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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

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INTRODUCTION

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 United States since the middle of the twentieth century. It should be noted, however, that the majority of the earlier investigations were realized from the viewpoint of diplomatic history. The works of Matsumoto Tadao, Peter A. Berton, S. S. Grigortsevich, and Yoshimura Michio could be called the classical examples of this scientific approach.¹ In recent years, the period of “an exceptional Russo-Japanese friendship” has drawn again the attention of young historians, who are attempting to overcome the limits of the International Relations theory by including views of civilizational, economic and cultural aspects of bilateral relations.² However, it is necessary to recognize that all above-mentioned researchers, old and new, seem to be neglecting the aspect of military cooperation in Russo-Japanese relations, despite the fact that the bilateral relations of that time were described even by contemporaries as “the Arms Alliance.”³ In other words, the significance of military aspects was obvious to contemporaries and to many historians, but, ironically,

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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, *Dal'nevostochnaia 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).
 - 2 Igor R. Saveliev, Yuri S. Pestushko, “Dangerous Rapprochement: Russia and Japan in the First World War, 1914–1916,” *Acta Slavica Iaponica* 18 (2001), pp. 19–41; Yu. S. Pestushko, *Iapono-rossiiskie otnosheniia v gody pervoi mirovoi voiny. Avtoreferat dissertatsii na soiskanie uchenoi stepeni kandidata istoricheskikh nauk* (Vladivostok, 2003); Eduard Baryshev, “Theory of Civilizations as a Background of Russo-Japanese Rapprochement during the First World War,” *Slavic Studies* 52 (2005), pp. 205–240 (in Japanese); 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).
 - 3 Ōba Kakō, “Nichiro shin-kyōyaku to heiki dōmei [New Japanese-Russian Convention and the Arms Alliance],” *Taiyō* XXII:10 (August 1, 1916), pp. 106–110.

the details about that cooperation have been unclear until now in the historiography of Russo-Japanese relations.

Fortunately, there are a number of serious investigations concerning the question of armament supply of the Russian Army during the Great War. A solid base for such studies was constructed by former military specialists of the Chief Artillery Department (*Glavnoe Artilleriiskoe Upravlenie*, or GAU) such as A. A. Manikovskii, V. S. Mikhailov, E. Z. Barsukov and V. G. Fedorov, who – in the early Soviet period – described in detail their activities during this dramatic period.⁴ Then, in the second half of the twentieth century and thereafter, the theme of Russia's arms supply policy was elaborated in the works of A. L. Sidorov, Norman Stone, Keith Neilson, Richard Spence, Dale Rielage and O. R. Airapetov, who tried to extrapolate the previous results regarding GAU's activities to different fields of historical research, such as Russia's political and economic history, history of foreign relations and specific interdisciplinary studies.⁵ However, despite the above-mentioned achievements, the supply efforts of the Russian government in the Japanese market have not been investigated properly, mainly because of the language barrier and the inaccessibility of Japanese archival sources and historiographical materials for Russian, European and American historians.

In fact, the issue of military relations between Russia and Japan during the First World War were also partly studied in Japanese historiography. The articles of Akutagawa Tetsushi, published in *The Journal of Military History*, summarized – on the basis of Japanese diplomatic and military sources – results and problems of armaments supply to Russia by the Japanese government in 1914–1917 and marked the contours of Japan's Russian policy in this sphere. A specialist in Japanese economic history, Sakamoto Masako, tried to illuminate Mitsui Bussan corporate's "continental policy" in connection with the problems of weapons supply to Russia. These valuable studies were

4 A. A. Manikovskii, *Boevoe snabzhenie russkoi armii v mirovuiu voynu* (Moscow, 1937); General V. S. Mikhailov (1875–1929): *Dokumenty k biografii. Ocherki po istorii voennoi promyshlennosti* (Moscow, 2007); E. Z. Barsukov, *Russkaia artilleriia v mirovuiu voynu*, 2 vols (Moscow, 1938–1940); V. G. Fedorov, *Oruzheinoe delo na grani dvukh epokh (Raboty oruzheinykh, 1900–1935)*, Ch. 2 (Moscow, 1939); E. Z. Barsukov, *Artilleriia russkoi armii (1900–1917)*, 4 vols (Moscow, 1948–1949).

5 A. L. Sidorov, *Finansovoe polozhenie Rossii v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny (1914–1917)* (Moscow, 1960); A. L. Sidorov, *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Rossii v gody Pervoi mirovoi voiny (1914–1917)* (Moscow, 1973); Norman Stone, *The Eastern Front, 1914–1917* (London, 1975); Keith Neilson, "Russian Foreign Purchasing in the Great War: A Test Case," *The Slavonic and East European Review* 60:4 (October 1982), pp. 572–590; Keith Neilson, *Strategy and Supply: The Anglo-Russian Alliance, 1914–1917* (London, 1984); Richard Spence, *Trust No One: The Secret World of Sidney Reilly* (Los Angeles, 2002); Dale C. Rielage, *Russian Supply Efforts in America During the First World War* (London, 2002); O. R. Airapetov, *Generalny, liberaly i predprinimateli: Rabota na front i na revoliutsiiu (1907–1917)* (Moscow, 2003).

completed mainly through the analysis of Japanese historical sources.⁶ That is, until now the achievements of Soviet (Russian) historiography have gone unnoticed by Japanese history specialists, and vice versa.

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. In the author's opinion, ignorance of Russo-Japanese military relations of that time may lead to the underestimation of the efforts and efficiency of the Tsarist government in the national security sphere and to simplification of the processes, relating both to Russian and international history of that time. More concretely, the author, focusing on the visit of the Chief Artillery Department's special commission to Japan at the beginning of the Great War, strives to clarify the motives, the course and the meaning of Russo-Japanese cooperation in the military sphere. Valuable materials found in the Russian and Japanese archives, as well as secondary literature on both sides help to reconstruct unknown episodes of Russo-Japanese relations.

DEPARTURE OF THE RUSSIAN MILITARY MISSION TO JAPAN

As a result of the European war, all relations of Russia with her traditional European trade partners, also involved in the war, had broken off. Nobody could foresee how long the war would last and the Russian military authorities, in order to prepare for the worst situation, had to concern themselves with armament supplies from alternative sources. Because of the potential Japanese invasion of the Russian Far East, in the first days of August a menacing atmosphere pervaded Russia. However, after several days, the Russian War Ministry learned from different diplomatic, military and private channels that Japan's leading trade companies, such as Mitsui Bussan, had been ready to provide the Russian Army with necessary arms and munitions. At that time, Mitsui Bussan's agent Yamamoto Shotaro was introduced by the Japanese ambassador to Russia, Motono Ichiro (1862–1918), to the War Ministry's top officials and made an arms supply offer. As a result, the head of GAU, Dmitrii Dmitrievich Kuzmin-Karavaev (1856–after 1920), immediately entered into contact with the Japanese military agent Kakizaki Tomosaburo (1861–1924) and expressed the Russian government's desire to purchase from Japan some quantity of cannons (twelve 15-cm cannons and twelve 21-cm howitzers with 500 shells for each gun), shells (800,000 of 3-inch calibre) and other artillery munitions (400,000 powder cartridges and 800,000 time-fuses).⁷

6 Akutagawa Tetsushi, "Buki yushutsu no keifu [The development of arms export]," part 1–2, *Gunji shigaku* [The Journal of Military History] 22:4; 23:1; 23:4 (March 1987 – March 1988); Sakamoto Masako, *Zaibatsu to teikokushugi: Mitsui bussan to chūgoku* [Financial Oligarchy and Imperialism: Mitsui Bussan and China] (Tokyo, 2003).

