

The Russo-Japanese War of 1904/05

At last year's convention, I talked about the Crimean War of 1854/55 and its consequences. Out of the humiliations suffered by Russia arose a new Russian nationalism, in which Russia turned its back on Europe, and instead, began to direct its imperialistic energies eastwards beyond the Caspian Sea. Russia's expansionist policies in the east eventually brought the empire into conflict with Japan, resulting in a military and naval conflict which again humiliated Mother Russia to her core. The consequences of this disastrous, and un-necessary, military engagement with tiny Japan became the flash-point which turned the smoldering embers of discontent into the flames of open and broad-based opposition against the Tsarist regime. Tsar Nicholas II defended his autocratic throne for another twelve years, before the Russian Revolution of October 1917 tore it from him. But the desire for fundamental changes and the seditious roots of rebellion had existed in Russia for many years prior to 1917.

In this presentation, I will talk about what some historians refer to as the Mini-Revolution of 1905, and the role which the war with Japan played in initiating open revolts against the tsarist bureaucracy. The war with Japan was a disaster for Russia. The humiliating defeats weakened the Tsar's authority and fed the growing opposition to autocratic rule which contributed to the eventual triumph of the Bolsheviks a dozen years later. In a speech in 1920 Vladimir Lenin referred to 1905 as the "dress rehearsal" which made possible the victory of the 1917 October Revolution.

A significant historical event such as a war does not occur in isolation. It is surrounded by simultaneous local, national and international influences. The war with Japan was a distraction for Tsar Nicholas II because in his prejudicial Russian view of the world, he could not imagine the Japanese as a serious threat. In 1904 Nicholas should have been paying more attention to events at home which would seriously threaten the survival of his autocratic administration. There was no revolution in 1905 really, because power did not change hands. Nevertheless the events of 1905 upset the balance of power in Russia. Workers and peasants discovered the powers of common purpose and organized resistance. Only the military and the repressive state police kept the Tsar in power through the tumultuous years 1904-1907.

The widespread revolts against the established system throughout the empire forced Nicholas to agree to the establishment of an elementary form of an elected constituent assembly (the October Manifesto). This assembly or Duma had only the power to "advise" the administration. Nicholas and his bureaucrats did everything they could to ensure this assembly remained weak and ineffective. Opposition factions fighting among themselves eventually allowed Nicholas to unilaterally dissolve it altogether in late 1907. But the real importance of the events of these years lies in the fact that ordinary Russians fought for, and won the legal right to form political parties representing alternative social and economic interests. The new freedoms made possible

for the first time in Russia open and uninhibited political activity. Political parties of all shades of opinion now campaigned openly for support. Bolshevism emerged during these years as a distinct political movement openly committed to the overthrow of the autocratic administration. The stage was set for the real Revolution and in 1917 the Tsar would lose the support of the army. This was the crucial difference which allowed a turnover of power in 1917 that did not occur in 1905.

But even the military challenged the Tsar's authority in 1905. On June 14 of that year, the crew aboard the battleship Potemkin on the Black Sea mutinied, killing the ship's commander and four officers. The crew took command of the ship and sailed for Odessa where strikers and demonstrators had been clashing with police and Cossack troops for two weeks. The appearance of the Potemkin in the harbor with its mutinous crew was cheered by mobs which proceeded to loot and burn the entire warehouse area of the harbor. Nicholas placed Odessa under martial law. Twenty thousand soldiers descended on the city and opened fire. The Potemkin set out to sea, and order in Odessa was restored. Certainly our German relatives in Odessa district would have been acutely aware of these momentous events. The open unrest throughout Russia became an important motivation for tens of thousands of Germans to leave Russia for North and South America, a movement which really picked up speed after 1905.

Opposition to the autocratic Tsars existed in Russia already in 1825 when a group of elite Army officers actually rebelled against Tsar Nicholas I in what is known as the Decembrist Uprising. Five of the leaders were publicly hanged in St. Petersburg, and dozens more exiled with their families to Siberia. Opposition to the Romanov monarchy would continue of course, but the criticisms came from liberal thinkers among the nobility, middle-class intellectuals, and from university students. The Tsars were able to keep this relatively small opposition in check using arrests by the Okhrana or State Police along with jail sentences and exile as punishments. There were also those radicals who orchestrated an on-going string of political assassinations, including that of Tsar Alexander II in 1881, and then his grandson Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovich in February of 1905. What was different, beginning in 1904, was the massive and spontaneous broad-based opposition which congealed among the industrial working class (looking for better working conditions), the peasants (wanting land and autonomy), and the liberal-thinkers and the socialists who wanted a European-styled democracy to replace the Tsarist administration. There is no doubt that the economic concerns of the Russian people shaped the political discussions of the day.

In 1905 Russia had 129 million population comprising more than 100 ethnic groups. The Russian Empire was predominantly agrarian and peasants accounted for more than 70 percent of the population. The peasantry was still devoted to the Tsar and directed its discontent against the bureaucrats and landlords, whom they naively held responsible for disregarding the Tsar's real affection for them. The economic plight of the peasants had actually deteriorated since the repeal of serfdom in 1861. They had not been able to acquire meaningful amounts of land. Taxes were onerous on what they did produce. The death rate in Russia was double what it was

in England at the time, giving a good indication of living conditions in rural Russia. Peasants were still not free to move from one locale to another, and so remained at the mercy of local landlords. Droughts in the grain-growing regions throughout the 1890's brought famine conditions to thousands of peasants. Agricultural production had decreased because the nobility, deprived of their serfs after 1861, were unable to manage their large estates profitably and gradually began to sell off their holdings. This trend greatly benefited the German colonists who purchased this land at every opportunity, much to the dismay of the local Russian peasants.

