

Ultra-Modernism

Architecture and Modernity in Manchuria

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Authors' Note

This book could have taken many forms. Japan's encounter with architectural modernity is distinguished for its distinction and China's is matchless in its multiplicity. Consequently, few sites offer the historian a richer and more fertile ground than the territory in which these two converged in the first half of the twentieth century. The production of architecture in Manchuria during this period was as prolific and profound as occurred anywhere else in the world at the time, yet it features in no standard textbooks on architectural modernity or modernism. The term Manchuria is used throughout this book only as a convenient and easily legible way of making reference to the region of northeast China as it was commonly known and referred to at that time.

The story of Manchuria mirrors that of most of the world outside the West during the twentieth century: a faint whisper drowned out by the deafening master narrative of Western-centric modernism. Change is afoot. In the twenty-first century, the century of modernism is being re-examined in a different light as the global majority challenges the minority's version of history. In so doing, it paints a much richer and

more complete picture of the actual experiences of this extraordinary era in which the global encounter with modernity heralded the end of Holocene and the dawn of the Anthropocene.

Manchuria has a close association with this epochal transition, in which the nuclear bombs over Japan played their part. Amid the comparatively barren landscape of architectural enquiry into Manchuria and its neighbours, this book's principal aim is to encourage much-needed further work on this fascinating subject in this overlooked region during this seminal period. It makes no claim to intellectual profundity and pleads leniency both from those who are familiar with its content and expected something weightier, and from those who are unfamiliar with it and hoped for something lighter.

Prologue

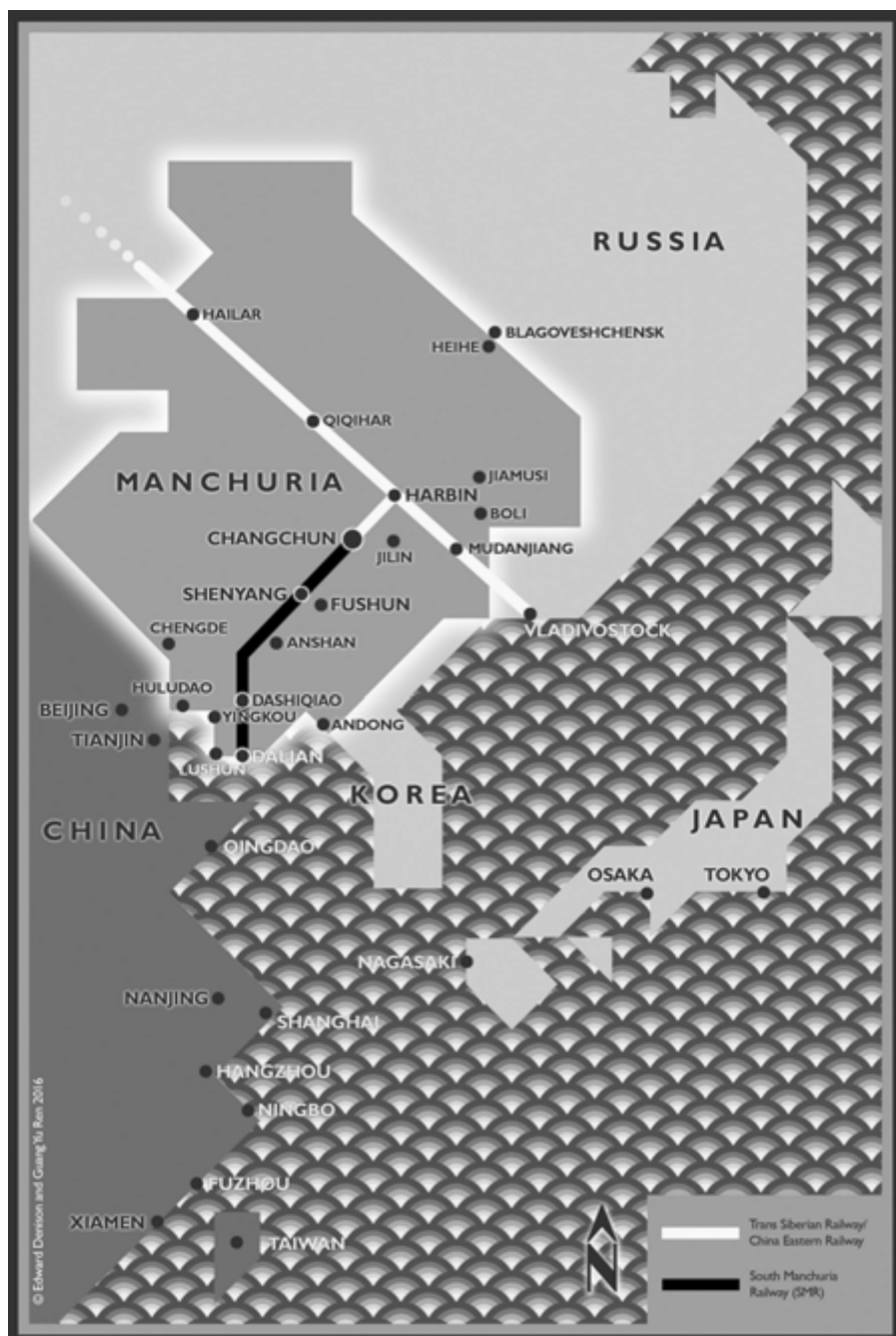
The date 9 August 1945 is seared into the history books by Fat Man, the atomic bomb that erased Nagasaki in a flash. Fat Man and his companion Little Boy, dispatched by Enola Gay over Hiroshima three days earlier, brought a mercifully swift end to the Second World War, but the blinding horror of these new weapons cast much into the historical shadows, including one of the largest military campaigns of the entire war. At one minute past midnight on 9 August, just hours before Fat Man's dispatch, a million Soviet troops crossed the border into Manchuria, opening a theatre of war the size of Western Europe. The Soviet invasion of Manchuria and the American bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima shared the same objective: the unconditional surrender of Japan, the first nation outside the West to have achieved a state of full modernisation and the first to gain entry into the exclusive club of imperial nations.

Manchuria, the long-contested northeastern portion of China that rises into Russia's underbelly was for most Westerners, as one Japanese writer explained in 1925, 'a name pasted on that jumping-off edge of the world somewhere in the outer darkness of their school geography—a mere label, some 10,000 miles below their mental horizon.'¹ Flanked by Mongolia to the west and Korea to the east, Manchuria, however, had been the jewel in Japan's imperial crown—a prized possession prised not merely from China, but from a brutish group of imperial powers rasping over the territory since the mid-nineteenth century. Following Japan's outright occupation of Manchuria in 1931, the region was rebranded Manchukuo and recast as a new state. However, this youngster was by no means independent. It had been conceived by Japan and was controlled by Japanese interests. Chief among these was the South Manchuria Railway (SMR)—an extraordinary product of modernity born out of the tumultuous union of industrialisation, state-sponsored capitalism and imperialism.

Throughout the 1930s, Japan set out not only to create an imperial realm in Manchuria, but also to manufacture a modernist utopia distinct from Western precedents. The vast plains of Manchuria became the site of some of the most ambitious architectural designs and urban plans anywhere on the globe before the Second

1. Kinnosuke, 1925: v.

World War. The subsequent conflict that brought the curtain down on Japan's exceptional experiment also concealed this unique architectural encounter with modernity from the world's attention and effectively struck it from the historical record. Forged by Japan in China, modernity in Manchuria challenges the West's exclusive claim to the programme of modernity, casting it in an Eastern mould and part of China's unique experience of multiple modernities. This book explores this overlooked territory and examines how architecture and planning were exploited to simultaneously create the reality and myth of modernity in Manchuria. It was an illusion that was painstakingly constructed throughout the early twentieth century until it finally shattered at one minute past midnight on 9 August 1945.



