

## **FACTS CLARIFIED?: THE INTERWAR ESTONIAN-GERMAN-JAPANESE INTELLIGENCE COOPERATION**

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This article takes up the joint Estonian-Japanese intelligence operation against the Soviet Union in the late 1930s and attempts to recreate a full picture of the operation through never-used primary sources in the Estonian National Archives. Between 1938 and 1940, the Japanese Army organized operations to infiltrate the émigré agents into the Soviet territory near Pskov, in cooperation with the Estonian intelligence service.

### **INTRODUCTION**

Intelligence operations of the Japanese Army during the interwar period were known in limited detail due to lack of primary sources. The officers involved in the operations left few memoirs about their interwar activities, and the official documents to back their testimonies were mostly burnt upon the Japanese surrender to the Allies in August 1945. Among the army's interwar intelligence operations, the stratagem in the Baltic states was one of the most highly classified, and due to the small number of the people involved, finding out the details had been a hardship. The official documents related to the Japanese military presence in the Baltic states were burnt in summer 1940, shortly before the Soviet annexation. However, by the early 2010s, a portion of the records that survived the wartime disasters was released to the public in the Baltic National Archives. Between autumn 2016 and spring 2019, the author visited and reviewed the primary sources available in the Estonian, Japanese, Latvian, and Finnish National Archives. Through the documents, it became possible to track the interwar activities of the Japanese Army in the region within the framework of its strategic plans for intelligence operations.

## EARLY HISTORY OF JAPANESE MILITARY INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES IN THE NORDIC REGION

On 6 October 1927, General Jiro Minami, then Vice Chief of Staff, issued a confidential order ('San-Mitsu No. 908-1') to Lieutenant Colonel Michitaro Komatsubara, Japanese military attaché in Moscow. Tokyo instructed him to report persons and organizations to be used for espionage and subversive activities against the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> This document fell into Soviet hands and was presented at the Tokyo War Tribunal as proof of Japan's planned aggression against the Soviet Union.

In February 1928, Major Masatane Kanda of the Japanese Army, who was on loan to the Manchurian Railway, sent a report titled 'Outline of Stratagem against the Soviet Union' (Tai-So Bouryaku no Taikou) to Captain Tadakazu Wakamatsu, head of the Russian section of the second department of the General Staff. Kanda had previously participated in Japan's Siberian intervention between 1918 and 1922 and was known as one of the best Russian experts in the army. He claimed that the fate of future war with the Soviet Union would be decided by the results of stratagems targeting the country, not by those of actual battles.<sup>2</sup> The Kanda report supports the perspective that the Japanese Army put emphasis on intelligence and subversive activities in planning a future war with the Soviet Union.

Japan and the Soviet Union established official diplomatic relationship in 1925. However, the history of bilateral relations between 1925 and 1945 is basically a compilation of stories of mutual distrust and suspicion. As of 1925, major diplomatic problems between the two nations, such as jurisdiction over the China Eastern Railway (CER) and other economic interests in Manchuria, remained unsolved.<sup>3</sup> As Stalin named Japan as one of the 'newly arising imperialist nations' in July 1927 which ultimately aimed to destroy the socialist nations, including the Soviet Union,<sup>4</sup> bilateral relations were very unstable. On 18 September 1931, the Manchurian incident occurred, and Mukden was immediately occupied by the Kwantung Army, a detachment of the Japanese Army in China to protect the Kwantung Leased Territory and the South Manchuria Railway in Manchuria. The army intended to install a puppet regime and thus consecutively occupied major Manchurian cities such as Qiqihar and Harbin. Tokyo was concerned about the unilateral actions of the Kwantung Army, as the installation of the puppet regime would provoke the Soviet

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<sup>1</sup> Headquarters/Supreme Commander for Allied Powers. Court Testimony No. 2436. GHQ/SCAP Records, International Prosecution Section. Entry No. 327. Court Exhibits in English and Japanese, IPS, 1945–1947. <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/10279005> (access date and time: 22 February 2019 09:32 AM). 'San-Mitsu' stands for 'Sanbo Honbu' (General Staff) and 'Mitsumei' (Confidential Order) in Japanese.

<sup>2</sup> **Tajima, N.** Stratagem of the Japanese Army against the Soviet Union. Yoshikawa Kobunkan, Tokyo, 2017, 47.

<sup>3</sup> For the details of the CER conflict between Japan and the Soviet Union, please refer to the following article: **Masunaga, S.** The interwar Japanese intelligence activities in the Baltic States: 1918–1940. – *Acta Historica Tallinnensia*, 2018, **24**, 89–90.

<sup>4</sup> **Degras, J.** Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy. Vol. 2: 1925–1932. Oxford University Press, New York, 1952, 233–235.

Union.<sup>5</sup> However, after the assassination of Japanese Prime Minister Inukai on 15 May 1932 by a group of radical officers and cadets of the Japanese Navy and Army, Tokyo could not resist against the policy of the Kwantung Army<sup>6</sup> and finally, on 1 March 1932, the puppet state Manchukuo was proclaimed. From the Japanese perspective, the Soviet Union posed a security threat to Manchukuo and vice versa.

While the countries harboured mutual hatred, in April 1929, a conference of Japanese military attachés was held at the attaché office in Berlin.<sup>7</sup> Moderated by Lieutenant General Iwane Matsui, head of the second department (intelligence) of the General Staff, military attachés from all across Europe frankly exchanged opinions on planning intelligence activities against the Soviet Union. For the Baltic states, the participants agreed on joint administration of Latvia by the military attaché in Warsaw as the great Western powers stationed their military attachés in Riga to collect the Soviet information.

