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Author(s): Raymond A. Esthus

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# *Nicholas II and the Russo-Japanese War*

By RAYMOND A. ESTHUS

Nicholas II is one of the most elusive individuals in Russian history. One reason for this, as Theodore H. Von Laue has noted, is that the historical sources that relate directly to Nicholas are very limited.<sup>1</sup> Another and even more important reason is that Nicholas' character is puzzling. Those who knew him believed he was easily understood; yet historical records show that the contemporary characterizations of the last Tsar are inadequate. An investigation of the role of Nicholas in the Russo-Japanese War points up this problem, for what emerges is a complex, enigmatic personality.

The contemporary assessments of Nicholas are remarkably uniform. He was described as shy, charming, gentle in disposition, fearful of controversy, indecisive, indulgent to his relatives, and deeply devoted to his family. Aleksandr Mosolov, who headed his Court Chancellery for sixteen years, wrote that Nicholas, though intelligent and well-educated, never adopted a definite, energetic attitude and loathed making a decision in the presence of others.<sup>2</sup> Sergei Witte, who served Nicholas and his father for eleven years as Minister of Finance, commented that the Tsar was a well-intentioned child, but his actions were entirely dependent upon the character of his counselors, most of whom were bad.<sup>3</sup> This widely held belief that Nicholas was weak led to much speculation about what persons exerted influence over him. Many believed that he was swayed by the Grand Dukes and by the Tsarina, Aleksandra Fedorovna. The influence of Aleksandra was thought to have been especially strong after the birth of their son Aleksei in 1904 and the subsequent tragic discovery that he suffered from hemophilia.

The problem with these characterizations of Nicholas and the speculations about the influence of others is that they ignore a significant aspect of his character. No doubt there were elements of truth in the descriptions of Nicholas as weak and irresolute. But his role in the Russo-Japanese War reveals another side of his character. Witte was getting close to it when he said of Nicholas: "A soft haze of mysticism refracts everything he beholds

<sup>1</sup> Theodore H. Von Laue, *Sergei Witte and the Industrialization of Russia* (New York, 1969), p. 123. Research on this article was facilitated by a grant from the Penrose fund of the American Philosophical Society.

<sup>2</sup> A. A. Mosolov, *At the Court of the Last Tsar: Being the Memoirs of A. A. Mossolov* (London, 1935), pp. 6-10.

<sup>3</sup> Cecil Spring Rice to Gerald Balfour, 2 October 1905, Cecil Spring Rice Papers, Churchill College, Cambridge University, Cambridge, England.

and magnifies his own functions and person.”<sup>4</sup> Nicholas was convinced that he was divinely ordained to rule and that he was responsible to God and to his conscience to preserve the autocracy and to defend the dignity, honor, and worth of Russia. His commitment to the preservation of the absolutist prerogatives had been evident at the time of his coronation when he characterized proposals for political reform as “senseless dreams” and declared his resolve to maintain unflinchingly the principle of autocracy.<sup>5</sup> Almost a decade later his actions and attitudes during the Russo-Japanese War showed a similar stubborn resolve to defend the honor and worth of Russia. Indeed, during that war he was to show a doggedness and consistency that his most observant contemporaries did not fully perceive or comprehend.

The “soft haze of mysticism” that surrounded Nicholas was a significant factor at the very outset of the war. It, along with a great deal of administrative mismanagement, contributed to the outbreak of the war itself, for it caused the Tsar to misread completely the realities that he and his nation were confronting. Shortly before the Japanese attack, he assured Kaiser William that there would be no war because “he did not wish it.”<sup>6</sup> When the attack came, according to Cecil Spring Rice, First Secretary at the British Embassy, it left the Tsar “almost incredulous.”<sup>7</sup> The months that followed presented more occasions for disbelief as the Russians went from disaster to disaster. The initial Japanese attack on Port Arthur was not decisive, but the successive Russian defeats that followed on land and sea placed a growing strain on the political and economic structure of the country and engendered a sense of national humiliation.

In the face of repeated setbacks, Nicholas maintained a steadfast confidence that Russia would ultimately triumph. Throughout the first summer of the war, many Russians shared this confidence. An “informant” who was sent to Russia by the Japanese reported in July 1904 that the ruling class of Russia, though experiencing deep humiliation from the defeats, expected final victory.<sup>8</sup> Even Witte, who would emerge as the strongest proponent of peace, initially shared this expectation. In June he talked with the British Ambassador, Sir Charles Hardinge, about the terms that a victorious Russia would impose upon Japan.<sup>9</sup>

As the war news continued bad during the fall of 1904, Nicholas made an important decision concerning the future prosecution of the war. By this time the Port Arthur fleet was severely battered and Port Arthur itself was

<sup>4</sup> Emile Joseph Dillon, *The Eclipse of Russia* (New York, 1918), p. 327.

<sup>5</sup> Bernard Pares, *The Fall of the Russian Monarchy* (London, 1939), pp. 56–57.

<sup>6</sup> Sergei Iu. Witte, *Vospominania*, ed. A. L. Sidorov, 3 vols. (Moscow, 1960), 2:278.

<sup>7</sup> Spring Rice to Robert H. M. Ferguson, 2 March 1904, in Stephen Gwynn, *The Letters and Friendships of Sir Cecil Spring Rice: A Record*, 2 vols. (Boston, 1929), 1:402.

<sup>8</sup> Motono Ichirō to Komura Jutarō, 2 August 1904, Telegram Series, Reel 55, pp. 17,808–17,811, Japanese Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives (microfilm collection), Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.

<sup>9</sup> Hardinge to Foreign Secretary Lansdowne, 30 June 1904, in *British Documents on the Origins of the War, 1898–1914*, ed. G. P. Gooch and Harold Temperley, 11 vols. (London, 1926–38), 4:2–4.

under siege. No decisive change in the fortunes of war now seemed possible unless Japan's command of the sea could be broken. Nicholas decided, therefore, to send the Baltic fleet to the Pacific. It was a decision reached only after much agonizing, the Tsar changing his mind three times before finally ordering the fleet to the theater of war. Any hope Nicholas had for victory was probably based more on his belief in God than on confidence in Admiral Rozhdestvenskii and his fleet. Rozhdestvenskii apparently had little confidence in either himself or a beneficent Providence, for he confided to Grand Duke Aleksandr Mikhailovich that the fleet was going to its destruction in the Pacific.<sup>10</sup> This prediction turned out to be all too true. The only victory the fleet was destined to achieve was an encounter on the Dogger Bank on 24 October with British fishing boats, which the Russians incredibly mistook for Japanese torpedo boats.

