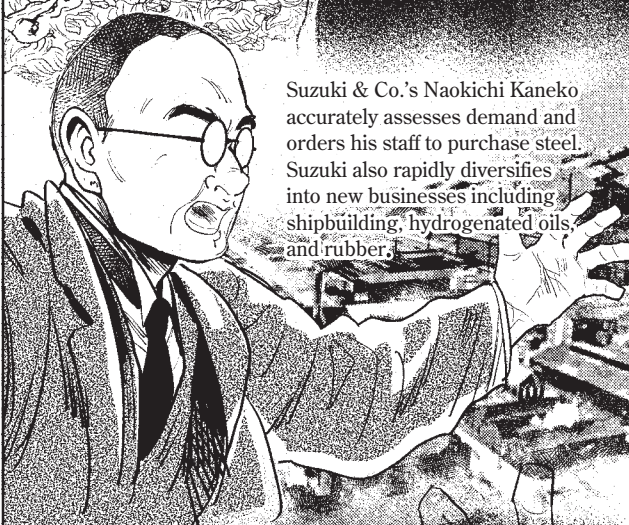





Japan Cotton Trading's Matazo Kita returns from a trip around the world with a cool-headed perspective on world affairs. Kita anticipates Japan's cotton spinning industry will receive a high volume of orders and instructs his staff to procure raw materials from around the world.


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

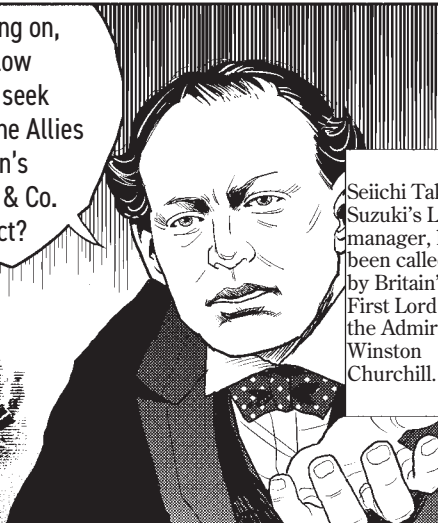
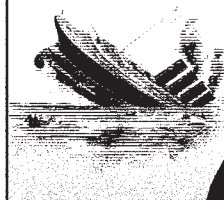
発想 × **sojitz**

Chapter 1

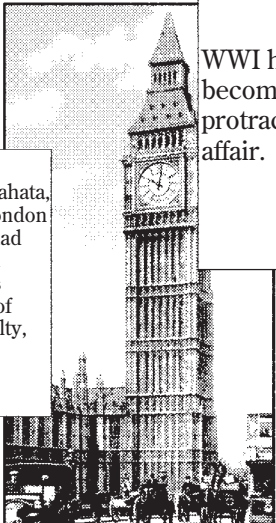
Kaiser Takahata takes on the British Empire



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?

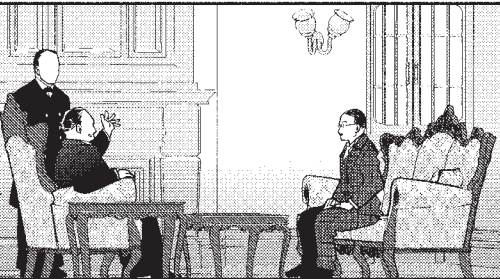


Seiichi Takahata, Suzuki's London manager, had been called by Britain's First Lord of the Admiralty, Winston Churchill.



WWI had become a protracted affair.

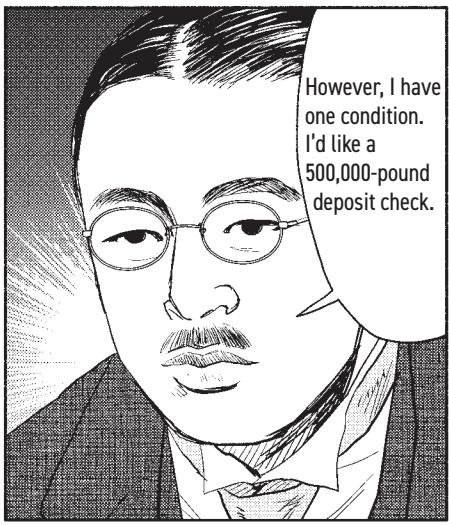
Your enthusiasm is reassuring!



