

Sino-Japanese negotiations over the Nikolayevsk Incident

Chang Li

ABSTRACT

In the later stages of World War I, the Allied Powers dispatched an expeditionary force to Siberia, with Japan and the United States sending the most troops. The Allied forces were not immediately withdrawn after World War I ended, and in the meantime, Russia sank into a chaotic civil war. On March 5, 1920, several hundred Japanese soldiers and expatriates residing in the town of Nikolayevsk-on-Amur clashed with the Russian Red Army in the “Nikolayevsk Incident.” Four Chinese naval warships happened to be detained in Nikolayevsk during the hostilities between Russia and Japan. In May 1920, after Nikolayevsk was recaptured by Japanese reinforcements, Japan accused the Chinese forces of aiding in the Russian attack, arrested several Chinese sailors, and insisted that both sides send officials to conduct an investigation. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Navy were forced to send officials to negotiate with the Japanese. China was not able to withdraw its warships, troops, and expatriates until, after several rounds of negotiations, it finally agreed to Japan’s demands for an apology, payment of an indemnity, and punishment of the involved personnel.

KEYWORDS

Nikolayevsk Incident;
Sino-Japanese relations

Introduction

The United States declared war against Germany on April 6, 1917, and began shipping materiel, weapons and soldiers to the European theater in huge quantities, reinforcing the combat strength of the Allied forces. However, on March 3, 1918, the newborn Soviet Union signed the Treaty of Brest-Litovsk with Germany, the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Bulgaria, and Turkey, and immediately withdrew from participation in World War I. This action caused disquiet amongst the other Allied Powers. Britain and France worried that Germany would not only be able to cease all action on the Eastern Front and withdraw its troops, but might also obtain Russian resources to focus on the Western Front, bringing great pressure to bear upon the Allied Powers. The two Allies therefore prevailed upon President Wilson of the United States to send American troops to Siberia: if Germany and Russia seemed likely to form an alliance, the new Siberian theater would draw away the attention of the new Russian government, leaving it powerless to assist Germany in the European theater; and the action might also raise the morale of anti-Bolshevik forces in Russia, which were calling for continued war against Germany. Wilson was reluctant at first, and was particularly concerned that direct military operations by the Allied Powers in Siberia would give the Japanese military an opportunity to pursue its designs for that region. Not long after, Wilson learned that the Czechoslovak Legions had been detained in Russian territory and urgently required assistance, and was also informed that Japan would unilaterally dispatch troops if the other countries did not take action.¹ Therefore, the United States, Britain, France, Japan, Italy, and China sent troops into Siberia in the summer of 1918.

The United States originally made a proposal to Japan that the two countries each send 7000 soldiers to Vladivostok, stipulating that the troops be withdrawn upon completion of the mission, but failed to secure an agreement with Japan. Through later coordination, the Allied Powers determined that a total of 24,800 troops would be sent to Siberia, specifying that the Japanese troops

Chang Li is a research fellow at the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, Taipei. Translation © 2016 Taylor & Francis, Inc. from the Chinese text “Miaojie shijian zhong de ZhongRi jiaoshe” in *Nanjing daxue xuebao* (Journal of Nanjing University) no. 1 (2005), by Carissa Fletcher.

were to number 12,000. Japan agreed, and issued the “Declaration of Troop Commitments to Siberia” on August 2, 1918: on August 12, it dispatched two divisions, numbering approximately 12,000 soldiers. Thereafter, Japan continued to send reinforcements, reaching a high point of 73,000 soldiers, whose range of activity was not limited to Vladivostok, as previously agreed. On January 9, 1920, the United States government notified the Japanese government of its decision to withdraw from Siberia, and Japan again failed to abide by the agreement to withdraw its troops simultaneously.² Soon after, Japanese troops stationed in Nikolayevsk clashed with Soviet Red Army in what would become the Nikolayevsk Incident, referred to in Japanese history as the Nikolayevsk Massacre.

Although the Nikolayevsk Incident was a clash between the Japanese and the Russians, Chinese expatriates had long resided in the area, and four Chinese warships headed upriver to Harbin, which had been detained in Nikolayevsk after being thwarted by the Russians, were drawn into the conflict. The Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs engaged in several months of negotiations with the Japanese government to rescue the troops stranded in Nikolayevsk, before the personnel and vessels were finally released. These negotiations between China and Japan should be recognized as one interlude in the overall Russo-Japanese conflict in Nikolayevsk. However, some studies on Russo-Japanese relations or the early naval history of the Republic of China hardly mention the Nikolayevsk Incident at all, and gloss over the Chinese involvement in negotiations with Japan.³ I have gathered and analyzed diplomatic and military archives to explore the process and significance of these negotiations.

Eruption of the Nikolayevsk Incident and involvement of the Chinese military

The Heilong River, which forms the northeast border between China and Russia, is joined by the Songhua River before converging with the Ussuri River near Khabarovsk, and flows from thence into the Strait of Tartary: in China, this section of the river is termed the Huntong (“Mixed”) River due to the confluence of many waters, while both the Heilong River and Huntong River are referred to as the Amur River in Russia. Nikolayevsk is a small town located on the northern bank of the Amur River near its convergence point, and in the summer, it is an important fishing harbor; but for six months of the year, it is frozen over, and movement is impossible.⁴ In the early period of World War I, Nikolayevsk had a population of approximately 12,500.⁵

In the course of its military operations in Siberia, Japan captured Nikolayevsk in September 1918. Its naval forces withdrew shortly thereafter due to concerns about being frozen in, leaving behind an army garrison. Apart from the original Russian inhabitants and Chinese expatriates, the town also held Japanese military and civilian transplants. The route to the sea was cut off when the river froze over, and overland transportation was inconvenient; the local Japanese were able to obtain some news transmitted from Harbin by radio.⁶

The Japanese military imposed tyrannical rule over Nikolayevsk, and the attack launched by the Russian Red Army against the White Army in Nikolayevsk in January 1920 fell inside the area under its control. The so-called Nikolayevsk Incident erupted soon after due to threats received by local Japanese. The incident was a military conflict between Japan and Russia, occurring on Russian soil occupied by Japan, and had little connection to China. However, Nikolayevsk was home to many Chinese expatriates, and four naval warships happened to be moored at Nikolayevsk after being frozen in; the Japanese military also accused the Chinese sailors of assisting in the Russian attack, thus drawing Chinese soldiers and civilians into the Russo-Japanese conflict in the Nikolayevsk Incident.

The reason why Chinese warships were at a Russian port in the first place was to organize a north-eastern fleet to protect Chinese shipping on the Heilong River. Under the Treaty of Aigun concluded by China and Russia in May 1858, the land on the northern bank of the Heilong River reverted to Russia’s possession, while China and Russia held joint sovereignty over the area from the eastern bank of the Ussuri River to the sea; however, both Chinese and Russian shipping vessels could ply the Heilong, Songhua and Ussuri rivers. Although the Convention of Peking signed by China and Russia in 1860 assigned the region east of the Ussuri River to Russia, this did not impact the joint shipping rights of each country on the three aforementioned rivers. After the Russian civil war broke out in

1918, shipping rights on the Songhua River and Heilong River were claimed by the Russians. The Navy of the Beijing Government sent the officer Wang Chongwen 王崇文 to investigate the situation and prepare for negotiations, while also establishing a River Defense Committee within the Navy to oversee related tasks. Soon thereafter, shipping vessels belonging to the Wu Tung Steamship Navigation Company of Manchuria were subjected to interference by Russian warships while plying the Ussuri River and Heilong River; in response, the Navy established the Jilin-Heilongjiang River Defense Preparatory Office in July 1919, and appointed Wang Chongwen as its head, under the control of the General Navy Headquarters.⁷

Based on the recommendations by Wang Chongwen, the Jilin-Heilongjiang River Defense Office founded a River Defense Headquarters at Harbin. Naval Commander Lan Jianshu 蓝建枢 decided to dispatch the *Jing An*, *Jiang Heng*, *Li Jie*, and *Li Sui* to be stationed at Tongjiang near Harbin, with Gan Lian'ao 甘联墩, Captain of the *Jing An*, leading the four ships northward as the fleet commander. Because the *Li Jie* and *Li Sui* had a flat keel and a shallow draft, they were vulnerable to large waves, so wooden frames were installed, and they were towed behind the *Jing An*; the *Li Chuan* was also added to the fleet, and the five warships set sail from Shanghai on July 21, 1919. After stopping over at Vladivostok for several days in mid-August, they entered the Strait of Tartary. After failing to secure a harbor pilot, as the weather grew colder, the *Jing An* was sent southward back to China, while the *Jiang Heng* and the other three warships risked entering the river, and finally arrived safely at Nikolayevsk. Local Chinese expatriates informed them that the river would freeze over within about ten days, so the four warships decided to head toward Harbin at double speed; however, near Khabarovsk, they suddenly encountered an attack by shore-based Russian artillery, and learned furthermore that underwater mines had been placed in the river. The four warships were forced to turn back: since the area downstream of Khabarovsk would be frozen over as well, they decided to return to Nikolayevsk to overwinter, and to make new plans once the thaw came the following spring.⁸

Thus the *Jiang Heng* and the other three warships, which had failed to reach Harbin, became embroiled in the Nikolayevsk Incident. According to a report sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs on March 18, 1920 by Vice-Consul Zhang Wenhuan 张文焕, who was stationed at Nikolayevsk, the town had been enveloped by war for the past two months: many artillery shells had fallen on the consulate, and its personnel were in peril. The Soviet Red Army entered the town to negotiate peace on February 29, but “on March 11, the Japanese Army suddenly launched a provocation, and again suffered defeat; the Japanese consul and captain are already dead, and of the thousand Japanese men and women, very few survived.” Zhang Wenhuan predicted that the Japanese military would certainly send warships to retaliate after the thaw; and he feared that Japan’s retaliatory action could bring disaster to the Chinese expatriates, as approximately seven or eight hundred Chinese had joined the Soviet Red Army. Because there was no passage by overland routes, and nowhere to hide, Zhang requested that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs hire five Chinese steamships from Harbin and Khabarovsk, preferably outfitted by the Wu Tung Company, to arrive at Nikolayevsk before May 20, during the thaw, and transport the more than 4,000 Chinese expatriates back to China to seek refuge. Since the harbor thaw would occur some ten days later, the Japanese warships would arrive at Nikolayevsk slightly after the Chinese steamships, and the Chinese warships detained at Nikolayevsk could seize this window to head for Khabarovsk. On March 29, Zhang Wenhuan again described the perilous situation in Nikolayevsk: the number of Chinese expatriates wishing to return to China had increased, and the five steamships might not suffice; he requested that the Wu Tung Company send ten steamships to provide transport.⁹ In response to this request, the Executive Yuan Council passed a resolution ordering the Ministry of Transportation to notify the Wu Tung Company to allocate shipping vessels, to sail to Nikolayevsk during the thaw for a rescue; those among the Chinese expatriates of good economic means could pay for their passage, and the Wu Tung Company would keep an account of those who were unable to pay, and submit it to the Ministry of Finance to request repayment.¹⁰ Since the Songhua River had already thawed by this time, many of the Wu Tung Company’s ships had already been contracted out for the transportation of goods; but since the expatriates’ lives were at stake, the company put forth great efforts to provide two large, fast

steamships and four large tugboats, as well as rice, flour, vegetables, and other foodstuffs, and made arrangements to immediately set sail for Nikolayevsk at double speed once the ice floes passed through the lower reaches of the Heilong River.

