

The Issue of Armaments Supply in Russo-Japanese Relations during the First World War (August 1914 – March 1917)

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Introduction

Historians say that 'the European conflict', started in August 1914, transformed into 'the World War', because of the huge interests that European powers had all over the world, especially in Asia. It is actually true, because all the participants – Great Britain and France, Russia and Germany – had wide commercial and political interests in the East. However, it should be noted that for Russia relations with the East had a special meaning. For the 'Eurasian' Russia her Far Eastern possessions were organic extension of the mainland, which guaranteed her connections with the rest of the world, and therefore they must be defended. During the First World War 'the Great Siberian Railway' became the main communication channel, which connected Russia with international market. All Russia's relations with Europe were broken off as a result of the war, and the former enemy, Japan, became – by the irony of fate – the Russia's

nearest influential neighbour. That is why the relations between Russia and Japan during the First World War had to transform into very intensive and even cooperative ones.

The interesting and unique phenomenon of Russo-Japanese rapprochement during the First World War has been studied intensively by different scholars of Japan, Russia and the USA since the middle of the twentieth century.¹ However, despite the plain fact that the bilateral relations of that time were described even by contemporaries as “the Arms Alliance”,² until now the aspect of military cooperation in Russo-Japanese relations seems to have been neglected. Certainly, the problem of Russian military orders during the First World War was investigated partly in Russian historiography, mainly by former officers of the Chief Ordnance Administration (*Glavnoe Artilleriiskoe Upravlenie* – GAU), but the Japanese orders were not analyzed as a special theme.³ Japanese military historians also investigated the problem of Japan’s armaments supply to Russia during the War, but they used only Japanese historical sources.⁴ As a consequence, the details

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- 1 Matsumoto Tadao, *Kinsei Nihon gaikō-shi kenkyū (Studies on Diplomatic History of Contemporary Japan)* (Tokyo, 1942), pp. 155-189; Peter A. Berton, *The Secret Russo-Japanese Alliance of 1916* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Columbia University, 1956); S. S. Grigortsevich, *Dalnevostochnaia politika imperialisticheskikh derzhav v 1906–1917 gg.* (Tomsk, 1965); Yoshimura Michio, *Nihon to Roshia: Nichiro sengo kara Roshia kakumei made (Japan and Russia: From the Russo-Japanese War until the Russian Revolution)* (Tokyo, 1968); E. B. Baryshev, *Nichiro dōmei no jidai, 1914-1917: ‘Reigaitekina yūkō’ no shinsō (The Epoch of Russo-Japanese Alliance, 1914–1917: The Truth About an ‘Exceptional Friendship’)* (Fukuoka, 2007); Yu. S. Pestushko, *Rossiisko-yaponskie otnosheniya v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny (1914-1917 gg.)* (Khabarovsk, 2008).
 - 2 Ōba Kakō, “Nichiro shin-kyōyaku to heiki dōmei [New Japanese-Russian Convention and the Arms Alliance],” *Taiyō*, Vol. XXII, No. 10 (August 1, 1916), pp. 106-110.
 - 3 A. A. Manikovskii, *Boevoe snabzhenie russkoi armii v voinu 1914-1918 gg.*, Ch. 1-2 (Moskva, 1920-1922); *General V. S. Mikhailov (1875–1929): Dokumenty k biografii. Ocherki po istorii voennoi promyshlennosti* (Moskva, 2007); A. P. Zalyubovskii, *Snabzhenie Russkoi Armii v Velikuyu voinu vintovkami, pulemyotami, revol’verami i patronami k nim* (Belgrad, 1936); A. A. Manikovskii, *Boevoe snabzhenie russkoi armii v mirovuyu voinu* (Moskva, 1937); E. Z. Barsukov, *Russkaia artilleriia v mirovuiu voinu*, 2 vols (Moskva, 1938-1940); V. G. Fyodorov, *Oruzheinoe delo na grani dvukh epoch (Raboty oruzheynika, 1900–1935)*, Ch. 2 (Moskva, 1939); E. Z. Barsukov, *Artilleriia russkoi armii (1900–1917)*, 4 vols (Moskva, 1948-1949).
 - 4 Akutagawa Tetsushi, “Buki yushutsu no keifu [The development of arms export],” part 1-2, *Gunji shigaku (The Journal of Military History)*, March 1987– March 1988, Vol. 22 (No. 4), Vol. 23 (No. 1), Vol. 23 (No. 4); Saitō Seiji, “Nihon kaigun ni yoru roshia kinkai no yusō, 1916-1917 nen [The Transportation of the Russia’s Specie Gold by Japanese Navy, 1916-1917],” *Kokusai seiji*

about that cooperation have been unclear until now in the historiography of Russo-Japanese relations. The achievements of Soviet (Russian) historiography seem not to be known enough by Japanese history specialists, and vice versa.⁵

In this article the author attempts to overcome the limits of previous studies relating to the issue of Russo-Japanese military cooperation during the First World War by means of summarising and supplementing them with new sources and materials. More concretely, the author, focusing on the initiatives of the Russian Government concerning military purchasing in Japan and the evolution of a position of Japan's ruling class during the Great War, strives to clarify the motives, the course and the meaning of Russo-Japanese cooperation in the military sphere. Valuable materials of the Russian and Japanese archives help to reconstruct unknown episodes of Russo-Japanese relations of the past.

The Beginning of the Russo-Japanese Military Cooperation: 'Unexpected Ally' (August 1914 – November 1914)

The first days of the European war in the Russian Far East were covered with a menacing atmosphere of the potential Japanese invasion, however after several days the Russian War Ministry learned from different diplomatic, military and private channels that Japan's leading trade companies had been ready to provide the Russian army with

(International relations), No. 97, May 1991, pp. 154-177; Sakamoto Masako, *Zaibatsu to teikokushugi: Mitsui bussan to chūgoku* (Financial oligarchy and Imperialism: The Mitsui Bussan and China) (Tokyo, 2003).

5 For the recent studies in this field see the following papers: E. A. Baryshev, "The Background of the Russo-Japanese Military Cooperation during the First World War: Mitsui Bussan's Trading Strategy towards Russia," *Shimane Journal of North East Asian Research*, No. 21, March 2011, pp. 23-41 (in Japanese); E. A. Baryshev, "The General Hermonius Mission to Japan (August 1914 – March 1915) and the Issue of Armaments Supply in Russo-Japanese Relations during the First World War," *Acta Slavica Iaponica*, Vol. 30 (August, 2011), pp. 21-42; E. A. Baryshev, "Японские винтовки на русском фронте во время Первой мировой войны (1914–1917): Малоизвестные страницы двустороннего сотрудничества," *Iaponiya 2011: Ezhegodnik* (Moscow, 2011), pp. 238-254; E. A. Baryshev, "The Russo-Japanese "Arms Alliance" and the Bilateral Commercial Relations during the First World War: The Case of Bryner, Kuznetsov & Co.," *Shimane Journal of North East Asian Research*, No. 23, March 2012, pp. 193-215 (in Japanese); D. B. Pavlov, "Япония и Россия в 1914-1918: Сотрудничество на фоне "бол'шой" политики," *Voprosy istorii* (Moscow, 2012), No. 11, pp. 3-27.

necessary arms, munitions and different military equipment. The first Japanese company to propose cooperative measures was the Mitsui Bussan Company, which had agents in both Petersburg and Vladivostok. The executives of Mitsui Bussan, who informed the Russian government about their wish to supply the Russian army with arms and munitions even before the decision of the Japanese government to begin war with Germany, understood clearly that their economic positions would be shaken greatly by this 'European conflict' and looked for ways of saving their prosperity. Russian gold at London banks was one of the desirable prizes for the company. Importantly, Mitsui Bussan acted as the central member of the government-controlled syndicate *Taihei Kumiai* (or Taiping Company) that had been exporting old-pattern weapons, produced at Japanese arsenals, to the developing countries. Other members of the *Taihei Kumiai* were the Okura Company and the Takata Company, whose representatives also immediately departed from Tokyo to Russia at the beginning of August, bringing with them special recommendation letters of the Russian Embassy. The interests of *Taihei Kumiai*'s members were keenly connected with those of the 'military party' of Japan, formed with the Elder Statesmen (*genro*) and the General Staff as its core elements.⁶

On August 15, Japan's Government sent to Berlin its ultimatum and initiated preparation for war with Germany. The next day, the Deputy-Chief of the General Staff of Japan, Lieutenant-General Akashi Motojiro (1864–1919) met with Russian military agent Major-General V. K. Samoilov (1866–1916) and informed him that Japan was going to help Russia with arms supply, and Russia should not worry about the security of its Asiatic possessions.⁷ In this situation, when Russia and Japan were going to stand together at war against Germany and its allies, the emperor Nikolai II encouraged the initiative of GAU and issued the order, according to which a special technical commission was to be dispatched to Japan and America, for the purchase of commodities and materials which the Russian army needed.⁸

On August 25, the Russian military commission, consisting of the armaments specialists of the Artillery Committee of GAU, and headed by Major-General E. K. Hermonius (1864–1938), departed from Saint-Petersburg to the Far East. The officers – Colonels V. G. Fyodorov (1874–1966) and M. P. Podtyagin – brought with them samples

6 For details see: E. A. Baryshev, "The Background of the Russo-Japanese Military Cooperation during the First World War," pp. 24-27 (In Japanese).

7 Rossiiskii gosudarstvennyi voenno-istoricheskii arkhiv (RGVIA), f. 2000 (Glavnoe Upravlenie General'hogo Shtaba), op. 1, d. 4453, l. 159.

8 RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4060, l. 15, 15 ob.; Fyodorov, *Oruzheinoe delo*, pp. 13, 24.

of different arms and munitions, and, more importantly, General Hermonius was vested with the authority “to carry on all negotiations with the trade company Mitsui”.⁹ The tasks of the Russian commission, set before General Hermonius and his colleagues by GAU, were “to purchase immediately from Japanese government about one million rifles, the same as are used in the Japanese army, with cartridges in a quantity of one thousand per rifle,” “to find out the possibility of urgent production of powder by Japan for the field guns [400,000], our shrapnel shells [800,000] and time-fuses [800,000],” and to order some quantity of trotyl, toluene and picric acid.¹⁰ The members of the Russian technical commission supposed that the Japanese government would sell to the Russian War Ministry arms and munitions from their mobilisation stocks, but soon it became clear that the Japanese government was not so earnest in its military cooperation. At the end of August, the War Ministry of Japan notified the Russian government that it could not sell to Russia any weapons from their stocks. All that the Japanese government was going to transfer to Russia were – almost useless – sixteen old model cannons that the Japanese army had taken as trophies after the fall of the Port-Arthur fortress.¹¹ The only arms that Mitsui Bussan offered to the Russian artillerists immediately after their arrival to Tokyo were 20,350 rifles and 15,050 carbines for 7-mm calibre cartridge, produced by the Tokyo Arsenal for the Mexican government.

