RUSSIAN AMBITIONS IN THE PACIFIC

Australian War Scares of the Nineteenth Century


(Delivered to a meeting of the Society on 22 February 1968.)

Russian territorial ambitions in the Pacific date back to the early 18th century, and Imperialist Russia continued throughout the 18th and 19th centuries to haunt the dreams of British, and to a lesser extent, of European statesmen. The ogre figure of Napoleon Bonaparte, which had dominated the fears of the European nations, had scarcely been removed from the stage of world history when the Russian bear began to throw a lengthening shadow which stretched in the succeeding decades from the Kuriles to the Khyber Pass; and from Kamchatka even to the shores of Botany Bay and Port Phillip.

Fear of bombardment by a Russian fleet and possible invasion caused successive war “scares” in the young Australian Colonies in the 19th century. The Russians exhibited an absorbing interest in Australia, and there is suggestive historical evidence that Russia had territorial designs in Pacific waters, including the Australian Colonies, which would have been an easy prey for lightning raids in the event of war with Britain, which at various periods in the 18th century was not a remote possibility. Imperialist Russia, until her defeat in the war with Japan, and the crushing naval defeat of Tsushima, considered the Pacific a Russian lake.

Alaska, bounded on the north by the Arctic Ocean, on the east by the north-west territories of Canada and by British Columbia; on the south-west by the Pacific Ocean, and the west by the Behring Sea and the Arctic Ocean, was, until it became a territory of the United States, known as Russian America; in 1799, the entire area came under the control of the Russian America Company. It was ceded to the United States in 1867 for the payment of $7,200,000. The youthful American Republic was justifiably distrustful of Russian ambitions in the Pacific. James Monroe, fifth president of the United States, was fully alive to the potential menace to the future security of the infant Republic, created
by Russian designs in the Pacific Ocean, as well as the inherent threat of interference from European powers. Jefferson and Madison, former presidents, had similar views. Their suspicions were well-founded by the march of events in subsequent years.

Indeed, in the early decades of the 19th century, the Czar Alexander II, who became emperor of Russia in March 1855, had territorial ambitions stretching down the western coast of the Pacific basin as far as California, where Russian secret agents were active.

THE MONROE DOCTRINE

In October 1823, Russian designs were so evident that President Monroe wrote a letter to Jefferson, who was then over 80 years of age, seeking his advice on a matter of grave international importance: the co-operation of the United States with Great Britain to keep European Powers out of the Americas. In spite of the fact that Britain and the United States had been on terms of practically continuous hostility for half a century, George Canning, Britain's Foreign Minister, had proposed a pact of mutual co-operation to prevent European Powers indulging in territorial ambitions in the New World. Canning was induced to take this step when he learnt that the reactionary Holy Alliance, consisting of Russia, Prussia, Austria, Spain, and Bourbon France, was plotting to reconquer South America. Jefferson urged immediate acceptance of Canning's proposition. But John Quincey Adams, the American Secretary of State, had a profound distrust of Canning, and was of the firm opinion that the United States should act on its own initiative. On 2 December 1823 Monroe sent a message to Congress in which he announced that the United States should declare any attempt by European powers "to extend their system to any portion of this hemisphere as dangerous to our peace and safety." Thus was born the Monroe Doctrine. In 1822, the United States had recognised the revolutionary governments of South America which had thrown off the yoke of Imperial Spain.

1. "The question . . . is the most momentous which has ever been offered to my contemplation since that of Independence . . . Our first and fundamental maxim should be, never to entangle ourselves in the broils of Europe. Our second, never to suffer Europe to intermeddle with cis-Atlantic affairs."—Jefferson's letter to Monroe, 24 October 1823.

2. The "Monroe Doctrine" embodied the principle, "in which the rights and interests of the United States are involved, that the American continents . . . are henceforth not to be considered as subjects for future colonisation by any European power. . . . With the existing colonies or dependencies of any European power we have not interfered, and shall not interfere. But with the governments who have declared their independence and maintained it, and whose independence we have . . . acknowledged, we could not view any interposition for the purpose of oppressing them, or controlling in any other manner their destiny, by any European power, in any other light than as the manifestation of an unfriendly disposition towards the United States."
LOUIS NAPOLEON’S MEXICAN ADVENTURE

Not until 1860 was the Monroe Doctrine threatened by a European power. In 1860, Napoleon III, obsessed by illusions of a renascence of French Imperialism in the New World, which would strike a double blow at British foreign policy and put a period to the expansion and development of the United States, embarked on the tragic drama of his Mexican adventure, the inspiration of which was to make the Second Empire a dominant world power in two hemispheres.

He found an innocent tool for his ambitions in Maximilian, an Austrian archduke, and younger brother of Francis Joseph I, of Austria. With French bayonets he made the energetic and liberal-minded Maximilian Emperor of Mexico. Maximilian aroused the hostility of the Liberal party in Mexico, and antagonised the Clericals by his promise to guarantee religious liberty and the freedom of the Press, while at the same time refusing to restore the Church lands which the overthrown Juarez Government had confiscated.

The prospect seemed rosy for Napoleon’s plans. The War Between the States precluded interference by the United States, and Napoleon was confident of Confederate victory which would divide and paralyse that country and further his imperial plans. But Grant’s victory at Appomattox in 1865 and the surrender of General Lee’s Confederate Army of Northern Virginia brought the American Civil War to an end. Although Lee’s Army of Northern Virginia literally “carried the Confederacy on its bayonets” and made a struggle unsurpassed in history, victory for the Union was inevitable.

In December 1865, Congress refused to recognise Maximilian and in the name of the Monroe Doctrine issued an ultimatum to France to evacuate Mexico. Napoleon dared not refuse. The French army left Mexico, and left Maximilian to his fate. He and his handful of troops were driven into Queretaro, besieged, and the hapless Austrian was shot by a firing squad after the travesty of a trial. The Empress Charlotte had in turn vainly appealed for help to Napoleon, to her father, Leopold of Belgium, and to the Austrian emperor. When her last hope failed, and Pope Pius refused to use his influence with the Mexican Church, she lost her reason.

BRITAIN’S “SPLENDID ISOLATION”

In the middle of the 19th century Russia became a great power under the Romanoff dynasty, and “The Situation In The Far East” was a perennial headline on British newspaper posters. The Czar Alexander III embarked during his reign
on a policy of conquest and the consolidation of Russia's dominions.

At this period Britain was committed to a policy of "splendid isolation"; she was faced with a hostile France in Egypt and a hostile Russia in Asia. In May 1882, the Triple Alliance between Germany, Austria, and Italy had become an accomplished fact. Britain had never been so alone since the days of Napoleon. The shadow of Alexander III dogged John Bull at every step, just as Napoleon's did eighty years earlier, when the mere mention of Bonaparte terrified the baby Britisher in his cradle.

Both before and after the Crimean War Russia exhibited an intense interest in the Pacific, and particularly in the Australian Colonies.

