbeat--or perhaps hoofbeat; General de Négrier realized that it would be almost impossible to get French cavalrymen to accept dismounted fighting and the rifle, but he attempted anyway to explain that reliance on the *arme blanche* would lead to wanton and senseless loss of life and the eventual demise of the arm.<sup>42</sup> Lieutenant Niessel supported de Négrier, maintaining that the war had clearly demonstrated that dismounted action was both necessary and practical, and that dismounted cavalry had proved that it could successfully engage and defeat infantry if properly trained and equipped.<sup>43</sup> But most Frenchmen found it more agreeable to side with Commandant Colin who, though he stated that at Saint-Privat, Coulmiers, and Mukden "there [was] only room for skirmishers lying down and concealed batteries," nevertheless declared that "there are no mounted troops ...who have not found opportunity to charge rather than to shoot."<sup>44</sup>

The failure of the belligerents in Manchuria to execute any truly successful or noteworthy cavalry raids also disappointed western military analysts. Only a few were actually conducted, and none were especially remarkable; those raids that did occur turned out to be relatively minor actions and in no way materially affected the course of the war. The Russians attempted the largest raid under the command of General Mishcenko, a comparatively experienced and competent officer. If

successful, it would have been a major blow to the Japanese and a desperately-needed shot in the arm to the dispirited Russians. The plan was to attack Yingkou and destroy a Japanese supply depot there that contained critical resources for the Japanese thrusts towards Mukden; along the way, the advancing columns were to devastate the rail line, as well. Starting out in early January, 1905, Mishcenko's force was unmanagably large and slowed by an absurdly lengthy supply column. Progress was slow, and the Japanese, quickly ascertaining the enemy objective, responded by dispatching infantry--not cavalry--reinforcements by rail. In short order the Japanese infantry routed the Cossacks, who fortunately managed to escape with minimal casualties, though many had to violate neutral Chinese territory to do so.<sup>45</sup> The entire operation--from start to finish--had been a fiasco. The largest effort of this kind carried out by the Japanese took place during the battle of Mukden, where the cavalry dispatched a number of patrols in January and February to the rear of the Russian lines to reconnoiter and to wreck the railway. Though the material damage inflicted was slight, it created enough anxiety within the Russian high command that Kuropatkin diverted 8000 additional cavalrymen away from the decisive events around Mukden to protect the line.<sup>46</sup> Hence, the Japanese cavalry, outnumbered 8 to 1 by the Russians, accomplished their tasks, regardless of how small the actual contribution. These operations drew hardly a comment from

most western officers, who considered them to be nothing more than additional examples of how not to satisfactorily employ cavalry. Asiaticus, who devoted a paragraph to the subject, attributed much of the Japanese successes in their raids to the help they received from the Chunchuses--or Chinese bandits.<sup>47</sup>

In the years after Manchuria, as doctrine writers seriously contemplated the recommendation of shifting the cavalry's emphasis from conducting mounted attacks to performing strategic and tactical reconnaissance, the advent of the airplane threatened to eliminate even a revised role for the arm. As World War I approached and the technology improved, some officers decried flying machines, claiming that they were an overrated innovation and as something imperfect for service in war. A French officer claimed that aviation would become "auxiliary" to the cavalry, and that "the adaptability of the aeroplane to military uses will not be so great...[as] promised." Many officers, however, were undeniably concerned about the effect of these machines on the future of the arm; this feeling was hinted at by one writer who sought to reassure his comrades by insisting that the invention of the flying machine "has not made the cavalry useless."<sup>48</sup> These attitudes were echoed by many cavalrymen in the same way that a child at the dentist's office reassures himself that "it will not hurt;" in essence, they could not bring themselves to admit that the possibilities for the use of

airplanes might "hurt" their cherished function as the eyes and ears, as well as the pursuers, of the army. So, at the same time that a few cavalry reformers were calling for the arm to refashion itself as an intelligence gathering--as opposed to fighting--body, the specter of aircraft was already threatening the cavalry's only viable option for employment in modern battle.