Map of Manchuria showing the principal settlements and railway routes.

1

Between East and West

Since the Great Wall of China the world has seen no material undertaking of equal magnitude.¹

Introduction

Manchuria is classic frontier territory—the contested no man’s land between established strongholds on the global chessboard. Raided by the Mongols, seized by Russia, conjoined with Korea, acquired by Japan and today claimed by China, the realm of the Manchus has been pounded for centuries by the historical tide and battered by successive waves of migration and military campaigns. During the Ming dynasty (1368–1644), the Chinese solution to incessant incursion was the construction of a wall designed to separate them from their barbarous neighbours. This eastern section of the Great Wall proved impenetrable until 1644, when the gates at Shanhaiguan were opened by the beleaguered Ming general Wu Sangui and a surge of Manchus poured through to claim the throne and establish the Qing dynasty (1644–1911)—China’s last imperial dynasty.

The Manchus were outsiders and their reign in China was weakened and ultimately terminated by other outsiders from farther afield. Unruly hordes, like the Manchus, had long tested China’s borders, but by the nineteenth century the arrival of an altogether new form of barbarian, invulnerable to any wall no matter how great, precipitated China’s fundamental transformation from an inward-looking and ancient civilisation to a modern nation-state.

Various European powers had nibbled at the edges of China since the sixteenth century. Trade forged the first contact, with the Portuguese arriving in the 1510s and settling in ports along China’s southern coast from Ningbo to Canton (Guangzhou). The foreigners’ licentious behaviour caused their banishment to a deserted island that became Macao and a staging post for religious missionaries hell-bent on converting the Chinese to Christianity over subsequent centuries. The Jesuits were the most

1. Norman, 1902.

successful in this endeavour and from the seventeenth century established strong ties with China in spiritual as well as more corporeal matters.

These soft relations that had opened the door to China were eclipsed in the early nineteenth century by the British, the most barbarous of barbarians. Their Herculean trade in narcotics blew the open door off its hinges and hastened the demise of the Manchu rulers. In 1839, after years of exchanging Indian opium for Chinese tea, the seizure and destruction of more than 1,000 tons of opium by Chinese officials provided the pretext for the First Opium War (1839–1842). China's fleet of outmoded junks proved no match for the technologically superior British gunboats. Modernity's arrival in China was propelled through the twin barrels of Royal Navy cannon and the opium pipe.

China's ignominious defeat concluded with the signing of the Treaty of Nanjing on 29 August 1842, which, among other indignities, opened five ports to foreign trade—Canton (Guangzhou), Amoy (Xiamen), Foochow (Fuzhou), Ningpo (Ningbo), and Shanghai—and the ceding of Hong Kong to Britain. It also launched an era of unequal treaties that eroded China's political standing and established growing numbers of treaty ports throughout the country in which foreigners were permitted to live and trade, immune from Chinese jurisdiction under the system of extra-territoriality. Through a systematic process of international drug dealing backed by Queen Victoria's navy and ill-disciplined marines, Britain was instrumental in launching China's 'Hundred Years of Humiliation' (*Bai Nian Guo Chi*), during which the once glorious Celestial Empire degenerated into the Sick Man of Asia and instilled in China a profound distrust for many foreign nations, not least Britain and, by the end of the century, Japan.

The second half of the nineteenth century saw China's frail carcass picked apart by predatory Western powers, its dominion sliced up and parcelled into manageable portions—colonies, leased territories, treaty ports, and foreign concessions. An unexpected and belated guest at this dishonourable banquet was Japan, China's subaltern neighbour and cultural underling. The Japanese, as the English poet and Orientalist Laurence Binyon (1869–1943) once noted, 'look to China as we look to Italy and Greece, for them it is the classic land'.² By the late nineteenth century, China's superior relationship with Japan was upended.

The historic reversal was effected by the countries' respective responses to the intrusion of Western powers. Both had sought to contain this interference by confining trade to specific ports (Canton in China³ and Nagasaki in Japan), but British gunboats turned foreign interest in China from an external concern to an unavoidable and corrosive internal problem. When Commodore Matthew Perry arrived in Edo (Tokyo) Bay in 1853 onboard the USS *Mississippi*, the Japanese were not going to

2. Binyon, 1908: 6.

3. Macau, Xiamen, and Taiwan were at different times exceptions to the general rule.

cede to foreigners the favourable terms that China had been forced to make a decade earlier. For Japan, interaction with the West stopped at trade, which became its salvation. For China, it permitted settlement, which became its downfall.

The arrival of foreign forces on Japan's doorstep prompted sweeping reforms aimed at the wholesale modernisation of the nation. With a revolutionary zeal, the Meiji Restoration of 1868 not only laid the foundations of Japan's swift and fundamental modernisation, but also endowed the country with membership to the elite club of Western nations. All that remained for Japan to become a fully signed-up member was an empire, the appetite for which China and Korea would pay dearly. In 1885, Japan's metaphorical passage to the West was encapsulated in an anonymous essay, 'Datsuaron' ('Departing Asia', *Tuo Ya Lun*), attributed to the reformist intellectual Fukuzawa Yukichi (1835–1901), conjuring an image of Japan, drawn by the irresistible 'winds' from the West, setting sail and leaving Asia and its uncivilised and unmodern neighbours behind.⁴

The pretext for the commencement of Japan's empire building was a dispute at the end of the nineteenth century over the former vassal state of Chosen (Korea). When war broke out on 3 August 1894, China—the region's perennial super-power—assumed it would easily defeat its upstart neighbour. The outcome was unthinkable. The eminent Chinese reformer Liang Qichao (1873–1929) described it as a 'thunderbolt in a dream';⁵ but for the population of northeastern China (which became Manchuria) it was a total nightmare. As the Japanese pursued the retreating Chinese forces, they rounded on the natural and strategic port of Lüshun, the protruding promontory that guards the maritime approach to Beijing—'China's Gibraltar'. There the Japanese massacred thousands of civilians in a chilling foretaste of future atrocities that would soak the ground on which their empire would later be constructed with the blood of many. The Lüshun Massacre opened wounds between the two countries that would fester into the third millennium.

Japan's victory in the first Sino-Japanese War secured China's fate—a vertiginous fall from grace that reached its nadir with the signing of the Treaty of Shimonoseki on 17 April 1895. This treaty contained not only the terms of peace, but also the first drafts of the gathering storm that would batter the region for half a century. It would also permanently alter the course of China's modernisation by preparing the conditions for unprecedented construction and destruction—modernity's loyal bedfellows.

In a supplementary treaty signed by China, Japan, and Britain in 1896, Japanese subjects were granted the right to 'carry on trade, industry and manufactures' in the territory granted to Japan.⁶ With the 'most-favoured-nation' clause extending this

4. Fukuzawa Yukichi, 'Datsuaron', *Jiji Shimpō*, 16 March 1885. Fukuzawa was referring to Korea and China.

5. Liang Qichao, 'Wu Shi Nian Zhongguo Jin Hua Lun', *Shen Bao*, 50th Anniversary Special Edition, February 1923.

6. The supplementary treaty was signed in Beijing on 21 July 1896.

right to citizens of other nations, for the first time in history foreigners residing in China were permitted to engage in industry. Having been allowed to settle on Chinese territory, they were now allowed to extract resources and manufacture goods. For China, the doors to modern industrial production—a hallmark of modernity—were unlocked not from the West but from the East.