7 No. 126, Malevsky-Malevich to Sazonov, July 25, 1914, Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi imperii (AVPRI), f. 133 [Kantseliarii ministra inostrannykh del], op. 470, d. 70; No. 134,

On August 15, Japan's government sent to Berlin its ultimatum and initiated preparation for war with Germany. As a result, Russian society was relieved: the menace of war with Japan had disappeared. The next day, the deputy-chief of the General Staff of Japan, Lieutenant-General Akashi Motojiro (1864–1919), who had shown his abilities as a spy and diversion-maker during the Russo-Japanese War, met with Russian military agent Major-General Vladimir Konstantinovich Samoïlov (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.⁸ 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 GAU initiative 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.⁹

On August 25, the Russian military commission, consisting of the gun-specialists of the Artillery Committee of GAU, and headed by Major-General Eduard Karlovich Hermonius (1864–1938), departed from Saint-Petersburg to the Far East. At the beginning of the First World War, General Hermonius, an experienced military engineer, who worked for over 20 years at the Izhevsk arsenals and headed from 1911 to 1914 the Samara Pipe Works, was the person responsible for final inspection and accepting of all guns purchased for the Russian Army from state and private arsenals (*Zaveduiushchii artilleriiskimi priemkami*).¹⁰ In his mission General Hermonius was accompanied by three colleagues: permanent member of the Artillery Committee, Colonel Vladimir Grigorievich Fedorov (1874–1966), and two secretaries of the same Committee, Colonel Mikhail Petrovich Podtiagin and Staff-Captain of Guards Artur Iakovlevich Zadde. Colonel Fedorov, who worked for a long time on creating an automatic rifle, was responsible for inspection of small arms and rifle-cartridges; Colonel Podtiagin was dispatched to “the far countries” as a specialist on artillery and shells, and Staff-Captain Zadde – as an English language interpreter. The officers brought with them samples of different arms and munitions, and, most importantly, General Hermonius was vested with the authority “to carry on all negotiations with the trade company Mitsui.” The members of the Russian technical commission supposed that the Japanese government would sell to

Malevsky-Malevich to Sazonov, July 26, 1914, AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 116; *Nihon gaikō bunsho* [Documents on Japanese Foreign Policy, further – NGB], 1914, Vol. 3 (Tokyo, 1966), p. 680.

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

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

10 For his biography see: *Rossiiskoe zarubezh'e vo Frantsii, 1919–1920. Biograficheskii slovar*, Vol. 1 (Moscow, 2008), p. 360.

the Russian War Ministry arms and munitions from their mobilisation stocks, and their secret the mission would be fulfilled in about two months.¹¹

On September 7, Russian officers, dressed as civilians, arrived in Vladivostok. Mitsui Bussan, the organization standing behind this visit, prepared a special welcome reception for the Russians there. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, which was also informed about the GAU's mission, dispatched to Vladivostok as its special agent the young employee Hozumi Eirai. The next day, Russian officers boarded the steamship *Hozan-maru* of the Osaka Trade Steamship Company, and accompanied by some Japanese officials and merchants, headed by Japan's General Consul in Vladivostok Nomura Motonobu, continued on their way to Japan. On the early morning of September 10, the Russian commission arrived at the port of Tsuruga, where they were welcomed by representatives of Mitsui Bussan Company and Okura Company, local officials and reporters of some central newspapers such as *Tokyo-nichinichi shimbun* and *Hōchi shimbun*. Another member of the Commission, a military orientologist and Japanese language interpreter, Staff-Rittmeister Lev Iosifovich Lion (? -1915) was also waiting for them at Tsuruga's port. After the brief reception General Hermonius answered the questions of Japanese journalists and together with his companions got onto a train bound for Tokyo. Unexpectedly for the Russian officers, their Japanese visit was not a secret to the Japanese public, and "at every station a great number of amazed people gathered." A special reception for the Russians was organized in Nagoya, where the governor himself came to the platform to welcome them. As Fedorov recollected, "the cordiality" of the Japanese people had impressed the Russians on a grand scale.¹²

On September 10, after a long 16-day trip, the Russian commission arrived at the Shimbashi Station in Tokyo, where they were met by thunderous applause and cheers. The *Tokyo asahi shimbun* reported that about five thousand people gathered on this evening at the station to greet General Hermonius as "a special envoy of the Russian Emperor" with Japanese cheers of *banzai*. After the greetings, the Russian officers, accompanied by the Russian military agent Samoilov, went by car to the western-style hotel Tsukiji Seiyoken. The enthusiastic reception, organized by Japanese economic and governmental circles, seems to have been a shock to the Russians greatly and made them too optimistic about the future of Russo-Japanese military cooperation.¹³

11 RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4060, l. 15, 15 ob.; NGB, 1914, Vol. 3, p. 680; Nihon Gaikō Shiryōkan [Japan Diplomatic Records Archive, further – NGS], file 5.1.5.17-7, Vol. 1, pp. 1-2; Fedorov, *Oruzheinoe delo*, pp. 12-13; V. G. Fedorov, *V poiskakh oruzhiia* (Moscow, 1964), pp. 24, 31.

12 *Hōchi shimbun*, September 11, 1914, No. 13476, p. 4; *Tōkyō nichinichi shimbun*, September 11, 1914, No. 13591, p. 7; Fedorov, *V poiskakh oruzhiia*, pp. 26, 30.

13 Fedorov, *V poiskakh oruzhiia*, p. 33; *Tōkyō asahi shimbun*, September 11, 1914, No. 10111, p. 5; *Yomiuri shimbun*, September 11, 1914, No. 13426, p. 7; *Hōchi shimbun*, September 11, 1914, No. 13476, p. 7; *Yomiuri shimbun*, September 12, 1914, No. 13427, p. 7.

