

The History of the Twentieth Century

Episode 35

“Mighty Good For Me, Too”

Transcript

[music: fanfare]

One year into the Russo-Japanese War, the Japanese have achieved their objectives, and are ready to talk peace. Russia still has many resources to draw upon, but the combination of massive political unrest and a disengaged Emperor makes it doubtful Russia has the will to fight on.

Meanwhile, the ships of the Baltic Fleet remain Russia's wild card, as they press forward on their unprecedented redeployment into the Pacific theater.

Welcome to the History of the Twentieth Century.

[music: opening theme]

Episode 35. Mighty Good for Me, Too.

This is the fifth episode in our series on the Russo-Japanese War, and there's a couple threads I want to pick up on from last week. One of them is the Second Pacific Squadron, which, you may recall, we have left languishing at Madagascar. When we left Admiral Rozhdestvensky, he was cooling his heels, waiting for the third Pacific squadron. While the Russian ships were languishing in Madagascar, they received news of the fall of Port Arthur, the Bloody Sunday killings in St. Petersburg, and in February, the Russian defeat at Mukden. And they are still waiting.

Another thread I want to pick up on is back in the Russian heartland, the follow up on the events of Bloody Sunday. Workers in other Russian cities began to protest and strike in sympathy with the strikers in St. Petersburg. Unrest was greatest in the ethnic minority regions of the Empire, no surprise there. On January 26, the Thursday after Bloody Sunday, Latvian socialist protesters were shot and killed in the city of Riga. Socialist organizations in Finland and Poland organized strikes, and strikers were being gunned down on the streets of Warsaw soon afterward.

The Russian government appointed a commission in St. Petersburg to investigate the complaints of the striking workers. The commission was supposed to be made up of government officials, factory managers, and representatives of the workers. But the socialists, still staunchly opposed to any form of cooperation with the existing government, resisted efforts to elect workers'

representatives to the commission and advocated a continuation of strikes and confrontation instead. As a result, the commission never got off the ground, and was dissolved in March. Unrest in the Empire's colleges and universities led to them all being closed down in March for the remainder of 1905. Many of the unhappy students, with no classes to go to, left their schools and joined the workers.

Russia's greatest composer at this time, Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov, taught at the St. Petersburg Conservatory. When students at the Conservatory joined the protests, Rimsky-Korsakov published a letter in support of some of their demands, such as the abolition of corporal punishment at the school. Yes, the St. Petersburg Conservatory practiced corporal punishment. Anyway, the government's response to Rimsky-Korsakov's letter was to sack him from the school and forbid public performances of his works anywhere in the Empire.

Meanwhile, Moscow, the empire's second most important city and former capital, was also seeing unrest. The governor general of Moscow was the Grand Duke Sergei, who had been appointed to the position in 1891 by his older brother, the then-Emperor Alexander III, and was kept on when Nikolai became Emperor. Grand Duke Sergei had a close relationship with his nephew, the current Emperor, not least because, as you may recall, their wives are sisters. As Governor General, the Grand Duke was essentially a viceroy and thus answered to no one but the Emperor himself, which was fortunate for the Grand Duke, because basically the Emperor was the only person in Russian who didn't hate his guts.

Grand Duke Sergei was a harsh, inflexible, ironfisted kind of guy, even by the standards of Imperial Russia. Upon his appointment as governor general of Moscow, one of his first acts was the expulsion of the 20,000 or so Jewish residents of Moscow. News of this decree expelling the Jewish community was thoughtfully presented to them on the first day of Passover. The expulsion was conducted in stages, with the oldest and youngest expelled last. As it happens, there was a spell of cold weather, just at the time when large numbers of Jewish children and old people were supposed to be traveling. Conditions were so bad, even the police and public officials in Moscow were horrified by the situation, and petitioned the Grand Duke to postpone the last phase of the expulsion until the weather got better. He agreed, but didn't get around to announcing his decision until after everyone had already left.