The Treaty of Shimonoseki forced China to recognise Korea's independence and pay Japan a hefty war indemnity. However, it was the surrender of sovereign territory that would have the most debilitating and lasting effect on China. Japan had taken from China parts of the northern coastline on the Liaodong Peninsula, as well as several islands in the China Sea, including Formosa (Taiwan). The generous terms not only disgraced China's ailing Qing government, but also rattled the Western powers. France, Germany, and Russia performed the 'Triple Intervention' demanding Japan withdraw its claim on the Liaodong Peninsula and the port of Lüshun. On 5 May 1895, Japan bowed to the pressure in exchange for a larger indemnity, but the damage had been done. Japan had lost face and this grave dishonour would have to be avenged. Russia, whose central role in prising back the Liaodong Peninsula for China, had not acted altruistically and would pay a heavy price for this Pyrrhic victory.

Enter the Russian Bear

Of the many foreign powers prowling around China's perimeter in the nineteenth century, the first to stake a claim in Manchuria's vast untapped resources were Britain and Russia. Britain's desire to open up north-east China to international trade was realised in the Treaty of Tientsin (June 1858), which established the port of Newchwang (Yingkou) as a treaty port and Manchuria's pre-eminent commercial port until the twentieth century.

One month earlier, when the Chinese were distracted by the dual tragedies of the Second Opium War (1856–1860) and the Taiping Rebellion (1850–1864),⁷ the Russians pressed the embattled Qing government to revise China's northern border southwards. The resulting Treaty of Aigun (May 1858) and Convention of Peking (November 1860) re-established the Sino-Russian border at the Amur River and granted to Russia all the territory east of the Ussuri River up to the Pacific coast.

Without firing a single shot in combat, Russia acquired 900,000 square kilometres of land and an extended Pacific coastline on which they established the naval port of Vladivostok. This distant settlement would later become the terminus of the longest railway in the world, the Trans-Siberian, linking Europe with East Asia. Still clinging hopefully to its antiquated ways, the Middle Kingdom 'darkened under the shadow

7. Over 20 million Chinese are said to have died in the Taiping Rebellion.

of a beast of prey with a thirst for blood and territory which was thoroughly modern, European.’⁸

Railways were an essential component in the machinery of modernity. Their iron filaments extended deep into uncharted territories and extracted the resources demanded and devoured by modern industry. Fossil fuels, metal ores, and agricultural produce depended on continuous columns of railway wagons shunting their cargoes to the nearest seaport and delivering them into new trade routes that spanned the globe. Foreign powers, in particular the British, were eager to build a railway network in China, but the Chinese were resistant. They viewed this technological innovation as a veil for further exploitation rather than mutual progress.

In the 1860s, goods in China were transported great distances using ancient methods. Canals and rivers were preferable to land transport, which required super-human levels of endurance. ‘The roads in China [were] proverbially the worst in the world,’ wrote the British traveller Archibald Colquhoun (1848–1914). ‘The typical western China road is a thing to be experienced, it cannot be described.’⁹ With the sedan chair and wheelbarrow reigning supreme for centuries, the benefits of the railway were obvious and the competition non-existent. ‘Steam or anarchy’ proclaimed the missionary Reverend Alexander Williamson (1829–1890) prophetically in 1870, unwittingly foreseeing the transformation railways would bring well beyond his lifetime:

Immense numbers would find employment and good wages on the construction of the works. The traffic would gradually, as the rails were laid down, assimilate itself to the habits of the people; mines and new sources of industry would be brought into operation. The agricultural resources would be greatly developed, and commerce in all its branches would receive a powerful impulse . . . Railways would bring the whole Empire under the control of the central Government, put an end to rebellions, would place commerce on a secure basis, equalize the administration of justice, modify those famines . . . moreover, they would provide means for the diffusion of knowledge and, in short, would, in a thousand ways, promote the advancement and happiness of the people.¹⁰

In 1894, the British introduced railways to Manchuria, breaching the Great Wall at Shanhaiguan while pressing for advantage in the region. While laying the Beijing-to-Mukden (Shenyang) railway in a bid to connect the strategic ports of Tientsin (Tianjin) and Newchwang, some Chinese officials witnessed the benefits of this new iron horse and became convinced of its potential. Few were as impressed as the eminent government official and military general, Li Hongzhang (1823–1901),

8. Kinnosuke, 1925: 48.

9. Colquhoun, 1898: 82.

10. Williamson, 1870: 82.

who masterminded various modernisation programmes in China. Manchuria's fate would be decided by his diplomacy and defined by the railways he championed.

One year after signing the Treaty of Shimonoseki on behalf of the Qing government in 1895 (during which he survived an assassination attempt by a Japanese right-wing extremist), Li was in St Petersburg attending the celebrations marking the Coronation of Emperor Nicholas II, Russia's last monarch. During this trip, Li negotiated the secret Li-Lobanov Treaty (June 1896), establishing a Russo-Chinese alliance motivated principally by a mutual antipathy towards Japan. The bonds of friendship between China and Russia were formed around a common enemy and strengthened by Russia's role in Japan's retrocession of the Liaodong Peninsula after the Sino-Japanese War.

Li travelled to Russia armed also with the draft of an unpublished accord dubbed the Cassini Convention, named after Russia's exceptional plenipotentiary to Beijing, Count Arthur Cassini (1836–1913). Cassini believed Manchuria was the key to Russian dominance in Asia and masterfully wrong-footed Britain, distracted by problems in southern Africa, in the race to seize control of the region in the dying years of the nineteenth century.

In 1890, Russia had started building the Trans-Siberian Railway connecting St Petersburg in the west with Vladivostok in the east. 'Since the Great Wall of China,' marvelled the writer Henry Norman, 'the world has seen no material undertaking of equal magnitude.'¹¹ The railway was forced to follow a wide arc to circumvent Manchuria. It was a costly detour that Cassini was determined to eliminate and ultimately exploit. The Cassini Convention was a blueprint for a Trans-Siberian shortcut that, rather than navigating around Manchuria, carved a straight line across it. The shortcut took 500 miles off the journey from Vladivostok to St Petersburg.

A new financial institution, the Russo-Chinese Bank, was established to sponsor the project, 'the financial lamb's skin in which the Russian Ministry of Finance was masquerading',¹² and a new company, the China Eastern Railway Company, was created to build it. This new company, whose shareholders could be either Chinese or Russian, 'was destined to play the rôle of giver of life or death to economic North Manchuria'.¹³ In an atmosphere of scheming, subterfuge, and secrecy, the China Eastern Railway (CER) or *Kitaiskaya Vostochnaya Jeleznaya Doroga* (Chinese Eastern Iron-road)¹⁴ was born, and its iron tracks began to cut across Manchuria's vast territory. With the help of Italian experts, Russian engineers constructed bridges and tunnels (the longest of which was over 3 kilometres) and nearly 100 stations in their bid to thread this vast line of communication across northern Asia.