As cavalrymen refuted the lessons of Manchuria and obstinately held to traditional theories, their inability to examine critically events there, coupled with their bombastic tendencies, alienated many of their brother officers in other branches. Non-cavalry officers were far from convinced that cavalry, as a fighting arm, would ever achieve any kind of success on the battlefield that would justify the exorbitant cost and resources necessary to maintain it. The skepticism and disdain directed at the orthodox cavalry view of things was somewhat best parodied by an artillery officer; commenting upon the standard cavalry habit of blaming the arm's lackluster performance in Manchuria on an insufficient "cavalry spirit," he remarked:

It is difficult for any but a cavalryman to grasp the exact nature of the expression "cavalry spirit," just as it is difficult for any but a Greek scholar to grasp the exact meaning of the expression "Greek spirit."<sup>49</sup>

The majority of cavalry officers, then, seemed to believe that the Russo-Japanese War offered little or nothing particularly worthy of study or implementation.

Regarding tactics and equipment, certain officers agreed with the requirement for some innovations, such as the incorporation of modern signalling devices, outfitting the arm with mounted machine guns, and using the rifle as an auxiliary weapon--as long as they did not challenge or in any way hamper the traditional employment of the cavalry. Thus, General Bernhardt spoke of the need for cavalry to "be equipped and conversant with wireless telegraphy, telephones, signalling apparatus, and flying machines," and stated, as late as 1914, that cavalrymen would face more difficulties than ever due to fire tactics, trenches, and rapid-firing artillery; yet, for all that, he--and other influential personalities--advocated the retention of the *arme blanche* because infantry on the modern battlefield might still 'at some time' be so disorganized as to be vulnerable to a cavalry charge.<sup>50</sup>

It would be incorrect to state that cavalrymen did not study the campaigns in Manchuria--the evidence shows otherwise. In terms of monographs, for example, cavalry officers published more books during this period than by officers in either of the other two arms. Additionally, numerous articles concerning the subject appeared throughout the professional literature, outlining the branch point of view. There is no doubt, however, generally speaking, that cavalry advocates largely misinterpreted events in Manchuria--their very background and frame of mind hindered their ability to grasp the need for reform. Cavalrymen

were reinforced in their thinking by the infantry's 'cult of the bayonet' mentality. If infantrymen could retain the bayonet in face of the machine gun, why could not mounted troops maintain the *arme blanche*? As one observer put it: "If the foot-soldier in masses can run and use the bayonet, the mounted man can gallop and use his sword or lance."<sup>51</sup> Appropriately, the issue of the lance illustrates superbly just how much the cavalry failed to heed the lessons of Manchuria; one recent writer has noted that in 1914: "The lance had the widest distribution it had ever enjoyed in the cavalries of Europe."<sup>52</sup>

## NOTES

1. John Ellis, The Social History of the Machine Gun (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 117.
2. Bond, War and Society in Europe, 50-51.
3. "What Lessons Can the Cavalry Draw from the Russo-Japanese War," Journal of the United States Cavalry Association 18 (July 1907): 123, trans. from Militaer Wochenblatt; hereafter Cavalry. See also Balck, Tactics, vol. II, 82.
4. Captain Serge Nidoine, "The Russian Cavalry During the Russo-Japanese War," Cavalry 17 (April 1907): 742, trans. from the French Journal des Sciences Militaires.
5. Hamilton, Reports from British Officers, vol. II, 527-528. British Major Rowan-Robinson also felt that the difficulties attributed to the terrain and the kaoliang was exaggerated; in fact, he argued that the kaoliang actually could have aided the cavalry by concealing its movement. See Major H. Rowan-Robinson, The Campaigns of Liaoyang (London: Constable and Co., Ltd., 1914), 268.
6. Captain R. S. Hamilton Grace, "Cavalry in the Russo-Japanese War," Cavalry 21 (July 1910): 138.
7. Russian cavalry strength, including Dragoons, Cossacks, and reserves, totalled approximately 225 squadrons; Japanese strength consisted of only 97 squadrons. No two sources provide the same numbers; those given above are provided in "Asiaticus" (pseud.), Reconnaissance in the Russo-Japanese War, trans. J. Montgomery (London: Hugh Rees, Ltd., 1908), 16, 128-129.
8. The Times, 2 April 1904, p. 5.
9. Hamilton, Scrap-Book, 86.
10. Ibid., 306.
11. H. Fischer, "Battle Losses of the Campaign in Manchuria," JMSIUS 55 (November-December 1914): 391, trans. and condensed from Kriegschirur Rück-Und Ausblicke Vom Asiatischen Kriegsschauplatze.
12. de Négrier, 10.
13. Kuropatkin, vol. II, 151.

