

# The Japanese Army's Intelligence Activities against the Soviet Union as Information Warfare: The “Lineage of Intelligence Officers” and War Termination Policies\*

HANADA Tomoyuki\*\*

---

## Abstract

This study focuses on the Japanese Army's intelligence activities against the Soviet Union as information warfare. In particular, by clarifying the institutions, policies, and main activities of the intelligence officers led by the General Staff, the author points out that the Japanese Army prioritized information warfare against the Red Army (Soviet Army) centering on intelligence strategy during the interwar period, and that the roles of these intelligence activities changed drastically from intelligence strategy to the gathering and analyzing of wartime information with the transition into World War II. As examples of the Japanese Army's intelligence activities against the Soviet Union, the author sheds light on Japan's war termination policies during the Pacific War and the confidential telegram of Major General Onodera Makoto, a military attaché to the Japanese legation in Sweden. Although the Japanese Army had formed various intelligence networks based in Manchuria to unveil Soviet military power and its strategic intentions, these networks were not fully utilized for accurately predicting the Soviet entry into the war against Japan in August 1945 (the Soviet-Japanese War) due to the difficulty of fact-finding and verification of wartime information.

---

## Introduction

This study analyzes the reality of information warfare against the Soviet Union, focusing on the Japanese Army's intelligence activities. After clarifying the institutions, policies, and main activities of intelligence operations (maneuvers) against the Soviet Union led by the General Staff, it demonstrates that during the interwar period, the Japanese Army prioritized information warfare centered on intelligence strategy in confronting the Red Army (Soviet Army). It also examines how the role of the Japanese Army's intelligence activities against the Soviet Union shifted dramatically from intelligence strategy to the collection and analysis of wartime information during World War II. This analysis aims to provide historical insights into information warfare in the contemporary East Asian security environment, given the renewed recognition of the importance of information warfare in hybrid warfare, including information operations involving false flag operations, as highlighted by the recent war in Ukraine, and the explicit stipulation of “the expansion of information warfare including the spread of disinformation” in the *National Defense Strategy* (decided by the Japan's National Security Council and the Cabinet

---

\* Originally published in Japanese in *Anzenhosho Senryaku Kenkyu* [Security & Strategy], vol.5, no. 1 (December 2024). Some parts have been updated.

\*\* Senior Fellow, Military History Division, Center for Military History, NIDS

on December 16, 2022).<sup>1</sup>

Previous research on the Japanese Army's intelligence activities against the Soviet Union has advanced understanding through testimonies and documentary records from personnel of organizations that identified the Soviet Union as the primary hypothetical enemy—the 5th Section (Russia Section) of the 2nd Division of the General Staff, the 2nd Section of the Kwantung Army Staff, and the Harbin Special Agency (reorganized into the “Kwantung Army Intelligence Department” after May 1940)—as well as through intelligence history research on the Japanese Army's espionage activities.<sup>2</sup> Among these scholars, Nishihara Yukio, who served as a staff officer in the Kwantung Army Intelligence Department, revealed that the Japanese Army's intelligence activities against the Soviet Union intensified following the Siberian Intervention in August 1918, with information warfare against the Soviet Union conducted from special agencies established in Harbin, Heihe, Manzhouli, and other locations.<sup>3</sup> He also demonstrated that intelligence

<sup>1</sup> For the history of Russian information warfare and influence operations, see Sasaki Taro, *Kakumei no Intelligence: Soren no Taigai Seiji Kosaku toshite no “Eikyoryoku” Kosaku* [Revolutionary Intelligence: Soviet “Influence” Operations as Foreign Political Operations] (Keiso Shobo Publishing, 2016); Hosaka Sanshiro, *Choho Kokka Roshia: Soren KGB kara Putin no FSB Taisei made* [Russia as an Intelligence State: From the Soviet KGB to Putin's FSB System] (Chuokoron-Shinsha, 2023); Thomas Rid, *Active Measures: The Secret History of Disinformation and Political Warfare*, Farrar Straus & Giroux, 2021; Christopher Andrew, *The Sword and the Shield: The Mitrokhin Archive and the Secret History of the KGB*, New York: Basic Books, 2000; and many others. Among these, Hosaka points out that problems with perspectives on the recent “Ukraine crisis” include not only Russia-centrism that denies or minimizes Ukraine's existence but also the existence of an anti-hegemonic cognitive framework that seeks “alternatives” while avoiding mainstream discourse in Europe and the United States, critically arguing that this thinking “resonates with postmodern thought.” Hosaka, *Choho Kokka Roshia*, pp. 248-250.

<sup>2</sup> Recent research on the Japanese Army's intelligence activities against the Soviet Union includes Kotani Ken, *Nihongun no Intelligence: Naze Joho ga Ikasarenai noka* [Japanese Military Intelligence: Why Intelligence Is Not Utilized] (Kodansha Sensho Metier, 2004); Kotani Ken, “Nihon Rikugun no Tai-Soren Intelligence” [The Japanese Army's Intelligence against the Soviet Union], in *Intelligence no 20 Seiki: Johoshi kara Mita Kokusai Seiji* [Intelligence in the 20th Century: International Politics from the Perspective of Intelligence History], eds. Nakanishi Terumasa and Kotani Ken (Chikura Shobo, 2007), pp. 19-40; Tajima Nobuo, *Nihon Rikugun no TaiSo Boryaku: Nichi-Doku Bokyo Kyotei to Yurashia Seisaku* [The Japanese Army's Anti-Soviet Strategy: Japanese and German Anti-Comintern Pact and Eurasian Policy] (Yoshikawa Kobunkan, 2017); Tomita Takeshi, *Senkanki no Nisso Kankei 1917-1937* [The Japanese-Soviet Relations During the Interbellum 1917-1937] (Iwanami Shoten, 2010); Miyasugi Hiroyasu, “Showa Senzenki Nihongun no Tai-So Joho Katsudo” [The Japanese Military's Intelligence Activities against the Soviet Union in the Pre-war Showa Period], *Gunji Shigaku* [The Journal of Military History], vol. 49, no. 1 (June 2013), pp. 96-114; Yamamoto Taketoshi, *Rikugun Nakano Gakko* [The Imperial Japanese Army's Nakano School] (Chikuma Shobo, 2017); Richard J. Samuels, *Tokumu: Nihon no Intelligence Komyuniti no Rekishi* [Special Duty: A History of the Japanese Intelligence Community], trans. Kotani Ken (Nihon Keizai Shimbun, 2020); Sinan Levent, *Nihon no “Chuo Eurasia” Seisaku: Turan Shugi Undo to Isuramu Seisaku* [Japanese Eurasian Policy in the Inter-war-period: The Turanism Movement and Islam Policy] (Sairyusha, 2019); and many others. Works by those involved include Naimouko Apaka Kai [Inner Mongolia Apaka Association] and Okamura Hidetaro, eds., *Tokumukikan* [Special Agency] (Kokusho Kankokai, 1990); Hayashi Saburo, *Kantogun to Kyokuto Sorengun* [The Kwantung Army and the Soviet Far Eastern Army] (Fuyo Shobo Shuppan, 1974); Higuchi Kiichiro, *Rikugun Chujo Higuchi Kiichiro Kaisoroku* [Memoirs of Lieutenant General Higuchi Kiichiro] (Fuyo Shobo Shuppan, 1999); and Hori Eizo, *Daihonei Sanbo no Joho Senki: Joho naki Kokka no Higeiki* [Intelligence War Record of an Imperial General Headquarters Staff Officer: The Tragedy of a Nation without Intelligence] (Bungei Shunju, 1996).