11. Norman, 1902.

12. Kinnosuke, 1925: 58.

13. Kinnosuke, 1925: 52.

14. Clarence Cary, 'Dalny—A Fiat City', *Scribner's Magazine* 33, no. 4 (April 1903): 485.

Having greased the diplomatic machinery with his covert convention, Cassini set to work in Beijing securing the ratification of the Li-Lobanov Treaty. On 8 September, China consented to Russia building their railway and ratified the treaty 20 days later. Cassini departed Beijing on 30 September with the paperwork, the terms of which not merely granted Russia the right to build the desired railway, but also allowed the Russians to exploit the mining potential in the region and also to reserve the right to concentrate Russian forces in Lüshun and the neighbouring settlement of Talienwan (Dalian Wan, Dalian Bay) in case she 'should find herself suddenly involved in a war'.¹⁵ Russia now had complete jurisdiction over the railway zone in Manchuria, within which its workers and military personnel enjoyed extraterritorial privileges. Cassini had played a masterful game and won for Russia the prize she desired. Construction of the Russian gauge (five foot) CER began on 28 August 1897, marking the height of Russia's fleeting but fundamental involvement in Manchuria and the first episode in half a century of foreign meddling that culminated in Manchuria's severance from China and Japan's attempt to fashion it into a uniquely modern independent state.

15. 'The Cassini Convention', *North China Herald*, 30 October 1896.

2

Russian Manchuria

Kwantung Leased Territory

Never, perhaps, in the whole history of colonization has so much money been so recklessly squandered as in Manchuria.¹

The success of the Li-Lobanov Treaty whetted Russia's appetite for control of the region. The Russian Empire was handicapped by the paralysis of its Far Eastern Fleet in the frozen Pacific port of Vladivostok during the winter and needed a warm water alternative. The obvious candidate was Lüshun, a natural deep water port at the tip of the Liaodong Peninsula, which the Japanese wrested from China after their victory in the Sino-Japanese War only for it to be humiliatingly returned following the Triple Intervention.

Two and half years after pressuring Japan to surrender its claim on the Liaodong Peninsula, Russia's Pacific Fleet arrived off the coast of Lüshun in the prologue to a performance of two acts combining manipulative military coercion and deft diplomatic courting. The imposing presence of the Russian navy moored at Lüshun provided sufficient coercion, while Russia's diplomats courted Li Hongzhang and his aides. On 27 March 1898, Russia's nimble performance resulted in the Russo-China Convention that leased to Russia the ice-free ports of Lüshun and neighbouring Talienwan, and the surrounding sea and hinterland 'for such a distance as is necessary to secure proper defence of this area' for a period of 25 years with the option of further extensions.²

Russia promptly renamed Lüshun, Port Arthur, which became a naval port for exclusive use by Russian and Chinese vessels. The surrounding area was renamed the Kwantung Leased Territory. Talienwan became Dalny (Dalian), Russian for 'Far Place', a moniker that even the earliest visitors to this auspicious settlement noted would 'lose [its] former significance in our easy, come-and-go modern methods of communication'.³ Dalian would become a commercial port open to foreign trade. The masterstroke that sealed Russia's grip on much of Manchuria was the clause permitting Russia to connect the China Eastern Railway (CER) with Dalian, thereby creating the

1. Whigham, 1904: 8.

2. Article II, Russo-Chinese Convention, 27 March 1898.

3. Clarence Cary, 'Dalny—A Fiat City', *Scribner's Magazine* 33, no. 4 (April 1903): 485.

basic structure of the railway network that would 'stagger the imagination in reach and potentiality' as it transformed the region over the next half a century.⁴

The original network was shaped like the letter 'T', with the CER crossing Manchuria in an East–West direction as part of the railway line connecting Europe and Asia and, from a point approximately midway along this line, a 943-mile track extending southwards to Dalian. The new line turned the Trans-Siberian Railway from an internal enterprise serving Russia's modernising programme, into what contemporary commentators described as:

[o]ne of the greatest arteries of traffic the world has ever seen [and] one of the chief factors in shifting the centre of gravity of the world's trade. . . . The eventual effect will be colossal, for the railway will open up enormous underdeveloped regions, and will facilitate the conveyance of passengers, correspondence, and the lighter class of goods; a most important matter when it is a question of connecting in a fortnight's time the capital of Europe with those of China, Japan and Corea [*sic*]. A great portion of the eastern section of the line will pass through a splendid country, – Manchuria, – a white man's country, and full of valuable resources.⁵

The person responsible for deciding the precise location of this railway junction was the engineer Shidrovski, who arrived at the site with a group of 20 men on 11 April 1898. At the junction of this triple spur, there was said to be a Chinese distillery encircled by a high wall on the banks of the Sungari (Songhua River) and approximately 20 huts centred around a wine shop, called the 'Hsiangfang' (frying pan), with other houses dotted along the river.⁶ Shidrovski is said to have bought the wine shop and surrounding dwellings and established the headquarters of the CER's construction group. The arrival of the railway would turn the barren landscape into an entirely new settlement called Harbin, a name said to be from the Mongolian, Ha-la-bin. Within months of its official foundation on 28 May 1898, Harbin became a bustling garrison town populated by several thousand Russians associated with the construction and protection of the railway under the leadership of Duke Hilkov and chief engineer Ignace. It would soon become one of the largest cities in Manchuria and among the first in China to be subject to modern urban planning.

At the other end of the line, on the Manchurian coast, Russian railway engineers disembarked not at Dalian, which was surrounded by hills that would take months for the new railway line to traverse, but at a site on the Liao River upstream from the treaty port of Yingkou and almost half way between the ancient capital of Shenyang and Dalian. From this point, it was easier and quicker to import all the necessary materials for the construction of the railway in both directions while at the same time

4. Clarence Cary, 'Dalny—A Fiat City', *Scribner's Magazine* 33, no. 4 (April 1903): 482.

5. Colquhoun, 1898: 327–28.

6. Kaname Tahara, 'Harbin and Environs', *Manchuria* (1 August 1940): 350.

the terrain around Dalian could be sufficiently blasted and bridged for the railway line to be cut through.

By 1899, the Russians had built a 14-mile branch line linking the river port to the main line at Dashiqiao (near Yingkou). And so it was this innocuous village became the principal portal through which the material elements of modernity arrived in south Manchuria. A 'huge quantity of rails, sleepers and other materials for the construction of the main line was rushed'⁷ through Dashiqiao as Russia spared no expense in laying their line southwards to Dalian and northwards to Harbin. The cost of the railway was estimated at £30,000 per mile (three times the average price of railway construction), which some observers who witnessed Russian officials' penchant for 'squeezes' put down to 'embezzlement and maladministration.'⁸ 'Never, perhaps, in the whole history of colonization,' claimed one visitor unfavourably, 'has so much money been so recklessly squandered as in Manchuria.'⁹ The iron rails of this new trunk line were not those used on the Trans-Siberian route weighing 48 pounds per yard, but much heavier, sturdier, and costlier 65 pounders that would support the anticipated speed and weight of the massive American locomotives that were expected to race from Harbin to Dalian in just 15 hours. The first trains were eight-wheeled compound Baldwin locomotives built in Philadelphia and weighing a comparatively heavy 90 tonnes.