14. First Lieutenant Henry J. Reilly. "The Russo-Japanese War," JMSIUS 52 (January-February 1913): 59.
15. McClernand, 114.
16. "Cavalry Operations in Manchuria," JMSIUS 43 (July-August 1908): 60-61; First Lieutenant G.A. Youngberg, "The Present Tendencies of German Tactics," Infantry 3 (January 1907): 50.
17. Baden-Powell, 243-249; Colonel G.F.R. Henderson, ed. Captain Neill Malcolm, The Science of War (London: Longman's, Green and Co., 1905), 55, 57, 61-62, 64.
18. The information on this engagement apparently comes from Japanese documents. The account given here has been taken from Western officers who knew about the incident; see Hamilton, Reports from British Officers, vol. II, 529; "An Operation of the Japanese Cavalry," trans. Captain Palmer E. Pierce, JMSIUS 44 (March-April 1909): 262, from the Revue de Cavalerie. Also see John Ellis, Cavalry: The History of Mounted Warfare (New York: G.P. Putnam's Sons, 1978), 148.
19. General Friedrich von Bernhardi, Cavalry in Future Wars, trans. Charles Sydney Goldman (London: J. Murray, 1909), 62.
20. Major General Douglas Haig, Cavalry Studies (London: Hugh Rees, Ltd., 1907), 8-9, 17-18.
21. Count Gustav Wrangel, The Cavalry in the Russo-Japanese War, trans. J. Montgomery (London: Hugh Rees, Ltd., 1907), 68-70, 76-77.
22. Ibid., 55, 67.
23. Asiaticus, 146-147.
24. Ibid., 129-135; for a comparison, see de Négrier, 39-40.
25. Asiaticus, 129-130.
26. Ibid., 142-147.
27. Erskine Childers, War and the Arme Blanche (London: Edward Arnold, 1910), 7.
28. Ibid., 241-242.
29. Ibid., 360.

30. See note 17.
31. Childers, 12.
32. Ibid., 347.
33. Ibid., 344, 350. Childers was referring primarily to General J.C. Burnett and Colonel W.H. Birkbeck; see Reports from British Officers, vol. II, 542-545. He spoke a little more favorably of Colonel McClernand, an American cavalry officer also in Manchuria; see Childers, 351.
34. Bernhardi, "A Consideration of Opposite Views Concerning Cavalry," Cavalry Journal 5 (September 1910): 466-83, trans. by 'White Horse' from Militaer Wochenblatt. An excellent overview of the fierce debate generated by Childers's work is provided by The Marquess of Anglesey, A History of the British Cavalry 1816 to 1914, vol. IV (London: Leo Cooper, 1986), 415-417. See also William L. Taylor, "The Debate Over Changing Cavalry Tactics and Weapons, 1900-1914," Military Affairs 28 (Winter 1964-65): 173-183.
35. Anglesey, 401; "War and the 'Arme Blanche'," Cavalry 21 (September 1910): 341-357, reprint from Cavalry Journal.
36. "War and the *Arme Blanche*," Cavalry 21 (November 1910): 521-532.
37. Colonel George T. Denison, A History of the Cavalry from the Earliest Times, 2d ed. (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1913), x-xv, 429, 433.
38. Anglesey, 417.
39. Captain Loir, Cavalry. Technical Operations, Trans. by the General Staff, War Office (London: HMSO, 1916), 93.
40. Taylor, 176; Anglesey, 391, 410.
41. Jay Luvaas, The Education of an Army (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1964), 316-317; Charles à Court Repington, Essays and Criticisms (London: Constable and Co., 1911), 81-88.
42. de Négrier, 73-74, 77.
43. Niessel, 58.
44. Colin, 160.
45. Warner, 461-462; Walder, 257; McClernand, 113. An interesting opinion on this raid was given by the special