As the hostilities in Nikolayevsk had not ceased, the journey would be perilous: the Wu Tung Company requested that the government send orders by telegram for the warships detained in Nikolayevsk to serve as an escort, and asked the senior committee on Siberia to give diplomatic notice to the belligerent parties, to avoid trouble en route.¹¹ The Navy instructed the Jilin-Heilongjiang River Defense Preparatory Office to make preparations.¹² On May 5, the Wu Tung Company dispatched the Yang Hu, one other steamship, and four tugboats from Harbin, carrying rice, wheat flour, vegetables and other foodstuffs; the tugboats were also equipped with bunks, to allow for the transportation of extra passengers.¹³ At the same time, Shao Hengjun 邵恒濟, the consul-general in Vladivostok, reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs that Japanese warships had been seen not far from Nikolayevsk, and that Matsudaira Tsuneo, political affairs chief for the Japanese Army in Siberia, had stated that there need not be any trouble if the Russians fled when the Japanese disembarked; but if they did not, the Japanese would launch an attack. The boats sent by the Chinese government to transport the Chinese expatriates should proceed as quickly as possible: the consulate general in Vladivostok had already notified the Japanese and the Russians, claiming that Chinese expatriate merchants in Vladivostok had privately hired the steamships to transport their relatives and friends out of Nikolayevsk, and requesting that both sides watch over them on their journey.¹⁴

The Chinese government originally hoped that the warships and expatriates could withdraw from Nikolayevsk before the Japanese reinforcements arrived. However, just as the Yang Hu and the other steamship reached the mouth of the Songhua River and prepared to make their way up the lower reaches of the Heilong River, they encountered Wang Xinzhai 王信齋, an office clerk from the Khabarovsk Branch Office of the Wu Tung Company, who had fled Khabarovsk bearing two telegrams from the commander of the Soviet Red Army: the first requested that the Yang Hu and the other boats stay their journey and await instructions from the Red Army headquarters; while the second stated that any steamship sailing to Khabarovsk would not be allowed to pass. Due to the urgency of rescuing the expatriates, the Yang Hu and the other boats continued forward, arriving at the region near Churki to negotiate with Captain Baksheev of the Soviet Red Army shore garrison. The captain stated that Khabarovsk had already been captured by the Japanese Army, and it was therefore forbidden to transport food supplies. However, the Chinese ships would be allowed to proceed to Khabarovsk to rescue the expatriates; however, they were to submit to an inspection at Churki, and would not be permitted to transport food or passengers of Russian nationality. The Russian assistant director of the Khabarovsk Branch Office of the Wu Tung Company, "Markos,"¹⁵ had recently been arrested, though the Russian sailors were unaffected. The shore garrison at first intended to seize all food supplies on board the ships, but after further negotiations, they agreed to send a telegram to their headquarters, and received a reply granting the ships passage. Up to this point, the Wu Tung fleet had not had a naval escort, and it was by no means certain that it could sail safely past Khabarovsk to Nikolayevsk.¹⁶ Soon after, Consul-General Shao Hengjun received a reply from both the Japanese and the Russians: the Japanese agreed to provide assistance, but stated that the fleet must not interfere in political affairs; the Russians also agreed to provide assistance, and issued a travel permit. However, because the Soviets had previously mined the Heilong River to defend against the Japanese, the Chinese fleet must be careful on its journey, and would only be permitted to moor briefly at Khabarovsk. Shao Hengjun also learned that Japan had already landed more than 2000 soldiers on Sakhalin Island on April 2, along with more than 1000 reinforcements on May 15. The Soviet Red Army at Nikolayevsk had been re-stationed in the forest, but once the Japanese Army disembarked at Nikolayevsk, it could spell disaster for the Chinese expatriates. Most alarmingly, a Japanese newspaper in Vladivostok printed the following passage on May 26: "In the battle of Nikolayevsk, both the Chinese and Korean peoples took part to aid the Russians, and the Chinese naval fleet is supplying the Russians with artillery shells; thus this tragedy unfolds." The publication

of these tidings rendered the execution of the plan to withdraw the Chinese warships and rescue the Chinese expatriates much more difficult.¹⁷

Investigation of an attack by Chinese warships on the Japanese army

The Japanese reinforcements sent to Nikolayevsk were commanded by Colonel Tamon Jirō: they set out from Otaru Port on Hokkaido on April 16, and disembarked at Sakhalin to await further orders. On May 7, the Japanese Army formed the Expeditionary Army for Northern Primorsky, led by Major-General Tsuno Kazusuke, and the Nikolayevsk Expeditionary Force led by Tamon Jirō was renamed as the Tamon Task Force. The Tamon Task Force crossed the Strait of Tartary on May 12, and entered Nikolayevsk on June 3. However, the Soviet Red Army had made the decision to abandon Nikolayevsk on May 25: on that day, they executed all Japanese and White Russian prisoners, and committed the town itself to the flames.¹⁸

Before the Japanese forces arrived in Nikolayevsk, the Vladivostok-based Japanese newspaper *Urajio Nippo* (Vladivostok Daily) published an account of the Soviet Russian's inhumane treatment of the Japanese in Nikolayevsk, which made reference to the Chinese warships supplying the Russian Red Army with weapons. Lin Jianzhang 林建章, Captain of the Hai Yung, who happened to be in Vladivostok at this time, represented the Chinese Navy in immediately discrediting this claim, and requesting that Kawahara Kesataro, commander of the 5th Japanese Fleet stationed in Vladivostok, order the paper to issue a correction. Lin Jianzhang had also heard that every newspaper in Japan was printing the same account, and therefore requested the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to send a telegram to Zhuang Jingke 庄景珂, the ambassador to Japan, to seek a correction on China's behalf.¹⁹ However, the domestic reaction to this affair in Japan was fierce: Ita, the Japanese liaison in Vladivostok, informed Lin Jianzhang that there seemed to be substantial proof that the Chinese warships had provided the Russians with weapons; although he could prevent the Japanese newspapers in Vladivostok from publishing accounts of this affair, popular fervor in Japan was unusually roused. Lin Jianzhang replied that the Chinese Army and Navy had maintained strict neutrality in the conflict between Japan and Russia, and that the warships certainly had not taken any such action; if the false reports in the papers gave rise to a misunderstanding, China would not bear any responsibility. Ita also declared that Commander Oi Shigemoto had no control over the expeditionary force sent to Nikolayevsk, and could not direct their military operations; Lin believed that this statement was alluding to the safety of the four warships in Nikolayevsk, and grew ever more concerned for the safe withdrawal of the warships.²⁰

Although Captain Lin Jianzhang had denied that there was any incident of Chinese warships aiding the Russians by supplying weapons, numerous accounts were published in Japan that even included the real names and titles of the personnel. Lin Guogeng 林国庚, a naval attaché stationed in Japan, informed the Navy: "Although the facts are unproven, the errors compound upon one another, and it has become particularly difficult to defend the nation's reputation." He hoped to ascertain the facts of the situation, and issue a correction.²¹ On June 8, the Osaka *Mainichi Shinbun* (Daily News) published a diary left behind by a Japanese soldier, which had been released by the Japanese Army & Navy. One passage read: "The Chinese warships bombarded the Japanese troops, and the Japanese troops returned fire over the water, but were hit hard by 12 machine guns, so they could not hold out, and retreated in defeat." At this point, Japan sent Hanaoka Shirō, Secretary of the Foreign Ministry, to conduct an investigation of this incident; if the Chinese warships had indeed shelled the Japanese troops, it would lead to a diplomatic dispute between China and Japan. At the same time, the Chinese warships still detained in Nikolayevsk and the officers and sailors arrested by the Japanese Army were awaiting the results of judgment. Lin Jianzhang argued that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should ask the Japanese ambassador stationed in Beijing how Chinese warships, officers and sailors could be detained on the basis of a falsified diary, but also recommended that the Navy organize a reconnaissance team to travel to Nikolayevsk and ascertain the situation of each warship, to serve as a basis for future negotiations.²²

On June 10, the *Uraio Nippo* also published the contents of this diary. The diary was discovered by Tamon Jirō after arriving at Nikolayevsk on June 3, and was the diary of a signalman spanning the period from his arrest in mid-March to May 24. The contents encompassed the battle between the Japanese and the Russians in mid-March, as well as the condition of the Nikolayevsk town center. The diary states that, “The reason why the [Japanese troops] suffered such great casualties was in truth because a certain country’s gunboats bombarded our garrison. Although part of our garrison returned the attack, due to meeting fierce resistance with multiple machine guns, we were ultimately unsuccessful.”²³ On June 16, Wang Zhongwen, the head of the Jilin-Heilongjiang River Defense Office, sent a telegram to the Navy refuting this account, and arguing that Japan “has in fact, by various insidious means, attempted to obscure the news” in relation to the Chinese fleet moored at Nikolayevsk; “under examination, their intentions are truly unpredictable.” Wang suspected that the diary’s content and even the diary itself were entirely fabricated, and produced two pieces of evidence to serve as a refutation:

It has been discovered that Japanese news radio in the region of Primorsky Province is extraordinarily well-informed: so after the clash between the Japanese and Russian armies, why did Ita state to Commodore Lin that he had only just heard about the report on the affair of the Chinese warships supplying the Russians with weapons? Regardless of the fact that this never happened, even if it had happened as he said, that weapons were supplied, this would be evident from the Russian attacks. And the soldier’s diary that the Japanese government recently published, which states that Chinese warships bombarded the Japanese troops with machine guns, is this not self-glorifying and self-contradictory? This is proven by the statements of all of China’s military officials, and can serve as one piece of conclusive evidence. After the two armies did battle in Nikolayevsk, around this time, two incoming telegrams were received from Chen Shiyong, the Captain of the Jiang Heng, giving reports on the situation of the Russo-Japanese conflict to serve as evidence in later negotiations with Japan and Russia, indirectly voicing Shiyong’s fears of an impediment to friendly relations with our Eastern neighbor. When this affair suddenly arose, the captain and the others indeed demonstrated a firm grasp of right and wrong, showing consideration and cordiality, and all were willing to serve as witnesses; why would they have supplied weapons and opened fire to aid in the attack? Even my humble self knows that this is not so ... This is the second piece of conclusive evidence, again proving that the reports of the Chinese warships maintained strict neutrality.