At the Berlin conference, Michitaro Komatsubara, then military attaché to the Soviet Union, expressed his opinions on the value of the Baltic states in terms of intelligence activities against the Soviet Union.<sup>8</sup> For Estonia, Komatsubara indicated that the Estonian military attaché in Moscow had organized the most successful operation to gather the Soviet military information. And for Latvia, he stated, ‘As the Latvian domestic politics are always manipulated and ran about in confusion by the Britain and Poland, the country would somehow be a suitable place to run our intelligence operations.’<sup>9</sup> In fact, in July 1929, the Japanese Army nominated Captain Taketo Kawamata as the first-ever military attaché to Latvia.

The April 1929 conference led to the formulation of the so-called ‘Plan 1932’ in October 1932, which was the Japanese Army’s first-ever large-scale espionage offensive plan against the Soviet Union. The plan was jointly distributed by the General Staff and Lieutenant Colonel Torashiro Kawabe, the military attaché in Moscow, to the military attachés in Paris and Warsaw, and its primary objectives included:<sup>10</sup>

- (1) To carry out measures that would destroy the fighting capacity of the Soviet Union as soon as possible after the outbreak of war;
- (2) To assist the independence movements of Ukraine, Georgia, and Azerbaijan and ‘disturb’ these areas;

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<sup>5</sup> **Hatano, S., Tobe, R., Matsumoto, T., Shoji, J., Kawashima, S.** Definitive Edition: The Second Sino-Japanese War. Shinchosha, Tokyo, 2018, 25.

<sup>6</sup> *Ibid.*, 28.

<sup>7</sup> **Boyd, C.** The Berlin-Tokyo axis and Japanese military initiative. – *Modern Asian Studies*, 1981, 15, 2, 314–315.

<sup>8</sup> Komatsubara used to be a military observer in Tallinn residence between 1919 and 1921.

<sup>9</sup> General Headquarters/Supreme Commander for Allied Powers. Court Testimony No. 732A. GHQ/SCAP Records, International Prosecution Section, Entry No. 327. Court Exhibits in English and Japanese, IPS, 1945–1947. <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/10274812> (access date and time: 23rd February 2019 12:35 AM).

<sup>10</sup> **Kuromiya, H., Mamoulia, G.** Eurasian Triangle: Russia, the Caucasus and Japan, 1904–1945. De Gruyter Open, Berlin, 2016, 136; **Tajima, N.** Stratagem of the Japanese Army against the Soviet Union, 97.

- (3) To link the anti-Soviet émigré Russian organizations to their comrades within the Soviet Union, call up rebellions in the country, and agitate for ‘pacifism’ (defeatism?).

Along with the objectives above, expansion or establishment of Japanese military intelligence hubs in the following locations was decided: London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Helsinki, Tallinn, Kowno, Warsaw, Bucharest, Istanbul, Ankara, Tehran, and Kabul.<sup>11</sup> In order to implement the plan smoothly, promotion of friendship with France, Poland, the Little Entente (alliance among Czechoslovakia, Romania, and Yugoslavia against Hungary), the Baltic states, and Turkey was also noted.<sup>12</sup>

In the Plan of 1932, the office of the Japanese military attaché in Paris was to be the headquarters of the Japanese operations in Europe, and a new attaché office was to be established in Tehran, which handled the operations in the Middle East region, and the Japanese military attaché in India was to jointly administer the issues related to Afghanistan.<sup>13</sup> According to Professor Nobuo Tajima, due to the German rearmament declared on 16 March 1935 and the subsequent conclusion of the Franco-Soviet mutual assistance treaty in May, there was difficulty maintaining the head office in Paris; thus the duties were succeeded by the Japanese military attaché office in Berlin.<sup>14</sup>

## CORRELATIONS OF ESTONIA WITH THE JAPANESE PLAN 1932

Ever since its independence in 1918, Estonia had been recognized as one of the most pro-Japanese nations by the Japanese Army.<sup>15</sup> Following the Plan of 1932, they decided to promote mutual friendship with the Estonian military through a detachment of student officers. From January through March 1934, Captain Tadamasu Shimanuki of the Japanese Army studied at the 3rd Flying Division of the Estonian Air Force. Lieutenant Colonel Tsutomu Ouchi, then military attaché to Latvia, visited the Estonian General Staff and participated in the Independence Day parade on 24 February 1934 under the plea of supervising Shimanuki.<sup>16</sup> Promotion of the mutual friendship through the visit of Shimanuki was successful and one of the objectives of the Plan 1932 was thereby achieved.

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<sup>11</sup> **Kuromiya, H., Mamoulia, G.** Eurasian Triangle: Russia, the Caucasus and Japan, 1904–1945, 137.

<sup>12</sup> General Headquarters/Supreme Commander for Allied Powers. Court Testimony No. 2409. GHQ/SCAP Records, International Prosecution Section, Entry No. 327. Court Exhibits in English and Japanese, IPS, 1945–1947. <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/10278948> (access date and time: 26 March 2019 18:15 PM).

<sup>13</sup> **Tajima, N.** Stratagem of the Japanese Army against the Soviet Union, 98.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, 99.

<sup>15</sup> Between 1919 and 1922, several officers of the Japanese Army such as Captain Michitaro Komatsubara and Major Toshiro Obata were dispatched to Estonia for the observation of the Soviet military and political conditions.

<sup>16</sup> **Shimanuki, T.** Memorial Writings for Tadamasu Shimanuki. (Shimanuki Tadamasu 33-Ki Tsuito Bunshu.) Taikosha, Saitama, 1988, 111.

Still, between 1934 and 1935, the Estonian-Japanese military relations experienced ups and downs. In late 1934, the Estonian Army rejected a proposal from the Japanese Army to dispatch the second student officer Captain Toshio Nishimura. On 19 November 1934, Envoy Shin Sakuma of the Japanese Legation in Riga reported to Tokyo about two possible reasons for the refusal: 1) detachment of the first Japanese military attaché to Finland in May 1934 and 2) recent conclusion of the Estonian-Soviet economic agreement.<sup>17</sup> In the telegram, Sakuma referred to the opinion of Lieutenant Colonel Ouchi, then military attaché in Riga, that the Estonians found it unpleasant that the Japanese Army prioritized the stationing of the military attaché in Finland, instead of Estonia. And, for the latter reason, Sakuma assumed the Estonians were trying to distance themselves from Japan to avoid any political collisions with the Soviet Union after the conclusion of the new bilateral economic agreement.