The tasks of the Russian commission, set before General Hermonius and his colleagues by GAU, were described in detail in a telegram from Major-General Evgenii Konstantinovich Smyslovskii (1868–1933), which had been wired to Samoilov on September 10:

It is to be desired to purchase immediately from the 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... Please, help General Hermonius to find out the possibility of urgent production of powder by Japan for the field guns, our shrapnel shells and time-fuses... Trotyl, toluene and milenite [picric acid – E. B.] are also necessary.¹⁴

Upon Hermonius's arrival, agents of Mitsui Bussan seem to have presented to the Russian envoy a detailed price-list of available weapons, because, on September 11, Hermonius had already wired to Petrograd his first report, writing that "all prices are normal"; additionally, he notified the GAU's superiors that Mitsui had made an offer to sell to the Russian government "Mexican rifles" of 7-mm calibre.¹⁵

The next morning, on September 12, the Russian officers, accompanied by General Samoilov, visited the War Ministry of Japan. At the ministry they met with influential Japanese military leaders, who were led by the minister Oka Ichinosuke (1860–1916). Among the Japanese officers present at this meeting, there were General Staff Head Hasegawa Yoshimichi (1850–1924) and his deputy General Akashi, the Technical Control Department Head Shimakawa Bunhachiro (1864–1921), Artillery Department Head Tsukushi Kumashichi (1863–1944), an influential representative of the Choshu clan Tanaka Giichi (1864–1929) and other officers, many of whom spoke fluent Russian. This meeting lasted about one hour, but most of the time was used for meaningless diplomatic phrases. The Minister said that the issue could not be decided in a moment, because Japan itself had taken up their arms against Germany and, therefore, needed weapons as well. At this moment, the Russians felt keenly that a decision on this question would take a long time.¹⁶ Tomita Isaburo,¹⁷ a mysterious person, who acted as an interpreter during these negotiations, in the interview to the internal government *Hōchi shimbun*, has reproduced the answer of the Minister as follows: "Japan does not produce arms above the quantity that is necessary for supply of our army forces. In order to begin production of an additional quantity of arms, the sanction of the Emperor is necessary. Without that sanction I cannot give you any positive answer," The Minister is said to have been surprised at the order's scale and declared that

14 RGVA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4060, ll. 24–25.

15 RGVA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4060, l. 22.

16 Fedorov, *V poiskakh oruzhiia*, pp. 34–35.

17 There are grounds to suppose that he was actually George Denbigh Jr. (1884–1954), the third son of an influential businessman of Scottish origin, George Phillips Denbigh (1841–1916), and his Japanese wife Moritaka Teshi (1853–1909).

he would make all possible efforts to acquire the cooperation of leading trade companies in Japan.¹⁸

Then, General Hermonius and his companions together with Ambassador Malevskii-Malevich visited the residence of Minister of Foreign Affairs Kato Takaaki (1860–1926). The Russian envoy, when applying for the Minister's cooperation, declared plainly that he intended to spend two or three months in Tokyo and purchase weapons in the sum of some tens of millions of yen. Kato answered that he could not guarantee that Russian representatives would be fully satisfied with future Japanese orders, and asked Hermonius not to blame the Japanese government in that case.¹⁹ All official meetings of that day took only two hours and finished without any concrete results. The Russians understood that they should be prepared for the worst.²⁰

GENERAL HERMONIUS'S MISSION AND THE FIRST TRIALS

As mentioned previously, in the first days of August, Mitsui Bussan informed the Russian government that it was ready to furnish the Russian Army with various weapons and munitions. As a matter of fact, Mitsui Bussan, the biggest trade company of Japan, acted as a central member of the government-controlled syndicate *Taihei Kumiai* (or Taiping Company) that had been exporting old-model weapons, produced at Japanese Arsenals, to the developing countries. Other members of the *Taihei Kumiai* were Okura Company and Takata Company. Importantly, the executives of Mitsui Bussan 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. Undoubtedly, they understood clearly that their economic position 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 within economic and financial circles of Japan.²¹ The existence of the government-closed *Taihei Kumiai* meant that the interests of the War Ministry and financial circles of Japan often coincided.

By the time of Hermonius's arrival in Tokyo, however, 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. On September 3, Malevskii-Malevich wrote in his telegram to Sazonov that the situation had changed greatly in comparison with the beginning of August, and that in the

18 *Hōchi shimbun*, September 27, 1914, No. 13492, p. 7.

19 *NGB*, 1914, Vol. 3, p. 689.

20 *Tōkyō nichī-nichī shimbun*, September 13, 1914, No. 13593, p. 7.

21 *Mitsui Bussan shitenchō kaigi gijiroku* [Protocols of the Conferences of Mitsui Bussan's Branch Managers], Vol. 9 (1915) (Tokyo, 2004), pp. 107–108; No. 179, Malevsky-Malevich to Sazonov, August 8, 1914, AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 70.

new circumstances Japan needed a great amount of weapons for its own army and fleet.²² All that the Japanese government was going to concede to Russia were sixteen old model cannons that the Japanese Army had taken as trophies after the fall of the Port-Arthur fortress. GAU regarded these cannons as useless and initially refused them, but Japanese officials hinted that they would be displeased with this response. In order to promote the negotiations being carried out by Hermonius the Russian government had to accept this Japanese proposal. On September 15, Malevskii-Malevich and Samoilov informed the Japanese government officials about the decision of the Russian government to receive these old cannons “with full satisfaction.”²³ That meant that Russia was forced to accept the rules of a game that the Japanese were going to play.

In the tense atmosphere of those September days, Russian military officials had accepted an offer from Mitsui Bussan, including 20,350 rifles and 15,050 carbines for 7-mm calibre patron, produced by Tokyo Arsenal for the Mexican government. All rifles and carbines were new model guns, but their quantity was surprisingly small. Besides, GAU wished to have not less than 1,000 cartridges per rifle, but the Japanese could supply each rifle with only 650 cartridges. Hermonius and his colleagues looked on this offer as uninteresting for Russia, but GAU persisted in accepting these rifles. A delicate aspect of the situation was that these guns had been already prepared for transfer to the special commission of the Mexican government, which had already arrived in Tokyo. As Fedorov wrote, “all this resembled a kind of detective story,” in which the Russians were forced to wrest new guns from the Mexican inspectors’ hands. In light of some indirect evidence, it could be supposed that the inspection of these rifles was finished approximately by the end of September.²⁴

The Russians were enthusiastically welcomed by Japanese capitalists and government officials, but time was passing without significant results. Actually, negotiations were not carried out, and General Hermonius and his colleagues were forced to wait for the Japanese government to arrive at a decision. The atmosphere of complete inaction seemed to be very oppressive for the Russians. As Fedorov recollected, they were nervous and applied for cooperation to the Russian ambassador and the military agent, but Malevskii and Samoilov could not help them either. After the defeat of the Russian Army in Prussia, the overly enthusiastic reception of the Japanese seemed dishonest and insincere. Fedorov said that “all this was very tiresome and wearisome, because we had

22 No. 200, Malevsky-Malevich to Sazonov, August 21, 1914, AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 70.

23 *Mezhdunarodnye otnosheniia v epokhu imperializma (further – MOEI)*, Vol. 6, Ch. 1 (Moscow, 1935), pp. 244–245, footnotes; RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4059, l. 2; NGB, 1914, Vol. 3, p. 689; Bōei kenkyūsho [The National Institute for Defense Studies, NIDS], 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], T. 3–6.39, pp. 403–406.