Construction of the railway attracted successive waves of Chinese labourers from neighbouring Shandong and Zhili¹⁰ Provinces. Over 100,000 found employment on the CER around the turn of the century. It was a propitious passage for many of these luckless peasants, though many met their end in the process. The Russian railway was unreliable, rickety, and risky. Derailments were frequent, and 'Chinese labourers were killed in considerable numbers by the overturning of waggons [*sic*].'¹¹ One journalist travelling between Yingkou and Dalian in 1903 reported on the state of the railway that had an average speed of around 30 mph on account of the frequent stops at refreshment-rooms in partially constructed stations:

[Each] refreshment-room was in every case a deplorable hovel, where the engineers and other employees of the line were accustomed to wash down the most unappetising food with liberal drafts of vodka. Our engine-driver and stoker visited each one of these "buffets," their consumption of vodka increasing with the distance and with the heat of the sun. The result was that the engine was driven with such vigour about the middle of the day as to run over a Chinese coolie.¹²

7. Kinnosuke, 1925: 57.

8. Whigham, 1904: 58.

9. Whigham, 1904: 8.

10. Present-day Beijing, Tianjin, and Hebei Province, as well as small parts of Henan and Shandong Provinces.

11. Whigham, 1904: 48.

12. Whigham, 1904: 15.

The sheer number of Chinese labourers rendered them expendable, but still they kept arriving, desperate to flee the famine and pestilence in their homeland and to chance their luck in Manchuria despite the grinding poverty and pneumonic plague. Armed with the naïve hope of the uninitiated, the countless coolies that formed this great northern migration were in search of riches. A small number would get to enjoy 'the golden shower of Russian roubles' emanating from the 'vast stream of gold that poured into North Manchuria from Europe'.¹³

The Boxers

By the time Russia had started extending its iron tentacles across Manchuria, the rest of China was overrun by foreign settlements. As harbingers of modernity, treaty ports had sprung up not only along the coast, but along its rivers too. These privileged and autonomous miniature foreign worlds were invariably subdivided into separate concessions owned and governed by merchant diplomats from competing foreign nations. Some, such as Russia (Kwantung) and Germany (Shandong), had successfully leased from China entire territories, while others, like Britain (Hong Kong) and Japan (Taiwan) had prised portions of the periphery which they claimed as their own.

The powerlessness of the ailing Qing government to prevent foreign nations claiming its territory and undermining its sovereignty caused a group of discontented Chinese from Shandong province to take the law into their own hands in 1899. The Empress Dowager, Ci Xi (1835–1908), turned a blind eye to their harassing and killing foreign missionaries, then later lent her tacit support. As the movement grew, the Society of Righteous and Harmonious Fists, or Boxers, as they became known by the foreign community, marched on Beijing. In June 1900, the Boxers besieged the Foreign Legation Quarter for two months. Foreigners in China endured a nervous impasse as disenfranchised Chinese rode a wave of nationalist fervour stoked by the Boxers' murderous campaign to rid China of foreigners and destroy their assets and institutions.

Russia's new railway line was one of the Boxers' principal targets. The Russians claimed that two-thirds of the 1,400 kilometres of track that had been laid by 1900 was destroyed or damaged, and railway buildings, especially those in Harbin (which was besieged for a week), were burned and razed. The damage was undoubtedly extensive and costly, but the incident was also a convenient excuse for unscrupulous Russian contractors and engineers to 'claim bridges that had been paid for but not built were "destroyed" by Boxers'.¹⁴

What first appeared like a serious setback not only for Russian interests and investments in Manchuria, but also for the foreign community in China more broadly,

13. Kinnosuke, 1925: 59.

14. Whigham, 1904: 58.

turned out to be an opportunity to strengthen their claims on China that would scar Russo-Chinese relations for generations. In early July 1900, Russian troops expelled Chinese residents from settlements on the Russian side of the border along the Amur River, resulting in the Massacre of Blagoveshchensk. Cossack soldiers rounded up Chinese citizens and forced them to swim across the treacherous river. Most of those that swam were swept away by the strong currents. Those that refused were bayoneted. Up to 5,000 Chinese civilians died in the slaughter. Similar incidents occurred all along the Russian border. The chaos coincided with the arrival in Beijing of the 20,000-strong multinational army that had marched, raped, and pillaged the 75 miles from the port of Tianjin to relieve Beijing's foreign legations on 14 August. Vengeance filled the foreign legations, forcing the Qing government to pay heavily for supporting the Boxers.

Foreign powers reconvened around the diplomatic table, their hungry eyes on China. The terms of peace were laid out in the Boxer Protocol on 7 September 1901, which demanded a huge indemnity from China and the occupation by foreigners of numerous Chinese settlements, as well as consenting to a stronger military presence in foreign areas. In the wings, Russia quietly asked for control of all Manchuria. China declined. Having to make do with an increased military presence, Russia strengthened her grip on the region by fortifying Harbin, Dalian, and Port Arthur and accelerating the pace of railway construction. At the end of the nineteenth century, Russia had over 20,000 troops stationed at Harbin and Dalian. By 1901 this had risen to over a million. China was powerless to resist, but Japan, who controlled neighbouring Korea, grew increasingly agitated at Russia's duplicity. With the Russians embedded in Manchuria and the Japanese entrenched in Korea, their overlapping spheres of influence strained under the pressure. Something had to give.

New Towns

Russia's consolidated position in Manchuria precipitated a building boom in Harbin and Dalian that saw, for the first time in China, the implementation of modern urban planning and, increasingly, architectural solutions to problems of a uniquely modern kind—factories, railway stations, telephone and telegraph facilities, radio stations, hotels, and international ports. Unlike the unplanned, cosmopolitan, and commercial treaty ports throughout China, Dalian and Harbin were the first cities in China's modern history to be the subject of comprehensive urban plans.

By the end of 1902, Russian engineers had completed their prized CER, and the first trains started running along the shortened Trans-Siberian Railway on 1 July 1903. The objective had been to connect St Petersburg with the China Sea within a matter of days. In 1901, it had taken 17 days to travel from Yingkou to St Petersburg on an unreliable and uncomfortable railway. By 1903, the same journey took 13 days

on 'one of the most luxurious trains in the world'.¹⁵ This new land route to Europe provided for the first time a competitive alternative to the sea. Passengers could travel from London to Shanghai via the CER in 18 days compared with the sea route, which took 31 days and was double the price.

The new route to Europe accelerated the development of Harbin, which had until then been marooned midway along the Manchurian section of this intercontinental line. The same military engineers assigned to conduct surveys for the railway were called upon to make plans for the city. Harbin had been a launch pad for the construction of the three spurs of the CER and the shop window for Russian engineering in the cause of imperial expansion. Money was no object for the Russian government, who lavished millions of gold roubles on the initial planning of Harbin. It was no object for the contractors either. Their exceptional pay was the Tsar's gold-plated carrot to ensure that the job was done. The soundtrack to the city's early development combined the latest tunes emanating from phonographs imported en masse from America and the crackle of money being burned. In Manchuria, 'a Russian's idea of good-fellowship is to squander, to pour champagne on the floor, to light his cigarette with a three ruble [*sic*] note, and to generally splash money around'.¹⁶ 'The Harbin idea of having a good time',¹⁷ wrote the same visitor who observed a Russian engineer arrive at a bar with pockets bulging with roubles, was to make 'all the girls sit in a row while pouring champagne on hundred ruble [*sic*] notes, and then stick these notes on the forehead of each of the eight girls'.¹⁸

Indeed, such insouciance was an indication to some of 'the true Russian spirit' in Harbin, which in turn had direct consequences for the city's planning. 'An Englishman or American,' wrote one visitor in 1904, 'would immediately have his commercial imagination stimulated by the position of the town. "Here," he would say, "is the very place for a big city; let us make haste and build it." The Russian says: "We have plenty of space to fill up before we get to Kharbin. If Kharbin is to be a great place, it will become so all in good time."' ¹⁹ And so it was that despite the considerable fortune spent on Harbin's early planning, the town grew somewhat haphazardly into a city over subsequent decades.

