

Chapter 10

Bloody Battle

—The Bitter Epic of the Siege of Lüshun Port—

Death-Defying Battles

The Russo-Japanese War became increasingly bloody day by day. Defenders entrenched themselves in fortifications made of stone and cement and dug trenches during field operations. From these points they fired rifles and machine guns at the charging enemy. Attackers shelled enemy fortifications, low-crawled, and then charged at defenders for the last few meters. Naturally, quite a number of chargers were gunned down in the course of a charge, but that was only to be expected. The important thing was for the remaining chargers to rush into the enemy fortifications to fight with swords and bayonets. For both friend and foe, there was a 50-50 chance of being killed. Thus, whichever side succeeded in sending more soldiers inside the fortifications, defying the barrage, would have the better chance of winning. And whichever side with more soldiers who were prepared to die would have a better chance of winning in a hand-to-hand combat. Once the winner took over the enemy's stronghold, the loser would try to retake it either with a counteroffensive—repeating the tactics of the winning side—or by first bombarding the captured stronghold with cannons prepositioned for that purpose.

This was the typical pattern of ground battles during the Russo-Japanese War. Being the height of the age of imperialism, both Japanese and Russian soldiers were animated with patriotism and ready to die to protect their honor and that of their countries. Concentrated charges by well-built foot soldiers had traditionally been the most favored tactic employed by the Russian Army. Although initially the Japanese side attempted to employ a tactic centered around open-order deployment and firepower, based on its successful experience during the First Sino-Japanese War, it became increasingly entangled in the Russian tactic and found itself also engaged in a hand-to-hand combat. Consequently, the Russo-Japanese War was filled

with bloody hand-to-hand struggles wherever the two sides met. In retrospect, this was a precursor to the bloodshed repeated in Europe during the First World War ten years later.

The Battle of Liaoyang began with 134,000 Japanese troops charging at Russia's 225,000 ground troops. Given the gap in strength between the two camps, the charge by the Japanese troops seemed suicidal. But the Japanese side had no other option. Although it was obvious that the Japanese side was overwhelmed by its opponent in terms of troop strength, a day's delay in attacking would further tip the balance in Russia's favor because reinforcements continued to arrive. If left unchallenged, heavily reinforced Russian troops would advance south to launch a pincer attack on the Japanese troops that were besieging Lüshun—and the fate of the Manchurian-Korean border that the Japanese Army had managed to capture earlier would become highly vulnerable. Thus, the Japanese had no choice but to attack the 225,000 Russian troops in Liaoyang. Objectively, the only thing the Japanese side could rely on in this situation was the courage and boldness of its soldiers, who actually fought beyond the call of duty.

Lieutenant Colonel Tachibana, a War Hero

Of the four Japanese armies mobilized for the Russo-Japanese War, the Third Army, which had been assigned to besiege Lüshun, did not take part in the Battle of Liaoyang. That battle was fought by the Second and Fourth Armies, which attacked the Russian south front, and the First Army, which advanced from the Yalu River to attack the eastern flank of the Russian force. The Second and Fourth Armies made frontal attacks on the Russians, who stubbornly resisted the offensive and refused to retreat even an inch.

Meanwhile, the Russian side steadily bolstered their preparations for a combined counterattack. It was also reported that some Russian troops were advancing south from the western flank, where the Japanese defense was the weakest due to shortage of troops. If those troops turned west and besieged the Japanese troops, it would have marked the end of the Japanese soldiers there. Objectively speaking, the Japanese Manchurian Army would have been annihilated if the Russian side had switched to an offensive at this point.

It was, again, the First Army under the command of General Kuroki Tametomo that rose to meet the crisis of the Japanese Army. Kuroki's army was indeed the only hope that the Japanese side had. On September 1, Commander-in-Chief Ōyama Iwao sent Kuroki a telegram, saying, "With the frontal attacks by the Second and Fourth Armies at a standstill, future prospects for this desperate battle remain gravely bleak. Our only hope to turn back the tide of war is your army's bravery."