<sup>3</sup> The term “special agency” was originally used to refer to organizations other than military units, government offices, and schools, such as the Marshal's Office, Imperial Chamberlain's Office, Supreme War Council, and Officer Candidate Examination Committee, but after the Siberian Intervention it was established as an organization responsible for intelligence operations concerning political and military matters. Nishihara Yukio, *Zenkiroku Harbin Tokumukikan: Kanto Gun Johobu no Kiseki* [All Records of the Harbin Special Agency: The Trajectory of the Kwantung Army Intelligence Department] (Mainichi Shimbunsha, 1980), p. 25.

activities against the Soviet Union centered on the Harbin Special Agency achieved significant functional enhancement as both Japan and the Soviet Union adopted increasingly hardline foreign policies following the Manchurian Incident in September 1931 and the subsequent founding of Manchukuo.<sup>4</sup> The General Staff's information warfare at that time was termed "secret warfare" and was classified into "intelligence (secret detection and collection)," "propaganda (various forms of propaganda to prevent disadvantageous positions)," "maneuver (covertly devising schemes to inflict harm, including political, economic, and ideological maneuver)," and "counterintelligence (investigation, arrest, and control)." Secret warfare was positioned as "intellectual stratagem through covert means" supporting the state's military warfare, diplomatic warfare, and economic warfare, with military warfare defined as "the annihilation of enemy military power manifested on the battlefield" and secret warfare as "the destruction of the enemy's capacity to cultivate power."<sup>5</sup>

Research has also illuminated the substance of intelligence activities against the Soviet Union conducted under "anti-communist" intelligence strategy by Japanese Army military attachés and assistant attachés dispatched to embassies and legations in Central and Eastern Europe and West Asia surrounding the Soviet Union (Afghanistan, Iran, Sweden, Turkey, Hungary, Finland, Poland, Latvia, Lithuania, and Romania).<sup>6</sup> This research has been greatly facilitated by the opening of historical archives in Russia after the dissolution of the Soviet Union, representing in some ways a "rediscovery" of the Japanese Army's intelligence activities against the Soviet Union through Soviet archives.<sup>7</sup> In Japanese-Soviet relations during both the interwar period and World War II, information warfare against the Soviet Union by the Japanese Army was unfolding beneath the surface in both the Far East and Europe.

Building on these perspectives, this study focuses on the Japanese Army's intelligence activities against the Soviet Union as information warfare, empirically analyzing the actual state of these operations—often stereotypically understood as emphasizing operations while neglecting intelligence—based on archival documents held by the Center for Military History at the National Institute for Defense Studies, published Japanese historical source collections, and recent research findings. After clarifying the institutions, policies, and main activities of intelligence operations against the Soviet Union led by the General Staff, this study examines as case studies Japan's war termination policies in the final stage of the Pacific War and the confidential telegram (incident) involving Major General Onodera Makoto, military attaché to the Japanese legation in Sweden. While demonstrating that the Japanese Army had established intelligence networks based in Manchuria to discern Soviet military capabilities and strategic intentions in areas surrounding the Soviet Union, this study examines how these networks were not fully utilized in predicting

---

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., pp. 48-51.

<sup>5</sup> Ministry of the Army, "'Bocho' Dai 8 Go, Showa 16-nen 4-gatsu" ["Counterintelligence" No. 8, April 1941], Archives of the Center for Military History, NIDS, pp. 87-89.

<sup>6</sup> For the pre-war military attaché system, see Tachikawa Kyoichi, "Waga Kuni no Senzen no Chuzai Bukan Seido" [Japanese Pre-War Military Attache System], *Boei Kenkyusho Kiyo* [NIDS journal of defense and security], vol. 17, no. 1 (October 2014), pp. 123-159; Tajima Nobuo, "Afganistan Chuzai Nihon Rikugun Bukan Tsuiho Jiken 1937-nen" [The Incident of the Expulsion of the Japanese Army Military Attaché in Afghanistan in 1937], *Seijo Hogaku* [Seijo Law Review], no. 85 (March 2017), pp. 95-121.

<sup>7</sup> Kuromiya Hiroaki and Georges Mamoulia, *The Eurasian Triangle: Russia, the Caucasus and Japan, 1904-1945* (Warsaw: De Gruyter Open Poland, 2016); Tajima Nobuo, "Nihon no Sujiku Domei Seisaku to Tai-So Seisaku" [Japan's Axis Alliance Policy and Policy toward the Soviet Union], *Kokusai Seiji* [International Relations], no. 206 (March 2022), pp. 34-50.

Soviet entry into the war against Japan in August 1945 (the Soviet-Japanese War), primarily due to difficulties in verifying and authenticating wartime intelligence.