correspondent of The Times, David Fraser, who quipped that "Mishcenko has performed some circus tricks for the edification of military critics," and that the raid on Yingkou was "a masterly exposition of the possibilities of cavalry in general, and of the hopeless uselessness of Russian cavalry in particular." See "The Cavalry Lessons of the War," Cavalry 16 (January 1916): 488, reprint from The Times. Mishcenko's baggage train consisted of 1600 pack animals and a battalion of miners, a bridge train, and 400 mounted frontier guards--see "Employment of the Cavalry in the Russo-Japanese War," Cavalry 20 (January 1910): 734, trans. from Armen und Flotten.

46. Kuhn, 28; an engineer officer, Kuhn spoke very positively of the Japanese cavalry. A more detailed and highly informative account of one of these raids is given by a British cavalry observer, see Captain J.B. Jardine, Reports from British Officers, vol. II, 59-65. See also Major Genral M. F. Rimington, Our Cavalry (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1912), 146-147.

47. Asiaticus, 139.

48. Captain D'Aubert, "The Cavalry of Tomorrow," JMSIUS 51 (July-August 1912): 222-223, trans. from Revue de Cavalerie; Captain Edgar Sermyer, "The Role of Cavalry in War," Cavalry 24 (March 1914): 754.

49. Colonel Charles Ross, An Outline of the Russo-Japanese War (London: Macmillan and Co., Ltd., 1912), 470-471.

50. Bernhardt, On War of Today, vol. I (New York: Dodd, Mead & Co., 1914), 192, 195.

51. Colonel Monsenergue, Cavalry Tactical Schemes, trans. E. Louis Spiers (London: Hugh Rees, Ltd., 1914), xxvi.

52. Hew Strachan, European Armies and the Conduct of War (George Allen & Unwin (Publishers), Ltd., 1983), 84.

## CONCLUSION

From the moment that the news was broadcast to the world of the Japanese attack on Port Arthur until the crisis of August, 1914, the Russo-Japanese War was undeniably one of the most frequently-discussed issues among western professional military officers. Interest in events that had transpired in Manchuria years before prevailed despite the occurrence of the two Balkan Wars on the eve of World War I. Articles in professional journals discussing aspects of the Russo-Japanese War were still frequent in the early months of 1914, while little, if any, material on the fighting in the Balkans appeared. That the Manchurian conflict generated considerable attention and stirred substantial debate in the decade before World War I is irrefutable; the scores of books, articles, and pamphlets produced, as well as the official accounts published by some countries, manifestly demonstrate that this war was a subject not to be ignored. Those soldiers who endeavored to write about Manchuria encompassed all ranks in all armies; lieutenants wrote books and articles as often as generals. Literature produced in one country, especially on controversial matters, usually was translated

for the benefit of officers in other armies. Thus, whether French, German, British, or American, officers seemed to be aware of what was being said about the key issues stemming from the war in each other's army, and certainly exerted influence on one another. Although it might be difficult to prove unequivocally Michael Howard's assertion that the Russo-Japanese War was foremost on soldiers' minds in the summer of 1914, Brian Bond's comment that the war was studied "assiduously, indeed almost obsessively,"<sup>1</sup> is without question absolutely correct.