On the eastern front, Kuroki's army was facing Russian troops across the Taizi River. Numbering 78,000 men, the Russian army was more than twice as large as Kuroki's. Unless the First Army crossed this river, it would become an idle force, exercising no influence on the state of the war. Anticipating this river-crossing operation immediately after the successful raid on Gongzhangling, Kuroki had transported all the equipment and materials his army had used to cross the Yalu River all the way to the Taizi River. Demonstrating, once again, his quick thinking and action, one of his best qualities, Kuroki immediately moved his army far to the northeast, while feinting a frontal attack, and succeeded in having it cross the river in the forenoon of August 31. As soon as it crossed the Taizi River, Kuroki's army marched toward a hill called Manju Yama (饅頭山 or Hsi-kuan-tun) that was a point of strategic importance.

Hearing that Kuroki's army had crossed the river, Aleksei Kuropatkin initially reacted with fury at his men for having allowed the enemy to cross the river so easily. Then he resolutely changed his plan and ordered the main division on the southern front to move east to besiege and destroy the sworn enemy, the First Army. The Russian division that was directed to move initially resented the order because it was about to crush the Japanese Second and Fourth Armies. The division had no choice but to follow the order, however, and in doing so it inadvertently helped the Japanese troops survive and continue their advances.

The outcome of the battle on the eastern front depended on which side conquered Manju Yama. Along with the above change of plan, Kuropatkin ordered that this hill be defended to the last, but Kuroki's army had already headed for it.

As a result of the night battle on September 1, during which possession of the hill passed back and forth between the two sides, Kuroki's army

succeeded in capturing Manju Yama. It was not until after dawn that 37,000 foot soldiers and 140 cannons hastily dispatched by Kuropatkin finally arrived at the scene and immediately launched a massive counterattack. Again, Kuroki's action was proven to be one day ahead of the enemy.

Short of ammunition supplies, the Japanese side had no choice but to hide in trenches and endure the enemy bombardment. Regarding this battle, Lieutenant General Hamilton wrote in his memoir, "It seemed as if the hill had been flattened and all the heroes of Gonzhangling were buried alive." The following episode demonstrates that Kuroki was a man of quick and clear decision. In the middle of the enemy's blistering bombardment on the hill, Kuroki decided to take a nap for about an hour, believing there was no use in commanding the situation. Seeing Kuroki lying on the grassy ground, his staff officer rushed to pick him up and found him in deep sleep.

Although Manju Yama was seized temporarily by the Russians, who wrapped the hill with a chorus of "Ura (Hurrah)," the Japanese troops charged the hill after sunset and retook it after mortal combat. A Russian countercharge immediately followed. It was at this moment that a Japanese trick play took effect. In the middle of the enemy's fierce attack, Japanese soldiers were ordered to cease fire. The fact that the soldiers followed this order at once testified to the amazing degree of discipline among Japanese soldiers, because firing at enemies was the only means for soldiers to protect their own lives. By not firing, the Japanese side was able to clearly locate the enemy forces, which were firing in the dark. Taking advantage of the situation in which the Russian forces had judged that the Japanese side must have retreated, Japanese soldiers poured out of their trenches at the sound of the trumpet, rushed at their enemies, and wiped them out. At this point, the Russians abandoned any attempt at retaking Manju Yama. The battleground was reportedly filled with corpses of the Russian soldiers as if they were tuna fish displayed at a fish market.

From this battle, the Second Army from Sendai earned its fame as the bravest division in the Japanese Imperial Army until its annihilation in Guadalcanal during World War II.

Even though the Russian army overwhelmed its Japanese opponent in terms of force strength, Kuropatkin ordered its retreat by way of precaution, seeing how his troops had unexpectedly faced an uphill battle. He judged that the

Japanese side could have hidden an extra reserve force, given Kuroki's highly self-assured fight. If his troops in the eastern front were defeated, Kuropatkin feared, the supply route between Mukden and Liaoyang would be severed and his entire force could be besieged and destroyed.

During the Battle of Liaoyang, the Russian side suffered from about 20,000 casualties, while casualties on the Japanese side ran as high as 23,500. The Japanese troops were so exhausted that they completely lacked the energy to chase after the retreating Russians. Because it was the Russians that had technically withdrawn from the battlefield, the Japanese side won the battle. But because it had been the Russian strategy from the beginning to delay the advance of the Japanese troops, the Russians had accomplished their strategic goal through this battle. Thus, the Russians lost the battle but conserved their reserve power, while the Japanese managed to win but completely exhausted their energy. And that was what the Battle of Liaoyang was all about.