Regarding terminology for the Soviet military, although the Red Army was officially renamed the “Soviet Army” in February 1946 after World War II, “Red Army” and “Soviet Army” are used interchangeably in this study to refer to the military forces of the Soviet Union.

## 1. The Japanese Army’s Intelligence Activities against the Soviet Union

### *(1) The “Lineage of Intelligence Officers” in Intelligence Activities against the Soviet Union*

Understanding the Japanese Army’s intelligence activities against the Soviet Union requires recognizing the historical continuity with intelligence operations against the Russian Empire, exemplified by the intelligence operations conducted by Majors Machida Keiu and Hanada Nakanosuke in Vladivostok during the Boxer Rebellion, and Colonel Akashi Motojirō’s intelligence strategy against the Russian Empire in Europe during the Russo-Japanese War.<sup>8</sup> According to Sato Morio, a “lineage of intelligence officers” existed within the Japanese Army, comprising the Satsuma and Saga (Hizen) lines. This lineage was distinct from the Choshu line of staff officers (Yamagata Aritomo, Katsura Taro, and Terauchi Masatake) who were central to establishing and operating the Army General Staff Bureau of the Ministry of Military Affairs in July 1871 (reorganized as the General Staff in December 1878). Rather, it represented the convergence of the Satsuma line—Shimazu Nariakira, Saigo Nanshu (Takamori), Arao Sei (who studied under Saigo), and Kawakami Soroku—with the Saga line—Nabeshima Naomasa, Eto Shinpei, Fukushima Yasumasa (who studied under Eto), and Utsunomiya Taro.<sup>9</sup>

Among these officers, Lieutenant General Kawakami, after assuming the position of Chief of the General Staff in January 1898, carried out comprehensive personnel reforms to prepare the General Staff for war against the Russian Empire, implementing the collection of intelligence materials domestically and internationally, the training of staff officers, and the integration of operations and intelligence departments.<sup>10</sup> Major General Fukushima is renowned for accomplishing the solo horseback crossing of Siberia from Berlin to Vladivostok to investigate conditions inside Russia. In 1902, as head of the 2nd Division, he became chairman of the “Committee for Compilation of Overseas Information,” established to collect intelligence against the Russia Empire, working to centralize all intelligence on Russia within the General Staff. These efforts contributed to accurate assessments of Russian Army’s strength and logistical capabilities in Manchuria before the outbreak of the Russo-Japanese War, enabling the General Staff to

---

<sup>8</sup> Hanada was born in Kagoshima in 1860. Adopting the name “Shimizu Shogetsu,” he infiltrated Vladivostok as a monk of the Jodo Shinshu Nishi Honganji sect, with the special mission of investigating and researching Russian politics, economy, and military affairs in the Far East and Siberia, as well as the transport capacity of the Trans-Siberian Railway, Russian Army forces, equipment, and military installations. After returning to Japan, he completed a written opinion titled “Humble Views on Urgent Russian Affairs” and submitted it to Chief of the General Staff Oyama Iwao, criticizing the Japanese Army’s insufficient preparations for war against Russia. Izaō Tomio, “Hanada Nakanosuke no Hotoku Kai Undo: Yamaguchi-ken wo Chushin ni” [Hanada Nakanosuke’s Hotoku Society Movement: Focusing on Yamaguchi Prefecture], *Yamaguchi Kenritsu Daigaku Gakujutsu Joho* [Yamaguchi Prefectural University Academic Information], no. 6 (March 2013), pp. 20-21.

<sup>9</sup> Sato Morio, *Joho Senso to Sanbo Honbu: Nichiro Senso to Shingai Kakumei* [Information Warfare and the General Staff: The Russo-Japanese War and the Xinhai Revolution] (Fuyo Shobo Shuppan, 2011), pp. 16-18.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 59.

draw favorable conclusions about prospects for an early war against the Russia Empire through comprehensive situational analysis.<sup>11</sup> During the Russo-Japanese War, Akashi is known to have worked extensively in Russia and Sweden (a neutral country), conspiring with Evno F. Azef, an executive of the Socialist Revolutionary Party (SR), and Konni Zilliacus, leader of the Finnish Revolutionary Party, who shared the common goal of opposing Russian imperial rule, to promote disruption and revolutionary movements inside Russia. Although the substance of these "Akashi's operations" was depicted in his book *Rakka Ryusui* and became so highly regarded within the Japanese Army that it was "mythologized," Inaba Chiharu offers a critical interpretation, viewing these operations as failures in terms of anti-Tsarist resistance, agitation operations, and armed uprising plans.<sup>12</sup>

The "lineage of intelligence officers" of the Japanese Army was inherited by pioneering leaders of subsequent intelligence activities against the Soviet Union, including Major General Muto Nobuyoshi (Saga line) and Major General Takayanagi Yasutaro. It became institutionalized during wartime through the Siberian Intervention and subsequent "guarantee occupation" of Northern Sakhalin, during which the Japanese Army intervened in the Russian Civil War by supporting the White Army. Takayanagi in particular is known as the "father of intelligence activities against the Soviet Union" and is also renowned for coining the term "*Tokumu Kikan* (special agency)." The Japanese Army at that time needed specialized agencies to address various challenges including the collection of political and military intelligence in the Far East and Siberia, identifying anti-radical elements, cultivating and fostering White regimes, liaison with and support for the White Army, assistance to White Russians, and negotiations with foreign armies. The General Staff therefore established special agencies (said to be a translation of the Russian term *военные миссии*) to carry out special missions concerning political and military matters in the field. Each agency was placed (in principle) under the control of the army commander, with the mission to "handle matters other than command relations and collect intelligence."<sup>13</sup>

In addition, Takayanagi himself assumed the position of Chief of Staff of the Vladivostok Expeditionary Army in July 1920 and attended armistice negotiations with the Far Eastern Republic. From March 1922, as an adviser (Director equivalent) in the South Manchuria Railway Company President's Office, he worked intensively on intelligence activities against the Soviet Union, such as establishing a "Public Relations Section" in the SMR President's Office responsible for propaganda and pacification operations. His perception of Russia and the Soviet Union is reflected in an interesting passage from his book *Manmo no Josei: Ogikawa Manpitsu*, where he described the difficulty of Japanese-Soviet negotiations, in which both countries held opposing

---

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., p. 184.