Needless to say, Grand Duke Sergei was outraged by the events of Bloody Sunday and the strikes and protests that followed. And when I say outraged, I mean that the Grand Duke felt that his nephew the Emperor was a total wimp, and that what Russia really needed was way more violence and repression and way more Russian and Polish and Latvian and Finnish blood running through the streets of the Empire's great cities, because of course he did.

The grand Duke felt so strongly about this and he resigned his position as governor general of Moscow after serving two emperors for a total of 14 years. He did, however, retain his position as commander of the Moscow military district. On February 17, a socialist revolutionary assassin

who was half Russian and half Polish, threw a bomb into the Grand Duke's carriage. The bomb reportedly landed directly in the Grand Duke's lap, and he was literally blown to pieces.

The Emperor responded to all this political violence by offering a set of concessions. The day after his uncle's assassination, Emperor Nikolai announced new rights of freedom of speech and religion, and the formation of an elected assembly, the Duma. This sounded pretty good, at first, and was enough of a concession that the political violence in Russia simmered down considerably during the spring.

And we will take advantage of this pause in revolutionary violence to turn our attention back to the Second Pacific squadron down there in Madagascar. Admiral Rozhdestvensky is riding herd on 12,000 bored Russian sailors. Morale is low, because of the twin blows of the fall of Port Arthur and Bloody Sunday, not to mention that they are a long way from home and it doesn't look like anyone's going to be going back home anytime soon. They have been idle in Madagascar for six weeks now, and discipline is breaking down. As you may recall from last week, they have been expecting a Japanese attack since, yes, when they were still in the Baltic. They almost went to war with the British, and during those few days of confrontation with the Royal Navy got a close-up look at how much more skillful British sailors were than they are. Now they were under orders from the Russian admiralty to wait around for additional ships to rendezvous with them, ships that Rozhdestvensky had already rejected months ago as not worth the trouble to bring along.

Rozhdestvensky would also have been thinking about Admiral Togo and the Japanese Combined Fleet, who also have had nothing to do since Port Arthur surrendered ten weeks ago. It wouldn't have been hard to predict Togo's next move: take the Combined Fleet back to the home islands for repair and refit, give the sailors some R&R time, and build up the Combined Fleet into better fighting trim than ever. And then wait for Rozhdestvensky, whose own fleet is disintegrating, even as Togo's fleet becomes ever more ready.

Recall, too, that the voyage of the Second Pacific squadron has captured the world's imagination, and newspapers all over are tracking Rozhdestvensky's every move and printing it in the papers, all but handing first-rate intelligence to Togo on a silver platter.

The cumulative effect of all of this on the fighting spirit of Rozhdestvensky and the Second Pacific squadron was, um, not good. The Russian sailors spent a lot of their time ashore, drinking and gambling, and collecting specimens from some of the exotic animal species native to Madagascar. After a while, the squadron took on the look of a floating zoo.

Imagine the feeling, of endless waiting around week after week. You'd give anything to get back on the ship and get going again, although this feeling is tempered by the realization that there's a significant chance that when you finally get to your destination, you are going to get killed. The circumstances literally drove some of the sailors mad. Others became defiant and mutinous. Others were sympathetic to the uprisings going on against the Emperor back home, and were

encouraging their fellow sailors to rise up against Rozhdestvensky. Finally, Rozhdestvensky collected the worst sailors – the sick and injured, the undisciplined, the drunkards, the revolutionaries – and put them on a single ship and sent it back to St. Petersburg.

And I bet you can't guess what happened next. If you guessed, all these misfits and troublemakers promptly mutinied and took control of that ship, well, then good for you. That's exactly what happened. But the mutineers weren't the brightest bulbs in the chandelier; they took over the ship when it was barely out of the harbor, making it fairly easy for Rozhdestvensky to send other ships after them and take it back.

And then there was the battle of Mukden in late February, which we covered last episode. The second Pacific squadron was still waiting at Madagascar when they received the news of this latest Russian defeat, which couldn't have made the morale situation any better.

