

Rewarding Japanese Servicemen With Russian Awards During World War I and the Russian Civil War (1914–1922)

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Abstract

The period from the end of the Russo-Japanese War to the 1917 October Revolution was a time of political, economic, and cultural rapprochement between Russia and Japan. Moreover, this rapprochement was observed after the events of 1917 for several more years, since, during the Russian Civil War, Japan supported the anti-Bolshevik forces in the Far East.

The two countries entered the First World War as de facto allies; this alliance culminated in the Treaty of 1916. Its reflection in symbolic actions was also an element of this cooperation. In the years before the First World War, and, actually, during the war, hundreds of Japanese servicemen were given Russian awards. The article analyzes the composition of military personnel, what awards and for what merits were presented to the members of the Imperial House who did military service, diplomats, generals, as well as fleet admirals and naval officers, engineers, and divers.

After October 1917, Japan supported members of the White Movement and Admiral A. V. Kolchak for several more years. In addition, even more active support was provided to Ataman G. M. Semenov. For example, Japanese garrisons were stationed in Transbaikalia starting from the autumn of 1918, when he came to power there. Paradoxically, many Japanese officers and enlisted men were presented with Russian awards during the years of the Civil War, which fact is also confirmed in archival documents.

Keywords: Russia and Japan in the early 20th century, Orders of the Russian Empire, Order of Saint Stanislaus, Order of Saint Anna, Order of Saint Andrew the Apostle the First-Called, Order of Alexander Nevsky, battleship *Peresvet* (*Sagami*), dreadnought *Imperatritsa Maria*, Tanaka Kotarō, Prince Kan'in Kotohito, Special Manchurian Detachment.

Recent years have seen a substantial number of studies on the history of Russian-Japanese relations in the 20th century, proving that, after the war of 1904–1905, there was a fundamental geopolitical rapprochement between the two countries, and, during the First World War, the two countries were de facto allies. This strongly corrects the simplified idea, rooted in Russian academic literature and in public consciousness, that, in the 1st half of the 20th century, the two countries were in a state of constant confrontation. Obviously, one cannot deny the fact that there were regular moments of tension and even armed conflicts between the two countries during that period, but it was not a case of a systemic confrontation that lasted four decades [Grishachev 2020]. Periods of aggravation of relations were followed by periods of de-escalation, and sometimes even rapprochement. Moreover, the dynamics of bilateral relations during that period cannot be reduced to a simplified formula of “confrontation–rapprochement.” In reality, the process was much more complex and had several layers.

The following description of the situations and reasons for presenting awards to Japanese diplomats and military personnel shows the multifaceted nature of the interaction between the two states in the circumstances of cooperation during the First World War and in the context of a deep internal split in Russia during the Civil War. And, behind the awards given in those years, the political, diplomatic, and practical motivation of the sides is visible quite clearly, which highlights in a more textured way the subjects and issues that are truly relevant to the bilateral relations during the period described.

Restoration of Relations Between Russia and Japan After 1905 and Memory of the War

After the war, dialogue between Russia and Japan was established relatively quickly. The countries re-established diplomatic relations, now at the ambassadorial level. Spheres of influence were being gradually divided in the northeast of Qing China – in Manchuria and Mongolia, where the sides tried to prevent the penetration of other major powers. The two countries intensified their economic cooperation and established trade along the railways of Manchuria, which, not so long ago, had been an object of bitter fighting.

The rapprochement was also accompanied by symbolic events, in particular, visits by members of the Japanese Imperial House. This practice was interrupted during the war, but now it was resumed, and, most often, these were short visits that were part of a trip to Europe. For instance, in April 1909, in Tsarskoye Selo, Nicholas II met with Prince Kuni Kuniyoshi,¹ who was accompanied by representatives of the Japanese Embassy. In May 1909, there was a similar meeting with Prince Nashimoto Morimasa and his wife, and, in the spring of 1910, with Prince Fushimi Sadanaru and his wife.² The most famous visit, that of Prince Kan'in Kotohito, made in 1916, was the longest; it was specifically made to Russia (already an ally country) and was widely covered in the press.

It should be noted that the above-mentioned members of the Japanese Imperial House once chose military education and career,

¹ Prince Kuni-no-miya Kuniyoshi 久邇宮邦彦王 (1873–1929) – a member of the Japanese imperial family, a participant of the Russo-Japanese War and later a field marshal. Prince Nashimoto-no-miya Morimasa (1874–1951) – a military officer, with the rank of captain participated in the war of 1904–1905, later a field marshal. Prince Fushimi-no-miya Sadanaru 伏見宮貞愛 (1858–1923) participated in the Sino-Japanese and Russo-Japanese wars and later became a field marshal.

² Russian State Historical Archive (RGIA), Fund 473, Series 2, File 1951, Sheets 4–11.

and subsequently all of them took part in the Russo-Japanese War in one way or another, for which they were given awards in their home country. In the light of the above, it is particularly interesting that some of them were presented with the highest Russian awards during their visits to Russia after 1905.