Wang Chongwen enclosed the two telegrams sent by Chen Shiyong, and requested that the Navy counsel the Ministry of Foreign Affairs accordingly: “On the one hand, to engage in serious negotiations with Japan, and on the other, to circulate each of the items explained previously among the various nations’ ambassadors stationed in Beijing, to set straight what is right and wrong, allow the many nations to hear news of this conspiracy, and their merciless persecution of the victims of oppression.”²⁴ On June 2, Wang Chongwen sent another telegram to the President, the Premier, the heads of each ministry, the two houses of parliament, the Section Supervisors of the Border Defense Department, senior military administrative officials across the country, and even newspaper publishing offices and business associations, emphasizing the two pieces of evidence described above, and stating that Japan “is disseminating slander through various actions, as a means of international competition.”²⁵

The Navy did not believe either that the warships were being detained at Nikolayevsk for the act of aiding the Soviet Russians in attacking the Japanese, but it still sent a telegram to Wang Chongwen instructing him to travel to Nikolayevsk for a field investigation, and also asked Lin Guogeng, the military attaché to Japan, to investigate whether or not the Japanese government had issued such statements, and what its intention was.²⁶ Wang Chongwen believed that, regarding the Japanese Army’s detention of the Chinese warships and sailors, “This affair has already developed into major international negotiations, tarnishing our national prestige and jeopardizing the reputation of the Navy, going to extreme lengths to force us to voluntarily slander ourselves.” However, he also pointed out that, if the Japanese government believed that the Chinese warships had indeed taken action to bombard the Japanese troops, then both parties should send officials to investigate. Wang suggested that the nearby cruiser Hai Yung be sent from Vladivostok to Nikolayevsk via the water route to investigate the situation, and he would personally go to Vladivostok; he also requested that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs send diplomatic personnel familiar with the situation and that the Navy

send Adjutant Chen Fu 陈复 to accompany them, to engage in interim negotiations.²⁷ The Ministry of Foreign Affairs had been informed by Tokyo that the Japanese government had already determined its policy regarding this affair, and that a round of difficult negotiations between the Chinese and Japanese would be unavoidable, regardless of whether or not the incident was verified; it therefore asked the Navy to closely examine the evidence, for the purpose of debate.²⁸ The Navy assigned Adjutant Chen Fu to travel to Harbin on the given date, and then accompany Wang Chongwen to Vladivostok to consult Lin Jianzhang, and charged Wang Chongwen with personally traveling to Nikolayevsk via the water route to investigate the true situation.²⁹

Before leaving for Nikolayevsk, Wang Chongwen suggested six methods to be used in the negotiations: First, the Japanese government should be asked to take provisional responsibility for providing food to the fleet at Nikolayevsk; second, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should make a request to the Japanese government for both sides to send officials to investigate; third, if the Japanese government would not consent to a joint investigation by both parties, it should agree for China to independently send officials to investigate; fourth, the China expeditionary fleet should be sent; fifth, two months' worth of army pay, 40 tons of coal, and three months' worth of provisions should be sent from Shanghai; and sixth, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs should be consulted to send more experienced diplomatic personnel to accompany the delegation.³⁰ In early July, an American who had fled Nikolayevsk and reached Vladivostok provided a description of the situation before and after the arrival of the Japanese troops in Nikolayevsk to Consul-General Shao Hengjun. The American noted that: On May 2, Commander Yakov Triapitsyn of the Soviet Russian Army, the adjutant and other figures approached the consulate and Captain Mao Chuicai 毛锤才 of the Li Sui requesting aid;³¹ Captain Mao declared that strict neutrality would be maintained with regard to the White and Red Russian armies and the Japanese Army. Triapitsyn stated that if China did not give aid, he would destroy the entire town, and make the Chinese expatriates leave Nikolayevsk. At this point, Consul-General Zhang Wenhuan 张文焕 and Captain Mao asked that no harm be done to the Japanese, in accordance with international law; Triapitsyn agreed to abide by P.O.W. rules, and abstain from torture. Mao and Zhang worried that these were empty words, and sent another letter requesting that Triapitsyn guarantee the lives of the Japanese prisoners, and asking for his signature. Triapitsyn stated that he was quite busy, and would call on the telephone to give consent. The Chinese warships and the consul led the Chinese expatriates to Mago, 40 kilometers away from Nikolayevsk. On the night of the 25th, the Red Army burned down the prison in Nikolayevsk, killing 134 imprisoned Japanese soldiers. On the 26th, they burned the entire town, massacring a total of 834 Japanese and 4,000 Russians, while the Red Army suffered approximately 500 casualties; 100 Chinese expatriates and one British citizen were caught in the crossfire and killed. Throughout this process, the Chinese warships maintained strict neutrality. The American provided a signed testimonial to serve as evidence, and planned to publish an account in the newspapers. He emphasized that the Chinese soldiers and civilians who had removed to Mago were on the verge of desperation: they had made arrangements with the Japanese Army for repatriation, but the Japanese Army gave various excuses to put them off, and assigned warships to monitor them. He believed that the several thousand people in Mago should seek an opportunity to independently extricate themselves from their situation: they would succeed more easily if China could send two ships, but local communications had been cut off, and without orders from the home front, no ship would dare set out on such a journey.³² Vice-Captain Yan Shouhua of the Hai Yung sent a letter from Vladivostok to Wang Chongwen describing similar circumstances, and noting that the American was named George Dyer; Lin Jianzhang had in fact once dined with him and his wife.³³ On this basis, Wang Chongwen judged: "That the Chinese warships maintained strict neutrality has already been proven by the telegrams sent by Captain Chen. Now an American husband-and-wife duo of newspaper correspondents has given evidence clearing up all misunderstandings regarding the Japanese Army, and thus there should be no misconceptions in the negotiations."³⁴ He therefore requested that the Navy advise the Ministry of Foreign Affairs "to demand that the Japanese ambassador provide material assistance without delay, and permit the passage of our ships, for wholly humanitarian purposes."³⁵

Dyer's account described the circumstances surrounding the assault on Nikolayevsk by the Japanese reinforcements in May and June; however, Japan was seeking an investigation of the events occurring in March during the clash between the Russians and the Japanese at Nikolayevsk. On June 24, a Russian woman named "Lacina" fled Nikolayevsk: upon reaching Vladivostok on July 12, she met with Consul-General Shao Hengjun and Yang Zhan'ao 杨占鳌, a representative of the River Defense Office, to give an account of the circumstances in Nikolayevsk since 1918, including the struggle between the Reds and the Whites, the occupation by the Japanese Army, and the subsequent Nikolayevsk Incident.³⁶ The Russian woman stated that the Whites had in fact requested that the Chinese consul send the Chinese warships to aid them: the consul stated that strict neutrality would be maintained, but the warships lent them two cannons and 120 artillery shells. She did not know if these had been returned, but she believed "that it was truly a fiction that the Chinese warships had aided in attacking the army."³⁷

At that point, Japan was already making active preparations for a joint investigation. On July 30, the Japanese embassy in China proposed in a memorandum that: 1) China and Japan would conduct a cooperative investigation and 2) until the investigation was complete, the Chinese gunboats would remain where they were, and would not be permitted to move; and the Japanese government would appropriately facilitate China's plans to send material aid, food, and investigators, as well as communications and other matters. In addition, the Japanese embassy listed the various pieces of evidence showing that the Chinese warships had in fact shelled the Japanese soldiers and civilians. This included statements by eight witnesses, and the diary of the Japanese soldier. Another 4 witnesses provided evidence showing that the Chinese warships had provided the Russian Whites with artillery.³⁸ On August 3, a group of approximately 900 Chinese expatriates made their way to Khabarovsk on a Russian boat hired by Chinese merchants in Khabarovsk: Zhu Dexin 朱德馨, chargé d'affaires of the Nikolayevsk consulate and a member of the traveling party, stated: "Vice-Consul Zhang has been severely overworked, and the Navy seamen have been over-excited, with much freedom to act on their own. If a Navy officer is not quickly sent to Vladivostok, I fear this will give rise to major international negotiations."³⁹ The Navy instructed Wang Chongwen and Chen Fu to immediately travel to Nikolayevsk with the Japanese representatives to conduct an investigation, without waiting for the representatives sent by the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Since the annual freeze was fast approaching, the four warships still detained in Nikolayevsk had best head for Vladivostok; if that was not possible, perhaps the sailors could all be transferred to one or two ships, which could set out first; if both were impossibilities, the Japanese could be temporarily authorized to take command of the four warships, and the sailors from each ship could be transported to Vladivostok to await the results of the investigation.⁴⁰ At this time, Japan also launched relief efforts for the Chinese military and civilians in Nikolayevsk, providing rice, and stating that it would not block the arrival of the grain transport ships sent by China.⁴¹

However, Wang Chongwen and Chen Fu still had not reached Nikolayevsk. They arrived at Vladivostok on August 13, and lingered there for some 20 days, "gathering the views of each country, and observing Japan's attitude toward China." Wang Chongwen gave the following judgment in summarizing the results of his efforts: "Before Japan declared open passage by river and by sea, the Japanese militarists incited the daily newspapers to recklessly give slanderous accounts of the Chinese warships bombarding the Japanese army: the volatile situation served as the motive for a soft detention. As the expatriates of various nations, who had taken refuge on the Chinese warships, began leaving Nikolayevsk, a multitude of true accounts were announced to the world; the militarists had the gall to change their tactics, demanding that both parties send officials for an investigation, to cover up their previous errors, and enact their covert plans." After Wang arrived in Vladivostok, some of the foreign refugees came to him to express their thanks and proffer evidence for use in the negotiations. He also made inquiries of a senior American official regarding Japan's policies for the Far East, and learned that: "Japan is gradually altering its aims: the actions by the militarists are invariably assailed by every country, and each failure is covered in infamy; of late, they have felt great regret, and have wished to reverse their actions, to remedy the situation." Perhaps for this

reason, Wang was quite well received in Vladivostok. He was “painstakingly contacted by the Japanese diplomats, Navy and Army stationed in Vladivostok, to bridge the divide.” During his visit to Commander Kawahara of the Japanese Navy, Wang mentioned that the Chinese warships planned to set sail once the investigation was complete: Kawahara stated that this would not be a problem, and that he was willing to provide one hundred tons of coal. When Wang left Vladivostok, a number of important American and Japanese personages came to see him off. Wang Chongwen felt that the Japanese had moderated their attitude: therefore, as the joint Sino-Japanese investigations were about to begin, he forcefully advocated for the fleet at Nikolayevsk to set sail immediately upon the completion of the investigation, because “the key to success or failure regarding river navigation rights in Jilin and Heilongjiang is to have the resolution to only advance, and never retreat; after that, we may achieve the aim of expanding navigation rights.”⁴²