24 See: Fedorov, *Oruzheinoe delo*, pp. 13–14; Fedorov, *V poiskakh oruzhiia*, pp. 36–37; Manikovskii, *Boevoe snabzhenie russkoi armii*, p. 276; Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Rossiiskoi Federatsii (GARF), f. R-6173 [E. K. Hermonius], op. 1, d. 11, l. 1.

not even an idea to pass more than 12 thousand kilometres only for that."²⁵ The Russians proposed different initiatives, like the creation of a special Russo-Japanese commission on armament supply, but the Japanese government did not show any interests in these ideas.²⁶

As for artillery, by the end of September, the Japanese government had eventually proposed to provide thirty-four 24-cm coastal mortars with 3,000 shells, fourteen 24-cm Kane cannons, twelve 28-cm howitzers with 1,200 shells, four 20-cm siege howitzers and twelve 10.5-cm cannons with 1,200 shells. However, they said that this artillery could be transferred to Russia no earlier than after two months, because they first needed to remove them from fortresses.²⁷ The provision of these artillery guns looked like a great success, but for the Russian specialists it was doubtful whether they would be useful for the Russian Army, because the guns were of a relatively old type, and the number of shells was too small. In order to fulfill their mission, Russian officials also had to purchase a large number of rifles, but negotiations had almost frozen. In desperation, at the beginning of October, General Hermonius declared that he had no plan to stay in Japan longer and would soon return to Russia. Details are unclear, but *Hōchi shimbun* reported that the Russians had moved from Tsukiji Seiyoken Hotel to a plain house in Enoki-machi in the Akasaka district. This "ultimatum," as Fedorov recollected, brought an effect immediately. In a few days, the Japanese government and merchants had agreed to sell to Russia 200,000 rifles of an 1897 model with 100 cartridges per rifle. However, according to the plan proposed, only 70,000 rifles could be ready by October, and the rest would be transferred in December. According to Fedorov, "the Japanese Ministry explained this slowness by the necessity to take rifles from regiments to be replaced by new guns of the 1905 model. Then, they explained, these rifles should be gathered at storehouses for inspection and repair and this process also would take a lot of time."²⁸

Fedorov pointed out:

The cartridge question was the most important and the most unfavorable. It was clear that Japan's War Ministry did not wish to weaken its army by decreasing their cartridge stocks, and regarded, probably, that the war with Germany, and the complete German defeat, were not among the tasks the Japanese Empire had set before itself. The weakening of Russia's western neighbour could not bring direct benefits for Japan. At the same time, Qingdao's fall was considered by the Japanese as only a question of time.

25 Fedorov, *V poiskakh oruzhiia*, p. 35; *Yomiuri shimbun*, September 16, 1914, No. 13431, p. 7; *Yomiuri shimbun*, September 15, 1914, No. 13430, p. 2.

26 See: Nos. 234–235, Malevsky-Malevich to Sazonov, September 10 and 16, 1914, AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 70; *NGB*, 1914, Vol. 3, p. 693.

27 Nos. 228, 231, 234, Malevsky-Malevich to Sazonov, September 4, 7 and 11, 1914, AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 70; *MOEI*, Vol. 6, Ch. 1, p. 245, footnote 2.

28 Fedorov, *V poiskakh oruzhiia*, pp. 40–45; *Hōchi shimbun*, October 14, 1914, No. 13509, p. 7; *GARF*, f. R-6173, op. 1, d. 11, l. 2; *NGS*, file 5.1.5.17–7, Vol. 1, p. 30.

As a result of the persistent efforts of Russian officials, Japanese merchants agreed additionally to sell to Russia five million cartridges (25 bullets per rifle), but, according to Fedorov, this was “equal to a refusal.”²⁹ In other words, Japan had agreed to sell Russia a great number of rifles, which could not be used fully because of a shortage of cartridges. In the instructions of War Minister-Deputy Oshima Ken’ichi (1858–1947) to the military agent in Paris, Fukuhara Yoshiya, from 28 December 1915, the position of Japan’s government was explained in the following way:

Some time after the war began, Russia requested us to hand over 300,000 rifles.³⁰ Our store stocks were not enough to satisfy that request. In this situation we decided to accelerate the process of change of 1897 model rifles with ones of 1905 model, planned for one or two years, and to concede 200,000 rifles and all cartridges that we had. – We considered that the sale of old-model rifles was beneficial for us.³¹

As a matter of fact, the Japanese War Ministry formally had no right to sell weapons, both new and old, used in the acting 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 the 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 conceded “repaired” old rifles, formally as newly produced ones, through *Taihei Kumiai* to Russia. The arsenals acquired old guns for repair, but returned to the army new guns of the 1905 model. Thus, Russia paid to modernize the Japanese Army.³²

“RUSSO-JAPANESE FRIENDSHIP” AND ARMS SUPPLY

Among the important issues for the Hermonius mission were the questions of who should sign contracts with Japanese weapons suppliers and where. At first, it was considered that the Hermonius mission would carry on negotiations with Mitsui Bussan and inspect arms only. In order to avoid wasting money, all contracts were to be concluded at Petrograd. However, “time does

29 Fedorov, *Oruzheinoe delo*, p. 15.

30 As mentioned previously, at first Hermonius was obliged to obtain one million rifles.

31 Akutagawa, “Buki yushutsu no keifu (1),” *Gunji Shigaku* 22:4 (March 1987), p. 28; NIDS, Ji Taishō 3-nen itaru dō-11-nen. Kakkoku-gun ni gunki kyōkyū ni kansuru tsuzuri [The File Relating Weapons Supply for Armies of Different Countries, 1914–1922], T. 3–6.39, pp. 282–283.

32 Taketomi Tokitoshi, “Ōkuma naikaku zaisei kaisōroku [Recollections about the Financial Policy of the Okuma Cabinet]” in Shibutani Sakusuke, *Taketomi Tokitoshi* (Tokyo, 1934), pp. 26–33.

not wait," and by October 10 Hermonius received permission to sign contracts in Tokyo. In two or three days he concluded his first contract, concerning the "Mexican guns," with a Mitsui Bussan agent. The sum of the bargain was equal to 200,000 pounds sterling, which were to be transferred to the London branch of the Yokohama Specie Bank. Interestingly, the War Ministry sold these guns to Mitsui Bussan at one-half of the above-mentioned price (1,074,000 yen).³³ The price and quality of the rifles were acceptable to the Russian government. The only demerit was their limited quantity and the shortage of cartridges. On October 15, the loading of the shipment of "Mexican guns" to the Volunteer Fleet's steamship *Erivan* began at Yokohama port and in two days it departed to Vladivostok. It was decided that the "Mexican guns" would be used at the Russian-Manchuria border by border-guard regiments, and their rifles would be sent to the front.³⁴

On October 15, Hermonius signed a preliminary purchasing act, concerning a deal for 200,000 rifles. Everything was also prepared for concluding a contract with *Taihei Kumiai* for heavy artillery. However, in a few days Hermonius received two telegrams from GAU with instructions to postpone the contracts' conclusion.³⁵ According to Fedorov's memoirs, for Russian officials "it looked like a catastrophe." In this situation, Hermonius and his colleagues tried to persuade the GAU staff that Japanese rifles could be used in the rear-guard and reserve regiments; they proposed also to order cartridges for them from Britain. Malevskii also cabled to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that it was not "appropriate for the honour of Imperial [Russian] Government" to refuse these weapons.³⁶ On October 24, at the office of War Minister Sukhomlinov an extraordinary meeting took place, and afterwards it was decided that Russia would accept Japanese rifles and heavy artillery. Remarkably, at this meeting the ambassador Motono stated that "Japan is ready to supply additionally in the future these rifles with cartridges in the quantity of 900 pieces per rifle." On October 25, GAU wired a telegram to Hermonius, ordering him to conclude the contracts.³⁷