For example, Princes Kuni Kuniyoshi and Nashimoto Morimasa were awarded the Orders of St. Andrew the First-Called, while Fushimi Sadanaru was given not only the highest order of the Russian Empire, but also the Order of St. Alexander Nevsky [Levin 2003, p. 38; Ponomarev, Shabanov 2009, p. 870]. Participants of the war against Russia were now being rewarded in the capital of the recent enemy.

In those years, cooperation was quickly established to perpetuate the memory of those who died during the war of 1904–1905, on both sides. The memory quickly acquired a conciliatory, sometimes demonstratively conciliatory character.

The sides applied much effort to bury the remains and arrange the graves of those who were killed in Manchuria, as well as of those who died in captivity during the war in Japan. Events to perpetuate the memory of the fallen were held in a solemn atmosphere, with the participation of diplomats and the military. In the summer of 1908, Vice-Admiral Nikolai Matusevich (1852–1912) visited Port Arthur (Ryojun in Japanese). During the Russo-Japanese war, he took part in combat operations, in particular, in the battle of the Yellow Sea. By 1908, he had risen to the position of head of the Vladivostok port. Accompanied by Japanese military men, he attended the opening ceremony of the monument to the Russian defenders of Port Arthur. After this visit, he suggested rewarding the two Japanese men who accompanied him: he recommended awarding First Lieutenant Machida Bun'ichi the Order of St. Anna of the 3rd Class and translator Hino Bumpei the Order of St. Stanislaus of the 3rd Class.³

³ Russian State Archive of the Navy (RGAVMF), Fund 417, Series 5, File 3110, Sheets 1–2. However, later, for unknown reasons, the Japanese side excluded Bumpei from the award list. Ibid.: RGAVMF Fund 417, Series 5, File 3110, Sheets 4–5.

In addition, Saint Petersburg discussed the issue of awarding badges of distinction to members of the Japanese commission for the construction of a monument to the Russian defenders of Port Arthur, as well as to those who hosted the Russian delegation at the unveiling of this monument.

In response, in September 1908, Matusevich sent the Russian Consul General in Dalny (Dairen in Japanese), N. A. Raspopov, a silver wreath with a request to lay it on the mass grave of the Japanese sailors who perished near Port Arthur. Raspopov wrote in a report dated September 16, 1908, "The Japanese authorities, notified of this fact by our admiral, took this opportunity to re-emphasize their friendly feelings towards us."⁴ Therefore, the wreath-laying ceremony was grand and solemn. N. A. Raspopov was greeted by Admiral Egashira Yasutaro. Together they went up Mount Perepelinaya, where a guard of honour and an orchestra were lined up. N. A. Raspopov laid the wreath sent by Admiral Matusevich to the sounds of Japanese traditional music. The ceremony was followed by a joint breakfast.⁵ Events to perpetuate the memory of Russian soldiers and sailors were just as ceremoniously held in other places.⁶

The Japanese side kept up with its attempts to thank the Russian side. An interesting incident occurred in the summer of 1910, when a military delegation led by Major General Hoshino visited Harbin in order to personally present awards on behalf of Emperor Meiji to Russian officers who were present in Port Arthur at the opening of a monument to the fallen Russian soldiers. The awards were accepted; however,

⁴ RGAVMF Fund 417, Series 2, File 1099, Sheets 319–320.

⁵ Ibid.: RGAVMF Fund 417, Series 2, File 1099, Sheets 319–320.

⁶ In 1908, on Oki Island (Shimane Prefecture), a mass grave was set up to bury the bodies of the Russian sailors that were washed ashore after the Battle of Tsushima. A monument was erected over the grave by efforts of the local Japanese military society and the local administration, and about 500 people attended the opening ceremony. The Russian Embassy funded the installation of a fence around this monument.

in response to a request from Minister of Finance Vladimir Kokovtsov about what to do in this situation, Minister of War Vladimir Sukhomlinov conveyed the will of the Tsar. Although Nicholas II considered this event to be a gesture of exceptional international courtesy, which had no precedent yet, he recommended to leave it for the time being “without an appropriate retaliatory act and postpone it until the first appropriate opportunity when it becomes possible to give the Japanese government the same attention from our side.”⁷ Thus, the Tsar apparently believed that there should be some justification and reason for a reciprocal diplomatic gesture.

Therefore, all these actions indicate that the former rivals quickly began to show official sympathy towards each other. Of course, this was not an expression of some kind of friendship between the peoples, but a symbolic formalization of the geopolitical rapprochement that was so necessary at that time, as well as a sign to the elites of both empires.

Military Cooperation in 1914–1917 and Symbolic Awards to August Personages and Senior Military Officials

As is known, Russia and Japan entered the First World War as allies. And although Japanese soldiers did not end up in the trenches in the European theatre of operations, nevertheless, military and military-economic cooperation between the two empires was quite noticeable. Russia placed huge orders in Japan for the manufacture and supply of weapons for the army – rifles, cartridges, infantry sapper tools, etc. Japanese military observers were sent to various branches of the Russian army – infantry, navy, artillery, etc.⁸ A Japanese Red Cross hospital

⁷ RGIA, Fund 560, Series 45, File 70, Sheet 153.