In fact, there's evidence that Rozhdestvensky himself was kind of losing it by this time. From this point forward, he shows distinct signs of impulsive and irrational thinking. The first sign of impulsive and irrational thinking came on March 16, a couple of weeks after the battle of Mukden, when Admiral Rozhdestvensky said, screw it, I can't take any more of this, and neither can my sailors, we're heading for Vladivostok no matter what the Admiralty says. I mean, what's the Emperor going to do, fire me? I already tendered my resignation, and he turned it down. I imagine too, that from his vantage point in Madagascar, St. Petersburg and the Emperor and the Admiralty must've seemed very, very far away.

And so, Rozhdestvensky and the fleet left Madagascar, against orders.

[music: *Flight of the Bumblebee*, by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov]

The second Pacific squadron was spotted off Singapore on April 8. This was duly reported in the newspapers, and Admiral Togo knew it was time to get the Combined Fleet ready. A few days later, Rozhdestvensky and his squadron arrived at Cam Ranh Bay, in French Indochina, now Vietnam.

Meanwhile, at the end of March, just days after the battle of Mukden ended, Marshal Oyama dispatched General Kodama, whom you may recall is his chief of staff, the guy Oyama sent to Port Arthur last fall to give General Nogi some pointers, to Tokyo to meet with the Emperor and his cabinet. Kodama informed the cabinet that it was the view of the Marshal and his staff that it was time to end the war.

As I've mentioned before, the war was a heavy burden on the relatively small Japanese economy. And with each Russian defeat, and Japanese advance, Japanese supply lines are getting longer and longer. While there were hotheads in Tokyo who spoke of continuing the war until Japanese soldiers were marching into St. Petersburg, or at least until they had pried control of Siberia away from the Russians, happily, cooler heads prevailed. Japan had achieved what it had

set out to accomplish: preservation of its interests in Korea, and ejection of the Russians from Manchuria. Well, southern Manchuria, at least.

Almost 400 years earlier, Niccolò Machiavelli famously observed “wars begin when you will, but they do not end when you please.” It is a lesson that statesmen through the centuries have had to learn over and over again. You may have noticed that in this war, the Japanese have approached every problem with meticulous planning. This war is probably the most carefully planned war in history up to the time, at least on the Japanese side. The Japanese cabinet were aware of the problem that Machiavelli had identified, and were working on what we today would call an “exit strategy” even before Kodama arrived. The name of their exit strategy was Theodore Roosevelt.

As it happens, two members of the Japanese cabinet, the foreign minister and the justice minister, were graduates of Harvard College, and were classmates of Theodore Roosevelt’s, even though they and Roosevelt didn’t hang out together at the time. But it gave the Japanese an opening, and they reached out to the American president to inquire about him mediating a peace agreement between Japan and Russia. All this was done in secret of course, because neither country wanted to be seen publicly asking for peace, as that would have been regarded as humiliating.

Roosevelt responded to the Japanese that he would agree to mediate on two conditions: first, that if the Russians withdrew from Manchuria, Japan would consent to restoring that province to the control of China. Second, that Japan would continue to support America’s Open Door Policy regarding China. By the time Admiral Rozhdestvenky and his fleet have arrived at Cam Ranh Bay, the Japanese cabinet is already pondering Roosevelt’s conditions, and drafting its negotiating position for the peace talks. By the end of April, the cabinet would agree to Roosevelt’s conditions. The US government began putting out feelers to the Russians, inquiring whether the Russian government would be interested in negotiating with American mediation. He did not mention that the Japanese had instigated this idea. But Emperor Nikolai and his government rebuffed Roosevelt at first.