The breakthrough at the Russo-Japanese negotiations at Tokyo occurred at the beginning of October, when General Hermonius was informed that the Japanese government had eventually agreed to sell to Russia 200,000 rifles of an 1897 model with 100 cartridges per rifle. By October 10 Hermonius received permission to sign

9 RG VIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4060, ll. 15, 15 ob.; *Nihon Gaiko Bunsho (Japanese Diplomatic Documents, further – NGB)*, 1914, Vol. 3, p. 680; Nihon Gaikō Shiryōkan (Japan Diplomatic Records Archive, further – NGS), file 5.1.5.17-7, Honpō ni oite kakkoku heiki juhin sonota chōtatsu kankei zakken: Rokoku-no bu (The Materials Relating to the Purchasing of the Weapons and Other Products in Japan by Different States: Russia), Vol. 1, pp. 1-2; Fyodorov, *Oruzheinoe delo*, pp. 12-13; V. G. Fyodorov, *V poiskakh oruzhiya* (Moskva, 1964), pp. 24, 31.

10 RG VIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4060, ll. 24-25.

11 No. 200, Malevsky-Malevich to Sazonov, August 21, 1914, Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (AVPRI), f. 133 (Kantselyariya ministra), op. 470, d. 70; *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia v epokhu imperializma (further – MOEI)*, Serie 3, Vol. 6, Ch. 1 (Moskva, 1935), pp. 244-245, footnotes; RG VIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4059, l. 2; *NGB*, 1914, Vol. 3, p. 689; Bōei kenkyūsho [The National Institute for Defense Studies, NIDS], file T3-6.39, Ji Taishō 3-nen itaru dō-11-nen. Kakkoku-gun ni gunki kyōkyū ni kansuru tuzuri (The File Relating Weapons Supply for Armies of Different Countries, 1914-1922), pp. 403-406.

contracts in Tokyo, and in two or three days he concluded his first contract, concerning the 'Mexican guns', with a Mitsui Bussan agent. On October 21, General Hermonius concluded with *Taihei Kumiai* representative contract No. 3027 about purchasing 200,000 rifles and 25 millions cartridges, and contract No. 3026 for 500,000 3-inch shells. Those first bargains with the Japanese syndicate about rifles and 'the work-horse' of the Russian army (3-inch shells) were undoubtedly a big success.

As a matter of fact, the Japanese War Ministry formally had no right to sell weapons, both new and old, used in the army. Weapons, sold by the Ministry through *Taihei Kumiai*, were arms newly produced at the state arsenals in Tokyo and Osaka. In order to cope with this limitation, the Ministry found an interesting loophole and used its inter-ministerial resources. At first, it gathered old-model rifles and transferred them to arsenals on the pretext of repair. At the same time, the arsenals obtained an order to produce the same quantity of rifles (200,000) for the Japanese army. Along with the production of new guns, the arsenals transferred 'repaired' old rifles, formally as newly produced ones, through *Taihei Kumiai* to Russia. The arsenals acquired old guns as for repair, but returned to the Army new guns of 1905 model. In other words, the sale of old-model rifles was very beneficial for Japan, because it helped "to accelerate the process of change of 1897 model rifles with ones of 1905 model, planned for one or two years."¹²

General Hermonius managed to use especially warm relations between Japanese financial circles and America's industrialists, and, on October 24, signed another contract with Mitsui Bussan about purchasing 3,003,000 pounds of powder (approximately equal to 1,362 metric tons) from the DuPont Company, the leading player on the world powder market.¹³ In this sense, the Hermonius Commission's activity paved a way to the arms purchasing on the American continent. At the end of October, Hermonius concluded a new contract with the *Taihei Kumiai* syndicate about seventy-six heavy artillery guns.¹⁴

12 Taketomi Tokitoshi, *Ôkuma naikaku zaisei kaisôroku* (Recollections about the Financial Policy of the Okuma Cabinet) in Shibutani Sakusuke, *Taketomi Tokitoshi* (Tokyo, 1934), pp. 26-33; NIDS, file T.3-6.39, pp. 282-283, 546-550.

13 RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4453, ll. 149, 83; RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4060, l. 7; Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. R-6173 (E. K. Hermonius), op. 1, d. 11, ll. 31, 31 ob; GARF, f. R-6173, op. 1, d. 26, p. 38; *General V. S. Mikhailov (1875-1929)*, pp. 361-362.

14 GARF, f. R-6173, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 23, 23 ob.; GARF, f. 676 (Velikii Knyaz Georgii Mikhailovich), op. 1, d. 362, l. 13; Akutagawa, "Buki yushutsu no keifu (2) (The Development of Arms Export, part. 2)," *Gunji Shigaku (The Journal of Military History)* Vol. 23, No. 1 (June 1987), pp. 49-50.

These old guns, taken from different fortresses, seemed to have been sold to Russia by the Japanese War Ministry in the same way as the earlier rifles. That is, to replace them, the Osaka Arsenal, using the Russian money, had to produce new analogical guns, and that opened a way to the speedy modernization of Japanese army.

At the same time, the Chief Quartermaster's Administration (*Glavnoe Intendantskoe Upravlenie* – GIU) of the War Ministry carried on negotiations – both at Vladivostok and Petrograd – concerning purchasing from Japan different kinds of soldier equipment. It was GIU that was also charged with the purchasing of foodstuff for the needs of the Chief Department of Land Management and Agriculture (*Glavnoe Upravlenie Zemleustroistva i Zemledeliya* – GUZiZ). On October 8, the Vladivostok fortress's Quartermaster, Colonel V. F. Filonov (1868–?) concluded his first contract, No. 14779, with the Mitsui Company about 250,000 arshins (arshin is a Russian unit of length, equal to 71.12 centimeters or 28 inches) of protective coloured cloth that had to be delivered by the end of the year. In October and November, Filonov ordered from Japanese trade companies, such as Mitsui Bussan and Nakatani Shobei, 1,928,000 arshins of cloth (4.252 million roubles) and 500,000 sets of soldier equipment from Mitsui (3.755 million roubles).¹⁵ Interestingly, the Okura Company, which had a special respect from the Russian War Ministry, had almost monopolised the Petrograd's orders of GIU. On October 12, trade representatives of Okura signed first contracts with the Quartermaster's Administration of the Petrograd Military District concerning 300,000 "leather belts with two cartridge-bags", 10,000 saddles, and 930,000 arshins of protective coloured cloth. By the end of the year, the total sum of Okura's contracts, concluded at Petrograd, had exceeded 6 million yen. The inspection of the production, ordered by GIU, was realised by Russian quartermaster officers, headed by Captain F. A. Popovsky (1879–?), who were dispatched to Japan at the end of November, 1914.¹⁶

The autumn of 1914 was the starting point both of active purchasing efforts of the Russian Government in Japan and the active Russo-Japanese cooperation during the First World War. One of the symbols of that cooperation was intensified contacts

15 Mitsui Archives (Tokyo), Rokoku seifu keiyaku (Contracts with the Russian government), Bussan-2353-15, I.15.1-4 (microfilm No. 355); RGVIA, f. 499 (GIU), op. 5, d. 395, ll. 126-128, 154-155; RGVIA, f. 499, op. 5, d. 396, ll. 26-33, 47, 54-57 ob., 189-191 ob.; *Nakatani Shōbei tsuitō-roku* (In Mourning for Nakatani Shobei) (Tokyo, 1941), pp. 19-23, 114-117, appendix p. 5.

16 RGVIA, f. 499, op. 5, d. 395, ll. 60, 66-69, 98-99, 105-106, 147-149, 214, 223; Ōkura Zaibatsu Shiryōsitsu [further – Okura Archives] (The Tokyo Keizai University), file 23.2-87, Nihon ginkō he teishutsu suru keiyakusho (The Contracts, submitted to the Bank of Japan).

between War Ministries of two countries. After Japan's declaration of war against Germany, the Russian Army had accepted seven Japanese military observers, and in October General-Major Oba Jiro (1864–1935) was welcomed at the Russian Headquarters as a Japan's representative. Moreover, in the middle of October, the special Japanese Red Cross mission was dispatched to Russia. The mission arrived to Petrograd in the middle of November, and worked in the Russian capital until April 1916 at the Japanese Red Cross hospital. Then, in the middle of November, at the Changchun railway station (Kuanchengzi), the southern end of the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER), Japan handed over to the Russians as "the sign of bilateral friendship" sixteen old cannons, the trophies of the Russo-Japanese war. The atmosphere of the 'Russo-Japanese friendship' and even 'Alliance', influenced by the active participation of Japan in the 'European war', had spread widely by the beginning of November 1914, when the 'stronghold of the German militarism' in the Far East, Tsingtao fortress, fell.¹⁷ However, with the fall of Tsingtao Japan's active participation in the war had come to the end, and the Russo-Japanese relations entered a new phase.

The Arms Question and the Big Politics (December 1914 – May 1915)

In the middle of November, GAU decided to withdraw Colonel Fyodorov from Tokyo, but Hermonius and Podtyagin were ordered to stay in Japan for some months in order to purchase some quantity of rifles and heavy artillery. Interestingly, Hermonius was advised to buy some munitions such as time-fuses and shell-cases to soften the position of the Japanese Government in the arms supply question. In Hermonius's terminology these were 'gifts' to the Japanese that the Russian government was to buy. At this time, Russian military authorities even hoped that after the completion of the Tsingtao operation the Japanese government would agree to dispatch its siege-artillery regiments with its manpower to the Russian front. Eventually, by the end of 1914, Japan had agreed to sell to Russia fifty-nine heavy artillery guns and to dispatch with them 11

17 See: Hara Teruyuki, *Shiberia shuppei: Kakumei to kanshō, 1917-1922 (The Siberian Expedition: Revolution and Intervention, 1917-1922)* (Tokyo, 1989), pp. 78-79; Kawai Toshinobu, "Daiichiji sekai taishenchū no Nihon sekijūjisha ni yoru Ei-Futsu-Ro he no kyūgohan haken [The Dispatch of the Japanese Red Cross missions to the Great Britain, France and Russia during the First World War]," *Gunji Shigaku (The Journal of Military History)* Vol. 43, No. 2 (September 2007), pp. 4-25; NIDS, file T.3-6.39, pp. 299-427; RGVIA, f. 2000, op.1, d. 4058; Baryshev, *Nichiro dōmei no jidai*, pp. 46-48, 59-62, 75-79, 81-82.

officers and some unter-officers as instructors. Obviously, the dispatch of Japanese instructors to the Russian front was a clear “political measure”, taken by Japan in order to exaggerate its contribution to the Allies in their struggle with Germany.¹⁸