⁸ The issue of sending Japanese volunteers to the front was heatedly discussed for a long time; however, despite the willingness of a large

arrived in Petrograd on a humanitarian mission and operated there for two years (from 1914 to 1916) [Pestushko 2008].

Even military cooperation at sea was an element of this cooperation. After the German cruiser-raider “Emden” captured steamship “Ryazan” on the way from Nagasaki to Vladivostok in August 1914, at the request of Petrograd, the Japanese naval command sent two destroyers to protect Russian merchant ships in its territorial waters [Pavlov 2014, p. 14].

As before, during the First World War, show awards of high-born and high-ranking officials became a symbolic confirmation of the Russian-Japanese rapprochement. The most striking episode was the visit of Grand Duke George Mikhailovich to the Japanese Empire in January 1916. This visit had an important political significance – in addition to expressing respect and friendly feelings for the allied country, it was necessary to impress upon the Japanese government, businessmen, and financiers the need to establish and increase the production of weapons for the Russian army as soon as possible. The visit was very ceremoniously arranged, and the programme of meetings of the Grand Duke included almost the entire establishment of Japan, starting with Emperor Taisho.

During a personal meeting with the Japanese emperor, the Grand Duke expressed gratitude for the allied assistance already provided. After that, as a sign of gratitude on behalf of Nicholas II, the Japanese royal couple was presented with awards – the Order of St. Andrew the First-Called to Emperor Taisho, and the Order of St. Catherine to his wife. The next day, Emperor Taisho sent a telegram to Emperor Nicholas II, in which he expressed gratitude for the awards [Baryshev 2009, pp. 62–63].

On the same day, Grand Duke George Mikhailovich paid a visit to one of the most influential Japanese politicians, Genro and Field Marshal Yamagata Aritomo at his own residence and presented the diamond-studded Order of St. Alexander Nevsky on behalf of the Russian emperor with words of appreciation for the contribution to the development of

number of volunteers, this fact still has very little documentary evidence. For further details, see [Pestushko 2008, p. 215].

good-neighborly relations between Russia and Japan. He said he was confident that the allied countries would soon win a decisive victory over the enemy [Baryshev 2009, p. 64]. Field Marshal Yamagata, head of the General Staff during the Russo-Japanese War, promised in response to make every effort to ensure that arms deliveries to Russia were carried out without delay.

Russian awards were also given to other high-ranking military officials and diplomats. Governor of Korea Terauchi Masatake, who was Minister of the Army in 1905, as well as Prime Minister Okuma Shigenobu and Foreign Minister Ishii Kikujiro were awarded the Orders of St. Alexander Nevsky. The Order of St. Vladimir was awarded to Lieutenant General Mitsuomi Kamio and Vice Admiral Kato Sadakichi in memory of the capture of the German fortress of Qingdao [Baryshev 2009, p. 64].

The Grand Duke handed out lesser awards during his visit to the Tokyo artillery arsenal. There, he met with the gunsmiths who made rifles for the Russian army and presented them with gold and silver medals. Since a large number of badges of merit were handed over, it is logical to assume that they were brought for this trip in sufficient quantities, as the saying goes, in case of need.

Symbolic awards of the same orders were made to the military diplomats sent to Russia. As part of several missions, Japanese representatives from both the army and the navy visited Petrograd, Moscow, and some other major cities, as well as the war fronts directly. In the first half of 1916 alone, eight Japanese delegations visited Russian defense enterprises, and five visited the active army [Pavlov 2014, p. 118].

Their presence was so frequent and ubiquitous that it often suggested data collection for the military leadership in Tokyo. Russian officers even questioned the expediency of these missions. For example, in the autumn of 1915, a group of representatives of the Japanese General Staff visited Russia, and eventually they were dispatched to the artillery depot in Revel (Tallinn). The mission was of introductory nature, and no specific tasks were assigned to it. Following its stay in Russia, the

head of the delegation, Captain 1st rank Osumi, was awarded the Order of St. Anna of the 2nd Class [Pestushko 2008, pp. 113–114].

Yet, there were those who visited not only warehouses and factories, but also the headquarters of the Supreme Commander-in-Chief and the theatre of operations. For instance, Major General Oba Jiro was dispatched to the headquarters for quite a long time from the very beginning of the war. And while, ten years before, he had participated in the assault of Port Arthur, in the current war, he was given Russian awards several times.

As for short-term visits, the most famous was the arrival in the summer of 1916 of a group led by Lieutenant General Fukuda Masataro and the military attaché, Colonel Odagiri Masazumi. They were honored with an audience with the Emperor at the headquarters, and then an audience with Dowager Empress Maria Feodorovna in Kiev, after which, for two weeks, they toured and inspected Russian positions in the frontline, becoming acquainted with the unit commanders who carried out actions later called the “Brusilov Offensive.” During the tour, the Japanese came under fire several times in the area of Rozhishche outside Lutsk when German airplanes began dropping bombs and firing machine guns [Pavlov 2014, pp. 53, 239–241].

