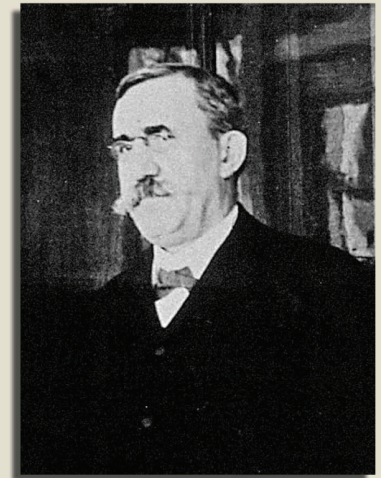


Prince Mutsuhito became emperor in 1868 at the age of 15. His coronation as the 122nd Emperor of Japan began the national revolution known as the Meiji (enlightened government) Restoration that ended the Tokugawa shogunate, unified the government, and transformed the country into a westernized industrial and military power. The emperor became more of a revered figurehead than a political leader and he left the affairs of state to the elder statesmen and military leaders, unlike the Russian Tsar who took command both of the war and the peace negotiations.



Emperor Meiji. Courtesy of C. B. Doleac.

Henry W. Denison was sent to Japan in 1870 as vice consul to the American consulate, but soon after, the Japanese government appointed him as legal advisor to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, a position he held for thirty-three years. A native of Lancaster, New Hampshire, he was a member of the Japanese delegation at Portsmouth and prepared the final draft of the treaty, along with Theodore de Martins, his Russian counterpart.



Henry W. Denison. Courtesy of Portsmouth Athenaeum.

THE RUSSIANS - ロシア政府代表团

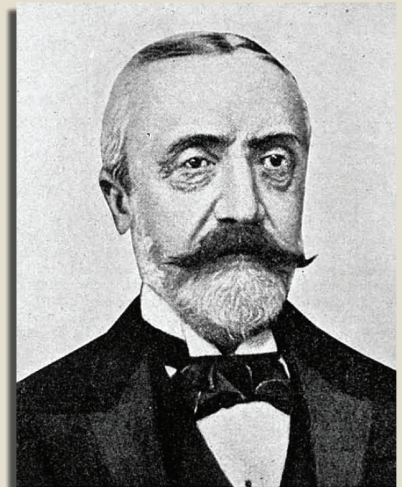
The Tsar's first two choices as First Plenipotentiary for the conference declined the appointments, claiming illness. Russia's military defeat embarrassed the monarchy and jeopardized its future, and many people felt the delegates would become scapegoats for the defeat. The Tsar at last turned to Sergius Witte, ironically the man who had worked diligently to forge an agreement with Japan regarding Manchuria and Korea in hopes of preventing war.



Sergius Witte. Courtesy of C. B. Doleac.

Sergius Witte was educated as an engineer, went into railroading, and rose to become director of the Department of Railway Affairs in the finance ministry. Impressed with Witte's skills, Tsar Alexander II appointed him Russia's Finance Minister in 1892. During Witte's tenure Russia achieved unprecedented economic growth. In describing the tall Russian, Dillon wrote, "Into Witte's judgment emotion enters as readily as sap into leafage. He is no mere theorizer, but a daring experimentalist, who sometimes pays a high price for the knowledge he acquires at the school of experience. ... For with acumen and resourcefulness he combines genuine kindness and can desecrate in bad deeds good, or at any rate, an indifferent motive."

Baron Roman Rosen was the other plenipotentiary selected, serving as the Ambassador to the United States. Formerly, he served as an Ambassador to Japan and had worked to avert the war.



Roman Rosen. Courtesy of C. B. Doleac.

Tsar Nicholas II was the good natured, but enigmatic leader of Russia, who was a puzzle to most who knew him. He ruled by his belief in divine right and was determined to preserve his autocracy, a position that cost his own life and that of his family in 1918. For his 22nd birthday, Nicholas embarked on a grand tour that included stops in the major capitals of Europe and then on to the Orient.

While Nicholas was riding in a rickshaw in Otsu, Japan, a crazed Japanese constable wielding a sword attacked the young visitor on the head. Some historians believe Nicholas, who forever bore a scar of reminder, held an unfriendly opinion of the Japanese as a consequence. But Nicholas later dismissed the assassination attempt as "the work of a fanatic." The incident did not diminish his interest in the Orient and what he later came to believe was Russia's "Holy Mission" to expand its influence into the Pacific region. Despite the war losses, Nicholas was concerned with maintaining Russia's dignity as a great power, even at the risk of continuing the war.



Tsar Nicholas II. Courtesy of C. B. Doleac.