The rapid economic and industrial development in Russia during the last decade of the nineteenth century was accompanied by increasing discontent among the three million plus factory workers during the depression of 1899-1903. The establishment of large state-owned enterprises had brought together large numbers of workers, thus making mass protests much easier than if the same number of workers was spread over many smaller enterprises. Workers considered to be trouble-makers were dismissed and sent back to their villages. In this way word spread about working conditions in the large factories, and so support for industrial discontent grew even in rural Russia. Factory workers at that time worked usually 11-12 hours per day, 6 days per week, most often in a very un-healthy and un-safe environment. Loss of limb and life was common in the steel mills for example. Pay was extremely low in the crowded textile factories. Workers most often met an extremely hostile reaction from the factory owners, who had little or no regard for the well-being of their workers, and who still maintained the right of corporal punishment against recalcitrant workers. It was fertile ground for revolutionary agitators.

So by 1904 there were three main issues which motivated opposition to the Tsar's administration.

1. The workers and laborers of the regime desperately wanted better working conditions and better pay, in order to share in the growing wealth of Russia.
2. Millions of peasants lived in extreme poverty and wanted their own land. They were unhappy with their lot in life.
3. There was a broad-based demand for change to the existing political structure, a change that would allow for sharing of administrative powers with representatives openly elected to a constituent assembly of some sort. This change of course would bring with it new civil liberties not previously allowed by the old regime – the formation of political parties and freedom of the press.

By late 1904, one can add to this list the public unhappiness within the army and the navy regarding the defeats and high number of casualties resulting from the war with Japan. The desertion rate en route to Manchuria, and in Manchuria itself, was very high. Approximately 2000 Russian Army officers surrendered willingly to the Japanese rather than fight. Self-inflicted wounds and suicides were common among soldiers upon learning they were being dispatched to Manchuria. The press reported on several mutinies against unit commanders regarding poor leadership, bad decisions, and insufficient supplies of food, shelter and clothing

in the field. Disease claimed many lives and morale was extremely low. Despite the lessons of the Crimean War, too many officers were still being promoted through graft and influence in St. Petersburg.

Another feature of the Tsarist administration was its overt prejudice against all minorities, which were considered to be culturally inferior to the Great Russians. The reforms of the 1870's had sought to "russify" the minorities by insisting the Russian language be used in schools, in business, and in the courts. These ethnic minorities began to demand the return of their previous rights. The Tsar's administration was particularly antagonistic toward the Jews who numbered about five million in the Empire at that time. This helps to explain the high proportion of Jews among the leadership of several opposition groups, especially the Bolsheviks. A good example is Leon Trotsky who gained public prominence during the years of unrest in 1904 and 1905.

In December, 1904 a dispute over dismissed workers led to a mass walk-out at a large armaments and shipbuilding factory in St. Petersburg. Notwithstanding the illegality of strikes, other factories quickly followed suit, and by early January, two-thirds of St. Petersburg's factory workers (about 100,000 people at 382 enterprises)¹ were not at work. This work stoppage spread throughout Russia so quickly that by month's end 414,000 workers had participated in "stop-work" protests. Similar actions occurred at the universities where students boycotted their classes, often organizing tumultuous meetings attended by workers, peasants, and agitators for change. There was a breakdown of public order, obvious to everyone. It was an open challenge to established authority. While police and soldiers had their orders to prevent public protests, they did not know how to react to the huge numbers attending these demonstrations. Sometimes, they even joined the protestors.

This is not to say that the State Police (Okhrana) were any less diligent in arresting known leaders and agitators. Terrorist attacks on policemen were common. Right-wing extremists known as the Black Hundreds formed vigilante groups to punish law-breakers. Communities formed self-defense paramilitary groups against the Black Hundreds. Several cities experienced anti-Jewish riots or pogroms. The resulting anarchy and social chaos caused many Russians, who had not previously been political thinkers, let alone agitators, to realize the need for fundamental changes to the way the country was governed. Rural areas increasingly experienced murders, looting and pillage, massacres and riots. Many Germans who left Russia after 1905 mention this lawlessness as a motivation to emigrate.

Strike numbers remained high throughout 1905, reaching a high of nearly half a million in December. By year's end, more than 13,000 establishments had been affected by work stoppages, resulting in more than 2.5 million work-days lost to the Russian economy.² The Tsarist administration had lost control. The turning point occurred 10 January 1905 outside the Winter Palace at St. Petersburg on what became known as "Bloody Sunday".

¹ The Revolution of 1905, A Short History. Abraham Ascher. 2004

² Ibid.

Up to this point, Russian workers and peasants still respected the Tsar. They believed the Tsar truly wanted better living conditions for them. It was only the corrupt bureaucrats and Tsarist officials who stifled the Tsar's true intentions. Father Georgii Apollonovich Gapon, an orthodox priest, also believed this and accepted as his mission appointed by God the dual role of helping the workers and the Tsar. He believed that only personal intervention by the Tsar could peacefully resolve the labor unrest. He sent a letter to the Tsar pleading with him to meet his people in front of the Winter Palace on Sunday morning, 10 January. The week prior, Gapon spent tirelessly talking to groups of workers throughout St. Petersburg. On that fateful Sunday morning, a large procession of several thousands gathered in the city center with Gapon and other priests in the lead, carrying crosses and icons as well as photos of the Tsar. No visible weapons were ever reported among the throngs of people, and Gapon had assured the Tsar that the demonstration would be orderly and non-threatening. By early afternoon the crowd had grown to an estimated 200,000 people (300,000 by some reports). They were faced by 50,000 nervous Cossacks and infantry troops.

The reported number of deaths and wounded which resulted on Bloody Sunday varies widely. It seems at least one hundred people were killed, with several hundred wounded.³ The actual number is not as important to this story as is the backlash against the Tsar, even among his own inner court advisors. The truth is that the Tsar was not even at the Winter Palace on that Sunday to meet, or to address, the demonstrators. The fact that his loyal troops fired upon un-armed citizens discredited the Tsar in the eyes of his people and in the eyes of the world. A popular sentiment was that he had lost the moral authority to rule, despite the Tsar's over-riding belief that his monarchy was anointed by God. Many Russians could no longer look upon Nicholas as the "father of the people".