The diary of journalist M. K. Lemke, who was at the headquarters of the Supreme Commander in 1916, has the following entry: “The Japanese and Montenegrin military representatives, both generals, who had just returned from the front, according to Count Zamoysky who accompanied them, went on the attack together with our troops and generally behaved very bravely, for which each of them received the order of St. Vladimir” [Lemke 2003, pp. 203–204].

There is no evidence that the members of the Fukuda mission were indeed awarded the Order of St. Vladimir for their participation in the attack. Count A. S. Zamoysky did accompany Fukuda’s group, but, in his report, he said that, after returning from the front line, only a general certificate of being under fire was issued to the entire mission staff from the headquarters of the 12th Infantry Division [Pavlov 2014, pp. 243–244]. It was obvious that military personnel of this level,

by their very status, were to be rewarded. Therefore, at least one of the participants of the mission, Fukuda himself, was awarded the Order of St. Anna of the 1st Class in addition to the Order of St. Stanislaus that he already had.⁹

Awards for Providing Logistical Assistance

In addition to the etiquette and diplomatic awards discussed above, it is necessary to focus in more detail on awards for the provision of specific assistance – military, logistical, or repair and technical. The practice of rewarding allies in such cases existed not only in relation to the military and not only in relation to the Japanese. For example, there are documents according to which awards were presented to the sailors of the British submarines for sinking the German cruiser *Undine* and to the French nationals who built ships for Russia. Similar awards were given to the Norwegian members of the crews of the *Eclipse* and *Kit* hydrographic expeditions.¹⁰ Russian sailors and officers often received similar awards from the governments of the allied countries.

As for the Japanese sailors, their assistance during the war years included transportation of especially valuable goods, inspection and repair of ships, provision of equipment by the Navy Ministry, and assistance from the Ministry in purchasing the necessary equipment.

Transportation of especially valuable goods was associated with the payment for military orders. The fact is that, for a long time, Japanese business, not believing in the sufficient credit solvency of the Russian government, expected guarantees of future payments; therefore, the supply of weapons in the required amount could not be arranged.

⁹ *Medals of Asia*. <https://asiamedals.info/threads/1st-class-st-stanislaus-and-st-anna-orders-for-non-christians-awarded-to-general-masataro-fukuda.25920/>

¹⁰ RGAVMF, Fund 417, Series 5, Files 3574–84.

As a result, Petrograd had to agree to the following proposal from the Japanese business: a loan was opened to Russia from Japanese banks, and to guarantee this loan, a large shipment of gold was exported to Japan and the United States.

The transportation had to be carried out as soon as possible, which was done by Japanese warships commanded by Rear Admiral Ide Kenji. Eventually, the commander of the Siberian Flotilla, Vice Admiral Maximilian Schulz, presented a petition to the Navy Minister, Ivan K. Grigorovich, to reward the Japanese admiral and his staff “for highly useful work, coupled with great responsibility for the double acceptance and delivery of gold currency to Japan and America.” Ide was supposed to be awarded the Order of St. Stanislaus of the 1st Class, Flag Captain Takahashi Sankichi – Order of St. Stanislaus of the 2nd Class, and Flag Officers Toyoda Teijiro and Tsutsumi Masao – the Order of St. Anna of the 3rd Class and the Order of St. Stanislaus of the 3rd Class, respectively.

In the same report, M. F. Schultz wrote: “I have the honor to add that, thanks to the personal qualities of Rear Admiral Ide, I established very friendly relations with him, expressed in the exchange of a number of signs of sympathy, both between us and between our staffs and other officers. I believe that, in the person of young, energetic, and cultured Rear Admiral Ide, who certainly has a great future, we are gaining a supporter who is well disposed to our interests.”¹¹ It is interesting to note the fact of personal friendship at the level of the two headquarters in a situation where only ten years had passed since the Russo-Japanese War, and, in this case, we are talking about officers who took part in the 1904–1905 fighting on opposing sides.

Japan also presented Russian officers with its awards. Of the many cases, here are just a few examples. In the summer of 1916, the Order of the Rising Sun of the 3rd Class was awarded to the military and naval attaché, Second Captain A. N. Voskresensky, and the commander of the Vladivostok port, Rear Admiral P. V. Rimsky-Korsakov, received

¹¹ RGAVMF Fund 417, Series 1, File 38964, Sheets 1– 3.

the same order of the 2nd Class. Other naval officers were also presented with the same awards.¹²

The exchange of awards between the two navy departments during that period had a noticeable scale and specific features. The above-mentioned naval agent in Japan, A. N. Voskresensky, who already had Japanese awards, wrote in a letter dated August 14/27, 1916, shortly before Prince Kan'in's visit:

