

FLEETS MAY HAVE MET IN BATTLE

St. Petersburg Believes Japanese Have Been Defeated.

HINT IN TOKYO DISPATCH

Significant Reference to "Today's Historic Events."

FOE IN STRAIT OF KOREA

Vladivostok Cruisers Acting in Co-operation with Baltic Fleet—Both Tokyo and St. Petersburg Accept Rojestvsky's Entry into Korean Strait as Evidence of His Intention to Force Togo into Battle, if He Has Not Already Done So—St. Petersburg Without Official Reports, but People Accept News of Victory, and the City Is En Fete.

Tokyo, May 27.—4:30 p. m.—Vice Admiral Rojestvsky's fleet has been cited off Tsu Islands, in the Straits of Korea.

Tokyo, May 27.—9 p. m.—Transmittable information concerning to-day's historic events in the neighborhood of the Tsu Islands is limited to the bare fact that Rear Admiral Rojestvsky's main fleet, steaming in two columns, with the battle-ships on the starboard and the cruisers and monitors on the port side, appeared in the Straits of Korea. All other information is withheld by the Japanese authorities, and cable transmission of any other reference to the movements of the Russian fleet or the movements of the Japanese is refused.

Tokyo, May 27.—2:45 p. m.—All Tokyo is eagerly awaiting advices of an engagement between the naval forces of Admiral Togo and Rear Admiral Rojestvsky. It is believed that the fleet of Russian vessels seen at Saddle Islands comprised the main fighting strength of Rear Admiral Rojestvsky's forces, and that after coaling there the Russians bravely headed for Tsu Islands, electing to give battle in the event of meeting the warships under command of the Japanese admiral.

Intends to Force Battle.

The fact that Rear Admiral Rojestvsky appears to have used the Formosan channel has created surprise, and it was generally expected that he would pursue a course eastward of Formosa. This increases the belief that the Russians are anxious to give battle.

The people have received the news of the prospective fight with elation, so great is their confidence in the prowess of Admiral Togo. While it is thought a portion of the Russian fleet is certain to reach Vladivostok, it is believed that Admiral Togo is bound to seriously cripple the main fighting ships of his adversary.

It is reported that four Russian warships passed through the Kurile Straits, to the westward of Japan, on May 25. The names of the vessels are unknown, but it is possible that they were light cruisers from Admiral Rojestvsky's fleet. Kurile Straits divide the Peninsula of Kamchatka and the northernmost islands of Japan.

Joined by Vladivostok Cruisers.

St. Petersburg, May 28, 12:50 a. m.—The Russian foreign office and the admiralty thus far have been entirely dependent upon the Associated Press dispatches from Tokyo for news concerning the movements of the warships in the Korean Strait, and up to midnight were in receipt of no telegrams from the Russian fleet.

The Associated Press is able to announce that the Vladivostok cruisers have left that port and are now acting in general co-operation with Vice Admiral Rojestvsky, under plans prepared for the present emergency. Capt. Broussikoff, who is well known in the United States, commands the armored cruiser Gromobol.

Vice Admiral Rojestvsky's success in reaching the Korean Strait, the gateway to Vladivostok, has aroused something like genuine enthusiasm. The showy Russian capital on the banks of the Neva, arrayed in gala attire and illuminated in honor of the anniversary of the coronation of Emperor Nicholas, seemed en fete for the occasion. For once, St. Petersburg was not pessimistic.

Report of Victory Accepted.

Everywhere the report current that Rojestvsky had defeated Togo was accepted as true, and in the streets the Russian admiral's name was on every lip. In the cafes and gardens he was toasted as the hero of the hour. Yet, in reality, St. Petersburg had only Tokyo's advices, but perhaps for once the Russian people, so easily prey to despair, might be pardoned for their premature jubilation after the unbroken series of reverses suffered on sea and land.

The authorities, however, while elated over the news, indulged in no unwarranted rejoicing, but instead awaited almost breathlessly for further news. The lights in the admiralty office burned far into the night, and the fact that no further dispatches had arrived from Tokyo, where alone the secret of the real

situation is known, was considered reassuring.

Admiral Wirenus, chief of the general staff of the navy, said to-night:

"If Rojestvsky has cleared the Korean Strait, God bless him. He has open water ahead. If he has succeeded in mystifying the enemy and entered the Japanese Sea with his force unimpaired, he has earned the title of master of naval strategy."

Anxiety at Imperial Palace.