Interestingly, according to General Hermonius's notebook, the contract No. 3027 about purchasing 200,000 rifles and 25 million cartridges was signed

33 *Hōchi shimbun*, October 14, 1914, No. 13509, p. 7; No. 244, Malevsky-Malevich to Sazonov, September 19, 1914, AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 70; AVPRI, f. 150 [Yaponskii stol], op. 493, d. 1868, l. 37; No. 261, Malevsky-Malevich to Sazonov, September 30, 1914, AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 70; *Mitsui Bussan shitenchō kaigi gijiroku*, pp. 107-108; GARF, f. R-6173, op. 1, d. 11, l. 1; NGS, file 5.1.5.17-7, Vol. 4, pp. 1710-1715.

34 Nos. 264 and 265, Malevsky-Malevich to Sazonov, October 2/15 and 4/17, 1914, AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 70; Fedorov, *V poiskakh oruzhiia*, p. 37.

35 AVPRI, f. 150, op. 493, d. 1868, l. 62.

36 No. 272, Malevsky-Malevich to Sazonov, October 9, 1914, AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 70; Fedorov, *Oruzheinoe delo*, pp. 15-16.

37 RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4060, ll. 11-13; AVPRI, f. 150, op. 493, d. 1868, ll. 61, 64.

by him and *Taihei Kumiai* representative Suda Nobutsugu on October 21, that is, before the eventual permission arrived. The Russian government had to pay 4,359,000 yen for these weapons (*Taihei Kumiai* paid 3,486,000 yen to the War Ministry). The same day, Hermonius concluded contract No. 3026, for 500,000 3-inch shells, with the *Taihei Kumiai* syndicate, which recognized the Russian government's right to obtain an additional 300,000 shells from Japan. The latter was to be fulfilled by the Tokyo-Ishikawajima shipyard, and its sum was 4,768,000 yen. Japanese merchants promised to deliver one-half of the shells in eight months and the other half in the next four months. This bargain about "the work-horse" of the Russian Army (3-inch shells) was a big success.³⁸

The Hermonius mission seemed to have managed to use especially warm relations between Japanese financial circles and American industrialists. Thanks to Mitsui Bussan Company, the Russian War Ministry entered into contact with the leading player on the world powder market, the DuPont de Nemours Company. In the first days of September, the Russian General Staff was informed that the firm Mitsui had been ready to supply the Russian Army with different sorts of powder, produced by the above-mentioned American powder-maker. These negotiations had once reached a dead end, but, at the beginning of October, Motono informed the Russian government that if Russia raised the question again, Japan would satisfy this Russian request. The terms were determined as follows: 1) The immediate signing of the contract with Mitsui, 2) 60 percent payment of the contract sum to London Lloyds Bank, and 3) the acceptance of the guarantee of the Yokohama Specie Bank.³⁹ On October 24, Hermonius signed a contract with Mitsui Bussan Company about purchasing 3,003,000 pounds of powder (approximately equal to 1,362 metric tons) from DuPont. The total sum of the contract was 642,000 pounds sterling. 200,000 tons of powder was to be delivered to Russia in the first four months, and the rest – in one year.⁴⁰ The task of accepting the powder from DuPont was charged to military engineer Colonel Nikolai Ivanovich Zhukovskii, who arrived in Japan with chemist Tikhonovich at the end of September and then went to America.

On October 29, Hermonius concluded some additional contracts with Japanese firms. At first, he signed contract No. 3047 with the *Taihei Kumiai* syndicate for heavy artillery. The Japanese company promised to deliver artillery guns to Russia by the end of 1914 as follows:

- four 20-cm siege howitzers and 400 cartridge-cases
- twelve 10.5-cm field guns of the 1905 model, 600 grenades with cartridge-cases and 3,900 Krupp-model high-explosives
- thirty-four 24-cm coastal mortars with 3,000 cast-iron shells
- twelve 28-cm coastal howitzers with carriages and 1,200 cast-iron shells

38 GARF, f. R-6173, op. 1, d. 11, l. 2; NGS, file 5.1.5.17-7, Vol. 1, p. 30.

39 RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4453, ll. 149, 83; RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4060, l. 7.

40 GARF, f. R-6173, 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.

- fourteen 24-cm coastal guns
- two 10-ton cranes.

The total sum of the contract was equal to 1,474,000 yen.⁴¹ 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, on the Russian money, had to produce new replacement guns, and that opened the way to the speedy modernization of the Japanese Army.

Thus, by the end of October, Hermonius and his companions had reached some positive results. At that time, members of the Russian military commission were actively engaged in the inspection and accepting of the weapons. The GAU officials' mission was considered to be coming to an end. On the other hand, it became clear that the German stronghold at the Far East fortress of Qingdao would be taken by Japanese troops in several days. In this situation, on October 29, the Russian Ambassador requested an audience with the Emperor for Russian officials. On November 6, General Hermonius and his colleagues were informed that the Emperor would receive them on November 9. The Russians were notified that they would be awarded with Japanese orders, in accordance with their ranks: Hermonius was to be awarded with the Rising Sun Order of the Second Degree, Fedorov and Podtiagin – with the same order of the third degree, Zadde and Lion – the same order of the fifth degree.⁴²

On November 9, two days after the fall of Qingdao, Russian officials, accompanied by Malevskii-Malevich, visited the Imperial Palace. Fedorov recalled the visit:

Court carriages were sent for us, and we moved to the Imperial Town, located at the centre of Tokyo... We entered through a big gate and found ourselves between many buildings, comprising the Imperial Town. The Mikado's Palace was distinguished by an exceedingly modest style of facade and was of small size. Within the palace everything had an extremely original look also: floors were covered with mats, there were not any signs of furniture, but everything was ideally clean. The Russian Ambassador met us, and we entered together into the Throne Hall, a very long and narrow room without any signs of decoration...

Around us, immobile as statues, the persons of the Imperial Suite – general-adjutants in khaki-colour uniforms and hats with lush white plumes, important dignitaries, chamberlains, ushers, marshals – all in European tunics, embroidered with gold, were standing. In accordance with the Eastern cer-

41 GARF, f. R-6173, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 23, 23 ob.; GARF, f. 676 [Velikii Knyaz' Georgii Mikhailovich], op. 1, d. 352, l. 13; Akutagawa, "Buki yushutsu no keifu (2)," *Gunji Shigaku* 23:1 (June 1987), pp. 49–50.