By the time the Baltic fleet left Russia, popular support for the war was fading. A German banker, Ernest von Mendelssohn, visited Russia in October, and he reported to Chancellor Bernhard von Bülow in Berlin that only the court, the military, and government officials wanted to continue the war until victory was achieved. In all merchant and banking circles, said Mendelssohn, there was a longing for a quick conclusion of peace and this sentiment was shared by a great majority of the population. Mendelssohn apparently talked with Witte, for he reported his view that Russia could not expect a turn in the fortunes of war and should make peace as soon as possible.<sup>11</sup>

The new year brought more disasters and a growing sentiment for peace. In January 1905 Port Arthur fell to Japanese forces. In the same month Bloody Sunday laid bare the widening gap between the government and the workers in St. Petersburg.<sup>12</sup> As an atmosphere of pessimism enveloped the Russian capital, Ambassador Hardinge reported to London that even members of the government were now openly expressing interest in peace.<sup>13</sup> One of the Grand Dukes told him frankly that Russia was defeated and should make peace. The Grand Duke added, however, that rather than pay an indemnity Russia would fight until the last soldier fell.<sup>14</sup>

Nicholas remained imperturbable amidst the mounting disasters, and he gave every indication of a determination to see the war through to victory. Foreign observers in St. Petersburg were baffled by what they took to be the Tsar's indifference to the catastrophic events unfolding around him.

<sup>10</sup> Grand Duke Aleksandr Mikhailovich, *Once a Grand Duke* (New York, 1932), pp. 221–22. Rozhdestvenskii said the same to Finance Minister Vladimir Kokovtsov. See Kokovtsov, *Out of My Past: The Memoirs of Count Kokovtsov* (Stanford, CA, 1935), p. 46.

<sup>11</sup> Memorandum by Bülow, 2 November 1904, in Germany, Auswärtiges Amt, *Die Grosse Politik der Europäischen Kabinette, 1871–1914*, 40 vols. (Berlin, 1922–27), 19:2:387–88.

<sup>12</sup> Walter Sablinsky, *The Road to Bloody Sunday: Father Gapon and the St. Petersburg Massacre of 1905* (Princeton, NJ, 1976).

<sup>13</sup> Hardinge to Lansdowne, 14 February 1905, F. O. 881/8650, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>14</sup> Inouye Katsunosuke to Komura, 18 February 1905, Telegram Series, Reel 63, pp. 4,089–4,090.

Hardinge wrote to Ambassador Francis Bertie at Paris: "Everybody is clamouring for peace, but the Emperor is impervious to everything, sees nobody and spends his time playing with the baby."<sup>15</sup>

Actually Nicholas could not remain completely impervious to the growing internal unrest, for the violence was moving closer and closer to the throne. The previous summer the Minister of the Interior, V. K. von Plehve, had been killed by a revolutionary bomb, and now on 17 February an uncle of Nicholas, Grand Duke Sergei Aleksandrovich, was blown to pieces. The mounting dissension caused Nicholas to take the first hesitant step towards political change. Just two weeks after the death of Grand Duke Sergei, he promised that he would permit the election of representatives who would take part in "the preliminary discussion of legislation." Since he accompanied this with a statement on the immutability of the autocracy, it was not surprising that the plans announced six months later for a State Duma limited that body to only an advisory role.<sup>16</sup>

The Tsar's slight softening in the political arena did not signal any change in his resolve to continue the war. Grand Duke Pavel Aleksandrovich, who was living in Paris because of hismorganatic marriage, visited Nicholas at this time, and he detected no change in his attitude. On his return to Paris, the Grand Duke told French leaders that Nicholas talked with "alarming complacency" about the war. The Tsar, he said, had not the slightest doubt that Russia would win in the end.<sup>17</sup>

Witte had come to the opposite conclusion about the war, and he now sent a long, blunt letter to Nicholas urging peace. He had little reason to think the Tsar would welcome his views: he had been ousted from the Finance Ministry in 1903, and though he now held the position of Chairman of the Committee of Ministers, it was well known that he was out of favor with the Tsar. As Ambassador Hardinge observed, Witte was distasteful to Nicholas because of his rough manners, brusque speech, and overpowering presence.<sup>18</sup> In his peace appeal, which he dispatched to Nicholas on 28 February, Witte was his usual overpowering self. He stated emphatically that further war expenditures would entirely upset the financial conditions of the country, that General Kuropatkin's army could not hold its position in Manchuria, and that Admiral Rozhdestvenskii's fleet could not score a success. Witte did manage to soften these bold assertions by indicating agreement with the Tsar's dedication to the nation's honor. He said that if negotiations were opened and the Japanese terms remained unacceptable, then the Russian people would rise in defense of the Tsar and the nation's honor.<sup>19</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Hardinge to Bertie, 14 February 1905, Francis Bertie Papers, F. O. 800/176, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>16</sup> Howard D. Mehlinger and John M. Thompson, *Count Witte and the Tsarist Government in the 1905 Revolution* (Bloomington, IN, 1972), pp. 17–18.

<sup>17</sup> Maurice Paléologue, *Three Critical Years (1904–05–06)* (New York, 1957), p. 178.

<sup>18</sup> Hardinge to Lansdowne, 17 January 1905, F. O. 65/1698, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>19</sup> Dillon, *Eclipse of Russia*, pp. 294–95.

Witte believed that his letter had a significant influence on Nicholas,<sup>20</sup> but if it did, it was a delayed impact. Before any indication of change came from Tsarskoe Selo, Russia suffered still another defeat. On 10 March the greatest land battle of the war ended with the routing of Russian forces at Mukden. This time the blow to Russia's prestige was starkly visible in the capitals of the world. Even Kaiser William could not restrain his admiration for the Japanese troops. Until this time he had given full support—and much unsolicited advice—to his cousin Nicky, but now he asked Chancellor Bülow whether he should decorate General Kodama and send a message to the Mikado wishing him success! Bülow wisely advised against such actions, pointing out that Nicholas would be deeply offended.<sup>21</sup>