Speaking of Cam Ranh Bay, let’s check back there and see what’s going on. The Japanese have been very unhappy with the Germans for being so helpful to the Russian fleet, supplying them with coal. After Japanese requests to the Germans to stop doing it were repeatedly rebuffed, the Japanese government informed the German government that if it was not going to fulfill its obligations as a neutral country, then Japan would regard Germany as a belligerent, and would treat the German-flagged colliers that were refueling Rozhdestvensky’s ships as military targets. The Germans were not keen on seeing their colliers get sunk, so they informed Rozhdestvenky that they would not take them any closer to the war zone. And the Russian Admiralty, now that they were back in touch with Rozhdestvensky, again ordered him to remain at Cam Ranh Bay until the Third Pacific Squadron had a chance to catch up.

Rozhdestvensky again fully intended to ignore this order and proceed. But the coal situation was a problem. Once the ships were fully coaled, they would have barely enough fuel to make it to Vladivostok, assuming they took the most direct route. And, of course, the problem with the most direct route is that it takes the Russians right through the narrow waters between Korea and Japan, exactly the place where the Japanese Combined Fleet is patrolling. But what's the alternative? He might have considered going around the Japanese home islands to the East, continuing north to the Russian-controlled island of Sakhalin, and sneaking into Vladivostok through the back door, as it were, but this would've required at least one more refueling, and that would have been complicated, although not impossible, given the Germans' new reluctance to get close to the war zone.

So, for better or for worse, Rozhdestvensky decided on the simple answer: take the straight shot to Vladivostok. Six months into this voyage, Rozhdestvensky and his officers were understandably eager to get to a Russian port as soon as they possibly could. Unfortunately, the straight shot is also the most predictable move, and Admiral Togo will fully understand Rozhdestvensky's sense of urgency, bordering on desperation, to get to Vladivostok, and he will station the Japanese combined fleet, now shipshape and Bristol fashion, on the south coast of Korea, waiting.

As it turned out, Togo will be waiting longer than he expects. As Rozhdestvensky was preparing to leave Cam Ranh Bay for the final leg of the voyage to Vladivostok, he learned that one of his front-line battleships, the *Emperor Alexander III*, had miscalculated its coal stockpiles, and did not have enough to make it to Vladivostok. So the whole fleet had to wait for another shipment of coal. And while they were waiting for this, Admiral Nebogatov and the Third Pacific Squadron finally caught up, no doubt much to Rozhdestvensky's dismay. I can't help wondering if it was really an accident, or if somebody aboard *Alexander III* was deliberately sabotaging Rozhdestvensky's plan to leave port in defiance of the Admiralty. The fleet finally left Cam Ranh Bay on May 14, seven months after departing St. Petersburg.

Rozhdestvensky did not have a battle plan. His goal was not to engage and defeat the Japanese Combined Fleet. His goal was to make it to Vladivostok. If he could do that without engaging the Japanese at all, that would count as a win. Because a strong and active Russian fleet in Vladivostok would force the Japanese Combined Fleet to blockade the port for months, wearing itself out as the larger Russian fleet rested and refit. And we've already seen how Russian ships operating out of Vladivostok can cause the Japanese no end of grief.

But it was not to be. Admiral Togo was determined to patrol the straits between Korea and Japan and bring the Russians to battle. He had the advantage of being in front of the Russians, assuming they were taking the straight shot. When Togo received intelligence of colliers and support ships being sent away to China on May 25, he was sure he had guessed right. Were Rozhdestvensky planning to take the long way around, he would have needed the colliers he was sending away.

The strait between Korea and Japan is generally known as the Korea Strait. Almost smack in the middle of the Korea Strait is the island of Tsushima, which is Japanese territory. The waters between Tsushima and Kyushu islands is called the Tsushima Strait. The only choice left for Rozhdestvensky to make and for Togo to guess is whether the Russians will try to pass west or east of Tsushima Island. Oddly enough, the Eastern route, the route that takes you through Japanese waters is the wider of the two channels, and that's the one Rozhdestvensky chose.