The position of the Japanese Government to the question of bilateral military cooperation was ambivalent. On the one hand, the further rapprochement with Russia as one of the Entente’s countries and as Japan’s neighbour in Manchuria had been one of the strategic goals of Japanese ruling class, which strived to use the European war for the strengthening of Japan’s influence in the Far Eastern affairs. On the other hand, the War Ministry of Japan had no intention to enhance the army of the ‘potential enemy’ at their own expense. In the end of 1914, the Russian representatives in Tokyo requested the Japanese government to hand over to Russia 150,000 rifles, and after some days were additionally instructed to initiate a request for 300,000 rifles.¹⁹ The Russian Government even proposed to Japan to pay for all costs required for the production of the same quantity of new-pattern rifles for the Japanese Army, if Japan agree to supply Russia with rifles from its mobilization stocks, but, despite of this, the Japanese Government had agreed eventually to sell only 100,000 rifles – of “rather doubtful quality”, in Hermonius’s words – after their repair. In accordance with contract No. 41 from January 28, the syndicate *Taihei Kumiai* promised to transfer to Russia 85,000 rifles and 15,000 carbines of the 1897 model with 22.6 million cartridges.²⁰

The Russian representatives in Tokyo continuously made different attempts to procure more rifles. General Samoilov considered that “purchasing from the Japanese War Ministry, without any intermediation of private persons, of the boots, cloth and other materials, offered to Russia and described by the Russian quartermasters as ‘of good quality and reasonable price’, might contribute significantly to a more successful course of negotiations for the purchasing of rifles.”²¹ GIU immediately recognised this consideration as reasonable, and in some days prepared the list of the military goods to be purchased in Japan. Samoilov was instructed to buy 800,000 pairs of soldier boots, grey overcoat cloth in large quantities, 1,240,000 yards of protective coloured cloth,

18 Baryshev, “The General Hermonius Mission to Japan,” pp. 34-36. For the dispatch of Japanese artillerists to Russia see: NGS, file 5.1.5.17-7, Vol. 1, pp. 378-464.

19 AVPRI, f. 150 (Iaponskii stol), op. 493, d. 1868, ll. 97-106; AVPRI, f. 150, op. 493, d. 1869, ll. 3-5; NGB, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, p. 992.

20 AVPRI, f. 150, op. 493, d. 1869, l. 17 ob.; GARF, R-6173, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 4, 74; AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 82. L. 9.

21 AVPRI, f. 150, op. 493, d. 1869, l. 7.

and 130,000 yards of waterproof canvas. The negotiations between Samoilov and the representatives of the War Ministry of Japan began from about January 21 and finished at the beginning of February with the signing of large-scale contracts.²²

It should be noted that at the end of January, the Russian War Ministry had managed to contract one million 3-line rifles from the American Remington Arms Company, which was undoubtedly considered a splendid breakthrough. Probably, in this situation, the GAU officials thought that the opportunities in the Japanese arms market had been already exhausted and had decided to withdraw Hermonius from Tokyo.²³ By the time of withdrawal, General Hermonius ordered from Japanese firms 340,000 small arms of different calibres, 347 artillery guns (including 216 Arisaka field guns of 1898 model), time-fuses and cartridge-cases for 3-inch shells (500,000), shrapnel shells (500,000), powder of different kinds and other strategic materials. That was the imposing result of the Commission's activity. The total sum of orders, made by General Hermonius, amounted to 38 million yen. About 70% of all orders were given through the syndicate *Taihei Kumiai*, 23% through Mitsui Bussan and the rest of them were contracted with other trade companies of Japan. As for the profits, *Taihei Kumiai* and Mitsui Bussan re-sold their arms to Russia with 15-20% or even higher extra-charge, and, by the beginning of the 1915, had almost overcome the financial crisis, getting large sums of Russian gold in London banks.²⁴ On March 1, Hermonius made their way home from the newly constructed Tokyo railway station, where they were given a hearty send-off by those who had already obtained great profits from Russia's war orders.²⁵

Importantly, the Hermonius Commission did not limit the purchasing activity of GAU in Japan. Some strategic materials, such as non-ferrous metals (zinc, lead, antimony, etc.), or camphor and sulphur, are supposed to have been ordered through the Ordnance Head of the Vladivostok fortress, Mayor-General V. P. Sagatovsky (1857-?), but these data are known insufficiently. General Samoilov also played an important role in the

22 NGB, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, pp. 995-996; AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 82, l. 16; RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4454, ll. 14-14 ob., 20.

23 *General V. S. Mikhailov (1875-1929)*, p. 345; Dale C. Rielage, *Russian Supply Efforts in America During the First World War* (London, 2002), p. 30. See also: *MOEI*, vol. 7, Ch. 2 (Moscow, 1935), pp. 208-210.

24 *MOEI*, Vol. 7, Ch. 1, pp. 156-158; GARF, R-6173, op. 1, d. 11; Baryshev, "The Background of the Russo-Japanese Military Cooperation during the First World War," pp. 28-29; Baryshev, "The General Hermonius Mission to Japan," pp. 31-33, 36-39.

25 *Hōchi shimbun*, March 1, 1915, No.13645, p. 4; *Hōchi shimbun*, March 2, 1915, No.13646, p. 4.

placement and control of these orders, especially after Hermonius's return to Russia.²⁶ Since March 1915, GAU's interests in Japan were represented by Colonel Podtyagin, who was responsible for inspection and purchasing of time-fuses, gun shells, other military ammunitions. In April and May, thanks to the continuous efforts of the Russian servicemen and diplomats, the Japanese government, through syndicate *Taihei Kumiai*, handed over to Russia different arms and munitions on the total sum of over 8 million yen.²⁷ As for GIU's contracts, their total sum had reached approximately to 40 million yen by June 1915. The first group of the contracts were those which were concluded with such Japanese trade companies as Mitsui, Okura and Nakatani during the first months of the war. These orders concerning cloth, soldier boots, saddles and other soldier equipment cost approximately 20 million yen. The second group of contracts were those concluded by General Samoilov between January and June of 1915 with Japan's War Ministry and private companies.²⁸ Additionally, since the spring 1915, General Samoilov ordered from Japan some soldier equipment as infantry spades and axes for the Chief Military-Technical Administration (*Glavnoe Voенno-Tekhnicheskoe Upravlenie* – GVTU) and individual antiseptic bandages for the Chief Military-Sanitary Administration (*Glavnoe Voенno-Sanitarnoe Upravlenie* – GVSU).²⁹

The Russian Naval Ministry was also involved in purchasing activity in Japan from the beginning of 1915. First of all, its Chief Shipbuilding Department (*Glavnoe Upravlenie Korablestroeniya*) managed to conclude several contracts with Okura at Petrograd concerning wire rope. Then, from March 1915, the Naval Ministry began purchasing directly in Tokyo through the naval agent A. N. Voskresensky (1879–1930) and procured from the Japanese Naval Ministry eighteen torpedoes, four million of rifle cartridges, sixteen 4.7-inch Armstrong quick-firing guns with shells and accessories. Supposedly, when it became clear that the War Ministry of Japan was not willing to concede more arms, the Russian government strived to purchase some weapons and strategic goods from the Navy of Japan, bypassing the resistance of the War Ministry. At the same time,

26 RGVA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4454, ll. 74, 116, 118, 120, 125, 134-135, 151^a, 182, 202, 235.

27 NGB, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, pp. 1032-1033.

28 NGB, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, pp. 1005-1009; RGVA, f. 499, op. 5, d. 395, ll. 151, 211, 211 ob., 252, 263; F. 2000, op. 1, d. 4453, l. 15; F. 2000, op. 1, d. 4454, l. 12; F. 499, op. 5, d. 396, ll. 26-33, 47, 54-57 ob., 174, 189-191 ob.; F. 499, op. 5, d. 429, ll. 77-78, 106, 128-129.

29 NGB, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, pp. 993-994, 996-997, 1032; AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 82, l. 30; Okura Archives, file 232-88, Robun keiyakusho (The Contracts in Russian); RGVA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4454, ll. 46, 61, 63, 68, 85, 93, 123, 136, 140, 153, 204, 231.

the Russian Naval Ministry also managed to purchase Arisaka field guns with shells and pyroxylin (nitrocellulose) directly from *Taihei Kumiai*.³⁰

The Elder Statesmen, headed by Marshall Yamagata Aritomo (1838–1922), tried to use the mechanism of ‘the Court Diplomacy’ in order to promote their ‘pro-Russian’ diplomatic course. Yamagata, as the nearest advisor to the Mikado, could resolve Russia’s rifle question using the special decree of the Japanese Emperor, if the Russian monarch asked Mikado about rifles officially. Certainly, this measure was not merely an attempt to help Russia, but should serve as a prologue to the future Russo-Japanese talks, which would guarantee Japan with the Russia’s support in the Far Eastern affairs. However, at that time, Russian diplomats decided that it was dangerous for Russia’s prestige to apply for the Emperor’s help and refused this plan.³¹

Interestingly, Japanese statesmen looked for the Russo-Japanese rapprochement in the midst of the Sino-Japanese negotiations that began after the presentation of the so-called ‘21 demands’ on January 18. Certainly, the Japanese Government needed Russia’s support during the Sino-Japanese negotiations, and that is why it could not decline Russia’s requests in the arms supply question completely. However, it tried to use Russia’s need for rifles as an instrument to achieve its strategic aims in Chinese affairs. Metaphorically speaking, the arms question was an important trump card in the political grand-game that the Japanese government played. On March 8, Ambassador N. A. Malevsky (1855–?) wired to Foreign Minister S. D. Sazonov (1860–1927) that “the rifles’ provision is delayed because of not only technical considerations, but also because of political reasons in connection with the current negotiations at Peking and the upcoming Parliament elections in two weeks.”³²

Actually, the position of Japanese government had softened with the end of Sino-Japanese talks. On May 10, the Japanese military representative at the Russian Headquarters, Major-General Nakajima Masatake (1870–1931), who arrived in Russia

30 Okura Archives, file 23.2-88, Robun keiyakusho (The Contracts in Russian); NIDS, file T.3-106.563, Taishō sen’eki senji shorui (The Documents Relating the War Conflicts of Taisho Epoch), Vol. 109, Part 4: Heiki jōto 4-dome. Rokoku seifu ni taisuru bun (Armaments transfers. The Russian Government), pp. 28-34, 39-81.

31 About “the Court Diplomacy” of Marshal Yamagata see: E. A. Baryshev, “Rol’ kniazia Yamagata v podgotovke russko-iaponskogo soiuzna 1916 goda: Za kulisami iaponskogo vizita velikogo kniazia Georgiia Mikhailovicha,” *Iaponiya 2007: Ezhegodnik* (Moscow, 2007), pp. 249-265; Baryshev, “Iaponskaia missiia velikogo kniazia Georgiia Mikhailovicha,” pp. 58-72.