<sup>12</sup> Inaba Chiharu, *Akashi Kosaku: Boryaku no Nichiro Senso* [The Akashi's Operations: The Russo-Japanese War of Strategy] (Maruzen Shuppan, 1995), p. 212. Inaba points out that as a historical impact of the "Akashi's operations," the Bolsheviks led by Vladimir I. Lenin analyzed the failure of armed uprising plans and shifted their revolutionary strategy, learning not to "obtain large quantities of weapons abroad and secretly send them into Russia to incite workers and peasants to uprising" but rather to "strengthen political activities within armed forces." Ibid., pp. 215-216.

<sup>13</sup> The main composition of special agencies included officers, civilian officials (consultants, interpreters), non-commissioned officers (general service branches from the Nakano School), military personnel (administrative officials, employees), communications personnel (cryptography, carrier pigeons), female military personnel, as well as Chinese, Koreans, Mongolians, White Russians, and Oroqen people. Nishihara, *Zenkiroku Harbin Tokumu Kikan*, p. 25.



principles, by likening the relationship to a back-and-forth *sumo* match. He stated, “Russia intends to the utmost to wield the axe of destruction, while our nation protects the fortress of international morality against it. In the back-and-forth of this sumo match, we should find interest, and it will impart a great lesson to the world’s perception of Russia.”<sup>14</sup> In fact, the General Staff had begun to prioritize information warfare centered on intelligence strategy against the Soviet Union following the Siberian Intervention.

Initially, special agencies were established in Vladivostok (agency head: Lieutenant Colonel Araki Sadao), Nikolsk (agency head: Lieutenant Colonel Inoue Chuya), Khabarovsk (agency head: Colonel Gomi Tamekichi), Blagoveshchensk (agency head: Captain Nakayama Shigeru), Chita (agency head: Colonel Kurosawa Jun), Irkutsk (agency head: Lieutenant Colonel Takeda Gakuzo), Omsk (agency head: Takayanagi), and Harbin (agency head: Major General Ishizaka Zenjiro), but following the Siberian Intervention, they were consolidated into Vladivostok, Heihe, Harbin, and Manzhouli.<sup>15</sup> Significantly, among the mid-level army officers who participated in the Siberian Intervention, Araki, Obata Toshiro (who supervised intelligence activities against the Soviet Union in Berlin), and Kuroki Chikayoshi (military adviser to the Special Manzhouli Detachment commanded by Grigory M. Semenov) became central figures in forming the *Kodo-ha* (Imperial Way Faction) with anti-Soviet and anti-communist ideology during the Showa period, suggesting that the “lineage of intelligence officers” from intelligence activities against the Russian Empire was inherited not only in intelligence activities against the Soviet Union but also in the *Kodo-ha*. Araki in particular articulated the purpose of the Siberian Intervention as follows: “To integrate and consolidate the political and military organizations of Far Eastern Russia and the economic organizations that are about to begin operations, first making them negotiating organizations for Far Eastern Russia (east of Trans-Baikal Oblast), ... and establishing a complete autonomous body for the Far East, guiding and supporting it to become the foundation for complete Russian restoration on the one hand, and a foothold for Japan’s management of the Far East on the other,” thereby advocating the establishment of a regime in the Far East under Japanese influence by excluding Bolshevik forces.<sup>16</sup>

The Harbin Special Agency became the crucial base for intelligence activities against the Soviet Union in Manchuria. Working in coordination with intelligence operations in Suifenhe and Manzhouli, this agency monitored Far Eastern conditions and Soviet military movements while guiding and managing White Russians. According to Nishihara, during the 1920s this agency analyzed Red Army forces and railway transport capacity, predicting that the future main battlefield between Japanese and Soviet forces would be in the Greater Khingan Range or near Qiqihar. They therefore devoted themselves to studying the military geography of Northern Manchuria and the transport capacity of both the Siberian and Chinese Eastern Railways, while establishing a new system whereby staff officers were assigned as attachés to the Harbin Special Agency and simultaneously appointed as consultants to the Research Section of the South Manchuria

---

<sup>14</sup> Takayanagi Yasutaro, *Manmo no Josei: Ogikawa Manpitsu* [The Situation in Manchuria and Mongolia: Ogikawa Essays] (Manmo Bunka Kyokai, 1925), pp. 205-206.

<sup>15</sup> Nishihara, *Zenkiroku Harbin Tokumukikan*, p. 37.

<sup>16</sup> “Araki Sadao no Kojutsu Kiroku—‘Shiberia Shuppei’ ni Tsuite—” [Oral Record of Araki Sadao—On the “Siberian Intervention”], annotated by Tonai Yuzuru and edited by Matsushige Mitsuhiro, *Kindai Chugoku Kenkyu Iho* [Bulletin of Modern Chinese Studies], vol. 42 (March 2020), p. 43.

Railway Company's Harbin Office.<sup>17</sup> Major Kanda Masatane, an expert in intelligence strategy against the Soviet Union, became the first South Manchuria Railway Company consultant in this capacity. Using the vast Russian-language documentary sources stored in the Research Section, he organized operational materials for operations against the Soviet Union in key areas of Northern Manchuria and promoted the development of military geography of Northern Manchuria and the construction of railways necessary for operations.

