

## RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR 1904-1905 – "CAUSES":

- One of the basic reasons for the clash between *"two sets of imperialist ambitions"* was the **declining and collapsing Chinese Empire**. Suddenly there was a power vacuum that both Japan and Russia wanted to fill...
- **Russia had expanded towards the east** during the 19th century. During the reign of Nicholas I (1825-1854) and Alexander II (1854-1881) we see the Russian influence over Dagestan and the Caucasus become permanent as well as the control over the Uzbeks and the Kazakhs. The establishment of influence in the Far East was typified by the foundation of the town aptly named *Vladivostok* (*"Lord of the East"*) in 1861. In the end of the century the construction of the Trans-Siberian Railroad started (tied European Russia together with Vladivostok). It was completed 1904. Russia now wanted to continue their expansion in the east. The Chinese districts of **Manchuria and Korea were their next targets**.
- Russia needed a **warm water port** for their navy (military reasons) as well as the merchant marine (economical reasons). The new Russian town of Vladivostok could only be used during the summer. **Port Arthur (Lüshunkou)** at the **Liaodong Peninsula** was such a port but it formally belonged to China.
- Russia had started **several economic ventures in the far east**, like the *"Russian Timber Company of the Far East"*. Sergei Witte (Minister of Economy) and other very influential persons had invested in these ventures...
- Japan had been forced to open for Western trade and influence in the middle of the 1800's. By the end of the 19th century Japan had transformed into a modernized industrial state with advanced technology mixing its old customs with new Western ideas. **Japan wanted to be recognized as an equal to the Western powers** who colonized parts of the China. Beginning in the 1870s, Japan had moved into the previous Chinese sphere of influence over Korea (Korea was a relatively independent part of the Chinese Empire). In the Treaty of Ganghwa (1876) Japan forced Korea to engage in foreign trade. This started a period of Japanese domination which ended in 1910 when the Japan-Korea Annexation Treaty was signed. Then Korea became part of Japan.
- After the **Sino-Japanese War 1894-1895** a Peace Treaty was signed (Treaty of Shimonoseki / Treaty of Maguan 1895) which granted Japan Formosa (Taiwan) and the bay of Liaodong together with all fortifications, arsenals and public property. It also forced China to open several cities to Japan as well as granting Korea complete independence and autonomy. China should thereafter treat Japan as the *"most-favored-nation"*. This **treaty was challenged by Russia, France and Germany** just three days after signing (the **Triple Intervention**). They forced Japan to withdraw its claim on the Liaodong peninsula. Port Arthur (Lüshunkou) was too important for them – especially Russia.

- **In 1897 a Russian fleet appeared off Port Arthur.** They put some pressure on China who signed permission for Russia to lease the area (early 1898 - for 25 years). Russia now started fortifications and other constructions on the peninsula as well as a railroad to Harbin from Port Arthur. These constructions contributed to the Boxer Rebellion. The Russian reaction to that was mobilization and an occupation of Manchuria... The success against the Boxer rebels also built up a false confidence among the Russian troops - that they would be able to defeat any "oriental foe".
- The **new independent Korea** signed a **pact of protection with Russia and China** at the beginning of the 20th century. This was an attempt to hinder further Japanese influence in Korea.
- Great Britain was worried of the Russian advances in the east. Therefore she signed a pact with Japan, the **Anglo-Japanese Alliance**, in 1902. The alliance meant that both countries would respect neutrality in case they became involved in war and promise of support in case they became involved in war with more than one state. Britain thought this would restrict naval competition by keeping the Russian Pacific seaports of Vladivostok and Port Arthur from their full use. The further benefit of the alliance to Britain was the establishment of an ally in East Asia who could help contain Russia in general and protect British commercial interests in China. It helped Britain's navy by providing coaling stations and repair facilities. For Japan, it was a necessary step in achieving further recognition as a Power (if not a Great Power) and gave her the confidence to challenge Russia's occupation of Manchuria and designs on Korea.
- For **two years** (1901-1903) **Japan tried to reach an understanding with Russia** about spheres of influence in Manchuria and Korea. They failed due to Russian "apathy".
- In **1903 Russia failed to remove a temporary garrison from Manchuria** (they were there formally as a protection for the construction and work on the Chinese Eastern Railroad). The delay made it look like Russia was trying to take more control over this region (both Manchuria and Korea)...
- **Domestic tension within Russia** (strikes, political unrest, etc...) made a "foreign distraction" welcome. The Minister of Interior Plehve said "*to stem the tide of revolution, we need a successful little war*"...
- In **January (13th) 1904 Japan proposed a formula** of Manchuria being outside her sphere of influence if Russia accepted Japanese sphere of influence in Korea. This proposal was met with - silence. When Japan hadn't received an answer in **February (6th)** the Ambassador, Kurino, called on the Russian Foreign Minister to take his leave. **Japan now severed their diplomatic relation with Russia.** Two days later the war started...
- Kaiser Wilhelm II sent a personal encouragement to his cousin Tsar Nicholas II about his "*crusade against the Yellow Peril*".