

Hassojitz

**Sojitz - A General Trading Company
The Pioneers who Paved the Future
of Japan**

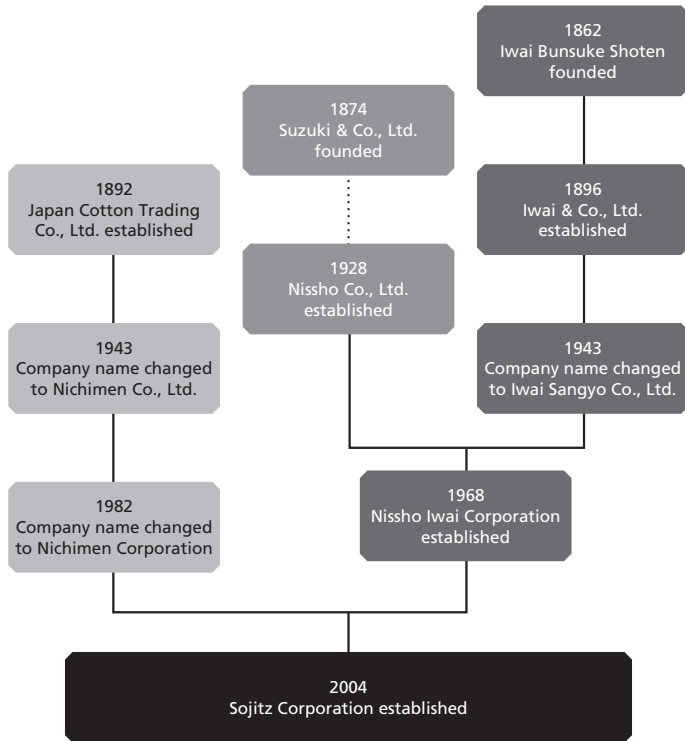


Volume
4

Ascension

 **sojitz**
New way, New value

Sojitz's Lineage

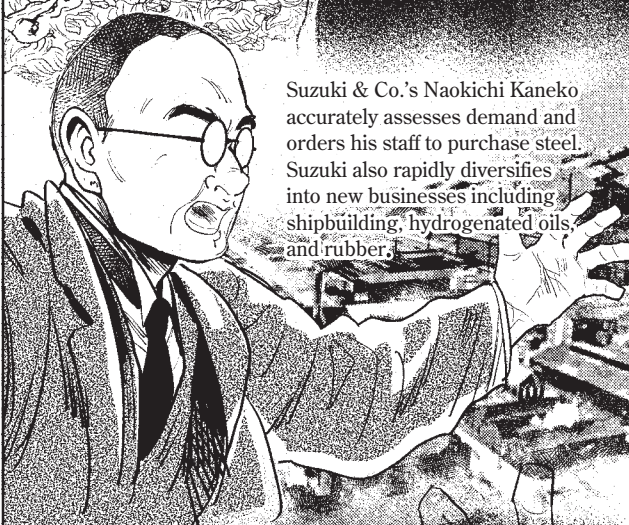


This historical account is based on archived materials from the companies and organizations involved. While Sojitz strives for historical accuracy, certain expressions and depictions have been adapted for the manga. In addition, character dialogue is fundamentally based on historic quotes, but also includes conjecture.




Japan Cotton Trading's Matazo Kita returns from a trip around the world with a cool-headed perspective on world affairs. Kita anticipates Japan's cotton spinning industry will receive a high volume of orders and instructs his staff to procure raw materials from around the world.


In 1914, the outbreak of World War I provided a window of opportunity for Japan's industries.



Suzuki & Co.'s Naokichi Kaneko accurately assesses demand and orders his staff to purchase steel. Suzuki also rapidly diversifies into new businesses including shipbuilding, hydrogenated oils, and rubber.



Iwai & Co.'s Katsujiro Iwai turns his focus to the future potential of celluloid, and Iwai independently establishes a new celluloid factory in Amagasaki near Osaka. The war disrupts imports of galvanized sheet iron which creates an opportunity for the establishment of a factory in Yamaguchi Prefecture's Tokuyama to domestically manufacture sheet iron.



While WWI was initially expected to resolve quickly, the war dragged on for four years. This unexpected turn of events would propel Japan's industrialization to new heights.

As a result of increased trade, Japan would become a country with a trade surplus.

Japan Cotton Trading Co. would support the cotton spinning industry both through procurement of raw materials and the export of products.

Suzuki & Co.'s Seiichi Takahata in London would play a major role. Takahata takes the opportunity to put Japan on equal footing with developed nations—and to come out ahead.

Sojitz's three predecessor companies were approaching an economic peak...



sojitz

Hassojitz

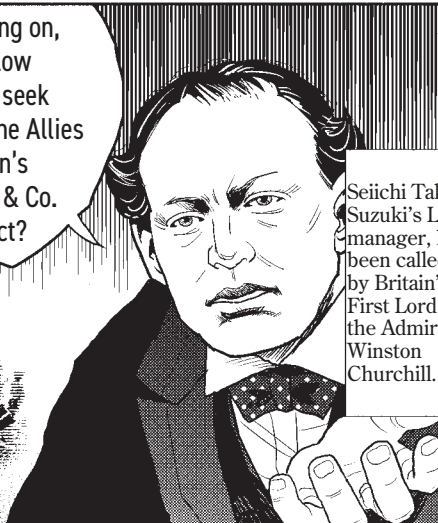
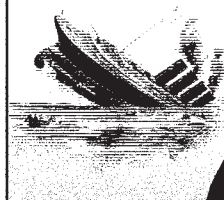
発想 × **sojitz**

Chapter 1

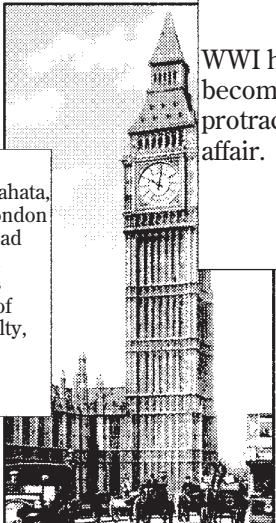
Kaiser Takahata takes on the British Empire



The war is dragging on, and we have run low on resources. We seek assistance from the Allies and Japan. London's acclaimed Suzuki & Co. can deliver, correct?

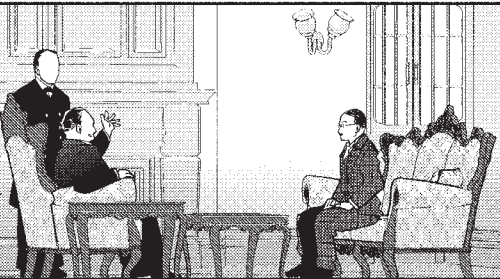


Seiichi Takahata, Suzuki's London manager, had been called by Britain's First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill.



WWI had become a protracted affair.

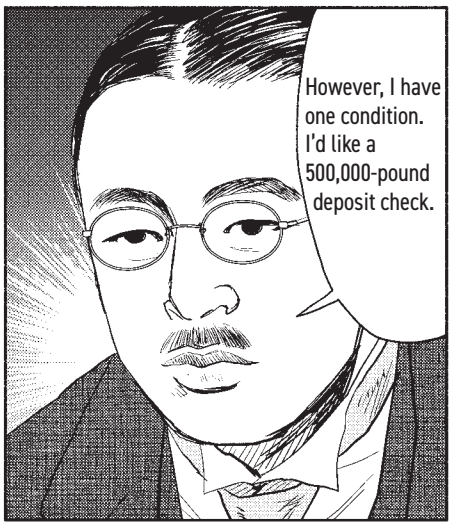
Your enthusiasm is reassuring!



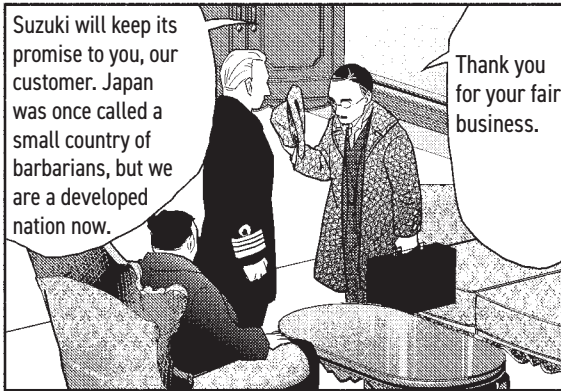
Yes, Your Excellency. Suzuki & Co. will supply you with iron, ships, food, and anything else you require!



What?! Are you saying you don't trust the British empire?



However, I have one condition. I'd like a 500,000-pound deposit check.



Japan's modernization had paid off. In this moment, Japan had risen to stand on equal footing and even surpass Western powers.



And thus, a legendary trade relationship was born. Beans, starch, and grains from Hokkaido were loaded for shipping and sold— ships and all— to Allied Powers as part of a tremendous undertaking by Suzuki, which sold 5 million bags of flour.

On the front lines of the trenches in Europe, sandbags with the SZK diamond logo could be seen everywhere.



It was said that 10% of the ships passing through the Suez Canal carried Suzuki & Co. cargo.



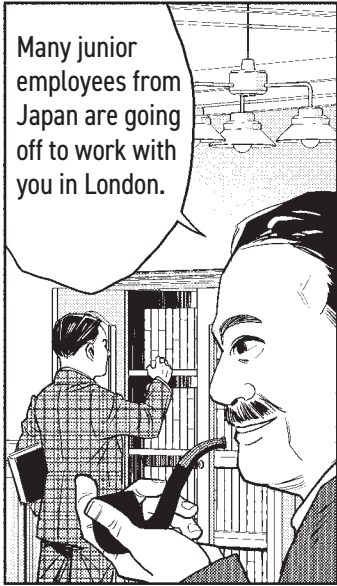
Suzuki & Co.'s business activities garnered admiration. The company received a 100-million-pound credit from the Bank of England and procured supplies from around the world. As a result, Suzuki & Co.'s name became known through London's business world.



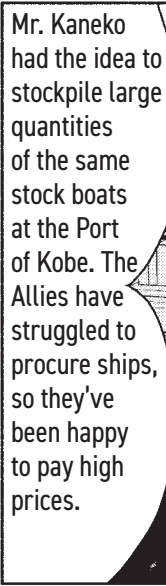
Good day, Mr. Takahata. Rumor has it that you're the first Japanese to become a member of the Baltic Shipping Exchange.

Kojiro Matsukata, President
Kawasaki Dockyard





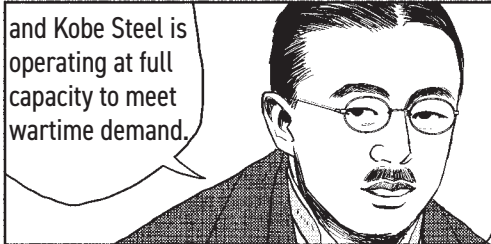
Many junior employees from Japan are going off to work with you in London.



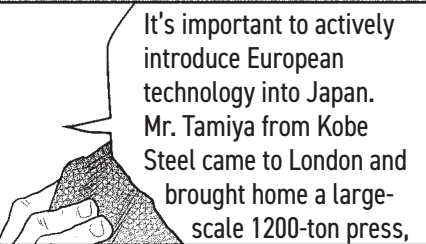
Mr. Kaneko had the idea to stockpile large quantities of the same stock boats at the Port of Kobe. The Allies have struggled to procure ships, so they've been happy to pay high prices.

That's right. I hear you're profiting these days too.

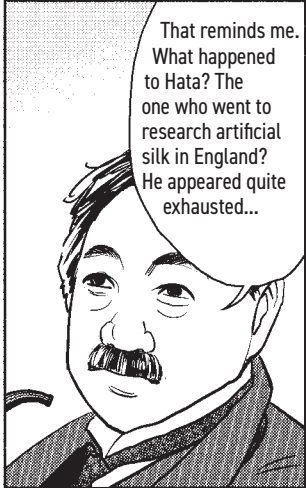
Matsukata worked out of a room in the Suzuki & Co. office.



and Kobe Steel is operating at full capacity to meet wartime demand.



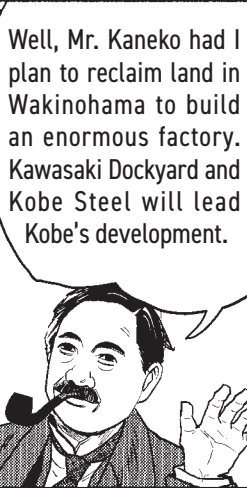
It's important to actively introduce European technology into Japan. Mr. Tamiya from Kobe Steel came to London and brought home a large-scale 1200-ton press,



That reminds me. What happened to Hata? The one who went to research artificial silk in England? He appeared quite exhausted...



You and Mr. Kaneko certainly operate on a grand scale.

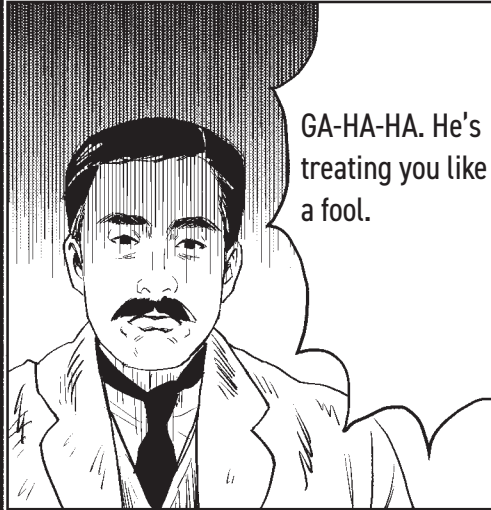


Well, Mr. Kaneko had I plan to reclaim land in Wakinohama to build an enormous factory. Kawasaki Dockyard and Kobe Steel will lead Kobe's development.

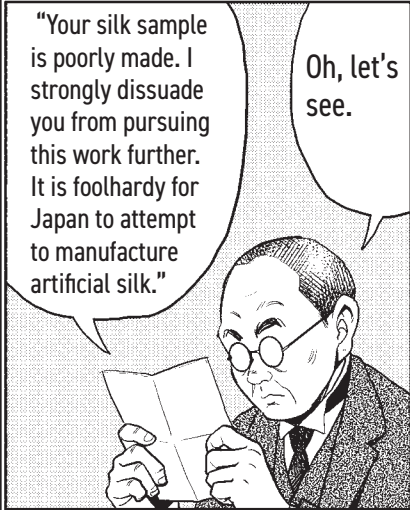
Mr. Kaneko. Development has been difficult, so I reached out to the inventor of viscose, Mr. Cross, for advice. Here's the response I received.



If you must know, right before I came here...

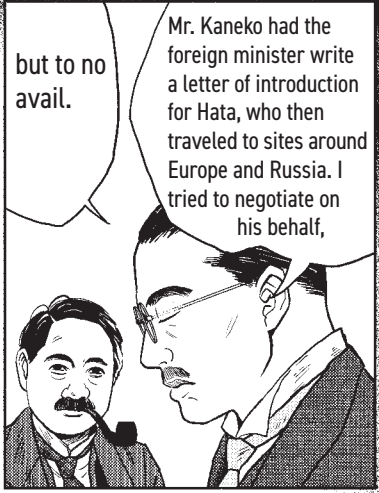


GA-HA-HA. He's treating you like a fool.



"Your silk sample is poorly made. I strongly dissuade you from pursuing this work further. It is foolhardy for Japan to attempt to manufacture artificial silk."

Oh, let's see.



but to no avail.

Mr. Kaneko had the foreign minister write a letter of introduction for Hata, who then traveled to sites around Europe and Russia. I tried to negotiate on his behalf,



Never fear. If the Europeans can do it, there's no reason we cannot!

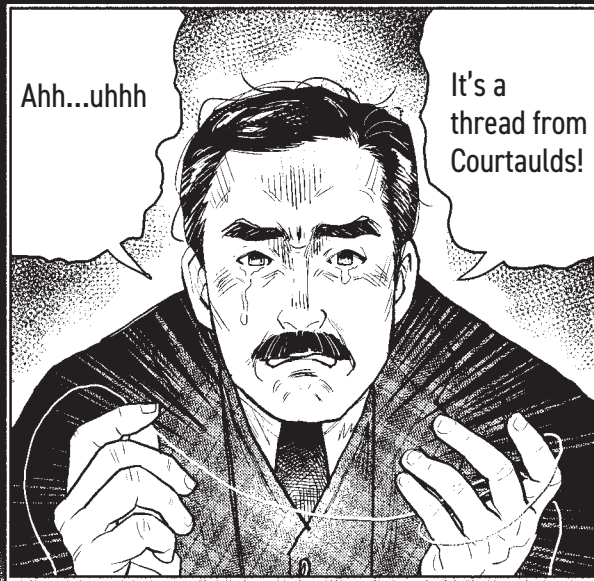


Wake up!
Our agreement was food for a factory floor plan.

He even fed workers to get them to draw floor plans of the factory...

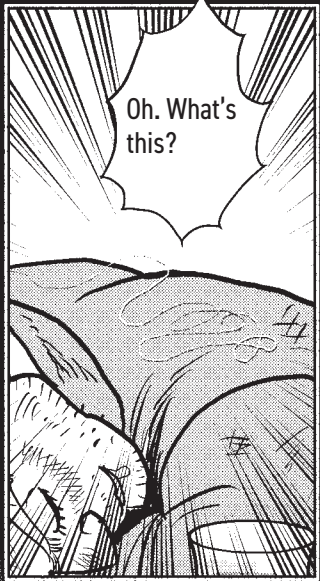


Despite these setbacks, Hata went so far as to gather drainage from the Courtaulds factory in England.



Ahh...uhhh

It's a thread from Courtaulds!



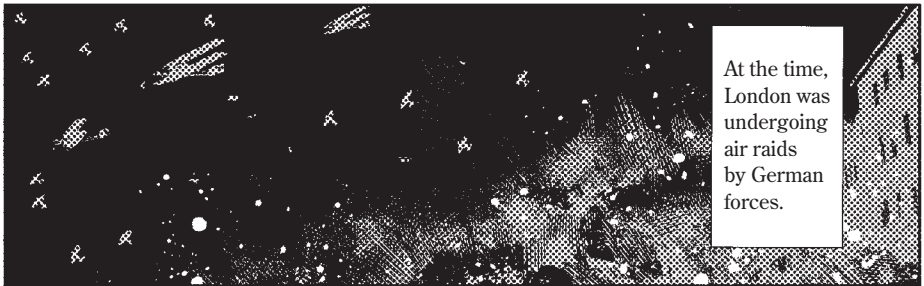
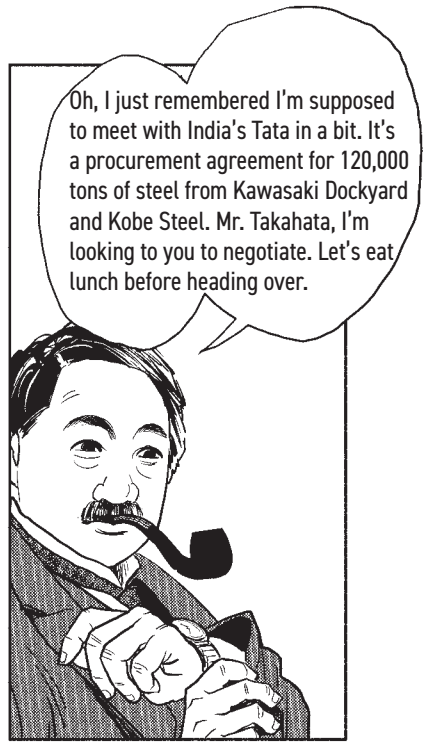
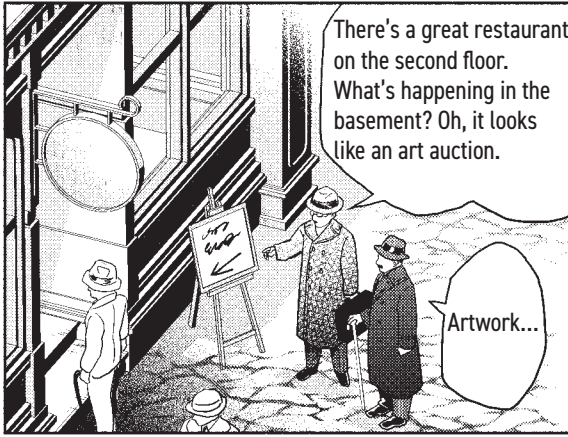
Oh. What's this?



Western countries are so secretive. They must be threatened by Japan's rapid growth.

How sad.

He then traveled to France and the U.S. Nobody would partner with Suzuki & Co. to offer technical guidance, so Hata was forced to return home empty handed.





Mr. Matsukata ...

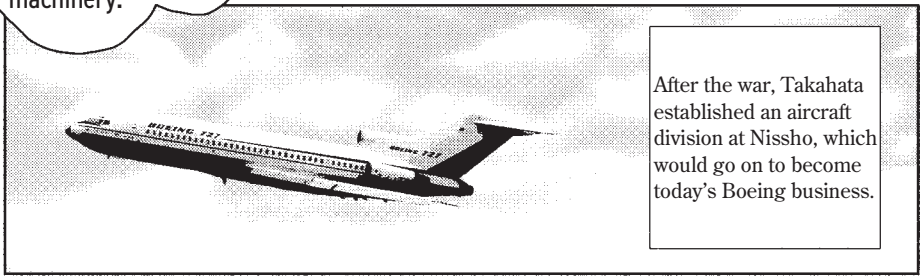
That's the mission of a merchant.

The war is a tragedy. But Mr. Takahata, we are merchants. We must survive this war and when peace returns, we must use the technologies we have gained.



I agree. Suzuki & Co. will one day build aircraft too...But first we want to revolutionize industries including chemicals, steel, and machinery.

I will return to Japan and build aircraft. These bombings have convinced me we are in the age of the airplane. Let's aim to build a world in which Japan and England are closer.



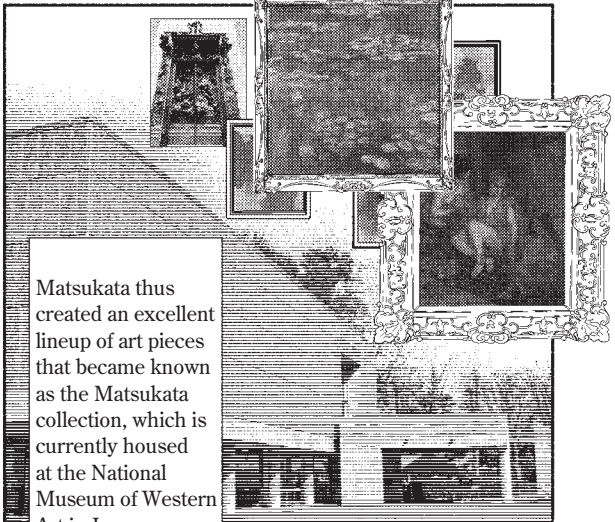
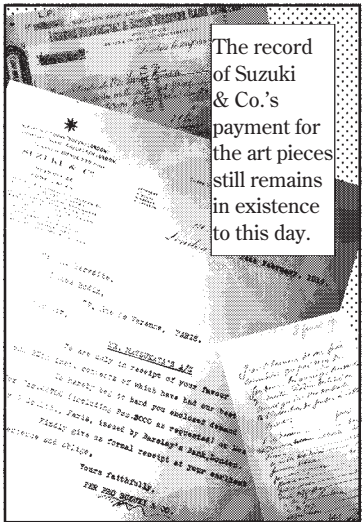
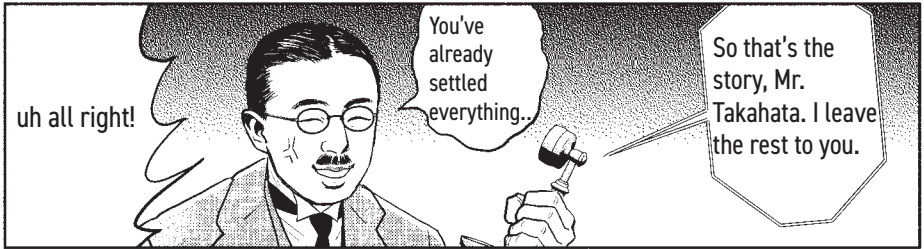
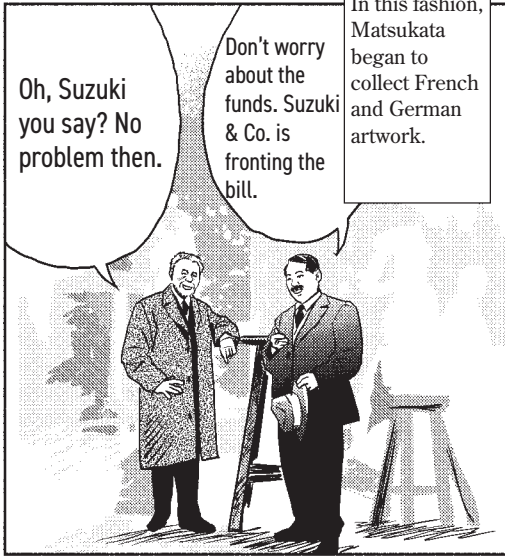
After the war, Takahata established an aircraft division at Nissho, which would go on to become today's Boeing business.



I'm sure you will collect wonderful pieces based on your good eye.

We need a museum in Japan to teach youngsters more about Western art.

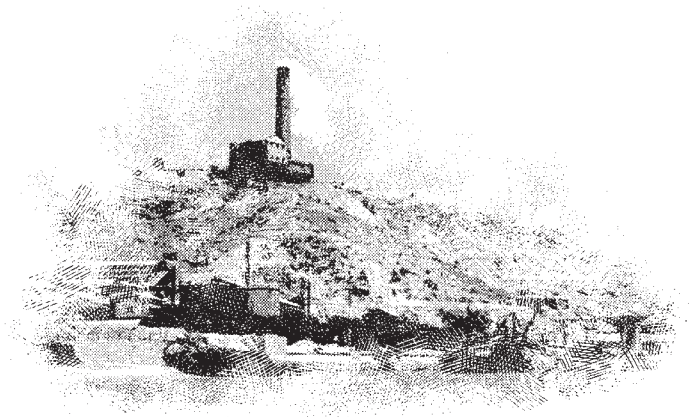
Matsukata also started to collect art.

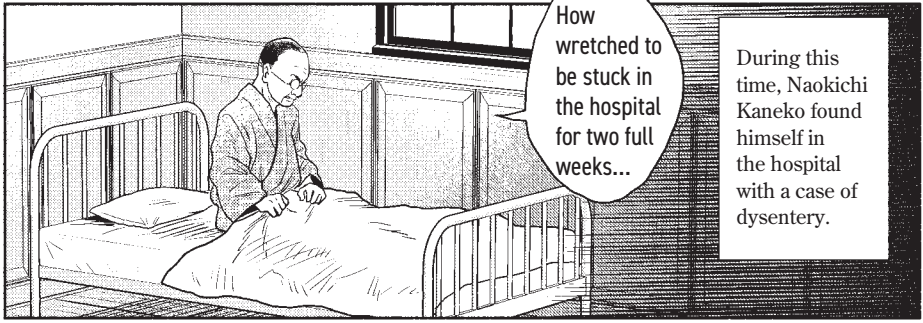


Chapter 2

Suzuki & Co. Ltd.

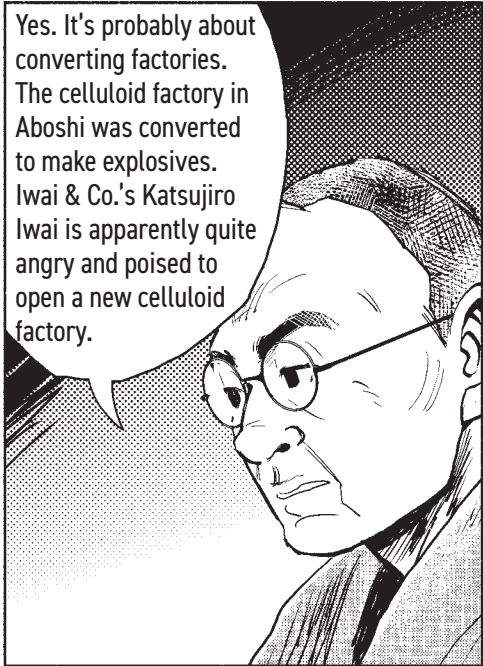
Entering the non-ferrous metal field and five million rounds of artillery





How wretched to be stuck in the hospital for two full weeks...

During this time, Naokichi Kaneko found himself in the hospital with a case of dysentery.



Yes. It's probably about converting factories. The celluloid factory in Aoboshi was converted to make explosives. Iwai & Co.'s Katsujiro Iwai is apparently quite angry and poised to open a new celluloid factory.



I see. Since Russia's an Allied Power, we must make a good impression for the sake of Mr. Shimpei Goto.

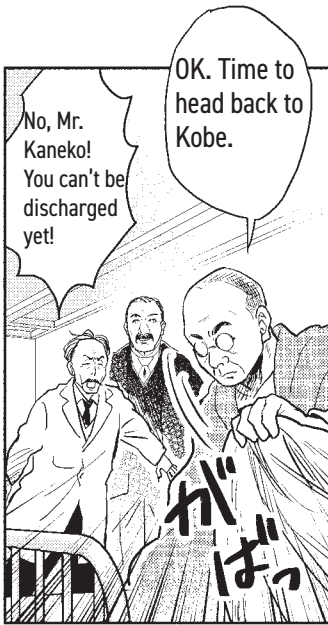
Brinell & Co. is insisting on seeing you at the Russian government's orders. The Japanese government wishes you comply.

So you'll meet them?



Can you manufacture 5 million rounds of artillery shells?

As Naokichi Kaneko predicted, Brinell & Co. wanted to order military supplies.

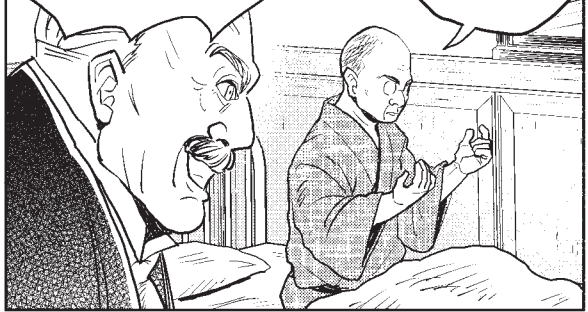


No, Mr. Kaneko! You can't be discharged yet!

OK. Time to head back to Kobe.

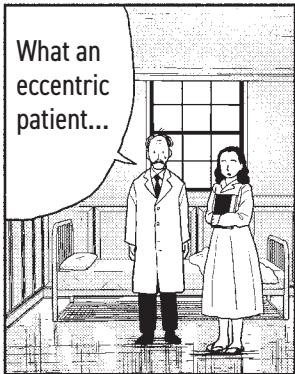
You calculate with such speed! I've asked around, but nobody else has quoted me a price and delivery date like you just did Mr. Kaneko. So you'll take the order?

The raw materials required are zinc, copper, lead...that will cost 18 yen for the ammunition. Let's see...delivery will take around 18 months.



That's not what I was saying...

Don't get the wrong impression. Look at Katsujiro Iwai and his commitment to celluloid. I'm always looking ahead to the post-war world. In the future, Japan will develop advanced industries that require more refined technologies, which is Japan's area of expertise. To reach that point, we must develop non-ferrous fields such as zinc, copper, lead, and aluminum. We're not looking to merely make a quick profit.



What an eccentric patient...

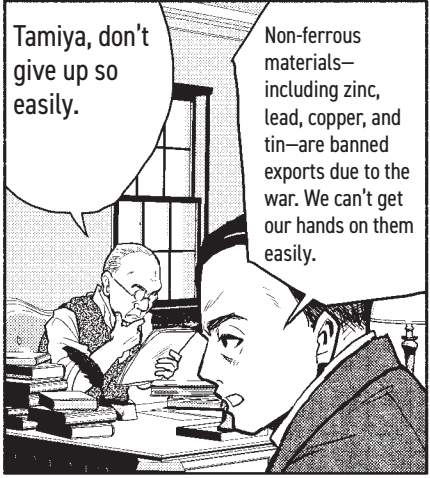


Apologies, Doctor. Well, that's the story so...

Katsujiro Iwai is also building a galvanized steel sheet factory in Yamaguchi prefecture's Tokuyama. Quick—we must return to Kobe.

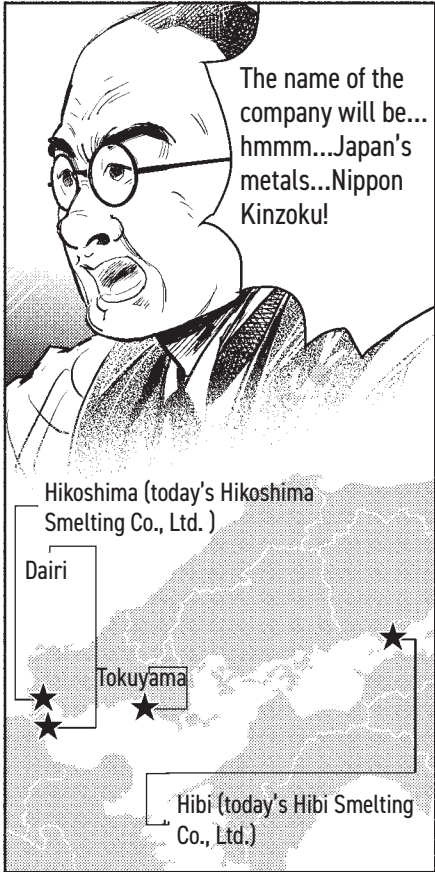


With these export restrictions, a straightforward approach won't work. We need a new approach.



Tamiya, don't give up so easily.

Non-ferrous materials—including zinc, lead, copper, and tin—are banned exports due to the war. We can't get our hands on them easily.



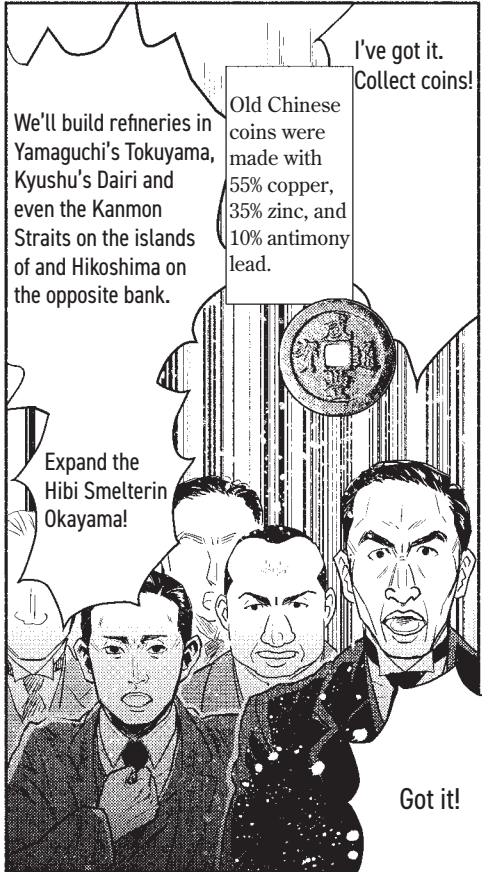
The name of the company will be... hmmm...Japan's metals...Nippon Kinzoku!

Hikoshima (today's Hikoshima Smelting Co., Ltd.)

Dairi

Tokuyama

Hibi (today's Hibi Smelting Co., Ltd.)



We'll build refineries in Yamaguchi's Tokuyama, Kyushu's Dairi and even the Kanmon Straits on the islands of and Hikoshima on the opposite bank.

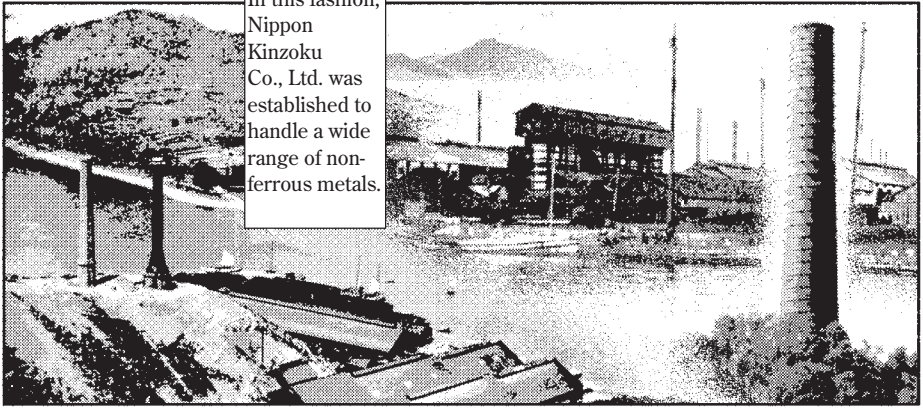
Old Chinese coins were made with 55% copper, 35% zinc, and 10% antimony lead.

I've got it. Collect coins!

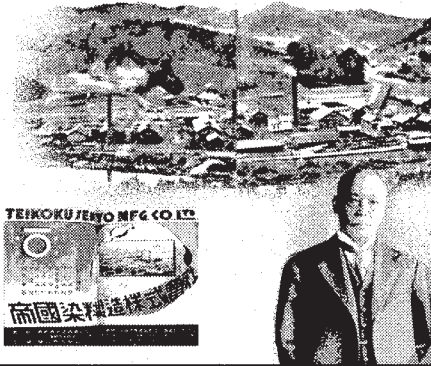
Expand the Hibi Smelting Okayama!

Got it!

In this fashion, Nippon Kinzoku Co., Ltd. was established to handle a wide range of non-ferrous metals.



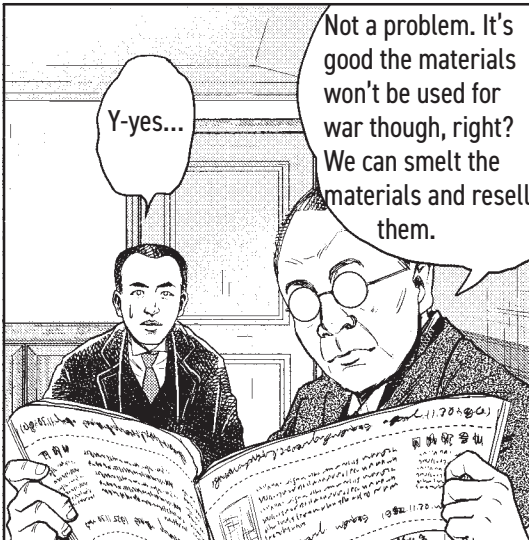
This is the origin story of today's Nippon Kayaku Co., Ltd.



Suzuki & Co. established Nippon Kayaku Seizo Co., Ltd. in Yamaguchi Prefecture's Asa with Jotaro Yamamoto, where dynamite was manufactured in Japan for the first time.

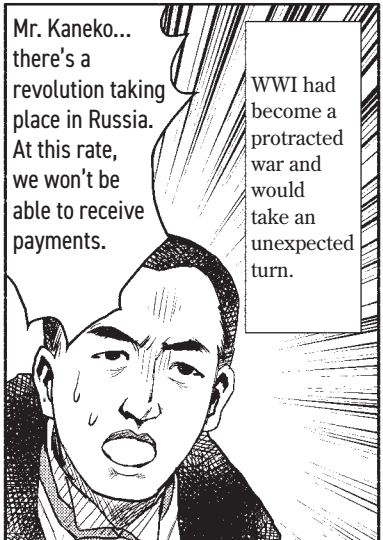
Suzuki also provided funding for Teikoku Senryo Seizo Co., Ltd. established in Fukuyama, Hiroshima with the aim of establishing a comprehensive chemical factory.

During this war period, gunpowder manufacturing by the private sector was permitted.



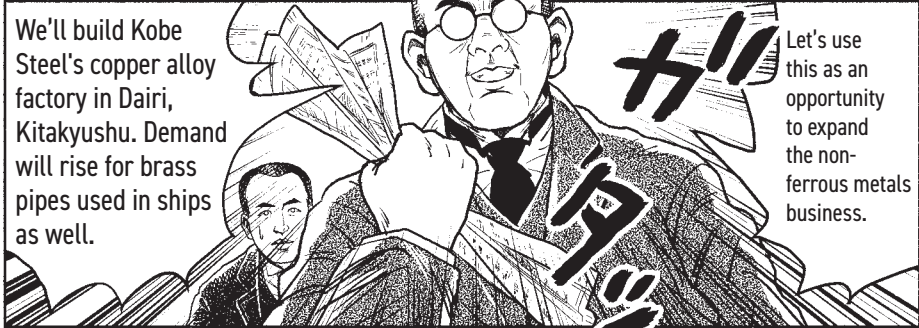
Y-yes...

Not a problem. It's good the materials won't be used for war though, right? We can smelt the materials and resell them.



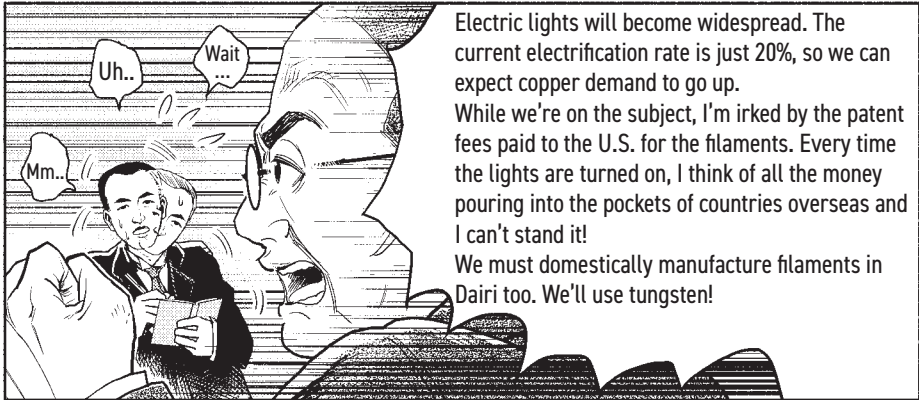
Mr. Kaneko... there's a revolution taking place in Russia. At this rate, we won't be able to receive payments.

WWI had become a protracted war and would take an unexpected turn.

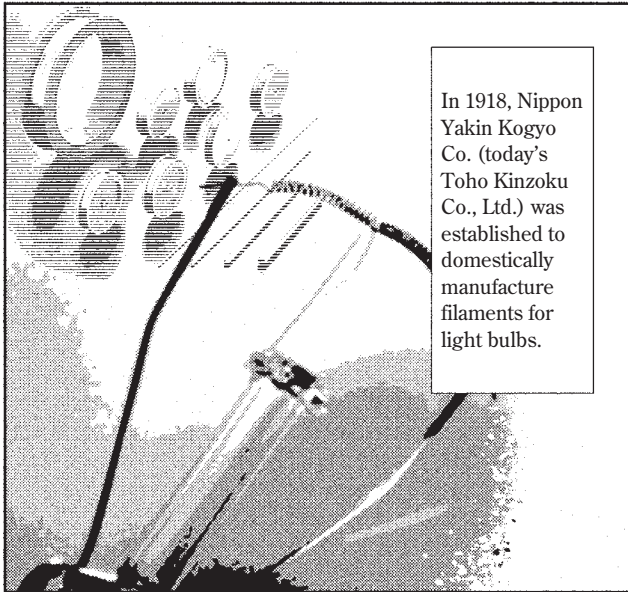


We'll build Kobe Steel's copper alloy factory in Dairi, Kitakyushu. Demand will rise for brass pipes used in ships as well.

Let's use this as an opportunity to expand the non-ferrous metals business.



Electric lights will become widespread. The current electrification rate is just 20%, so we can expect copper demand to go up. While we're on the subject, I'm irked by the patent fees paid to the U.S. for the filaments. Every time the lights are turned on, I think of all the money pouring into the pockets of countries overseas and I can't stand it! We must domestically manufacture filaments in Dairi too. We'll use tungsten!



In 1918, Nippon Yakin Kogyo Co. (today's Toho Kinzoku Co., Ltd.) was established to domestically manufacture filaments for light bulbs.



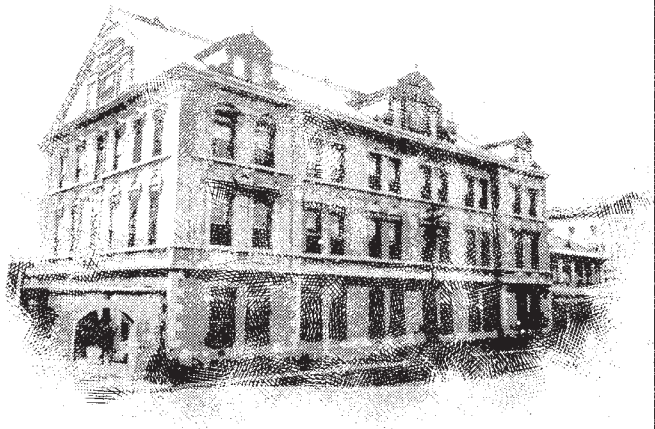
Please slow down! I can't keep up with your fast-paced stream of ideas ...

Chapter 3

Suzuki & Co.

Acquiring Mikado Hotel and opening a new
head office

Acquiring South Manchuria Railway's soybean
oil extraction business

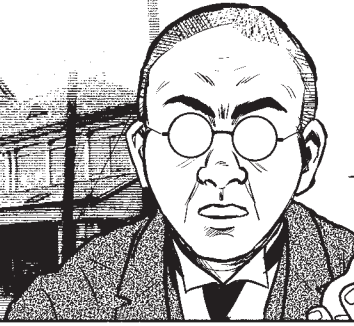


Naokichi Kaneko paid a visit to Katsuzo Goto at Goto Kaisoten Ltd.

Hahaha. You flatter me. Let's cut to the chase.

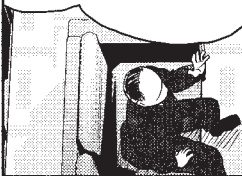


I strongly believe that Kobe opened up because of your connections with Taiwan and it's thanks to you that Western culture has spread in Kobe.

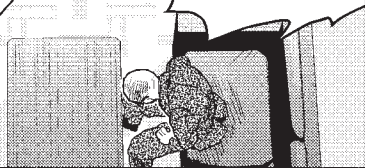


Actually, it's about your Mikado Hotel. Would you consider selling?

Not at all. To be honest, I'm not a relative of Mr. Shimpei Goto. But he's been very kind to me because we share the same family name. Have you been in contact with Mr. Goto recently?



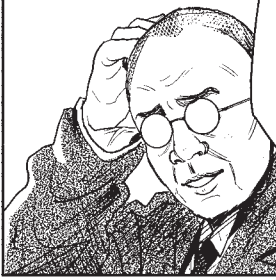
Thank you! Suzuki was able to expand its business thanks to your introduction of Mr. Shimpei Goto. We are indebted to you once more.

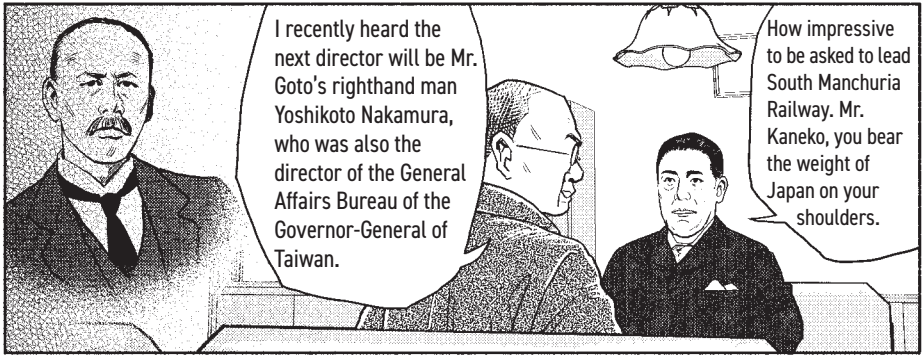


Suzuki is now known around the world. There's nothing I'd be happier about than to have our hotel as your new head office.



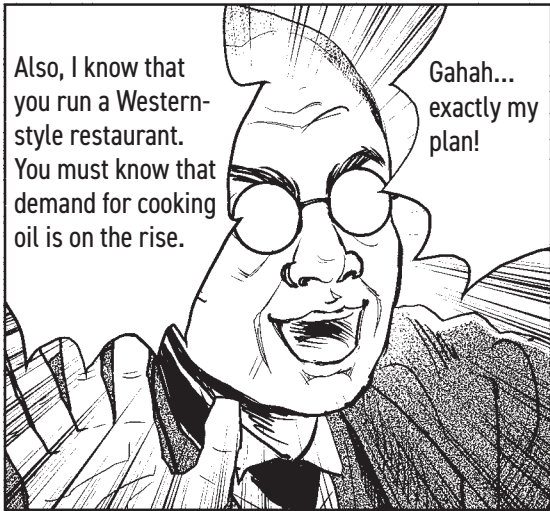
His lordship was appointed to be a Director of the South Manchuria Railway after serving as the head of civil affairs at the Government-General of Taiwan. Actually, I was recently asked to become the next director. But I'm content being a faithful old business clerk, so I refused.





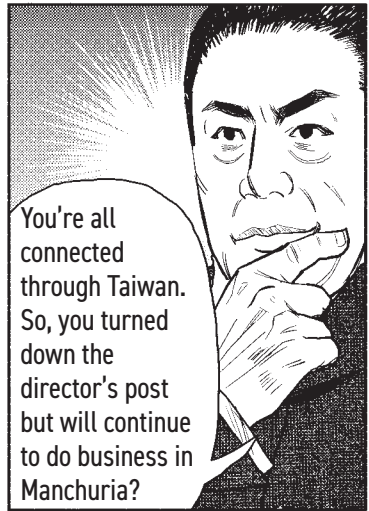
I recently heard the next director will be Mr. Goto's righthand man Yoshikoto Nakamura, who was also the director of the General Affairs Bureau of the Governor-General of Taiwan.

How impressive to be asked to lead South Manchuria Railway. Mr. Kaneko, you bear the weight of Japan on your shoulders.



Also, I know that you run a Western-style restaurant. You must know that demand for cooking oil is on the rise.

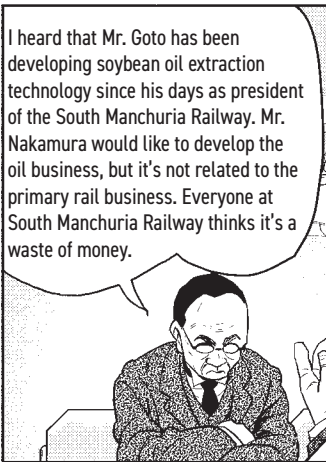
Gahah... exactly my plan!



You're all connected through Taiwan. So, you turned down the director's post but will continue to do business in Manchuria?

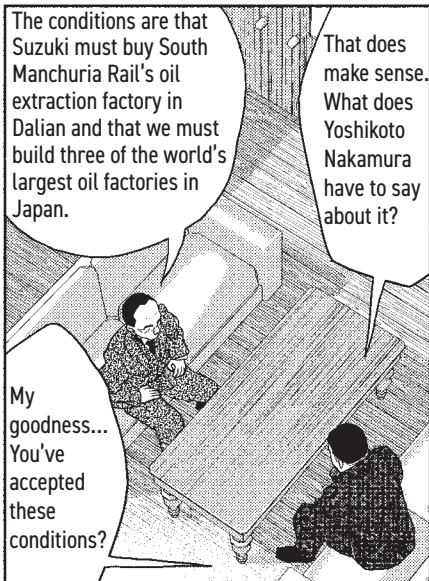


Mr. Kaneko... you can't be thinking of...



I heard that Mr. Goto has been developing soybean oil extraction technology since his days as president of the South Manchuria Railway. Mr. Nakamura would like to develop the oil business, but it's not related to the primary rail business. Everyone at South Manchuria Railway thinks it's a waste of money.

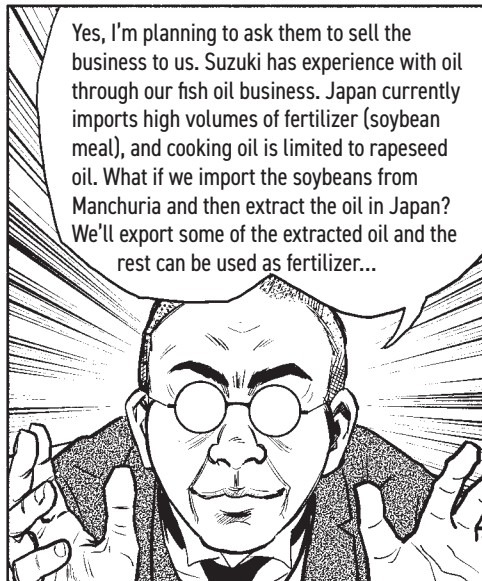
I also believe Western cuisine will become increasingly widespread. Mr. Matsui from Kameido started selling Kawara crackers, which appropriates from Western confectionery culture. Our Western dishes are becoming increasingly popular too, so that means more cooking oil.



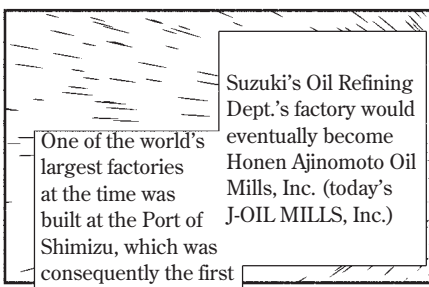
The conditions are that Suzuki must buy South Manchuria Rail's oil extraction factory in Dalian and that we must build three of the world's largest oil factories in Japan.

That does make sense. What does Yoshikoto Nakamura have to say about it?

My goodness... You've accepted these conditions?



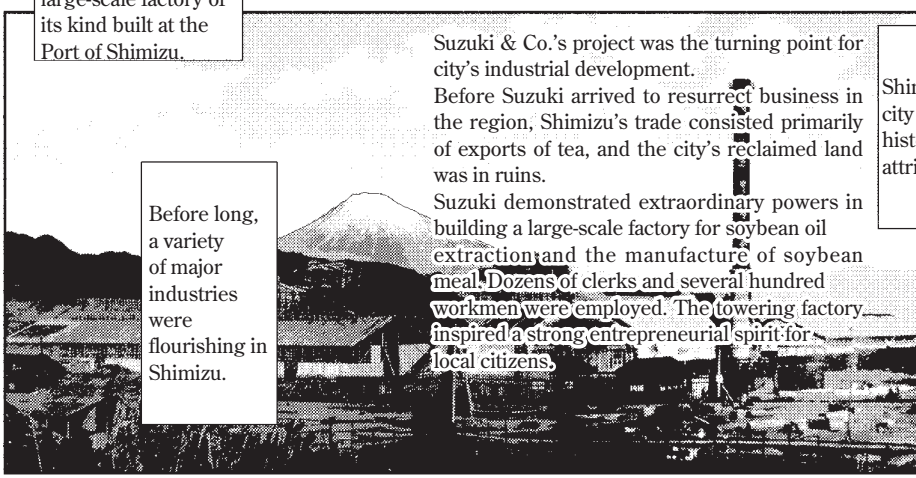
Yes, I'm planning to ask them to sell the business to us. Suzuki has experience with oil through our fish oil business. Japan currently imports high volumes of fertilizer (soybean meal), and cooking oil is limited to rapeseed oil. What if we import the soybeans from Manchuria and then extract the oil in Japan? We'll export some of the extracted oil and the rest can be used as fertilizer...



One of the world's largest factories at the time was built at the Port of Shimizu, which was consequently the first large-scale factory of its kind built at the Port of Shimizu.

Suzuki's Oil Refining Dept.'s factory would eventually become Honen Ajinomoto Oil Mills, Inc. (today's J-OIL MILLS, Inc.)

Of course. First, we'll build in Naruo close to Kobe, then Yokohama, then Shimizu in Shizuoka.



Before long, a variety of major industries were flourishing in Shimizu.

Suzuki & Co.'s project was the turning point for city's industrial development. Before Suzuki arrived to resurrect business in the region, Shimizu's trade consisted primarily of exports of tea, and the city's reclaimed land was in ruins. Suzuki demonstrated extraordinary powers in building a large-scale factory for soybean oil extraction and the manufacture of soybean meal. Dozens of clerks and several hundred workmen were employed. The towering factory inspired a strong entrepreneurial spirit for local citizens.

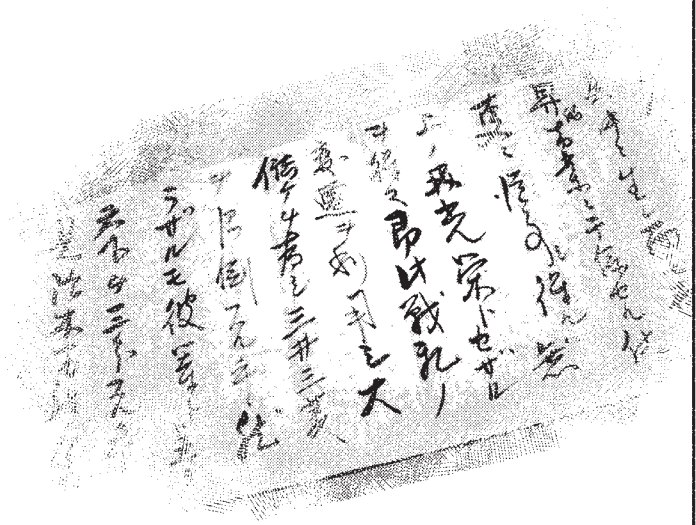
Shimizu's city history attributes

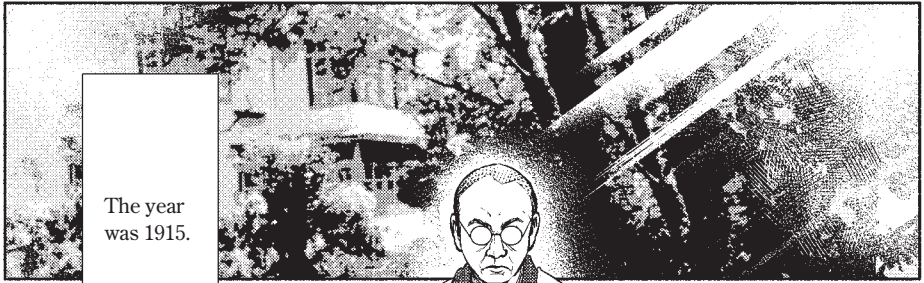
Chapter 4

Suzuki & Co.

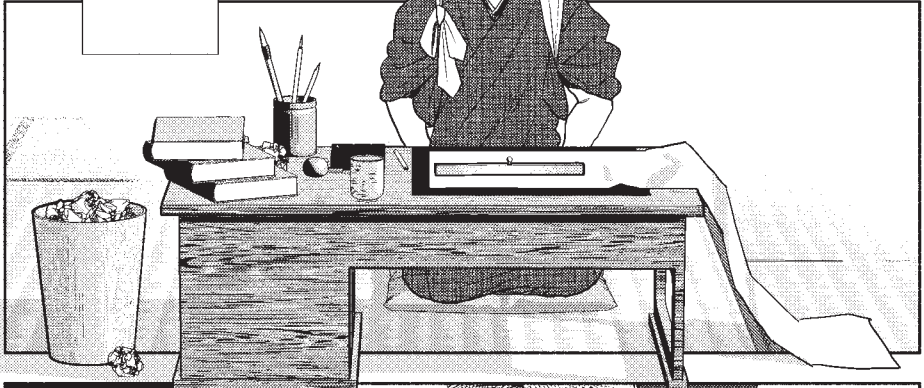
Declaration of Three Kingdoms

Rising to No.1 in Japan

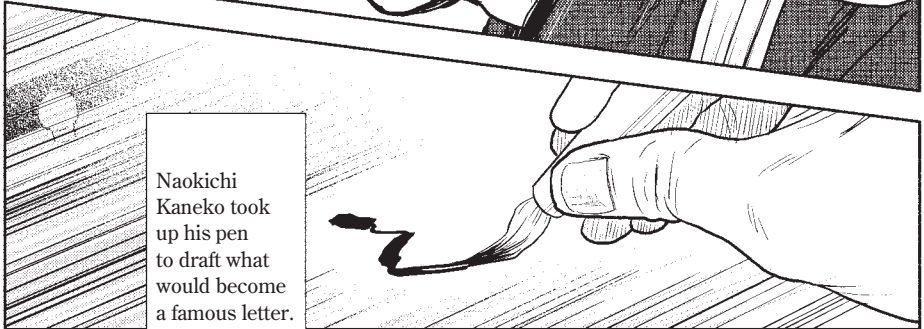




The year
was 1915.



I must
communicate
my thoughts
to Takahata
and all those in
London...



Naokichi
Kaneko took
up his pen
to draft what
would become
a famous letter.

Our business plan is progressing such that we are on track to achieve at the highest level to date. We have all been forged as merchants through these tumultuous times, and it is a true honor to be engaged in global commerce. We have achieved substantial gains during this transitional period of war, and we now are in a position to surpass Mitsui and Mitsubishi. It is only natural that we shall divide the business world into three kingdoms, which is the ideal position for all members of Suzuki & Co. I will have no regrets if these endeavors reduce my lifespan by half or even a full decade. In short, I have been struggling to find the best path forward for our continued success and even the German Emperor does not work as hard as I do.

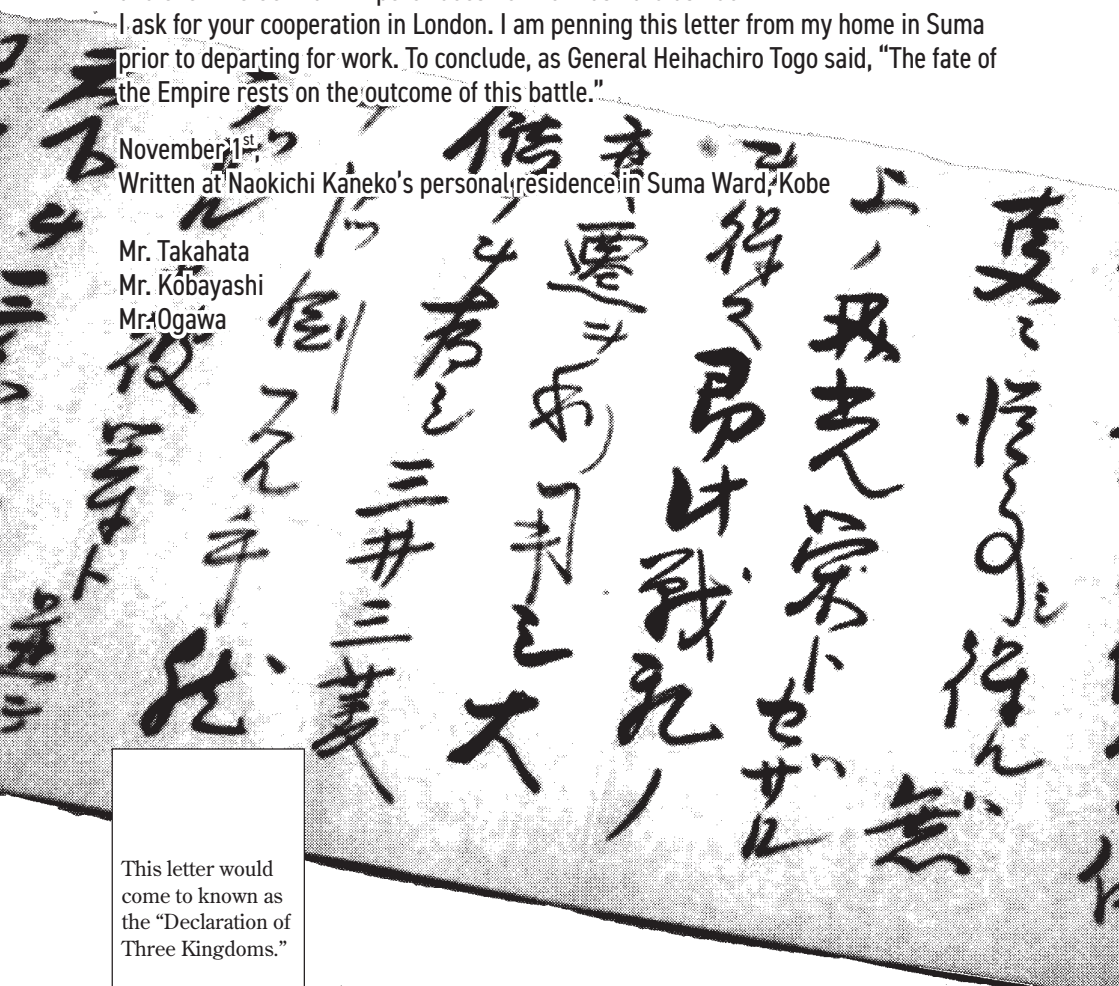
I ask for your cooperation in London. I am penning this letter from my home in Suma prior to departing for work. To conclude, as General Heihachiro Togo said, "The fate of the Empire rests on the outcome of this battle."

November 11th

Written at Naokichi Kaneko's personal residence in Suma Ward, Kobe

Mr. Takahata
Mr. Kobayashi
Mr. Ogawa

This letter would come to know as the "Declaration of Three Kingdoms."





In 1917, Suzuki & Co.'s annual trade volume reached 1.54 million yen, and the company far outstripped other Japanese conglomerates.

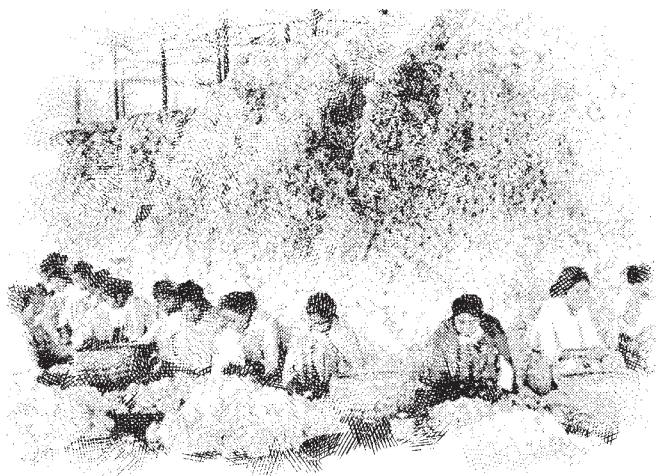


Sojitz & Co. thus become the No. 1 general trading company in Japan, recording sales worth 10% of Japan's GNP.

Chapter 5

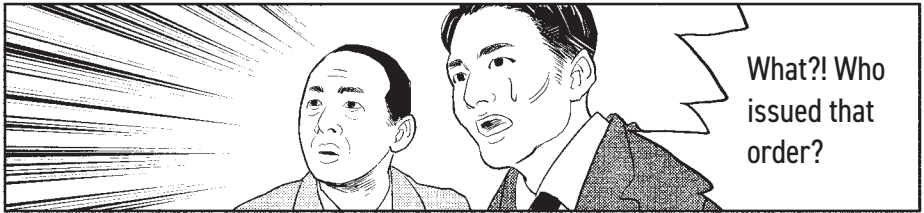
Japan Cotton Trading Co., Ltd.

The emergence of President “Napoleon” Kita

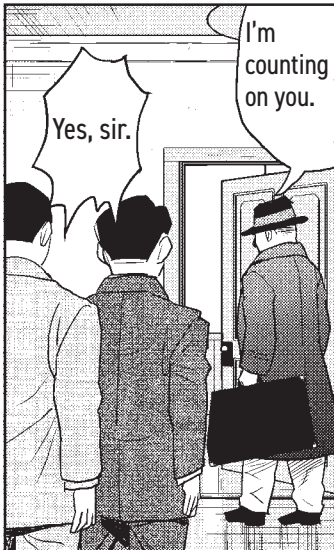




Purchase
10,000 bales
of U.S.
cotton.

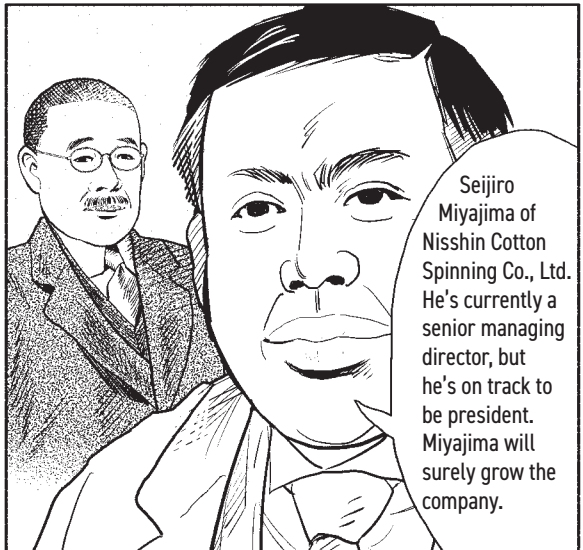


What?! Who
issued that
order?

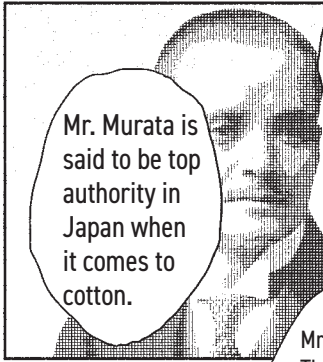


Yes, sir.

I'm
counting
on you.



Seijiro
Miyajima of
Nisshin Cotton
Spinning Co., Ltd.
He's currently a
senior managing
director, but
he's on track to
be president.
Miyajima will
surely grow the
company.



Mr. Murata is said to be top authority in Japan when it comes to cotton.

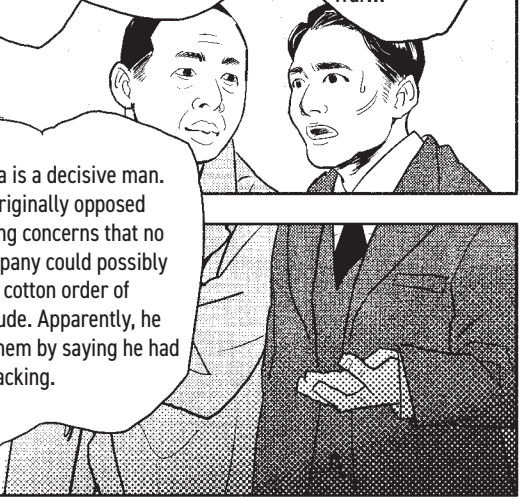
Apparently Mr. Miyajima is on good terms with Mr. Yoshizou Murata, who flew around the world with Mr. Kita and his staff. So they are trying to help each other out in hard times?

Isn't Nisshin is the company established in 1907? It must be rough for them with the chaos brought by the war...

Mr. Miyajima is a decisive man. The board originally opposed his plan citing concerns that no trading company could possibly fulfill a bulk cotton order of that magnitude. Apparently, he convinced them by saying he had Mr. Kita's backing.

In the following months, the cotton market boomed.

So that means...



So, your sights are set on China? Your company name, Nisshinbo, symbolizes hope for prosperous trade between Japan and China (at that time the Qing Dynasty). Japan will one day begin building cotton spinning factories in China.

Not at all. It's not about whether prices rise. Exports from England will decline due to the war and that will give Japan a chance. All I did was ensure we didn't miss an opportunity.

Mr. Kita, I would like to express my deepest gratitude to you.

I think Mr. Murata will come in handy then.



All things considered you have excellent staff. Would you allow Yoshizou Murata to come work with me?

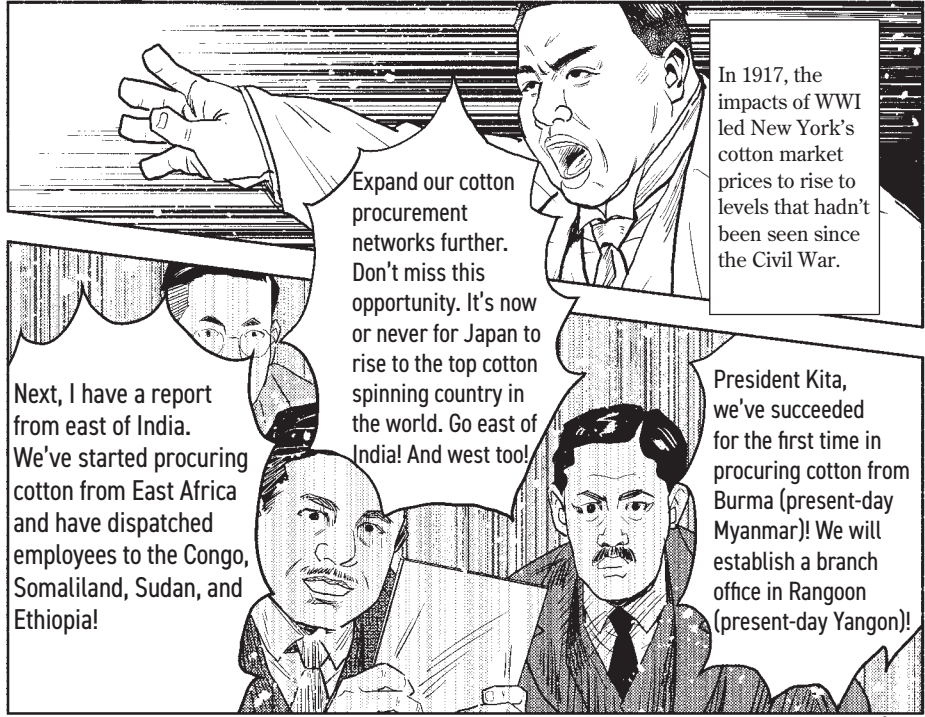


Kita correctly anticipated the influx of orders to Japan. He had already obtained a high volume of orders from cotton spinning companies.



Leave it to me. I will have Japan Cotton's executives go to the lengths of the earth to buy cotton.
We'll then sell cotton products around the world. Let's take over the British Empire's markets during the war.

Can you really procure all of this cotton?



In 1917, the impacts of WWI led New York's cotton market prices to rise to levels that hadn't been seen since the Civil War.

Expand our cotton procurement networks further. Don't miss this opportunity. It's now or never for Japan to rise to the top cotton spinning country in the world. Go east of India! And west too!

Next, I have a report from east of India. We've started procuring cotton from East Africa and have dispatched employees to the Congo, Somaliland, Sudan, and Ethiopia!

President Kita, we've succeeded for the first time in procuring cotton from Burma (present-day Myanmar)! We will establish a branch office in Rangoon (present-day Yangon)!



Yeesssssssss!