In 1804, the Czar Alexander I, under whose rule Russia had emerged as the leading power on the Continent, and had extended the limits of the Empire, sent two ships of the Russian Navy on a voyage around the world. One of these ships was the corvette Neva, and the Russian Government had sought and obtained permission for the Neva to pay a visit to Port Jackson. But the Neva did not arrive in Sydney Harbour until 16 June 1807, in the course of another Russian voyage of exploration, under the command of Captain Leontii Hagemeister. She left on 1 July 1807.

RUSSIA "SHOWS THE FLAG"

Following the defeat of Napoleon, in which the terrible Russian campaign "broke the back" of Napoleon's Grand Armee, Alexander continued to send out ships of the Russian Navy to "show the flag" in the Pacific.

In August 1814, a second Russian ship called in at Port Jackson; this was the Suvorov, under Captain Michael Lazarev, who had served with distinction as a volunteer in the British Navy. Lazarev recorded: "While we were preparing to cast anchor in this distant port, a great crowd gathered on shore and gazed at us with curiosity, as this was the second Russian ship to call here since the settlement of the English... The authorities fired a Royal salute in honour of the Russian victories over Napoleon and the taking of Paris by the Allies... It would gladden one to see the friendliness with which we were received."

Lazarev reconditioned the Suvorov in Port Jackson, and after spending 22 days in Sydney, he continued his voyage to Alaska. He discovered and named several islands of the Pacific Ocean. Port Lazarev, a harbour in Broughton Bay, on the east coast of Korea, 390 miles from Vladivostok to the north, is named after him.
In March and April 1820, four other Russian ships visited Port Jackson. The *Ottkrytie* and *Blagonamerennoy* were on a voyage to Alaska, and they were followed by the *Vostock* and the *Mirnyi*, which were on an expedition to the Antarctic. Captain Thaddeus von Bellingshausen was in command of the *Vostock* and Lazarev, making his second visit, on the *Mirnyi*. While in London on their way to the South Seas, Bellingshausen and Lazarev had called upon Sir Joseph Banks.

Bellingshausen (1779-1852) was a notable Russian explorer. He served in the Russian Navy, and as a lieutenant had sailed round the world with Krusenstern (1803-06). Adam John, Baron von Krusenstern (1770-1846) was an eminent Russian voyager. After serving for some time in the British Navy he was commissioned by Alexander I of Russia to command a naval expedition of exploration in the North Pacific. In the course of a three years' voyage (1803-1806), the first made round the world by a Russian navigator, he discovered the Orloff Islands, and explored the Marquesas and Washington groups, the west coast of Yezo, the coast of Saghalien, and the northern Kurile Islands. But he failed in the second object for which he was sent out—the opening of Russian trade with Japan.

**RUSSIANS IN ANTARCTIC**

In 1819, Alexander I appointed Bellingshausen to command an Antarctic exploration party, the chief objects of which were to ascertain whether reports of an Antarctic continent were correct, and to supplement Captain Cook's discoveries. After a long voyage in the Antarctic the *Vostock* reached Sydney for repairs and fresh stores on 11 April 1820, and the *Mirnyi* on 19 April. The two ships sailed from Sydney in company to spend the winter exploring the South Pacific. The voyagers were back in Sydney on 9 September 1820, and remained there for seven weeks.

Before returning to Kronstadt in July 1821, Bellingshausen completed the circumnavigation of the Antarctic Continent. He sailed over 42 deg. of longitude within the Antarctic Circle, compared with Cook's 40 deg., and covered 57,073 miles. He twice reported in his diary that he had sighted what is now known to be the Antarctic Continent, but assumed that what he saw were nothing more than very large icebergs. He was appointed an admiral in 1831, and in 1839 became Governor of Kronstadt, where he died in 1852. Dr. H. R. Mill has stated (*Siege of the South Pole*) that the voyage of Bellingshausen "was one of the greatest Antarctic expeditions on record, well worthy of being placed beside that of Cook."
Governor Macquarie and Captain John Piper hospitably entertained the Russian visitors during their stay in Sydney. Bellingshausen was the guest of the Governor.

In 1832, and again in 1835, the *Amerika*, a Russian naval vessel, visited Sydney. Alarm at the frequency of the visits of Russian men-of-war to Australian waters was being expressed and this concern was reflected in articles and comment in the Press of the day. It was intensified with the outbreak of the Crimean War, and widespread fears were expressed as to the possibility of an attack on New South Wales by a Russian invading force.

As the result of public agitation, the New South Wales Government strengthened the fortifications of Pinchgut Island, which later became Fort Denison. Pinchgut, known to the aborigines as *Mat-te-wa-ye*, had been christened by that name because some of the worst trouble-makers among the convicts who arrived in Port Jackson by the First Fleet were marooned on the island and kept on short food rations.

**AMERICAN VISITORS**

The fortification of Pinchgut had been projected in 1841, and some preliminary work done, as the result of a scare in Sydney in 1839—not by the Russians, but by an unheralded visit of a squadron of American warships. The ships, commanded by Captain Charles Wilkes, of the United States Navy, dropped anchor in Sydney Harbour at night on 29 November 1839 without anybody being aware of the fact until next morning! Something like panic seized the authorities when it was realised how easy it would be for a hostile warship to enter Sydney Harbour.

Wilkes, in fact, was the commander of the first maritime exploring expedition ever undertaken by the United States. The expedition set out from Norfolk, Virginia, on 18 August 1838. The ships of the squadron were the sloop *Vincennes* (flagship), the sloop *Peacock*, the brig *Porpoise*, a storeship, and two tenders. The voyage occupied four years, and the squadron sailed 90,000 miles, nearly 2,000 of which were along the coast of the Antarctic continent, and which the United States claimed was first discovered by Wilkes from the 158th degree of east longitude.

**THE SCARE OF 1854**

Considerable alarm was felt in Victoria by the Pacific cruise of a Russian naval squadron in 1854, and active steps were taken to protect Melbourne from sea attack. The commander of the military forces in Australia, Sir Robert Nickle, was called upon to organise all available forces. Nickle
(1786-1855) had been appointed commander of the military forces in Australia, and had reached Sydney early in 1854. He took part, as captain, in nine general actions of the Peninsular War, and in 1837-38 he served at the outbreak of the rebellion in Canada. He moved to Melbourne during 1854, and had to deal with the disturbances on the goldfields at Ballarat. He arrived there just after the military forces had captured the Eureka Stockade. Defence activity in the Australian Colonies was greatly stimulated by the outbreak of the Crimean War (1854-1856), and in August 1854 authorisation was given for the raising of volunteer forces in the various Colonies.

As a result of Britain's war with Russia, the scanty Imperial forces in Australia were reorganised: Army headquarters were moved from Sydney to Melbourne; from the British point of view this was the most central point, and Melbourne also received its mails more quickly from London. An elaborate defence scheme for Port Jackson involved batteries on Dawes Point, Pinchgut, Bradley's Head, George's Head, Middle Head, and South Head; the main fort to be located on George's Head. But Sir William Denison, who was appointed Governor of New South Wales in January 1855, had other ideas. A graduate of the Royal Military Academy, who, in 1855, held the rank of lieutenant-colonel of the Royal Engineers, Denison induced the Legislative Council of New South Wales to dismantle all the outside harbour forts and concentrate on an earlier scheme to fortify the inner harbour alone. Pinchgut, renamed Fort Denison, in honour of the Governor, was to be the principal key fortification, to be supported by batteries on Dawes and Kirribilli Points and on the headland named Mrs. Macquarie's Point. Fort Macquarie was also reconditioned. Cost of these fortifications amounted to more than £60,000; ten years later the entire scheme was abandoned, and the plan for the fortification of the harbour entrance was revived and adopted.