The initial plan of Harbin was determined by a combination of natural and manmade features—the navigable Songhua River created the northern boundary, to the south of which the two railway lines converged in the form of a three pointed star that stretched to the farthest corners of Manchuria in the direction of Europe, the Pacific, and the China Sea. A shrine in the waiting room of the town's railway

15. Whigham, 1904: 50.

16. Kinnosuke, 1925: 69.

17. Kinnosuke, 1925: 69.

18. Kinnosuke, 1925: 69.

19. Whigham, 1904: 77.

station containing an icon of St Nicholas, patron saint of travellers, symbolised the town's strategic position at this new crossroads between Asia, Europe, and America. Despite the settlement's 'triple aspect' being 'about as ugly and uninteresting as any new prairie town can expect to be', it was clear to those that witnessed the establishment of this settlement that its 'situation, if intended for a future metropolis, [was] unexampled'.²⁰

Comparisons between Manchuria and America's Midwest were common, especially among Western observers, and it was easy to see why. The shared experience of vast exploitable, rich and fertile territories facilitated by the expansion of railways and shipping on navigable waterways was unambiguous. But despite these similarities, Manchuria was not the Midwest. As one observer in 1903, 'One remembers Kharbin [*sic*] is not in America. . . . These three lines of railway are Russian lines, which would never have been built save for strategic purposes. This wide navigable river leads, not to a Chicago nor to a St Louis, but to Khabarovsk, to the Amur, a Russian river and finally not to the sea, but to the Sea of Okhotsk'.²¹

The original town of Harbin, which soon became known as the Old (Starrie) Town, was planned by the engineer Obromievski and laid out on 4,000 hectares of raised ground to the south of the later settlement in 1898. On the swampy south bank of the Songhua River, workshops, warehouses, and a sawmill were erected to store and supply the building trades. Demand consistently outstripped supply, and the local Chinese were quick to seize a business opportunity. In 1899, one entrepreneur established the town's first Chinese general store, and the area became the preferred home of the city's merchants. Harbin would 'never witness such active building and street planning works as while it was giving shelter to the first contingent of builders in its numerous mud houses' and all manner of tents of straw mats and canvas.²² However, within weeks of their arrival, these pioneers witnessed devastating summer floods that inundated vast swathes of land earmarked for their future city. The deluge was a terrible yet timely occurrence that determined the early layout of Harbin.

By 1901, a New Town (*Novui Gorod*) was planned on 3,000 hectares of raised ground to the west of the Old Town adhering to modern urban planning principles emanating from Europe and North America. Mr Miller, a US consul, later described these plans in a report to Washington as a 'record of the wonderful enterprise worth special mentioning in the history of modern town-building in the nineteenth century'.²³

Streets were laid out in a regular and orderly pattern, with a combination of rectilinear, diagonal, and curved routes converging at, or radiating from, key sites, such

20. Whigham, 1904: 76.

21. Whigham, 1904: 76–77.

22. T. Itoda, 'Harbin and Its Forty Years History', *Manchuria* (1 June 1940): 231.

23. 'Official Report to DC by US Consul Miller in Manchuria in 20 Years', *Far Eastern Review* 22 (1926): 341.

as parks or civic buildings, to create a grand and dignified appearance. A smattering of public gardens provided a 'few cherished trees and plots of grass [to] relieve the eye, and a military band sometimes played without positive offence to the ear'.²⁴ The result was a city with a variegated urban layout formed by a series of differently scaled open spaces and roads, from monumental boulevards to quiet backstreets. One of the pivotal features was St Nicholas Church (1900) in the heart of the Old Town. The original church, built of straw matting in 1898, was the first Russian Orthodox church to be built in Manchuria. By 1900, CER employees had amassed sufficient funds to build an imposing new church out of wood in the architectural style of North Russia. The exterior walls were covered in murals painted by the artist and adjudicator of the Imperial Russian Art Academy Exhibitions, Mr Gurschensko.²⁵

By 1903, the town's evenly mixed civilian population of Russians and Chinese had reached 20,000. Despite opposition from city planners, an additional 5,000 hectares of low-lying land was given over to development between the New Town and the river. Here emerged the commercial district, Pristan (quayside), populated by Harbin's growing army of merchants and industrialists, who shared this cheap and inauspicious floodplain with the thriving Chinese settlement of Fuchiatien, which derived its name from a woman named Fu who established a hostel for the Chinese who were prohibited from residing in the CER zone. These suburbs, connected flimsily to the New Town by a single road bridge over the railway line, were intended only to be temporary, but the early builders had other ideas and constructed their shops and homes with permanence in mind, creating Harbin's primary business district and Manchuria's liveliest commercial centre.

Harbin's rapid development coincided with the global proliferation of the biomorphic style of Art Nouveau, furnishing the town with the most concentrated ensemble of this contemporaneous global style anywhere in China and perhaps even the world. Less than a decade after the Belgian architect Victor Horta (1861–1947) had unveiled the flamboyant organic 'whiplash' style in his design for the Hôtel Tassel (1893) in Brussels (the first time Art Nouveau had enjoyed an architectural outing), the seeds of Art Nouveau travelled the length of the Trans-Siberian Railway and blossomed in the unlikely setting of Manchuria.

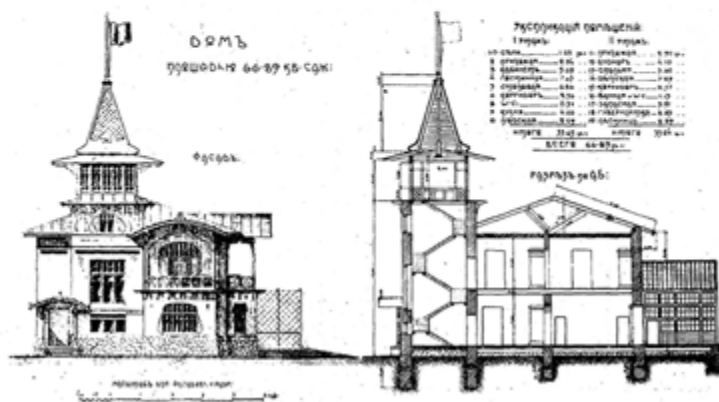
Hotels, shops, department stores, offices, and residences built by the Russians in Harbin at the turn of the century adopted this ostentatious aesthetic. Art Nouveau became the signature style of the CER in its early years and some of the city's most expressive and original examples include the railway station, the administrative buildings on Bolshoi Avenue designed by Mr D. A. Kryzhanovsky from St Petersburg, and, earliest of all, the residences built for the railway's supervisors.

24. Whigham, 1904: 79.

25. Kaname Tahara, 'Harbin and Environs', *Manchuria* (1 August 1940): 350.



The plan of Harbin showing the three settlements created by the railway. Clockwise from top left: Pristan, Fuchiatien, and the New Town (*Novui Gorod*).



Example of the many residences for the staff of Russia's China Eastern Railway, designed in the early 1900s in an Art Nouveau style.

Constructed in wood and plastered stone, the organic, irregular, and playful character of some of these dwellings contrasts sharply with the pompous posturing of neo-classicism that proliferated in China's other foreign settlements from the same period.