32 AVPRI, f. 150, op. 493, d. 1869, l. 64.

instead of Major-General Oba, notified the Head of the Supreme Commander's Staff, N. N. Yanushkevich (1868–1918), that "Japan now is completely ready to help Russia with all its resources." It was a token of Japan's gratitude to Russia that tacitly supported Japan during Sino-Japanese negotiations. On May 14, Nakajima arrived from the Headquarters to Petrograd in order to transmit "a private request" of the Supreme Commander, Grand Duke Nikolai Nikolaevich (1856–1929), concerning the cession of arms, which the Russian army needed. Having this request, Yamagata and his circle could apply 'the Court Diplomacy' mechanism to the bilateral Russo-Japanese relations. The connections between two Imperial Courts were outside of the competition of Japanese Government, and Yamagata could ignore the resistance of Government members in the question of arms supply. On May 20, the council of five field-m Marshals and the war minister took place in Imperial Palace at Tokyo, where it was decided to supply Russia with 100,000 Arisaka rifles of 1905 model with 20 million cartridges. This decision was immediately approved by the Emperor and transmitted to Malevsky.³³

On June 11, Japan's Foreign Minister Kato Takaaki (1860–1926) officially informed Malevsky about the readiness of the Japanese Government to supply Russia with the rifles. It was an eventual answer of Japan to Russia's request from January 14, 1915, concerning provision of Russia with 300,000 rifles. The selling of the weapons from the mobilization stocks was unprecedented in both the history of the Japanese War Ministry and of Russo-Japanese relations. One week after the transmission of Japan's official answer to Russia, Kato wired – in Malevsky's words – to Ambassador Inoue Katsunosuke (1861–1929) in London that the cession of 100,000 rifles "from the mobilization stores of Japanese Army should not be considered as an accomplishment of some kind of order. This provision was realized by the motives of political character as exclusion, and Japan can supply neither Russia nor Great Britain with any rifles until the replenishment of the Japanese Army's needs, that is in the next two years."³⁴ Metaphorically speaking, the rifles were understood as a 'honey-cake' for the loyal position of Russian government to the Japanese expansive policy in China.

33 AVPRI, f. 150, op. 493, d. 1869, ll. 125, 135; NIDS, file T.3-6.39, pp. 435-462; *NGB*, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, pp. 1003-1004.

34 *NGB*, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, p. 1020; AVPRI, f.133, op. 470, d. 82, ll. 108, 115.

Reorganization of Russia's Armaments Purchasing in Japan: Russo-Japanese Relations at the Crossroads (June – September 1915)

Japanese military help was useful and valuable to Russia, but, of course, could not satisfy her needs completely. That is why, in the end of May, soon after receiving the information about the provision of 100,000 rifles, the Russian Government applied to Japan again with the new request for 200,000 rifles and 300 million cartridges, 120,000 shells per month for 75-mm Arisaka field guns, heavy cannons and 120 field guns.³⁵ It should be noted that the tactic of Russian Government (and its readiness to give some services and concessions to Japan) became more and more sophisticated. From the beginning Russia showed the readiness to thank Japan for any kind of support, including things that were considered to be unnecessary as some trophies. Additionally, in order to get rifles and heavy artillery, the Russian Government agreed to buy some minor weapons, war materials and ammunitions. Besides, at the end of 1914 Russia had already shown a readiness to pay all overhead costs for the accomplishment of the Japanese Government's order to produce rifles at the Japanese arsenals, in case of immediate provision of some quantity of rifles from the army's stocks, and even had agreed to supply Japanese arsenals with some necessary materials. In spring of 1915 this initiative did not bring any results, but the negotiations continued in this way. As a result, in the beginning of June, Japan's War Ministry had agreed to produce some quantity of rifles and cartridges at its Arsenals with the precondition that Russia supply Japan with such materials as zinc, nickel, tin, spring and instrumental steel.³⁶

At the same time, the industrial and financial circles of Japan started their 'silent pressure' campaign on the Russian Government. By the middle of May, General Samoilov had learned from the representative of the Okura Company that the Japanese Government could sell to Russia between 200 and 300 thousand Arisaka rifles if Russia would agree to concede the southern part of the CER, from Taolaizhao to Kuanchengzi, to the South Manchuria Railway Company.³⁷ On May 30, Ambassador Motono Ichiro (1862–1918) reported to *Kasumigaseki* that in his opinion, there was a splendid chance to resolve this railway issue, remained from the Russo-Japanese War, if the Japanese Government was ready to provide wider military assistance to Russia. In Motono's

35 NGB, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, pp. 1014-1015.

36 NGB, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, pp. 1017-1019; AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 82, l. 117.

37 RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4454, ll. 173, 175.

view, the providing of all possible military support towards Russia, in order to secure the victory of Britain, France and Russia in the War, was “both an obligation and an advantageous political course for Japan” in these circumstances. Importantly, the British Government also asked Japan to give Russia adequate military support.³⁸ The Japanese Government did not take any decisive measures in this direction, but at the end of June ‘the Elder Statesmen’, influenced by these reports by Motono, had started an active campaign for the Russo-Japanese political rapprochement.³⁹

As a result of the tough talks, restarted in Tokyo between Colonel M. P. Podtyagin and the representatives of the Japanese War Ministry, in the middle of July, the Japanese Government informed Russians that it could 1) produce in one year about 62 million cartridges and 130,000 rifles, starting from the December of 1915, 2) supply Russia with 46,000 shells for heavy artillery and 80,000 shells for 75-mm field guns per month in the next six months, 3) prolong from the October the contract, signed by Hermonius, concerning 3-inch shrapnel, and produce additionally 1.2 million shells, 4) supply Russia with fifteen 28-cm howitzers with shells and four 24-cm coastal cannons.⁴⁰ By the beginning of August, the conditions of new contracts were generally agreed between Russian and Japanese military authorities, but the situation on the Russian Front had been changing speedily.

The beginning of August for the Russian Army became the most crucial bottom-point, when it was forced to start a large-scale retreat because of a lack of weapons. The fall of Warsaw was the symbolic sign of the Russian Army’s problems. In this critical situation, on August 10, the Russian Government had taken a resolution, according to which the transfer of the CER’s part in the Japanese sphere of influence was considered to be possible in case of provision of some quantity of rifles from Japan. On August 11, Sazonov met with the Japanese Ambassador, and informed him about the Russian Government’s wish to be supplied additionally with 1 million rifles with necessary store of cartridges. Sazonov explained about an extremely difficult situation on the North-Western Front, and added that in this situation Japan was the only country that could help Russia. Of course, he did not forget to hint that Russia was ready to give some valuable concessions to Japan in Manchuria, according to the new Government’s

38 NGS, file 5.1.5.17-4, Honpō ni oite kakkoku heiki juhin sonota chōtatsu kankei zakken: Ei-Futsu-Ro-no bu (The Materials Relating to the Purchasing of the Weapons and Other Products in Japan by Different States: Britain, France, Russia), p. 144.

39 See: Baryshev, *Nichiro dōmei no jidai, 1914-1917*, pp. 134-137.

40 NGB, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, pp. 1027-1029; AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 82, l. 118.

resolution. The comments of Ambassador Motono to this meeting with Sazonov were as follows:

Today's Russian request is a result of consultations between the Allied Powers. If Japan does not respond to this request, and one of the Allied Powers is defeated, a part of the rights that Japanese had taken in China will turn to dust. On the other hand, I am sure that if the Allies have a victory without any cooperation from our side, Japan's voice in the peace treaty negotiations will weaken greatly. If the Japanese Government considers that there is no menace to peace in the Far East, and decides to supply Russia with a part of the weapons from its defence stocks, I am sure that there will be an opportunity to resolve the question concerning the railway from Sungari to Changchun. The words of the Russian Minister that Russia is ready to give some compensation should be, probably, interpreted in this way.⁴¹

In view of Russia's defeats, Great Britain's Government was also forced to take some extraordinary measures. Until this time, London did not accept the idea of Russo-Japanese Rapprochement, preferring to control Japan through the Anglo-Japanese Alliance, but in the middle of August Edward Grey (1862-1933) had decided to allow Russia and Japan to become closer, if this rapprochement would result in the enhancement of Japan's military support towards Russia.⁴² By this time, Minister Kato, an adherent of a strong orientation to London, was replaced, and the former Japanese Ambassador Ishii Kikujiro (1866-1945) was put at this post.

On August 19, British, French and Russian Ambassadors visited Prime-Minister Okuma and requested Japan's government to supply Russia with possible quantity of arms and weapons. However, the Japanese government could not and did not wish to change plans of arms supply, prepared by this time. On the same day, Okuma wired to Petrograd a telegram, which included the following points: 1) Japan could not supply Russia with rifles and cartridges, except 150,000 rifles of a new model with 100 million of cartridges and 50,000 rifles of an old model, 2) New model rifles will be produced at the Japanese Arsenals according with the special mobilization plan and will be transferred to Russia in one year, 3) The important condition of the contract was supplying of Japan by the Russian government with necessary materials and metals. That is, in contrast with the situation during the Sino-Japanese negotiations, Japan's Government had not

41 *NGB*, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, pp. 1039-1040.

42 *NGB*, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, pp. 1042-1048.

decided to put this question “on the political grounds”, as Russia and other Allies wished. That meant that purely European problems were alien to the Japanese statesmen, who pursued clear tasks relating to the political and economic expansion of Japan in the Far East.⁴³

Eventually, from the beginning of August until the end of October, Colonel Podtyagin concluded some large-scale contracts with *Taihei Kumiai*. According to the contracts, the Russian Government ordered from Japan 1.2 million 3-inch shells, 43 heavy artillery guns and 92,300 shells, 120 75-mm Arisaka field guns and 860,000 shrapnel shells for them, 150,000 new model rifles with 84 million cartridges (contract No. 578), 50,000 old model rifles with small quantity of cartridges, and even 30,000 hand-grenades. The total sum of these orders is considered to reach approximately 65 million yen.⁴⁴ Additionally, in the middle of August, Captain Voskresensky signed a contract with Japan’s Navy about the provision of 37,000 Arisaka rifles and 10 million of cartridges; these rifles were to be transferred to Russia by the end of March of 1916.⁴⁵ These orders were valuable for the Russian Army, but their effect was delayed greatly, and it could not influence the Russian Army as the previous orders made by General Hermonius in the first months of the War.