Tsar Nicholas had little time to consider the events of Bloody Sunday. Port Arthur, Russia's year-round naval base in Manchuria with its all-important access to the Pacific, had fallen to the Japanese only 10 days before Bloody Sunday. Russia's public (ie. international) image was in disgrace, and its military might was now questioned by other European powers, jeopardizing Russia's access to foreign loans to finance the war with Japan. Nicholas was still confident that the war with Japan would end in victory as soon as the Baltic Fleet reached the Far East. A rag-tag assembly of every available ship had been hastily outfitted and dispatched from the Kronstadt naval base at St. Petersburg in early October 1904. More about the epic journey of this ill-fated armada will follow as this report turns its attention now to the Russo-Japanese War of 1904-05.

Many historians consider Bloody Sunday as the pivotal event which drove Russia inexorably into revolution in 1917. Lenin, upon hearing about the events of that day, proclaimed, "The prestige of the Tsarist name has been ruined forever. The uprising has begun."⁴ Still, the Tsarist regime might have survived the domestic turmoil of 1904-05 if it had not been for the

³ The Tide at Sunrise, A History of the Russo-Japanese War 1904-05. Dennis & Peggy Warner, 1974

⁴ Ibid, page 486.

disastrous results of its war with Japan. Backlash against the inept conduct of the war became one of the main thrusts of a “perfect storm” of protest and opposition directed against the autocratic regime of Tsar Nicholas II. Abraham Ascher writes: “It is conceivable that had Russia not provoked Japan into a war in 1904 a revolutionary upheaval might have been delayed and the country might even have avoided altogether a cataclysm as far-reaching as the events of 1905. As it was, the catastrophic defeats suffered by the imperial army and navy seemed to justify every criticism that the political opposition had leveled at the autocratic regime: that it was irresponsible, incompetent, and reckless.”⁵

As early as May 1904 the war had begun to have a serious impact upon the economic life of Russia. The military had taken over the railways to rush men, equipment and supplies to the east. This interrupted all domestic trade within Russia causing much hardship for the population at home. The 1904 wheat crop in Bessarabia was a complete failure, and the harvest was poor everywhere. The grinding poverty of the peasants became more evident. Dissidents, including Leo Tolstoy, became more vocal in blaming the capitalists for provoking a war that would ruin the country in their pursuit of profits.

The war with Japan was the result of a long chain of events as European imperial ambitions competed for influence in China. After the war in Crimea fifty years earlier, Russia had set its sights eastwards. Construction of the city of Vladivostok on the Pacific Coast began in 1860. As the rich resources of Siberia became evident, construction of the Trans Siberian Railway began in 1891. Timber and coal resources lured Russian capitalists into Manchuria, then a protectorate of China. For decades, everyone in Europe had wanted to expand western trade into China which had vigorously pursued a “closed door” policy against the Christian “barbarians”. In 1897, during the Sino-Japanese war, Russia wrested control of Port Arthur and the Liaodong peninsula away from Japan, providing Russia with a year-round navigable harbor with direct access to the Pacific Ocean. Russia became an ally to China, providing foreign loans, and in return, Russia gained permission to build a railway through Manchuria via Harbin and Mukden in order to connect Port Arthur with the Trans Siberian Railway. To protect their commercial interests in Manchuria, the well-connected Russian entrepreneurs asked for a military presence there. When Russian troops were moved into Manchuria on the new railway, Japan objected. It considered the presence of Russian troops as a direct threat to Japanese sovereignty in Korea, despite Russia’s repeated assurances that it had no interest in Korea.

Meanwhile behind the scenes, Britain (officially neutral) provided Japan with financing for its military expansion. Kaiser Wilhelm of Germany openly supported his cousin Tsar Nicholas hoping to keep Russia distracted in the East while he himself had designs on the western fringes of the Russian Empire like Poland and Czechoslovakia. France had recently built four new battleships for Russia, while Britain was building ships for Japan. France was as well a major

⁵ Ascher, page 13

source of financing for St. Petersburg. The United States, also officially neutral, provided Japan with war loans against the understanding that Japan would not interfere in the Philippines.

Also feverishly active behind the scenes were Japanese espionage agents supporting the various revolutionary groups. Lenin and his co-conspirators were living in Paris and Geneva, financially supported by funds approved by the Japanese government.⁶ The Japanese purchased a printing press for Lenin, as well as significant amounts of weaponry which was warehoused in London. Two small steamers were even purchased to transport the weapons into St. Petersburg. Japanese agents played an active and direct role in fomenting political unrest within Russia.

And so the scene was set. Japan demanded that Russia withdraw troops from lower Manchuria. Tsar Nicholas agreed, and then for over a year proceeded to ignore the agreement. The Tsarist administration never once considered that Japan could be a military threat. After Japan's fourth protest was ignored, it broke off diplomatic relations and on 05 February 1904 (N.S.) the Japanese ambassador left St. Petersburg. Three days later, the Japanese navy staged a surprise attack on Port Arthur. Russian military command was stunned at the incredulous provocation. The Tsar was enraged and vowed revenge. No one in St. Petersburg gave any credibility to Japan's ability to wage war with mighty Russia.

The Russo-Japanese War would be the most stunning war the world had seen to that point in history. It was the first great war of the twentieth century which will always be remembered for its great wars. Between 08 February 1904 and 05 September 1905, this war cost about 125,000 Russian troops and 85,000 Japanese soldiers. Russia had committed more than 2 million fighting men to the cause against 400,000 Japanese. Mukden in central Manchuria was the scene of the largest land battle in history at that time. In the end, victorious Japan forced Russia out of Manchuria and established itself as a serious military force. Historically, the Russo-Japanese War was the first war won by an Asian nation over a European nation. It boosted the Japanese ego into pursuing its own brand of imperialism.