In 1854, the Victorian Government undertook to meet practically the whole expense of maintaining the Imperial forces in that Colony, which then numbered about 700 troops of all arms. Following a survey of Port Phillip Bay, Captain Ross, of the Royal Engineers, recommended the stationing of two steam guard ships at Port Phillip, and said that 2,000 troops, with a company of engineers and one of artillery, would be required for the defence of the Colony. He was opposed to fortifying Port Phillip Heads. Active preparations for defence got under way on the arrival in August 1854 of Sir Robert Nickle, with the headquarters staff. Extensive military barracks were planned in St. Kilda
Road, and construction was begun on batteries at Williams-town and Sandridge, but with the progress of war in the Crimea and the coming of peace, enthusiasm flagged.

RUSSIA THE POTENTIAL AGGRESSOR

But on each occasion that cabled reports from London in the Press suggested Russian ambitions for expansion, a fresh wave of panic gripped the Colonies. On 9 December 1858 a Royal Commission on the defence of New South Wales, over which Major-General Edward Macarthur presided, went so far in its report as to actually name Russia as a potential aggressor.

In the following year (1859) volunteering was revived when rumours flew from mouth to mouth of another Maori War in New Zealand, and worse, of French hostility against England, as a result of the sword-rattling policy of Napoleon III, the jackdaw of Europe, strutting in the borrowed eagle feathers of his uncle, Napoleon Bonaparte. With acute penetration and satiric wit, Victor Hugo described Louis Napoleon "Napoleon le Petit." Fear of the Russian Bear was long-standing, but Napoleon III had kept Europe quaking in its shoes for two decades. It was Britain's fear of the Russian Empire which in the Crimean War period, as C. R. L.

REAR-ADMIRAL POPOV
Fletcher points out, gave the French Emperor "the alliance of the virtuous and innocent Queen Victoria, and that of her virtuous and innocent Prime Minister (Lord Aberdeen)," but Czar Nicholas I was a villain built of sterner stuff than Napoleon III.

In January 1859 Napoleon III was preparing for his Austrian adventure; he planned to attack the Austrians in Lombardy, and had a secret understanding with Count Cavour, the architect of the unification of Italy. His negotiations with Napoleon III for the expulsion of the Austrians from Italy precipitated the successful war of 1859, and the ultimate declaration of Victor Emmanuel as King of Italy. At the time of his negotiations with Cavour, Napoleon III was allowing strong anti-British propaganda in the French army and Press. This campaign began in 1858 and continued well into 1860. Palmerston, Britain's Prime Minister, feared invasion. Although British fears were unjustified by subsequent events, they produced, in the spring of 1859, the Volunteer movement, which Lord Wolseley said in 1890, "would be remembered as the greatest event in Victoria's reign." Palmerston considerably increased Britain's naval expenditure, and large sums were spent on fortifications.

In 1862, the 2,000-ton Russian frigate Svetlana visited Melbourne, and caused much interest and speculation in Victoria and the other Colonies. Large crowds inspected the ship which was open to visitors each day, and sightseeing Russian sailors were followed in the streets of Melbourne by curious crowds.

THE SCARE OF 1863

The Russian "scare" flared up again in 1863, as a result of the visit to Melbourne of the Russian corvette Bogatyry, the flagship of Admiral Popov, Commander-in-Chief of the Pacific station of the Russian Navy. Sensational stories were published in the Colonial Press regarding Russian designs on Australia. One such story related that Captain Severyn Rakowski, a Polish gentleman living in Melbourne, had been warned by his nephew, an officer on the Bogatyry, that a raid on Melbourne was planned by Russian warships. Although no authentic evidence was ever forthcoming of the truth of the allegations, there is circumstantial record of

Russia’s designs in the Pacific at this time, and of her malignant interest in the isolated Australian Colonies with their wealth in wool and gold. The statement was made that the plan to attack Melbourne was abandoned when Rakowski warned the authorities of the intended attack.

This was to occur in 1864, when war was expected to break out between Britain and Russia over the Polish question.

The War Between the States was raging in 1863, and there was no doubt, in the opinion of British naval strategists and commentators, that Russia was profoundly impressed\(^4\) by the terrible injury inflicted on Federal shipping by the Confederate sea raider *Alabama*, which was later joined by her sister predatory cruisers, the *Sumter*, the *Florida*, the *Georgia* and the *Shenandoah*.\(^5\) There was the possibility of war between Britain and Russia over the Polish insurrection which broke out in February 1863. All Europe’s sympathies were with the Poles, but Britain was suspicious of France, the oldest friend of Poland, and this prevented a joint protest of England and France against the cruelties exercised when “order was restored in Warsaw.” The insurrection in Poland was suppressed with extreme severity. Britain’s Foreign Secretary, Lord John Russell, whose leading political principle was non-intervention (e.g. during the American Civil War and the Schleswig-Holstein difficulty), contented himself with protesting to Russia and was promptly told by the Czar to mind his own business.

The Australian Colonies, fed by speculation in the *Times* and other British newspapers, reprinted in the Australian newspapers, had lively visions, in the event of war breaking out between Britain and Russia, of “hit and run” naval raids in the Pacific by Russian cruisers, and swoops on major Australian cities and seaports by raiders.

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4. The Russian fleet did not distinguish itself in the Crimean War. In the spring of 1854 a powerful British and French fleet appeared in the Gulf of Finland; but the Russian Fleet declined the combat and kept safe behind the granite fortresses of Kronstadt and Sveaborg. In the Black Sea, the Russian Fleet followed the same tactics as in the Baltic and took refuge in the fortified harbour of Sebastopol, sinking ships across the entrance to keep out the enemy.

5. Next to the *Alabama*, the *Shenandoah* was the most famous of the predatory cruisers built in Britain for the Confederacy. “Her career,” one Australian newspaper reported, “reads like the old deeds of Drake and Raleigh on the Spanish Main.” Ranging the Pacific and Indian Oceans she sank no fewer than 37 Federal ships, mostly whalers. The *Shenandoah* is notable in Australian history because of the fact that she steamed into Port Phillip on 25 January 1865, anchored near the pier at Port Melbourne, took on coal and supplies and effected repairs, and enlisted Australian recruits for her crew. Despite the efforts of William Blanchard, the United States Consul in Melbourne, to have the raider detained, the *Shenandoah* slipped away from Williamstown early on 18 February 1865, and resumed her career of commerce raiding. It was a clear violation of neutrality on the part of the Victorian Government, and the visit of the *Shenandoah* to Melbourne cost the British Government £807,375. Total amount awarded the United States by the arbitration tribunal at Geneva after the war, in compensation for the destruction wrought by Confederate raiders, including the *Alabama*, was $15 million.
THE PANIC OF 1882

Again in 1882, panic in the Colonies rose to fever pitch as the result of a visit to Sydney and Melbourne of a squadron of Russian warships under the command of Admiral Aslanbegoff. The squadron, which arrived in Australian waters in January, consisted of the Afrika (2,850 tons), flying the Admiral’s flag, the Vestnik (1,400 tons), a clipper, and the Platon (2,000 tons), a corvette.