It took the Russian fleet 12 days to reach Tsushima Strait at a speed of about nine knots. The Russian fleet was so slow because of the older, slower ships that Rozhdestvensky didn't want to have in his fleet in the first place, and also because the Russian ships were fouled, meaning that their hulls were encrusted with barnacles and other marine life that inevitably accumulates when a ship goes so long without proper maintenance. And, of course, they were burdened with heavy stockpiles of coal.

It is reported that no one in the fleet slept very well the night of May 26, as the Russians approached the narrows. It was a foggy night, and the Russian ships turned off all their lights, hoping to slip through undetected. Unfortunately, there was a hospital ship in the fleet that kept its lights on, in accordance with international law, but it was spotted by a Japanese merchant ship, which used one of those newfangled electrical radio machines to notify Admiral Togo, who ordered the combined fleet to sea at once.

Togo's original plan was to harry the Russian ships all the way through the Sea of Japan, with hit-and-run battleship and cruiser attacks during the day, and torpedo attacks at night. On paper, the Russian fleet looks stronger, with eight battleships to the Japanese four. But the Japanese ships are faster, and Togo took full advantage of this, ordering the fleet to throw their surplus coal overboard so that, in contrast to the Russians, the Japanese ships would be faster and more nimble. The Japanese also had many more small destroyers and torpedo boats which, again, are fast and nimble, and very useful for reconnaissance. Reflecting the Russians' defensive strategy, what destroyers the Russians did have were reserved for evacuating flag officers off of damaged battleships, and the cruisers were tasked with rendering assistance to the damaged battleships.

The Japanese cited the Russians at about 1:40 in the afternoon. Admiral Togo, still the risk taker, ordered his fleet to make a U-turn to port, one ship at a time. It left the Japanese vulnerable during this maneuver, but Togo was willing to gamble that the Russians were tired and that their defensive posture would mean they would not be quick to take advantage of an opening. They weren't. The Japanese completed the maneuver, which allowed them to cross the T of the Russian line, meaning they were able to cross in front of the Russian ships perpendicularly, allowing them to fire with all their guns while the Russians would be limited in their response. The Japanese gun crews, more experience than the Russian counterparts, fired faster and more accurately.

[sound effects: naval warfare]

Within minutes, the lead ships in the two Russian columns, *Oslyabya*, and *Knyaz Suvorov*, were on fire and out of the action, and both ships would sink by nightfall. *Knyaz Suvorov* was Rozhdestvensky's flagship, and the Admiral was wounded and out of action early on. Command of the fleet was transferred to Admiral Nebogatov. Two other Russian battleships were sunk later that afternoon, *Borodino* and *Emperor Alexander III*, and exactly one crewman survived between the two of them.

That night, per Togo's plan, the destroyers and the torpedo boats moved in. Togo ordered them to attack at minimal range, which was another risky decision, but the surviving Russian ships were too panicked and disorganized to take advantage of it. One more battleship was sunk and another scuttled by her crew. The Russians also lost two cruisers. The remaining Russian ships scattered, and headed for Vladivostok. It was every man for himself.

By daylight the next morning, when the larger Japanese ships were readying for a second round of gunfire, Nebogatov decided to surrender. The Russian ships struck their colors and ran up tablecloths, but the Japanese continued to fire. It was only when Nebogatov ordered the ships to run up Japanese flags that the battle ended.

The Russians lost eight battleships sunk or scuttled or captured. Three Russian cruisers escaped to Manila, where they were interned by the Americans. One destroyer escaped to Shanghai and was interned by the Chinese. One cruiser and two destroyers made it to Vladivostok. The Russians suffered over 4800 sailors killed, 6000 captured, and almost 2000 interned. Japanese casualties were 117 sailors killed and 600 wounded. The Japanese lost three torpedo boats.

It is said that the Russian Emperor was playing a game of tennis when a messenger came to him with a telegram bringing the news of the defeat at Tsushima Strait. Nikolai read the telegram, stuck it into his pocket, and went back to finish the match.