As a matter of fact, by this time, the War Ministry of Japan had almost exhausted its extra-resources, finished the process of modernization of the army and had no plans to share its mobilization weapons with Russia. For the same reason, the trade syndicate *Taihei Kumiai* had no more opportunities to resell weapons to Russia. At the same time, some kind of desperation in foreign military supply, and the absence of perspective towards the end of the War, made the Russians throw all of their energy and resources into the development of Russia’s own military industry. Of course, an extension of industrial production in Russia required both machines and different raw materials, previously imported mostly from Germany. In these circumstances, both the Russian Government and private factories began the massive purchasing of copper, brass, zinc, antimony and other materials in Japan. Large-scale orders were given by GAU to such industrial companies as Takata, Kuhara, and Furukawa. Supposedly, the total sum of

43 *NGB*, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, pp. 1058-1059, 1069-1070, 1072; *MOEI*, Vol. 8, Ch. 2 (Moscow, 1935), pp. 100 (ref. 1), 120-122, 141-142.

44 NIDS, file T3-6.39, pp. 39-41, 173-175, 179-186, 602-611; GARF, f. 676, op. 1, d. 352, ll. 7-9, 13-15; AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 82, ll. 185, 235; *NGS*, file 5.1.5.17-7, Vol. 2, pp. 648-649, 656-657.

45 NIDS, file T .3-106.563, pp. 47-55, 94-129.

these 'metallic' orders reached about 40-50 million yen by the end of 1915.⁴⁶ Moreover, as it was noted above, the Russian War Ministry had to supply the Japanese Arsenals with different materials that were necessary for the production of the rifles, and it is known that eventually GAU had paid only to the Okura Company about 1,400,000 yen for zinc, nickel, lead and spring steel.⁴⁷

The summer of 1915, accompanied by a chain of Russia's military defeats, brought about great changes in the Russian state organization, and the Russian bourgeoisie got an opportunity to take active part in the arms purchasing activities abroad. In this situation, Vladivostok's Bryner, Kuznetsov & Co. managed to conclude some large-scale contracts with the Russian government concerning arms supply, using its connections at Petrograd, especially in the newly created Central War Industrial Committee, and its cooperative relations with the Japanese economic circles. The most impressive of them was the order for 4 million charged time-fuses for 3-inch artillery shells (worth 19.2 million yen) that was placed on the Japanese market in August 1915.⁴⁸

All Japanese orders, made by GAU by June 1915, were fulfilled by autumn of 1915. All weapons, bought by GAU in Japan, were of quite good quality and of quite moderate price. The rifles were not new ones, and were not provided with the necessary quantity of cartridges, but they could be used by reserve and guard regiments or on the second line of the front. As for artillery guns, which were short of shells also, they could be used instead of Russian guns at the minor parts of the Front and at the fortresses. Obviously, Japanese rifles and artillery could not change greatly the situation on the Eastern Front, but they could help in eliminating the front breakthroughs and bring to the Russian army "a small respite."⁴⁹ According to the author's calculation, by the autumn of 1915, at least ten percent of rifles and five percent of heavy artillery guns at the Russian front were of Japanese origin. The very important purchase for Russia was the 3-inch shells

46 NGS, file 5.1.5.17-7, vol. 3, pp. 1395-1410, vol. 4, pp. 2021-2022, 2035, 2099-2119, 2130-2143; AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 82, l. 161; RGVIA, f. 499, op. 5, d. 429, ll. 5, 24; Sakamoto, *Zaibatsu to teikokushugi*, pp. 168-169.

47 Okura Archives, file 23.2-88, Robun keiyakusho (The Contracts in Russian).

48 See: Baryshev, "The Russo-Japanese "Arms Alliance" and the Bilateral Commercial Relations during the First World War", *Shimane Journal of North East Asian Research*, No. 23, March 2012, pp. 193-215 (in Japanese).

49 Fyodorov, *Oruzheinoe delo*, p. 19; Manikovskiy, *Boevoe snabzhenie russkoi armii v mirovuyu voynu*, p. 213. See also: Alfred Knox, *With the Russian Army, 1914-1917: Being Chiefly Extracts From the Diary of a Military Attaché*, Vol. 1 (London, Hutchinson & Co., 1921), pp. 168, 216-217.

and their components, which played a positive role in the 1915 summer campaign, when 'the shell-shortage' occurred. The powder, purchased through Mitsui Bussan from the DuPont Company and from the Iwai Company, also contributed greatly to enhancing efforts on the Eastern Front. In contrast to the Japanese orders, the contracts with the British Vickers, the American Remington and The Purchasing Canadian Company were not fulfilled properly, and this was the first reason why the value of Japanese rifles and guns was re-estimated greatly in the late summer and autumn of 1915. In short, the crucial and tragic months of the summer of 1915 had shown that Japan was the only diligent and honest supplier of weapons for the Russian army. Baron Motono, who knew well that American supplying business was too late, suggested that it was strategically profitable to Japan to expand its supply of weapons to Russia, and to support the Allies in war against Germany.⁵⁰

The Financial Issues of the Military Cooperation and the Japanese Mission of Grand Duke George Mikhailovich (October 1915 – January 1916)

The problems of Russo-Japanese military cooperation were not merely of political, but also of economic-financial character. Russia's financial resources were strictly limited, and this factor restrained greatly the Russian purchasing efforts in Japan. The first foreign orders were supported with both the Russian gold abroad and the credits that the British government opened for Russia at the beginning of the War. On September 30, 1915, Russian minister of Finance, P. L. Bark (1869–1937), concluded a new agreement about the large one-year credit of 300 million pounds sterling (approximately 250 million roubles / yen per month). Unfortunately, the greater part of this credit (about 205 million roubles per month) should be used for the payments by the contracts, concluded by October, 1915. Moreover, for the payments of the contracts, which had been concluded earlier in Japan, only 6 million pounds (60 million yen) was prepared. According to the Russo-British financial agreement, the Russian Government had to ship abroad 400 million gold roubles (approximately, one fourth of all Russia's gold stock).⁵¹

In comparison with Great Britain, at the beginning of the Great War, Japanese finances were not so stable as to allow for loans to Russia of large sums of capital.

50 NGB, 1915, Ch. 3, Vol. 2, pp. 1061, 1072-1075.

51 A. L. Sidorov, *Finansovoe polozhenie Rossii v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny (1914–1917)* (Moskva, 1960), pp. 207-210, 224-283, 537-541; RGVIA, f. 499, op. 5, d. 395, ll. 122-123; MOEI, Vol. 8, Ch. 2, pp. 162-164, 177-178, 204-205, 225-231, 255-258, 408-410, 418- 421, 433-437.

Japan was a pure debtor, who tried to cope with its own financial problems. In these circumstances, Japan oriented itself primarily for the credits that were opened for the Russian Government in London, Paris and New York. However, by autumn of 1915 Japan's financial position in the world market had strengthened enough, and being afraid of the pounds sterling's rate fall, and trying to support Japan's national currency, the government decided to accumulate money in Japan's banks. As mentioned above, at the beginning of the War, Japanese economic circles strived to get money abroad in foreign currency, but now they had changed their strategy and decided to promote yen payments in Russo-Japanese financial relations. By the middle of September 1915, the Japanese government prepared – together with the five-year arms supply plan – the first draft of credit agreement with Russia, and one of the conditions was shipping of Russian gold to Japan. Russia could not agree to this condition, but eventually Japan managed to procure large sums of the Russian gold.⁵²

On October 19, the Japanese government made an official announcement about its joining to the British-Franco-Russian London declaration concerning separate peace treaty question, signed on September 5, 1914. That was a meaningful political step to the strengthening of strategic relations with the Entente's countries, and a sort of preparation to the future peace conference. Importantly, the participation of Japan in the European War mainly took a form of the military support of Russia as Japan's nearest neighbour and 'the weak link' of the coalition. In other words, Japan supported Russia in order to exaggerate its contribution to the Allies' war efforts. Naturally, Japanese nationalists tried to use European Allies' need for Japan's military support of Russia in order to open the way to a more independent political course in world affairs. At the same time, Yamagata's group still strived to realize the plan of complete normalization of relations with Russia, in order to escape international isolation and to prevent German-Japanese tensions in post-war time. In other words, they considered the joining to the London declaration as a prologue to the Russo-Japanese Alliance, which should give to Japan new international guarantees. The Japanese military representative at Russian Army's Headquarters, General Nakajima, had managed to trigger the mechanism of 'the Court Diplomacy' in the bilateral relations.

As a rule, after the inglorious war of 1904-1905 the Russian diplomacy did not

52 NGB, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, pp. 1084-1088; NGS, file 5.1.5.17-7, vol. 2, pp. 662-664, 747-748, 752-758, 812, 831, 875, 1022-1026; NIDS, file T3-6.39, pp. 235-236; MOEI, vol. 8, ch. 2, pp. 469-470; AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 82, ll. 170, 176-177, 198, 200; Sidorov, *Finansovoe polozenie Rossii*, pp. 397, 399.

seem eager for direct rapprochement with Japan and tried to enhance these relations through London. However, the precise fulfilment of the armaments supply orders by the Japanese government and companies, in concert with the disruption of the same obligations by European and American suppliers, led to the relative revision of the Russian strategic and diplomatic course by autumn of 1915. Japan's joining to the London Declaration resulted in a kind of thaw in Russo-Japanese relations. By the way, at the end of 1915, Great Britain had agreed to hand over to Russia all Arisaka rifles that it had (a bit less than 130,000 with 68 million of cartridges), 37 million non-charged cartridges for the Japanese rifles, ordered from the Japanese Arsenals in spring of 1915, and even had agreed to supply Russia in the nearest future with 45 million cartridges per month. In these circumstances, Russia's military Headquarters decided to concentrate all Japanese rifles on the Northern Front and to organise supplying them with cartridges.⁵³

At the middle of December, the Russian Emperor decided to dispatch to Japan with a special mission his uncle once removed, Grand Duke George Mikhailovich (1863–1919). This decision was a consequence of the mere talk between General Nakajima and the Tsar's ordinary surgeon S. P. Fyodorov (1869–1936), when Japanese representative said that “the dispatch of some Grand Duke to Japan could lead to the extension of Japanese arms supply.” A formal goal of the mission was to transmit to the Japanese Emperor Coronation congratulations and gratitude for the Japanese military cooperation. The Grand Duke brought with him a Special Memorandum concerning necessary arms orders. In this Memorandum the following arms and weapons (“the means of national defense”) were enlisted: 1) 45 million of rifles cartridges per month, 2) 400,000 rifles of new model with at the minimum 300 cartridges per rifle, 3) 5,000 machine-guns, 4) 6-inch (15-cm) speedy artillery guns and 8-9-inch (20-24-cm) artillery guns for supplying of 36 artillery squadrons, forty-eight 11-12-inch heavy guns, 5) 500 or 550 Arisaka field guns of 1907 model, 6) 120 mountain guns, 7) Five or six million puds (pud is a Russian unit of weight, equal to 16.38 kilogram) of barbed wire. The content of the Memorandum shows that the cartridge and the rifles question were the most important ones for Russia at this moment. The supply of Russian Army with artillery guns was the question of the