In mid-August, Japan appointed the following personnel to the joint Sino-Japanese investigation: First Embassy Secretary Hanaoka Shirō, as the head of the committee; as well as Colonel Tamon Jirō of the Infantry Staff for the Sakhalin Expeditionary Force, Major Doihara Kenji of the Army General Staff, Captain Uchida Torashiro, Chief of Staff of the Second Fleet, and Captain Sawamoto Yorio, Staff Officer of the Third Submarine Mine Combat Team, as the members of the committee. Japan was already aware at this point that Adjutant Chen Fu of the Chinese Navy was a member of the Chinese committee, and hoped to learn the names of the head of the Chinese committee and the other officials serving as members of the committee; Japan also outfitted a destroyer at Vladivostok to take the members of the Chinese committee to Nikolayevsk.⁴³ On the Chinese side, Adjutant Chen Fu had already been appointed by the Navy, and had arrived in Vladivostok on August 3. The Navy also believed that it was best if the Ministry of Foreign Affairs appointed one member of the committee to participate in the international negotiations. However, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs felt that, if the Japanese had used the attack on their expatriates as grounds for the dispute, which would fall under the category of diplomatic affairs, the Embassy Secretary should then have served as the head of the committee. But because China was set to argue on the occurrence of a naval bombardment, which was a naval matter, not a diplomatic matter, the Ministry determined that there was no real need for it to send any officials. Instead, Chen Fu was instructed to immediately accompany the Japanese representatives to Nikolayevsk, without waiting for representatives from the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs. However, given that Japan had shown an abundance of caution in publishing a list of committee members for the joint investigation, it was felt that the Chinese side should not be remiss in appointing a naval officer of relatively high rank to preside over the affair. Because Wang Chongwen was the commander of the River Defense Fleet and had taken up special responsibilities in this matter, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asked the Navy to send Wang as the head of the Chinese committee: following his appointment, the Ministry would then send its personnel as support.⁴⁴ For the remaining committee members, the Navy appointed Shen Honglie, 沈鸿烈, Staff Officer of the River Defense Office,⁴⁵ and the Ministry of Foreign Affairs appointed Advisory Staff Officer Wang Hongnian 王鸿年 and Consul Guan Yu'en 关裕恩. They were due to set out on August 24, but the Navy still had not appointed anyone to head the committee:⁴⁶ finally, Chen Fu was appointed as the head of the committee.⁴⁷

Thus far, the Navy still had not appointed Wang Chongwen as a committee member, as expected by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, in mid-August, in light of the fact that the investigation could last for a protracted period of time, and the harbor would soon freeze over, damaging the warships detained in Nikolayevsk, the Navy asked the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to delicately approach the Japanese side, to gain passage for the warships to Vladivostok. Wang Chongwen also sent a telegram stating that he had high hopes that the Japanese ambassador would allow the four ships to set sail (toward the upper reaches of the Heilong River), even if the investigation was incomplete. The different destinations proposed by the Navy and Wang Chongwen left the Ministry quite perplexed, particularly since the Navy did not give formal notice by telegram regarding Wang Chongwen's recommendations. In addition, Consul-General Shao Hengjun of Vladivostok sent a telegram around the same time, which read: “The situation in Nikolayevsk is extremely concerning:

firstly, the sailors have been longing for change for some time now, and if the government does not deliver them, or send Commander Wang to Nikolayevsk for a thorough investigation, they will inevitably take independent action.” Vice-Consul Zhang Wenhuan of Nikolayevsk also sent a telegram, stating: “Earnestly requesting the Navy to quickly send officials to Nikolayevsk; if delayed, mutiny by sailors is feared, leaving the situation even more unthinkable.” The reports forwarded to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by Wang Hongnian and Guang Yu’en, who arrived in Vladivostok on August 29, noted that: “The Japanese hold power over transportation and communication rights, and several lines have been severed. For witness testimony, our side only has the gunboat personnel: within its sphere of influence, how can the Japanese side not find what it seeks for witness testimony? Hong and the other two committee members are isolated overseas: we shall adhere to our conclusions in this joint investigation, but fear that it shall be extremely difficult to obtain results. The freeze is next month, and if our ships are still unable to depart, the situation will become even more volatile.” In response, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs again requested that the Navy order Wang Chongwen to promptly make his way to Nikolayevsk to make arrangements, pacify the situation, and preferably lead the ships away, to facilitate communications with the home front during the investigation, and transport the members of the investigative committee back to China.⁴⁸ However, Wang Hongnian had observed Wang Chongwen while staying in Vladivostok, and had discovered that he “is highly secretive ... and we have heard that once I and the others depart, Commander Wang will make some pretext to return to the capital and stay aloof from this matter.” In contrast, he felt that Lin Jianzhang was quite zealous regarding this matter, and therefore asked that the Navy instruct Lin to accompany and assist the committee.⁴⁹ The Navy’s Chief of the General Staff, Sa Zhenbing 萨镇冰, also stated that: “Even if Chen Fu is sent to head the committee and pacify the soldiers, it is too late. If Wang Chongwen is appointed instead, I fear it will still be too late.”⁵⁰ Wang Chongwen therefore ultimately took no part in the joint investigation.”

The Chinese officials also noted that, “Our gunboat personnel have lived in Nikolayevsk for more than a year in wretched conditions, and are said to be quite shaken. Unless a decision is made soon to advance or withdraw, it is greatly feared that a disturbance will be provoked that will impact diplomatic affairs.”⁵¹ Due to the damage to the warships and the sailors’ unstable morale, the committee members hoped to first determine whether the detained warships and personnel could leave Nikolayevsk before the river froze over. Chen Fu argued that the investigation and the negotiation should be separate, with an investigation in Nikolayevsk and negotiations in Beijing. He estimated that the investigation could be settled within two weeks of the committee members’ arrival in Nikolayevsk: he therefore asked that the government consult the Japanese ambassador, and secure the release of the fleet soon after the conclusion of the investigation, to either sail to the defense zone or remain in Khabarovsk to wait out the negotiations. If Japan did not agree, the fleet could first return to Vladivostok. Because the war between Russia and Japan was in a state of imminent crisis, the Chinese personnel and ships must not remain in Nikolayevsk any longer, to avoid being drawn into the conflict.⁵² Following a discussion between the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Obata Yukichi, the Japanese ambassador, Obata was instructed by the Japanese government that: “Once the joint investigation into this case is generally complete, the free passage of each Chinese ship shall not be impeded. Therefore, regardless, the matter should be settled before the harbor freeze in Nikolayevsk, so that the passage of the warships shall not be delayed.”⁵³ The Navy believed that, “The Japanese government has strongly upheld this matter, and diplomatic relations between China and Japan have grown ever more harmonious,” and therefore instructed the Chinese committee members to quickly proceed to the joint investigation, to conclude matters before the freeze.⁵⁴

Chen Fu and the others arrived in Nikolayevsk on September 6: on the same day, the Jiang Heng and the other three warships, which had withdrawn to Mago, returned to Nikolayevsk to wait out the bilateral investigation, which was launched on September 7.⁵⁵ In the course of the investigation, Wang Hongnian reported to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by telegram: “After several days of joint investigations, Japan has presented testimony by many witnesses, while our side is relying solely on the oral accounts of the captains, etc.; I fear the prospects are not optimistic.”⁵⁶ After the first hearing,

Shen Honglie secretly met with the captain of the Jiang Heng, and learned that there had indeed been an attack on the Japanese troops. Because this affair could greatly impact national sovereignty and the prospects of the Navy, the overseer on the Li Chuan had been ordered to alter the armaments logbook, and it had been decided that all the officers and men would deny it.⁵⁷ The investigation was concluded on September 18: the only concession the Chinese committee members could gain from the Japanese was that the warships would not be investigated for lending arms to the White forces. Wang Hongnian and Shen Honglie both exclaimed that they were extremely lucky even to gain such results as these, given the complicated circumstances, the great difficulty of conducting inquiries, and the fact that they were within the Japanese sphere of influence.⁵⁸ The joint decision reached by the Chinese and the Japanese, and the penalty conditions proposed by Japan to the Chinese government are shown in Table 1.

Aside from the apologies and punishments listed above, Japan also demanded that “the Chinese government shall discuss an appropriate means of offering condolences to the families of the victims in this incident.”⁶⁰

Table 1. Sino-Japanese joint decision and penalty conditions proposed by the Japanese.⁵⁹

Item	Contents of joint decision	Penalty conditions proposed by the Japanese
Provision 1	For the purpose of protecting the Chinese expatriates, Vice Consul Zhang Wenhuan of Nikolayevsk negotiated with the Red Army; although he is without fault, he deeply regrets even having had personal interactions with the Reds, whom he believes are no better than brigands.	The Chinese government shall express an apology to Japan, and the text of this provision shall simultaneously be made public.
Provision 2	As the Red Army approached, when Nikolayevsk was in a desperate situation, Captain Chen Shiyong of the Jiang Heng made an agreement with the Whites that any who crossed a certain perimeter around the vicinity of the Chinese warships and transport ships would be fired upon; this was published by the Whites in the newspaper. Captain Chen gave similar orders to those under his command. After the Reds entered the city, the orders did not change. In the battle between Japan and the Reds in mid-March, as a division of Japanese soldiers approached the Chinese gunboats on March 22 in darkness, the lookout on the gunboat fired at them with a machine gun; at daybreak, it was discovered that the casualties were three Japanese soldiers; they hastily dug a hole in the ice and threw in the bodies, in the hope of concealing this act, which is deeply regretted.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The Chinese government shall express its gratitude to the Japanese government in an official document. 2. The fleet commander of the Chinese gunboat Jiang Heng shall visit the Japanese commander of the Nikolayevsk Garrison to similarly express gratitude and give an apology. 3. The soldiers connected to the shooting and their supervising officer shall be severely punished. The captain shall also be punished appropriately as the responsible party.
Provision 3	Captain Chen Shiyong of the Jiang Heng lent the Whites three cannons, of which one five-barrel gun was seized by the Reds; Captain Chen did not promptly find a way to recover the gun, with the result that there are signs that the gun was ultimately used by the Reds, which he deeply regrets.	The Chinese government shall express an apology to Japan, and the text of this provision shall simultaneously be made public.
Provision 4	In mid-March, during the battle between Japan and the Reds, the Chinese sailors went forth, possibly on a personal matter; for the purpose of self-defense, they carried military arms whilst walking through the streets, and there are signs that they fired at Japanese soldiers due to a misunderstanding; there are also signs that, when walking in the vicinity of the Reds' artillery emplacements, one or two among them were coerced by the Reds into giving instruction on the use of the cannons; it is deeply regretted.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Regarding the first section of this provision, the Chinese government shall express its gratitude to Japan in an official document. 2. The fleet commander of the Chinese gunboat Jiang Heng shall visit the Japanese commander of the Nikolayevsk Garrison to similarly express gratitude and give an apology. 3. Regarding the latter section of this provision, the Chinese government shall express an apology to Japan, and the text of this provision shall simultaneously be made public.