Although the focus of this thesis has been directed towards the combat arms, officers in other branches likewise participated in debates about the significance of the conflict and its relevance for them. Engineers and quartermaster officers in particular now had examples before them of modern armies conducting operations on an unprecedented scale for lengthy periods of time in severe climatic conditions; several officers analyzed fortifications, transportability, mobility, and resupply matters, and offered a variety of opinions on these issues. Courses instituted at staff colleges and other service schools helped to ensure wide dissemination of information to officers of all branches. A few officers, with the permission of the Japanese government, made trips to Port Arthur, Mukden, Liaoyang, and other battlefields, to see for themselves the localities about which they had heard so much.<sup>2</sup>

Some western medical officers who had visited Manchuria during the hostilities penned accounts of their experiences, as well; in this way, many in the west learned how the latest techniques were used to treat wounds created by modern weaponry.<sup>3</sup> One of the most fascinating essays involving medical subjects was an analysis by an American doctor of the Russian treatment of psychological casualties during the war.<sup>4</sup> The Russian Army of 1905, incidentally, was the first army in history to determine that mental collapse was a consequence of the stress of war and to regard it as a true medical condition. It was also the first army to attempt to prevent and treat it.<sup>5</sup> Unfortunately, most western observers totally overlooked this aspect of the conflict.

In assessing the essential lessons of the war and interpreting their implications for future European scenarios, officers exhibited a range of opinions extending from outright skepticism to wholesale acceptance that Manchuria was a precursor of the next war--wherever fought. Some lessons were clearly discernable while others were not; several writers were often maddeningly contradictory. Artillery officers, many of whom came from humble origins, had more formal education, and were thus more comfortable with emerging technology, embraced the lessons of the war as a whole more eagerly than other combat arms officers.

Even so, events in Manchuria overwhelmingly demonstrated to the majority of officers that certain features

were more than likely to figure in any future European war. These included trenches, night attacks, indirect fire, high explosives, and improved telephonic communications. Western armies were further influenced in their thinking on a variety of other less notable, yet consequential, topics. The importance of individual training, the color and composition of uniforms (after 1905, most armies used khaki or other drab material), and the application of shields to artillery pieces, were among the numerous areas addressed after the war.

That the next conflagration would last longer than it had taken the Prussians to defeat the French regular army in 1870 was also generally recognized. What is so interesting today, however, three-quarters of a century after the carnage wrought by the Great War, is that many obvious lessons were discarded, ignored, or--worse yet--totally misappropriated by western officers to fit preconceived doctrinal notions. The failure to appreciate the potential of the machine gun and the inability to recognize the declining value of cavalry, especially employed in its traditional role, starkly reveal how the officers of the era were unable to apprehend the lessons that they had been so gratuitously provided in Manchuria. Most officers accepted the idea that conflicts would last longer than the old cabinet wars of the nineteenth century, yet few believed that a general war in Europe would endure for the length of time that it took to settle matters in

the Far East. Even less did they contemplate the devastation that modern warfare, as so graphically demonstrated in the Russo-Japanese War, would inflict on both man and the environment. In this last regard, too many professional officers were totally blind to understanding, or expressing an interest to understand, the psychological toll that modern combat would have on its participants. As Captain Soloviev stated, many soldiers were rendered *hors de combat* after several days in a position without ever having seen an enemy soldier--the result of having to withstand intermittent shelling and the whistling of random bullets, harsh weather, little food, drink, or rest, and witnessing day after day the wounding and death of close comrades.<sup>6</sup>

The notion that Japanese success in Manchuria vindicated the proponents of the offensive is perhaps the biggest irony to come out of western analyses of the war. Writers were quick to point out the tactical battlefield victories which the Japanese achieved by aggressively and continually battering the Russians in one offensive after another. While certainly acknowledging the terrible human cost which the Japanese paid for these successes, analysts used them to bolster further the idea of the cult of the offensive. What so many in the west failed to realize--and here is the real tragedy in terms of misinterpreting the war's lessons--was that Japan had utterly spent herself in Manchuria by the battle of Mukden and was afterwards

vulnerable to whatever countermeasures the Russians desired to make. Were it not for Russia's own strategic and political crises, the outcome of the conflict may have been altogether different. The Japanese, however--and here again policy-makers in the west missed the essential point--knew when to quit. Despite the wishes of the population to fight the war to a decisive conclusion, the Japanese oligarchy realized that the country was strategically unable to continue the struggle. Thus, they sued for peace, albeit in a fashion that convinced many in the west that they were the undisputed victors.