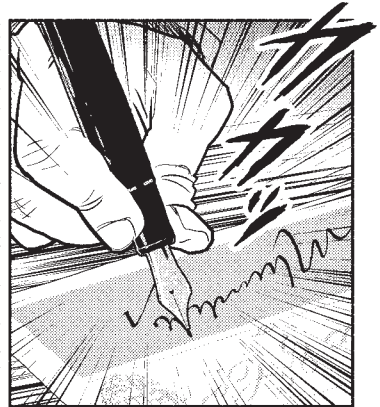
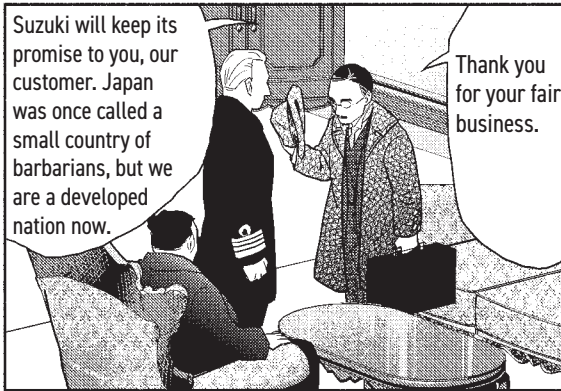
Yes, Your Excellency. Suzuki & Co. will supply you with iron, ships, food, and anything else you require!



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.

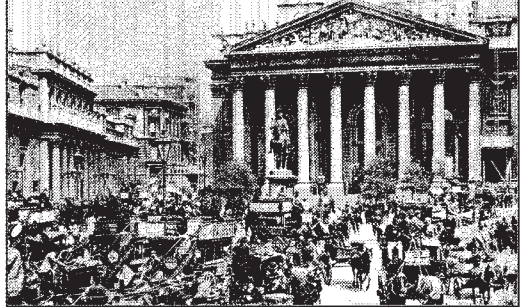
On the front lines of the trenches in Europe, sandbags with the SZK diamond logo could be seen everywhere.



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



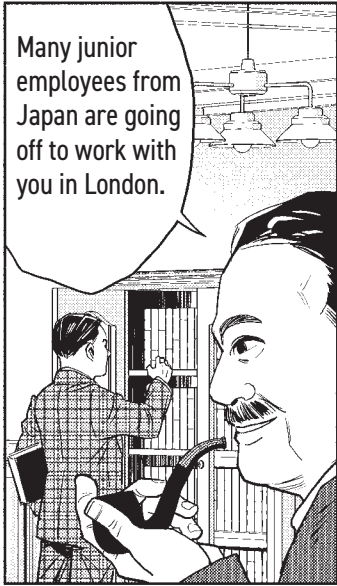
Suzuki & Co.'s business activities garnered admiration. The company received a 100-million-pound credit from the Bank of England and procured supplies from around the world. As a result, Suzuki & Co.'s name became known through London's business world.



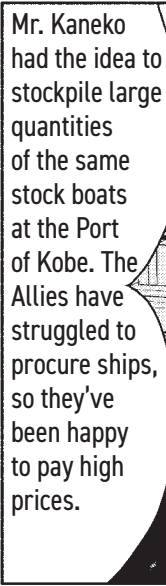
Good day, Mr. Takahata. Rumor has it that you're the first Japanese to become a member of the Baltic Shipping Exchange.

Kojiro Matsukata, President
Kawasaki Dockyard





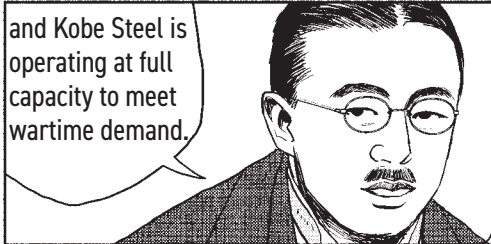
Many junior employees from Japan are going off to work with you in London.