"Today I am writing to you mainly because of the orders. The Japanese orders for the people in our naval department, which were started by Akiyama, will now finally be issued with the upcoming trip of Prince Kan'in, and everything must be decided before September 10, Kan'in's departure from Petrograd... In addition, Prince Kan'in is also supposed to issue orders to the commanders of the Baltic and Black Sea fleets. However, we will have to equal them with those issued to us; missed at the Navy Ministry were the Assistant Chief of the Naval General Staff, Vice Admiral Yamaya, the head of the Main Technical Directorate, Vice Admiral Tochinai, and the adjutant of the Naval General Staff, Captain 1st rank Yamaoka. Engineer Muto makes up all our drawings, and he, in fact, should be awarded more than anyone else – he has been handling our orders from the very beginning."¹³

From the above paragraph, it can be seen that the awarding had, firstly, a practical meaning: officers who performed specific technical work were presented with awards: the adjutant of the Naval General Staff Yamaoka Tomokazu – with the Order of St. Anna of the 2nd Class, and the design engineer of the main technical department Muto Inotaro – with the Order of St. Stanislaus of the 2nd Class.

Secondly, there were awards with a purely diplomatic meaning, when it was impossible to respond with fewer awards to awards from the opposite side. As a result, to level the score, the Order of St. Anna of the 1st Class was presented to the Assistant Chief of the Naval General Staff, Vice Admiral Yamaya Tanin. Here again, it is appropriate to recall

¹² RGAVMF Fund 418, Series 1–3, File 4538, Sheets 78–79.

¹³ RGAVMF Fund 418, Series 1–3, File 4538, Sheet 111.

that, in 1904, he commanded the armored cruiser *Akitsushima*, which participated in the Battle of the Yellow Sea on August 10.¹⁴ In addition, the Order of St. Anna of the 1st Class was presented to the head of the Main Technical Directorate, Vice Admiral Tochintai Sojiro, who commanded the armored cruiser *Suma* in the Battle of Tsushima in May 1905.¹⁵

Thus, a considerable number of senior officers of the Japanese Navy who distinguished themselves in the naval battles of the Russo-Japanese War were presented with awards of the Russian Empire during the First World War. It should be emphasized again that this became possible precisely because of the change in the foreign policy courses of the two empires, which had become incredibly close over the years, and, therefore, the perception of the previous conflict became less acute. And based on the above petitions, it can be stated that, in some situations, personal trust arose in the relationships between the highest ranks of the Russian and Japanese navies.

Awards to Japanese Divers for Their Assistance in Bringing Afloat the Battleship *Peresvet*

The most significant practical assistance during the First World War was provided by Japanese seamen in the repair of Russian ships and their transfer to the port of Vladivostok. In 1916, the Russian government bought the cruiser *Varyag* (*Soya*), the battleships *Peresvet* (*Sagami*) and *Chesma* (*Tango*), which had become Japanese trophies ten years earlier.¹⁶ According to the plan, they were supposed to move north to

¹⁴ Recall that, in the same battle, but, of course, on the other side, the aforementioned N. A. Matusевич served on the battleship *Tsesarevich*, later rising to the rank of vice admiral. As head of the port of Vladivostok, he sent a wreath to the graves of Japanese soldiers in Port Arthur in 1908.

¹⁵ RGAVMF Fund 417, Series 5, File 4576, Sheets 1–2.

¹⁶ Initially, the ship was called *Poltava*; in the Japanese navy, it was named *Tango*. However, at the time of its return to Russia, in the Black Sea Fleet,

the port of Romanov-on-Murman (now Murmansk) in order to join the flotilla being formed on the Kola Peninsula.

The Russian vessels purchased in Japan in 1916 had exhausted their performance potential and, in addition, required serious re-equipment – from high-explosive shells and cables to canvas, dishes, mattresses, shirts and bandages for the infirmary. In matters of supply, the Japanese Navy Ministry acted as an intermediary in the procurement of necessary items.¹⁷

The ships were transferred to Vladivostok by Japanese crews and placed under Russian command in April 1916. The officers of the crews of the three ships, as well as the cruiser *Ibuki*, which accompanied this detachment, were awarded the badges of the Orders of St. Anna and St. Stanislaus of various degrees established for non-Christians. More than thirty warrant officers and seamen of lower ranks were awarded gold and silver medals with the inscription “For diligence.”¹⁸

However, the need for Japanese help did not end there. It came in handy very soon, when the battleship *Peresvet* had an accident. After arriving in Vladivostok from Japan, the ship underwent initial repairs and went on its first sea trials with a Russian crew. Upon returning to the port, it ran aground near the Skryplev Island. The ship could not be removed from the shoal with the use of available improvised means. The situation was further complicated by the fact that, on the orders of Rear Admiral A. I. Bestuzhev-Ryumin,¹⁹ several attempts were made to pull the ship off the rocks by tug boats, as a result of which the inner bottom was seriously damaged. It was virtually impossible to repair such damage with the means available in the port of Vladivostok.

there was a new ship under the name *Poltava*; so, *Tango* was renamed *Chesma*.

¹⁷ RGAVMF, Fund 418, Series 1, File 4539, Sheets 39–42.

¹⁸ RGAVMF, Fund 417, Series 5, File 3583, Sheets 57–59.

¹⁹ A. I. Bestuzhev-Ryumin was appointed commander of a detachment of three ships purchased in Japan.