That the calamitous events of the Russo-Japanese War failed to ultimately convince the majority of western officers of the direct need to rethink conventional strategy and standard tactical doctrine is obvious. Why the situation in the Far East did not have as much of an impact as it appears that it should have is not so obvious. Of the four armies concerned, the Germans seem to have paid the most attention to what happened; hardly anyone familiar with the First World War would argue about the German superiority in machine guns and heavy siege artillery, at least at the outset of hostilities. Additionally, once the war entered its almost immediate static phase, it was the Germans who saw the wisdom in maintaining the strategic defensive, and who opted to exhaust the Allies by leaving it to them to expend their forces in futile "pushes." Despite all this, Japanese successes in Manchuria may have

dangerously emboldened the Germans. Since the German-trained Japanese defeated the Russians in every major engagement, even when the latter were heavily entrenched, many Germans became confident of the soundness and supremacy of their doctrine. As General von Caemmerer commented, in discussing the battle of Mukden: "It is my conviction that this great battle as well as the whole course of the East Asiatic war have most admirably confirmed the doctrines of the German Service Regulations."<sup>7</sup>

A variety of cultural, philosophical, and political factors certainly influenced the mentality of those officers who were responsible for interpreting the lessons of the conflict and applying them. In this respect, the soldiers of all armies were alike; they were essentially still products of the nineteenth century. Thus, both soldiers and politicians considered warfare as an acceptable, in fact normal, means of achieving national political objectives. Social Darwinism, which as a doctrine was eagerly embraced at the time by all the western industrialized nations, undoubtedly colored the thinking of professional officers. Believing that their country and, ergo, their army to be superior, why change a doctrine which likewise must be superior? Closely related was latent racism; though applauding Japan's handling of the war, much of the literature, if not outright saying so, subtly implied that Europeans or Americans had little to learn from the conflict. Such attitudes were directed

against the Russians as much as the Japanese. Numerous writers persisted in believing that somehow the battles waged between central Europeans in Europe would be different than those waged between other nationalities elsewhere. Simply put, the Russo-Japanese War, while attracting the attention of soldiers throughout the world and sparking debate that lasted a decade, was nevertheless fought in the wrong place, by the wrong belligerents, with the wrong cultural and ethnical backgrounds, for most westerners to truly heed its lessons.

Soldiers who went to war in 1914 largely retained romantic and moral concepts of war that mirrored in some respects those of the classical Greeks. Like the Greeks, who refused to adopt the superior military technologies of their adversaries for nearly four hundred years on the grounds that doing so would impugn the dignity and heroism of their warriors,<sup>a</sup> the generation that entered the Great War clung to ideals that were simply incompatible with the realities of highly technological warfare. Though now apparent that in many ways the Russo-Japanese War was the dress rehearsal for World War I, the soldiers of 1914 preferred looking back, like the Greeks, and seeking traditional solutions to warfare, rather than looking forward and devising appropriate doctrine to accommodate the ever-more technological nature of conflict.

## NOTES

1. Bond, War and Society, 84.
2. See, for example, Second Lieutenant Henry J. Reilly, "Port Arthur," Cavalry XVII (January 1907), 399-442; and Captain Frances Le J. Parker, "A Trip to Port Arthur," Cavalry XXIV (November 1913), 383-399.
3. See, for example, Louis Livingston Seaman, M.D., From Tokio through Manchuria with the Japanese (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 1907).
4. Captain R.L. Richards, "Mental and Nervous Diseases during the Russo-Japanese War," The Military Surgeon XXVI (1910), 177-193.
5. Richard A. Gabriel, No More Heroes: Madness and Psychiatry (New York: Hill and Wang, 1987), 109.
6. Soloviev, 40-42.
7. General Rudolf von Caemmerer, The Battle of Mukden, trans. Karl von Donat (London: Hugh Rees, Ltd., 1906), 55-56.
8. Gabriel, 101-102.

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