Table 2. Comparison of points disputed by the Chinese and Japanese sides.⁶²

Item	Opinion of the Chinese ministry of foreign affairs	Response of Japanese ambassador Obata Yukichi
<p>Provision 1 Personal Interactions between Vice-Consul Zhang Wenhuan and the Reds</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The actions of the Vice-Consul were personal interactions outside of his official powers, and namely were a personal, private matter, for which the government cannot be wholly responsible. 2. There are many Chinese expatriates in Nikolayevsk, and for the sake of protecting the Chinese expatriates, the Vice-Consul was compelled to pretend interest and sympathy with the Reds; this was an unavoidable fact in handling the negotiations, and the first provision of the decision also states this on the record. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. If it is recorded in the joint decision that the Vice-Consul identified the communications with the brigand Reds as a wholly personal matter, this is extremely unreliable behavior under your country's rules for functionaries; we need not go into the details. And the consequences implicated a foreign country, which is extremely inappropriate: this certainly cannot be considered a personal matter. 2. Although this affair was an unavoidable situation for the protection of the Chinese expatriates, and the joint decision refers to personal interactions, there is still the fact that the Vice-Consul had Red soldiers as his bodyguards and sentries, and provided material goods to the Red Army, etc.; this was all acknowledged by the Vice-Consul, and recorded clearly in the hearing minutes; this must all be regarded as behavior exceeding the scope of protection for the Chinese expatriates. The joint decision recognizes this as a cause for regrets, and it does not fall outside this significance.
<p>Provision 2 1. Warship Troops Killed Japanese Soldiers 2. Dug a Hole in the Ice to Bury the Bodies</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Captain Chen Shiyang had full responsibility for defending the warships, and had made an agreement with the Whites that any who invaded the Chinese warships and a certain perimeter around the Chinese warships could be fired upon; the decision acknowledges this on the record. Furthermore, while the hostilities were occurring in Nikolayevsk, it was the dark of night, and soldiers suddenly approached the warships; at that time, it was not possible to distinguish between Japanese and Russians, and for the purpose of self-defense, they were compelled to repel them with armed force. 2. At that time, the Chinese warships had declared neutrality; your company's consulate in Nikolayevsk was surrounded by the Reds, and communications were blocked; they wished to deliver the bodies of the Japanese soldiers to the consulate, but in fact it was simply impossible. In addition, it was not convenient to leave the bodies exposed for a long period of time; these were honestly the circumstances at the time, and the misunderstanding only arose because there was no time to report to your country's consulate in advance. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. The item of the lookout of the Jiang Heng firing a machine gun was based on an agreement reached with the Whites to defend against the Reds, and it has been ascertained to indeed be a fact that the captain of the ship made such an agreement with the White Army, and it was announced by the White Army; however, the Red Army thereafter occupied the entire town of Nikolayevsk, and the surrounding circumstances changed completely, but the ship captain showed no consideration for any changes for the troops under his command. No arrangements were made regarding the orders issued and methods used under the aforesaid agreement, as announced by the Whites. Despite the reasons claimed for firing the machine gun, the results were as recorded in the joint decision; moreover, it was a self-defense arrangement announced under a previous agreement with the Whites. This must be regarded as a slight against the judgment, for which the Joint Investigative Committee members independently selected and assigned by the Chinese government are responsible. 2. The purpose of the burial was entirely the wish to conceal their actions; this is also clearly recorded in the joint decision. The committee members of both countries identified them as regretful parties, and one absolutely cannot undermine the facts recorded in the decision with the word "honesty"; moreover, at

(Continued)

Table 2. Continued

Item	Opinion of the Chinese ministry of foreign affairs	Response of Japanese ambassador Obata Yukichi
<p>Provision 3 Captain Chen Shiyang Lent Cannons to the Whites</p>	<p>The original intention in lending the cannons was to aid the Whites, up to the point that a cannon was seized by the Reds; at that time, the Chinese warships considered investigating the whereabouts of each cannon, causing the Chinese warships to be regarded as an enemy; how could they then have recovered the cannon from the Reds? As to the use of the cannon by the Reds, this could not have been expected at the time of lending the cannons; this principle is quite clear.</p>	<p>the time, although your country's warships had declared neutrality, this was contrary to the reality and the facts. The gist of the joint decision is that the captain of the Jiang Heng showed no consideration for means and methods of retaking the cannon; the emphasis for this point is that the warship captain could not fulfill his duties. As for the cannon being used by the Red Army, whether or not this could have been predicted at the time of lending it to the White Army is not in question.</p>
<p>Provision 4 1. Chinese Sailors Fired Upon the Japanese Soldiers 2. Other Sailors were Coerced into Instructing the Reds in the Use of the Cannons</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. As to the sailors going ashore and firing upon the Japanese soldiers, the decision certifies that there was in fact a misunderstanding, which is not without some forgivable elements. 2. The sailors were indeed coerced, and were in a position of being unable to resist; this was a personal action, and the government naturally cannot be directly responsible. 	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Although the shooting arose from a misunderstanding, since these were the actions of sailors from a Chinese warship, the Chinese government is naturally responsible; the many instances of evidence need not be mentioned. 2. Since these were the actions of sailors from a Chinese warship, regardless of whether or not they were coerced, the Chinese government should bear responsibility. Same as stated above in the previous paragraph. Moreover, at a moment when the Japanese Army and Red Army were in battle, the Chinese sailors willfully separated themselves from their field officers and commander, to wander the streets with the Red Army; if they approached the Red Army's artillery emplacements, it was due to the poor leadership of the cadres.
<p>Summary of All Provisions</p>	<p>In surveying the above circumstances, they proceeded either from personal actions, misunderstandings, self-defense, coercion, or mistrust arising from good intentions; none were intentional, and none are connected to the government, therefore the government cannot take direct responsibility.</p>	<p>Since each item recorded in the joint decision for the investigation of this case was the action of a warship or sailor of the Chinese government's Navy, flying the banner of the Chinese Navy, whether or not their actions were intentional is not at issue, and naturally the Chinese government is responsible, which this ambassador has repeatedly explained in person to the minister. Moreover, the Chinese government has declared on the one hand that the non-commissioned officers and sailors related to this case shall be punished, and that an appropriate expression shall be made to the families of the victims, while on the other hand claiming that the central government is not responsible; this is self-contradictory, and this ambassador absolutely cannot accept this point.</p>

On October 11 and 12, Wang Hongnian and Chen Fu separately sent the joint decision to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and to the Navy. In early November, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a memorandum sent by the Japanese ambassador regarding his opinions on the punishments, and consulted the Navy for its view as well. The Navy stated that, regarding the matter of the second and fourth provisions requiring the fleet commander to visit Nikolayevsk to express an apology, Wang Chongwen would be instructed to handle those proceedings; and regarding the punishment of the privates and non-commissioned officer in the second provision, an investigation would be conducted to impose differentiated sentencing for that section; the remainder could be handled by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as it saw fit.⁶¹

On November 12, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs issued a response to the joint decision, and on November 17, Ambassador Obata promptly responded. Table 2 shows the points disputed by the two parties.

The Chinese and Japanese were unable to reach a unanimous position, and officials were sent to continue discussing resolutions, ultimately drafting the following measures: 1) the Chinese ambassador in Tokyo would apologize to the Japanese government in a diplomatic note; 2) consent was given to comply with the second provision of the Japanese ambassador's memorandum of October 26 (namely, that the Chinese fleet commander would "express gratitude" to the Japanese commander in Vladivostok); 3) consent was given to comply with the third provision of the Japanese ambassador's memorandum of October 26 (namely, that the Chinese government would relieve Captain Chen of his duties, and the sailors would be sentenced to imprisonment with hard labor for more than six months and less than one year, based on the severity of their crimes); and 4) a compensation fund of 30,000 yuan would be granted. On December 23, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs solicited the consent of the Japanese ambassador regarding these measures; on the following day, the Japanese ambassador sent a diplomatic note expressing consent.⁶³ The formal negotiations between China and Japan regarding the Nikolayevsk Incident thus came to a close.