At the other end of the railway line was Port Arthur, a military base that neither needed nor possessed civic planning. When the traveller Alexander Hosie (1853–1925) visited in 1900, he noted the government offices 'scattered about the town, which consists of a collection of heterogeneous buildings, setting all sanitary laws at defiance, with streets and alleyways in the worst possible conditions'.²⁶ The small settlement comprised only a few small offices, shops, and residences, a branch of the Russo-Chinese Bank and at the western end the red-brick railway station and terminus of the CER. The scene could not have contrasted more sharply with neighbouring Dalian, where the Russians planned to 'build a modern city and port on gigantic scale [*sic*]'.²⁷

Dalian was the only Chinese harbour north of Shanghai at which ocean-going liners could discharge their cargos, giving it a distinct advantage over the nearby port of Yingkou, at the mouth of the Liao River. Before the Russians developed Dalian, goods imported from Europe and America into Manchuria had to be discharged at Shanghai, from where they were sent up the China coast on smaller freighters. Planned as a free port, Dalian dispensed with this inefficient arrangement and for the first time in history plugged Manchuria directly into the international network of maritime trade. The speed of Russia's progress not only 'startled the world', but, as one American writer explained, especially 'waked-up our British friends, as well as sorely depressed their spirits'.²⁸ Yingkou's standing, like that of the foreign powers with vested interests in the treaty port, was gravely undermined and never recovered.

The site on which the Russians had chosen to build Dalian was, as one journalist remarked, an area of land that 'nature had done little to mark out as a future metropolis'.²⁹ Mr Kerbech, an engineer from the CER, designed this new city with the assistance of the future governor and chief of engineering construction, Mr Saharoff, who had supervised the construction of the Egelsheld Wharf in Vladivostok.³⁰ Together, they were responsible for introducing China to modern town planning. With a massive budget of 20 million roubles, their ambitious scheme covered an area of 100 square kilometres, reinforcing the views of the wider community that the relatively small group of engineers and contractors charged with building Dalian

26. Hosie, 1901.

27. *Far Eastern Review* 24 (February 1928): 78.

28. Clarence Cary, 'Dalny—A Fiat City', *Scribner's Magazine* 33, no. 4 (April 1903): 484.

29. Whigham, 1904: 7.

30. *Dairen*, South Manchuria Railway Company, 1935: 3.

and the connecting railway were 'extravagant and reckless'.³¹ At Dalian, the Russian government was 'determined to build itself a metropolis complete in every detail,' wrote one observer, 'another power would have been content to build its railway and begin the harbour tentatively, and let trade do the rest. Not so Russia. Dalny is to spring into the world full grown.'³²

'The manifold requirements of modern city construction,' observed the American writer Clarence Cary when visiting Dalian in 1903, were 'created at demand in double-quick order, by the exercise of an alert and intelligent foresight, backed with a generous purse.'³³ Attempting to make sense of the senseless, many commentators drew comparisons with the cosy familiarity of Western precedents. One American later described the scheme as 'a European city admitting a population of 40,000'.³⁴ Another claimed it was modelled after Paris with 'the main streets radiating from several circles like the spokes of a wheel, and intersected by narrower streets'.³⁵ For 'those who love analogies,' wrote another, 'see in Dalny the future New York of the East'.³⁶ But Dalian, clinging as it does to China's coast and dangling off the end of Russia's fanciful railway line, cannot be seen as a Western incarnation. To regard it as such is to misunderstand it. 'There is,' as the journalist H. J. Whigham described, 'something splendid and Oriental and almost barbaric in [its] wholesale creation. . . . Even in its present embryo state Dalny is one of the marvels of the present age. For surely nowhere else in the world has a Government built a city and port of such dimensions on absolutely barren soil, hundreds of miles from its own borders, without a penny's worth of trade already in existence to justify the expense.'³⁷

Despite the dubious site and the unsustainable budget, the Russian plan was to create a complete and modern city serving global trade on Chinese soil. Witnessing the nascent settlement in 1903, Whigham foresaw 'a large seaport town with ample docks and wharves, with a splendid sea frontage and convenient railway depôt, with wide streets and boulevards and shady gardens, with a commercial quarter that will eclipse every foreign settlement in the East and a residential quarter which might grace Manchester or Philadelphia'.³⁸ However, unlike the great planned cities of Europe that had to contend with medieval foundations or the early urban plans of the United States of America that were devised in an era before railways, power stations, factories and unfurnished with electricity, gas, and water supplies, Dalian, like Harbin, was a twentieth-century city and, as such, not only combined contemporary

31. Whigham, 1904: 77.

32. Whigham, 1904: 8.

33. Clarence Cary, 'Dalny—A Fiat City', *Scribner's Magazine* 33, no. 4 (April 1903): 489.

34. 'Official Report to DC by US Consul Miller in Manchuria in 20 Years', *Far Eastern Review* 22 (1926): 344.

35. *Dairen*, South Manchuria Railway Company, 1935: 6.

36. Whigham, 1904: 8–11.

37. Whigham, 1904: 8.

38. Whigham, 1904: 8–11.



Photo of the early Russian 'administrative' settlement in Dalian in 1903.

deep scar across its northern boundary. 'This difficulty, by dint of much patience, perseverance and expenditure of countless roubles' was overcome by the construction of a large bridge that carried the road over the freights lines and sidings.⁴⁰ In the years ahead and under a different administration, this bridge would become one of the city's major landmarks.

Dalian's earliest significant buildings, including the town's first residential quarter, were constructed to the north of the railway line in a small area of land that jutted out into the bay and formed the first phase of the Russian city plan. Later phases comprised far more ambitious plans that filled the area between the railway line and the mountains, which formed a dramatic backdrop to the south.

The Russians spared no expense installing the necessary components of a modern city. The city they had planned and started to build possessed Manchuria's first electrical power plant, the first water works, and modern brick foundries that furnished the town with the building blocks of its first 'European style' structures. In 1902, they began transforming the ramshackle seafront with warehouses that were invariably flooded even at low tide into a new harbour with modern facilities using thousands of

40. Cook's *Tourist's Handbook*, 1910: 81.

tonnes of rocks brought to the foreshore from the mountains on the backs of 40,000 to 50,000 Chinese coolies.⁴¹

The heart of Dalian's urban plan was an arterial circus in the city centre from which major roads radiated. It was to be a modern and rational civic landscape that created a sense of formality and grandeur through the arrangement of broad boulevards connected at key nodes and junctions often landscaped as public parks, forming a more dense urban grain with minor streets serving residential or smaller commercial functions. Streets were sealed, guttered, paved on either side, and electrically lit. Tramways, telegraph lines, and a clean water system were laid, and public parks were ample in size and number to accommodate the city's future growth.