53 Fyodorov, *Oruzheinoe delo*, pp. 19, 21, 26, 51, 61-63, 72, 74; Manikovskiy, *Boevoe snabzhenie russkoi armii v mirovuyu voynu*, pp. 204-205, 213, 291-292; Barsukov, *Artilleriya Russkoi armii (1900–1917)*, vol. 1, p. 359; *Ibid.*, vol. 2, pp. 278, 286-287, 293, 299-300; Zalyubovskii, *Snabzhenie Russkoi Armii v Velikuyu voynu*, pp. 105-107; A. L. Sidorov, *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Rossii v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny* (Moscow, 1973), pp. 297-309.

second importance.⁵⁴

On December 25 the mission took the way through Siberia, Manchuria and Korea to Japan. Japanese elite (Yamagata's group) understood the great political meaning of this visit and tried to do the best for the reception the Grand Duke. The Japanese suite of the Grand Duke was headed by the President of Russo-Japanese Association Prince Kan'in Kotohito (1865–1945) and Governor-General of Korea Terauchi Masatake (1852–1919). Japanese representatives were specially sent to Changchun, Mukden and Antung for the meeting of the Grand Duke. Moreover, the two battleships *Kashima* and *Shikishima* were sent to Pusan, in order to take His Highness to Kobe. On January 12, 1916, the Grand Duke and his companions arrived to their final destination, Tokyo.⁵⁵

Interestingly, on January 8, two other battleships (the *Tokiwa* and the *Chitose*) entered into Maizuru port. They arrived from Vladivostok and were loaded with the Russian gold bullion worth 100 million roubles. Onboard the *Chitose* there were clerks of the Russian State Bank, who were charged to oversee the transportation of the 1,247 gold bars, packed in 232 boxes, with a value equal to 20 million roubles, to Japan. The gold was sold to Japan by the Government of Great Britain as 'an award' for the transportation of the Russian gold bullion from Vladivostok to Vancouver.⁵⁶

Emperor Nikolai II hoped that the Grand Duke's Japanese Mission would result in some progress in arms supply question, but the formal negotiations, held in Tokyo during this visit, were carried upon the draft of the Russo-Japanese alliance, prepared by Russia. The task, settled before Kozakov, was to propose to Japan a conclusion of the new Russo-Japanese political agreement, in order to make Japan promise support as an ally to Russia in the struggle against Germany. That is, it was necessary for Russia to involve Japan in the Allies camp. It was considered as a further development of the relations, delineated by the joining of Japan to the London Declaration. Russian Foreign Minister Sazonov suggested that the conclusion of such an alliance treaty would contribute to the creation of new more cooperative relations between countries. According to the Russian draft of the treaty, Japan should supply Russia with weapons

54 GARF, f. 676, op. 1, d. 362, l. 11; *Taishō shoki Yamagata Aritomo danwa hikki (The records of conversations with Yamagata Aritomo at Early Taisho period)* (Tokyo, 1981), pp. 87-88.

55 Baryshev, *Nichiro dōmei no jidai*, pp. 165, 171; Baryshev, "Iaponskaia missiia velikogo kniazia Georgiia Mikhailovicha," pp. 59-61.

56 Saitō Seiji, "Nihon kaigun ni yoru roshia kinkai no yusō, 1916-1917 nen (The Transportation of the Russia's Specie Gold by Japanese Navy, 1916-1917)", pp. 158-164; NIDS, file T.3.113-570, pp. 486, 492-493, 504, 536, 564-565, 645.

within its capabilities, and Russia should hand over to Japan as 'a gesture of the good will' the southern part of the CER (approximately, 82 kilometers), located in the Japanese sphere of interest in Manchuria. It was a compensation that Russia was ready to pay for the more intensive arms supply.⁵⁷

Certainly, the Japanese government and its economic circles were keenly interested in obtaining the southern part of the CER, but they did not intend to supply Russia, a potential enemy, with its mobilizational weapons. The course of the Japanese War Ministry was defined clearly through the instructions of the newly appointed Deputy-Chief of the General Staff, Lieutenant-General Tanaka Giichi (1864–1929), which were sent at the beginning of November 1915 to the Japanese military agents abroad.

The influence of the European War has been spreading constantly and will gradually penetrate into the East. Naturally, at this time, the Allied Powers will strive by any means to involve Japan in the conflict and/or will demand the provision of our weapons from the war stocks. However, the participation of the Empire [Japan – E. B.] in the mutual military operations, or the supplying [of the Allies] with our war weapons, might darken the international future of the Empire and reduce her power. That is why [in future] the Empire, as previously, will try to stand beyond the conflict to accumulate her military powers, will observe the course of events deliberately in order to grasp all essential strategic opportunities, and will render indirect assistance to the friendly nations as far as her national spare capacities allow [*kokka yoryoku no oyobu kagiri*].⁵⁸

In other words, the Japan's military circles were not going to supply Russia with arms from their war stocks, and it was a principal strategy of the Japanese Government. That is why the Grand Duke's mission did not result in any meaningful breakthrough in the arms supply question. Everything that the mission managed to do was to get consent of the Japanese War Ministry to transfer 100 mountain guns and 20 million rifle cartridges, and to produce additionally 2 million 3-inch shells for the Russian Army. However, it should be mentioned that all these offers had been generally prepared already by the end of 1915, before the Grand Duke's visit to Japan.⁵⁹ During the Grand Duke's visit, Japan's bank syndicate had agreed to acquire the Russian government's bonds of 50

57 NGB, 1916, vol. 1, pp. 107-108; MOEI, vol. 10, pp. 259-260; Baryshev, *Nichiro dōmei no jidai*, pp. 161-164, 167-171, 177.

58 NGB, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, pp. 1100-1101.

59 GARF, f. 601 (the Emperor Nikolai II), op. 1, d. 796, ll. 1-9; Baryshev, "Iaponskaia missiia velikogo kniazia Georgiia Mikhailovicha," 71; NIDS, file T3-6.39, pp. 280-282.

million yen value, but that was actually influenced by the above-mentioned shipping of the 20 million gold roubles to Japan. Interestingly, 15 million yen from this 50 million credit was to be used for payment as the special operation concerning the casting of Russian silver coins (their total nominal value was 21.5 million roubles) at the Osaka Mint. In short, as a result of the Russo-Japanese credit operation, realized formally on February 7, Russia received only 35 million yen that could be used for payments on the arms orders in Japan.⁶⁰ The Grand Duke's Mission paved the way to bilateral diplomatic negotiations concerning the conclusion the Russo-Japanese Alliance Treaty, which started at the end of February at Petrograd.

Russo-Japanese Diplomatic Rapprochement and the Growing Political Dissension (February – June 1916)

At the beginning of the War, the central role in arms supply movement in Japan was played by *Taihei Kumiai* and, especially, its leading member Mitsui Company. However, in the late summer of 1915, when the situation in the Russian Front had worsened greatly, Mitsui began to show some reluctance to engage in the large-scale bargains with the Russian government. In this situation, the leading role in supplying Russia with arms and ammunition was taken by the Okura Company, which was ready to undergo some risky operations with Russia. The Russian Government valued the trade activities of Okura and strived to support them, as much as possible, to get some extra weapons from Japan. As a matter of fact, Okura was a leading force in the movement for the acquiring the Russian bonds as a payment for the arms and ammunitions orders. Between the end of 1915 and May of 1916, Okura concluded some large-scale contracts with GIU concerning soldier equipment such as boots (750,000 pairs), cloth (2.7 million arshins), soldier underwear (200,000 sets) and the leather cartridge-bags (2 million) for the total sum of over 20 million yen. All these contracts were based on the “deferred terms of payment”, according to which Russia was to pay with one-year bonds issued on the same conditions as those of the Russo-Japanese agreement from February 7. The Russian Government was keenly interested in Okura's support in the Japanese market, and even decided to give to the company special commission (about 134,240 yen), allowing Okura to resell silver, belonging to the Japanese Government (according to the contract, 194.891 tons; eventually 177.937 tons) to Russia, despite of the fact that it could

60 *MOEI*, vol. 10 (Moscow, 1938), pp. 145, 236-238, 302; Sidorov, *Finansovoe polozhenie Rossii*, p. 400.

be purchased directly.⁶¹

Another active player in the arms supply business was the Kuhara Mining Company, which also was ready to undertake some risky operations with the Russian government. In the middle of December 1915, industrialist Kuhara Fusanosuke (1869–1965) proposed to Russia to produce 600,000 rifles with immediate provision of 100,000 rifles. This was a newly elaborated plan concerning the mobilization of private Japanese industry, and the War Ministry of Japan was directly involved in these schemes. As Kuhara said, he planned to obtain from the War Ministry 100,000 rifles instead of 10 million yen investments that the Ministry should make for the building of the new Arsenal. However, the Russian Government refused this idea, because of a shortage of money and because the plan was very speculative and suspicious (its total sum was equal to 100 million yen, and the prices were two or three times more expensive than the average prices at the beginning of the War).⁶² This plan was never realised, but it demonstrated the ways in which the Russo-Japanese cooperation in the arms supply question could be extended. Since the autumn of 1915, the Kuhara Company not only actively engaged in supplying Russia with copper, but also supported the trade operation concerning the production of 4 million time-fuses, which were ordered by GAU in Japan through Vladivostok's businessman J. I. Briner (1849–1920).⁶³ As a result, during the Great War the Kuhara Company developed and expanded its world markets greatly.

Furthermore, by the spring of 1916, the Russian military authorities managed to establish close relations with the Naval Ministry of Japan. From September 1915 the Ministry actively used its Arsenals for the production of arms for Russia. By May 1916, the total sum of such orders (400,000 22 second time-fuses, 10,500 shells for heavy naval artillery guns, 120 heavy guns of 4.2-inch calibre with 120,000 shells, 100 cannons of different calibre with shells) reached to 12 million yen. Some of these were made to

61 Okura Archives, file 23.2-102, Robun keiyakusho genpon (The originals of the Contracts in Russian); file 23.2-35, Ginkai baibai keiyakusho (The Contract, relating to the purchasing of silver); file 23.3-9-2, Dai-9-ki kessan uchiwake-hyo (The Balance Sheets for the 9th period); file 23.3-10-2, Dai-10-ki kessan uchiwake-hyo (The Balance Sheets for the 9th period); file 23.2-89, Kaigun keiyaku utsushi: Taisho 5 nen (The copies of the Naval Ministry's contracts, 1916); Taketomi Tokitoshi, Ōkuma naikaku zaisei kaisōroku (Recollections about the Financial Policy of the Okuma Cabinet), pp. 37-38.

62 AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 82, ll. 254, 268, 290-291, 293, 325; *MOEI*, vol. 10, p. 72 (ref. 1), p. 73 (ref. 1).

