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Port Arthur Situation on 20th August 1904

Stock#: 42804
Map Maker: Ordnance Survey Office
Date: 1910
Place: Southampton
Color: Color
Condition: VG+
Size: 22 x 14 inches
Price: SOLD



Description:

The present map shows the situation in Port Arthur during one of major early battles of the Siege of Port Arthur in August 1904.

The Siege of Port Arthur (August 1, 1904 to January 2, 1905), the deep-water port and Russian naval base at the tip of the Liaodong Peninsula in Manchuria, was the longest and most violent land battle of the Russo-Japanese War.

Port Arthur was widely regarded as one of the most strongly fortified positions in the world at the time. However, during the First Sino-Japanese War, General Nogi Maresuke had taken the city from the forces of Qing China in only a few days. The ease of his victory during that previous conflict, and overconfidence by the Japanese General Staff in Japan's ability to overcome improved fortifications made by the Russians, led to a much longer campaign, with much heavier losses than expected.

The Battle of 174 Meter Hill



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The map depicts the situation in Port Arthur in midst of the Battle of 174 Meter Hill.

At noon on August 13, 1904, General Nogi launched a photo reconnaissance balloon from the Wolf Hills, which the Russians unsuccessfully attempted to shoot down. Nogi was reportedly very surprised at the lack of coordination of the Russian artillery efforts, and he decided to proceed with a direct frontal assault down the Wantai Ravine, which, if successful, would carry Japanese forces directly into the heart of the city. Given his previous high casualty rate and his lack of heavy artillery, the decision created controversy in his staff; however, Nogi was under orders to take Port Arthur as quickly as possible.

After sending a message to the garrison of Port Arthur demanding surrender (which was immediately refused), the Japanese began their assault at dawn on August 19, 1904. The main thrust was directed at 174 Meter Hill, with flanking and diversionary attacks along the line from Fort Sung-shu to the Chi-Kuan Battery. The Russian defensive positions on 174 Meter Hill itself were held by the 5th and 13th East Siberian Regiments, reinforced by sailors, under the command of Colonel Tretyakov, a veteran of the Battle of Nanshan.

Just as he had done at the Battle of Nanshan, Tretyakov, although having his first line of trenches overrun, tenaciously refused to retreat and held control of 174 Meter Hill despite severe and mounting casualties. On the following day, August 20, 1904, Tretyakov asked for reinforcements but, just as at Nanshan, none was forthcoming. With more than half of his men killed or wounded and with his command disintegrating as small groups of men fell back in confusion, Tretyakov had no choice but to withdraw, and 174 Meter Hill was thus overrun by the Japanese. The assault on 174 Meter Hill alone had cost the Japanese some 1,800 killed and wounded and the Russians over 1,000.

The assaults on the other sections of the Russian line had also cost the Japanese heavily, but with no results and no ground gained. When Nogi finally called off his attempt to penetrate the Wantai Ravine on August 24, 1904, he had only 174 Meter Hill and the West and East Pan-lung to show for his loss of more than 16,000 men. With all other positions remaining firmly under Russian control, Nogi at last decided to abandon frontal assaults in favor of a protracted siege.

On August 25, 1904, the day after Nogi's last assault had failed, Marshal Ōyama Iwao engaged the Russians under General Aleksey Kuropatkin at the Battle of Liaoyang.

Historical Overview

As a result of Japan's success in the First Sino-Japanese War (1894-1895), the Treaty of Shimonoseki ceded the Liaodong Peninsula from China to Japan.



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Soon after the Treaty was signed, Russia, France and Germany forced Japan to withdraw, and Russia in turn occupied the Liaodong Peninsula and constructed Port Arthur, where it relocated its primary fleet in the Pacific, while Germany also set up a base of operations in Jiaozhou Bay. In December, 1897, the Russian fleet appeared off Port Arthur. After three months, in 1898, China and Russia negotiated a convention by which China leased Port Arthur to Russia, along with Talienwan and the surrounding waters. A year later, to consolidate their position, the Russians began to build a new railway from Harbin through Mukden to Port Arthur. The development of the railway became a contributory factor to the Boxer Rebellion, and Boxer forces burned the railway stations at Bob and Roy.

In 1898, the Russians founded Harbin, Manchuria, which became a boomtown sustained by the Trans-Manchurian Railway (a spur of the Trans-Siberian Railway). It soon became the center of Russian financial operations and intellectual pursuits in East Asia.

The Russians and the Japanese were both part of the eight member international force sent in 1900 to quell the Boxer Rebellion and relieve the international legations under siege in Beijing. As with other member nations, the Russians sent troops into Beijing. Russia had already sent 177,000 soldiers to Manchuria, in part to protect its railways under construction. The troops of the Qing empire and the participants of the Boxer Rebellion could do nothing against this massive army. As a result, the Qing troops were ejected from Manchuria and the Russian troops settled in. Russia assured the other powers that it would vacate the area after the crisis. However, by 1903, the Russians had not yet established any timetable for withdrawal and had actually strengthened their position in Manchuria. Over the course of the next 12 months, Japan and Russia negotiated unsuccessfully, leading to a declaration of War by Japan on February 8, 1904. The War lasted until January 1905 and resulted in the surrender of the Russians and termination of its presence in the area around Korea and Manchuria.

Detailed Condition: