As the battle for the fortress at Port Arthur was reaching its final stages, a translation of a book was published in Tokyo. The book entitled *Burohhoshi gencho, Kinji no senso to keizaï* [Original work by Mr. Bloch, War and Economy in Modern Times], preface by Marquis Ito Hirobumi, foreword by Count Inoue Kaoru, translated and edited by Minyusha, was published on 10 December 1904 by Tokutomi Soho’s Minyusha Publishing House and, at 400 pages, it fetched one yen and fifty sen a copy.¹

There is nothing to indicate that this book received any special attention at the time as a large and multifarious body of military/economic literature had been published during the course of the Russo-Japanese War. While it is not clear how it came to be translated and published, readers at the time did not necessarily grasp the full meaning or significance of this book. Nonetheless, it was an abridged translation of the great work of Ivan Stanislavovich Bloch (1836–1902), *The War of the Future.*

Often the Russo-Japanese War is described as a quasi-“total war,” a prelude to the Great War that would occur 10 years later.² However, the phrase “total war,” while containing powerful overtones of bitter modern warfare, has a tendency to be overused. Can it be said that the majority of wars up until the end of the 18th century were what Karl von Clausewitz has called “limited wars,” that the phenomenon of “absolute wars” spread from the end of the Napoleonic Wars onwards, that the Russo-Japanese War became the archetype for “total war,” the true horror of which was revealed in the First World War? Have all the wars from the second half of the 20th

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¹ The most well-preserved copy of the book can be seen in Meiji Period Library, Waseda University Central Library Holdings, Tokyo, Japan.

century until the present been “total wars,” or something else? What, after all, is the definition of a “total war”?3

This paper seeks to define “total war” as follows: (a) A war that is not decided in a short space of time, or by a few decisive battles, and that instead becomes a prolonged war of attrition. (b) A war that requires the use of additional military and financial resources produced in the course of the conflict. Therefore, as the conflict persists, the scale and capacity of a nation’s industrial and financial base becomes a determining factor in victory or defeat. (c) A war that is decided not exclusively on the battlefield. High levels of industrial mobilization and political propaganda occur, heightening the level and significance of the belligerents’ political, social, and economic mobilization. Alternatively, (b) and (c) can be summarized as the formation of a “home front”. (d) A war that does not end until both parties lose the will or one or both parties loses the ability, to continue to fight.

If the above definition is applied, while Bloch does not use the term “total war”, the vision of the future he describes in The War of the Future is, as will be argued later, none other than that of “total war”.4 Using Bloch’s The War of the Future, this paper will investigate in what ways the Russo-Japanese War was and was not a “total war”. This paper also seeks to locate the Russo-Japanese War in terms of the development of the concept of “total war” at the beginning of the 20th century.

**Ivan Bloch and The War of the Future**

Ivan Bloch was born into an influential Jewish Russian family in Poland in 1836, and later converted from Judaism to Calvinism.5 Bloch emerged at the forefront of the railroad business and banking

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5 Bloch’s Polish name was Jan Blokh, while he was known as Jean de Bloch in France. Bloch’s biographical details are drawn mainly from Encyclopaedia Judaica, 16 volumes (Jerusalem, 1972), Vol. 4, p. 1094.