The Afrika and her consorts visited Auckland, Sydney, and Hobart. The Afrika, which had been purchased from the United States, was a barque-rigged cruiser, and evidently was designed as a commerce raider, or as she was described by the Australasian Sketcher of 28 January as a “floating dodger”—“buoyant and swift, armed to the teeth, and capable of inflicting an immense degree of mischief in destroying not only armoured ships but the mercantile navy . . . able to hit and retire in quick order.” The Afrika was of 1,400 horsepower, had a crew of 275 men, 24 wardroom officers, with Admiral Aslanbegoff in command, Captain Alesscoff, and Flag-officer Fredericks. She carried 13 guns of the most modern design, and was also equipped with Whitehead torpedoes, which could be launched by an appliance from the main deck. On the main deck also she had five guns, built on the Krupp system. They were of Russian manufacture, and furnished evidence of the ability of the Russian armament-makers to produce naval guns equal in every respect to the German model. She was also equipped with repeating guns and four-pounders.
"SINISTER DESIGNS"

The most active dramatising of the presence of the Russian visitors and the reasons for it was done by the Melbourne Age which in February and March published editorials and sensational articles on the sinister designs entertained by Aslanbegoff. The Age, under the extremely able and energetic editorship of David Syme, was at this time one of the most powerful newspapers in Australia, and Syme, because of the influence he exercised through the columns of the Age, was, with some justification, known popularly as "the uncrowned king of Victoria." In fact, it was true that on occasions Cabinet meetings of Victorian Ministries were held in his editorial office. The Age was the advocate of a strong defence policy, including the development of an Australian navy, and Syme published several vigorous and provocative articles on the subject. On 15 February, Syme claimed in his editorial columns that the visit of the three Russian ships was directly associated with the threatened war between Britain and Russia, and that the Russian squadron was in the Pacific for the definite purpose of raiding British commerce.

Next day, 16 February, Syme published a sensational article headed "A Confidential Despatch Intercepted," in which he alleged that a long despatch, of which a copy had been secretly obtained, had been sent to the Russian Government by the Russian admiral, detailing features of Melbourne's vulnerability and unpreparedness, including the inadequate armament and mechanical defects of the mighty Cerberus. The article also claimed that two more Russian frigates, the Wallenski and the Petrolin, were expected to reinforce Aslanbegoff's squadron in December.

The Russian squadron sailed on 24 February for Adelaide, where it remained until 3 March. In the meantime the spate of speculation and rumour on the intentions of the Russians continued unabated in every capital city.

DEFENCE WORKS

Throughout February, March and April 1882 highly dramatic stories were published by the newspapers in Sydney, Melbourne, and Brisbane about the alleged malignant intentions of the Russian visitors. The Melbourne correspondent of the Queenslander wrote on 11 March 1882 that Port Phillip was to be the point of attack "when the inevitable declaration of war between Great Britain and Russia takes place. Melbourne was 'the richest city to loot of all the Australian capitals,' and it could be shelled and brought to surrender easily in 24 hours by such a fleet as that com-
manded by Admiral Aslanbegoff. Sydney might offer resis-
tance and do damage to the rigging and spars. *Adelaide, 
Hobart, and Brisbane did not offer sufficient temptation at 
present."

Further articles asserted that the half-finished fortifications 
of Port Phillip Bay were to be completed; the fort at Queens-
cliff was to be mounted with 300-pounder rifled guns; the 
torpedo corps was to be reorganised, and a permanent artil-
lery corps of 300 men raised. The new boilers of the 
*Cerberus*, a turret ironclad, mounting four 18-ton muzzle-
loading guns, were being pushed to completion; and new armaments had been ordered. The *Nelson*, originally a 120-
gun three-decker which, at the time she was launched in 
England in 1814, was the world's largest warship, was to be 
placed "in effective order."

"*A VARNISHED BARBARIAN*"

In an editorial, the *Queenslander* on 18 March 1882 said 
that there was something more than rudeness in the way the 
Russians behaved in not answering invitations and refusing 
to notice civilities tendered to them by the clubs (in Mel-
bourne). "Admiral Aslanbegoff could not bring himself to 
hobnob with the leading men of the city he intended at no 
distant date to loot. It would be a kind of desecration first 
to drink their champagne and then imbue his hands in their 
blood, so the admiral determined to refrain from the usual 
felicities. Such was the theory which had been propounded 
to account for the strange conduct of the admiral and his 
officers. . . . The Admiral took up his quarters at Menzies 
Hotel, and not at the Melbourne or Australian Club, and the 
Melbourne people, or the Melbourne Press, have discovered 
the reason. It may be the Admiral's duty to shell the city in 
a few months' time, and he is too much a gentleman, 
although only a varnished barbarian, to play the outrageous
hypocrite he might be considered if he mingled in the throng of shepherd princes who resort to the Melbourne Club.

"The Admiral remembers that it is reserved for him to play the part of the Assyrian who came down like a wolf on the fold, and in the circumstances he declined to commit himself to misplaced familiarities. The Admiral's gaucheries are not without their use. The Volunteers have been reorganised, and if Melbourne can only manage to get six months' start of the Admiral, she will be ready for him when he comes to leave his contribution."

THE "SCOOP" OF THE CENTURY

On 23 March the Age came out with the most extraordinary newspaper story of the century. An individual describing himself as "Major Bryant" gave a "scoop" to the Age which was a tour de force in sensational journalism.

The astonished readers of the Age learnt over their bacon and eggs that war was to be declared between Britain and Russia in April 1882. A Russian Fleet of more than double the strength of Aslanbegoff's squadron was to pounce on the capitals of the several Colonies, and would loot from Melbourne £5 million in specie; £5 million from Sydney; £2 million from Adelaide; and £1,600,000 from Brisbane, in addition to untold pillage in stores and merchandise.

THE "BRYANT" SWINDLE

"Bryant," in proof of his statements, produced a copy of alleged instructions from the Russian Minister of Marine to the Admiral and a copy of a telegram in cypher said to have been sent by the Admiral in reply. "Bryant" accounted for his possession of these documents by asserting that he was a confidential agent of Russia, and that he had assisted the Admiral in the preparation of the cypher telegram, which he urged that the Victorian Government should at once take possession of and act upon.