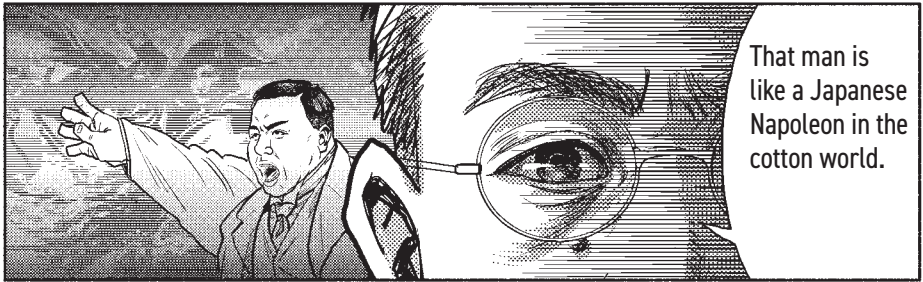
Alright, let's show off Japan Cotton's pioneering spirit! We shall not only procure cotton, but also sell cotton cloth.

Kita had also earned Muto's trust.

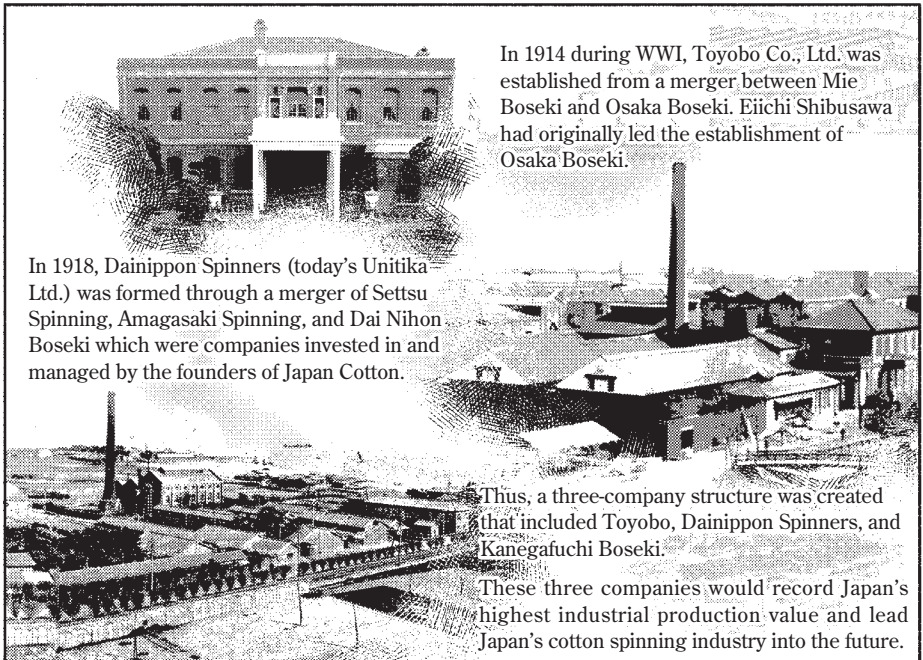
Matazo Kita... a man who doesn't miss an opportunity. Kita is working to change the world's cotton industry.

Sanji Muto put forward the cotton spinning consolidation theory and conducted multiple mergers and became known as the "King of Cotton Spinning."

Sanji Muto, Director Kanegafuchi Boseki



That man is like a Japanese Napoleon in the cotton world.

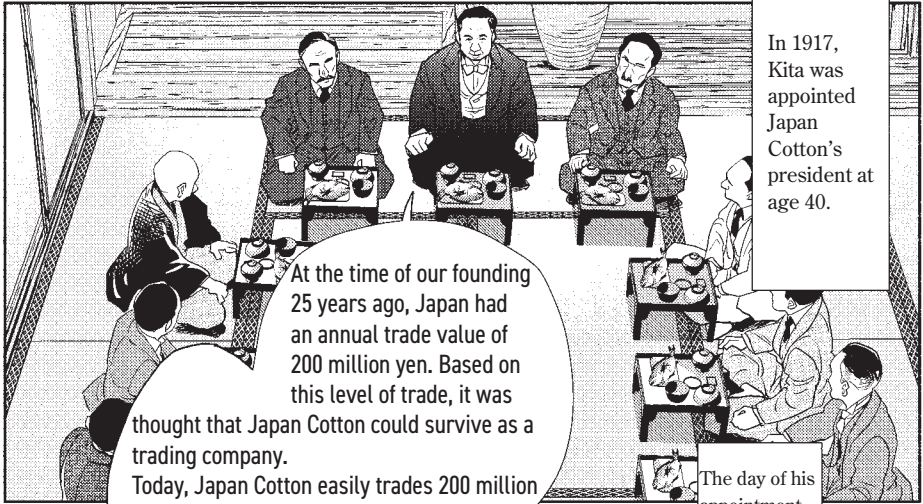


In 1918, Dainippon Spinners (today's Unitika Ltd.) was formed through a merger of Settsu Spinning, Amagasaki Spinning, and Dai Nihon Boseki which were companies invested in and managed by the founders of Japan Cotton.

In 1914 during WWI, Toyobo Co., Ltd. was established from a merger between Mie Boseki and Osaka Boseki. Eiichi Shibusawa had originally led the establishment of Osaka Boseki.

Thus, a three-company structure was created that included Toyobo, Dainippon Spinners, and Kanegafuchi Boseki.

These three companies would record Japan's highest industrial production value and lead Japan's cotton spinning industry into the future.



In 1917, Kita was appointed Japan Cotton's president at age 40.

At the time of our founding 25 years ago, Japan had an annual trade value of 200 million yen. Based on this level of trade, it was thought that Japan Cotton could survive as a trading company. Today, Japan Cotton easily trades 200 million yen on its own as a single company.

The day of his appointment coincided with the 25th anniversary of Japan Cotton's founding.



What?!

we will offer 100% dividends with 20% regular dividends, 20% special dividends, and 60% commemorative dividends.

100-percent dividends???

In honor of our 25th anniversary,

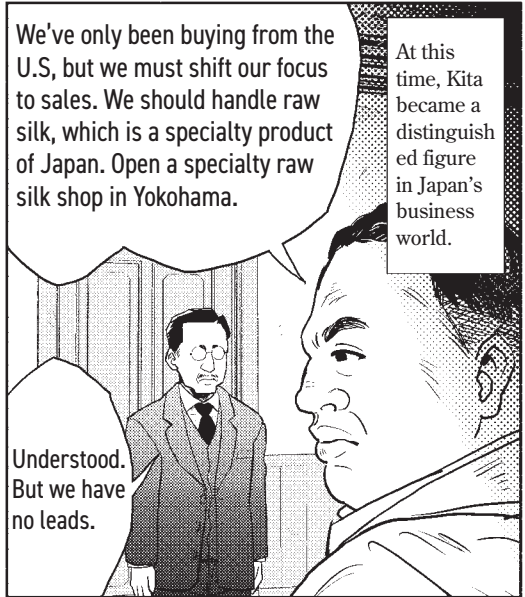


All- one!!

Moving forward, let's demonstrate an All-one mentality. We must join hands to take on challenges together.



Well, I'm working with Kintaro Sugiyama, one of my upperclassmen from the Osaka City Commercial School, on conducting a trade business with China from Tokyo. Let's build on that business to create an export business for the U.S. market.



We've only been buying from the U.S, but we must shift our focus to sales. We should handle raw silk, which is a specialty product of Japan. Open a specialty raw silk shop in Yokohama.

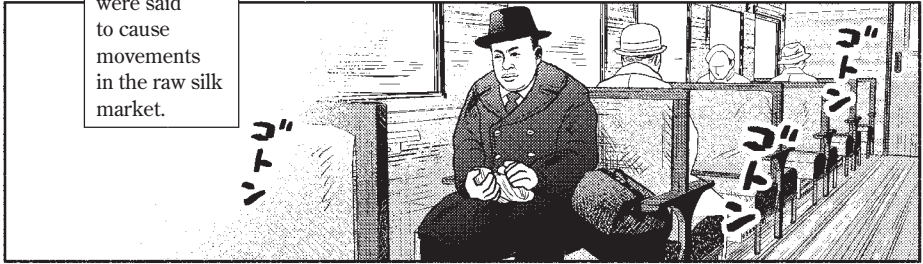
At this time, Kita became a distinguished figure in Japan's business world.

Understood. But we have no leads.



Matazou Kita is going to Tokyo? Speculators will be jumping in to boost the market!

Kita's movements were said to cause movements in the raw silk market.



At some point down the line, we must also handle man-made silk. Better yet, we should manufacture it ourselves.



That reminds me. Mr. Kaneko from Suzuki & Co. is rumored to be putting a lot of effort into creating artificial silk.

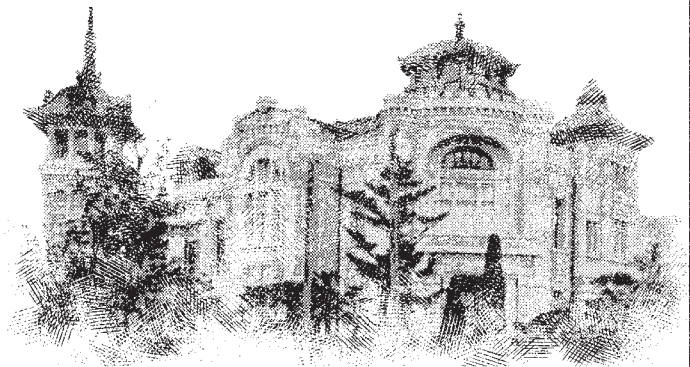


A face-off between Japan Cotton and Suzuki & Co. was on the horizon.

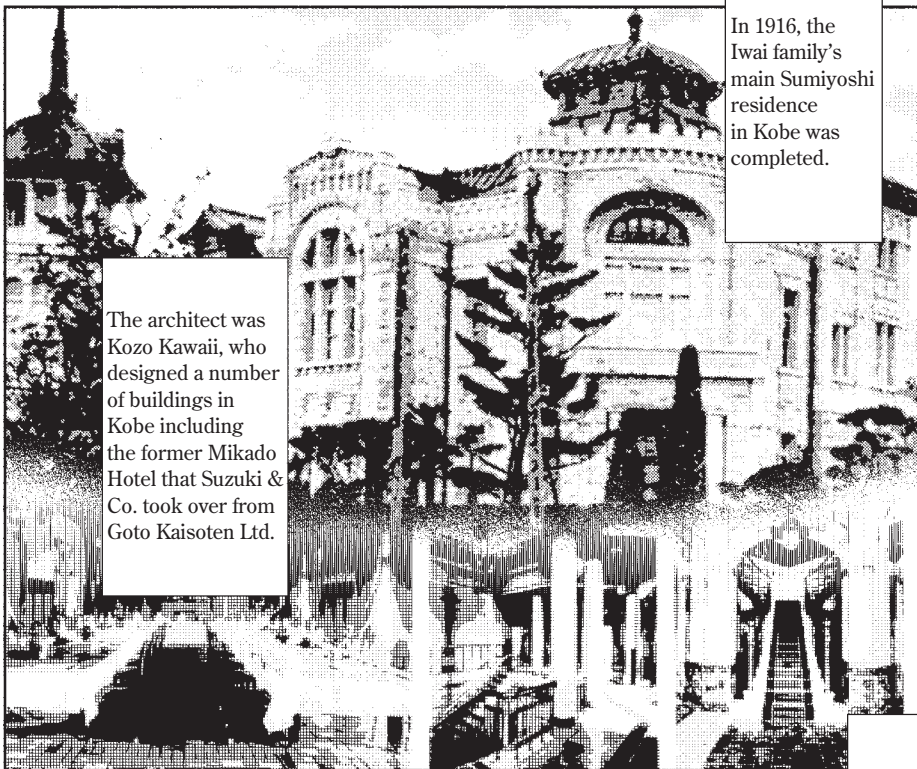
Chapter 6

Iwai and Suzuki begin domestic production of Soda Ash

Iwai & Co. establishes Kansai Paint Co., Ltd.



*The Iwai residence was burned to the ground following the air strikes on May 17th and June 5th in 1945.



In 1916, the Iwai family's main Sumiyoshi residence in Kobe was completed.

The architect was Kozo Kawaii, who designed a number of buildings in Kobe including the former Mikado Hotel that Suzuki & Co. took over from Goto Kaisoten Ltd.

The war-time economy had brought Iwai & Co. a wave of business.

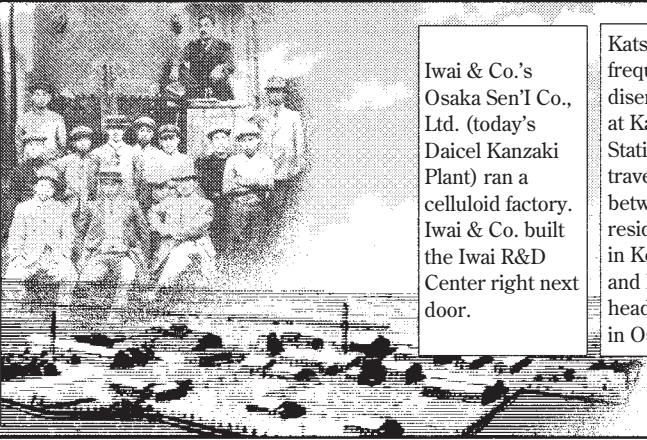
“At the beginning of the Taisho period, Katsujiro Iwai moved his residence to Sumiyoshi and Osaka’s elite have followed suit by moving to Sumiyoshi.” (Tamesaburo Yamoto, President of Asahi Beer)

“Iwai commutes daily from Sumiyoshi Station to the Iwai & Co. headquarters in Osaka. If Iwai is not observed on board, the station master stops the train and waits for him.” (“Our Founder, Katsujiro Iwai” published by Kansai Paint)

Katsujiro Iwai's relocation influenced the business community.

Iwai's special bonus was five times that of the previous year.

At the Iwai R&D Center, research was being conducted for domestic production of Alkali, Sodium Carbonate ("soda ash") needed for industrial production.

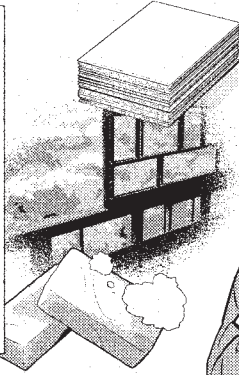


Iwai & Co.'s Osaka Sen'I Co., Ltd. (today's Daicel Kanzaki Plant) ran a celluloid factory. Iwai & Co. built the Iwai R&D Center right next door.

Katsujiro Iwai frequently disembarked at Kanzaki Station when traveling between his residence in Kobe and Iwai's headquarters in Osaka.

After beginning direct trade with foreign companies, Iwai & Co. began importing Soda Ash for Britain's United Alkali

Company Limited. When United Alkali merged with Brunner, Mond & Co., Iwai & Co. lost its distribution rights and turned to handling U.S. manufactured Soda Ash.