42 NGS, file 6-4-3.3-10, Gaikokujin ekken kankei zakken: Rokoku no bu [Materials Relating to Audiences with Foreigners: Russia], Vol. 3; *Yomiuri shimbun*, November 10, 1914, No. 13486, p. 3; *Yomiuri shimbun*, January 1, 1915, No. 13537, p. 11; *Tōkyō nichī-nichī shimbun*, November 10, 1914, No. 13651, p. 5.

emonial occasions, the Suite had to freeze before the Mikado entered the living picture. Indeed, nothing could break the stone immobility of these people. Our Ambassador whispered about something with the Marshal, and then, one by one, we approached the Emperor, in accordance with our ranks. Only at this time did I have an opportunity to discern Him well. The Ambassador warned us not to stare at Him, but we, as military men, who are used to looking directly at our authorities during presentations, could not change our habits and did not follow the Eastern etiquette properly. The Emperor was in usual khaki-colour uniform with the band of the highest Russian order on his shoulder. In his hands he held a military cap. His low stature and his entire figure were not coinciding well with the lush ritual and solemn atmosphere of the ceremony. Undoubtedly, he was uneasy with all these ceremonies.⁴³

Probably, the audience became the most triumphal point for the Hermonius mission's members during their stay in Japan. Fedorov said that in these days they had been "full of rose-colored hopes."⁴⁴ Their mission seemed to have been finishing satisfactorily, and, on November 17, a farewell party was held at Tsukiji Seiyoken Hotel on the initiative of the Russians. The heads of Tokyo's leading newspapers, the president of Mitsui Company Mitsui Hachiroemon (or Mitsui Takamine, 1857–1948), Baron Okura Kihachiro (1837–1928), business magnate Takata Shinzo (1852–1921), Tokyo mayor Sakatani Yoshio (1863–1941), various agents of *Taihei Kumiai* and many others were present. At this party, Hermonius warmly thanked the Japanese for their military help.⁴⁵ Russian military officials seemed to have already begun to prepare for their departure, but then it became clear that some of them had to stay in Japan for some additional months.

THE LIMITS OF THE RUSSO-JAPANESE ALLIANCE AND GENERAL HERMONIUS'S DEPARTURE

As a matter of fact, the Russians hoped that after the fall of Qingdao the Japanese government would be able to provide Russia with more intensive military support, or even dispatch their troops to the Eastern front. The Staff of the Commander-in-chief was especially interested in Japanese siege-guns, released after Qingdao fell. Formally, Hermonius was requested to sound out the position of the Japanese government about the concession of the heavy artillery and to continue negotiations for rifles and rifle cartridges. Hermonius's correspondence with GAU shows, however, that the real situation was more difficult. In a telegram sent on November 23, Smyslovskii informed Hermonius of the following circumstances:

43 Fedorov, *V poiskakh oruzhiia*, pp. 72–76; *Tōkyō nichi-nichi shimbun*, November 10, 1914, No. 13651, p. 7.

44 Mitsui bunko [Mitsui Archives], Motochō [Ledgers], the first part of 1915, book A, p. 86; Fedorov, *V poiskakh oruzhiia*, p. 72.

45 *Yomiuri shimbun*, November 18, 1914, p. 2.

At present time we are conducting diplomatic negotiations not on purchasing, but on the dispatching to us of a Japanese siege regiment. You should not take any actions on your own judgment, because it may bring damage to our plans. Probably, as a gift you would have to buy something like old guns or time-fuses. In this case, try to get some benefit from this purchase, to add them to shrapnel shells, which are being produced now in Japan. As for rifle cartridges, buy all that you can.⁴⁶

The content of this telegram shows that GAU did not set new tasks before Hermonius. All that he had to do was to manage the orders that he had placed and make additional purchases of rifle cartridges.

By the beginning of December, the membership of the commission had been changed. Staff-Captain Nikolai Vladimirovich Osipov (1878–1925), a military orientologist, who graduated from the Eastern Institute, was appointed as a new Japanese interpreter for Hermonius. As for Staff-Rittmeister Lion, he had managed to get permission for departure to the front. On November 27, Colonel Fedorov also departed from Tsuruga to Russia. Staff-Captain Zadde and chemist Tikhonovich also left Japan soon. Account books of Mitsui Bussan show that the company used some money for good-bye presents. In other words, only Hermonius and Podtiagin remained in Japan of the initial members of the commission.⁴⁷

Japanese government officials and merchants, as earlier, took care of the Russian officials, but in the sphere of military cooperation there was no definite progress. At the end of November, the Russians understood that the Japanese government was not prepared to dispatch siege-artillery regiments with its manpower to the Eastern Front. Instead, the Japanese government agreed to hand over to Russia some quantity of artillery guns and to dispatch with them 11 officers and some non-commissioned officers as instructors.⁴⁸ In a telegram sent on December 3, Hermonius informed GAU about the 96 artillery guns, which the Japanese used during the siege of Qingdao and could potentially cede to their allies. In his opinion, the artillery guns that the Japanese proposed for sale were of a relatively old type and had no big value for the Russian Army. Russians needed heavy guns of 20-cm or 24-cm calibre, but the Japanese agreed to hand over only 12-cm and 15-cm howitzers in great quantity and four 28-cm howitzers of an old type. GAU persisted in the purchasing of siege-guns, but Hermonius felt some dissatisfaction with this kind of “cooperation.” In a telegram sent on December 5, he wrote as follows:

The general impression is that all old guns bought by us and those that we are going to buy as gifts are being handed over to us by the Japanese as gifts, ac-

46 RGVIA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4059, l. 44.

47 *Kitai i Iaponiia: Obzor periodicheskoi pechati*, No. 229, June 1915, p. 77; Mitsui bunko, Motochō, the first part of 1915, book A, p. 88.

48 No. 291, Malevsky-Malevich to Sazonov, November 20, 1914, AVPRI, f. 133, op. 470, d. 70; MOEI, Vol. 6, Ch. 2, p. 125.

ording to the opinion of the government, party politicians and social [figures – here the text is unclear, E. B.]... Laymen cannot estimate the quality of those weapons; the quantity of those is, of course, large for Japan.⁴⁹

That is, Hermonius felt some dissatisfaction with the approach taken by the Russian government, which not only bought the expensive “presents” from the Japanese, but was forced to thank them for such “a mercy.”

On December 21, Hermonius managed to conclude a new contract – 35 days after the last one – for purchasing 300,000 35-second time-fuses. After four days the Russian envoy signed another contract with the same *Taihei Kumiai* for about 500,000 3-inch cartridge-cases. The Russian government paid about 3 million yen for these two orders.⁵⁰ These two orders were “gifts” to the Japanese, according to the GAU’s terminology. Concerning negotiations for siege-guns, talks had finished by the end of the year. On January 2, 1915, contract No. 3216 was concluded with *Taihei Kumiai*. According to it, Russia purchased 59 siege-guns, released after the fall of Qingdao, for 1,475,000 yen. They were:

- fifteen 28-cm coast howitzers, 3,000 shells for them with powder and time-fuses
- sixteen 15-cm field howitzers, 6,400 bombs with cartridge-cases and powder, 1,600 shrapnel shells with cartridge-cases and powder, 2,600 high-explosives with cartridge-cases and powder
- twenty-eight 12-cm field howitzers, 5,600 bombs with cartridge-cases and powder, 5,600 shrapnel shells with cartridge-cases and powder, 6,650 high-explosives with cartridge-cases and powder.⁵¹