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.

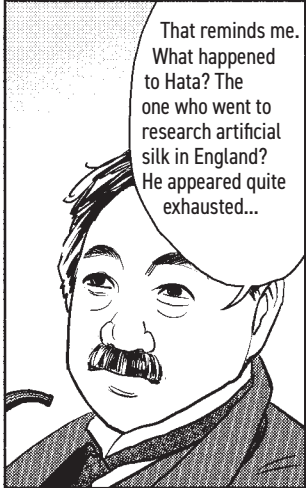
That's right. I hear you're profiting these days too.

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...



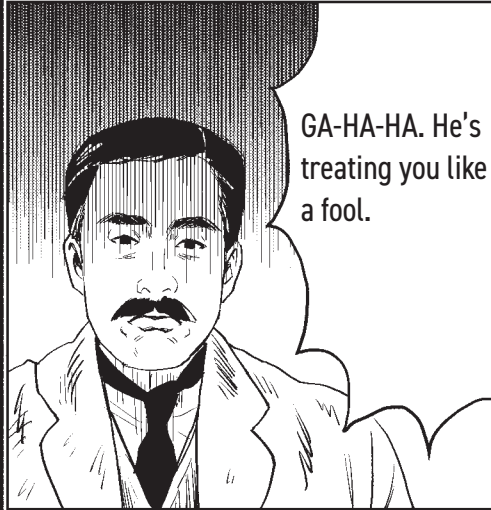
You and Mr. Kaneko certainly operate on a grand scale.

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.

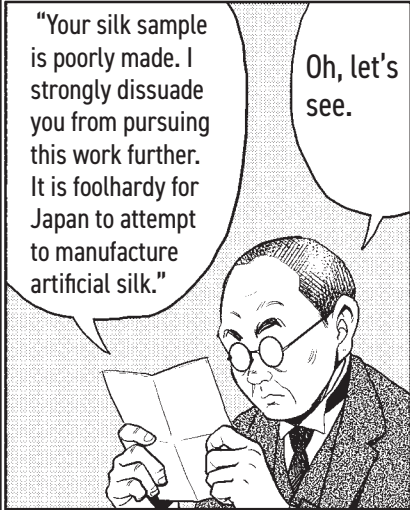
Mr. Kaneko. Development has been difficult, so I reached out to the inventor of viscose, Mr. Cross, for advice. Here's the response I received.



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

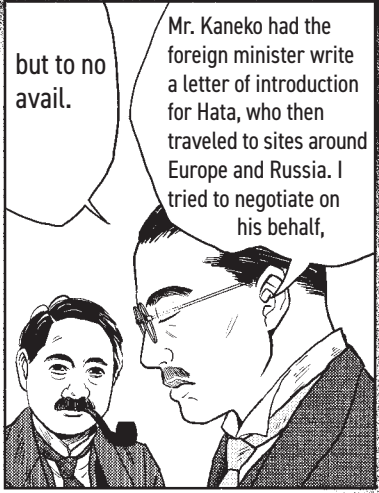


GA-HA-HA. He's treating you like a fool.



"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.