There is no clue about the actual reason(s), yet earlier, on 17 October 1934, Latvian newspaper *Sibīrijas Cīņa* revealed the secret meeting between the Japanese military attaché in Warsaw and the Polish counterpart, along with vitalization of Japanese intelligence activities in Finland following the visit of Japanese industrial magnate 'Akacaki' based on the article in French newspaper *Journal de Debats*.<sup>18</sup> It is rational to think the stationing of the Japanese military attaché in Helsinki was not the sole reason for the refusal of Captain Nishimura, but rather the intensification of Japanese activities in Finland. Furthermore, on 3 November 1934, the so-called 'Baltic Entente' finally materialized with the activation of the Geneva agreement among the three Baltic states, which had been signed on 12 September 1934.<sup>19</sup> Despite the fact that the Baltic Entente was nothing more than an organ for fostering diplomatic cooperation among the three countries, not promoting any military cooperation, it is an essential factor which provides background for any of Estonia's decisions aimed at eliminating all possibilities of provoking the Soviet Union.

Anyway, the only concrete fact here is that the Japanese Army was actively working on intelligence operations against the Soviet Union around that period, and such moves attracted the attention of many countries, including Estonia. On 18 March 1935, Hugo Valvanne, Finnish Envoy to Japan residing in Tokyo, reported to the Ministry and the General Staff in Helsinki about the information gained from the British military attaché in Tokyo, Colonel James. According to James, the Japanese Army was carrying out more massive scale military intelligence operations abroad than any of the great powers. James continued that the Japanese military intelligence network abroad had been recently modernized and there were now plenty of Japanese agents in Mongolia and the Soviet Union.<sup>20</sup> In the report issued by the Eurasian Bureau of

<sup>17</sup> Japan Centre for Asian Historical Records (JACAR). 23. Latvia. Ref. B14090839400. [https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/image\\_B14090839400?IS\\_KEY\\_S1=%E5%9C%9F%E5%B1%85%E3%80%80%E3%83%A9%E3%83%88%E3%83%B4%E3%82%A3%E3%82%A2&IS\\_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS\\_STYLE=default&IS\\_TAG\\_S1=InD&](https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/image_B14090839400?IS_KEY_S1=%E5%9C%9F%E5%B1%85%E3%80%80%E3%83%A9%E3%83%88%E3%83%B4%E3%82%A3%E3%82%A2&IS_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS_STYLE=default&IS_TAG_S1=InD&) (access date and time: 27 February 2019 08:55 AM).

<sup>18</sup> *Sibīrijas Cīņa*, 17 October 1934.

<sup>19</sup> **Feldmanis, I., Stranga, A.** *The Destiny of the Baltic Entente: 1934–1940*. Latvian Institute of International Affairs, Riga, 1994, 31.

<sup>20</sup> Ulkoministeriön Arkisto (Finnish Foreign Ministry Archive), 5-C15. Telegram No. 11, sent on 18 March 1935.

the Japanese Foreign Ministry on 21 November 1934, intentions of the Japanese Army and the Foreign Ministry toward nurturing mutual friendship with Estonia were more clearly indicated than the army's plan of 1932. The report directed that 'to use Estonia as hubs for (Japanese) propaganda, espionage, stratagem', the Japanese Army must dispense the utmost favours to Estonia since the Foreign Ministry had recently brought about the conclusion of the Estonian-Japanese economic agreement.<sup>21</sup> The bilateral economic agreement was signed on 21 June 1934 and in a provision, Estonia recognized the existence of Manchukuo for the first time.<sup>22</sup> The Japanese Army took the advice of its diplomatic counterpart and consequently, in February 1935, an Estonian military delegation visited Ouchi in Riga and they agreed on exchange of firearms.<sup>23</sup> The relationship between the Estonian military and the Japanese Army had been damaged by the Nishimura incident in 1934, but it was soon restored, as the army needed Estonia for its specific purpose. Between 1935 and 1936, Estonian-Japanese military relations did not show any progress but were maintained on good terms.

#### MYSTERY OF LAKE PEIPUS: JOINT ESTONIAN-JAPANESE INTELLIGENCE OPERATIONS IN THE LATE 1930s

In her memoir *On the Shore of the Baltic Sea*, published in 1985, Yuriko Onodera, wife of the third Japanese military attaché to Latvia, who replaced Ouchi in early 1936, unveiled that the Japanese Army collaborated with the Estonian General Staff to construct a high-speed boat to infiltrate the latter's agents into Soviet territory. The operation was commanded by the so-called 'Manaki Organ' (Manaki Kikan) in Berlin.<sup>24</sup> Colonel Takanobu Manaki had long been one of the most highly regarded German experts among the Japanese Army. However, his arrival in Europe was in mid-1938, thus the special organ in Berlin was run by Lieutenant Colonel Shigeki Usui. Usui had been stationed in Europe since circa 1936 to be in charge of secret intelligence operations of the Japanese Army.<sup>25</sup>

Some of the few remaining sources about the activities of the Usui Organ are the so-called Oshima statement of 1946 and the report of Heinrich Himmler, head of the German Gestapo, written on 31 January 1939. The former was a testimony of Hiroshi Oshima, ex-Japanese Ambassador to Germany who was a superior of Usui, at the Tokyo War Tribunal and the latter was written by Himmler to report to Adolf Hitler

<sup>21</sup> JACAR. 23. Latvia, Ref. B14090839400.  
[https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/image\\_B14090839400?IS\\_KEY\\_S1=B14090839400&IS\\_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS\\_STYLE=default&IS\\_TAG\\_S1=InD&](https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/image_B14090839400?IS_KEY_S1=B14090839400&IS_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS_STYLE=default&IS_TAG_S1=InD&) (access date and time: 27 March 2019 21:23 PM).