[music: Largo from *Scheherazade*, *Opus 35*, by Nikolai Rimsky-Korsakov]

The Battle of the Tsushima Strait is one of the most important naval battles of all time, and the most decisive naval victory since Trafalgar, as, in hindsight, it effectively marks the end of the war. A few days after the battle, Emperor Nikolai accepted Theodore Roosevelt's invitation to a peace conference.

I say in hindsight because not all Russians were ready to quit the war. And when I say not all Russians, I mean the Emperor and the Empress. The Imperial family was living in their rural estate and preoccupied by the health of their infant son Alexei, who suffered from hemophilia. Living in a bubble as they were, isolated from the turmoil in St. Petersburg and throughout the Empire, the Emperor and the Empress spoke of fighting on, whatever the cost. Even after agreeing to the peace conference, Nikolai spoke of sending hundreds of thousands of more troops to Manchuria and crushing the Japanese. Two years earlier, Emperor Nikolai had made an unusual intervention into the affairs of the Russian Orthodox Church in order to advocate for the

canonization of Saint Seraphim. Now the Emperor was reporting that Saint Seraphim had come to him in a dream, and appeared before him to prophesy that Russia would defeat Japan and Britain both and emerge from the war triumphant and stronger than ever.

As spring became summer, talk of peace conferences was in the air but no peace conference had yet been convened, and the people of Russia began to become restless again. The concessions that the Emperor had made back in March proved, under close inspection, to mean very little. He had agreed to an elected Parliament, the State Duma, but he had not actually agreed that it would function as anything more than an advisory body. He agreed to more civil liberties, but nothing was changing. Protests and violence were breaking out again, including pogroms against Jewish communities. You may recall that *The Protocols of the Elders of Zion* came out at about this time, purporting to show that the Jews were conspiring to take over the world, and some in Russia, probably with government encouragement, were inciting the Russian people against the Jews with the argument that Russia's setbacks in the war were all part of the global Jewish conspiracy.

But the most important protest in the summer of 1905 was the mutiny aboard the battleship *Potemkin*. *Potemkin* was one of six battleships in the Russian Black Sea Fleet, the only fleet Russia has left at this time. The most experienced officers and sailors from the Black Sea Fleet had already been transferred to the Pacific, and so by this time the Black Sea Fleet is being crewed and commanded by the second string. Morale was low—I'm starting to feel like a broken record—morale was low, and keeping the Black Sea Fleet supplied and happy was a low priority for the Russian Admiralty, what with the war in the Pacific and all. And the news from Tsushima lowered morale that much further. And socialist revolutionaries were hard at work infiltrating the Black Sea Fleet, as they had in the Baltic Fleet.

On June 27, while *Potemkin* was in the Black Sea on maneuvers, crewmembers complained about the maggoty meat they were being served for lunch. *Potemkin's* first officer dealt with the complaint by shooting one of the complainers, and the crew mutinied, killing the first officer, the captain, and several other officers, and taking control of the ship. They raise the red flag of socialism and headed for the city of Odessa, to support a general strike and antigovernment rioting that was going on there. After a couple of abortive attempts to assist the revolutionaries in Odessa and resupply, the crew of *Potemkin* headed for the Rumanian port of Constanta, where they were granted asylum. They sank *Potemkin* in Constanta harbor, although the Russian Navy was able to raise the ship and return it to service, under a different name.

The *Potemkin* mutiny is a famous moment in Russian history, and many, including Lenin, mark it as the beginning of the real Russian revolution to come. It also made *Potemkin* the most famous ship in Russian naval history, for all the wrong reasons. But it's also an important moment in the Russo-Japanese war, because it genuinely frightened Russia's ruling class. Until now, the protests, the demonstrations, the strikes, the violence did not impress them, because

they had the military. For the first time, Russia's aristocracy had to ask itself, are we losing even the military?