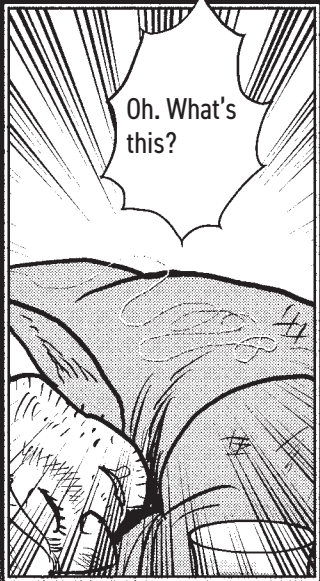
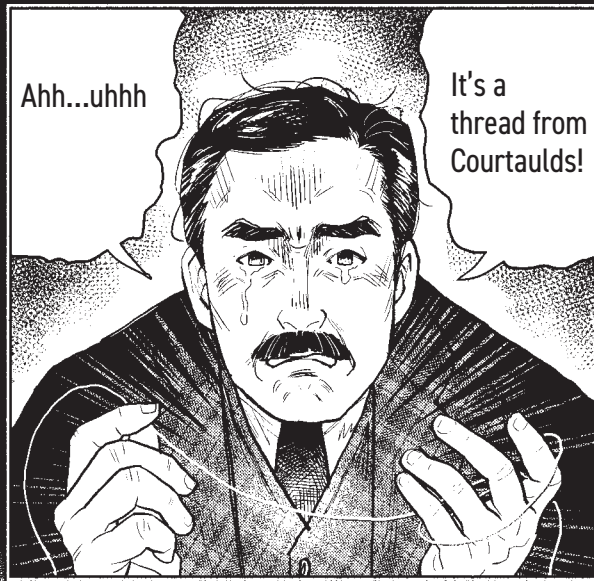


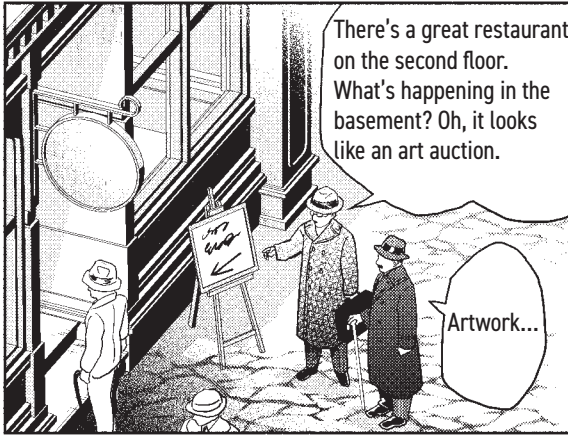
but to no avail.

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!





There's a great restaurant on the second floor. What's happening in the basement? Oh, it looks like an art auction.

Artwork...

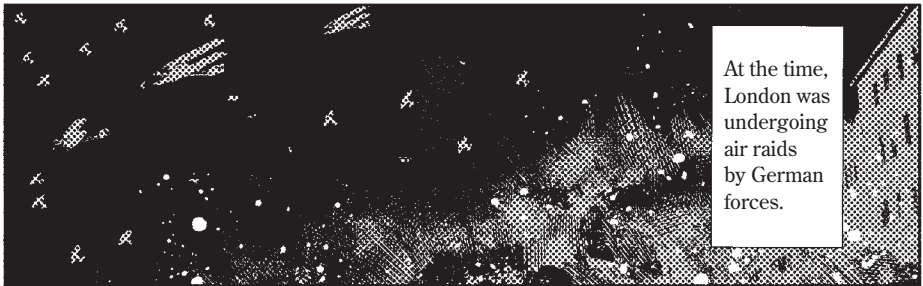


Oh, I just remembered I'm supposed to meet with India's Tata in a bit. It's a procurement agreement for 120,000 tons of steel from Kawasaki Dockyard and Kobe Steel. Mr. Takahata, I'm looking to you to negotiate. Let's eat lunch before heading over.



It could be worth a shot.

hmmmm



At the time, London was undergoing air raids by German forces.



It's ironic how the war has advanced innovation. I never imagined planes would be used for war...



Mr. Matsukata ...

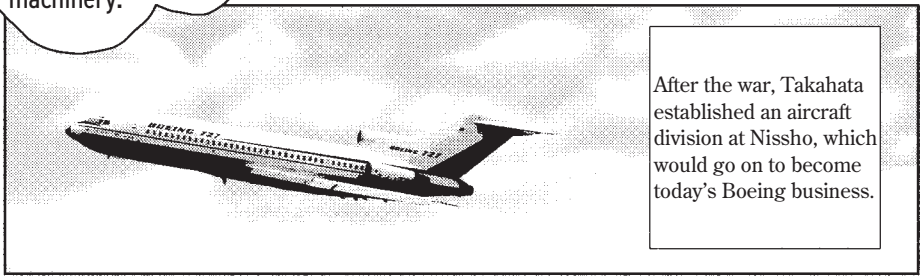
That's the mission of a merchant.