For these reasons, Japanese experts were called to help; in total, about 180 people participated in the works. They removed the conning tower and armor and lightened the ship. After that, the works were continued by 14 divers. P. V. Rimsky-Korsakov's report emphasized their accuracy in determining the position of the ship on the rocks, as well as in running under-keel conductors to secure the lashings. The holes were filled with cement, after which pontoons were brought in, and the water was pumped out. The ship was removed and towed to Vladivostok.

The work of Captain 2nd rank Fukushima Kumataro, who supervised all the work, and of Captain 2nd rank Kokuma Suwa, who did all the calculations, was honored with awards. Special mention was made of the work of Lieutenant Hashiguchi Yasutaka who was directly involved in the diving operations. He went down into the flooded compartments, examined the hole, and filled it with cement to pump out the water.

According to the established tradition, all of them were presented to the relevant classes of the Orders of St. Anna and St. Stanislaus for non-Christians. About thirty lower ranks and handworkers who serviced these works were awarded silver medals with the inscription "For diligence."²⁰

According to the information available, the awards were agreed, approved, and presented. The ship was sent back to Japan for repairs at the port of Maizuru. However, all efforts to repair the cruiser *Peresvet* were in vain – after repairs and passage from Japan to Port Said in December 1916, the ship was blown up by German mines; more than 250 members of the crew were killed.

Awards to Japanese Seamen for Diving Operations and Drafting a Project to Raise the Battleship *Empress Maria*

The next reason for requesting the help of Japanese divers was the tragic incident in Sevastopol on October 20, 1916, when a terrible

²⁰ RGAVMF, Fund 417, Series 5, File 3584, Sheets 4–8, 9–10.

explosion occurred on board the battleship *Empress Maria*, killing several hundred people. The ship overturned after the explosion and sank at a depth of 20 meters, half a mile from the shore. Before lifting the ship, it was necessary to clarify its condition and exact position. In Russia, works on the inspection and lifting of ships of this class had not been carried out before. Therefore, at one of the meetings of the Technical Council of the General Directorate of Shipbuilding, Lieutenant General V. P. Vedernikov suggested asking for help and advice of foreign experts from Italy, the United States, and Japan, who had experience in such operations.

For instance, Japanese sailors and divers had considerable experience in lifting the Russian ships in Port Arthur, as well as the cruiser *Mikasa*, which sank in the autumn of 1905 on the Sasebo roadstead after an explosion in one of the ammunition stores. Italian experts tried to raise the battleship *Leonardo da Vinci* comparable to *Empress Maria*; it also sank after an internal explosion in the summer of 1916.

None of the US, British, and Italian companies gave a direct answer. Only the Japanese acceded to the request and sent a 12-member commission to Sevastopol. It included divers, shipboard engineers, mechanical engineers, technicians, carpenters, and other specialists. It was headed by military attaché Tanaka Kotaro. The group arrived in Sevastopol as early as December 1916.

After the diving work, Lieutenant Colonel Fukui Junmei and mechanical engineer Kuroda Takuma developed a multi-stage project to raise the vessel, which had much in common with one of the Russian projects. All work was supposed to be completed within eight months, for which it was planned to hire at least two hundred (!) Japanese workers and experts. The project was approved by the General Directorate of Shipbuilding, and it was decided to ask the Japanese command to begin its implementation. However, in March 1917, the Japanese mission had to return home. The reason was that, on January 14 in Yokosuka, the armored cruiser *Tsukuba* sank from an internal explosion, resulting in the death of over 350 people. And the Japanese divers were needed for cleaning up the incident.

The participants of the mission, which lasted several months, were presented with awards for their diving work and efforts to draft the ship's salvage. During the presentation, it was found out that at least two of its participants had already been awarded Russian orders. Actually, Captain K. Tanaka had the Orders of St. Stanislaus of the 2nd Class with a star and of St. Anna of the 2nd Class. And the ship's engineer, Captain Hashiguchi Yasutaka, had already been awarded the Order of Stanislaus of the 3rd Class.²¹ Captain Hashiguchi received his award, as mentioned above, for diving work on the battleship *Peresvet*, that had been carried out six months before.²²

Thus, the orders for the works on the battleship *Peresvet* and the battleship *Empress Maria* were a reward for the most difficult and necessary operations for the Russian navy. An additional confirmation of the quality of this work is the fact that some Japanese seamen were repeatedly awarded.

The Civil War and Awards to the Japanese Military

The events of 1917 – the two revolutions and the outbreak of the Russian Civil War – radically changed the country's foreign policy situation in general and relations with Japan in particular. Russia's participation in the war and relations with the Entente countries, of course, were interpreted in different ways by different political forces in the new historical reality. While the Bolsheviks denied any legitimate connection with the previous government, the leaders of the White Movement (in particular, the government of Alexander Kolchak) relied on the fact that they were the legitimate representatives and legitimate successors of the Provisional and Tsarist governments, guarantors of previously issued military, political, and financial obligations.

²¹ RGAVMF, Fund 417, Series 2, File 2320, Sheet 63.