Even before the final outcome of the Battle of Mukden was known, Nicholas' own mother, Maria Fedorovna, sought to aid the cause of peace. The Dowager Empress was a supporter of Witte, and she fully shared his views about the war. Having failed to persuade Nicholas herself, she now attempted to enlist the aid of the French government. Through Grand Duke Pavel she asked the French Foreign Minister, Théophile Delcassé, to send a message to Nicholas urging the opening of peace negotiations. Delcassé went so far as to draft a message to the Tsar but in the end decided not to send it. French Ambassador Maurice Bompard advised from St. Petersburg that the time was not ripe. Delcassé was also reluctant to take such an initiative for fear that Russia would blame France for any unfavorable peace that resulted.<sup>22</sup> The Foreign Minister nevertheless was in full sympathy with Empress Maria; he told the Japanese Minister at Paris that a continuation of the war after the battle at Mukden appeared to him utterly useless.<sup>23</sup>

Though Delcassé's message did not go to St. Petersburg, two other important communications were shortly transmitted from Paris to the Russian capital. On 13 March French bankers wired their delegates in St. Petersburg instructing them to break off negotiations on a 600 million franc loan. This was a disaster that rivaled the defeat at Mukden, for it would be very difficult for Russia to go on with the war without the continued infusion of French money. The other message to St. Petersburg was sent by Russian Ambassador A. I. Nelidov. The Ambassador was convinced that Russia should make peace at once, and he urged his government to avail itself of the services of Delcassé in approaching Japan.<sup>24</sup>

The failure of the French loan negotiations and the plea of Nelidov—coming as they did on top of the defeat at Mukden—brought the first break

<sup>20</sup> Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegram, 24 March 1905, Lord Lansdowne Papers, F. O. 800/141, Public Record Office, London.

<sup>21</sup> William II to Bülow, 11 March 1905, and Bülow to William II, 11 March 1905, *Die Grosse Politik*, 19:2:411–12.

<sup>22</sup> Delcassé to Bompard, telegram, 12 March 1905, and Bompard to Delcassé, telegram, 13 March 1905, France, Ministère des Affaires Étrangères, *Documents diplomatiques français (1871–1914)*, 2nd series, 1901–1911 (Paris, 1930–55), 6:192–93; Paléologue, *Three Critical Years*, pp. 178–86.

<sup>23</sup> Motono Ichirō to Komura, 16 March 1905, Telegram Series, Reel 66, pp. 6,299–6,300.

<sup>24</sup> Bompard to Delcassé, telegram, 13 March 1905, *Documents diplomatiques français*, 2nd series, 6:193; Paléologue, *Three Critical Years*, pp. 184, 192–93.



in the Tsar's determination to go on with the war. On 21 March he authorized Nelidov to ask Delcassé to exchange ideas with the Japanese on peace terms. The instructions to Nelidov listed the terms that Nicholas would not accept: there would be no cession of territory, no payment of an indemnity, no surrender of control over the Manchurian railway running to Vladivostok, and no restriction on the Russian navy in the Pacific.<sup>25</sup> The listing of these unacceptable conditions, judged by common diplomatic practice, might have been viewed simply as an opening gambit to establish a good bargaining stance, a position from which concessions could be made. The events of the subsequent weeks, however, leave no doubt that this was not Nicholas' intention. He was in earnest about the unacceptability of these terms, and he was interested in pursuing peace negotiations only if Delcassé could obtain prior assent from Japan to exclude them.

More than a week passed before Delcassé acted on the Russian request, and in the interim diplomats at St. Petersburg learned that Nicholas was for the first time considering peace. American Ambassador Robert McCormick reported to Washington that the Tsar was at last faltering in his decision to continue the war and that he was seeking to learn Japan's terms through France.<sup>26</sup> Ambassador Hardinge sent a similar report to London and also relayed a suggestion by Witte that King Edward send a message to Nicholas urging peace.<sup>27</sup> Hardinge said that the failure of the French loan had been a severe blow and that all the ministers now favored peace.<sup>28</sup>

It was at this juncture that President Theodore Roosevelt urged Russia to make peace. Throughout the war he had hoped that a balance of power would emerge in East Asia, and now, though his personal sympathies were with Japan, he worried about the possibility that Russian power in the East would be completely shattered. His apprehensions had recently been increased when Japan informed him that it would demand an indemnity. This would make peace more difficult to achieve, and consequently the danger of Russian power being destroyed would be increased. Now in late March and early April he talked with Russian Ambassador Arturo Cassini several times and strongly urged peace "in the interest of Russia." Roosevelt did not have great hope that his plea would be successful. He wrote to Secretary of State John Hay: "The Czar is a preposterous little creature as the absolute autocrat of 150,000,000 people. He has been unable to make war, and he is now unable to make peace."<sup>29</sup>

<sup>25</sup> G. A. Planson, "Portsmutskaia mirnaia konferentsiia 1905 goda: Otchet sekretaria konferentsii Plansona" (St. Petersburg, 1908), p. 2, in Sergei Iu. Witte Papers, Archives of Russian and East European History, Columbia University, New York.

<sup>26</sup> McCormick to Secretary of State, 24 March 1905, Dispatches: Russia, Department of State Records, National Archives, Washington, D. C.

<sup>27</sup> Hardinge to Lansdowne, 25 March 1905, F. O. 881/8701; Hardinge to Lansdowne, telegrams, 24–25 March 1905, F. O. 65/1706; Hardinge to F. A. Campbell, 29 March 1905, F. O. 65/1699; Lansdowne to Hardinge, 3 April 1905, Lansdowne Papers, F. O. 800/141.

<sup>28</sup> Hardinge to Lansdowne, 29 March 1905, Lansdowne Papers, F. O. 800/141; Hardinge to Francis Knollys, 29 March 1905, Charles Hardinge Papers, Cambridge University Library, Cambridge, England.

<sup>29</sup> Roosevelt to Hay, 2 April 1905, in Elting E. Morison, ed., *The Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 8 vols. (Cambridge, MA, 1951–54). 4:1,156–158.