The facts were that "Bryant" had no confidential relations with the Admiral—although he did try to sell him—for 5,000 roubles—designs for a torpedo that he claimed to have invented. The Russian Admiral was also hoodwinked; he thought so highly of the "plans" for this "secret" torpedo that he cabled a description of it to St. Petersburg at a cost of £50. The Russian Minister was not so easily deceived. He refused to give credence to the proposal, and "Bryant" was informed of Russia's rejection of his offer by the Russian Consul in Melbourne. Foiled in swindling the Russian Admiralty "Bryant" concocted the extraordinary documents
relating to Russia's plans to hold Australia's capital cities to ransom, and sold them to the *Age*.6

The Premier of Victoria, Sir Bryan O'Loghlin, declined to violate the secrecy of the telegraph office by inspecting Admiral Aslanbegoff's despatches sent through that department, but thought it well, however, to send cables to the Imperial Government briefly stating the circumstances which the *Age* newspaper guaranted as "authentic and genuine."

The reply came back from the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs (Lord Kimberley): "Our relations with Russia are altogether of a friendly character, and render such a report incredible."

**THE *AGE* HOAXED**

The Melbourne correspondent of the *Sydney Evening News* said that very few credited the statements of the *Age*, and believed that the newspaper had been hoaxed. The Russian Consul had shown the Melbourne *Argus* a telegram he had received from the Russian admiral at Adelaide, signed by Captain Alexieff, stating that "Bryant's" proposition had not been accepted. When the *Age* published what was termed

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6. Among papers found in Bryant's possession when he appeared before the court on 14 June 1882 on a charge of forging and uttering, was an original agreement signed by the editor of *The Age*, agreeing to give Bryant £25 cash down, with a further sum of £25 by weekly instalments of £5, and £50 to be paid two days after the declaration of war between Britain and Russia.

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**ADMIRAL ASLANBEGOFF**, from a contemporary print.

Mitchell Library Print.
“intercepted despatches” just before the departure of the Russian squadron for Adelaide, the admiral saw Sir Bryan O’Loghlin. The admiral was in his cabin with Lieut. Alexieff, of the Afrika, and Lieut. Alessa.

Admiral Aslanbegoff was highly indignant: he said that he had been well treated and frankly received everywhere, but in Melbourne he had been held up as a spy and a trickster. He was eager to take legal proceedings against the Age newspaper on the ground that the despatch was a series of falsehoods against him.

DEFENCE OF PORT PHILLIP

On 25 March the Melbourne correspondent of the Queenslander advised that Victoria’s state of utter unpreparedness for an enemy had been the chief theme dealt with by the Melbourne Press for the past week. The same subject had occupied the deliberations of the Cabinet. Some years previously, Sir William Jervois had given the Ministry of the day a complete scheme for the defence of Port Phillip Bay, Hobson’s Bay, and Melbourne, in addition to a report on the coast generally. The works immediately required for the protection of the harbour and the capital involved an expenditure of about £3 million, the carrying out of which would extend over a number of years. The half-finished fortifications in Port Phillip Bay were now to be completed, and the Victorian Agent-General in London (Colonel Paisley) had been instructed by the Victorian Cabinet to approach the British Admiralty to obtain for the Victorian Government a gunboat of the Alpha Beta class, carrying a 25-ton gun, and two gunboats of the Staunch pattern were to be armed with a 12-ton gun, the latter being considered the most serviceable for harbour employment. Two torpedo launches were also to be obtained suitable for narrow channels and confined waters.

The correspondent continued: “How we are to man our Navy when we have got it, is being discussed. But the dark looks of Admiral Aslanbegoff and the discontented mutterings of the officers of the Russian Squadron during their recent visit have done some service in organising the Victorian mind on the defencelessness of their position.”

It was evident from these and other extravagant and sensational references to the Russian visit that Admiral Aslanbegoff had been elevated to the status of a giant bogey man who haunted the dreams of Victorians, whose fears were shared by the other Colonies, including Queensland.
RUSSIAN STRENGTH IN CHINESE WATERS

The Age stuck to its guns, and published several articles justifying its sensational "disclosures." It quoted, *inter alia*, a statement by the correspondent of the Ballarat Star, who travelled on board the Afrika on her trial trip down Port Phillip Bay after she had come out of the repair dock. He related: "I was told by the officers on board the Afrika that it was the intention of the Russian Government to send about twenty of their men-o'-war now stationed in the Baltic to the China Station, as it appeared that if by any chance a war did break out between Russia and Britain, the Colonies of the latter country would present a most favourable point of attack. The fact of their being sent to the Pacific instead of being kept in the Baltic was very easily explained by the officers' observation, with some truth, that if they went to war with England, their ships in the Baltic would be as good as useless, as they would be very easily blockaded, and prevented from getting out of the Baltic, as they were in 1854-1855, whereas if, say, 30 or 40 ships were stationed in the Pacific, they were just as handy for use and always available."

The Sydney Evening News, in this connection, learnt from the Hong Kong Daily Times of 3 February 1882 that several Russian men-o'-war were stationed on the China and Far East Station. These ships included the Abreck, gunboat, 7 guns; the Asia, cruiser, 12 guns; the Ermak, transport; the Gornostal, gunboat, 7 guns; Morge, gunboat, 7 guns; Moscow, transport, 6 guns; Nerpa, gunboat, 7 guns; Prince Pujarsky, frigate, 12 guns; Sobol, gunboat, 7 guns; St. Petersburg, transport, 7 guns; Strelok, corvette, 9 guns; Tongous, gunboat, 9 guns; Vostock, gunboat, 4 guns.

The Age further published a statement made by its Bay reporter, and confirmed by other testimony, to the effect that Captain Mitchell, who had acted as coasting pilot of the Afrika on the voyage from Hobart to Melbourne, told him that he was employed to take the Afrika into the Bay of Fires (on the north-east coast of Tasmania) and that he had been well paid for it. "What we want to know is why did Admiral Aslanbegoff leave the squadron on this expedition, and why was the expedition kept a secret, and the report circulated that the Afrika had been blown away from the squadron in a gale, and that one ship of the squadron had actually gone in search of him! . . ."

The Age virtuously claimed that there were only two tests of any value open to it for proving or disproving the truth of Bryant's tale, and both were denied to the Age. "Fredrick would not tell the Age what he knew about Bryant, and Sir
Bryan O'Loghlin would not look at the secret despatch now lying at the Post Office. In these circumstances, we had nothing else to do but either to keep silent about the whole business, or to take what precautions we could to identify Bryant. If we had said nothing, the public of Victoria would never have known that Admiral Aslanbegoff had been negotiating with a foreigner concerning the purchase or manufacture of an infernal machine in Hobson's Bay, and that he had been making a secret survey of the Tasmanian coast while he gave out that his ship had been blown away from its consorts in a gale. These two circumstances have been elicited by the appearance of Bryant, and although they are pooh-poohed by the newspapers who never lose an opportunity of taking the side of the foreigner in every argument or discussion that turns up, we still think they are significant of the Russian designs upon the wealthy and poorly defended cities of the Australian Colonies.

“What it seems the *Age* should have done is to have said nothing about Bryant and his secret interview with Admiral Aslanbegoff. *What if the Cerberus and Nelson had been blown up one night at their moorings just before a declaration of hostilities, as one of the American monitors was blown up during the American Civil War?”