²² Hashiguchi Yasutaka (1895–1948), a naval engineer, rose to the rank of rear admiral.

Thus, Japan continued to provide allied assistance to the White Movement, considering the government of Alexander Kolchak legitimate. Moreover, Tokyo's representatives were often exactly the same people who had worked in Russia in previous years. It would be enough to say that, at the end of 1918, the head of the Japanese military mission under the government of Alexander Kolchak in Omsk was the above-mentioned Tanaka Kotaro, formerly a military attaché in Russia, and now an admiral. Both the press and people from Kolchak's entourage mentioned the admiral's excellent knowledge of the Russian language and Russian realities, as well as his particularly friendly relations with the Supreme Ruler of Russia. It is clear that these relations arose back in 1916–1917, when A. V. Kolchak commanded the Black Sea Fleet, and Tanaka Kotaro headed the mission of Japanese experts in Sevastopol, who examined the sunken battleship *Empress Maria*.²³

The Japanese military also supported Ataman Grigory Semenov, who coordinated his actions with A. V. Kolchak to a certain extent. As early as the autumn of 1917, Semenov went to the Far East and tried to lead the anti-Bolshevik forces in Manchuria and Transbaikalia. He was engaged in the creation of military units, and, in the spring of 1918, his forces already numbered several thousand people.

On the Japanese side, contacts with the ataman (if not patronage over him) were carried out by the head of the military station in Harbin, Colonel Kurosawa Hitoshi, who later became the head of the Japanese military mission in Chita. It should also be noted here that, back in 1916, Kurosawa Hitoshi accompanied Prince Kan'in on his trip to Petrograd, Moscow, and the headquarters of the Supreme Commander.²⁴ Most likely, it was on this trip that he was awarded the Order of St. Stanislaus

²³ At the end of his life, the admiral wrote memories of his stay in Omsk and his relationship with Alexander Kolchak: *Kokuritsu kōbun shokan. Ajia Rekishi Siryō Sentā*. <https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/listPhoto?LANG=default&BID=F2012081317121190329&ID=M2012081317121290342&REFC ODE=B12080958900>

²⁴ RGIA, Fund 473, Series 2–261, File 1951, Sheet 85.

of the 1st Class as an accompanying person²⁵ – this is another proof that the people who worked in the Russian direction continued their activities after 1917. Semenov continued to honor him: as a sign of gratitude for his comprehensive assistance, Colonel Kurosawa was appointed honorary commander of one of the regiments on November 21, 1919, “with lifelong enrollment in the lists of the regiment and the 1st *sotnya* with the right to wear the uniform assigned to the regiment as a reward for the labors incurred in restoring Russian statehood and restoring order within the district entrusted to Semenov.”²⁶

Semenov’s Special Manchurian Detachment (O.M.O.) included, among other units, a volunteer battalion consisting of the Japanese. It should be particularly noted that the Japanese serving in this battalion were not regular military personnel stationed in the Russian Far East. Formally, they did not serve in the Japanese army and operated separately.²⁷ At the same time, members of the Japanese military station were also recruiting volunteers, and, by April 1918, they numbered 346 already. They were mostly reserve servicemen, both officers and enlisted men [Polutov 2012, p. 76].

The surviving orders on the awards of the Japanese who served in the O.M.O. indicate that there were about 300 people awarded, both officers and enlisted men:

Order of St. Anna of the 1st Class – 2 people;

Order of St. Anna of the 2nd Class – 61 people;

Order of St. Anna of the 3rd Class – 119 people;

²⁵ *Kokuritsu kōbun shokan. Ajia Rekishi Siryō Sentā*. <https://www.digital.archives.go.jp/das/image/M000000000000045391>

²⁶ GAZK, Fund 329, Series 1, File 46.

²⁷ In parallel, we should mention the important fact that, back in 1918, the Japanese command refused to send troops west of Omsk to Alexander Kolchak. Subsequently, throughout the years of their presence in the region, regular Japanese units avoided direct military clashes with regular units of the Red Army and the Army of the Far Eastern Republic [Datsyshen 2021, p. 123].

Order of St. Vladimir of the 1^{3rd} Class – 5 people;
Order of St. Stanislaus of the 2nd Class – 19 people;
Order of St. Stanislaus of the 3rd Class – 35 people;
St. George's Cross of the 4th Class – 18 people.²⁸

The Japanese O.M.O. officers received their first awards in the spring of 1918, when Semenov's units launched an offensive from Manchuria. On May 27, 1918, the commander of the Japanese volunteer battalion, Okumura Hiroshi, in the battle for the Onon River crossing site 12 *versts* south of the station Olovyannaya took up a position in the rear guard and repelled the attacks of the Red cavalry, which broke through from the rear, which made it possible to withdraw the O.M.O. units and save them from total destruction. In another battle, on July 28 of the same year, Major Takeda Motoharu, near Manchuria Station (now Otpor), managed to recapture the Atamanovskaya hill seized by the Red Army units. During the battle, the major personally assumed command of the battalion and managed to capture prisoners and several machine guns. In both cases, the Japanese officers were awarded the Order of St. George the Great Martyr and Victory-bearer, 4th Class, the standard established for the O.M.O. ranks. [Selivanov 2017, pp. 29, 192].