In a February 1928 document titled "Outline of Intelligence Strategy against Russia" addressed to the Russia Section of the 2nd Division of the General Staff, Kanda emphasized the importance of information warfare against the Soviet Union, stating that "the position occupied by intelligence strategy in future wars is extremely significant. Particularly in operations against Russia, final resolution cannot be achieved by military force alone. Depending on circumstances, the greater part of war should be conducted entirely through information warfare."<sup>18</sup> According to his strategic plan discovered after World War II, he was plotting: a. to incite anti-communist and anti-Semitic sentiment among Soviet residents and troops through propaganda and agitation; b. to sabotage trunk lines east of Siberia and instigate coal mine strikes; c. to create anti-communist organizations in Manchuria, Korea, Sakhalin, and other areas, and at the opportune moment advance into Soviet territory to establish anti-communist regimes; d. to strengthen "Outer Mongolian operations" against the Soviet Union; e. to implement communication intelligence strategy for both wired and wireless communications; and f. to suppress pro-Soviet organizations in Manchuria and China.<sup>19</sup> The promotion of political turmoil in the Far East and intelligence strategy within the Soviet forces were conceived as "intensifying various struggles concerning race, ideology, and class, particularly fostering internal discord within the Communist Party, and aiming at the destruction of the state organization."<sup>20</sup>

Intelligence activities against the Soviet Union by resident military attachés in areas surrounding the Soviet Union were also actively pursued. Poland, with its traditionally strong anti-Russian sentiment, possessed advanced intelligence collection capabilities against the Soviet Union, including cryptanalysis abilities, as superiority in the electromagnetic spectrum domain, especially communications intelligence, had reportedly contributed greatly to the Polish military's victory in the Soviet-Polish War during the Russian Civil War (the Miracle of the Vistula).<sup>21</sup> In 1923, the Japanese General Staff dispatched Captain Hyakutake Haruyoshi (Saga line) and others from the Russia Section of the 2nd Division to Warsaw to receive training in cryptographic techniques from Polish Army Major Jan Kowalewski, actively advancing cryptographic research

---

<sup>17</sup> Nishihara, *Zenkiroku Harbin Tokumukikan*, p. 40.

<sup>18</sup> Awaya Kentaro and Takeuchi Katsura, eds., *Tai-So Joho Sen Shiryō* [Materials on Information Warfare against the Soviet Union], vol. 1 (Gendai Shiryō Shuppan, 1999), p. 190.

<sup>19</sup> Nishihara, *Zenkiroku Harbin Tokumukikan*, p. 42.

<sup>20</sup> Awaya et al., eds., *Tai-So Joho Sen Shiryō*, vol. 1, p. 191.

<sup>21</sup> Abe Shohei, "Tajigen Togo Boeiryoku no Kochiku ni mukete 4: Denjiha Ryoiki no Yuetsu ga Motarasu mono (1920-nen no Poland Soviet Senso no Shiten)" [Toward Building Multi-Domain Defense Force 4: What Superiority in the Electromagnetic Spectrum Brings (From the Perspective of the 1920 Polish-Soviet War)], *NIDS Commentary*, no. 131 (July 2020), pp. 1-7.

against the Soviet Union.<sup>22</sup> Hyakutake subsequently studied in Poland, came to recognize the importance of information warfare centered on intelligence strategy that utilized advances in information technology to counter Soviet forces, and went on to serve successively as head of the Harbin Special Agency, commandant of the Signal School, and commander of the 18th Division.<sup>23</sup> In July 1932, a Cryptanalysis Section was established in the 6th (Europe and America) Section of the 2nd Division of the General Staff.

Captain Kasahara Yukio, renowned as an intelligence officer knowledgeable about the Soviet Union, also served as a military attaché in Poland from 1922 to 1925, during which time he wrote a report titled “Political (Propaganda and Military Administration) Maneuvers of the Russian Army in the Battlefields.” This detailed analysis of the internal conditions of the Soviet military by category—including “maneuvers within the Red Army,” “propaganda against enemy forces,” “maneuvers toward local residents,” “the military’s political structure,” and “peacetime exercises and political maneuvers”—is known to have been internally published by the General Staff. He subsequently served as head of the Russia Section of the 2nd Division of the General Staff and Director of the General Affairs Department of the General Staff.<sup>24</sup> In March 1931, he wrote *Random Thoughts on Imperial Defense against the Soviet Union*, in which he assessed future war against the Soviet Union: “Although the Red Army’s equipment and training have currently reached a considerable level and even possess certain advantages against the combined forces of various countries, its war-fighting capacity in the broad sense—namely economic power, munitions industry, and unity of popular sentiment—still remains insufficient today.” He then argued that “in a situation where it is difficult to control the enemy’s fate in the Far East, it is a particularly important and indispensable requirement in war against the Soviet Union to lead neighboring countries and others into war against the Soviet Union especially through intelligence strategy and propaganda, and, furthermore, to cause internal collapse by utilizing White Russian organizations, ethnic minority groups, and anti-Soviet elements inside and outside the Soviet Union.”<sup>25</sup> This reveals that, like Kanda, he envisioned information warfare that would employ intelligence strategy and propaganda to draw countries surrounding the Soviet Union into war against the Soviet Union, while utilizing White Russian groups and ethnic minority forces as anti-Soviet elements within Soviet territory to cause collapse from within.

## *(2) Intelligence Activities against the Soviet Union after the Manchurian Incident*

As the Manchurian Incident and subsequent founding of Manchukuo led to increasingly hardline foreign policies by both Japan and the Soviet Union, the General Staff endeavored to strengthen intelligence activities against the Soviet Union centered on special agencies. New special agencies were established in Manzhouli, Suifenhe, Heihe, Hunchun, Hailar, Dong’an, Sanhe, Jiamusi,

---

<sup>22</sup> Kowalewski’s lectures introduced research results on cryptanalysis not only of Soviet military codes but also of various European military codes, greatly contributing to improving the Japanese Army’s cryptanalysis capabilities. For details, see Okubo Toshijiro, “Tai-Ro Ango Dokkai ni kansuru Soshi narabi ni Senkunto ni kansuru Shiryo” [Materials on the Origins and Lessons of Cryptanalysis against Russia], Archives of the Center for Military History, NIDS.

<sup>23</sup> Hata Ikuhiko, ed., *Nihon Rikukaigun Sogo Jiten Dai 2 Han* [A Comprehensive Dictionary of the Japanese Army and Navy, 2nd ed.] (Tokyo Daigaku Shuppankai, 2005), p. 133.

<sup>24</sup> Tajima, *Nihon Rikugun no Tai-So Boryaku*, p. 52.

<sup>25</sup> Awaya et al., eds., *Tai-So Joho Sen Shiryo*, vol. 1, pp. 234-238.