The war began badly for Russia, caught un-prepared by a smaller, yet more organized and more determined military force. For twenty months, Russia fought a war of defensive measures against smaller forces which would not stop or give up. Russia never did get organized enough to mount any meaningful offense. Beginning with the eleven month naval siege and blockade of Port Arthur, Russia suffered one setback after another as Japan gradually moved its land forces through Korea into Manchuria, eventually isolating Port Arthur from any further support from St. Petersburg. Port Arthur officially surrendered on 02 Jan 1905. Thirty-one thousand Russians and 58,000 Japanese had died in the fighting to capture the port. The 10,000 surviving Russian troops looted what they could of the town site and fled north towards Mukden. By mid-March even Mukden had to be abandoned. Three hundred and fifty thousand Russian troops battled

⁶ Dennis & Peggy Warner. "The Tide at Sunrise, A History of the Russo-Japanese War 1904-1905". 1974

against 300,000 Japanese with huge losses on both sides – 90,000 Russian casualties vs. 75,000 Japanese losses. It was the last major land battle of this war.

As in Crimea, Russia was never really defeated. The Trans Siberian Railway was always able to provide the Russian army with enough forces and firepower to stave off the enemy. Nevertheless, the army was forced into a continual series of hard-fought retreats until the war-weary Japanese army was forced by public pressure at home to enter into peace negotiations.

The high numbers of war casualties as reported in the press contributed greatly to the growing public unhappiness with the autocratic administration. Russians were embarrassed and frustrated that their mighty military could be so shamed by little Japan. No one, including the Tsar, would accept responsibility for the failure of the Port Arthur fleet to break out of its own harbor or for the military fiascos on land. In June 1904, with the war going badly, Tsar Nicholas personally conceived the rash idea to send Russia's Baltic Fleet to the rescue of Port Arthur. This would involve an 18,000 mile voyage half way around the world (29,000 kilometers). The voyage entailed navigating the North Sea, the English Channel, down the entire west coasts of Europe and Africa, around the Cape of Good Hope and then crossing the Indian Ocean and into the South China Sea. Critical observers said it was ludicrous but the Tsar found the man to make the idea work in the person of Admiral Zinovy Petrovich Rozhstvensky (1848-1909). The story of his incredible accomplishments in shepherding fifty ships of varying capabilities carrying 12,000 seamen from St. Petersburg to the Straits of Tsushima between Japan and Korea is extremely well told by Constantine Pleshakov in his 2002 book, "The Tsar's Last Armada".⁷

Rozhstvenky wanted to take a smaller fleet including naturally the four new battleships built in France. But the Tsar, against the Admiral's objections, wanted to send as many ships as possible in the un-warranted belief that the sight of such a large fleet would send the Japanese navy scurrying for safety. Every available floating vessel was hastily made sea-worthy, equipped with gunnery, stocked with supplies, and staffed with a mix of peasant soldiers-cum-sailors and thugs plucked from St. Petersburg jails. Russia was not exactly a sea-faring nation, and these new sailors, the majority of whom had never before even been on a ship, soon found themselves at sea. This fleet would require 17,000 tons of coal for every 1000 miles at sea. The 4700-mile leg of the voyage between Madagascar and Singapore was the longest continuous trip without touching a port in maritime history at the time.

As battles raged around Port Arthur, the Baltic Sea Fleet finally steamed out of the Kronstadt harbor in St. Petersburg in October, 1904. But it would all be for naught. The Japanese navy

⁷ Constantine Pleshakov, *The Tsar's Last Armada*, 2002. Cover jacket. Actually this entire voyage has numerous logistical accomplishments to its credit according to naval historians. Rozhstvensky is also often seen spelled as "Rozhdestvensky".

waited more than six months for the arrival of the Baltic Fleet, and they were ready for the encounter. Russia made no attempt to conceal the details of the voyage. No attempt was ever made to code internal naval communications concerning the fleet. Such was the un-bridled arrogance of the Russian military which still reigned at the time. The two fleets met in the early afternoon of 27 May 1905 in the Straits of Tsushima. Five hours later it was over. Only three Russian ships escaped the battle, the rest sunk, scuttled, or captured by the Japanese. Incredibly thirty-two Russian ships had been lost.⁸ The Japanese lost three small torpedo boats. Nearly 5,000 Russian sailors were lost, killed in battle or drowned. Seven thousand Russian soldier/sailors, many of them wounded, were captured as prisoners-of-war, and taken to Japan. In sharp contrast, only 117 Japanese sailors lost their lives in the battle. To this day, Russian ships passing through the Straits of Tsushima drop wreaths of flowers to honor the lives of those who went down with the battleships, cruisers and destroyers to the bottom of the sea. The flagship *Suvorov* was sunk and a wounded Admiral Rozhstvensky captured and taken to a military hospital in Japan.

Maritime historians rate the Battle of Tsushima as among the top five naval battles in history. But it is not a well-known story and I only learned about it in 2002 from Norman Fischbuch of Calgary whose grand-uncle was the chief engineer aboard the brand new battleship, the *Tsarevich* built in Toulon, France. Norm tells his family story through “Friedrich the Blacksmith” which he published in 2009. Suddenly some stories about my own Grandfather Konrad Weiss (who died before I was born) began to make sense. I could never understand stories handed down to me that Konrad had related to his children: about being on a ship where it was so hot, he could not walk on the deck with bare-feet, about him being in Japan and learning to speak a few words of Japanese with which he entertained his children. Finally I could make sense of this story. Records of ordinary enlisted men are not researchable at the Russian Military Archives in St. Petersburg, so I may never be able to document my grandfather’s military service in this war. However, circumstantial evidence is strong that Konrad Weiss was one of those thousands of peasant soldiers conscripted as laborers to accompany the Baltic Fleet on this incredible voyage.