Desperate Battle That Lasted 130 Days and Nights

The siege of Lüshun Port (Siege of Port Arthur) was the bitterest epic during the Russo-Japanese War. In the beginning, nobody anticipated that it would become such a bitter battle. When a full-scale offensive at Lüshun Port was announced on August 19, all the Japanese newspapers set up tents within the Ministry of War compound so that they could put out an extra on the fall of Lüshun naval port ahead of their competitors.

However, for the next five months, every full-scale attack failed one after another. Meanwhile, the Baltic Fleet, into which almost all of Russia's fleets (except for the Black Sea Fleet) had been integrated, was advancing closer to the Far East day by day, and, at the same time, the Russian troops in Mukden grew more powerful as reinforcements arrived daily. Thus it was under a growing feeling of impatience agitated by the possibility that the outcome of the siege might critically affect the overall prospect of the war that the Japanese soldiers engaged in a 130 day-and-night hand-to-hand combat at Lüshun Port. In the end, the port was captured by the Japanese side, but only in exchange for heavy casualties of 60,000 soldiers, of which 15,000 lost their lives.

The progress of this battle was closely watched by the entire Japanese

population, which oscillated between anticipation and disappointment. Not only the families of the injured and the dead but the entire population learned the gruesomeness of a modern war. People discussed wars and strategies, while countless demonstrations of patriotism and the spirit of self-sacrifice were repeated every day on the warfront.

It was during the siege of Lüshun Port that poetess Yosano Akiko (与謝野晶子, 1878–1942) wrote her famous poem, “Oh, younger brother mine, for thee I weep,... So I prithee, do not die, though Lüshun’s fortress should perish, should it be saved, what of that? . . .”

It amazes me to realize how lively the Meiji spirit was. Of course, some people criticized the unpatriotic poem by Akiko, but the criticism remained in the bounds of literary commentary and Akiko was not socially oppressed for freely expressing her sentiments. In Japan, not only before World War II but even today, one should be prepared to be ostracized by society, including the mass media, when he/she has anything to say that is contrary to what the overwhelming majority of people believe in. Against this background, it is refreshing to know that there was such a liberal atmosphere in the Meiji era. Yosano Akiko henceforth remained a lady that all Japanese men admired throughout the Meiji and Taishō eras.

Still, a perpetual spring of patriotism among soldiers on the battlefield as well as the powerful support of the people back home was called for to bolster the soldiers’ spirits to fight through the 130 day-and-night hand-to-hand battle. Even though Akiko lamented as above, she did not have even the faintest doubt that her younger brother would fulfill his duty for his country. That was the *Zeitgeist* of the time. This is a poem of a woman who had pled for the safety of her brother because she was fully aware that he was willing to die for his country.

It is ideal for a Japanese to possess a perfect combination of heart and mind, as reflected in a famous poem, *Ohyakudo Mōde* (One Hundred Prayer Visits), sung by the contemporary poetess Ōtsuka Naoko (or Kusuoko, 大塚楠緒子):

Should a woman be denounced
If she thinks of her husband at the first step
Her country at the second step

But her husband again at the third step?

Those were the days when the spirit of each and every Japanese was uninhibited by any exogenous coercion or manneristic education, freely realizing itself as it pleased.

Strategic Dilemma for Japan and Russia

Because there are too many individual episodes concerning the siege of Lüshun Port, let me confine myself to some discussion on the strategic significance of the siege.

Many criticize the battle for having wasted more time and more human lives than originally expected. Below, I will attempt to analyze this battle mostly along the treatise by Kuwata Etsu (桑田悦), who presented a relatively detached view on the combat that is included in the first volume of *Kindai Nippon Sensō-shi*¹ (近代日本戦争史).

In the course of the Russo-Japanese War, the main theatre of which was the Manchurian plain, the presence of Lüshun became a strategic dilemma of both Japan and Russia.

Being a small and weak nation, Japan had no other option than, first, to defeat the Russian navy and army stationed in the Far East and, second, to set up favorable conditions for peace negotiations with the help of mediation by friendly nations. Japan needed to do this while crushing Russian reinforcements one by one as they arrived from Europe.