<sup>22</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, 20 July 1934, Morning Edition, 2.

<sup>23</sup> JACAR. Exchange of Firearms and Ammunitions with Estonia, Ref. C01006736600.  
[https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/image\\_C01006736600?IS\\_KEY\\_S1=C01006736600&IS\\_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS\\_STYLE=default&IS\\_TAG\\_S1=InD&](https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/image_C01006736600?IS_KEY_S1=C01006736600&IS_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS_STYLE=default&IS_TAG_S1=InD&) (access date and time: 26 March 2019 19:18 PM).

<sup>24</sup> **Onodera, Y.** *On the Shore of the Baltic Sea*. Kyodo Tsushin, Tokyo, 1985, 53.

<sup>25</sup> **Sugita, I.** *War Strategy without Information*. Hara-Shobo, Tokyo, 1988, 59.

about the progress of the joint German-Japanese intelligence operations against the Soviet Union. According to the two documents, headquarters of the Usui Organ was located in Falkensee, in the vicinity of Berlin. There Usui hired six émigré Russians to print out propaganda leaflets, and the leaflets were handed over to a Georgian émigré agent (Haider Bammat) to be dispersed inside the Soviet Union.<sup>26</sup>

Unfortunately, there are no sources that indicate correlations between the Usui Organ and the Estonian General Staff, or Makoto Onodera, the third Japanese military attaché to Latvia, except Yuriko Onodera's memoir.

Details of the joint Estonian-Japanese operation had also been shrouded in mystery due to lack of primary sources. In the early 2000s, American interrogation records of Makoto Onodera at Tokyo in 1946 were declassified. During the interrogations at the Sugamo prison for war criminals, Onodera himself confessed that he provided 16,000 German Marks to the Estonian General Staff to fund the construction of the high-speed boat in Germany.<sup>27</sup> The whole project to provide the boat to the Estonians took roughly two years, until 1940. In summer 1940, shortly before the Soviet occupation of the Baltic states, Lieutenant Colonel Hiroshi Onouchi, then Japanese military attaché to the Baltic states, handed the last instalment of the funds to the Estonian General Staff.<sup>28</sup>

In August 1940, the Soviet secret police arrested Rudolf Velling, trainee of the second department (intelligence) of the Estonian General Staff, and interrogated him with regard to the interwar Estonian-Japanese operation. Before the Soviet occupation, Velling was working closely with Major Aksel Kristian, head of section C of the Estonian second department. Section C was officially a topological section of the second department, albeit the true face was that of a section to handle negotiations with foreign military attachés accredited to Estonia on operational matters.

The Velling statement was created on 16 September 1940, shortly after the completion of the Soviet occupation of Estonia. Its credibility should be subject to source criticism since the Soviet authorities had arrested its own nationals based on false accusations and tortured them in order to force confessions of crimes during the Great Purge in the late 1930s. However, Velling's confessions were made in almost full detail (see Fig. 1). Although it is hard to believe Velling provided the Soviets with all the information he had access to, still, some important names were given and as the persons were immediately added to the Soviet list of 'People's Enemies', the Velling statement is authentic in some sense.

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<sup>26</sup> Headquarters/Supreme Commander for Allied Powers. Court Testimony No. 488. GHQ/SCAP Records, International Prosecution Section. Entry No. 327. Court Exhibits in English and Japanese, IPS, 1945–1947. <http://dl.ndl.go.jp/info:ndljp/pid/10274286> (access date and time: 27 February 2019 15:40 PM); Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality. Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression. Vol. 1, 1946, 842.

<sup>27</sup> Strategic Services Unit (SSU). Interrogation report of Makoto Onodera. Reference Number: DB#1225. 30th September 1946, 24. [https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/ONODERA%2C%20MAKOTO%20201-0000047%20%20VOL.%20\\_0022.pdf](https://www.cia.gov/library/readingroom/docs/ONODERA%2C%20MAKOTO%20201-0000047%20%20VOL.%20_0022.pdf) (access date and time: 28 February 2019 18:30 PM).

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 27.

**Interrogation Protocol**

Accused Person: Velling Rudolf Augustinovich (Веллинг Рудольф Августинович)

Date: 16 September 1940

**Q: Tell us about the intelligence operations of Japanese intelligence services against the USSR.**

A: In the beginning of 1938 Japanese military attaché Onodera started visiting the office of Major Kristian (Кристъян, N. B.: Aksel Kristian) – head of Section C of the second department of Estonian General Staff, and they were having a chat. I am not familiar with the contents of conversations between Kristian and Onodera as I was not present during these conversations.

**Q: Are you acquainted with ONODERA?**

A: Yes, I know Onodera from the end of 1937. I first met Japanese military attaché Onodera at the office of Kurgvel (Кургвель, N. B.: Captain Aleks Kurgvel) – who was heading Section A of the second department of the Estonian General Staff. I remember that once, when I entered Kurgvel's office, I saw a Japanese man, who was introduced to me then as a Japanese military attaché. It was in the end of 1937 when I became acquainted with Onodera.

**Q: How did your relations with ONODERA developed further on?**

A: In the beginning of 1938, when the Japanese attaché Onodera was leaving Estonia, he organized a banquet at the hotel 'Kuld Lõvi' – Golden Lion. I was also one of those invited.

**Q: What conversations did you have at that banquet?**

A: I don't remember the contents of conversations which we had back then at the banquet.