At Tsarkoe-Selo, where it is realized the whole fortune of the war and possibly the fate of the dynasty was staked upon the issue, the greatest anxiety prevailed. Emperor Nicholas received the news with satisfaction, but without elation, as an indication that Rojestvsky had outwitted his adversary and had cleared the difficult entrance to the Japan Sea. Throughout the Emperor has displayed the greatest confidence in Rojestvsky's ability to turn the trick, but with the arrival of the decisive moment he showed nervousness and repeatedly had officials at court inquire of the admiralty and the foreign office for dispatches, but neither ministry could relieve the imperial suspense.

Capt. von Essen, of Port Arthur fame, and one of the most capable of Russian naval officers, is one of those who believes that Rojestvsky's arrival in the Korean Strait is not an affair of mystification, but is due to the relative strength of the fleets. He expressed to-night the utmost confidence that Rojestvsky would reach Vladivostok without fighting a decisive battle, Togo's fleet being too weak, he believed, to meet that of Russia in open combat.

It is undeniable that many thoughtful liberals display almost consternation over the success that thus far has attended Rojestvsky's voyage. A decisive victory for him, they believe, might so strengthen the government as to not only destroy all prospects of peace, but enable the government, if it chooses, to stifle the whole programme of reforms and for many years their dreams of a parliament and a constitution.

Left Saddle Island May 24.

Saigon, Cochinchina, May 27.—Returning colliers report that Vice Admiral Rojestvsky's fleet arrived off the Saddle Islands May 24 and proceeded in the direction of the Straits of Korea.

Hongkong, May 27.—The British steamer St. Kilda, which arrived here to-day from Kuchinotsu, Japan, reports having sighted early in the morning of Wednesday, May 24, forty-five Russian vessels, including battle-ships, cruisers, torpedo-boat destroyers, colliers, a hospital ship, and tugs, 140 miles south-southeast of the Saddle Islands. The Russians were stationary when first sighted and most of the colliers were half empty. Subsequently the Russian vessels steamed away, heading in a north-northwesterly direction.

London, May 27.—4:30 p. m.—The dramatic appearance of Vice Admiral Rojestvsky's fleet within the zone of fire in the far East has aroused the liveliest interest. Shipping circles are somewhat disturbed, and have been sending cable dispatches broadcast with the object of stopping vessels bound for Japan and elsewhere in the danger zone.

The interruption in the Chefoo-Shanghai cable occurred twenty-two miles from Chefoo. Cable ships are repairing the break, which is attributed by the Great Northern Telegraph Company, not to deliberate cutting, but more probably to the anchor of a Chinese junk drifting before a gale. As the Chefoo-Tsingtau cable is also interrupted there is at present no cable communication between Chefoo and Shanghai.

Useless Vessels Left Behind.

Minister Griscom, at Tokyo, has reported to the State Department the announcement of the Japanese admiralty that the entire fighting strength of the Russian Baltic fleet was seen yesterday morning heading for Tsushima Strait.

Government officials here yesterday expressed the firm belief that the two fleets will meet within a few hours, if they have not already done so. It is thought that Rojestvsky has left behind him at Saddle Islands and at Woosung colliers and small vessels, which would not only be of little use in battle, but which would impede any rapid dash toward Vladivostok with the fighting craft of his fleet.

Private advices received here early yesterday, which are regarded as highly authentic, reported that more than twenty-one Russian vessels were at the Saddle Islands, including three battle-ships and three cruisers. Later dispatches, of an official nature, report the departure of the six fighting vessels, with the other ships remaining at anchor, despite the protest of the Chinese officials. The battle-ships and cruisers evidently hastened to join Rojestvsky in the straits. It is believed by naval officers here that the two fleets have met or will meet.

The fact that Rojestvsky did not meet any Japanese warships in passing northward between Formosa and the Island of

CONTINUED ON SIXTH PAGE.

FLEETS MAY HAVE MET IN BATTLE.

CONTINUED FROM FIRST PAGE.

Luzon, of the Philippines group, indicates very clearly that Togo has his fleet centered in the Korean Straits, very near home, and where he can fight to a great advantage. If Togo has any cruisers in or about Formosa, these will probably follow the Russian fleet northward, and possibly will make an attack on the Russian vessels at Saddle Islands.

If the Japanese want to attempt to capture the colliers and other craft at Saddle Islands, there would probably be no hesitancy in making an effort on account of fear of violating Chinese neutrality, inasmuch as the Russians have apparently refused to accede to the demands of the Chinese officials to depart from the Saddle Islands.