Withdrawal of the expatriates and warships, and the aftermath

Arrangements to transport the expatriates were already under way before the investigation began. The Yang Hu, a second steamship, and four tugboats under the Wu Tung Company, which had been sent toward Nikolayevsk in May, had been detained in Khabarovsk, and had been unable to complete their mission. When they learned that the soldiers and civilians detained in Nikolayevsk had removed to Mago, despite the perilous situation, the Chinese merchants in Khabarovsk rented a Soviet Russian boat to transport provisions to Nikolayevsk to give relief; the Vice-Consul stationed in Khabarovsk also asked the Red Cross to join the expedition, which arrived in Nikolayevsk on July 25.⁶⁴ When the boat returned to Khabarovsk on August 3, it carried more than 900 Chinese expatriates and consulate chargé d'affaires Zhu Dexin, to explain the situation in Nikolayevsk. At this time, the Japanese were not in opposition to Chinese grain transports, and were providing facilitation in various relief matters. In early August, the Jilin Branch of the Red Cross and the Wu Tung Company signed a lease contract for the Yi Xing steamer to set forth from Harbin on August 9 to provide transport to the Chinese expatriates in Nikolayevsk. The Wu Tung steamer Nan Xiang, which was anchored in Khabarovsk, also set forth on August 14 for a rescue, accompanied by the tugboats Wen Shu and Miao Yin; for protection, the flotilla was also escorted by 16 River Defense soldiers.⁶⁵ The Yi Xing and the other ships reached Nikolayevsk around late August or early September: en route, they met with customs blockades by the Japanese military and the Soviet Russians; following negotiations, the Japanese released the ships in a show of good will, while the Soviet Russians held that Chinese vessels had no navigation rights in the lower reaches of the Heilong River, and refused passage. The Vice-Consul of Khabarovsk arrived to join in the negotiations, explaining that this was a relief mission, and citing the treaty; finally, passage was granted.⁶⁶ As the detention of the warships continued, at one point the entire body of sailors, who had been confined in Nikolayevsk for more than a year, made plans to abandon ship and take a steamboat back to China;⁶⁷ Japan therefore

sought to expedite the investigation work. After the investigation was concluded on September 18, Wang Hongnian and Guan Yu'en boarded the Yi Xing steamer: they departed from Nikolayevsk on September 19, and reached Khabarovsk on the 23rd. Shen Honglie boarded the Jiang Heng, and led the warships Li Jie, Li Chuan, and Li Sui, along with the Nan Xiang steamer and two tugboats, back to Khabarovsk, arriving on September 30. Due to the shallow waters of the Songhua River, the entire party changed ships at Tongjiang, and separately arrived at Harbin on October 16 and 21.

The withdrawal of both the warships and the expatriates was smoothly completed following the conclusion of the joint investigation. In accordance with Provision 1 of the final disposition reached by China and Japan, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs sent a telegram in mid-December to the Chinese ambassador to Japan, Hu Weide 胡惟德, instructing him to prepare a document expressing regrets, to send to Japan's Foreign Ministry; in accordance with Provision 3, and the Navy verbally notified the Japanese ambassador that Captain Chen Shiyang had been relieved of his duties, and regarding the punishments for the sailors.⁶⁸ Wang Chongwen was to personally travel to Vladivostok to express thanks and apologies to the Commander of the Japanese Army, and deliver the victims' compensation fund; however, these matters were repeatedly delayed, triggering another round of negotiations between China and Japan.

With regard to the issuance of the compensation fund, in April 1921, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs received a telephone call from Attaché Nishida of the Japanese embassy: he stated that the Navy had already delivered the compensation fund of 30,000 yuan to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to give to the Japanese embassy, and asked that the Ministry quickly hand over the funds. However, the Ministry had not received any such sum, so it made inquiries at the Navy as to whether the compensation fund had been sent to the Japanese embassy, or if it had been delivered to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to hand over.⁶⁹ By July, the acting Japanese ambassador claimed that the Chinese had not handled the matter of the apology by the River Defense commander, nor the granting of the compensation fund; the Ministry of Foreign Affairs again made inquiries with the Navy.⁷⁰ The Navy replied that the River Defense commander had already been instructed to handle the matter of the apology in accordance with requirements, and asked the Ministry of Finance to appropriate the compensation fund.⁷¹ The Ministry of Finance had applied to the Specie Bank make an exception allowing the withdrawal of 30,000 yuan, but the request was denied due to insufficient funds. Following further inquiries by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Navy again urged the Ministry of Finance to deliver the funds. On August 25, the Ministry of Finance again replied that the reserves were insufficient, but stated that the Ministry would issue 30,000 yuan in one-year, no-interest treasury bonds, to settle the case.⁷² The Ministry of Foreign Affairs anticipated a refusal from the Japanese ambassador, and asked the Navy to quickly find a way for the Ministry of Finance to allocate cash money to settle the case, lest the failure to provide this trifling sum so long after the decision on the case should give rise to further complications.⁷³ However, the Navy did not take notice of the phrase "cash money," and merely sent a letter to the Ministry of Finance asking for the funds to be sent to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the Ministry of Finance sent a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs asking for someone to be sent over to receive the funds.⁷⁴ As expected, once the Japanese ambassador learned that the compensation fund had been converted from cash to one-year, no-interest treasury bonds, he stated that this was "unacceptable"; the embassy personnel engaged in further negotiations with personnel from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and the ambassador again met in person with the Foreign Minister. However, on September 3, the Japanese embassy received 15 one-year, no-interest treasury bonds at 2000 yuan each. The Japanese ambassador stated that, "This method is utterly unacceptable," but made allowances for the Chinese government's financial circumstances, ordering Secretary Nishida to reach an agreement with Secretary Xiong of the Chinese Ministry of Foreign Affairs, and formulate three courses of action, and the Ministry could decide which to adopt; at the same time, the 15 treasury bonds were returned.⁷⁵ However, the Chinese failed to adopt any course of action. In January 1922, Secretary Nishida declared to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs: "This compensation fund is an unresolved issue for the Navy. It is long overdue, and the principal should be accruing interest: for the time being, this matter may be handled flexibly. Please consult the Ministry

of Finance regarding a monthly appropriation of ten thousand yuan in silver dollars from the salt tax surplus, beginning in January of this year, to make payment in full in three months of installments. If complying with this method, an exemption from paying interest may be granted.”⁷⁶ It is unconfirmed if the Ministry of Finance did indeed adopt this method. However, China and Japan did not experience any further disputes after this point, thus it is likely that Japan received the compensation fund not long after.

Wang Chongwen’s journey to Vladivostok to express gratitude and apologies was also delayed again and yet again. On January 6, 1921, the Navy ordered Wang Chongwen to perform the tasks specified in the decision,⁷⁷ but in August and September of that year, the Japanese ambassador twice inquired with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs as to why Wang Chongwen had not left for Vladivostok yet. Wang Chongwen made no reply until October 1: “I had planned to travel to Vladivostok immediately; at that time, the new and old parties were clashing in Vladivostok, and all was chaos and disorder. Once the factional struggle was settled to some extent, problems arose in the prevention of an epidemic; later, because the railway was cut off, I was not able to make the journey. In addition, for many months, our finances have been straitened, and the soldiers’ wages are greatly in arrears; I had no choice but to await them in the capital. Due to recent incidents with Russia, military supplying and preparations for defense matters have become ever more urgent, and it is necessary to dash about raising money.” He was therefore unable to travel to Vladivostok, and wished to wait: “Once the matter before us of the urgent need for military supplying and preparations has been resolved, Chongwen will immediately speed to the port of Vladivostok while the river is frozen over, in order to settle matters.”⁷⁸ In light of the fact that “the Japanese ambassador has made repeated visits to urge action, and it is inconvenient to delay further,” the Navy demanded that Wang Chongwen “swiftly and immediately travel to the port of Vladivostok.”⁷⁹ In November, the Japanese ambassador again sent a letter to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, pointing out that Wang Chongwen still had not performed the apologies, and although the Navy had instructed him to handle the matter soon, he had not proposed a date. The ambassador noted, “It is difficult to understand the true intentions of your country’s government.”⁸⁰ Wang Chongwen again made excuses: “I had intended to travel to the port of Vladivostok immediately to handle matters, but at the moment, due to excessive arrears in military pay, which has not been received for some time, I had no choice but to wait in the capital. Now the entire detachment is out of provisions, and morale is uncertain; recently I have been rushing about to solicit help, without obtaining a single penny; if material assistance is not quickly provided in the form of food and money for necessary expenses, it will give rise to desperation, which is dreadful to contemplate. Unfortunately we have insufficient funds to cover traveling expenses to Vladivostok. If our humble difficulties may be perceived, first I will find a way to obtain twenty or thirty thousand yuan to temporarily relieve these dire circumstances, and then I will comply in immediately traveling to Vladivostok, to settle the earlier case.”⁸¹ It appears that Wang Chongwen finally traveled to Vladivostok in January 1922 to apologize to the Japanese commander and conclude this case.⁸²

Conclusion

In 1918, Japan seized the occasion of the expeditionary forces sent by the Allied Powers to Siberia during World War I as an opportunity to occupy Nikolayevsk-on-Amur. When the war ended, Japan failed to withdraw its troops as agreed; in the meantime, Russia’s civil war spread to eastern Siberia. In March 1920, the Japanese garrison and residents of Nikolayevsk sustained an attack by the Soviet Russian Red Army, and suffered many casualties. In late May, on the eve of the arrival of Japanese reinforcements, the Red Army executed its Japanese prisoners and withdrew from Nikolayevsk. Due to the heavy casualties amongst the Japanese, the “Nikolayevsk Massacre” was known contemporarily as “the worst national shame since the Mongol invasions.”⁸³ After the Japanese reinforcements retook Nikolayevsk, they proceeded to occupy Sakhalin; with an evident ambition to expand its sphere of influence in northeast Asia, Japan did not begin withdrawing its troops until June 1922.

During this period, in order to uphold its navigation rights on the rivers of Northeast Asia, China formed a River Defense Fleet, composed of the Jiang Heng and three other warships: what it lacked in strength, it made up for in determination. At first, China sought only to resist Russian impingement upon free navigation, but it soon became embroiled in the conflict between Russia and Japan in Nikolayevsk. While detained in Nikolayevsk, the Chinese warships did in fact lend cannons to the Whites, which were then seized by the Red Army and used in an attack on the Japanese. When the Japanese learned of this situation, they blamed China's failure to enforce military discipline and the inappropriate conduct of its diplomatic personnel; these criticisms hit home. However, in the course of negotiations between China and Japan, the two countries had no intention of inflating the conflict. Aside from having been detained in Nikolayevsk for too long and suffering from unstable morale, the Chinese naval officers and sailors felt no great enmity toward the Japanese; China later agreed to Japan's demands for an apology, payment of a victims' compensation fund, and punishment of the sailors involved, and thereafter was able to smoothly withdraw its warships, troops and expatriates.