**Q: Who attended the banquet?**

A: There were: General Reek (PEEK, Nikolai Reek – Estonian Chief of Staff), General Brede (БРЕДЕ), Colonel Maasing (МАЗИИНГ, Richard Maasing – head of the Estonian second department), Colonel Saarsen (СААРСЕН, Villem Saarsen – Estonian military attaché to Latvia), Major Kristian (КРИСТЪЯН), Captain Kurgvel (КУРГВЕЛЬ), Major Brede (БРЕДЕ), Onodera and I – Velling.

**Q: What did you do back then at the second division of Estonian general headquarters?**

A: I was serving as a trainee (intern) at the Section C of the second department of the Estonian General Staff.

**Q: How would you then explain that while being (only) a trainee you were still invited to the banquet organized by Japanese military attaché ONODERA?**

A: To this day, I do not know why, amongst all the big commanders, I was the one invited.

**Q: What intelligence on WPRA were you collecting for Onodera?**

A: I did not give any information on WPRA (N.B.: the Soviet military forces) to Onodera.

**Q: Have you received any gifts from Onodera?**

A: Yes, I received a piece of silk fabric to make a dress for my wife, and it was in the beginning of 1938. I received no other gifts from Onodera.

**Fig. 1.** Excerpt from the Soviet interrogation report of Rudolf Velling on 16 September 1940. Translated from the original text in Russian into English by the author. Based on ERAF-138sm-1-12, 43–45. (Continued on the next page.)

**Q: What did you receive this gift from Japanese military attaché Onodera for?**

A: I cannot answer this question as I do not myself know why Onodera gave me this piece of silk fabric.

**Q: Have you received any other gifts from Japanese military attaché?**

A: Yes, I have. In the beginning and in the end of 1938, I received the following presents from the aide of Japanese military attaché Shimanuki (Шемануки, Major Takeharu Shimanuki – Japanese military attaché to Estonia): a wooden racket for a play with two balls, a wooden toy depicting Japanese woman inside this thing. These presents Shimanuki made me when he was leaving Estonia for Japan and closed up (N.B.: literally liquidated) his apartment. Besides that in 1938 I received the following from a military attaché Takatsuki: one pearl, a vase made in Japan, a piece of silk fabric to make a shirt for my uniform. In 1939 new Japanese attaché Onouchi gave me one lighter and a piece of silk fabric for a shirt. I would also add that such non presents, but significantly worthier ones were received by: Captain Kristian and Major Brede. What were they receiving these gifts for is beyond my knowledge.

**Q: What intelligence on the Red Army did you share with the Japanese spies?**

A: In the beginning of 1939 in the office of Major Kristian and at his order, we together with Japanese military attaché Onouchi were matching locations of WRPA military units and formations in the Far East. Onouchi shared intelligence on the Red Army in the Far East, and I, in turn, shared some information on WRPA, which were available in the locations of WRPA, compiled by the Section C of the second department of the Estonian General Staff.

**Q: How and what else did you help the Japanese intelligence with?**

A: In 1938, in the end of May, Major Kristian summoned me to his office, and told me to head immediately to the central station in Tallinn, and to hand a bag to Gavrilov. Kristian then told me, that Gavrilov is at the station, dressed in a light coloured raincoat, wearing a blue cap and is waiting for the pack. From this conversation with Major Kristian I got to know that Gavrilov is heading a diversion group, preparing to move (N.B.: deployment) onto the territory of the USSR. In the end of July of year 1938, Japanese military attaché Takatsuki (N.B.: Onouchi's predecessor) visited me during my service and asked why Kristian does not yet deploy the Gavrilov diversion group into the USSR. I answered that I will pass this information to Major Kristian. Then, Takatsuki told me that the Gavrilov group must be immediately deployed to the USSR territory to conduct a special mission and that was the end of the conversation with Takatsuki. After this conversation I understood that Japanese intelligence is controlling the diversion group of Gavrilov to deploy it to the territory of the USSR.

**Q: Did you complete the task given by Takatsuki?**

A: Yes, I passed Major Kristian the request Takatsuki made to me. Moreover, I made fake Soviet passports for agents of the Gavrilov group, and then Kristian made arrangements with Puusepp about deployment of this group into the territory of the USSR, then this was done.

**Q: Therefore you were acting against the USSR, taking on directions from Japanese intelligence officers. Do you agree with this statement?**

A: Yes, I was complying with assignments given by intelligence officer Takatsuki, but Major Kristian was helping Japanese intelligence services to a much greater degree, and he was the one who deployed the Gavrilov diversion group to USSR across the border.

Fig. 1. Continued.

The mysterious collaborator ‘Puusepp’ was identified as Herbert (Henn) Puusepp, senior assistant officer of the Estonian Political Police (Poliitiline Politsei) at the Irboska (Izborsk) branch between 1938 and 1940.<sup>29</sup> He was previously stationed in the political police branch in Petseri (Pechory) circa May 1937.<sup>30</sup> As Onodera and Saarsen, Estonian military attaché to Latvia, travelled to Petseri sometime in summer 1937, it is logical to think they both knew Puusepp in person.<sup>31</sup> The Soviet confidential report of February 1938 regarding the agents in Estonia revealed that the Estonian second department had four ‘reconnaissance points’ (intelligence hubs?) in Gungenburg, Narva, Mustvee, and Irboska.<sup>32</sup> Puusepp was working under direct command of the Estonian second department, not the Political Police.<sup>33</sup> It could mean the reconnaissance point in Irboska was probably run by Puusepp himself.