But there would be one more military action before the two sides sat down to talk. The Japanese were getting frustrated at the Russians dragging their feet on the way to the conference table, so they decided a little incentive was in order. Until now, the war was fought entirely on Korean and Chinese territory. One of the Russian arguments against making any concessions was that there had been no attacks on Russian territory, and Russia had lost nothing. By the summer of 1905, Russia had a larger army in Manchuria than it had prior to the battle of Mukden. Maybe Russia could fight on after all.

The reality that this argument ignores is that the Russian army in Manchuria is now straining the limits of supply that can be brought in on the Trans-Siberian Railroad, even though the railroad's capacity has been much upgraded since the war began. The Japanese have pushed the Russians out of the more fertile southern regions of Manchuria, where many supplies could be obtained locally, and into northern Manchuria, where pretty much everything has to be shipped in.

But the Japanese have the same problem. Their supply line is getting longer and longer, and everything has to be shipped in to their army too. And Japan is going deeper and deeper into debt every day the war goes on.

So the Japanese decided the Russians needed another little nudge. In July, they launched an amphibious invasion of the southern coast of the Russian island of Sakhalin. By the beginning of August, they controlled the entire island. The island meant little to the Russians. As we've seen, they were using it as a penal colony, but not for much else. Still, it was Russian territory, and the loss of actual Russian territory was one further blow to Russian prestige, and one more argument for ending the war, and ending it now.

President Roosevelt suggested the Portsmouth Navy Yard in Portsmouth New Hampshire—although it's actually across the state line in Kittery, Maine—as a better location for the peace talks than Washington DC, what with it being summer and all. Roosevelt opened the conference, but did not participate in the talks.

The Japanese demanded five concessions: recognition of Korea as effectively a Japanese protectorate, the withdrawal of Russian troops from Manchuria, the Russian lease on Port Arthur and the Liaodong Peninsula to be turned over to Japan, the island of Sakhalin, and an indemnity payment.

The Russians were okay with the first three of these—they had had quite enough of Manchuria, thank you very much—but the last two were sticking points. The Japanese had been counting on that indemnity payment to pay off the debt they ran up fighting the war. But the Russians flat out refused to pay an indemnity and threatened to walk out of the talks. Japan's image took a beating too. There was a lot of sympathy in the United States and Britain for Japan, but holding up a

peace treaty for the sake of the cash payment looked awfully mercenary. British intelligence advised the Japanese that the Russians might be open to dividing Sakhalin between them, but they were adamant about the indemnity. So the Japanese dropped the indemnity demand in exchange for the concession of the southern half of Sakhalin, and the deal was done.

Roosevelt himself would declare the treaty “a mighty good thing for Russia, and a mighty good thing for Japan, and mighty good for me too.” Way to keep your priorities in order. But he was right. His role in the Treaty of Portsmouth would win Theodore Roosevelt the Nobel Peace Prize for 1906, making him the first American to win a Nobel Prize. I mean, just in case his résumé needed another bullet point.

We’ll have to stop there for today, but I hope you’ll join me next week on history of the 20th century as we wrap up the Russo Japanese war with a discussion of the lessons learned and the consequences for Russia, Japan, and the world. That’s next week on the history of the 20th century.

Oh, and one more thing. Twenty years later, the Soviet director Sergei Eisenstein would direct a dramatized silent film version of the mutiny of the battleship *Potemkin*, called *Battleship Potemkin*. It is a landmark in the history of cinema and has been heavily influential. You have probably not seen it, but you have probably seen modern films whose directors have borrowed techniques from, if not outright copied from, Eisenstein’s film.

The most striking moment in the film is the massacre of the Odessa steps, depicting lines of Imperial Russian soldiers marching down Odessa’s famed outdoor stairs, as they slaughter fleeing civilians. No such massacre actually took place, although there were certainly killings of protestors in Odessa in 1905, but such is the power of the scene that many people today believe the event actually took place, and the Odessa Steps are today known as the Potemkin Stairs.

[music: closing theme]