Russia's strategy was completely opposite. Lüshun Port was a military base that the Russians wished to defend until the arrival of the Baltic Fleet. At the same time, if Lüshun Port suck up the main force of the Russian army in Manchuria for its rescue, the entire army would become extremely vulnerable when and if the Japanese army attempted a full-scale offensive before the arrival of further reinforcements from Europe. Due to this dilemma, the Russian war council on the eve of the Battle of Liaoyang was divided between those who argued for sending forces to Lüshun, as

¹ *Kindai Nippon Sensō-shi* (Military History of Modern Japan). Dōdai Keizai Konwakai. Tokyo. 1995.

advocated by Yevgeni Alekseyev, Russian viceroy in Port Arthur, and those who argued for retreating troops to Harbin, as advocated by Kuropatkin. The impasse resulted in a series of halfhearted compromises.

From the Japanese navy's viewpoint, it was imperative to destroy the Russian squadron that had locked itself up in Lüshun Port before the Baltic Fleet arrived. From the army's point of view, however, it would be deprived of a force vital to crush the Russian army in Manchuria at an early stage if it had to dispatch a large force to besiege Lüshun. Its true wish was for the force to be deployed to Liaoyang after the occupation of Jinzhou, where the Liaodong Peninsula is the narrowest. In fact, the Japanese army had already once missed the chance of pursuing the retreating Russians in Liaoyang owing to shortage of soldiers.

It was not only the troops but also ammunitions that was difficult for Japan to supply; it had to divide the meager resources between two major operations. Although there had been no plan to promptly capture Lüshun in the beginning, the policy to attack Lüshun was decided in late May, more than three months after the eruption of the war, at the strong request of the Imperial Navy, which had realized the futility of the blockade operation. The first full-scale offensive was launched on August 19.

In retrospect, it turned out that this delay of half a year, although it was nobody's fault, had a crucial influence on the entire war.

Beton (Cement) as Hard as Steel

Although the Russian side had been in the process of executing a long-term plan by constructing a modern fortress in Lüshun, it completed a new and more operationally-oriented fortress within half a year of the start of the war. Under the direction of the brilliant General Roman Kondratenko, as many as 10,000 laborers were employed to build the fortress. Reinforcements of some 20,000 soldiers were also completed in three months while the Lüshun-Mukden railway was still serviceable.

In retrospect, if the Japanese Army divisions had advanced straight to Lüshun immediately after the eruption of the war in February in a speed comparable to that of Kuroki's army, the occupation of Lüshun must have been much easier.

Partly because the siege of Lüshun had been originally requested by the

navy, the army did not have sufficient information on the target, not to mention a workable operational plan. This explains why the Japanese Imperial Army had scarce valid information on Lüshun. It should be recalled that the Japanese Army had earlier made a thorough and accurate study on situations in the regions along the Trans-Siberian Railway and in Northern Manchuria that it differed only a little from the Russian records published after the war. Particularly, the Japanese Army was totally unaware of the modern fortress which had been constructed in Lüshun with scrupulous care.

Therefore, the Japanese side had assumed that the entire city of Lüshun would fall easily with a conventional frontal attack. This misguided assumption was the principle cause for the grave damage that Japanese forces later received, as well as the greatest reason why the attack on the 203 Hill was not carried out when the Russian defense was still undermanned.

Once the Japanese troops started attacking Lüshun, however, they soon realized that the strength of the Russian defense was far beyond their imagination. The fortifications were consolidated with cement, which withstood the shelling of the Japanese guns. Having passed the barbed wire which surrounded the fortification, attackers had to deal with trenches which were six to nine meters wide and three to ten meters deep with almost vertical walls, making easy targets for the Russians from numerous gun ports set up within the fortification. This setup resulted in a wretched spectacle, on the part of Japanese troops, that was described by Meiji literary giant Mori Ōgai (森鷗外) as, “Despite the valor of our brave warriors, the steel-hard cement wall of the enemy fortification became splattered with human flesh . . .” During the first full-scale offensive on August 19 through 24, the death toll of the Japanese side reached 16,000 soldiers. It was a miserable defeat, with the Japanese failing to take even a single fortification.