**THE “COMTE DE BEAUMONT”**

The sequel to the melange of melodrama and Gilbertian comic opera associated with the visit of the Russian squadron to Melbourne was the exposure of the *affaire* Bryant by the Melbourne detective office as a complete hoax. Henry Bryant turned out to be a notorious and artful swindler. His real name was Henry de Beaumont, and he had posed as the “Comte de Beaumont.” According to his own statement, he had been employed as a Russian agent. An ex-convict, he had been sent to New Caledonia, and was believed to have been one of the political prisoners transported from France after the Paris Commune of 1871. After having completed his term of imprisonment in New Caledonia, Beaumont landed in Melbourne, posed as a French count in society, and even gained entrance as a guest to Government House.

His engaging manners and polished conversation secured his welcome to the best circles, and ensured his entree to exclusive clubs. He lived in a manner appropriate to his assumed position. He bought jewellery which he did not pay for, and he borrowed money from wealthy and influential persons, whom he forgot to repay. He obtained £60 from a French laundress who did his washing for him. After a career of swindling enterprises, he was laid by the heels and
spent a year in Pentridge Gaol. Shortly after leaving Pentridge, Beaumont introduced himself to the Russian Admiral "whom he most effectively bamboozled by tales of artful import. . . ."

Source of this account of Beaumont's activities is the *Queenslander* of 15 April 1882. That journal had its own correspondent in Melbourne, who fed it with weekly tit-bits from the Melbourne Press.

The Governor of Victoria, the Marquess of Normanby, who subsequently became Governor of Queensland (Aug. 1871-Jan. 1875), was greatly impressed by Bryant, but became highly suspicious when the bogus count confided that he was short of funds, and casually suggested that the Marquess might be kind enough to use diplomatic channels to get in touch with a bogus de Beaumont relative, the Duke of Leinster. Bryant hoped that the Governor would take the bait and offer him a substantial loan to tide him over what Wilkins Micawber was wont to describe as a "temporary pecuniary embarrassment." The Governor, who was very close-fisted where money was concerned, smelt a rat, and the upshot was that the con man was politely escorted from Government House, never to darken its portals again. But there were numerous other victims of Bryant's persuasive tongue.

"IMMINENT DANGER"

In an editorial, the *Queenslander* of 15 April 1882 commented that the ex-convict Beaumont, alias Bryant, had inadvertently done a public service by attracting attention to the unsatisfactory position of the Australian Colonies in the event of war.

"It is plain," said the *Queenslander*, "that were Russia and England to come into collision again, as they did a quarter of a century ago, we should be in imminent danger of attack. Since the time of the Crimean War the circumstances have vastly changed. Then the Australian Colonies felt in no danger, and contemplated from an unassailable vantage ground the bloody struggle carried on before the walls of Sebastopol, but the position would be completely changed now. The Russians have a formidable fleet in eastern waters, and in the event of war, if they did not actually attack the Colonies, would keep them in a state of great anxiety.

"Vladivostok may be, as the Russian admiral lately reminded Victorians, 10,000 miles from Melbourne, and the difficulty of getting fuel sufficient for a descent upon Australia might be almost insuperable, despite the recent opening up of coalmines in China and Japan."
"But what if the Russian squadron managed at Singapore or elsewhere to seize coal to carry them to Newcastle, and by a sudden assault, succeeded in keeping possession of that great coal port? The position of the Colonies would then be difficult indeed, for the British-Australian squadron would be helpless for want of fuel, and our mercantile marine would be paralysed by the same cause.

"A few months ago, there was the departure from England of a large steam collier with 2,000 to 4,000 tons of coal on board for replenishing a coal depot in the eastern seas. A vessel of that kind, despatched to meet a Russian squadron in Torres Straits, would enable its admiral to entirely surmount the fuel difficulty, and to hurl the whole strength of his war vessels against the very ineffective defences of Melbourne, Sydney, or Brisbane.

**FOOLS' PARADISE**

"To ignore these facts is nothing less than to persist in occupying a fools' paradise."

Queensland shared with other Australian Colonies in the Russian war scares. By 1862, Queensland had mounted rifles, infantry, and artillery to the number of 248 men. British garrison troops were withdrawn from the Australian Colonies in 1870. In New South Wales a permanent battery of artillery and two permanent companies of infantry were established. A Naval and Military Act, empowering the New South Wales Government to raise and maintain permanent forces was passed in 1871. Other Colonies followed suit. In March 1877, Major-General Sir William Jervois and
Lieutenant-Colonel Peter Scratchley, of the Royal Engineers, were commissioned to examine and make proposals for a correlated scheme for the defence of the Colonies. Plans for Queensland included a battery at Lytton, torpedoes (controlled mines) in the Brisbane River, gunboats, and torpedo boats. The Queensland 1882-1883 Estimates provided for the purchase of two gunboats, the *Gayundah* and the *Paluma* (aboriginal “Lightning” and “Thunder”). Other naval units included the *Mosquito*, a second-class torpedo boat. Launched on 16 July 1884 it was the first unit of the Queensland Marine Defence Force to arrive in the Colony. A considerable military organisation was also provided for.

In 1884, at the beginning of the Jervois-Scratchley re-organisation, Queensland had a volunteer force of 755 infantry, 250 artillery, 60 engineers (including torpedo force), or a total of 1,065 men. The total force of the various Colonies was 6,380 infantry, 2,410 artillery, 370 engineers, 118 torpedo force, 145 mounted troops, a total muster of 9,423. Queensland in 1885 raised a Scottish volunteer regiment; earlier, New South Wales had established the Scottish Rifles. The Boer War, to which Australia sent nearly 16,200 men, had a considerable influence on the country’s military ideas, training, and capacity.

7. *Triumph In The Tropics*, 1959, Cilento and Lack, Chapter XXV, The Defence of the Frontiers, based largely on a paper prepared by Commander N. Pixley, D.S.O.

8. Moving the defence estimates for 1885-1886, the Premier and Colonial Secretary (Sir Samuel Griffith) warned Parliament that the threat of war was “no idle one,” and said it was well known that arrangements, including an ample supply of coal, had been made by the Russians for attacking the Australian coast.
THE RUSSO-JAPANESE WAR

It was the Russo-Japanese War which put a period for fifty years—until the resurrection of Russian Imperialism via Communism in our own time—to Russia’s ambitions in Asia and the Pacific.

At the turn of the 20th century, Russia was preoccupied in the Far East. Manchuria and Korea were planned as the cornerstones of a Russian Asiatic empire, and the Muscovite displayed an ignorant contempt of the “yellow dwarfs” of Nippon. But Japan had been preparing almost ten years for the struggle she foresaw was inevitable. Her highly trained army had been taught by German instructors, and her navy had been likewise trained in the British tradition; her Admiral Togo—Count Heihachiro Togo—had been educated at the British Naval College at Greenwich.

When Japan went to war with Russia she got in the first blow—just as she did at Pearl Harbour 38 years later. While the Japanese Ambassador, on a peace mission, was dancing at a ball in St. Petersburg one evening in January 1904, “suicide crews” from Togo’s squadron outside Port Arthur, sneaked into the harbour and torpedoed ships of the Russian Fleet. The blow temporarily paralysed Russian naval strategy. Seven of the best Russian ships were badly damaged and the Japanese, with command of the sea assured, were able to transport their armies to Manchuria. The Czar’s Government sent out its best admiral, the brilliant Ossipovitch Makaroff, to match Togo. Makaroff, a giant physically, was one of the world’s recognised authorities on
torpedoes and was a noted hydrographer. His inspiring leadership rejuvenated the Russian Fleet. The reorganised squadron, supremely confident of the outcome, issued from Port Arthur to do battle with Togo.