The Battle of Tsushima effectively ended the Russo-Japanese War. The Russian public lashed out at the Tsar and his advisors. Bitter attacks on the government from the Russian press went un-answered and un-punished. The Tsar had momentarily lost control. There was a great deal of unrest in Japan as well, both over the high losses of manpower in the army and the crippling financial debt the country had incurred to wage war with Russia. The two war-weary nations agreed to negotiations and a peace was concluded in September in a conference at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, hosted by President Theodore Roosevelt.

⁸ Not all of Rozhstvensky’s fleet entered into battle. Several damaged ships did manage to drift into neutral ports on the Chinese shore where they and their men were interred until the war was officially over.

The loss of its navy and the extreme loss of men during the Russo-Japanese War of 1904/05 humiliated the Russian government and the Russian people once again. And again, the experience alienated Russia from the rest of Europe. Russia was seen from start to finish as the “bad guy”, bullying a smaller nation, an image actively promoted by British media propaganda. Even before the war, the vicious pogrom against the Jews which occurred in the city of Kishinev (now in Moldova) in April, 1903 had given the Russian Empire a “black eye” in world opinion. Russia’s only ally had been Germany, which was merely playing European politics to its advantage. World opinion became very anti-Russian, much as it had after the Crimean War. The “anti-Europe” attitude in the Russian government in part drew Russia into war against Austria in August, 1914, and then into World War I. World War I broke down the Russian autocracy and its government, and led without any doubt to the Russian Revolution, while the revolutionaries were encouraged and supported by Germany and Britain.

Historical questions will always remain. Could a more effective leader have successfully devolved power to a constitutional monarchy and avoided the Russian Revolution? How would world history have changed? Would Russia still have precipitated World War I by siding with the Slav nationalists in Serbia? Without World War One, would there have been a World War Two? Would there have been a Korean War without the unfinished business of World War II? Russia’s war with Japan in 1904/05 prefaced a century of wars with global consequences.

Sources:

1. *The Tide at Sunrise. A History of the Russo-Japanese War 1904-1905.* Denis & Peggy Warner. Charterhouse, New York. 1974.
2. *The Revolution of 1905. A Short History.* Abraham Ascher. Stanford University Press. 2004.
3. *The Tsar’s Last Armada. The Epic Voyage to the Battle of Tsushima.* Constantine Pleshakov. Basic Books. 2002.
4. *Friedrich the Blacksmith. From the Promised Land of Catherine the Great to the Gulags of Comrade Stalin.* Norman Fischbuch. Trafford Publishing. 2009.

Merv's Timeline of Russo-Japanese War

After War in Crimea (1854-1855), Russia sets its sights eastwards.

1860 – Construction begins of the city of Vladivostok on the Pacific Coast.

1891 – Construction of the Trans Siberian Railway begins.

1890's - Russian capitalists acquire coal and timber leases in Manchuria.

1894/95 – Sino-Japanese War. Russia gains control of Port Arthur and the Liaodong peninsula, while Japan and China are fighting over Korea. Port Arthur becomes a valuable year-round ice free port to supplement Vladivostok.

Russia extends Trans Siberian Railway into Mukden, as per agreement with China.

1901 - Russia negotiates with China for control of Manchuria - very strong opposition from Japan, Britain, and America.

30 Jan 1902 – Anglo-Japanese Treaty gives Japan confidence to challenge Russia in Manchuria.

1902 - Russia moves troops into Manchuria to protect commercial interests. Japan with support of international community protests, and Russia agrees to remove troops. Russia does not remove troops, and ignores Japan's further protests for over a year.

06/07 April 1903 (O.S.) - Violent anti-Jewish riots in city of Kishinev, Bessarabia. International condemnation of Russia's justice system.

July 1903 – first of the very large general strikes occurs in Odessa.

26 Jan 1904 (O.S.). Japan's surprise attack on Port Arthur without a formal declaration of war. Japan blockades Russia's Port Arthur harbor – beginning of 11 month siege.

April 1904 – Japanese agents in Europe begin stockpiling arms and ammunition for Russian revolutionaries.

01 May 1904 – Russia loses first major land battle against Japanese at Yalu River (border between Korea and Manchuria).

15 July 1904 (O.S.) Assassination of Vyacheslav Plehve, Russian Minister of Interior.

Aug 1904 – Port Arthur fleet makes several attempts to break out of harbor and make a run for Vladivostok. Forced back each time with casualties to ships and men.

12 Aug 1904. Birth of Alexii, son and heir to Tsar Nicholas II.

19 Aug 1904 – Japan's assault on Port Arthur begins. Would last for 4 months.

Sept 1904 – Russia begins to pull land forces back to Mukden.

30 September - 9 October 1904: Meetings of Russian revolutionaries in Paris and in Geneva were attended by Japan's chief of intelligence Akashi, who actively financed and encouraged political discontent in St. Petersburg and Moscow. Also active in Poland and Finland.

Fall 1904: With winter approaching, the Russian army in Manchuria is drastically short of adequate clothing and food. Exact same problem with Crimean War, 50 years earlier. Japan moves troops through Korea onto Liaodong peninsula.

03 October 1904 – Russia's Baltic fleet sets sail from Kronstadt (St. Petersburg) en route to Vladivostok. Land battle rages in Manchuria.

Nov 1904 – horrific fighting by Japanese to take Port Arthur at any cost. 350 five-hundred pound shells fall daily on Port Arthur!

Dec 1904 – 14,000 Japanese and 5,000 Russian soldiers die on the heights surrounding Port Arthur. Port Arthur finally falls to the Japanese, ending the 11-month naval siege. Total casualties of both sides exceeds 100,000 to this point in the war. Japan now tens of millions of dollars in foreign debt. Japanese public very un-happy.

02 Jan 1905. Port Arthur surrenders to the Japanese after an eleven-month long siege. Russia formally cedes Port Arthur to Japan

10 Jan 1905. **Bloody Sunday** - troops fire on peaceful workers' demonstrations in St. Petersburg - THE RUSSIAN 1905 REVOLUTION IS UNDERWAY.