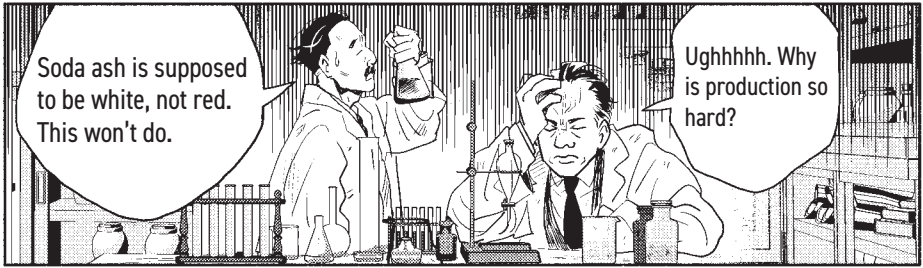


Soda ash is essential for production of paper, glass, and other products in Japan.

Our dependence on foreign imports has been the problem. From a national standpoint, we must manufacture Soda Ash domestically.

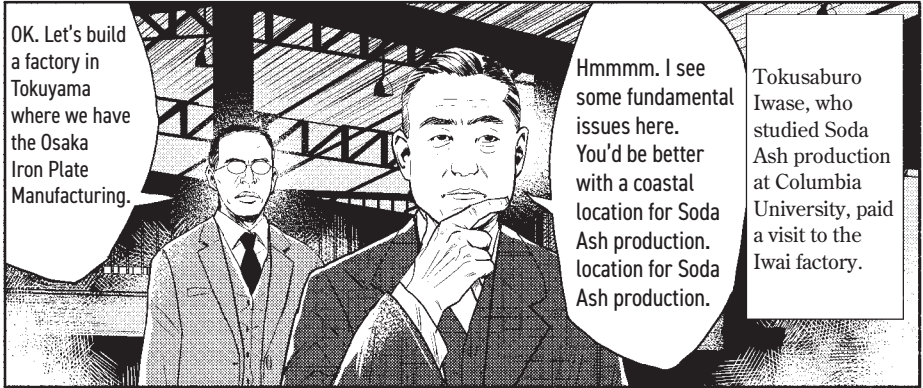


Unfortunately, imports of Soda Ash ceased due to WWI.



Soda ash is supposed to be white, not red. This won't do.

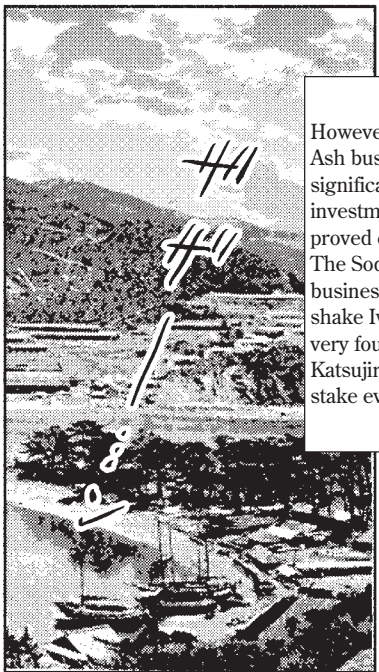
Ughhhhh. Why is production so hard?



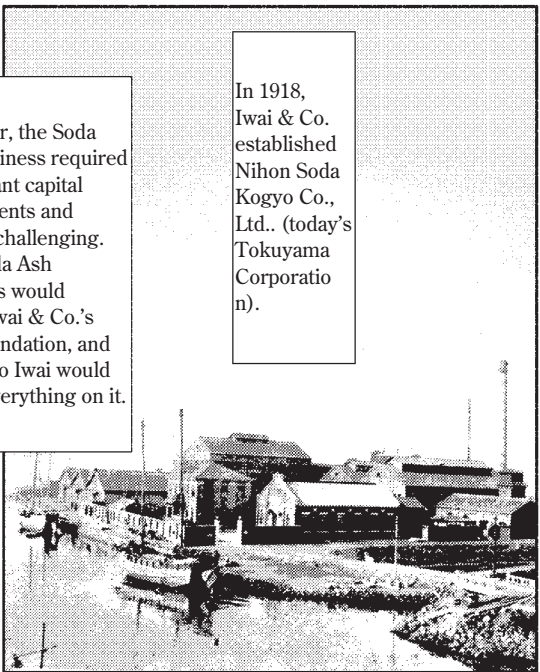
OK. Let's build a factory in Tokuyama where we have the Osaka Iron Plate Manufacturing.

Hmmmm. I see some fundamental issues here. You'd be better with a coastal location for Soda Ash production.

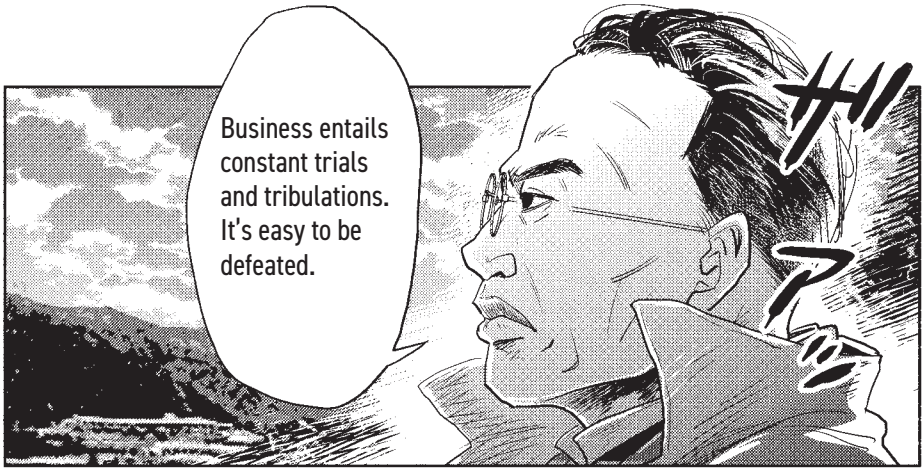
Tokusaburo Iwase, who studied Soda Ash production at Columbia University, paid a visit to the Iwai factory.



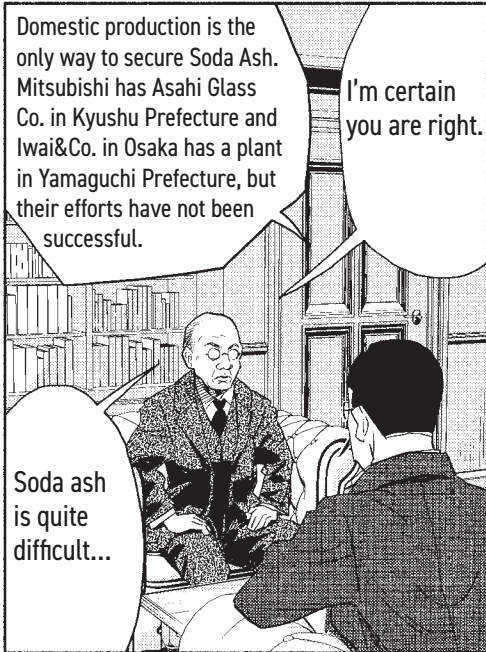
However, the Soda Ash business required significant capital investments and proved challenging. The Soda Ash business would shake Iwai & Co.'s very foundation, and Katsujiro Iwai would stake everything on it.



In 1918, Iwai & Co. established Nihon Soda Kogyo Co., Ltd.. (today's Tokuyama Corporation).



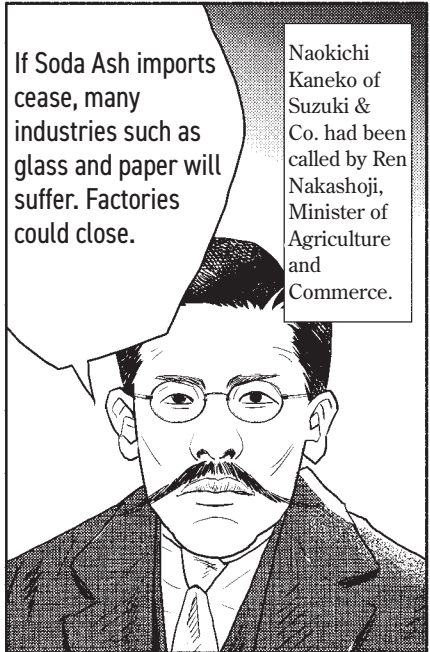
Business entails constant trials and tribulations. It's easy to be defeated.



Domestic production is the only way to secure Soda Ash. Mitsubishi has Asahi Glass Co. in Kyushu Prefecture and Iwai&Co. in Osaka has a plant in Yamaguchi Prefecture, but their efforts have not been successful.

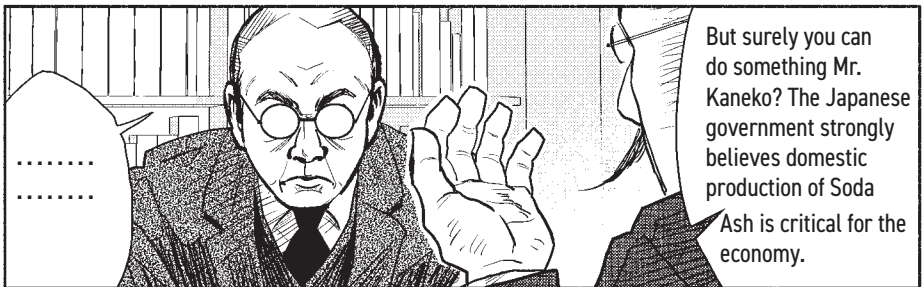
I'm certain you are right.

Soda ash is quite difficult...



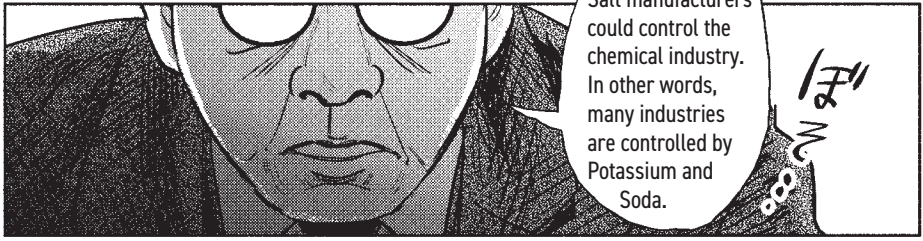
If Soda Ash imports cease, many industries such as glass and paper will suffer. Factories could close.

Naokichi Kaneko of Suzuki & Co. had been called by Ren Nakashoji, Minister of Agriculture and Commerce.

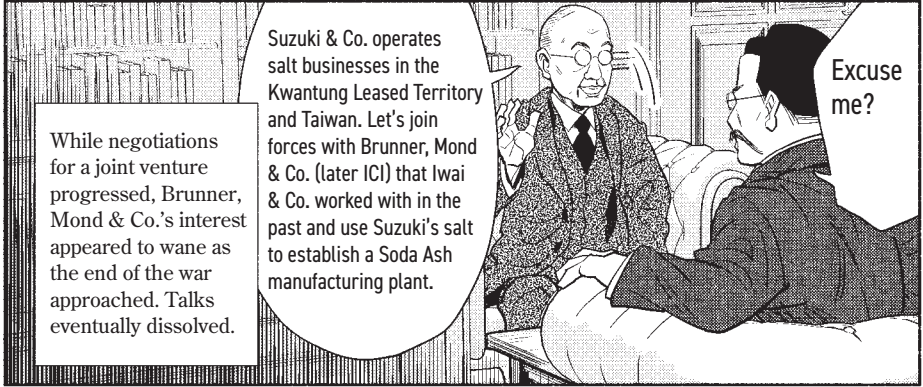


.....
.....

But surely you can do something Mr. Kaneko? The Japanese government strongly believes domestic production of Soda Ash is critical for the economy.



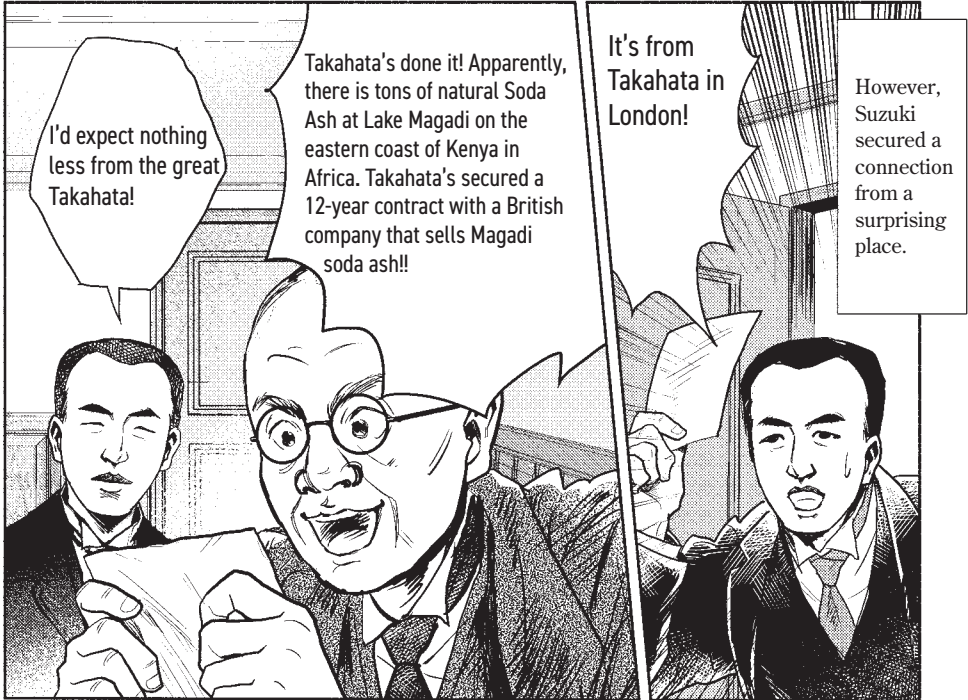
Salt manufacturers could control the chemical industry. In other words, many industries are controlled by Potassium and Soda.



Suzuki & Co. operates salt businesses in the Kwantung Leased Territory and Taiwan. Let's join forces with Brunner, Mond & Co. (later ICI) that Iwai & Co. worked with in the past and use Suzuki's salt to establish a Soda Ash manufacturing plant.

While negotiations for a joint venture progressed, Brunner, Mond & Co.'s interest appeared to wane as the end of the war approached. Talks eventually dissolved.

Excuse me?

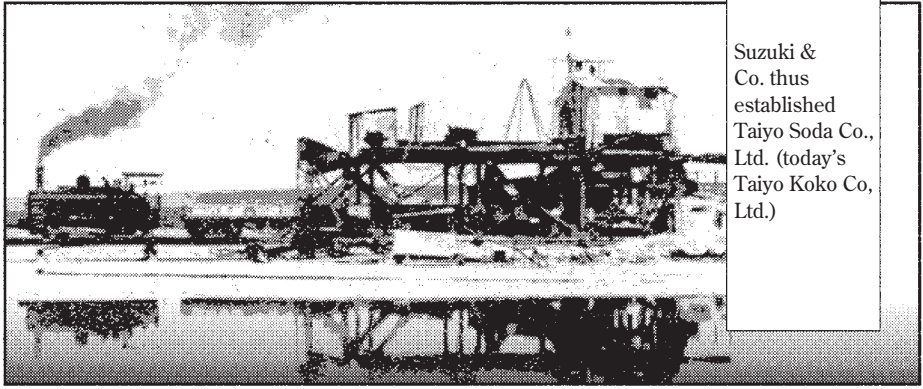


I'd expect nothing less from the great Takahata!

