

The danger of dismemberment was aggravated by the outbreak of the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. The Boxers were a group of fanatical Chinese who were out to kill the "foreign devils." The Czar took advantage of the ensuing chaos to dispatch his troops to Manchuria, allegedly to protect Russian lives and a segment of the all-but-completed Trans-Siberian Railroad.

Russia promised to withdraw its troops when the rebellion ended, but they were still there four years later. If Russia succeeded in occupying Manchuria, this would leave Japan dangerously exposed. In February, 1904, Tokyo mounted a damaging sneak attack on the Czarist fleet at Port Arthur, Manchuria. Two days later Japan declared war on Russia. The United States officially took a "wait and see" attitude.

A Story of the China Shop

An Artist's View of the Complications in the Far East



1. Uncle Sam. "Seems ter be a little trouble at the store to-day, boys."



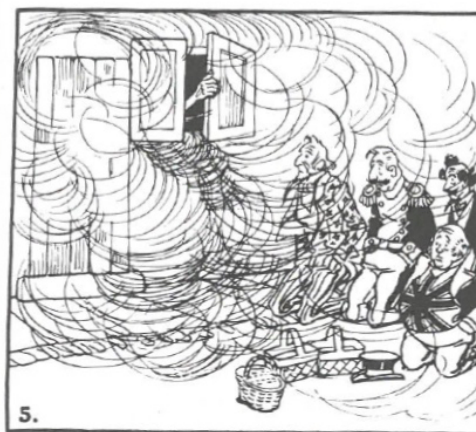
2. Uncle Sam (to France, Germany, and England). "There he goes inside, boys; guess we'd better stay out for a while."



3. Uncle Sam (to China). "Be careful you don't get mixed up in it."



4. China. "Hellup!"
Uncle Sam. "Jinkys! they've pulled him inside too. Don't get too near, boys."



5. Uncle Sam. "Never mind, boys. Don't go any nearer. We'll just wait a few days."



6. The Kaiser, et al. "That looks to us like we wait. Uncle Sammy was right, wasn't he?"

Albert Levering. *Harper's Weekly*, 1904.

The United States had traditionally been friendly with both countries. But American sympathies were with the apparent underdogs, the Japanese. Washington suspected that the Russians intended to slam the Open Door in Manchuria, and a Japanese victory would spike that plan. President Roosevelt warned France and Germany to keep hands off. Britain didn't need a warning: it was allied with Japan.

The land war between Russia and Japan was fought on Chinese soil without a second thought to China's neutrality. Within months the Japanese had routed the Russians. But it cost them over 100,000 lives. Japan secretly asked President Roosevelt to mediate. The Russians were also anxious to end the carnage. And in the summer of 1905 Roosevelt met with representatives of the two sides in Portsmouth, New Hampshire.