63 Baryshev, "The Russo-Japanese "Arms Alliance" and the Bilateral Commercial Relations," pp. 202-215 (in Japanese).

meet the GAU's needs. Above all, in March 1916 the Naval Ministry agreed to make a large-scale bargain with the Russian Government and handed over to Russia three former Russian warships the *Poltava* (*Tango*), the *Peresvet* (*Sagami*) and the *Varyag* (*Soya*), captured during the Russo-Japanese War. More importantly, the Naval Ministry had agreed to the payment for this operation with the Russian Government's bonds (15.5 million yen). The warships had been handed over to the Russian Fleet solemnly in Vladivostok on April 4.⁶⁴

As for the orders of the Russian War Ministry, made through the syndicate *Taihei Kumiai* between December 1915 and May 1916, Russia purchased from Japan 6,000 Arisaka rifles and 500 carbines of 1897 model, 120 Arisaka field guns with 150,000 shells, ordered additionally 30,000 Arisaka rifles of new model with 8.1 million cartridges, 2 million of 3-inch shells, 100 Arisaka mountain guns and 5 howitzers of 10.5-cm calibre with 2,000 shells. Supposedly, the total sum of these orders reached approximately 65 million yen, however about 85 percent of the sum accounted for the deal for the 3-inch shells. It is known that *Taihei Kumiai* had bought all of these weapons for 56.62 million yen, but charged Russia 56.86 million yen for just the 3-inch shells.⁶⁵

As noted above, Prince Yamagata, who considered the conclusion of Russo-Japanese Alliance a necessary element for enhancing Japan's positions in China and Manchuria, skilfully used the need of the Russian Army in Japan's military support and managed to pave a way to the bilateral diplomatic negotiations that began in the end of February, 1916. Undoubtedly, for Russia the Alliance had significance primarily in the sense of enhancing Japanese military support during the War. The Russian Government was not going to support Japanese expansion in the Far East, and the involving of Japan into the active struggle against Germany should weaken Japan's position in Manchuria. During the Grand Duke's Japanese visit, Kozakov made a proposal to the Japanese diplomatists to hand over the southern part of the CER, located in the Japanese sphere of interest, if Japan would supply Russia with some quantity of rifles. In the middle of February, Japan's military authorities hinted to Ambassador Malevsky that Japan was ready to supply Russia with about 100,000 or 150,000 rifles in that case. In the instructions from Minister Ishii to Ambassador Motono, decoded in the Russian Foreign Ministry, it was stipulated that the Japanese Government would hand over to Russia 120,000 rifles and

64 NIDS, file T.3-106.563, pp. 131-286, 296-409, 422-461; R. M. Mel'nikov, *Kreiser "Varyag"* (Leningrad, 1983), pp. 228-235; Baryshev, *Nichiro dōmei no jidai, 1914-1917*, pp. 212-213.

65 AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 82, l. 283; AVPRI, f. 134 (Arkhiv "Voina"), op. 473, d. 152, ll. 24 ob., 26-27 ob.; NIDS, file T3-6.39, pp. 613-617-2.

60 million cartridges, if the discussed railway question could be solved.⁶⁶ However, at this time, such ‘interchange of the mutual interests’, which resembled a mere commercial bargain, already had no great attraction for Russia. The value of the rifles and cartridges, calculated even by speculative prices, was worth a maximum of about 20 million yen. The main problem the Russian Government met with was one of finance, and during these diplomatic talks Russia made an attempt to solve this question again.

On February 21, the British Government officially informed the Russian Government that it had decided to extend ‘the Japanese credit’ from 6 to 9 million pounds sterling. However, this sum could not cover all Russian orders in Japan, which were calculated at the beginning of February to be 289 million yen (the former orders, payment by which was partially finished, were valued approximately in 120 million yen, and new supposed orders needed approximately 169 million yen).⁶⁷ On March 18, at the meeting of the Ministers’ Council, the special resolution of the Russian government, concerning the credit question, was adopted. The resolution, named “About providing with proper credits [Russian] foreign orders” (“*Ob obespechenii sootvetstvuyushchimi kreditami proizvodimykh za granitsej zagotovlenii*”), indicated clearly that there was a necessity “to pay special attention to the question of the placement of our foreign orders in Japan”:

... Japanese orders differ from any other purchasing that we do on the foreign markets. Putting aside their relative – in comparison with the prices, overrated beyond measure on the American and, especially, on British markets – cheapness, orders given to the Japanese factories are not only fulfilled on time, but in some cases are finished in advance. After all, concerning the quality the Japanese manufactures there is no room for improvement, and in this respect too they differ favourably from many products purchased on the other foreign markets. Finally, an especially valuable distinctive feature of the Japanese orders is the speediness and convenience of their delivery, because Japan has a lot of small vessels and their freights are very cheap.⁶⁸

The Ministers’ Council decided to give special instructions to the Minister of Finance “to enter in proper negotiations with the British and Japanese Governments about the further provision, with appropriate credits, of Russian orders in foreign markets.” The document, signed by the Ministers, was approved by the Emperor on April 4.⁶⁹

66 MOEI, vol. 10, pp. 205-207, 223, 567-570; AVPRI, f. 134, op. 473, d. 152, l. 31.

67 MOEI, vol. 10, pp. 118, 121-123, 144-147, 236-238.

68 Sidorov, *Finansovoe polozhenie Rossii*, pp. 539.

69 Sidorov, *Finansovoe polozhenie Rossii*, pp. 540-541.

At the beginning of April, Finance Minister Bark met with Motono, in order to inform him officially that the Russian Government needed large Japanese credits up to 315 million yen, in full accordance with “The List of the Proposed New Orders in Japan” (“*Vedomost' predpolozhennykh novykh zakazov v Yaponii*”), prepared at the Russian War Ministry.⁷⁰ On April 7, Foreign Minister Sazonov informed Malevsky about this initiative of the Russian Government and asked Ambassador to give instructions to Chancellor M. S. Shchekin (1871–1920) to discuss this question with the Japanese Finance Minister. In his telegram Sazonov also stressed the importance of the Japanese market for Russia:

Mobilization of all Russian industry could not satisfy in adequate degree our needs, caused by the present war. As a result of such situation and a lack of some production materials in Russia, we were forced to apply to the foreign markets in order to get some commodities. In this relation the support of Japan was especially valuable for us, because it was characterised with the irreproachable fulfilment of our orders. Thanks to Japan's geographical position, the import from Japan to Russia through Vladivostok is not accompanied with different difficulties and delays, which we have importing from other countries.⁷¹

By that time, Russia had already passed through the peak of her misfortunes, realized the crucial role that she played in the Great War, and attempted to use the Allies' dependence on the Russian Army's combat power. The Russian Government strived to use in the arms supply question the interests of the foreign industrial and financial circles, which earned great profits from the Russian war orders. In Petrograd it was known that the Japanese industrialists and the War Ministry of Japan were keenly interested both in new Russian orders and in the acquisition of the southern part of the CER.⁷² In this sense, the relative stabilization at the Russian Front (that was achieved primarily thanks to the mobilization of the Russian industry) contributed in some degree to the enhancing of the Russian diplomatic course. Russia was not going to give to Japan new privileges and make new concessions (except those, promised during the diplomatic negotiations in spring of 1916, concerning fishery, custom tariffs, and the CIR), and hoped that Japan, as a new Ally, would extend its military support towards Russia. However, Japan was interested in the 'visible' fruits of the military cooperation and its position on

70 NGS, file 5.1.5.17-7, vol. 3, pp. 1495-1497, 1519-1529.

71 AVPRI, f. 134, op. 473, d. 152, l. 18.

72 AVPRI, f. 134, op. 473, d. 152, l. 8, 8 ob., 16.

the negotiations was very rigid.⁷³

By June 1916, the Russian diplomatic and military representatives at Tokyo had been changed. Malevsky was withdrawn, and the former Minister in China, V. N. Krupenskii (1868–1945), arrived in Japan as the new Ambassador. Furthermore, in February 1916, General Samoilov died onboard a steamship on the way to Shanghai; since September 1915 he was ill with consumption, and his duties were fulfilled by Colonel N. M. Morel (1869–1920). The latter was replaced by Colonel V. A. Yakhontov (1881–1978) in January 1917. The arrival to Tokyo by the beginning of June, 1916, of the commercial agent, K. K. Miller (1874–1943), meant that the financial issues of bilateral relations had become of paramount importance.

Conclusion: The Russo-Japanese ‘Arms Alliance’ and the fruits of bilateral military cooperation

As previously stated, General Hermonius purchased in Japan different weapons on the total sum of 38 million yen; the contracts with the syndicate *Taihei Kumiai* achieved 26.6 million yen. After his return to Russia, in spring of 1915, thanks to Colonel Podtyagin, Captain Voskresensky and General Samoilov, the Russian Government ordered from Japan additional arms worth up to 9 million yen. It was the first wave of the Japanese orders, the cost of which reached approximately to 50 million yen. At the same time, GIU concluded many large-scale contracts, both with the private companies and the War Ministry of Japan, valued up to 40 million yen. Some small contracts were concluded by GVTU, GVSU and other departments of the Russian Government. The Russian Government’s purchasing activities at this period were rather spontaneous, but relatively successful, because the political and economical circles of Japan were keenly interested in selling of weapons and ammunition to Russia. Russia managed to get large quantities of old-pattern weapons that were reserved at the stocks of the War Ministry of Japan.

The second wave of Japanese orders occurred between July and October of 1915. The peculiar feature of this period was in fact that the extra-resources of the War Ministry of Japan had already been used, and Russia was forced to order from Japanese arsenals the production of different arms and munitions. In order to fulfil these orders, special organization of production, mobilization of resources, and a relatively long time frame

73 AVPRI, f. 134, op. 473, d. 152, l. 31.

were needed. The sum of the GAU's arms orders, given at this time through syndicate *Taihei Kumiai*, reached approximately 65 million yen. Moreover, this period coincided with the mobilization of the Russian industry, and GAU was forced to purchase different metals in Japan up to 40-50 million yen. Interestingly, the orders given by GIU to the private companies and the War Ministry of Japan at the beginning of the War met with complex problems, and the inspection of cloth and boots continued until the end of 1915. Another characteristic feature of this period was the cooperative initiatives of the Naval Ministry of Japan to acquire the Russian orders (worth about 12 million yen). It should be also noted that Mitsui Bussan, the central member of *Taihei Kumiai*, seemed to have lost interest in arms supply, and the leading role in the business transited to the Okura, Takata and Kuhara companies.