But the stars in their course seemed to be against Russia. Makaroff's flagship, the battleship Petropavlovsk, struck a mine, and sank with all hands. It was a loss comparable to the loss of the Prince of Wales battleship in the Second World War, for the Petropavlovsk was the pride of the Russian Navy. But the worse disaster was the loss of Makaroff.

RUSSIA'S BALTIC FLEET

Russia still had her Baltic Fleet. It consisted mainly of obsolete ships, but it also included a number of fast battle cruisers and two or three powerful battleships, among them the giant Suvarov, Russia's most modern "heavyweight" ship, the equivalent of the King George V of her day. Russia decided to send this fleet to the Pacific in a last desperate effort to regain control of the sea and cut off Japanese reinforcements in Manchuria, where Prince Kurupatkin was locked in terrible land battles with Marshal Oyama's armies.

But the Baltic Fleet was ill-found and ill-manned, and no worse choice than Petrovich Rozhdestvensky could have been made for admiral. He was a brave man and a specialist in naval ordnance, but most of his life had been spent ashore behind an Admiralty desk.

The newest and most powerful battleships stood too deep in the water so that their heavy armour belts were submerged and a useless drag. The untrained crews lacked combatant seamen and trained technicians. Shortage of ammunition practically prohibited target practice, and a chronic shortage of coal made tactical exercises impossible on any scale.

While the Russian Fleet was passing the Dogger Bank in the North Sea, it found itself in the midst of a fleet of British fishing smacks and trawlers. These were mistaken for Japanese torpedo boats. Panic spread through the Russian Fleet. The Russians opened fire, sinking several ships and killing and wounding a large number of fishermen.

On 27 May 1905, the opposing fleets approached each other in the Straits of Tsushima. Togo's flagship was the Mikasa, British-built and heavily armoured, 15,000 tons, armed with four 12-inch guns and a 6-inch secondary armament. There were two other Japanese battleships of the Mikasa class, and the battleship Fuji, also built in Britain, 12,450 tons, and armed with four 12-inch guns. In addition to Togo's four British-built battleships, he had two Italian and six other European armoured cruisers.
Against this powerful fleet the Russian Baltic Fleet could put five good ships and seven inferior vessels. The first division included the Suvarov flagship, the Emperor Alexander III, the Borodino, and the Orel, four brand-new battleships, each with a displacement of 13,500 tons, a speed of 17 knots, and the same batteries of four 12-inch guns as the Mikasa. The second Russian division was led by the Osliabia, carrying four 10-inch guns, a good specimen of the battleship class preceding the Suvarov, the Sissoi Veliki, and the Navarin, two older battleships of lower speed and smaller size, and the old armoured cruiser Admiral Nakhimoff, armed with six 8-inch guns.

**TOGO'S DESPERATE GAMBLE**

Togo had learnt his tactics well from British text-books. He succeeded, like Jellicoe at Jutland, eleven years later almost to the day, in crossing the T of the Russian Fleet. In doing this, he took a desperate gamble on the ineffectiveness of the Russian gunnery. He turned his leading battleships in the form of a narrow U, a manoeuvre which was tantamount to an antagonist in a duel making his opponent a present of the first shot at the almost point-blank range of three-and-a-half miles. The manoeuvre took 16 minutes for Togo's twelve ships to get into the new position, and during that time they were exposed to the concentrated fire of the Russian Fleet, while Togo's own ships in turning, masked the fire of those still coming up. A torrent of 12-inch shells splashed around the Mikasa and other ships as they rounded the imaginary corner, but the Russian gunfire was appallingly bad, and relatively few hits were registered.

Togo's deployment was accomplished without substantial damage, and at a range of three miles he poured into the Russian ships a series of devastating salvoes. Showers of shells fell upon the Suvarov and the Osliabia. Before 3 p.m. the Suvarov was a floating hulk and fell out of the battle line. Rozhdestvensky was mortally wounded, and the fleet left leaderless. The Osliabia was hit by three successive shells near the waterline beneath the forward turret; the sea poured through a huge rent in her side, and she heeled over and capsized. After the first hour of action all cohesion was lost by the Russian Fleet.

But the Japanese had not escaped unscathed. The Russian ships shrewdly concentrated their fire on the Mikasa. The percentage of Russian hits was low, but such was the density of the shells hurled at Togo's flagship that she was struck again and again. Over thirty shells made direct hits on the Mikasa, and her casualties were by far the greatest in the Japanese Fleet.
As night came down, Togo’s torpedo boats closed in for the kill. Only half a dozen light cruisers and destroyers succeeded in escaping the annihilation which overtook the remainder of the Baltic Fleet. Togo’s losses were two destroyers; Admiral Dewa’s cruiser flagship, the Kasagi, was put out of action; and Admiral Uriu’s flagship, the Naniwa, and several other Japanese ships were damaged.

Tsushima (27 May 1905) was the finishing stroke of the war. It was really at sea that the war was decided. The final land battle was fought at Mukden, capital of South Manchuria.

"VIA DOLOROSA"

Tsushima established in naval history the fact that an encounter between two hostile fleets of approximately equal strength could in certain strategic circumstances lead to the destruction of the fleet which, on paper, has the advantage over its opponent in gunpower. The Russian Fleet comprised five first-class, three second-class, and three third-class battleships, in all mounting 41 heavy guns. Togo could marshal only four first-class battleships, and no second and third class “heavyweights,” but he had eight highly efficient armoured cruisers, as against one Russian cruiser. Thus, while the Japanese Fleet had an armament of only 17 heavy guns, it had a great superiority in 8-inch and 6-inch weapons—110 to 49. It also steamed 15 or 16 knots to the Russian Fleet’s 10 or 11.

Also thrown into the scale was possibly the most decisive factor of all—the Japanese crews greatly excelled the Russians in skill, gunnery, discipline, and morale. Semenoff, in his book Rasplata (“The Reckoning”), established that the Russian officers were depressed with heavy forebodings of defeat and disaster. As the Fleet entered the Sea of Japan one officer, pointing to their course through Tsushima Straits on the chart, exclaimed, “Via Dolorosa”; and he and his companions cursed the bureaucrats of Petersburg who had sent them out to what seamen knew to be disaster. The Japanese victory at Tsushima proved the decisive superiority of quick and accurate gunnery. The Russian crews were bewildered by the rapid succession of hits scored by the lighter Japanese batteries. One of the officers of the Suvarov declared: “I had never imagined anything like it. Shells seemed to be pouring upon us incessantly!”