Based on this failure, the Japanese side abandoned its initial plan to destroy enemy fortifications at a stroke and rush to Lüshun Port and adopted, instead, an orthodox tactic of taking up a position and closing in on the enemy via breaches.

Despite this change of tactics, all-out offensives in September and October only resulted in piles of corpses of Japanese soldiers in and around the trenches due to the impregnable resistance put up by Russian defenders.

The only good news for the Japanese side during this period was that its 28-cm Howitzer was proven highly effective against enemy defense because of its long range and heavy warheads. The Japanese side succeeded in transporting eighteen 28-cm Howitzer guns, which had been installed in fortresses in Japan, to Manchuria and making them operable in only two weeks, with the prompt completion of gun platforms which normally would have taken one to two months.

Nogi Maresuke, Commander of the Japanese Third Army

Meanwhile, the Baltic Fleet had sailed out of the Baltic naval port of Libau on October 15, 1904. At the earliest, it was expected to arrive in the Far East by early January. Because the Combined Fleet of the Japanese Imperial Navy had been stationed outside Lüshun Port to police the Russian squadron since the early stage of the war, all of its vessels needed to be docked and fitted out at least two months before a major sea battle. From the beginning of the war, the Japanese navy had hoped for the capture of not Lüshun Port itself but of the 203 Hill, from which Russian vessels could be bombarded and sunk, and the navy had repeatedly submitted its request to the army through General Headquarters.

The Japanese Third Army was criticized for not having responded to this request from the navy promptly, which was counted as one of the causes of the failure of the operation. As days idly went by without any hopeful progress on the war, people's disappointment and frustration reached the limit, with daily reports on failed operations and on miserable deaths of countless young soldiers.

People showered the residence of General Nogi Maresuke, commander of the Third Army, with stones and verbal abuse; Mrs. Nogi had to pay a visit to Ise Grand Shrine in Mie prefecture and pray for the fall of Lüshun in exchange for the lives of her and her husband. Even though some in the General Headquarters argued for Nogi's dismissal, it never materialized. It was more than obvious to anyone that if he had been dismissed, he would have taken his own life by disembowelment.

Until the end of World War II, General Nogi had been the god of war and an icon for the Japanese, so much so that any play or movie on General Nogi was guaranteed to become a big hit. General Nogi ended up being a legend

himself, and numerous folktales depicted his superhuman capabilities—for example, Nogi appearing by the bedside of an impoverished sick person to solve all his problems, and so on. Of course, most of those tales must have been mere fantasy.

Although the failure of the operation in Lüshun was mostly attributable to inadequate planning before Nogi was appointed as commander of the Third Army, and thus was something for which Nogi could not be responsible, Nogi was, as the commander of the time, naturally blamed for all failures. Nevertheless, Nogi was a man of integrity and nobody ever doubted his selflessness.

During the encampment, Nogi declined any special treatment and insisted on being treated just like an ordinary soldier. While he never allowed *ondol* (underfloor heating) in his room to be fired up, he did not forbid others to fire up theirs. He would not touch anything other than the same rations for the rank and file. Even when he had indigestion, he declined the offer of a rice porridge his aide-de-camp had prepared and ate ordinary rations.

During the First Sino-Japanese War, one division commander sent Nogi an overcoat with a woolen lining during encampment to be worn in the severe winter, but he instructed one of his men to return the coat immediately to the sender. Reminded by his subordinates of the rudeness of this act in the face of the kindness of the sender, Nogi ordered the coat to be sent to a hospital as bedding for patients.

There are countless other episodes that revealed Nogi's kindness to his subordinates and strictness toward himself. His life in peace time was also simple and honest. He generously gave away to his subordinates money that had been accumulated during expeditions or that came from imperial grants for his service. Nogi died almost penniless when he disemboweled himself on the death of Emperor Meiji.

War, however, is not won by personal virtue of a commander alone. After repeated abortive attempts in Lüshun, frustration reached a peak in Tokyo and, on the eve of the all-out offensive scheduled for November 26, an imperial edict was issued wishing for the success of the operation. Such an edict was highly unusual. Now that the emperor had voiced his wish for the success of the operation, Nogi would have to die if he failed again. Just before

commencing the full offensive, Nogi announced to his senior officers that, in case the offensive did not go as planned this time, “I intend to lead the Seventh Division myself and charge at the central line of the enemy fortress, and I beg for your approval.” This could only mean that Nogi intended to be the first to be killed, and it took his staff officers two hours to dissuade Nogi from this plan.