Fujin, and other locations, particularly centered on the Harbin Special Agency. Instructions were issued to each special agency head and agency personnel, with the head of the Harbin Special Agency ordered to supervise all intelligence activities against the Soviet Union, guide Manchukuo government authorities, and command special agencies. Regarding basic policies for intelligence activities against the Soviet Union, instructions specified that intelligence activities should follow the "Kwantung Army Peacetime and Wartime Intelligence Plan," strategic activities the "Kwantung Army Intelligence Strategy Plan," propaganda activities the "Kwantung Army Peacetime Propaganda Plan," and counterintelligence activities the "Counterintelligence Service Guidelines." Particular emphasis was placed on the directive that "in implementing intelligence activities, our intentions should be especially concealed and close liaison must be maintained with relevant agencies in Manchuria, intelligence agencies in China, and Manchukuo government authorities."<sup>26</sup>

The main activities of special agencies in Manchuria were wide-ranging: a. monitoring general Soviet political conditions and annual events; b. obtaining military information; c. acquiring and translating Soviet newspapers and magazines; d. intercepting radio broadcasts; e. investigating popular sentiment trends within Manchukuo; f. dispatching White Russian spies; and g. guiding White Russians. In relation to this, in intelligence activities against China (including anti-Manchukuo and anti-Japanese forces) after the Manchurian Incident, the Mukden Special Agency played the central role in intelligence collection and strategic activities, with special agencies in Jilin, Qiqihar, and Shanhaiguan functioning as subordinate organizations. Furthermore, as the Kwantung Army promoted "Inner Mongolian operations" to make Inner Mongolia independent and consolidate Manchukuo's position, special agencies were also established in Chengde, Duolun, Zhangjiakou, Zhangbei, Dewu, West Sunit, Bailingmiao, Suiyuan, Abaga, Ujumqin, and other locations.<sup>27</sup>

The heads of the Harbin Special Agency during this period typically included intelligence officers with experience as military attachés in the Soviet Union and Central and Eastern Europe, such as Hyakutake, Lieutenant Colonel (June 1931 to January 1932), Doihara Kenji, Colonel (January 1932 to April 1932), Komatsubara Michitaro, Colonel (April 1932 to August 1934), Ando Rinzo, Major General (August 1934 to May 1937), Tominaga Kyoji, Colonel (acting: May 1937 to August 1937), and Higuchi Kiichiro, Major General (August 1937 to July 1938). Particularly during Major General Ando's tenure, significant functional enhancement of intelligence activities against the Soviet Union centered on the Harbin Special Agency was achieved to address new northern intelligence requirements accompanying the strengthening of Manchukuo's defense system. This enhancement had four main characteristics.

First, the establishment of the "White Russian Affairs Bureau." Following the Russian Revolution of 1917, many counter-revolutionary White Russians had fled to Manchuria, but lacking unified management, they were broadly divided into Royalists seeking restoration of the former Russian Empire, the All-Russian Fascist Party centered on Konstantin V. Rodzaevsky, and the Military Union centered on Semenov. While these organizations agreed on being anti-Bolshevik, they were far from unified, with the conflict between the All-Russian Fascist Party and

---

<sup>26</sup> Ibid., p. 242.

<sup>27</sup> Naimouko Apaka Kai et al., eds., *Tokumukikan*, p. 13.

the Military Union particularly pronounced.<sup>28</sup> To address this situation, in December 1934 Ando instructed Major Akikusa Shun, assistant to the Harbin Special Agency, to establish the “White Russian Affairs Bureau,” directing White Russians to be utilized for intelligence activities against the Soviet Union. The bureau’s stated purpose was to serve as “an autonomous organization for White Russians and a representative organization to the outside world.” The Manchukuo Concordia Association worked to strengthen propaganda operations targeting White Russians, fostering among them the spirit of Manchukuo’s founding and the Concordia spirit, thereby encouraging their active cooperation in special agencies’ intelligence activities against the Soviet Union.<sup>29</sup> Okabe Yoshihiko has drawn attention to the Ukrainian diaspora in Manchuria, suggesting the possibility that Ukrainian communities existed among the “White Russians.”<sup>30</sup>

Second, intelligence collection and analysis against the Soviet Union through the establishment of a document intelligence section. This involved ordering White Russians to classify and organize obtained Russian-language documentary records (printed materials, memos, or publications). The document intelligence section of the Harbin Special Agency was established in March 1935 when Ando instructed Major Onouchi Hiroshi to create it. Although extremely small-scale initially, by 1941 it reportedly comprised 89 personnel—37 Japanese military officers and 52 White Russians.<sup>31</sup> The majority of Japanese military officers were distinguished graduates of the Kwantung Army Russian Language (Interpreter Personnel) Training Unit, while most White Russians consisted of former Imperial Russian Army officers. The main obtained (decrypted) documents ranged widely, including central newspapers *Izvestia*, *Trud*, and *Pravda*, Far Eastern newspapers *Tikhookeanskaya Zvezda* and *Zabaykalsky Rabochi*, military information newspapers *Krasnaya Zvezda* and *Voennaya Mysl*, as well as field service regulations carried by Soviet military officers and intercepted materials from military radio telephones and high-speed Morse telegraph designated as “voice secrets and voice intelligence.”<sup>32</sup>

Third, the commencement of *Hatokucho* (abbreviation for Harbin Special Agency Special Intelligence). This represented intelligence activities against the Soviet Union centered on Major Yamamoto Satoshi, involving contacting and bribing telegraph operators at the Soviet consulate in Manchuria to intercept wireless communications between Moscow and Khabarovsk. Although some doubts arose regarding its authenticity and value, the likelihood of it being disinformation was considered low. It was conducted secretly while seeking cooperation in intelligence operations against the Soviet Union from the White Russian Ivan A. Mikhailov, a former Finance Minister of the Alexandr V. Kolchak regime. The content of *Hatokucho* encompassed politics, military affairs, and economics. Ando reportedly utilized it for analyzing the political and military situation in the Soviet Far East by comparing and cross-referencing *Hatokucho* with other obtained documents, wireless interceptions, and related materials from on-site inspections. However, critical opinions also existed among those associated with the Harbin Special Agency, arguing that “it is inconceivable

---

<sup>28</sup> Susanne Hohler, *Facism in Manchuria: The Soviet-China Encounter in the 1930s* (London: I.B. Tauris, 2017), pp. 51-64.