[The late Firmin M’Kinnon, a former editor of the Courier and the Courier-Mail, was a war correspondent in the Russo-Japanese War; he sent the first message announcing the result of the Battle of Tsushima to the British and Australian Press.]
REVOLT IN RUSSIA

The war was intensely unpopular with the Russian people. Russia was in the throes of a belated Industrial Revolution, and the Communist doctrines of Karl Marx were taking root in the country. The first disasters of the war with Japan stirred the smouldering embers of public discontent into roaring flame. In July 1904, Plehve, the detested Minister of the Interior, was killed by a well-aimed bomb; on 22 January 1905, "Red Sunday," a procession of factory workers of St. Petersburg, led by Father Gapon, and preceded by sacred Eikons, was dispersed by troops, and the leaders shot down; in the country, mobs of peasants9 plundered and wrecked the homes of their overlords; at Odessa the crew of the battleship Potemkin mutinied and terrorised the city; and there were strikes all over Russia. Eventually the revolution exhausted itself; it had been a violent rehearsal and prelude to the Great Marxist Revolution of 1917.

Japan replaced Russia in the years after Mukden and Tsushima as the would-be overlord of Asia and the Pacific until the Samurai dream vanished in blood and smoke and death, and the horror of Hiroshima. In our own time, we have seen the re-birth of modern Japan as a great industrial power and our best customer for wool, coal, and sugar, and the rise of the American colossus to the hegemony of the Pacific.

As the immortal Horace said when Rome was mistress of the Western World—

God shuffles high with low estate,
Raising the humble, casting down the great,
While Fortune to and fro on clangorous wings
Flies plucking crowns, to make and unmake kings.

APPENDIX

THE COLONIAL NAVIES

The first warship built in the Colony of New South Wales was the Spitfire, which was launched at Port Jackson in 1855. She was a 60-ton ship, and mounted a long 32-pounder gun. Both New South Wales and Victoria were apprehensive of Russian raids following the outbreak of the Crimean War. An armed steamer for the defence of Port Phillip was built by the Victorian Government in England. This ship was the sloop Victoria, was a twin-screw vessel of 580 tons, and was armed with two 32-pounders and one 68-pounder. She arrived in Hobson's Bay in May 1856.

9. These peasants bore more resemblance to the slaves of antiquity than to the serfs of the Middle Ages.—Charles Seignobos, History of Contemporary Civilisation.
In 1859, as a result of representations to Britain by the Governors of New South Wales and Tasmania, the British Admiralty established a separate naval squadron in Australian waters. In March of that year, Captain Loring, of H.M.S. Iris, hoisted the Blue Pennant and assumed command as senior officer of H.M. ships on the Australian station, independently of the Commander-in-Chief on the East Indian Station. In June 1859, the British squadron on the Australian Station consisted of the 26-gun sailing frigate Iris; the 21-gun screw ship Pelorus; the 14-gun screw ship Niger; the 12-gun sailing brig Elk; and the 11-gun screw ship Cordelia.

The Colonial Naval Defence Act of 1865 provided for a definite Colonial naval policy under which Colonies were to be able to provide, maintain, and use their own vessels of war under prescribed conditions; to raise and maintain seamen for service; and to raise and maintain volunteers for the Royal Naval Reserve.

In 1866, Victoria obtained from Britain £100,000 towards the cost of the Cerberus, a turret ironclad for harbour defence, and the gift of the Nelson, originally a 120-gun three-decker, which at the time she was launched in England in 1814, was the world's largest warship; she had been cut down to a 72-gun two-decker and given an auxiliary screw. This Nelson should not be confused with the armoured cruiser Nelson, which in 1881 joined the British squadron on the Australian Station. The original Nelson became a training ship for the naval brigade at Port Phillip.

The second Nelson, a three-masted ship of 6,600 horsepower, had a length of 280ft. overall, a breadth of 60ft., and a displacement of 7,986 tons. She was regarded as a formidable type of armour-belted cruiser, had a complement of 553 officers and men, and was the most powerful and largest ship of war in Australian waters. She had a belt of armour amidships 180ft. in length and 9in. thick, extending from 4ft. above the waterline to 5ft. below. She was equipped with a ram, and her armament consisted of four 18-ton guns fore and aft, and eight 12-ton guns on the main deck. The upper deck armament consisted of six 20-pounder Armstrongs, six Nordenfeldt machine guns, and two Gatling guns. Steel wire torpedo nets encircled the ship for defensive purposes. She also carried two second-class torpedo boats, and four of the five steam-pinnaces and cutters she carried were fitted to fire Whitehead torpedoes.

The Cerberus was the first armour-plated monitor or turret ship. Laid down at Yarrow in September 1867, she became in 1870 a unit of the Victorian Navy, and was Australia's first battleship. She was an iron-plated twin screw turret ship, the first of her class. Her overall length was 235ft., with a 45ft. beam. A 250 h.p. marine engine drove her at a speed of nine knots. The Cerberus was armed with four muzzle-loading guns with a 10-inch bore, and fired a 400lb. shell. The naval battles of the American Civil War had demonstrated to the world that the wooden man-o'-war was no match for an armoured vessel. The hull of the Cerberus was protected by a belt of armour 6in. to 8in. thick in the middle and tapering towards the stern and bows, and extending from the gunwale to well below the waterline. The Cerberus was really a floating fort; she could be moved at speed to any part of Port Phillip Bay. The deck was 1¾in. thick, and all hatches and skylights were armoured. Her deck was a citadel with sides of armour 8in. and 9in. thick, a protected deck above, and a turret at each end. In action, every man in the ship would be under armour.

On 1 April 1921 the training establishment in Victoria was transferred to Flinders Naval Depot, and on the same day the Cerberus
was removed from the Navy List. Filled with concrete, her hull now
does duty as a breakwater off Black Rock, on Port Phillip Bay.

In 1881, the British Admiralty gave New South Wales the screw-
corvette *Wolverene* as a training ship. In addition to the *Cerberus*
and *Nelson*, the Victorian Navy included the *Victoria*, cruiser, the
*Childers*, a first-class torpedo boat, and two second-class torpedo
boats.

In 1884, the Queensland Navy included the gunboats *Gayundah*
and *Paluma*, and the torpedo boat *Mosquito*. In the same year South
Australia obtained the heavily-armed cruiser *Protector*.

It was in this period when another Russian "scare" was being
experienced that the British squadron was strengthened by the arrival
of the *Nelson*, and by the appointment of Rear-Admiral George (later
Admiral Sir George) Tryon (1832-93)—the first Admiral in charge
of the Australian Station.

As a result of his consultation with the Colonial Governments, the
agreement of 1887 was reached whereby the existing British squadron
in Australian waters was to be supplemented by an auxiliary
squadron. It was as a result of his advocacy of the principle of
personal service, that the Australian Navy had its genesis, and sub-
sequent development.

In 1891, Admiral Tryon took command of the British Fleet on the
Mediterranean Station. During manoeuvres by the British Mediter-
anean Fleet, on 22 June 1893, off Beirut in Syria, the ships of the
Fleet were steaming in two columns, 1,200 yards apart. Tryon
ordered that the course was to be inverted in succession, turning
inwards. The distance between the columns was insufficient, and
Tryon's ship, the *Victoria*, collided with the leading ship of the other
column, the *Camperdown*, and sank in a few minutes. Tryon and
358 officers and men lost their lives.