Instead, a special detachment known as the *Shirodasuki-tai* (White Sash Company) was organized. Members of this detachment were told that, “Although it is the greatest honor to be a member of this special detachment, . . . you should not expect that any of its members could come back alive. You are expected to accomplish the mission at the sacrifice of your life.” The detachment’s mission was to launch a bayonet charge at the enemy under the cover of darkness, not firing a single shot. Members all wore white cotton sashes across their shoulders for identification. Members spent their last minutes on this earth preparing for the departure, entrusting their farewell notes and tufts of their hair to be sent to their families at home. One of the notes reads, “I will depart to heaven with great glee. Never should you deplore my departure.”

But even this suicide squad failed to bring a breakthrough. When the squad charged at the enemy, the majority of its members were gunned down within a few initial steps except for a few who somehow managed to reach the wall, only to be shot to death there. In the end, some 3,000 members of the *Shirodasuki-tai* were all wiped out.

Death-Defying Struggle for the 203 Hill

At this point, Nogi finally made up his mind to shift the major target to the 203 Hill. The charge at the hill had to be launched immediately while Russian attention was still concentrated on the Japanese frontal attack. The failure of the third full-scale offensive at Lüshun became obvious before dawn on November 27, and Nogi had already ordered the attack on the 203 Hill at 10 o’clock in the morning of the same day.

Meanwhile, the Russian side had not paid too much attention to the 203 Hill, preoccupied as it was with the defense of Lüshun. As the war progressed, however, the strategic importance of the 203 Hill became more clearly recognized and the Russians started constructing strongholds on the

hill. These hastily constructed strongholds were not permanent establishments like the other fortifications in Lüshun.

It was against this backdrop that the most gruesome battle in world history of land warfare took place. There never has been and never will be another battle like this. When the initial success of the night raid led Nogi's army to capture a part of the plateau, Tōgō Heihachirō, Commander-in-Chief of the Combined Fleet of the Imperial Japanese Navy, immediately dispatched a messenger to convey his congratulations. But the Japanese troops occupying the captured territory were soon wiped out by a Russian counteroffensive, marking the beginning of incessant death-defying struggles between the two armies in which this territory changed hands 67 times.

Colonel Nikolai Tretyakov, commander of the 5th East Siberian Rifles Regiment defending the 203 Hill, reminisced, "It is rare to take part in such a gruesome battle . . . those who had already lost guns tried to strangle their opponents with bare, bloody hands. . . . The gruesomeness of the battlefield was enough to make you cover your eyes. . . ." In the end, the Japanese side took the last offensive with all the remaining soldiers on December 5 and succeeded in capturing the top of the hill. By that time, the Russian side had lost all of its reserve forces to launch another counterattack—and silence returned to the hill.

Having captured the 203 Hill, the Japanese side was astonished by its strategic importance. Beneath their eyes were all the vessels of Russia's Lüshun squadron, whose whereabouts had been unknown, as if they were model ships on a miniature garden. Taking advantage of the newly-acquired vantage point, Nogi's army started bombarding the Russian squadron as early as in the afternoon of December 5. Within 30 minutes, the battleship *Portava* was sunk, followed by the destruction of all the other vessels of the squadron in three subsequent days.

With the elimination of the Russian squadron in Lüshun, Tōgō led the Combined Fleet back to Japan in order to prepare for the imminent showdown with Russia's Baltic Fleet.

Although the main force of the Russian troops continued to resist for another one month, nailing down the Third Japanese Army, their morale visibly deteriorated after General Roman Kondratenko, the central person in

the Russian defense of Port Arthur, was killed by a Japanese 28-cm Howitzer on December 15. The Russians surrendered on January 1, 1905.