Feb 1905. Japanese offensive begins in Manchuria.

17 Feb 1905. Assassination of Grand Duke Sergei Alexandrovitch, uncle and brother-in-law to Tsar Nicholas.

10 Mar 1905. Mukden falls after largest military land battle in history. Almost 500,000 troops deployed on both sides. 90,000 Russians lost in battle. Russia retreats from Mukden. Japan now rules southern Manchuria, but Japanese army too weary to push further north.

22 Apr 1905 – Revolutionary groups meet in Geneva.

27 May 1905 – Battle of Tsushima, one of the great naval battles of maritime history. Japan's navy engages Russian Fleet in the Straits of Tsushima between Korea and Japan. (also called Korean Strait) Battle lasts 5 hours. 7,000 Russians taken as Prisoners of War, while 5,000 Russians were killed in battle or drowned.

19 Jun 1905 – Mutiny aboard Battleship Potemkin of the Black Sea Fleet. Riots in Odessa.

Aug 1905 – Peace treaty talks at Portsmouth, New Hampshire, USA.

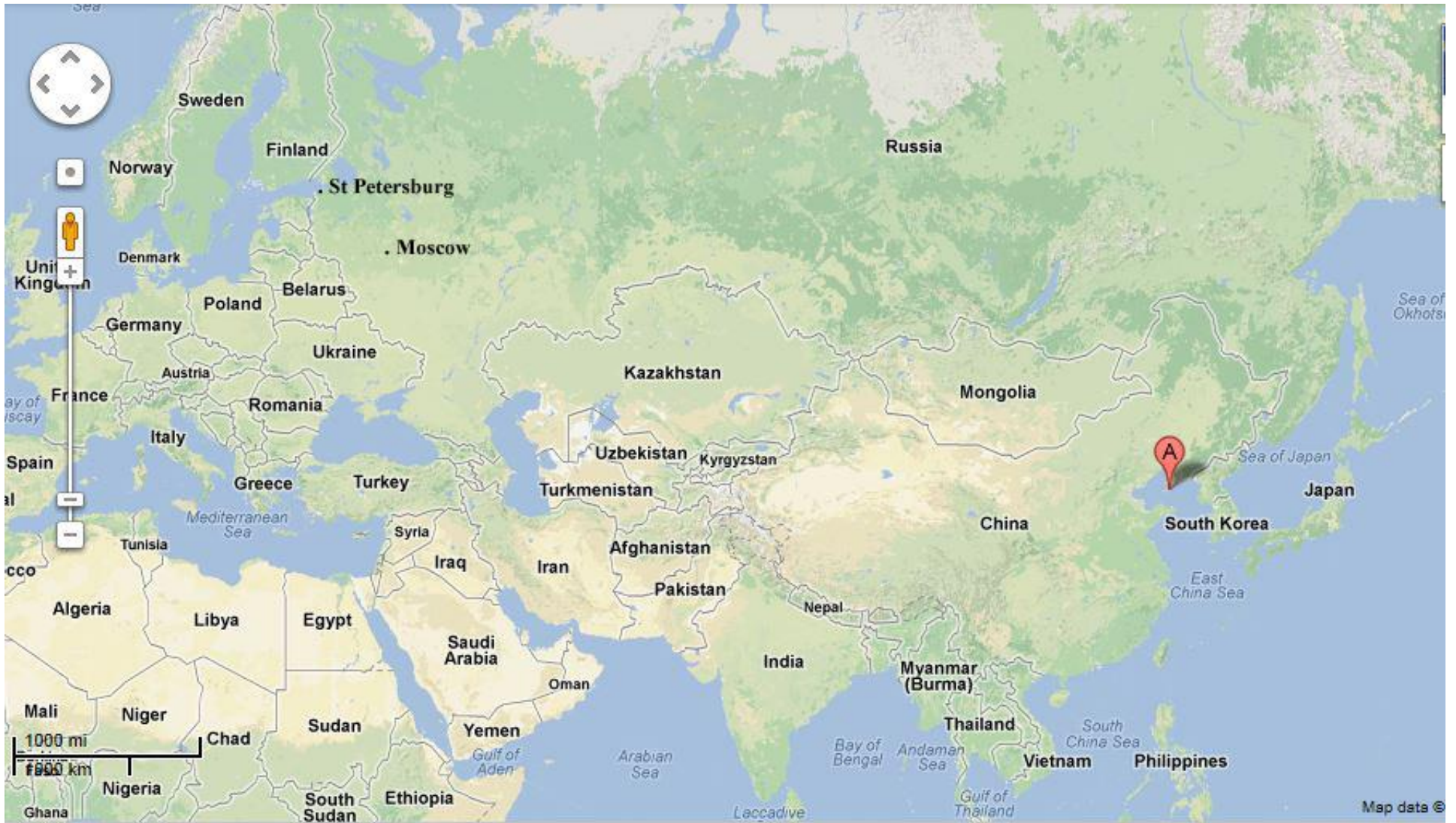
Oct 1905 – Huge, spontaneous general strike throughout Russia. More than two million workers involved. Virtually every urban center affected.

Oct 1905 – Under pressure from all sides, Tsar Nicholas agrees to introduce basic civil liberties and to the establishment of a constituent assembly called the State Duma. Determined to preserve his autocracy, Tsar Nicholas unilaterally dissolved the Duma in February 1907.