Kerbech and Saharoff's plan was the subject of considerable professional approbation internationally. The British architect Inigo Triggs included their scheme in his seminal book, *Town Planning: Past, Present and Possible* (1909), where it features alongside Sir Christopher Wren's plan for London after the Great Fire in 1666. To Triggs, Dalian was:

[a]n interesting example of this type of the combined radial and chessboard system. . . . There are many diagonal arterial thoroughfares. The crossing points of the different systems of radials create a number of local centres, the most important of which has been planned in front of the railway station. In the heart of the town a circular public space has been laid out, with ten long straight streets converging upon it. Built round this, with excellent effect, as may be imagined, there are ten structures, each in its separate block. The city is divided into various quarters, the Administration Town on the north, with three broad thoroughfares leading to the railway station; the commercial quarters in the centre of the city, radiating from one large round-point round which are gathered the important public buildings; the private residences and parks, grouped together on the south-east, and the Chinese quarters in a separate city on the south-west.⁴²

Kerbech and Saharoff's plan might have been attractive on paper, but only a tiny fraction (around 8 square kilometres) was ever realised. One visitor described a scene in August 1902, in which 'long empty roads, scaffolded buildings, and up-turned surfaces had rather an air of inchoate desolation' and projected the 'somewhat melancholy expression which is a concomitant of dishevelled habitation-places wherever an appropriate sum of human life and endeavour is lacking, whether because this is yet to come, or has had its little day'.⁴³ Despite the harbour improvements, the area between the central circle and the main wharfs remained 'rough ground, with hills and ponds'.⁴⁴ In the adjacent area, between the central circus and the railway, the Russians only managed to level the ground without constructing any buildings. Only

41. Manchuria in 20 years, *Far Eastern Review* 22 (1926): 343.

42. Triggs, 1911: 101–2.

43. Clarence Cary, 'Dalny—A Fiat City', *Scribner's Magazine* 33, no. 4 (April 1903): 493.

44. *Dairen*, South Manchuria Railway Company, 1935: 3.

one street was laid out along what would become the Central Park, and only a few houses in this district were ever built. These residential quarters that were to host the first generations of adventurers or entrepreneurial Russians remained largely empty, with too few Russian officials, contractors, or wealthy Chinese to fill what had been constructed.

Dalian was 'a "boom" town without any reason for a "boom"'.⁴⁵ There was something not only novel and audacious about Russia's ambitions but also chimerical. 'It is not a common thing in the line of human endeavour,' wrote Cary, 'to evolve a sea-port, railway terminal city, with all the essential modern appliances, including ample provision for future residence, trading, and manufacturing facilities, before the advent of an expected population.'⁴⁶ Behind ambitious plans and exorbitant budgets there was an omnipresent sense of ephemeral opportunism lingering over Russian Dalian. The harbour had been built, but there were no ships. Not yet at least. Macadamised roads criss-crossed the empty plain on which the city had been laid out on paper but had yet to be built in brick or stone. One road had even been carved through mountains at considerable expense so as to reach the sandy coastal beaches where 'future millionaires of Dalny will have their summer bungalows'.⁴⁷ But the millionaires were nowhere to be seen. Even the city's main hotel suffered from what one journalist described as 'the defects of Russian management'. The construction and equipment were first rate, but the hotel manager was 'a man of the lowest type, who confined his attention to drinking vodka [and] ran the hotel into a state of disreputable dirt and almost deserted by the public'.⁴⁸ It was a common story in Russian Manchuria, where the architects of this new world seemed happy to 'erect a building at great expense and then to hand it over to a confirmed inebriate'.⁴⁹

Although the Russians were not as arrogant as other foreign nationals towards the Chinese, there was ample evidence of their general ambivalence. 'Racial prejudice was a factor' in Russia's early urban planning as it was in colonial settlements across the globe, where new towns were established away from existing settlements so the foreigner did not have to 'mingle too closely with the natives'.⁵⁰ Dalian's Chinese settlement was undoubtedly less formal than the Russian area and set 'aloof' from it by a large public park. Foreigners explained the separation was to ensure 'the multitudinous poorer classes of the indigenous folk [were] not to swarm among foreign residents as they have elsewhere been imprudently suffered to do' in their 'unpleasant and detrimental' manner in places like Hong Kong and Shanghai.⁵¹ Some claimed the

45. Whigham, 1904: 8.

46. Clarence Cary, 'Dalny—A Fiat City', *Scribner's Magazine* 33, no. 4 (April 1903): 482.

47. Whigham, 1904: 9.

48. Whigham, 1904: 13.

49. Whigham, 1904: 13.

50. *The Kwantung Government*, 1934: 137.

51. Clarence Cary, 'Dalny—A Fiat City', *Scribner's Magazine* 33, no. 4 (April 1903): 486.

Russians 'never cared a fig for the Chinese. . . . The economic and commercial benefits for the hundreds of thousands of coolies who worked on the Chinese Eastern Railway were about the last thing the architects of the Far-Eastern Empire of the Tsar would bother about.'⁵² Dalian's Chinese town possessed a theatre where the Chinese coolie could 'spend some of his wages for the good of the place instead of hoarding them and sending them at length to his family in Shan-tung [Shandong]';⁵³ but between Dalian and Harbin, argued an American Consul some years later, the Russians 'gave no thought to the construction of modern towns' and in the Chinese settlements 'not the slightest indication of modern town planning could be seen anywhere.'⁵⁴ Modernity had arrived in Manchuria but it was embryonic and unevenly distributed. A much larger and more immediate impact would be made by modernity's omnipresent companion: war.

As Russia sought to strengthen its position in Manchuria after the Boxer Rebellion, confidence gave way to complacency. Russia's desirousness of neighbouring Korea created unease among the Japanese, who proposed the establishment of a buffer zone between Manchuria and Korea. Russia's Admiral Alexieff 'and other Russian architects of her Far Eastern Empire' balked at the idea and pressed harder for timber concessions along the Korean border.⁵⁵ Japan lost patience. As had occurred ten years earlier against China and would happen again four decades later at Pearl Harbor, Japan seized the initiative and launched a surprise attack on the Russian fleet at Port Arthur in the opening salvo of the first Russo-Japanese War (1904–1905). Minutes before midnight on 8 February 1904, as a circus entertained soldiers and civilians in town, in a scene of 'mingled confusion and deliberate devastation', a group of small Japanese torpedo boats stole into the heavily fortified harbour and crippled Russia's invincible fleet while moored at anchor.⁵⁶ Japan's modernised navy under the command of the British Royal Navy-trained Vice-Admiral Togo, the 'Nelson of Japan', boasted a new era of battleships, some of which were built on the Clyde, and carried 60,000 soldiers. With extraordinary pluck, the Japanese assault on the Russians at sea and on land set the tone not only for a war that would last over a year and a half, but also for subsequent events in Asia for half a century.

Conflict between these two neighbours in China's backyard had been anticipated by many for years. The long and costly war mobilised a million soldiers from each side on the Manchurian battlefield, but few had imagined the result. Japan paid a high price for the gamble. The heavy casualties its army suffered etched Manchuria into the romance of selfless sacrifice of the Japanese soldier; an imperial baptism that forged

52. Kinnosuke, 1925: 67.

53. Whigham, 1904: 9.

54. 'Official Report to DC by US Consul Miller in Manchuria in 20 Years', *Far Eastern Review* 22 (1926): 343.

55. Kinnosuke, 1925: 65.

56. *Cassell's History of the Russo-Japanese War*, Vol. 1, 1904: 18.

a modern national psyche. The 81,455 dead and 381,313 wounded Japanese soldiers⁵⁷ prepared the ground for future myth-making that would excuse far larger conflicts and much greater losses. Japan's victory over Russia also avenged their duplicity over the Liaodong Peninsula a decade earlier. Japan had seized back that very same asset from the Russians—it was, as one Japanese resident in Manchuria would later put it, 'territory *regained*'⁵⁸—only in the meantime it had been richly furnished with the embryonic accoutrements of modernity—industry, manufacturing, mining, construction, ports, architecture, urban planning, and, most importantly, railways.

The Russo-Japanese War marked the first time in the modern era that a Western nation was defeated by an Eastern counterpart. It signalled also the completion of Japan's second vital step in its quest for empire. The balance of power in the region had shifted dramatically and laid the grounds for events over the next four decades.

57. Young, 1998: 89–90.

58. Itō Takeo in Fogel, 1988: 5.

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