On 5 April Delcassé finally acted on the Russian request to assist in achieving a peace compatible with Russia's dignity and honor. Any reluctance Delcassé had about getting involved in peacemaking had now been removed by the eruption of the great European crisis over Morocco. From the moment the German Kaiser made his famous landing at Tangier on 31 March, France was anxious to see peace restored in the Far East in order to redress the balance of power in Europe. Delcassé was, therefore, hoping strongly for success as he undertook to sound the Japanese Minister, Motono Ichirō, though he realized he could not avoid the severe handicap of the Tsar's preconditions. When he talked with Motono on 5 April he told him he was firmly convinced he could bring Japan and Russia together for peace negotiations if Japan would eliminate conditions humiliating to Russia such as cession of territory and payment of an indemnity.<sup>30</sup>

Japan at this time was by no means averse to peace. After the battle at Mukden, Japanese military leaders demanded that the civilian leaders at Tokyo seek peace. They were convinced that in the future the tide of battle in Manchuria would swing against their troops. Field Marshall Yamagata Aritomo declared that while Russia still had powerful forces in its home country, Japan had exhausted its forces. General Kodama Gentarō, the commander in Manchuria, told government leaders that any further advance by the army in Manchuria was impossible, and he exclaimed to another general, "If one has started a fire, he must put it out." The need for peace was so great that Japanese military leaders, as well as many civilian leaders, believed it was unrealistic to expect to get an indemnity from Russia.<sup>31</sup>

Foreign Minister Komura Jutarō did not agree with his colleagues about the indemnity issue, and he proceeded to kill what little chance existed that something might come from Delcassé's initiative. He had Motono tell Delcassé on 13 April that Japan was unwilling to enter peace negotiations bound on certain conditions.<sup>32</sup> It is doubtful, however, that this made much difference; the Tsar's interest in peace was apparently already beginning to wane. On 11 April, two days before Motono's second talk with Delcassé, Ambassador Hardinge reported indications that Russia was determined to go on with the war.<sup>33</sup> Hardinge probably had solid information for he had a spy in the top level of the Russian Foreign Ministry.<sup>34</sup> The next day, 12 April, Hardinge seemed even more certain of his assessment. He reported to London that the tendency toward peace that the Tsar had shown a fortnight before had vanished.<sup>35</sup>

<sup>30</sup> B. F. Barnes to William Loeb, Jr., telegram, 18 April 1905, in Tyler Dennett, *Roosevelt and the Russo-Japanese War* (New York, 1925), pp. 176-77.

<sup>31</sup> Shumpei Okamoto, *The Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War* (New York, 1970), pp. 111-18, 261.

<sup>32</sup> B. F. Barnes to William Loeb, Jr., telegram, 18 April 1905, in Dennett, *Roosevelt*, pp. 176-77.

<sup>33</sup> Hardinge to Lansdowne, 11 April 1905, in *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, 4:75-76.

<sup>34</sup> Sir Charles Hardinge, *Old Diplomacy* (London, 1947), p. 108.

<sup>35</sup> Hardinge to Lansdowne, 12 April 1905, Lansdowne Papers, F. O. 800/141.



When the new American Ambassador, George von Lengerke Meyer, had an audience at Tsarskoe Selo on 12 April, he found Nicholas evasive on the issue of peace. Meyer relayed an offer of good offices from President Roosevelt but got nowhere with the proposal. Nicholas said he was glad to hear the President's offer, but he instantly turned the conversation to another subject and never alluded to it again. The Tsarina, who was known to be opposed to peace, was present during the audience, and Meyer noticed that she "watched Nicholas like a cat."<sup>36</sup>

The Tsar's inclination to continue the war was greatly strengthened in the days that followed. First came news of the failure of Delcassé's efforts. Then reports arrived that the Baltic fleet had passed Singapore and was approaching the Pacific. Meyer reported that the news of the fleet caused the peace movement to "evaporate into air."<sup>37</sup> Meyer believed that the Russians had great expectations about what Rozhdestvenskii's fleet could accomplish.<sup>38</sup> Prince Henry of Prussia, who was married to a sister of Nicholas, visited Tsarskoe Selo at this time, and his assessment coincided with Meyer's. He telegraphed Chancellor Bülow: "Tsar determined at present continue war in spite of strong agitation for peace. He pins his whole hopes on Rozhdestvenskii who will arrive shortly in the Sunda Archipelago. Tsar in calm and normal spirits."<sup>39</sup> Actually the Tsar's confidence was not so great as might have been inferred from this report. A British military attaché, Colonel Waters, talked with both Nicholas and Aleksandra on 5 May and found they were not hopeful about the outcome of the war.<sup>40</sup> Nicholas was, nevertheless, no less determined to continue the war. In late May he commented to some intimates that if the fleet were victorious, it would give a happy turn to events, and if it were beaten, the war would continue because in that case he could not think of ending it.<sup>41</sup>

When the catastrophe came, it was worse than anyone expected. On 27–28 May near the island of Tsushima in the Korea Strait, the Japanese naval forces under Admiral Tōgō Heihachiro annihilated the Russian fleet. All of its eight battleships were sunk or captured while Japan lost not a single ship. The reaction in St. Petersburg and throughout Russia was profound. Hardinge reported that "a shadow of gloom and consternation spread over the land."<sup>42</sup> Meyer reported that for the first time since war commenced St. Petersburg was really moved.<sup>43</sup> French Chargé Boutiron

<sup>36</sup> Meyer diary, 12 April 1905, George von Lengerke Meyer Papers, Library of Congress, Washington, D. C.; M. A. De Wolf Howe, *George von Lengerke Meyer: His Life and Public Services* (New York, 1920), pp. 145–46.

<sup>37</sup> Meyer to Secretary of State, 17 April 1905, Dispatches: Russia.

<sup>38</sup> Meyer to Thomas Beyer, 16 April 1905, George von Lengerke Meyer Papers, Massachusetts Historical Society, Boston, Massachusetts.

<sup>39</sup> Bernhard Bülow, *Memoirs of Prince von Bülow*, 4 vols. (Boston, 1931), 2:147.

<sup>40</sup> Spring Rice to Lansdowne, 10 May 1905, F. O. 65/1700.

<sup>41</sup> Chargé d'Affaires Boutiron to Delcassé, 3 June 1905, *Documents diplomatiques français*, 2nd series, 6:581–82.

<sup>42</sup> Hardinge to Lansdowne, 5 June 1905, in *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, 4:83.