Regular units of the Japanese expeditionary force – the 3rd, 7th, and 12th Infantry Divisions, as well as individual units and subunits – actively cooperated with Ataman Semenov's troops, especially after his forces entered Chita. Japanese officers received a number of awards for their participation in the Battle of Bogdat in 1919. However, most of the awards made outside the O.M.O. indicate that the assistance was not so much military as economic, logistical, and technical. Japanese servicemen helped with the office work of the O.M.O., worked in the hospitals of Transbaikalia, and provided food delivery. Also awarded were the Japanese commandants of railway stations on the Trans-Siberian Railway.

The O.M.O. had a special version of orders for non-Christians, which were also awarded to the Japanese seconded to Semenov. It was

²⁸ GAZK, Fund 329. Series 1. Files 10, 46, 82.

the Order of St. George the Great Martyr and Victory-bearer, 4th Class. It had a distinctive engraving – the letters O, M, and O on three of the four ends of the cross. The Orders of St. Anna and St. Stanislaus were also produced. While the headquarters of the Detachment was in Chita, the orders were made with the use of ivory instead of enamel at the Art and Industrial School, formed as a result of the merger of the Art and Industrial School evacuated from Yekaterinburg in 1919 and the Chita Art School [Alekseev 2019, pp. 139–145]. The Chita printing shop produced artistic certificates for awarding the Order of St. George of the 4th Class [Selivanov 2017, p. 45]. After the defeat of the White Movement in Transbaikalia and the retreat of Semenov's units to Manchuria, starting from November 1920, the Orders of St. George, St. Anna, and St. Stanislaus were made in Harbin [Selivanov 2017, p. 62].

An episode that occurred after the defeat of the White Movement and the withdrawal of the Japanese troops from the Russian Far East can serve as a peculiar epilogue to the interaction of the Japanese command and Ataman Semenov. Semenov left Russia via Primorye, from where he first moved to Seoul, where he met with General Oba Jiro, former commander of the 3rd Division stationed in Chita. The meeting took place at the palace of the Governor-General of Korea, where a dinner was held in honor of the Russian guest, at which General Oba was wearing all the Russian orders he had. In his memoirs, Semenov wrote about this that the kind attitude towards him in the Japanese military environment had clearly not changed [Semenov 2007, p. 290]. Semenov's cooperation with the Japanese military continued after 1922; however, it was of a fundamentally different nature and did not radically affect the actual relations between Japan and Russia, where a different government was established.

As for the biography of General Oba Jiro, once again, it is important to point out many similarities with the biographies of the other military personnel listed above. During the Russo-Japanese War, he participated in the siege of Port Arthur, and, during the First World War, he was the military representative of Japan at the headquarters of the Supreme Commander in Russia. With the outbreak of the Civil War, in 1918, he

was appointed commander of the 3rd Division stationed in Chita, which guarded the railway from Nerchinsk to Verkhneudinsk.

Thus, the biography of Oba Jiro shows the main stages that recur in the lives of many Japanese servicemen of the late 19th and early 20th centuries who were related to Russia – the war in 1904–1905, award-marked cooperation during the First World War, as well as assistance to those political and military forces that fought the Bolsheviks during the Civil War.

Conclusion

The above review of the events and circumstances in which Japanese servicemen received Russian awards in the course of 15 years shows how complex and multifaceted the interaction between Russia and Japan was in the early 20th century. It was a period of bilateral rapprochement marked by mutual colonial and geopolitical interests. Quickly enough, the memory of the war of 1904–1905 became the reason for the appearance of rituals of reconciliation: The military from both sides tried to reward each other or celebrate the courage of yesterday's rivals.

Presented at the high state level were several dozen symbolic awards, including Russian awards to the Japanese Imperial couple and princes, and members of the ruling family. High-ranking military officers, admirals, and generals were often awarded. At the same time, in many cases, Russian awards were given to those military personnel who had shown their worth in the battles of the 1904–1905 war a few years earlier.

During the First World War, in addition to the etiquette and diplomatic awards in accordance with their intended purpose, there were many awards for providing specific assistance, especially in the field of naval cooperation, i.e., cargo transportation, equipping of Russian ships, rectification of the consequences of accidents on the ships *Peresvet* and *Empress Maria*.

After 1917, during the Civil War, Japan supported those political forces that confirmed the continuity of the military and financial obligations of the Tsarist and Provisional Governments. It is not surprising, therefore, that diplomatic contacts with the government of Admiral Kolchak and comprehensive assistance to the forces of Ataman Semenov were carried out precisely by those Japanese senior officers – admirals and generals – who had worked in Russia before 1917 and had already been awarded Russian orders.

The end of the Civil War and the establishment of the Soviet government in Russia ushered in a new period of bilateral relations filled with new content. However, even in the moments of rare thaws between Japan and the USSR, awarding orders and medals to military personnel of the opposite side in such great numbers as it had been before would have been impossible.

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