Nevertheless, Commander Wang Chongwen of the Jilin-Heilongjiang River Defense Office asserted that the Japanese had expansionist ambitions, and had framed the Chinese warships; even once compelled to acknowledge that the warships had in fact fired upon Japanese soldiers, he still harped upon Japan's hidden intentions, and explicitly drew attention to Japanese schemes. Wang Chongwen himself was not subjected to any punishment over this incident, and continued to serve as River Defense Commander until December 1922, when he was dismissed by Zhang Zuolin 张作霖 for embezzlement of public funds and suspected contact with Wu Peifu 吴佩孚.⁸⁴ As for Captain Chen Shiyong of the Jiang Heng, who had been punished with removal from office, Wang Chongwen affirmed that, in a time of unstable morale, he was "actually able to remain steady throughout, without harming, imperiling or disgracing China. If rewarded for his merits, despite having had a misunderstanding over the bombardment action, this is an example where leniency should be granted."⁸⁵ After being relieved from his post, Chen Shiyong changed his name to Chen Jiliang and transferred to the First Fleet, where he served as captain of the Chu Guan, and was later promoted to captain of the Hai Yung. During the era of the Nanjing Nationalist government, he successively served as Permanent Under-Secretary and Administrative Under-Secretary of the Navy; during the War of Resistance, he concurrently served as Chief of Staff to the Naval Command, Commander of the First Fleet, and as a member of the Military Affairs Commission of the Nationalist government, and was posthumously promoted to admiral when he died in 1945. It thus appears that his punishment over the Nikolayevsk Incident and the depictions of him did not have any detrimental impact on his development in the Navy. As for the Jiang Heng and the other three warships, which escaped from danger to return home, they formed the Jilin-Heilongjiang River Defense Fleet, and thereafter gradually developed into the northeastern arm of the Republican Navy.

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Notes

1. Akira Iriye, *The Cambridge History of American Foreign Relations*, vol. 3, *The Globalizing of America, 1913-1945*, (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 55–56.
2. Wang Chunliang, "Jianlun 1918-1922 nian Riben yu Su'E de guangxi" (Summary of the Relations between Japan and Soviet Russia in 1918-1922), *Shandong shifan daxue xuebao* (Journal of Shandong Normal University), no. 1 (2002).

3. Studies by British and Japanese scholars on the Nikolayevsk Incident focus on the clash between Russia and Japan, and hardly mention the involvement of the Chinese Navy. Works by Chinese scholars follow the same general outline, while books on Chinese naval history tend to focus on the Jilin-Heilongjiang River Defense Fleet, the predecessor to the Northeastern Fleet, and rarely mention the Nikolayevsk Incident; although some provide a fairly detailed narrative for the incident, they generally lack cited materials, and even have historical errors.
4. Clarence A. Manning, *The Siberian Fiasco* (New York: Library Publishers, 1952), 22.
5. There is another theory that the local population was around 15,000 people. See A. Morgan Young, *Japan Under Taisho Tenno, 1912-1926* (London: Unwin Brothers Ltd., 1928); and Elena Varneck, H. H. Fisher, eds., *The Testimony of Kolchak and Other Siberian Materials* (Stanford University Press, 1935), 331.
6. A. Morgan Young, "Japan Under Taisho Tenno, 1912-1926," in *The Testimony of Kolchak and Other Siberian Materials*, edited by Elena Varneck and H. H. Fisher (Stanford University Press, 1935), 181.
7. Bao Zunpeng, *Zhongguo haijun shi: xia ce* (Chinese naval history: Book two) (Taipei: Zhonghua congshu bianshen weiyuanhui, 1970), 872-73.
8. "Li [Jia'ao] gaodeng weiyuan shou Zhongguo jun bangongchu han song Haijunbu laidian" (Return Telegram by Senior Committee Member Li [Jia'ao] Received by the China Military Office and Sent to the Navy), in *Zhong'E guanxi shiliao: Dongbei bianfang (er): Zhonghua Minguo liu nian zhi ba nian* (Historical Materials on Sino-Russian Relations: Northeastern Border Defense (two): 1917-1919), (Taipei: Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica, 1984), 746.
9. "Zhang Wenhuan dian cheng Waijiaobu" (Telegrams from Zhang Wenhuan to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Mar. 18, 1920, Mar. 29, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:379-(1), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (1), in the collection of the Institute of Modern History, Academia Sinica. (Unless otherwise indicated, all Foreign Ministry archives below are from this collection).
10. "Guowuyuan gonghan Waijiaobu" (Official letter from the Executive Council to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Apr. 7, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:379-(1), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (1).
11. "Jiaotongbu zi Waijiaobu" (Inquiry by the Ministry of Transportation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Apr. 26, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:379-(1), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (1).
12. "Haijunbu zi Waijiaobu" (Inquiry by the Navy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Apr. 30, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:379-(1), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (1).
13. "Haijunbu zi Waijiaobu" (Inquiry by the Navy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (May 18, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:379-(1), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (1).
14. "Shao Hengjun dian Waijiaobu" (Telegram from Shao Hengjun to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (May 18, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:379-(1), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (1).
15. Translator's Note: This name is a transliteration, given as "Ma-er-ke-si," here approximated as "Markos"; original spelling unknown.
16. "Jiaotongbu zi Waijiaobu" (Inquiry by the Ministry of Transportation to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (May 27, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:379-(1), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (1).
17. "Shao Hengjun dian Waijiaobu" (Telegram from Shao Hengjun to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (May 29, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:379-(1), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (1).
18. Morimatsu Toshio, *Gunjintachi no Shōwa shi* (The Military in the Showa Era) (Tokyo: Tosho Shuppansha, 1989), 50-53.
19. "Waijiaobu gonghan Haijunbu" (Official letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Navy) (Jun. 4, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1), in the collection of the Taipei Military History Compilation and Translation Office of the Ministry of National Defense (Unless otherwise indicated, all National Army archives below are from this collection).
20. "Lin Jianzhang dian Haijunbu" (Telegram from Lin Jianzhang to the Navy) (Jun. 10, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1).
21. "Lin Guoqing dian Haijunbu" (Telegram from Lin Guoqing to the Navy) (Jun. 13, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1).
22. "Lin Jianzhang dian Haijunbu" (Telegram from Lin Jianzhang to the Navy) (Jun. 14, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1).
23. "Lin Jianzhang dian Haijunbu fujian" (Enclosure in Telegram from Lin Jianzhang to the Navy) (Jun. 14, 1920); *Guojun Dang'an* (Archives of the Armed Forces of the Republic of China), 062.24/0022, "Miaojie Zhong-Ri jiu fen an (yi)" (Case [1] in the Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute). Secretary Hanaoka's report is similar in content: see "635: 6月12日中国炮舰卜尼港事件卜/关系二付花冈书记官报告/件" (635: Jun. 12 Nikolayevsk Incident with Chinese gunboats / Concerning the submission of the second report by Secretary Hanaoka / Case), *Nihon gaikō bunsho—Taishō 9* (Japan's diplomatic papers—9th year of the Taisho era [1920]), Book 1, Vol. 2, Japanese Foreign Ministry, Aug. 1972, 773-74.
24. "Wang Chongwen dian Haijunbu" (Telegram from Wang Chongwen to the Navy) (Jun. 16, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1). On Mar. 19, 1920, Captain Chen Shiyang, the captain of the Jiang Heng and the commander of the River Defense Fleet, reported to Wang Chongwen on the

- outbreak of hostilities between Russia and Japan, and noted that at 3 AM on Mar. 13, due to problems in their surrender, Japanese soldiers suddenly fired upon the headquarters of the New Russian Party (Red Army), injuring the commander and killing the deputy commander. After several days of fierce fighting, the Japanese soldiers and expatriates had suffered heavy casualties, and approximately one hundred Japanese soldiers had retreated to headquarters; after being surrounded and assaulted by the Russian Army, the Japanese surrendered on the 18th. Three sailors on the Li Sui were also injured by stray bullets during these hostilities. Another telegram sent a few days later by Chen Shiyong mentioned that the commander of the New Russian Party had asked that he bear witness to these hostilities, to provide testimony in negotiations between Japan and Russia. Chen worried that such an action would hinder diplomatic relations between China and Japan, and tactfully declined. However, the fleet had had high expenses in combating several months of freezing weather, and had even obtained a short-term loan from the expatriate merchants; Chen hoped that the Jilin-Heilongjiang River Defense Preparatory Office would quickly allocate and deliver funds. The warships had also obtained the permission of the New Party Commander to borrow coal. See “Chen Shiyong dian Wang Chongwen” (Telegram from Chen Shiyong to Wang Chongwen) (Mar. 19, 1920); “Chen Shiyong dian Wang Chongwen” (Telegram from Chen Shiyong to Wang Chongwen) (Mar. 28, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1).
25. “Wang Chongwen dian Haijunbu” (Telegram from Wang Chongwen to the Navy) (Jun. 23, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1).
 26. “Haijunbu dian Lin Guogeng” (Telegram from the Navy to Lin Guogeng) (Jun. 19, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1).
 27. “Wang Chongwen dian Haijunbu” (Telegram from Wang Chongwen to the Navy) (Jun. 19, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1).
 28. “Haijunbu dian Ji-Hei jiangfang choubeichu” (Telegram from the Navy to the Jilin-Heilongjiang River Defense Preparatory Office) (Jun. 26, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1).
 29. “Haijunbu xunling Ji-Hei jiangfang siling Wang Chongwen” (Orders from the Navy to Jilin-Heilongjiang River Defense Commander Wang Chongwen) (Jun. 30, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1).
 30. “Wang Chongwen dian Haijunbu” (Telegram from Wang Chongwen to the Navy) (Jul. 3, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1).
 31. Translator’s Note: Various spelled as Trapetzin or Trepetzin in contemporary accounts.
 32. “Shao Hengjun dian Waijiaobu” (Telegram from Shao Hengjun to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Jul. 10, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:379-(2), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (2).
 33. Translator’s Note: George S. Dyer was a mining engineer and a native of Oakland, California, who operated a British gold mine on the Amur River, and fled with his wife when the mine was captured by the Russian Red Army. For the publication of his account, see: Thomas F. F. Millard, John B. Powell, and John W. Powell, eds., *China Monthly Review*, vol. 14 (New York: Millard Publishing Company, 1920), 335–37; and John Powell, “Yanks Say Japs Distorted Facts to Justify Ends,” *Chicago Sunday Tribune*, Oct. 3, 1920.
 34. Translator’s Note: The Dyers were not reporters; Wang’s statement appears to be in error, or possibly to conflate the Dyer couple with Jack Mason, an American newspaper correspondent who also visited Nikolayevsk and gave a first-hand account. See Jack Mason, “The Chinese at Nikolaevsk,” *China Monthly Review* 14:287–95. This account makes reference to Captain Mao Chuicai as “Captain Mow.”
 35. “Waijiaobu shou Haijunbu han” (Letter from the Navy received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Jul. 21, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:380-(2), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (3).
 36. Translator’s Note: “Lacina” is a transliteration; original spelling unknown.
 37. “Waijiaobu shou Harbin jiaosheyuan cheng” (Report by Harbin negotiators received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:380-(2), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (3).
 38. “Waijiaobu zi Haijunbu” (Inquiry from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Navy) (Jul. 30, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1).
 39. “Waijiaobu shou zhu Boli fulingshi dian” (Telegram from the Vice-Consul at Khabarovsk received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Aug. 2, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:381-(1), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (4).
 40. “Haijunbu dian ling Lin Jianzhang” (Telegram orders from Navy to Lin Jianzhang) (Aug. 10, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1).
 41. “Waijiaobu shou Riben shiguan han” (Letter from the Japanese embassy received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Aug. 6, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:381-(1), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (4).
 42. “Wang Chongwen dian Haijunbu” (Telegram from Wang Chongwen to the Navy) (Sept. 6, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
 43. “Ribei Obata gongshi zhi Chen Waijiao cizhang zhaohui” (Diplomatic note sent by Japanese Ambassador Obata to Deputy Foreign Minister Chen) (Aug. 14, 1920), Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Beijing Government, ed., *Waijiao wendu: Miaojie shijian jiaoshe an* (Diplomatic documents: Negotiations in the Nikolayevsk Incident), Modern Chinese History Series, vol. 861, no. 3, photo offset edition, Taipei: Wenhai chubanshe, 1973, 78.

