

BATTLE IN THE SEA OF JAPAN

Admiral Togo

28 May 1905

The head of the enemy's column, when our main squadron bore down upon it, changed its course a little to the starboard, and at eight minutes past two o'clock they opened fire. We did not reply for some time, but when we came within six thousand meters' range we concentrated heavy fire on two of their battle ships. The *OSLYABYA*, which headed the left column, was soon seriously injured, burst into strong conflagration, and left the fighting line. The fire of both our squadrons becoming more and more effective as the range decreased, the flagship *KNAZ SUVAROFF*, and the *EMPEROR ALEXANDER III*, which was the second in line, burst into roaring flames and left the fighting line, so that the enemy's order became still more deranged. Several of the ships following also took fire, and the smoke carried by the westerly wind quickly swept over the face of the sea, combining with the fog to envelop the enemy's fleet so that our principal fighting squadrons ceased firing for a time.

On our side also the ships had suffered more or less. The *ASAMA* had been struck by three shells near the water line, her steering gear had been injured, and she was leaking badly; but she effected temporary repairs, and was very soon able to resume her place. Such was the state of the main fighting forces on each side at 2.45 PM. Already the fate of the battle had been decided....

The above are the results of the battle which continued from the afternoon of the 27th to the afternoon of the 28th. About thirty-eight of the enemy's vessels had attempted to pass the Sea of Japan, and I believe that the ships that escaped destruction or capture at our hands were limited to a few cruisers, destroyers, and special-service steamers. Our own losses in the two days' fight were only three torpedo boats. Some others of our vessels sustained more or less injuries, but not even one of them is incapacitated for future service. Our casualties throughout the whole fleet were 116 killed and 538 wounded, officers included.

There was no great difference in the strength of the opposing forces in this action, and I consider that the enemy's officers and men fought with the utmost energy and intrepidity on behalf of their country. If, nevertheless, our combined squadrons won the victory and achieved the remarkable success recorded above, it was because of the virtues of His Majesty the Emperor, and not owing to any human prowess. It cannot but be believed that the small number of our casualties was due to the protection of the spirits of the Imperial ancestors. Even our officers and men who fought so valiantly and so stoutly, seeing these results, found no language to express their astonishment.

James Harvey Robinson and Charles A. Beard, *Readings in Modern European History*, (New York: 1909), II:445-446.