<sup>43</sup> Meyer to Alvey A. Adee, telegram, 2 June 1905, in Dennett, *Roosevelt*, p. 217.

reported demoralization and a universal cry for peace.<sup>44</sup> Nicholas himself was dazed. He recorded in his diary: "Now finally the awful news about the destruction of almost the entire squadron in the two day battle has been confirmed."<sup>45</sup> In foreign capitals Russia's prestige received a severe blow. The Japanese Minister at Berlin was deluged with telegrams of congratulations from all parts of Germany.<sup>46</sup> Nelidov reported from Paris: "I don't even have the strength to describe the destructive impression which the destruction of our fleet produced here."<sup>47</sup>

The shock of the naval disaster brought Nicholas to reconsider his resolve to continue the war. On 30 May he assembled a council of war to assess the disheartening state of affairs. At that meeting Grand Duke Vladimir Aleksandrovich, one of Nicholas' uncles, made an impressive speech advocating peace, while the War Minister, General V. V. Sakharov, and others argued strongly for continuing the war. Nicholas reached no decision at this meeting, but the French Chargé, who gained detailed information about the discussion, concluded that the belligerent party was losing much ground.<sup>48</sup>

In the ensuing days events moved towards agreement on peace talks. On 1 June Japan, despairing of Russia ever making the first move towards peace, asked President Roosevelt to take steps "on his own motion and initiative" to bring the two nations together for peace talks. Two days later Roosevelt proposed to Russian Ambassador Cassini that peace talks be opened. Roosevelt declared to Cassini that Russia's position was hopeless and that it would be driven from all eastern Siberia if the war continued.<sup>49</sup> On the same day that Roosevelt took his action, Kaiser William urged Nicholas to make peace. The German ruler told his cousin bluntly that the naval defeat ended chances for a decided turn of the scales of war and that he should seek peace.<sup>50</sup> Prior to this time the Kaiser had encouraged Nicholas to go on with the war, but he now feared that such a course would threaten the Russian monarchy and create a similar danger in other countries. "Unless peace is made," the Kaiser exclaimed excitedly to American Ambassador Charlemagne Tower, "they will kill the Tsar."<sup>51</sup>

<sup>44</sup> Boutiron to Delcassé, telegram, 2 June 1905, and Boutiron to Delcassé, 3 June 1905, in *Documents diplomatiques français*, 2nd series, 6:574, 581–82.

<sup>45</sup> *Dnevnik imperatora Nikolaia II, 1890–1906 gg.* (Berlin, 1923), p. 201.

<sup>46</sup> Inoue to Komura, 1 June 1905, Telegram Series, Reel 64, p. 4,311.

<sup>47</sup> Planson, "Portsmutskaia mirnaia konferentsiia 1905 goda," p. 4.

<sup>48</sup> Boutiron to Delcassé, telegrams, 3 and 5 June 1905, in *Documents diplomatiques français*, 2nd series, 6:579–80, 594. See also Hardinge to Lansdowne, 5 June 1905, in *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, 4:82–84.

<sup>49</sup> Roosevelt to Henry Cabot Lodge, 5 June 1905, in *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 4:1,202–1,206; Komura to General Kodama Gentaro, telegram, 9 June 1905, in Japan, Gaimushō, *Nihon Gaikō Bunsho: Nichiro Sensō* (Japanese Diplomatic Documents: Russo-Japanese War), 5 vols. (Tokyo, 1958–60), 5:252–54.

<sup>50</sup> William II to Nicholas II, 3 June 1905, in *Die Grosse Politik*, 19:2:419–22.

<sup>51</sup> Tower to Roosevelt, 9 June 1905, in Dennett, *Roosevelt*, pp. 218–19. The Kaiser told the French military attaché at Berlin: "Their interior situation is terrible, and it is a danger for all of us." Captain de Vaisseau de Sugny to the Minister of Marine, 13 June 1905, in *Documents diplomatiques français*, 2nd series, 7:57–58.

Nicholas did not agree with Roosevelt's dire military prediction, nor did he share the Kaiser's mood of panic. He did, nevertheless, have to calculate what route—peace or war—would provide the least risk in the endeavor to achieve a conclusion of the war that was compatible with Russia's honor. To assist him in reaching a decision, he called another war council for 6 June. It was to be a fateful meeting, for in the course of that discussion he would announce his preference for the peace route.

At the conference of 6 June, there was agreement about the immediate military situation. The island of Sakhalin could not be held, and Vladivostok probably could not hold out long if attacked. There was also agreement that General Linevich, who had replaced General Kuropatkin, should get substantial reinforcements, though there was concern about the effect of further mobilization on the internal situation. On the long term prospects for the war and the advisability of peace negotiations, there was no agreement. War Minister Sukharov and Admiral F. V. Dubasov argued vigorously against peace negotiations. It would be a disgrace, said Sukharov, to end the war without a single victory or even a successful clash. Dubasov injected confidently that if Russia continued the war, it would conquer its enemy without fail. On the other side Admiral E. I. Alekseev, Grand Duke Aleksei Aleksandrovich, and Grand Duke Vladimir Aleksandrovich argued strongly for the opening of peace negotiations. Alekseev stated frankly that under the influence of constant retreats and many losses, the morale of the troops was undermined. Grand Duke Aleksei suggested that Russia cede the southern part of the island of Sakhalin if peace could be achieved thereby. Grand Duke Vladimir warned that future success was questionable and if Russia were fated to submit to still another blow, the conditions of peace would become so heavy that no Russian could accept them. Peace negotiations, he pointed out, would probably be drawn out providing time for reinforcements to be sent to Linevich. If the peace conditions turned out to be unacceptable, then Russia could continue the war. The decisive moment in the discussion came when Nicholas announced without equivocation that he agreed with Vladimir's views regarding opening negotiations. He gave as his reason the fact that not one inch of Russian land had fallen to the enemy but "tomorrow this situation can be changed." The decision was clearly the qualified one that Vladimir recommended. An attempt at peace would be made, but the war option would still be left open as an alternative that was preferable to a humiliating peace.<sup>52</sup>

The day following the war council Ambassador Meyer gained the Tsar's assent to the opening of peace negotiations. Acting on instructions from Roosevelt, Meyer had an hour-long audience with Nicholas in which he relayed the President's offer to set up direct negotiations between the belligerents. Meyer wisely did not give too much emphasis to Roosevelt's jarring assertions about the hopelessness of the Russian position in the war.

<sup>52</sup> "Konets russko-iaponskoi voiny, voennoe soveshchanie 24 maia 1905 g. v Tsarskom Sele," *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 106 vols. (Moscow, 1922–41), 28:182–204.

Instead he told Nicholas that he had reported to his government that there was no cry for peace at any price and that if Japan's terms were unreasonable, the Tsar would have almost a united Russia behind him in rejecting such terms. It was within this context that Nicholas agreed to accept Roosevelt's proposal. In responding to Meyer, the Tsar repeated the view that he had expressed at the war council the day before: "You have come at a psychological moment; as yet no foot has been placed on Russian soil; but I realize that at almost any moment they can make an attack on Sakhaline."<sup>53</sup>

Ambassador Hardinge was greatly puzzled by what he regarded as a volte-face by Nicholas, and he speculated that the Tsar's decision was "due to the personal equation and to the dislike of a weak man to say 'no' when face to face with a person in the position of a foreign Ambassador."<sup>54</sup> Hardinge's guess, however, missed the mark. Meyer's persuasions may have been important in bringing Nicholas to take the final agonizing step to negotiations, but the record of the war council of 6 June shows that the Tsar had already reached the conclusion that he must try peace negotiations. It is also apparent that the Tsar's decision did not represent as much of a volte-face as Hardinge appeared to think. The decision was in line with the objective Nicholas had consistently pursued, namely a peace settlement compatible with what he termed the honor and worth of Russia.