44. “Waijiaobu zhi Haijunbu han” (Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Navy) (Aug. 18, 1920), in *Waijiao wendu: Miaojie shijian jiaoshe an*, 7B–8A.
45. “Wang Chongwen dian Haijunbu” (Telegram from Wang Chongwen to the Navy) (Aug. 7, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3). Shen Honglie was selected because he “studied abroad in Japan, took part in war and was sent to the battlefield, and is qualified in both learning and experience.” In his autobiography, Shen Honglie states that he was assigned to the mission because, when he was the Naval Warfare instructor at the Army College, “at that time I gave a speech on the world situation and the steps that China should take, which was clear and logical. The thing was that some authorities heard it, so they appointed me as a Nikolayevsk negotiation committee member.” See: Shen Honglie, “Ziwo jieshao” (Self-introduction), Feb. 21, 1941, 8 AM, speech at the Linxiong Luliandian Cadre School Auditorium, manuscript.
46. “Yan waijiao zongzhang zhi Ri Obata gongshi han” (Letter from Foreign Minister Yan to Japanese ambassador Obata) (Aug. 23, 1920), in *Waijiao wendu: Miaojie shijian jiaoshe an*, 8A.
47. “Waijiaobu zhi Haijunbu han” (Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Navy) (Aug. 30, 1920), in *Waijiao wendu: Miaojie shijian jiaoshe an*, 8B.
48. “Waijiaobu zi Haijunbu” (Inquiry from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Navy) (Sept. 1, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (1).
49. “Waijiaobu zi Haijunbu” (Inquiry from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Navy) (Sept. 3, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
50. “Haijunbu qingshi shijian” (Navy requests instructions on incident) (Sept. 3, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
51. “Waijiaobu zi Haijunbu” (Inquiry from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Navy) (Sept. 3, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
52. “Chen Fu dian Waijiaobu” (Telegram from Chen Fu to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Sept. 2, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
53. “Ribei Obata gongshi zhi Chen Waijiao cizhang zhaohui” (Diplomatic note sent by Japanese Ambassador Obata to Deputy Foreign Minister Chen) (Sept. 7, 1920), in *Waijiao wendu: Miaojie shijian jiaoshe an*, 98.
54. “Haijunbu dian Chen Fu” (Telegram from the Navy to Chen Fu) (Sept. 8, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
55. “Lin Jianzhang dian Waijiaobu Haijunbu” (Telegram from Lin Jianzhang to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Navy) (Sept. 14, 1920), “Chen Fu dian Waijiaobu” (Telegram from Chen Fu to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Sept. 2, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
56. “Waijiaobu zi Haijunbu” (Inquiry from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Navy) (Sept. 18, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (2).
57. Shen Honglie, *Dongbei bianfang yu hangquan* (Northeastern Border Defense and Navigation Rights), (place of publication and publisher unknown, 1953), 2.
58. “Wang Chongwen dian cheng Haijunbu” (Telegram report by Wang Chongwen to the Navy) (Sept. 23, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3); “Wang Hongnian dian cheng Haijunbu” (Telegram report by Wang Hongnian to the Navy) (Sept. 30, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
59. Sources: “Wang weiyuan Hongnian mianjiao waijiaobu panjue fuben” (Copy of decision delivered to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs by committee member Wang Hongnian) (Oct. 11, 1920), in *Waijiao wendu: Miaojie shijian jiaoshe an*, 10B–11A; “Ribei gongshiguan zhi waijiaobu jielue” (Memorandum from the Japanese embassy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Oct. 26, 1920), in *Waijiao wendu: Miaojie shijian jiaoshe an*, 10A.
60. “Waijiaobu zhi Ribei Obata gongshi jielue” (Memorandum from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Japanese Ambassador Obata) (Sept. 18, 1920), in *Waijiao wendu: Miaojie shijian jiaoshe an*, 10A.
61. “Haijunbu zi Waijiaobu” (Inquiry from the Navy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Nov. 8, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (2).
62. Sources: “Waijiaobu zhi Ribei Obata gongshi jielue” (Memorandum from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to Japanese Ambassador Obata) (Nov. 12, 1920), in *Waijiao wendu: Miaojie shijian jiaoshe an*, 861, no. 3, 11B–12B; “Ribei Obata gongshi zhi Yan waijiao zongzhang jielue” (Memorandum from Japanese Ambassador Obata to Foreign Minister Yan) (Nov. 17, 1920), in *Waijiao wendu: Miaojie shijian jiaoshe an*, 12B–13B.
63. “Yan waijiao zongzhang zhi zhu Ribei He gongshi han” (Letter from Foreign Minister Yan to Ambassador He in Japan) (Dec. 23, 1920), “Ribei Obata gongshi zhi Yan waijiao zongzhang zhaohui” (Diplomatic note sent by Japanese Ambassador Obata to Foreign Minister Yan) (December 24, 1920), in *Waijiao wendu: Miaojie shijian jiaoshe an*, 14B–15A.
64. “Waijiaobu fa Caizhengbu zi” (Inquiry sent by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Ministry of Finance) (Jul. 31, 1920), “Waijiaobu shou Boli Quan fulingshi dian” (Telegram from Khabarovsk Vice-Consul Quan received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Jul. 31, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:380-(1), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (3).

65. “Waijiaobu shou Jiaotongbu dian” (Telegram from the Ministry of Transportation received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Aug. 13, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:381-(1), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (4).
66. Waijiaobu shou Boli fulingshi cheng” (Report by Khabarovsk vice-consul received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Aug. 31, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:381-(1), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (4).
67. Waijiaobu shou Boli lingguan cheng” (Report by Khabarovsk consulate received by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Sept. 23, 1920), Foreign Ministry Archives 03.32:381-(2), Rescue of the Chinese Expatriates in Nikolayevsk, Archive (5).
68. “Waijiaobu gonghan Haijunbu ji fujian” (Official letter and enclosure from Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Navy) (Dec. 30, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (2). Captain Chen Shiyong of the Jiang Heng was relieved of his duties on January 20, 1921; Second-Class Seaman Zhang Baoxing, Bannerman Zhang Bingjie, Second-Class Seaman Zhang Lianyong, and Second-Class Signalman Fanqixin of the Jiang Heng were each sentenced to 8 months of imprisonment, effective as of February 15, 1921. See “Chen Fu shoudao Haijunbu Zongwuting han” (Letter from the Navy General Affairs Office received by Chen Fu), (Apr. 30, 1921), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
69. “Waijiaobu gonghan Haijunbu” (Official letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Navy) (Apr. 18, 1921), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
70. “Waijiaobu han Haijunbu” (Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Navy) (Jul. 20, 1921), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (2).
71. “Haijunbu han Waijiaobu” (Letter from the Navy to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) (Aug. 9, 1921), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (2).
72. “Haijunbu han Caizhengbu” (Letter from the Navy to the Ministry of Finance) (Aug. 9, 1921), “Caizhengbu han Haijunbu” (Letter from the Ministry of Finance to the Navy) (Aug. 25, 1920), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
73. “Waijiaobu han Haijunbu” (Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Navy) (Sept. 19, 1921), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (2).
74. “Haijunbu han Caizhengbu” (Letter from the Navy to the Ministry of Finance) (Sept. 23, 1921), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
75. “Waijiaobu han Haijunbu” (Letter from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Navy) (Nov. 19, 1921), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (2).
76. “Haijunbu han Caizhengbu” (Letter from the Navy to the Ministry of Finance) (Jan. 11, 1922), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
77. “Haijunbu xunling Wang Chongwen” (Orders from the Navy to Wang Chongwen) (Jan. 6, 1921), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
78. “Wang Chongwen cheng Waijiao zongzhang” (Report by Wang Chongwen to the Foreign Minister) (Oct. 1, 1921), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
79. “Haijunbu xunling Wang Chongwen” (Orders from the Navy to Wang Chongwen) (Oct. 5, 1921), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
80. “Waijiaobu han Haijunbu fujian” (Letter and enclosure from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to the Navy) (Oct. 19, 1921), Haijunbu xunling Wang Chongwen” (Orders from the Navy to Wang Chongwen) (Jan. 6, 1921), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (2).
81. “Wang Chongwen cheng Haijunbu” (Report by Wang Chongwen to the Navy) (Jan. 24, 1921), National Army Archives 062.24/0022, Sino-Japanese Nikolayevsk Dispute Archive (3).
82. “Haijun da shiji (1912-1941)” (Record of important naval events [1912-1941]), Yang Zhiben, *Zhonghua minguo haijun shiliao* (Historical materials on the Navy of the Republic of China), (Beijing: Haiyang chubanshe, 1987), 1038.
83. Hosoya Chihiro, “Nikoraefusuku jiken” (Nikolayevsk Incident), Lexicographical Committee for Japanese Diplomatic History, Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, *Nihon gaikōshi jiten* (Dictionary of Japanese diplomatic history), (Tokyo: Yamakawa Shuppansha, 1992).
84. Wu Jiezhong et al, *Zhongguo jindai haijun shi* (Modern Naval History of China), (Beijing: Jiefangjun chubanshe, 1989), 298. Translator’s Note: Zhang Zuolin and Wu Peifu were rival military warlords who fought to control territories in northern China.
85. “Sa haijun zongzhang zhi Yan waijiao zongzhang zi” (Inquiry from Navy Chief of Staff Sa to Foreign Minister Yan) (Oct. 15, 1920), in *Waijiao wendu: Miaojie shijian jiaoshe an*, 118.

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