In either February or March 1940, Puusepp was given an order by Colonel Villem Saarsen, new chief of the Estonian second department, to find a person able to covertly cross the Soviet border to reach Pskov. Although Puusepp found the candidate in May 1940, the plan was not initiated due to the Soviet occupation of Estonia the following month.<sup>34</sup> Thus, it makes sense that the high-speed boat was used in the southern part of Lake Peipus, where is called ‘Lake Pskov’ (Pihkva järv) in Estonian. Indeed, Makoto and Yuriko Onodera visited Petseri and the surroundings of Lake Peipus in summer 1937, together with other foreign military attachés stationed in Riga.<sup>35</sup> In 1978, Makoto Onodera confessed to his children that he had 2 or 3 agents, either Russians or Ukrainians, who were trained (at the Usui Organ) in Berlin and sent to the Soviet Union by the aforementioned high-speed boat via ‘Lake Peipus’ – to be precise, ‘Lake Pskov’.<sup>36</sup>

In fact, between ‘End of May and End of June 1938’, which was mentioned in the Velling statement, Lieutenant Colonel Takatsuki visited Estonia twice and, more frequently, his assistant military attaché Major Takeharu Shimanuki, when living in Tallinn, travelled to Berlin and Helsinki (see Fig. 2). Unfortunately, from Estonian records, the entrances of Takatsuki to Estonia in this particular period could not be confirmed.

One of the reasons why the Japanese military attaché Takatsuki was in a rush to send the agents of the Gavrilov group to the Soviet Union in the end of July 1938 was the outbreak of the Battle of Lake Khasan, a border conflict between Japan and the Soviet Union, in the same month. Just before the crush, Major Hjalmar Front, staff officer of the Soviet military forces stationed in Manchuria, drove a car on his

<sup>29</sup> Herbert (Henn) Puusepp (1891–1941). <http://prosopos.esm.ee/index.aspx?type=1&id=23513> (access date and time: 31 January 2019 18:25 PM). According to the database of the Estonian War Museum, Puusepp was arrested by the Soviet authority on 22 August 1940.

<sup>30</sup> Eesti Riigiarhiiv (ERA), Tartu, ERAF-138sm-1-58, 14.

<sup>31</sup> **Onodera, Y.** *On the Shore of the Baltic Sea*, 55–56.

<sup>32</sup> ERA, Tartu, ERAF-138sm-1-56, 75.

<sup>33</sup> ERA, Tartu, ERAF-138sm-1-12, 46.

<sup>34</sup> *Ibid.*, 46.

<sup>35</sup> **Onodera, Y.** *On the Shore of the Baltic Sea*, 55–56.

<sup>36</sup> **Okabe, N.** *Disappeared Yalta Telegram*. Shinchosha, Tokyo, 2012, 111.

<p>Tamotsu Takatsuki, Lieutenant Colonel (Japanese military attaché to Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania, in Riga residence) 3 June – Entered Estonia from Valga (Valka) 4 June – Left Tallinn for Berlin (German aircraft DH-AHUS, from Tallinn to Berlin) 18 June – Entered Estonia from Valga (Valka) 19 June – Left Estonia from Valga (Valka)</p> <p>Takeharu Shimanuki, Major (Japanese assistant military attaché to Latvia, residing in Tallinn) 13 June – Left Tallinn for Helsinki (Polish aircraft SP-BGF, from Tallinn to Helsinki) 15 June – Returned to Tallinn from Helsinki (Polish aircraft SP-BGF, from Helsinki to Tallinn) 21 June – Left Tallinn for Berlin (German aircraft D-AGIS, from Tallinn to Berlin) 22 June – Returned to Tallinn from Helsinki, via Berlin? (German aircraft D-ABES, Helsinki to Tallinn)</p> <p>Yoshihide Kato, Major (Japanese military attaché to Finland and Sweden, residing in Helsinki) 21 June – Arrived in Tallinn from Helsinki (German aircraft D-AGIS, from Helsinki to Tallinn)</p>
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**Fig. 2.** List of Japanese military officers who visited Estonia between May and June 1938. Based on ERA, Tallinn, 495-11-28.

own to cross the border and surrendered to the Manchukuo border guards on 29 May 1938.<sup>37</sup> Shortly after, on 13 June 1938, Major General Genrikh Lyushkov, Chief of the Soviet Secret Police (NKVD) in the Far East region, defected to Japan via Lake Khasan where a disputed border zone in Northern Korea between Japan and the Soviet Union was.<sup>38</sup> As a souvenir for the Japanese Army, Lyushkov handed over secret documents indicating the locations of 25 divisions of the Soviet Army in the Far East region.<sup>39</sup> Their defections were followed by the Battle of Lake Khasan between 29 July and 11 August 1938.

While the armies of the two great powers engaged in the fierce battle over the border, Lieutenant Colonel Akimitsu Oda, Japanese assistant military attaché in Poland, arrived in Tallinn via Stockholm on 31 July 1938.<sup>40</sup> Oda stayed in Tallinn for 6 days, until 6 August<sup>41</sup>, to substitute Major Shimanuki. Actions of Shimanuki during this period were peculiar: he left Tallinn for Helsinki on 2 August<sup>42</sup>, then continued from Helsinki to his final destination, Germany, via Copenhagen and

<sup>37</sup> **Tanaka, K.** *The Nomonhan War: Mongolia and Manchukuo.* Iwamani Shoten, Tokyo, 2009, 183.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, 183.

<sup>39</sup> **Hata, H.** *Light and Shade of the War History of Nomonhan.* PHP Institute, Tokyo, 2014, 332.

<sup>40</sup> ERA, 495-11-28, 360.

<sup>41</sup> *Ibid.*, 393.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, 378.

Danzig.<sup>43</sup> As shown in Fig. 2, the Japanese officers tended to choose direct flights or trains to their destinations to save time. Meanwhile, Lieutenant Colonel Takatsuki was becoming extremely impatient as to the progress of the joint operation and the serious conflict against the fatal enemy of the Japanese Army was ongoing in the Far East, his assistant officer was enjoying elegant but time-consuming cruises in the Baltic Sea. On the same day Shimanuki arrived in Danzig, the Battle of Lake Khasan was ended with a cease-fire agreement.