<sup>29</sup> Awaya et al., eds., *Tai-So Joho Sen Shiryo*, vol. 1, pp. xxii-xxiii.

<sup>30</sup> Okabe Yoshihiko, “‘Manshu Tsushin’ ni miru Harbin no Ukuraina Jin 1932-1937-nen” [Ukrainians in Harbin through the ‘Manchurian Herald’, 1932-1937], *Kobe Gakuin Keizaigaku Ronshu*, vol. 52, nos. 3-4 (March 2021), pp. 71-115.

<sup>31</sup> Nishihara, *Zenkiroku Harbin Tokumukikan*, p. 50.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154.

that the Soviet side, which held absolute superiority over us in secret warfare, would unilaterally allow Japan such sensitive and significant espionage operations through its own public offices, and especially allow them to continue for nearly nine years until the end of the war."<sup>33</sup>

Fourth, the construction of "special immigrant" settlements. This aimed to have intelligence agents and White Russians develop areas near the border within Manchukuo to establish training and strategic bases for conducting show-of-force intelligence strategy at military strongpoints. Particularly after the acquisition of the North Manchuria Railway in March 1935, "special immigrant" settlements were constructed near the Chuo'er River in the Greater Khingan Range, creating "immigrant areas" that, while serving as training and strategic bases, engaged in agriculture, livestock farming, and hunting during peacetime. Such "immigrant areas" were constructed in the Gan River basin, northwest of Jiamusi, Nancha, the Tangwang River basin, and other locations.<sup>34</sup> Although lacking large-scale troop deployments, they were intended to serve as border resistance zones against Soviet military invasion from the north.

Beyond these initiatives, various missions were assigned to the Harbin Special Agency, including internal guidance of White Russians, training of intelligence agents, counterintelligence, and investigation and management of border crossers entering Manchuria, further advancing the organization and institutionalization of intelligence activities against the Soviet Union. Regarding the Japanese Army's intelligence activities against the Soviet Union during this period, the Soviet TASS news agency reported that "Japan is attempting to construct a 'defense line' extending from the North Korean border to the Xinjiang border throughout the Soviet Far East and the Mongolian People's Republic," noting that irregular forces were entering Suiyuan for defense and that numerous defensive positions were being constructed in Inner Mongolia.<sup>35</sup>

With the reorganization of the Kwantung Army in May 1940, the Kwantung Army Intelligence Department was newly established, the Harbin Special Agency was reorganized into Intelligence Department headquarters, and the special agencies in Dalian, Yanji, Mudanjiang, Dong'an, Jiamusi, Heihe, Hailar, Sanhe, and Wangyemiao (Xing'an) became Intelligence Department branches. This formally transformed special agencies into intelligence units of the Japanese Army, effectively resolving the institutional problem of vertical segmentation between operations and intelligence departments. On the other hand, it has been noted that as intelligence units from this point forward had increasingly frequent interactions with officers and non-commissioned officers of field units, "it is also true that this gave some the impression that the old special agency character had been lost" compared to earlier days when they engaged in secret warfare while maintaining a low profile.<sup>36</sup> Regarding this point, the qualitative change brought about in information warfare was significant. It was stated that "in an era when war was limited to military warfare, intelligence targeted only military secrets, but in today's total national war, all other national total mobilization secrets, even

---

<sup>33</sup> Ibid., p. 145.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid., p. 192.

<sup>35</sup> "Naimou ni okeru Nihon no Himitsu Senbi to Daisuru Rojishi Kiji ni kansuru Ken" [Regarding a Russian-Language Newspaper Article Titled "Japan's Secret War Preparations in Inner Mongolia"], Japan Center for Asian Historical Records (JACAR) Ref. B02031785400, Manmo Seikyo Kankei Zassan / Naimouko Kankei Dai 4 kan [Miscellaneous Documents on Manchurian and Mongolian Political Conditions / Inner Mongolia Relations, vol. 4], Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

<sup>36</sup> Nishihara, *Zenkiroku Harbin Tokumukikan*, p. 60.

things not ordinarily considered secrets, become targets of intelligence.”<sup>37</sup> Concrete examples of secret warfare conducted by various countries were cited, including Japan’s armaments being unjustly reduced at the Washington Conference and elsewhere, the immigration law making it difficult to solve Japan’s population problem, and causing ideological confusion within Japan through the injection of the shortcomings of communist and liberal ideology.<sup>38</sup>

### *(3) Intelligence Activities against the Soviet Union during World War II*

Following the conclusion of the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact in April 1941, Japan and the Soviet Union existed in a peculiar relationship—while adversaries as members of the Axis and Allied powers respectively, an official diplomatic channel connected the two warring camps.<sup>39</sup> As Manchukuo-Soviet border conflicts decreased significantly, the Kwantung Army Intelligence Department’s primary mission shifted from information warfare centered on intelligence strategy to the collection and analysis of wartime information, including the progress of World War II, and situational assessment. They actively provided intelligence to field intelligence units of each army while themselves organizing “battlefield intelligence collection teams” to prepare for intelligence, propaganda, and strategic operations on the battlefield. Additionally, show-of-force intelligence strategy units composed of Japanese officers and White Russian forces were organized and deployed in the northern border districts of Manchukuo and other areas.<sup>40</sup>

When the German-Soviet War (the Great Patriotic War) broke out on June 22, 1941, the 5th Section of the Kwantung Army was newly established, with Colonel Ikeda Sumihisa, former head of the Mukden Special Agency and known as a theoretical leader of the Control Faction, appointed as section head. Anticipating possible war against the Soviet Union, Ikeda began research on occupied territories, seriously examining—alongside the Japanese Army’s logistical maintenance and management—the feasibility of winning hearts and minds among Russian residents in the Soviet Far East including Eastern Siberia, administrative management, securing transportation, and expanding production. This was greatly influenced by his experience leading the establishment of the East Asia Research Institute as a Planning Board investigator and engaging in intelligence collection and analysis for economic development in North China. He stated that “for Japan, fully expanding productive capacity not only in its own territory but throughout the range recognized as most reliably utilizable, namely throughout Japan and Manchuria, must be said to be the urgent national policy of the moment.”<sup>41</sup>

However, by 1943, as the initiative in the war shifted to the Allied side and extraction and diversion of Kwantung Army forces toward the south rapidly increased, the Kwantung Army Intelligence Department began intelligence activities against the Soviet Union that considered the possibility of Soviet entry into the war against Japan while maintaining “northern tranquility toward the Soviet Union.” Major General Doi Akio (former military attaché to the Soviet embassy), who assumed the position of Intelligence Department head in March of that year, established a new

---

<sup>37</sup> Ministry of the Army, “‘Bocho’ Dai 8 Go, Showa 16-nen 4-gatsu,” p. 25.