The Tsar's objective was explicitly set out in the instructions prepared for the Russian plenipotentiaries. That document stated that Russia would not hesitate for one minute to continue the war if Japan presented demands which tarnished the honor and worth of Russia as a great power. Specifically, there would be no loss of Russian territory and no payment of an indemnity.<sup>55</sup> It was, of course, easier to draft these instructions than it would be to achieve them, and Nicholas had much difficulty finding a capable person to head the Russian peace delegation. With great reluctance he finally turned to Witte after two other appointees asked to be relieved of the onerous task. Nicholas may have worried about Witte's willingness to follow the instructions, for he emphatically reaffirmed the two key items to him. He would not, he reminded Witte, pay one kopek of indemnity or cede one inch of Russian land.<sup>56</sup>

<sup>53</sup> Department of State to Meyer, telegram, 5 June 1905, *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 4:1203–1204; Meyer to Roosevelt, 9 June 1905, in Howe, *Meyer*, pp. 157–62.

<sup>54</sup> Hardinge to Knollys, 21 June 1905, Hardinge Papers.

<sup>55</sup> An Instruction to State Secretary Murav'ev, 11 July 1905, in Russia, Ministerstvo inostrannykh del, *Sbornik diplomaticheskikh dokumentov, kasaiushchikhsia peregovorov mezhdu Rossiei i Iaponiei o zaključenii mirnogo dogovora, 24 mai–3 oktiabria 1905* (St. Petersburg, 1906), no. 60, pp. 78–89, New York Public Library. This collection of documents was printed in a limited edition for use within the government. The copy cited was originally in the Witte papers. It has inserts of additional documents from the Witte papers which were put in by Witte himself. For a discussion of this and other sources relating to Witte, see: V. V. Anan'ich and R. Sh. Ganelin, "Opyt kritiki memuarov S. Iu. Vitte v sviazi s ego publitsisticheskoi deiatel'nost'iu v 1907–1915 gg.," in S. N. Valk, ed., *Voprosy istoriografii i istochnikovedeniia istorii SSSR: Sbornik statei* (Moscow, 1963), pp. 298–327.

<sup>56</sup> Witte, *Vospominaniia*, 2:395. The word "piadi" has been freely translated here as "inch." Literally it means the distance between the index finger and the middle finger when they are spread apart.

Witte, in fact, did not agree with the Tsar's position. In July, while Roosevelt was making arrangements for the peace conference, the Japanese seized Sakhalin, and Witte thought Russia should cede it if necessary to gain peace. Apparently he was also willing to pay a modest indemnity. Hardinge reported to London that in the coming negotiations the indemnity and the cession of Sakhalin would be the two principal difficulties and that combinations had been prepared for the acceptance of these terms in a manner that would save face for the Russians.<sup>57</sup> This information was doubtless obtained from Hardinge's spy in the Foreign Ministry and was probably correct. It is certain, of course, that to whatever extent such a plan existed, it was a scheme devised by Witte and Foreign Minister Lamsdorff and was kept secret from the Tsar. It is not absolutely certain that Witte contemplated paying an indemnity, but Baron Rosen, the second Russian delegate to the peace conference, later recorded information that coincided with that obtained by Hardinge. Rosen stated in his memoirs that Witte told him he was willing to pay a small indemnity if it could be disguised.<sup>58</sup>

Whatever Witte's intentions, he outwardly asserted the Tsar's position. On his way to Portsmouth, New Hampshire, where the conference was to be held, he told French leaders in Paris that Russia would not pay an indemnity.<sup>59</sup> After his arrival in the United States in early August, he told Roosevelt that Russia would not pay an indemnity or agree to any conditions that touched its honor. "If the Japanese will not now adopt our point of view," he said, "we shall carry on a defensive war to the last extremity, and we shall see who will hold out the longest."<sup>60</sup>

During the first nine days of the Portsmouth Conference, Witte agreed to many of the Japanese terms while he simultaneously tried to get Nicholas to change his position on Sakhalin. Witte's instructions permitted him to agree to most of Japan's demands, including Japanese predominance in Korea, evacuation of military forces from Manchuria, and transference to Japan of the Port Arthur leasehold and most of the branch railway line running from Harbin to Port Arthur. But Witte believed the cession of Sakhalin also would be necessary, particularly since the Japanese were in possession of it. On 15 August he relayed to Lamsdorff the Japanese arguments on Sakhalin and posed the question, "I think some additional

<sup>57</sup> Hardinge to Knollys, 19 July 1905, Hardinge Papers; Hardinge to Lansdowne, 25 July 1905, in *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, 4:93-94. Hardinge repeatedly reaffirmed this information in August. Hardinge to Bertie, 14 August 1905, Bertie Papers, F. O. 800/184; Hardinge to Lansdowne, 15 August 1905, in *British Documents on the Origins of the War*, 4:96-97; Hardinge to Captain Frederick Ponsonby, 16 August 1905, Hardinge Papers; Hardinge to Lansdowne, 16 August 1905, Lansdowne Papers, F. O. 800/141.

<sup>58</sup> Baron Roman Rosen, *Forty Years of Diplomacy*, 2 vols. (New York, 1922), 2:263-64.

<sup>59</sup> Witte, *Vospominaniia*, 2:404.