After the surrender of the fortress, the commanding generals on both sides, General Nogi and General Anatoly Stessel, met on January 5. An American movie crew had been dispatched to cover the war, a highly unusual scene in those days, but Nogi declined its offer to take pictures of the meeting, explaining that doing so would dishonor the defeated opponent, which was against the samurai ethics. After repeated pleadings by the Americans, Nogi finally allowed one picture to be taken of him and Stessel, wearing swords, sitting next to each other as friends, surrounded by their respective staffs. After the meeting, it is said Stessel uttered, “Although I had expected General Nogi to be a pitiless demon, I came back convinced that it was not a shame at all to be defeated by such a modest and kindhearted warrior.” This meeting between two generals was vividly captured in “*Suishiei no Kaiken*” (Meeting in Shuishiying), a song composed for elementary school pupils of the time.

Humble even in victory, the Japanese side treated the Russians with courtesy and humility. When the commanders of the two sides met, they treated each other with mutual respect as fellow warriors who had fought through an unprecedented fierce battle, albeit on opposite sides.

[The enemy general] sitting straight, started by saying, “I can only feel how dishearted Your Excellency must have been with the loss of your two sons in this war.” (Verse 5)

In response, our General replied, reassuringly, “I am happy that both my sons found their own place to die. This is truly an honor to a military family.” (Verse 6)

General Nogi had two sons. The elder one, First Lieutenant Nogi Katsusuke, was killed in the Battle of Nanshan. When his staff endeavored to assign his younger son, Lieutenant Nogi Yasusuke, to headquarters so as to keep him off frontline duty, Nogi rejected the idea and dispatched his younger and only remaining son to the battle of the 203 Hill, from which he never returned. Of course, not only the Nogi’s but tens of thousands of Japanese families lost

their sons and husbands in this war. An Edo-style popular song with the 7-7-7-5 syllable pattern composed around this time laments:

It is presumptuous to cry over the loss of your only son
When some noble persons have lost two

Nogi himself expressed his feeling in the form of a Chinese poem that he composed on the occasion of the triumphant return:

One million soldiers of the Emperor's Army conquered arrogant
barbarians
During field operations and attacks on enemy strongholds, mountains of
corpses were built
I am so ashamed, how could I meet the elderly fathers of the fallen
soldiers
How many of them have returned today with the triumphant song

Honor to a Warrior

General Nogi continued to look for a place to die in the subsequent Battle of Mukden, always situating himself at the head of charges. When he disemboweled himself on the death of Emperor Meiji in later years, it must have been the occasion that he had long waited for.

Shizuko, the general's wife, died with her husband as she had wished for at Ise Grand Shrine. The recent iconoclastic historic view tends to see her death as a suicide coerced by General Nogi, though without any hard evidence. The only remaining evidence about Nogi's death is the general's written will. While its first clause—about his long journey to look for a place to die ever since the humiliation of having lost his regimental banner to the enemy during the Satsuma Rebellion—was a moving account of his view on the honor of a warrior, the ninth clause contained meticulous instructions on how Nogi's wife was to be looked after in her advanced age. The third clause and the end note instructed that Shizuko should be consulted on anything that was not covered by the will.

Nogi was by birth a typical feudalistic macho man, and, as such, dying with his wife was utterly beyond his perception. Here, we should take pity on

Shizuko's determination to take her own life, using a sword, with which she must not have been familiar, after sending her husband off.

Nogi's will concluded with the instruction that there should be no adoption and that the Nogi family line should become extinct when Shizuko passed away.

Prelude to the Fall of Czarism

The fall of Lüshun had a tremendous international impact. While Japan did not come off with a clear victory of the Battle of Liaoyang, in which some say Russia was not necessarily defeated, the outcome of the battle in Lüshun was obvious to anyone. In a nutshell, a Caucasian commander raised a flag of surrender to troops of a yellow race.

The Times of London stressed the significance of the siege of Lüshun by saying, "Port Arthur was not a mere fortress. It was a symbol of Russia's power."

Of the most direct influence on the war was the psychological impact of this defeat on the Russian people. An Austrian newspaper predicted "the fall of Port Arthur would ignite dissatisfaction and frustration among Russian people as if throwing fire into a powder keg," a statement which later proved to be accurate.

Vladimir Lenin characterized the siege of Port Arthur as "a prelude to the fall of Czarism." On January 22, only twenty days after the fall of Lüshun, the massacre on "Bloody Sunday" took place. Witte described it as "the first bloody festival of the Russian Revolution in 1905."