The third wave of purchasing activities of the Russian Government in Japan took place during the period between November 1915 and May 1916. At this time GAU managed to order through *Taihei Kumiai* arms and munitions valued at 65 million yen. However, the main portion of these orders was a contract concerning the production of 2 million 3-inch shells. The Russian Government actively engaged in the purchasing activities in Japan, but these efforts met with a lack of money. Partly, it was a consequence of the Russo-British financial agreement from September 30, 1915. The issue of the Russian bonds (on the total sum of about 50 million yen) in the Japanese market was one of the successes the Russian Government achieved in this sphere. However, this relative success was accompanied with the shipping of the Russian gold both to America and Japan (by March 1917, about 80 million of gold roubles, bought by the Japanese Government from the Bank of England, were shipped to Japan). The Okura Company and the Naval Ministry of Japan also agreed to take the Russian bonds up to the total sum of 35 million yen. This was during the period of the Japanese visit by Grand Duke George Mikhailovich, which opened a way to the Russo-Japanese diplomatic negotiations.

The last wave in arms purchasing in Japan was the weakest one, and it was extended in time greatly from June 1916 until the October Revolution. The total sum of orders, placed through *Taihei Kumiai* in this period, was equal to 37.5 million yen. Russian purchasing in Japan was restricted mostly by the loan question, in which Japan did not wish to change its rigid position. At the same time, the Japanese Government strived to guarantee its rights on the southern part of the CER, but the arms question in Russia lost its importance and this bargain had no special attraction for the Russian

Government. Russia reasonably stressed that Japan as an ally should give Russia some significant military support, including loans, but Japan waited for the cession of the CER. As a result, negotiations about the loans and the CIR continued until the February Revolution, but did not succeed.⁷⁴ Actually, it was a kind of stalemate in Russo-Japanese relations during the First World War, because both Japan and Russia had almost decided their problems and had to prepare for the new configuration of world politics after the Great War. By July 1916, Russia had almost coped with the lack of weapons, and 'the Brusilov offensive' of summer 1916 demonstrated it well. In other words, the zenith of the Russo-Japanese Rapprochement – the bilateral secret Alliance Treaty from July 3, 1916 – meant also that the active partnership of Russia and Japan in the Great War was over. As for the arms supply question in bilateral relations after the February Revolution, it was influenced greatly with the Russo-American Rapprochement and, as a consequence, some kind of estrangement between Russia and Japan.

It should be specially noted that the Japanese military support was actively made, when the Russian Army was in the most difficult situation, that is, in summer 1915. At the same time, Japan's arms supplying activities coincided generally with the period of the active participation of Japan in the Great War. At the beginning of the War, Japan was quite weak among the world powers, which is why it was forced to balance itself between nations. Russia, Japan's neighbour in the Far East, became for Japan one of its Allied countries, and Japan attempted to normalise relations with its former enemy and to improve its position in the world politics. Russia was also weak in the Far East, and that created some conditions for the Russo-Japanese rapprochement in the East. However, together with the strengthening of Japan in the world economy and politics, its arms supply efforts became less and less enthusiastic. Japan needed a Russia that could support it in Manchurian and Chinese affairs, but the Russian Government was not going to take active part in these 'adventures'.

It goes without saying that Japanese companies, especially *Taihei Kumiai*, pursued clearly egoistic aims in their business. However, they were forced to act under the control of Japanese government, which to a significant degree deterred their selfish aspirations and excluded chances for unlimited speculation. The Japanese government was interested in Russia's political support of its Far Eastern policies, and, at the same time, tried to turn Russian foreign policy from the Far East toward Europe. Obviously, the quick and full victory of the Russian army did not seem to be a merit in the eyes of

74 AVPRI, f. 134, op. 473, d. 152, ll. 62-63.

Japanese politicians, who considered, probably, that the dispatch of Russian troops from the Far East, and the transmission of all Russian weapons from there to the Eastern Front, were useful for them. Despite the above-mentioned limitations, at the beginning of the 'European War', the Japanese government, under the pressure of the 'military party' and Japan's financial circles, had chosen a tactical course of supporting Russia with arms and munitions. The Russian Government highly evaluated Japan's military support and strived to expand the framework of 'the Arms Alliance' as much as possible. This cooperative attitude of Russia appeared clearly in the beginning of 1916, during the visit of Great Duke Georgii Mikhailovich to Japan, and in the bilateral diplomatic negotiations that paved a way to the secret Russo-Japanese alliance treaty of July 3, 1916.

Since the summer of 1916, Japan was involved actively in the economic struggle for the Russian market, but the rigid position of the Japanese government both in the loan question and the CIR question (that ignored completely the principle of the 'mutual concessions' in the bilateral relations) could not contribute to the development of 'the Russo-Japanese understanding'. By that time, the arms supply for Russia transformed in a sort of inertial movement, which had to be stopped in the nearest future. The strategic needs of both countries – Japan and Russia – were near to the saturation point. At the same time, by the end of 1916, 'the first seats in the Russian market-theatre had been already occupied' by American and British businessmen.⁷⁵ That is, in the economic struggle for the Russian market Japan was left behind by the Allies. That situation was a prologue to the Revolution and the Siberian Intervention, when Japan attempted to secure its political and economic rights in the Russian Far East with the use of military force.

* * *

Until recently in both Russia and Japan the period of the First World War seemed to have been a sort of 'unknown history'. In the Soviet Union, the war was described as 'imperialistic' and was usually treated as a background for the Socialist Revolution. For decades the old imperial regime had been used as an object for ideological critic, and all subjects of its political, economic and social life had been pictured in the form of caricature. In this sense, the growing interest in the First World War and the last days of Imperial Russia that can be seen nowadays among Russian historians seems to be very promising.

In Japan the period of the first world conflict was interwoven into national history

75 See: AVPRI, f. 134, op. 473, d. 152, l. 46; NGS, file 5.1.5.17-7, vol. 4, pp. 1779-1785.

as a part of 'Taisho democracy', described primarily in terms of socio-political history. However, international and military aspects of this epoch and the features of Japan's imperial order have not been clarified adequately. Roughly speaking, this period in Japanese history has been pictured as a 'brilliant transitive era' between the 'glorious' Russo-Japanese war and the 'vicious' militarism of 1930s. In this sense, the analysis of bilateral military relations during the First World War could fill in some blank spots in world history (relating mostly to the background of the Russian Revolution, the rise of Japanese militarism and the mechanics of imperialism as itself) and deepens our understanding of the state system of both countries.

In the case of Russia, this investigation helps us, first of all, to clarify some peculiar features of the political system of the Empire and, especially, the place of the Emperor in this system. At the very least, the study shows that Russia as a monarchy had a special attitude to Imperial Japan, which was the last country, to which Romanovs' 'Court Diplomacy' had been applied. Importantly, not only geopolitical, but also civilizational factors can be found in the process of Russo-Japanese rapprochement during the First World War.⁷⁶ Second, the investigation indirectly proves the fact that the Russian imperial system as a whole successfully coped with a lack of arms and ammunitions during the war. More concretely, the study contributes to the more accurate evaluation of GAU's activities abroad, and demonstrates a rather successful example of the organization of arms supplies in Japan. That is, criticism of the principal inefficiency of the Russian Imperial Government's policies, which can be seen in some studies even in recent years, does not apply here.⁷⁷ Third, the study demonstrates that Japan's military support had a great importance for imperial Russia during the most critical period of the war. This aspect of bilateral relations has been traditionally underestimated in Soviet historiography.⁷⁸

In the case of Japan, the history of its military cooperation with Russia during the First World War constitutes a splendid background for analysis of the Japanese political and economic system of that time. In the first place, it helps us to trace the

76 See about it in: Baryshev, *Nichiro dōmei no jidai, 1914-1917*, Ch. 12.

77 See for example: Dale C. Dielage, *Russian Supply Efforts in America During the First World War* (Jefferson, North Carolina, and London: MaFarland & Company, 2002).

78 Grigortsevich, *Dalnevostochnaia politika imperialisticheskikh derzhav*, pp. 515-520; Tekut'eva E. T., "Russko-yaponskie otnosheniya v period Pervoi mirovoi voiny (1915-1916 gg.)," *Uchenye zapiski Moskovskogo gosudarstvennogo pedagogicheskogo institute imeni V. I. Lenina*, Vol. CIX, 1957, pp. 134-135.

autonomous diplomacy of the 'military party' during 'the European War' and to make clear its connections with the interests of the syndicate *Taihei Kumiai*. In fact, it was Japan's 'military party', who actively engaged in the supplying of Russia with arms and munitions from 1914 to 1917, and managed to launch talks about the conclusion of the new political convention. That is, the study demonstrates the principal truth of the thesis – often seen in Soviet historiography – that the Russo-Japanese Alliance of 1916 was induced by the Japanese side.⁷⁹ Actually, the Russian Government was rather reluctant to engage in direct diplomatic rapprochement with Japan, but the Emperor attempted to grasp this opportunity in order to extend arms supplies from Japan. At the same time, it should be noted that the alliance of 1916 was not 'imposed' by Japan on Russia by military pressure, but was skilfully promoted in the atmosphere of the 'mutual rapprochement'.

In the second place, for Japan the arms supply business was very valuable both economically and politically. Thanks to the arms trade, the Japanese army obtained great sums of money, which were immediately used for its modernization. In addition, Japanese economic circles improved their financial situation, expanded greatly their industrial production and acquired new international markets. In this sense, there is a need to state that the theses that Japan's policy of military support towards Imperial Russia was 'erroneous', and these arms supplies were 'unprofitable'⁸⁰ is doubtlessly wrong. Moreover, production of Russian-model weapons at Japanese state and private factories is supposed to have resulted in transfer of Russian military technologies and know-how to Japan.

As mentioned above, the problems of Russo-Japanese diplomatic rapprochement during the First World War and the role of the Elder Statesmen in this process were analysed in the studies of Matsumoto Tadao, Peter Berton, Yoshimura Michio and some other scholars. However, for different reasons, these historians could not investigate carefully the military aspect of bilateral relations. In this sense, the present investigation contributes to clarification and reexamination of some arguments of the above-mentioned

79 See: Grigortsevich, *Dalnevostochnaia politika imperialisticheskikh derzhav*, pp. 520-526; Kutakov L. N., *Portsmutskii mirnyi dogovor (Iz istorii otnoshenii Yaponii s Rossiei i SSSR. 1905-1945)*, Moscow, 1961, pp. 130-135. Compare with: Berton P. A., *The Secret Russo-Japanese Alliance of 1916*, pp. 83-91.

80 See for example: Taketomi Tokitoshi, *Ôkuma naikaku zaisei kaisôroku* (Recollections about the Financial Policy of the Okuma Cabinet), pp. 36-50; Akutagawa Tetsushi, "Buki yushutsu no keifu," June 1987, Vol. 23 (No. 1), pp. 44-48.

studies. This episode of Russo-Japanese military cooperation may be treated as a miniature of international and internal imperial order of that time, which highlights the mechanics of world politics and international strategies of Russia and Japan.

Keywords the First World War, Russo-Japanese relations, arms supply, GAU, *genro*, *Taihei Kumiai*, loan question, the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER)

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