Symbolically, Kuzmin-Karavaev wrote to Head of the Commander-in-Chief’s Staff Nikolai Nikolaevich Ianushkevich (1868–1918) on December 23 that this purchase “should be considered a political one [from the Japanese position – E. B.], but not as a contribution for the restoring of our armaments deficiencies.”⁵²

Why, at the end of 1914, did GAU consider some Japanese contracts concerning artillery guns as mere “gifts” and underestimate Japanese cooperation? Probably, the reason was the overwhelming reliance on Russia’s traditional European partners like the Vickers Company, which received in November an order for 1.2 million 3-inch shells. Great Britain was Russia’s main ally, and the War Ministry at that time had not any reason to get rid of its cooperative initiatives. On December 25, at Petrograd a new contract with the Canadian Purchasing Syndicate was concluded for purchasing two million 3-inch shells. As a result, by the end of 1914, GAU considered the question of 3-inch shell supply as almost decided. On the other hand, the need for rifles, calculated in Septem-

49 RGVA, f. 2000, op. 1, d. 4059, l. 43.

50 GARF, f. R-6173, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 17, 20.

51 GARF, f. R-6173, op. 1, d. 11, l. 25; GARF, f. 676, op. 1, d. 352, l. 13.

52 E. Z. Barsukov, *Russkaia artilleriia v mirovuiu voinu*, Vol. 1 (Moscow, 1938), p. 242.

ber as one million, had not yet been addressed. In November 1914, GAU managed to conclude at Petrograd the only contract with the American Winchester Repeating Arms Company for the production of 100,000 3-line rifles, but that quantity, of course, was not enough.⁵³ That is why Hermonius and Malevskii were ordered to make all efforts to obtain some quantity of rifles from Japan's mobilisation stocks immediately. At the end of 1914, the Russians requested the Japanese government to hand over 150,000 rifles, and after some days were additionally instructed to initiate a request for 300,000 rifles. On January 13, Malevskii visited Minister Kato and officially asked the Japanese government to hand over an additional 300,000 rifles.⁵⁴

The position of the Japanese government on the question of bilateral military cooperation was ambivalent. On the one hand, it was interested in Russia's support during the Sino-Japanese negotiations that were soon going to start, and could not refuse Russia completely. On the other hand, the War Ministry of Japan had no intention to enhance the army of a "potential enemy" at their own expense. In this situation, on January 23, Kato informed Malevskii as a final answer that the War Ministry was ready to sell only 100,000 rifles after their repair. According to Hermonius, the rifles were of "rather doubtful quality," but after some consideration GAU decided to purchase them. As a result, on January 28, between Hermonius and an agent of *Taihei Kumiai* the new contract was signed. In accordance with the contract, the syndicate promised to concede to Russia 85,000 rifles and 15,000 carbines of the 1897 model with 22.6 million cartridges for the total sum of 2,612,000 yen. Delivery had to be finished by the end of April.⁵⁵ It should be noted also 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 break-through. Probably, in this situation, GAU officials thought that the opportunities in the Japanese arms market had already been exhausted and decided to withdraw Hermonius from Tokyo.⁵⁶

In the first part of February, Hermonius signed some minor contracts with Tataki Company (rifle bayonets), Suzuki Company (camphor), Mitsui Bussan Company (2,000 automatic Mauser pistols and 400,000 cartridges for them) and Yamaguchi Company (rifle belts). Then, on February 18, he concluded an important contract with Iwai Company for purchasing 393,131 tons of gun powder to be delivered to Russia within one year. The total sum of the order, which was to be fulfilled by the Aboshi Factory, was equal to 1,819,000 yen.⁵⁷ The last contract, concluded by Hermonius on February 24, was with the

53 Sidorov, *Ekonomicheskoe polozhenie Rossii*, pp. 33, 259–261, 266–268; Stone, *The Eastern Front*, pp. 150–151, 317; Neilson, "Russian Foreign Purchasing," pp. 572–590; Rielage, *Russian Supply Efforts*, pp. 19–20, 30, 38.

54 NGB, 1915, Ch. 3, vol. 2, p. 992.

55 GARF, f. R-6173, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 4, 74.

56 *General V. S. Mikhailov (1875–1929)*, p. 345; Rielage, *Russian Supply Efforts*, p. 30.

57 GARF, f. R-6173, op. 1, d. 11, ll. 7, 9–10, 36, 43, 74.

Taihei Kumiai syndicate for purchasing 216 75-mm field guns of the Arisaka model with all necessary munitions, including 324,000 shells of different kinds. All that artillery, which cost Russia over six million yen, was to be delivered in three months.⁵⁸

The time to return home had come. Before their departure, General-Major Hermonius, Colonel Podtiagin and Staff-Captain Osipov, who had successfully completed their special mission in Japan, were given a special reception at the private residence of Field-Marshal Yamagata in Odawara. On March 1, Hermonius and his companions made their way home from the newly constructed Tokyo Railway Station, where they were given a hearty send-off by those who had reaped great profits from Russia's war orders. Among those who came to see the Russians off, were the figures Takata Shinzo and Okura Kihachiro accompanied by their sons. *Hōchi shimbun* reasonably called Hermonius in its reportage "the angel, who had brought Japanese economic circles to life."⁵⁹ Official circles were represented by Deputy-Minister of Foreign Affairs Matsui Keishiro (1868–1946), the Trade Department head Sakata Jujiro (?–1919), the head of Personnel Department of the War Ministry Kikuchi Shinosuke (1866–1927) and some others. The Russian military agent General-Major Samoilov and his assistant Colonel Nikolai Mikhailovich Morel, who were going to Osaka, saw them off as far as the Maibara Station. The next day, March 2, Hermonius and his colleagues boarded the Volunteer Fleet's steamship and went to Vladivostok.⁶⁰

Their mission was successfully fulfilled, and new trials were waiting for them. From May 1915 General Hermonius continued his work on armaments supply as the chief of the Russian governmental committee in London; perhaps, that time Hermonius's name was known by everybody who was interested in the Russian Army's supply. After the Russian Revolution, they said, he lived for a long time in Czechoslovakia, working at the Škoda Factory, and died at Levant. Colonel Podtiagin and chemist Tikhonovich, as experienced specialists of GAU, were sent to Japan again in 1915 to continue their work on arms supply. Podtiagin remained there until 1923 and then immigrated to the United States to spend his last days; his archival collection is now in the Hoover Institution at Stanford University. It is known that Captain Osipov followed the Japanese artillerists to Russia in the spring of 1915, and in August 1916 came back Japan

58 GARE, f. 676, op. 1, d. 352, l. 13; NGB, 1915, Ch. 3, Vol. 2, pp. 1031–1032.

59 The so called "Taisho economic boom" has been studied for a long time by many researchers of economic history of Japan, but the influence of the Russian orders on the Japanese economy has remained until now a poorly elaborated topic. For some data about this aspect of the arms supply question, see: Bāruishefu Edowarudo [Eduard Baryshev], "The Background of the Russo-Japanese Military Cooperation during the First World War: Mitsui Bussan's Trading Strategy towards Russia [Daiichiji Sekai taisenki niokeru Nichi-ro gunji kyōryoku no haikei: Mitsui-bussan no tai-ro Bōeki senryaku]," *Shimane Journal of North East Asian Research* 21 (March 2011), pp. 23–41 (In Japanese).