<sup>60</sup> Witte to Lamsdorff, telegram, 4 August 1905, *Sbornik diplomaticheskikh dokumentov*, no. 75, pp. 103-104; J. J. Korostovetz, *Pre-War Diplomacy: The Russo-Japanese Problem, Treaty Signed at Portsmouth, U. S. A. 1905, Diary of J. J. Korostovetz* (London, 1920), pp. 31-32.



instructions from His Majesty would be in order, don't you?"<sup>61</sup> The Tsar's response was a categorical negative. Nicholas himself wrote on the text of Witte's telegram: "On the loss of Sakhalin there cannot be any talk. The Russian people would not forgive me for giving one inch of our land to any enemy and my own conscience would not allow it either."<sup>62</sup> Two days later Witte telegraphed that a continuation of the war would be the very greatest calamity for Russia, and he again requested a modification of his instructions.<sup>63</sup> The Tsar's reply was again unyielding: "It was said not one inch of land and not one ruble of military reparations would be paid, and I will insist upon this until the end."<sup>64</sup>

Despite the Tsar's clearly stated position, Witte proceeded to devise a compromise that ran counter to his instructions. With his counterpart, Foreign Minister Komura, he drafted a plan in which Russia would cede the southern half of Sakhalin to Japan and pay a sum of money for the return of the northern half.<sup>65</sup> Since the Japanese wanted 600 million dollars for the return of the northern half, Witte knew that this was a very poorly disguised indemnity and that it would not be acceptable to Nicholas. In referring the plan to St. Petersburg, therefore, he reverted to his original view. He recommended ceding the whole island rather than pay money to Japan.<sup>66</sup> Nicholas lost no time in rejecting both versions, and on 21 August Lamsdorff telegraphed Witte ominously that final instructions for ending the conference would be sent to him the following day.<sup>67</sup>

It was at this point that Roosevelt injected himself into the negotiations, and Witte was able to use the President's intervention to avoid breaking off the peace talks. On the very same day that Lamsdorff told Witte that he would get orders to end the conference, Roosevelt dispatched an appeal to Nicholas recommending the cession of southern Sakhalin and the postponing to later negotiations of the fixing of a sum for the return of northern Sakhalin.<sup>68</sup> Roosevelt sent a copy of the message to Witte, and it arrived just as Witte got orders to come home.<sup>69</sup> Seeing an opportunity to deflect the imperial order, he telegraphed Lamsdorff that it would be inadvisable to end the negotiations before the Tsar gave an answer to the President.<sup>70</sup>

Roosevelt's intervention also produced a concession from Nicholas.

<sup>61</sup> Witte to Lamsdorff, telegram, 15 August 1905, in *Sbornik diplomaticheskikh dokumentov*, no. 102, pp. 126–27.

<sup>62</sup> Lamsdorff to Witte, telegram, 16 August 1905, *ibid.*, no. 103, p. 127.

<sup>63</sup> Witte to Lamsdorff, telegram, 17 August 1905, *ibid.*, no. 123, pp. 137–39.

<sup>64</sup> Lamsdorff to Witte, telegram, 19 August 1905, *ibid.*, no. 124, p. 139.

<sup>65</sup> Katsura Tarō to Kodama, telegram, 24 August 1905, in *Nihon Gaikō Bunsho: Nichiro Sensō*, 5:293–95; Witte to Lamsdorff, telegram, 18 August 1905, in *Sbornik diplomaticheskikh dokumentov*, no. 128, pp. 140–41.

<sup>66</sup> Witte to Lamsdorff, telegram, 18 August 1905, in *Sbornik diplomaticheskikh dokumentov*, no. 129, pp. 141–42.

<sup>67</sup> Lamsdorff to Witte, telegram, 21 August 1905, *ibid.*, insert between pages 164 and 165.

<sup>68</sup> Roosevelt to Meyer, telegram, 21 August 1905, in *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 5:4–5.

<sup>69</sup> Lamsdorff to Witte, telegram no. 1, 22 August 1905, in *Sbornik diplomaticheskikh dokumentov*, no. 147, pp. 167–68.

<sup>70</sup> Witte to Lamsdorff, telegram, 22 August 1905, *ibid.*, no. 152, pp. 170–71.



When Ambassador Meyer personally delivered Roosevelt's appeal, he persuaded Nicholas to give up southern Sakhalin. As in his audience with Nicholas in June, Meyer avoided emphasizing Roosevelt's blunt statements about Russia's hopeless military position. Instead he argued effectively that Sakhalin, a largely uninhabited island, was not Russian territory in the same sense as territory on the mainland since both Japan and Russia had claimed it as recently as 1875. On this occasion Meyer's ability to persuade was probably decisive to the outcome of the audience. It is certain that Nicholas was no less determined to go on with the war if necessary. He told Meyer in words that were absolutely sincere that his army was not vanquished, that he had half a million men in front of the Japanese army, which was thousands of miles from Moscow and St. Petersburg.<sup>71</sup> In a statement that was more perceptive than Meyer realized, Nicholas said of the Japanese: "Why have they not attacked the army for nearly four months?"<sup>72</sup>

The agreement to cede southern Sakhalin did not break the deadlock at Portsmouth, and Roosevelt rushed another prediction of doom to the Tsar. The continuation of the war, he told Nicholas, might be the greatest calamity ever to befall Russia. Japan would probably take Harbin, Vladivostok, and eastern Siberia, and the probabilities were overwhelming that Japan could never be dislodged.<sup>73</sup> This appeal made not the slightest impact. When it was given to the Tsar, he told Lamsdorff simply, "I remain with my views."<sup>74</sup> Nicholas was determined to make no further concession. Just before Roosevelt's appeal arrived in St. Petersburg, Lamsdorff had telegraphed Witte that the Tsar had said the last word, "and from that he will not deviate." Echoing the Tsar's views Lamsdorff said that though it was important to spare the amour propre of the President, it was "incalculably more important and more dear to stand guard for the welfare and honor of Russia."<sup>75</sup>

In the next three days events raced to a climax. On 28 August Lamsdorff relayed verbatim to Witte the Tsar's command: "Send Witte my order to end discussion tomorrow in any event. I prefer to continue the war than to await gracious concessions on the part of Japan."<sup>76</sup> Meanwhile Komura had requested final instructions from Tokyo. In Komura's original instructions the demands relating to Sakhalin and the indemnity had not been listed among the "imperative" demands, but Komura believed they should have been and had negotiated as if they were. The final instructions he now received from Tokyo completely undercut his position. He was ordered to make peace even if it meant giving up the indemnity and the entire island of

<sup>71</sup> Meyer diary, 23 August 1905, Meyer Papers, Library of Congress.

<sup>72</sup> Meyer to Roosevelt, 25 August 1905, in Howe, *Meyer*, pp. 197–202.

<sup>73</sup> Roosevelt to Meyer, telegram, 25 August 1905, in *Letters of Theodore Roosevelt*, 4:1,314–1,315.

<sup>74</sup> Lamsdorff to Witte, telegram, 27 August 1905, in *Sbornik diplomaticheskikh dokumentov*, no. 175, p. 190.

<sup>75</sup> Lamsdorff to Witte, telegram, 26 August 1905, *ibid.*, no. 169, pp. 184–85.

<sup>76</sup> Lamsdorff to Witte, telegram, 28 August 1905, *ibid.*, no. 180, p. 193.