Although the incident was triggered by a trivial difference of opinion, like the beginning of many other revolutions, 1,216 citizens lost their lives by army gunfire. Whatever the cause might be, bloodshed ignites a revolution. The year 1905, thus, became the year of prelude to the 1917 Russian Revolution. These domestic events as well as other issues were behind the attempts of Witte and others to promote peace negotiations with Japan despite the Czar's strong wish to continue the war.

Had there not been a peril of revolution within Russia, the Czar would not have had listened to offers of mediation by President Theodore Roosevelt and, as a result, Japanese troops would have been driven away from the Liaodong and Korean Peninsulas and the entire Asian continent. This would

have put not only Korea but the entire northern half of China at the mercy of Russia—a horrifying prospect.

Japan's Intelligence War during the Russo-Japanese War

Behind the domestic unrest in Russia was, among other factors, Japan's secret service. Because it was undertaken in a strictly confidential manner, no General Headquarters document on this operation remained, except for the debriefing report of Lieutenant Colonel Akashi Motojirō (明石元二郎), allegedly a central figure in this operation. Thus, what was actually done and how effective it really was remains a mystery. Because the antigovernment segments in Russia would not and could not admit that they had received financial assistance from the Japanese government, the truth never came out.

By orders of General Fukushima Yasumasa, Director of Intelligence of the Imperial Japanese Army, Lieutenant Colonel Akashi undertook a secret operation to support revolutionary movements in Russia while he was assigned to the Japanese embassy in Stockholm as a military attaché. Because General Headquarters had provided Akashi with a bold sum of ¥1 million, out of which only ¥270,000 was left unused at the end of the war, the size of Akashi's operations can be more or less conjectured.

First having succeeded in making contact with Finnish national independence activists, Akashi continued to expand his connections to various other nationalist activists and, finally, to the Russian Social Democratic Labour Party led by Lenin, which was later to become the Communist Party of the Soviet Union. Akashi aimed to accomplish a sense of unity among them based on broad common interests.

On October 1, 1904, several secret societies in Russia got together for the first time in Paris and agreed on plans of action, including antiwar demonstrations and antiwar strikes at military arsenals. It is believed that Lieutenant Colonel Akashi's swift but clandestine maneuvering and the war chest he had offered were behind this collaboration. The second meeting was convened in Geneva in April 1905, after the Battle of Mukden, after which countless riots and insurgencies continued to erupt in Russia until the end of the war. During this period, Akashi not only helped organize meetings but also purchased a massive amount of weapons and supplied them to the

revolutionary groups within Russia.

Akashi was not the only Japanese who was engaged in the subversive activities. Taking advantage of their appearance, which made them indistinguishable in Russian eyes from the Mongolians or the Chinese, Japanese agents sneaked into northern Manchuria and engaged in spying and subversive activities. The Trans-Siberian Railway was so tightly guarded that minor damages were soon fixed, but they nevertheless were able to temporarily delay the transport of reinforcements by damaging parts of the railway. Thus, for Japan, the Russo-Japanese War was truly an all-out effort, involving not only soldiers at the battlefield but also everyone else, including secret agents behind the scenes.

The Japanese side also used to their advantage *bazoku* (馬賊, mounted bandits), which were rampant in Manchuria in those days. While both Russia and Japan tried to win the hearts and minds of these bandits, many of them started to seek personal advantage by helping the Japanese troops as the war situation became increasingly favorable for Japan, overcoming their initial doubts about Japan's prospects. Behind the winning of widespread support from the bandit, which allegedly annoyed the Russians tremendously, was the personal character of Major Hanada Nakanosuke (花田仲之助) of the Japanese Army in charge of *bazoku* relations. Nicknamed *Hua Daren*, Hanada rallied *bazoku* clans, leading a bunch of desperado members of the Japanese ultranationalist society Genyōsha (玄洋社). Eventually, the bandits started admiring Hanada, and some even treated him as a living saint. This was attributable to Hanada's humility and his willingness to give all the credit to his men.

It should be recalled that most of the officers and soldiers who were engaged in the most dangerous behind-the-scene activities had given up the honor of being killed in the battlefield, fully aware that their accomplishments would go unsung and be forgotten. Because their spirit was so noble that they left no clue of their existence, it is difficult for us today to trace their accomplishments. We can only be thankful for their self-sacrifice and pray for the repose of their souls.