Takahata's done it! Apparently, there is tons of natural Soda Ash at Lake Magadi on the eastern coast of Kenya in Africa. Takahata's secured a 12-year contract with a British company that sells Magadi soda ash!!

It's from Takahata in London!

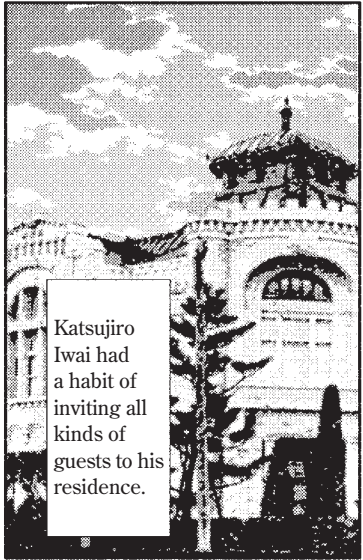
However, Suzuki secured a connection from a surprising place.



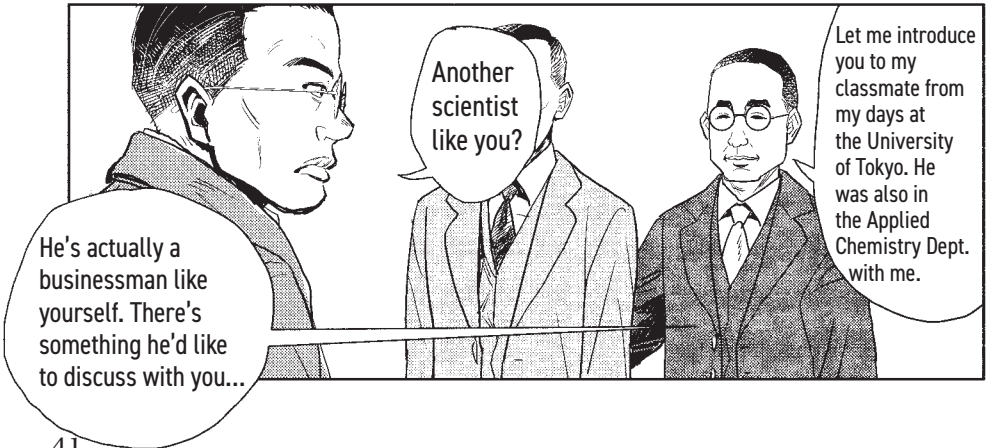
Suzuki & Co. thus established Taiyo Soda Co., Ltd. (today's Taiyo Koko Co, Ltd.)



Hello there, Tanaka. I'm looking forward to hearing from you about the cutting-edge chemical technologies in Europe and the U.S.



Katsujiro Iwai had a habit of inviting all kinds of guests to his residence.



He's actually a businessman like yourself. There's something he'd like to discuss with you...

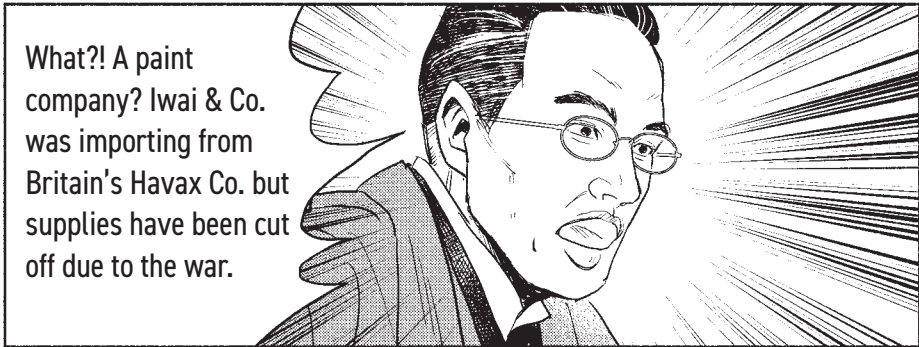
Another scientist like you?

Let me introduce you to my classmate from my days at the University of Tokyo. He was also in the Applied Chemistry Dept. with me.

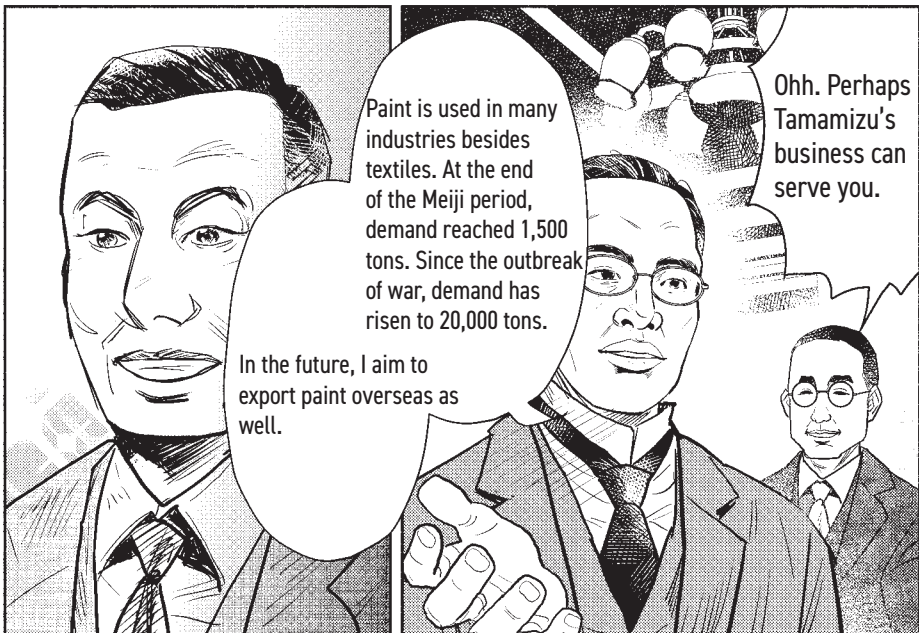


I quit Nippon Paint and Toa Paint to establish my own paint sales company in Nishinomiya. However, the company has cash flow issues...

Nice to meet you. I'm Hiroshi Tamamizu.



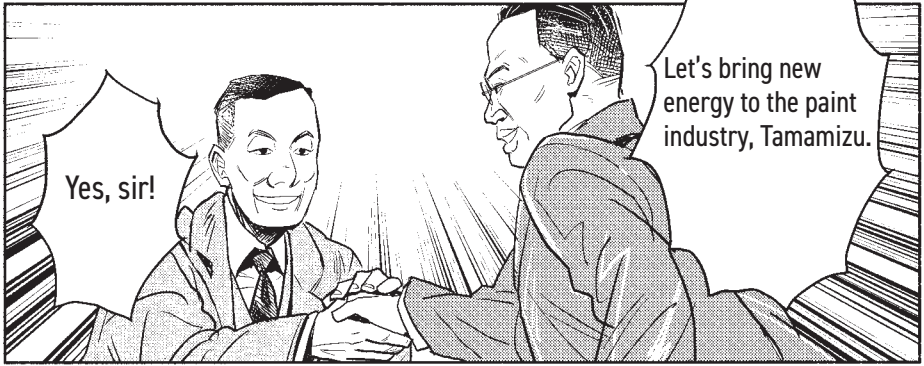
What?! A paint company? Iwai & Co. was importing from Britain's Havax Co. but supplies have been cut off due to the war.



Paint is used in many industries besides textiles. At the end of the Meiji period, demand reached 1,500 tons. Since the outbreak of war, demand has risen to 20,000 tons.

In the future, I aim to export paint overseas as well.

Ohh. Perhaps Tamamizu's business can serve you.

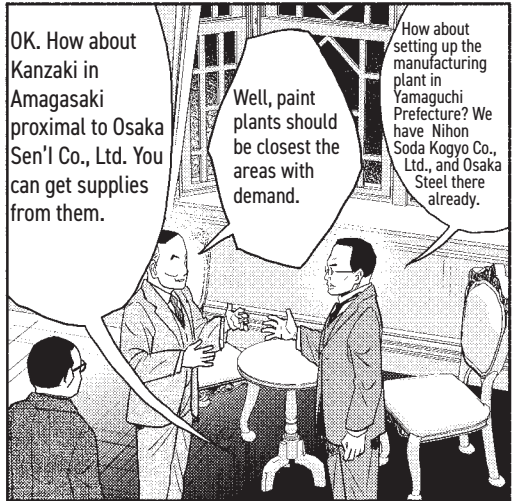


Yes, sir!

Let's bring new energy to the paint industry, Tamamizu.



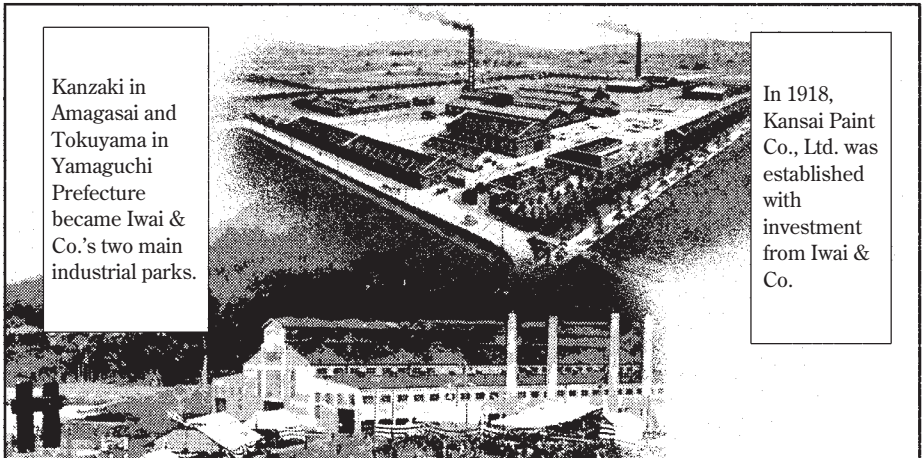
That would be excellent. We will take you up on that offer!



OK. How about Kanzaki in Amagasaki proximal to Osaka Sen'I Co., Ltd. You can get supplies from them.

Well, paint plants should be closest the areas with demand.

How about setting up the manufacturing plant in Yamaguchi Prefecture? We have Nihon Soda Kogyo Co., Ltd., and Osaka Steel there already.

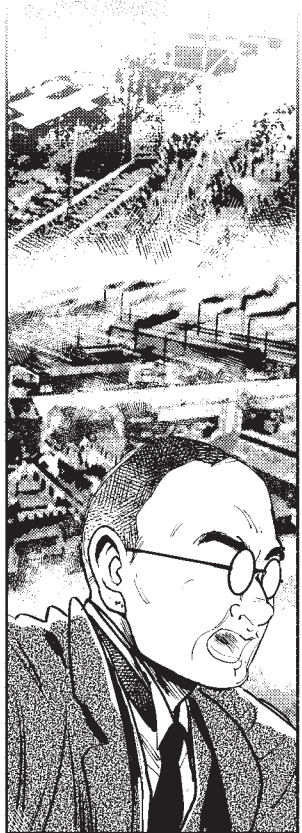


Kanzaki in Amagasaki and Tokuyama in Yamaguchi Prefecture became Iwai & Co.'s two main industrial parks.

In 1918, Kansai Paint Co., Ltd. was established with investment from Iwai & Co.

WWI wreaked havoc around the world.

Suzuki & Co., Iwai & Co., and Japan Cotton Trading were able to not only accurately forecast world affairs and navigate major global changes but enjoy business success through new ideas.



Suzuki & Co.'s Towering Industrial Chimneys: Landmarks That Preside Over the Setouchi Region to This Day

During World War I, Suzuki & Co. moved to greatly expand its non-ferrous metals business after taking on a contract to produce artillery shells. The company built massive industrial chimneys for the smelting of copper and zinc. In fact, two chimneys from the Suzuki & Co. era remain standing in the Setouchi region to this day. The towering chimneys have served as a landmark for ships passing through the Setouchi Islands since their construction over 100 years ago.

Taro Entotsu: The Industrial Chimney that Still Stands in Okayama Prefecture

The first of these industrial chimneys belonged to the Nippon Kinzoku Hibi Refinery located in Hibi, Okayama Prefecture. Suzuki & Co. purchased the refinery in 1903 and renamed the company Nippon Kinzoku Co., Ltd. in 1916. Suzuki & Co. rapidly expanded Nippon Kinzoku's business in order to grow its copper smelting capacity. Nippon Kinzoku now operates as Hibi Smelter, a member of the Mitsui Kinzoku Group.

The factory built by Suzuki & Co. at the time has since been torn down. However, the immense chimney affectionately nicknamed *Taro Entotsu* ("Taro chimney")—still stands to this day, despite being long out of use.



Nippon Kinzoku Hibi Refinery, Taisho Era
(1912-1926)



The refinery chimney that came to be known affectionately as *Taro Entotsu*, circa 1955



The chimney today (currently not in use)

Suzuki & Co.'s Towering Industrial Chimneys: Landmarks That Preside Over the Setouchi Region to This Day

Red Brick Chimney: The Seven-month Long Undertaking in Yamaguchi Prefecture

The second remaining industrial chimney from this period was part of the Nippon Kinzoku Tokuyama Refinery located in Shunan, Yamaguchi Prefecture. The facility was originally known as the Suzuki & Co. Zinc Refinery. The massive chimney was constructed over the course of seven months for the purpose of smelting zinc. Later, Suzuki & Co. faced difficulties with securing the imported raw materials needed for the smelting process, and the refinery was closed in 1920. However, the land where the refinery stood became the site of the Tokuyama Oil Refinery operated by Suzuki & Co.'s subsidiary Teikoku Oil Co., Ltd. (later Asahi Oil Co., Ltd.). Following Suzuki & Co.'s bankruptcy, Asahi Oil merged with Showa Shell Sekiyu K.K. (present-day Idemitsu Kosan Co., Ltd.).



The 72-meter chimney (while in operation)



The industrial chimney today

Today, the land belongs to Nippon Seiro Co., Ltd., a company that was established as a subsidiary of the South Manchuria Railway Company, Ltd. Nippon Seiro's creation was ordered by Jotaro Yamamoto, the then Chairman of the South Manchuria Railway Company. Yamamoto is the same businessman who partnered with Suzuki & Co.'s president Naokichi Kaneko to create Nippon Kayaku Seizo Co., Ltd. (present-day Nippon Kayaku Co., Ltd.).

With Nippon Seiro under Yamamoto's supervision, the company's choice to purchase the former refinery land may have been influenced by the connection between Yamamoto and Kaneko. Many landmarks indicating former Suzuki & Co. and Teikoku Oil facilities can still be found on the land now owned by Nippon Seiro.



Landmarks indicating Suzuki & Co. and Teikoku Oil former facilities on Nippon Seiro's property



On November 11, 1915, Naokichi Kaneko sent his Declaration of Three Kingdoms to Seiichi Takahata at Suzuki & Co.'s London office. The two towering refinery chimneys, which were built near the time this letter was sent, can be seen as symbols of the excitement and momentum that Suzuki & Co. experienced during this period.