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

as an assistant military agent. He supposedly committed suicide in Tokyo in 1925. As for Zadde, during the First World War he worked as a specialist for the GAU in the United States, and seems to have stayed there after the Russian Revolution. During the First World War Colonel Fedorov worked in different places supplying arms for the Russian Army, and afterwards contributed a lot to enhancing Soviet military power; he left for us interesting writings, based on his private memoirs that help to deepen our understanding of Russo-Japanese relations of that time. One of the members of the Commission, Staff-Rittmeister Lion, a talented officer-orientologist, by his own request was sent to the front and was killed in the summer of 1915.

CONCLUSION

In this article the author had space to analyze only one episode of Russo-Japanese military cooperation, relating to the initial period of the First World War, but it allows us to make some general conclusions about the nature and character of bilateral relations during the Great War. First of all, it should be noted that GAU's intensive armaments supply activities on the foreign market began with "the Hermonius mission" in September of 1914. Thanks to the early dispatch of the GAU's Commission to Japan, many tasks were fulfilled successfully during Hermonius's stay in Tokyo. By the spring of 1915, 340,000 small arms of different calibres, 351 artillery guns, time-fuses and cartridge-cases for 3-inch shells (500,000), shrapnel shells (500,000), powder of different kinds and other strategic materials had been ordered.⁶¹ That was the most important result of the Commission's activity. One of the members of the Hermonius commission, Colonel Fedorov, pointed out that the purchase of the Arisaka rifles was "the first positive measure," taken by the GAU at the beginning of the Great War.⁶² The Hermonius mission's return to Russia in March 1915 meant that they had done all that was possible, and the arms supply business in Japan had been already put on a firm basis.⁶³

Second, evaluating the results of the Hermonius mission, we should also take into consideration that all the above-mentioned Japanese orders were fulfilled by the autumn of 1915. At the same time, all weapons bought by Hermonius in Japan were of good quality and were purchased at moderate prices. The rifles were not new, and were not provided with the necessary quantity of car-

61 *MOEI*, Vol. 7, Ch. 1, pp. 156-158.

62 Fedorov, *Oruzheinoe delo*, p. 19.

63 By March 1917, the Japanese government supplied GAU at least with 672,000 rifles and 210 million cartridges, 800 artillery guns of different calibres and 6.5 million shells for them, and besides 3.76 million shells, 2.16 million cartridge-cases and 1.8 million time-fuses for 3-inch Russian field guns (*NGS*, file 5.1.5.17-7, Vol. 4, pp. 1710-1715; Manikovskii, *Boevoe snabzhenie russkoi armii*, pp. 291-292; Barsukov, *Artilleriia russkoi armii*, Vol. 2, pp. 178-179).

tridges, but they could be used by reserve and guard regiments or on the second line of the front. As for artillery guns, which were also short of shells, 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 breaches and bring to the Russian Army “a small respite.”⁶⁴ 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 Japanese-made. The most important purchase for Russia was the 3-inch shells 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 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. In this situation, in December 1915, the Russian General Staff decided to transfer all Japanese rifles to the Northern Front for use on the first front-line together with Russian 3-inch rifles and Austrian trophy rifles, and this was a clear sign of confidence in the Japanese rifles and the Japanese government. Remarkably, thanks to this measure as well, by the spring of 1916 the Russian Army had almost coped with the shortage of rifles.⁶⁵

The resolution of the Russian government, adopted at the meeting of the Ministers’ Council on March 18, 1916, could be mentioned as a splendid example of the special attitude of the Tsarist government to the Japanese market. This resolution, named “About Providing with Proper Credits [Russian] Foreign Orders (*Ob obespechenii sootvetstvuiushchimi kreditami proizvodimykh za granitsei zagotovlenii*),” indicated clearly that there was a necessity “to pay special attention to the question of the placement of our foreign orders in Japan.” In connection with the Russian orders in Japan this resolution stated as follows:

... 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 oth-

64 Fedorov, *Oruzheinoe delo*, p. 19; Manikovskii, *Boevoe snabzhenie russkoi armii*, p. 213.

65 Fedorov, *Oruzheinoe delo*, pp. 72–74; Manikovskii, *Boevoe snabzhenie russkoi armii*, pp. 212–214.

er 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.⁶⁶

General Hermonius himself, highly evaluating Japan's efforts in arms supply for Russia, said afterwards:

I can attest to the accurate fulfilment of orders from the official factories of Japan – in the sense of metal quality, all sizes' maintenance, etc. – as I have not seen such accuracy anywhere. In this sphere the "pupils" positively have overcome their "teachers." Neither at the official factories, nor in the case of ordering on the private Japanese market, have I heard any complaints about the severity of our technical terms, which were usual when ordering from other countries. All our claims were fulfilled unquestioningly. We had the impression that the Japanese were pleased with that case, given them in order to improve their production, and were trying to cope with such strict requirements.⁶⁷

In other words, 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 the beginning of 1916. The latter resulted in some cooling in the relations with European partners and a "thaw" in Russo-Japanese relations. This change in political atmosphere became a proper background for the visit of Great Duke Georgii Mikhailovich to Japan at the beginning of 1916, and could be considered one of the distant sources of the secret Russo-Japanese alliance treaty of July 3, 1916.⁶⁸ That is why the Hermonius mission is a very important topic for analysis of Russo-Japanese relations and the contribution of the Japanese government to enhancing the Russian Army during the First World War.

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 Japanese politi-

66 Sidorov, *Finansovoe polozhenie Rossii*, pp. 539–540.

67 GARF, f. R-6173, op. 1, d. 26, l. 40.

68 For more background information on the Russo-Japanese alliance of 1916 see: E. A. Baryshev, "Russko-iaponskaia politicheskaiia konventsiiia ot 3 iiulia 1916 goda i ee mezhdunarodno-politicheskii smysl," *Iaponiia 2006: Ezhegodnik* (Moscow, 2006), pp. 243–256; E. A. Baryshev, "Rol' kniazia Yamagata v podgotovke russko-iaponskogo souiua 1916 goda: Za kulisami iaponskogo vizita velikogo kniazia Georgiia Mikhailovicha," *Iaponiia 2007: Ezhegodnik* (Moscow, 2007), pp. 249–265; E. A. Baryshev, "Iaponskaia missiia velikogo kniazia Georgiia Mikhailovicha," *Znakom'tes' – Iaponiia* (Moscow, 2009), pp. 58–72.

cians, 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 Japan's financial circles, had chosen a tactical course of supporting Russia with arms and munitions. At the same time, American and European financial and industrial bourgeoisie were not going to support Russia as an independent actor in the international system at all, considering the Tsarist regime as "the stronghold of despotism." The relative success of "the Hermonius mission," which laid the basis of Russo-Japanese military cooperation during the First World War, could be explained by the above-mentioned features of the international situation.