### **POSSIBILITY OF GERMAN INTERVENTION IN THE BILATERAL MILITARY COOPERATION: THE CANARIS-OSHIMA AGREEMENT OF 1937 AND THE OSHIMA-KEITEL AGREEMENT OF 1938**

Collaboration between Japan and the Nazi Germany has been investigated by a number of scholars and become one of the most researched topics of Japanese diplomatic history in the twentieth century. Amidst the isolation from international society ever since the establishment of the puppet state Manchukuo in 1931 and worsened relations with the Western great powers due to the outbreak of the second Sino-Japanese War in 1937, Japan had no other way but to pursue an alliance with Germany. Circumstances of the bilateral negotiation are not the focus of this article; however, two secret agreements in the 1930s and the joint German-Japanese intelligence operations against the Soviet Union must be explained in the context of Plan 1932.

The interwar German intelligence operations abroad were mainly organized by the Abwehr, the counterintelligence department of the German Ministry of Reichswehr. In January 1935, Admiral Wilhelm Canaris was appointed as a new department chief. In the summer, Canaris visited the Estonian, Finnish, and Hungarian intelligence services to formalize an intelligence network targeting the Soviet Union. In February 1936, he issued a document titled 'Guideline of secret intelligence activities for the Wehrmacht', which indicated a necessity to strengthen ties with the intelligence services of the aforementioned countries. Moreover, on 5 February 1936, Canaris made a proposal to Jozef Lipski, Polish Ambassador in Germany: formal cooperation with the Polish General Staff in terms of military intelligence. Professor Nobuo Tajima summed up that Canaris's plan to establish the intelligence network and the Japanese Army's Plan 1932, along with General Oshima's ongoing negotiation with the German government to conclude the Anti-Comintern Pact, 'came across' at some point.<sup>44</sup>

After the conclusion of the German-Japanese Anti-Comintern pact on 25 November 1936, bilateral cooperation in the military intelligence sector rapidly accelerated. On 12 February 1937, four points to strengthen bilateral military cooperation were agreed upon at the meeting between Otto (German military attaché to Japan)

<sup>43</sup> Archives of the National Institute for Defence Studies (NIDS). Photo Albums of Colonel Takeharu Shimanuki during the Interwar Period. Vol. 4. (Shimanuki Takeharu Rikugun Taisa Senzen Album.) Reference: Chuo-Zenpan-Shashin, 37, 38.

<sup>44</sup> **Tajima, N.** Stratagem of the Japanese Army against the Soviet Union, 102.

and the Second Department of the Japanese General Staff: 1) interactions on operation planning, 2) exchange of Soviet information, 3) stratagems, and 4) trainings for military equipment and military affairs.<sup>45</sup> This small meeting in Tokyo led to the conclusion of the two Canaris-Oshima supplementary agreements on joint operations in the Soviet territories on 11 May 1937, which noted the ‘region bordering Europe to the Southwest (Turkey and Iran) shall be a common sphere of interest to Japan and Germany’.<sup>46</sup> A more formal agreement, known as the Oshima-Keitel agreement, followed on 7 October 1938.

In October 1938, conferences of the Japanese military attachés in Europe were held in Paris and Riga. For the Riga conference, the military attachés from Turkey, Romania, Poland, Latvia, Finland, and the Soviet Union participated; the conference was moderated by Colonel Akio Doi, the military attaché in Moscow. Doi summed up the opinions of the attachés in a report to Tokyo, stressing the majority of the attachés were against taking risks for strengthening the anti-Comintern pact with Germany.<sup>47</sup>

Later in the month, the Anglo-Foreign Information Bureau (AFIB), a British secret agency, informed the Latvian legation in London that they had acquired information that there was a secret meeting at the Japanese legation in Riga with regard to the joint German-Japanese war plan against the Soviet Union. AFIB also pointed out the fact that the Soviets failed to provide efficient support to the Chinese, rather helping the Japanese to quickly advance onto Southern China.<sup>48</sup> The Latvian foreign ministry attempted to confirm the fact to the Japanese legation; however, they only found out that the military attaché Takatsuki had not been in Riga at the time and probably stayed in Estonia.<sup>49</sup> Furthermore, the Japanese legation in Riga did not provide a clear answer to the Latvian request. So far, the Riga conference had not had any effect on the joint Estonian-Japanese operations, nor was the topic probably ever taken up during the conference. On the other hand, the advice of Doi and other military attachés was not taken into account by Tokyo and the cooperation with Germany kept intensifying throughout the late 1930s.

## CONCLUSIONS

Saburo Hayashi, former chief of the Russian section of the second department of the Japanese General Staff, who used to study the Russian language and Soviet military affairs in Riga circa 1938, left a memoir titled *How we managed intelli-*

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<sup>45</sup> Ibid., 116.

<sup>46</sup> **Tajima, N.** The origins of the Berlin-Tokyo axis reconsidered: From the Anti-Comintern Pact to the plan to assassinate Stalin. – Seijyo Hougaku, 2002, 69, 19.

<sup>47</sup> Doi Akio Den Kankokai. Biography of Lieutenant General Akio Doi: Life of a Military Officer of Patriotism. Hara Shobo, Tokyo, 1980, 102.

<sup>48</sup> Latvijas Valsts Vēstures Arhīvs, Rīga (LVVA) 2574-2-7231, 3–4.

<sup>49</sup> ERA, 495-11-28, 1587. Takatsuki left Estonia through the border checkpoint in Valga on 31 October 1938.

*gence works on the Soviet Union (Warewarewadonoyouni tai-so chohokinmu wo yatta-noka)* in the post-WWII period, designated for new intelligence officers of the Japan Self-Defence Forces (JSDF).