Sakhalin.<sup>77</sup> The next morning (29 August) he received a supplementary instruction to hold out for southern Sakhalin.<sup>78</sup> The Foreign Ministry at Tokyo at the last moment had learned through the British Ambassador that the Tsar had agreed to its cession in the conference with Ambassador Meyer on 23 August, a fact that Komura had not made clear to Tokyo.<sup>79</sup>

Witte was convinced that he should make peace if he could get it by the cession of southern Sakhalin and without payment of money. To do so he would have to violate the order of Nicholas to end the discussion “in any event,” but he resolved to do just that. On the morning of 29 August he telegraphed St. Petersburg that the Tsar’s order could place him in an untenable position and that it would be a great mistake to give the Japanese a way out and for Russia to accept the guilt in the eyes of the whole world for continuing the war.<sup>80</sup> He then went to the conference session where he and Komura agreed to peace on Witte’s terms.<sup>81</sup>

The world was stunned by the Japanese backdown. The British Ambassador at Tokyo, Sir Claude MacDonald, wrote to Hardinge: “There is no doubt that the R[ussian]s have jockeyed our little Allies pretty severely over these peace terms.”<sup>82</sup> Nicholas was also stunned. He recorded in his diary on 30 August: “This night there came a telegram from Witte with the news that the negotiations about peace have been brought to an end. All day after that I went around as if in a trance.”<sup>83</sup> To his Finance Minister, Vladimir N. Kokovtsov, he confided that he had not quite come to terms with what had happened.<sup>84</sup> Hardinge reported a rumor, which may or may not have been true, that Nicholas talked of having been tricked into giving up half of Sakhalin.<sup>85</sup>

For two days, during which the minor details of the treaty were being worked out at Portsmouth, not a word of congratulation came from Nicholas. Lamsdorff sent his own congratulations on 31 August and explained that the unexpectedness of the results at Portsmouth prevented a just evaluation of Witte’s accomplishment.<sup>86</sup> By this time, however, Nicholas was feeling better about everything. He wrote in his diary: “Only today have I begun to assimilate the thought that peace will be concluded

<sup>77</sup> Katsura to Komura, telegram no. 69, 28 August 1905, in *Nihon Gaikō Bunsho: Nichiro Sensō*, 5:300-302; Okamoto, *Japanese Oligarchy and the Russo-Japanese War*, pp. 154-55.

<sup>78</sup> Japan, Gaimushō, *Komura Gaikōshi* (History of Komura Diplomacy), 2 vols. (Tokyo, 1953), 2:126.

<sup>79</sup> Ishii Kikujirō, *Gaikō Yoroku* (Diplomatic Commentaries) (Tokyo, 1930), pp. 82-83.

<sup>80</sup> Witte to Lamsdorff, telegram, 29 August 1905, in *Sbornik diplomaticheskikh dokumentov*, no. 182, pp. 193-94.

<sup>81</sup> Witte to Lamsdorff, telegram, 29 August 1905, *ibid.*, no. 184, pp. 194-95.

<sup>82</sup> MacDonald to Hardinge, 31 August 1905, Hardinge Papers.

<sup>83</sup> *Dnevnik imperatora Nikolaia II*, p. 214.

<sup>84</sup> A. I. Putilov to I. P. Shipov, telegram, 1 September 1905, in “Portsmut perepiska S. Iu. Witte i drugikh lits,” *Krasnyi arkhiv*, 6:43-44.

<sup>85</sup> Hardinge to Lansdowne, 5 October 1905, Lansdowne Papers, F. O. 800/141.

<sup>86</sup> Lamsdorff to Witte, telegram, 31 August 1905, in *Sbornik diplomaticheskikh dokumentov*, insert between pages 200 and 201.

and that this is in all likelihood good because it should be that way. I received several congratulatory telegrams in this regard.”<sup>87</sup> Telegrams of congratulation continued to pour in upon the Tsar, and on 1 September he sent to Witte and the other members of the Russian delegation an expression of his gratitude.<sup>88</sup>

The mixed feelings that Nicholas had about the peace settlement were due to a combination of factors: the suddenness of the event, the shock at being disobeyed by his envoy, and probably most of all, worry about whether the peace terms tarnished Russia’s honor. Insofar as his concern centered on the peace terms, it was unjustified. If any proof of that was needed, it came in the form of a three-day riot in Tokyo that greeted news of the treaty.

Nicholas’s last-minute inclination to go on with the war was probably due far more to his aversion to a humiliating peace than to any exaggerated hopes for future military victories. After agreeing to cede southern Sakhalin, he apparently regretted the decision, fearing that even that small territorial concession would tarnish the worth of Russia. As it turned out, his anxiety was not well-founded. That provision of the treaty attracted little notice, and what attention it did receive was associated primarily with Witte personally. When Witte was given the rank of count on his return to Russia, his critics enjoyed dubbing him Count Half-Sakhalin!

The role of Nicholas in the war and the peace negotiations does not answer all the questions about the complex character of this Russian autocrat, but it does make clear that as part of his God-annointed task Nicholas felt a heavy responsibility to uphold the honor and worth of Russia. It is true that he was shy, timid, and sometimes indecisive; yet what comes through during the Russo-Japanese War is his tenacity and resolution. His goal of a dignified peace may have been too costly in blood and treasure to be justified, but there can be no doubt that he pursued it with extraordinary resolve. Some of the kudos that were showered on Witte at the moment of triumph in 1905 should have gone to Nicholas. The contributions of both sovereign and envoy were significant in the achievement of the victory. Nicholas restrained Witte from ceding all of Sakhalin and possibly paying a disguised indemnity, while Witte, for his part, boldly seized the moment to make peace when Nicholas had ordered him home. The result of the tension and struggle between the two men was the achievement of a peace that all the world recognized as a remarkable Russian triumph.

<sup>87</sup> *Dnevnik imperatora Nikolaiia II*, pp. 214–15.

<sup>88</sup> Nicholas II to Witte, telegram, 7 [sic], September 1905, in *Sbornik diplomaticheskikh dokumentov*, insert between pages 216 and 217. Both Korostovetz and Dillon, who were with Witte at Portsmouth, record that this telegram came on 1 September. The date on Witte’s copy which he inserted in the document collection is doubtless wrong. The telegram was sent to Portsmouth, and Witte was no longer in Portsmouth on 7 September. Korostovetz, *Diary*, pp. 119–21; Dillon, *Eclipse of Russia*, p. 311.