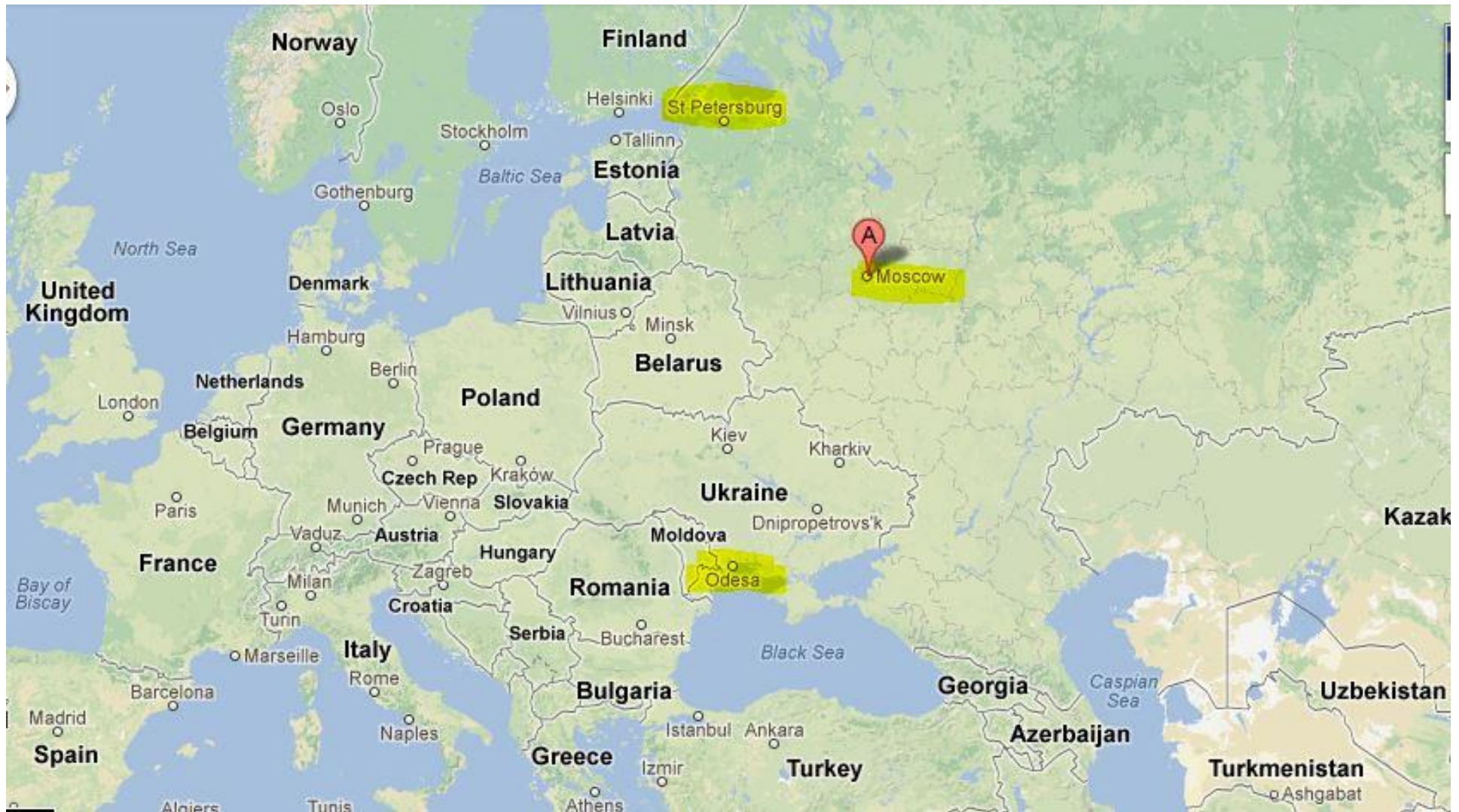
Dec 1905 – large general strike in Moscow crushed by brutal military forces using heavy artillery against civilians.

Post War – Russia in turmoil. Baltic states in open revolt against Moscow. Poland in revolt. Bloody riots in Moscow, Kiev, Odessa and the Caucasus.