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.



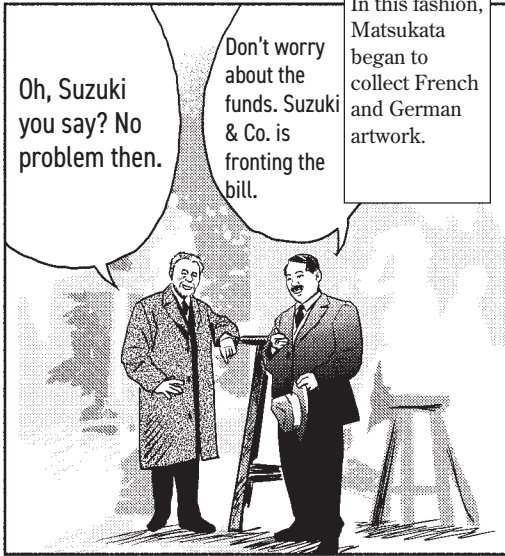
After the war, Takahata established an aircraft division at Nissho, which would go on to become today's Boeing business.



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.



Oh, Suzuki you say? No problem then.

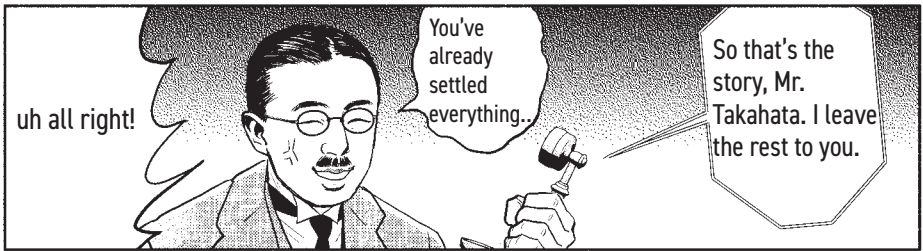
Don't worry about the funds. Suzuki & Co. is fronting the bill.

In this fashion, Matsukata began to collect French and German artwork.



Excuse me?

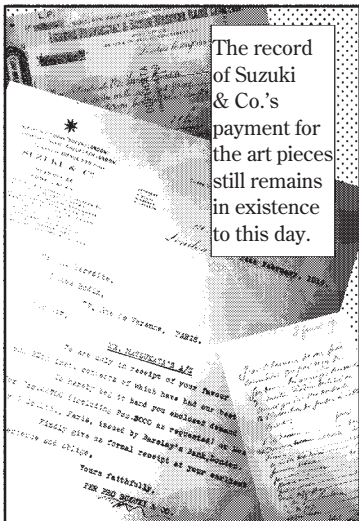
Great! Well, I leave the payment to you!



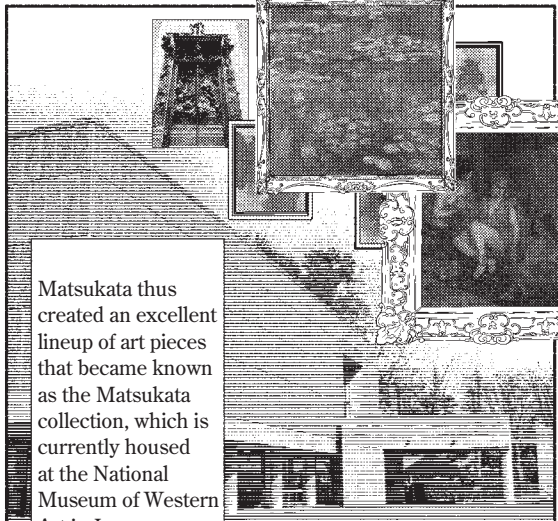
uh all right!

You've already settled everything...

So that's the story, Mr. Takahata. I leave the rest to you.



The record of Suzuki & Co.'s payment for the art pieces still remains in existence to this day.



Matsukata thus created an excellent lineup of art pieces that became known as the Matsukata collection, which is currently housed at the National Museum of Western Art in Japan.