As the army's Russian expert, Hayashi summarized his interwar and wartime experiences of Japanese military intelligence activities against the Soviet Union as follows:

- “1. In order to monitor illegal entrances, the Soviet border guards (HKBD) were stationed on the borders. The situation is probably unchanged even today. HKBD was the best equipped unit with the highest percentage of the Communist Party members in the Soviet Union. Their doctrine was to monitor zones of 75 km in front of the border and 25km behind the border, and the latter zone was declared off-limits in order to enable HKBD to identify and arrest any persons entering the zone.
3. A system of ‘domestic passport’ was strictly implemented in the Soviet Union. The system was applied not only in the border region, but also other regions. The purpose was to find out illegal residents. The Soviet counterintelligence authority frequently renewed the domestic passports to prevent the use of fake passports, and the inspection was randomly organized. Especially on trains running in the Far East region, the inspections were frequently done.”

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4. Due to the circumstances mentioned above, we felt it extremely difficult to send our agents into the Soviet Union. Firstly, the agent must be a Russian émigré; however, we highly suspected that the émigré Russians were double agents between us and the Soviets. Secondly, it was not easy for our agents to cross the borderline and the off-limit zone. Finally, even if the agents succeeded in overcoming the aforementioned difficulties, their activities inside the Soviet territories were strictly restricted due to the Soviet regulations on accommodation, food, and transportation. Thus, we did not expect much of the agents.<sup>50</sup>

Although Yuriko Onodera's confession in the 1980s and the release of the Onodera statement in the early 2000s intrigued many scholars, the reality of the Japanese activities against the Soviet Union was maybe pitiful according to Saburo Hayashi.

Indeed, the Velling statement did not mention the results of the joint Estonian-Japanese operation, which would have intrigued the Soviet interrogators the most. Or maybe the Soviets were already fully aware of it. Sometime in the end of July 1938, Major General Yukio Kasahara, who was to take over the position of the military attaché to Germany from Hiroshi Oshima, arrived in Singapore on the way to Berlin. Kasahara was surprised upon arrival at the local hotel when a young lady called him by his real name and he found out she was one of the local employees of the Manaki Organ in Berlin. She was soon discovered to be a mistress of Manaki and also a Soviet

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<sup>50</sup> Hayashi, S. How we conducted intelligence activities against the Soviet Union. (N.B.: written date is unknown.) NIDS. Reference Number: Chuo-GunjigyoseiSonota – 151.

double agent.<sup>51</sup> Also, circa 1938, there was an ethnic Japanese Soviet agent called 'No.148', whose actual name was Sato, stationed in Tallinn.<sup>52</sup> In the Estonian records, the holder of a Japanese passport under the name 'Hiroo Sato' left Estonia from the border in Valga (Valka) on 7 February 1938<sup>53</sup>, and the same person entered Estonia from Valga on 2 March 1939, together with the military attaché Takatsuki.<sup>54</sup> If Sato was an agent hired by Takatsuki or Shimanuki, a large amount of the information related to the operation may have been leaked to the Soviets.

The Soviet persistence to clarify the Japanese intelligence activities against them could be summed up by a series of intercepted Japanese documents presented at the Tokyo War Tribunal. Torashiro Kawabe, the former military attaché to the Soviet Union and Germany, wrote, 'Two documents hidden in my personal safe of the attaché office (in Moscow) were photocopied and the Soviet public prosecutor showed them as proofs of Japanese preparations on war against the Soviet Union'.<sup>55</sup> There are actually many routes we can think as possibilities of the Soviet counterintelligence activities against Estonia and Japan, and it is extremely hard to identify which of the Soviet agents or organs played the most important role in breaking off Estonian-Japanese cooperation in the military intelligence sector, since the majority of the Soviet Secret Police documents are still classified by the Russian government today and even their locations are unknown.

As a conclusion, the Estonian-Japanese military intelligence operation against the Soviet Union has yet to be fully unveiled through the existing primary sources in the Baltic states, Finland, Germany, and Japan. After four years of research, the author managed to show merely the general picture. The so-called 'missing links' are seen in every phase of the Estonian-Japanese intelligence operation. The biggest mystery is probably the consequences of the operation.

For instance, Lieutenant Colonel Tamotsu Takatsuki, the aforementioned Japanese military attaché who was in charge of the bilateral operation, was assassinated in Beijing on 29 November 1940, by an anti-Japanese resistance member.<sup>56</sup> From the perspective of traditional historical method, we must not think the assassination of Takatsuki in November 1940 was linked to the Velling statement in September, due to lack of sources to prove the connection between the two events. We must let time shed light on the truth behind Estonian-Japanese military cooperation during the interwar period.

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<sup>51</sup> **Sugita, I.** *War Strategy without Information*, 93; **Suzuki, K.** Hiroshi Oshima: Ambassador to Germany. Fuyo Shobo, Tokyo, 1979, 94–95.

<sup>52</sup> ERA, Tartu, ERAF-138sm-1-56, 72.

<sup>53</sup> ERA, Tallinn, 495-11-22, 1885.

<sup>54</sup> ERA, Tallinn, 495-11-29, 722.

<sup>55</sup> **Kawabe, T.** *From Ichigayadai to Ichigayadai: Memoir of the Last Vice Chief of the General Staff*. Jiji Press Co., Ltd., Tokyo, 1962, 210.

<sup>56</sup> *Asahi Shimbun*, 1 December 1940, Morning Edition, 1.

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## SELGUNUD FAKTID(?): EESTI-SAKSA-JAAPANI SÕDADEVAHELINE LUUREKOOSTÖÖ

Shingo MASUNAGA

Artiklis on vaadeldud Eestis toimunud Eesti-Saksa-Jaapani sõdadevahelise luurekoostöö üksikasju. Viimastel aastatel on Eesti Riigiarhiivis kättesaadavaks tehtud hulk uut materjali. Artiklis on keskendutud Gavrilovi grupile, kes saadeti Eesti salaagentidena Eestist Nõukogude Liitu. Grupi tegevust ümbritseb salapära, trükistes on seda ainult mõnel korral kajastatud. Teatud materjalides on siiski mainitud Eesti-Jaapani suhteid Gavrilovi grupiga, mis tõendab, et niisugune grupp eksisteeris.