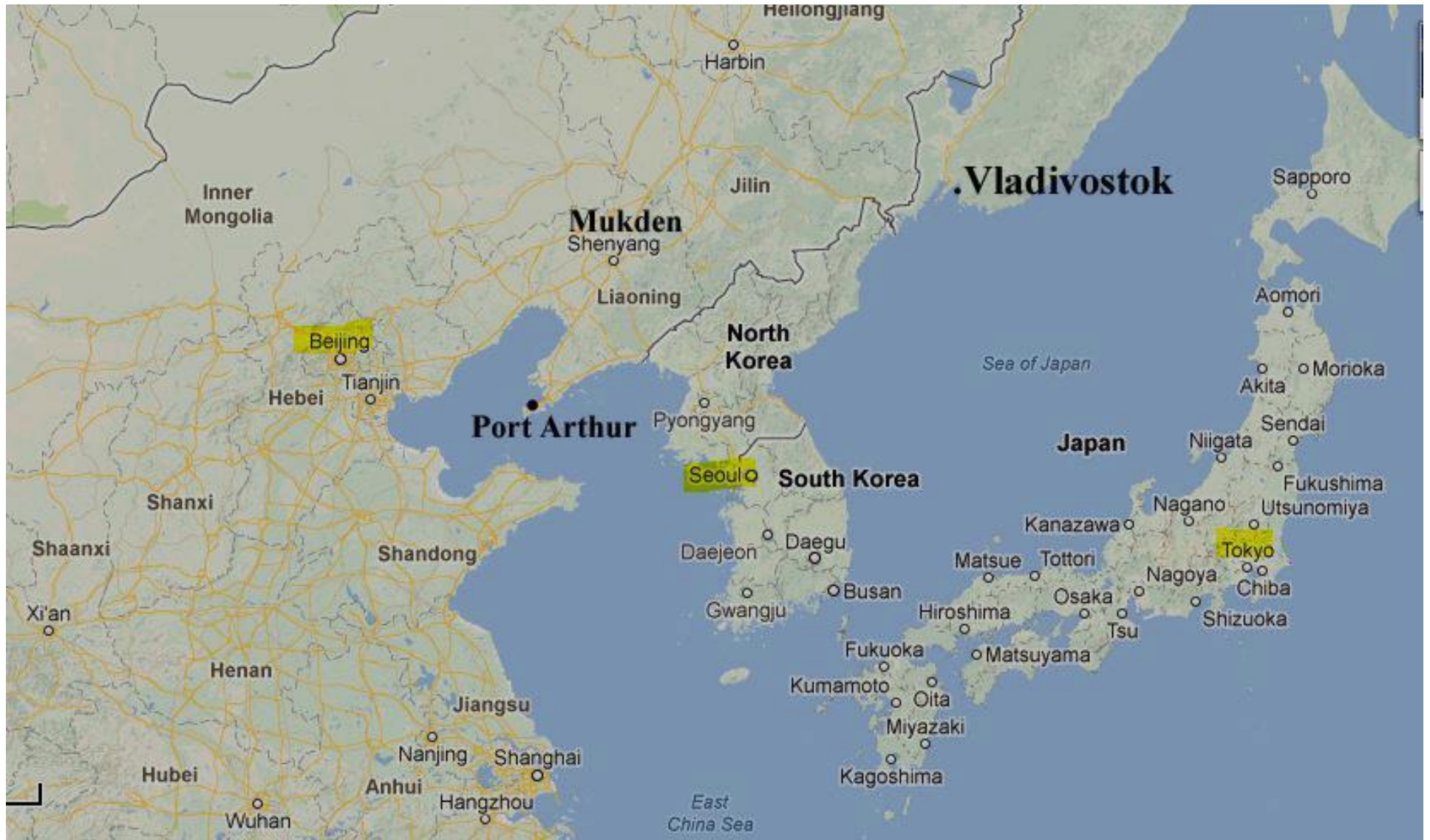
The Russo-Japanese War of 1904/05



St Petersburg to Port Arthur (A) = nearly 10,000 km

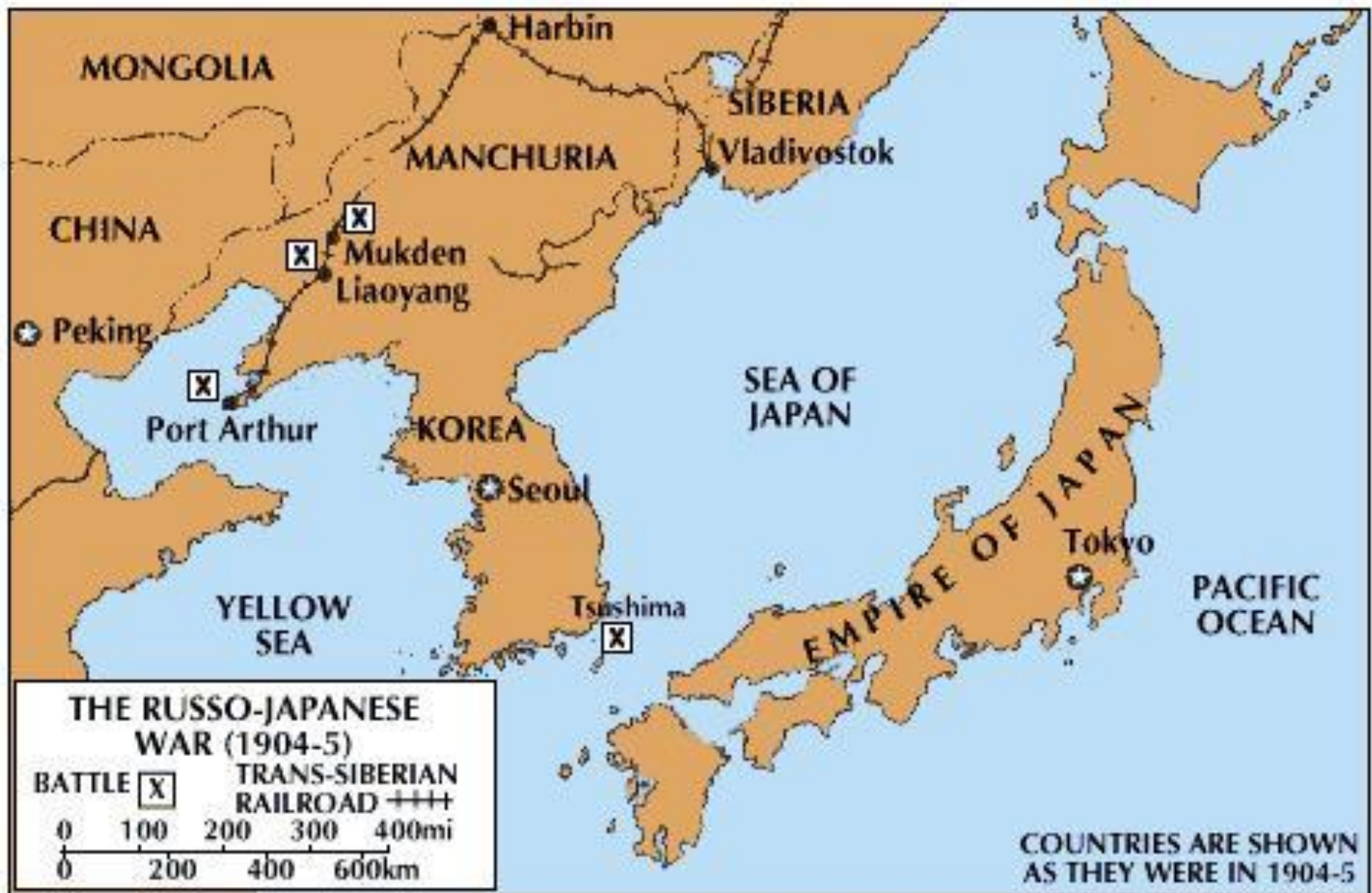


Our German relatives in Odessa district were well informed about political events in St. Petersburg and Moscow.



08/09 February 1904 – Japan attacks Port Arthur

01 Jan 1905 – Port Arthurs falls to the Japanese



THE ROUTE OF THE BALTIC FLEET

Oct. 1904 - May 1905

MAIN FLEET ———
ADMIRAL FELKERZAM - - - - -