<sup>38</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>39</sup> Hanada Tomoyuki, “The Soviet Military Leadership’s Perceptions of Japan during World War II,” *NIDS Security & Strategy*, vol. 1 (January 2021), pp. 63-64.

<sup>40</sup> Nishihara, *Zenkiroku Harbin Tokumukikan*, p. 65.

<sup>41</sup> Maeda Keisuke, *Showa no Sanbo* [Staff Officers of the Showa Era] (Kodansha Gendai Shinsho, 2022), p. 256.

Intelligence Office in addition to the document intelligence section, systematically investigating Soviet state structure and ideological principles while emphasizing research on Soviet military tactics, forces, and organization, collecting and analyzing military-related materials.<sup>42</sup> It has also been revealed that cooperation was sought in analyzing Soviet ideology, politics, economics, and military affairs from Genrikh S. Lyushkov, former head of the Far Eastern Bureau of the People's Commissariat for Internal Affairs, who had defected to Manchukuo in June 1938, among others.<sup>43</sup>

Within the Kwantung Army, an Intelligence Department Training Unit was newly established in preparation for the possibility of Soviet entry into the war against Japan. Its purpose was not only to train intelligence agents for the Intelligence Department but also to implement personnel training for field intelligence units of each army, battlefield propaganda teams, and various units for show-of-force intelligence strategy. The officers and non-commissioned officers were graduates of the Nakano School.<sup>44</sup> After Soviet entry into the war against Japan, they were to be organized as the "Intelligence Department Special Guerrilla Unit" and come under the command of the Harbin Defense Force. Following the war's end, these officers were detained in Siberia as "Intelligence Department Headquarters Personnel."

As described above, the Japanese Army's intelligence activities against the Soviet Union, including those against Russia, involved various forms of intelligence collection and analysis concerning Russia and the Soviet Union for nearly half a century. Particularly during the interwar period, the Japanese Army prioritized information warfare centered on intelligence strategy in confronting the Soviet military, with intelligence activities by the Harbin Special Agency and resident military attachés in areas surrounding the Soviet Union playing central roles. During World War II, the role of intelligence activities against the Soviet Union shifted dramatically from intelligence strategy to the collection and analysis of wartime information, with a qualitative change in information warfare against the Soviet Union observable amid total national war. The Japanese Army had established intelligence networks based in Manchuria to discern Soviet military capabilities and strategic intentions in areas surrounding the Soviet Union.

However, intelligence activities against the Soviet Union presented continuous challenges. Lieutenant Colonel Hayashi Saburo, who served as head of the Russia Section of the 2nd Division of the General Staff during World War II, recorded that it was "like painstakingly searching for extremely small grains of gold dust in mud."<sup>45</sup> The Japanese Army would come to recognize acutely the difficulties of verifying and authenticating wartime intelligence through information warfare surrounding Soviet entry into the war against Japan.

---

<sup>42</sup> Nishihara, *Zenkiroku Harbin Tokumukikan*, p. 68.

<sup>43</sup> Tajima Nobuo, "Ryushikofu Risuna Zoruge—'Manshukoku' wo meguru Nichi-Doku-So Kankei no Ichisokumen" ["Lyushkov, Lisner, Sorge: a Relation between Japan, Germany and USSR around the 'Manchukuo'], in Enatsu Yoshiki et al. eds., *Kindai Chugoku Tohoku Chiikishi Kenkyu no Shin-Shikaku* [A Perspective of the Research of Modern Northeast China] (Yamakawa Shuppansha, 2005), p. 200.

<sup>44</sup> Nishihara, *Zenkiroku Harbin Tokumukikan*, p. 224.

<sup>45</sup> Hayashi Saburo, "Wareware wa Donoyoni Tai-So Joho Kinmu wo Yattaka" [How We Conducted Intelligence Operations against the Soviet Union], Archives of the Center for Military History, NIDS.



## 2. Intelligence Activities against the Soviet Union Surrounding Japan's War Termination Policies

One of the most significant examples of the Japanese Army's intelligence activities against the Soviet Union as information warfare concerns Japan's war termination policies in the final stage of the Pacific War and Onodera's confidential telegram incident. This involves Onodera obtaining classified information, "*Bu* information," from Polish Army officer Major Feliks Brzeskwinski about the "Yalta Secret Agreement" reached at the Yalta Conference in February 1945—that the Soviet Union would enter the war against Japan within three months after Nazi Germany's surrender. Onodera then requested his wife Yuriko to construct a special cipher to convey information about Soviet entry into the war against Japan and sent a confidential telegram to Vice Chief of Staff Hata Hikosaburo of the Imperial General Headquarters about the possibility of Soviet entry into the war against Japan, yet this ultimately was not reflected in Japan's war termination policies.

This series of events has attracted attention not only as intelligence activities against the Soviet Union by the Japanese Army but also as war termination efforts that potentially could have prevented the atomic bombings of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, and Soviet entry into the war against Japan, given how Japan's conclusion of the Pacific War ultimately unfolded. However, questions remain: a. Did the confidential telegram exist in the first place? b. Did it reach the Imperial General Headquarters? c. Did it reach the Imperial General Headquarters but fail to be reflected in war termination efforts? Complete clarification of the actual circumstances has yet to be achieved.

Regarding this matter, Onodera himself testified after the war that it was "official information from the Polish government-in-exile."<sup>46</sup> His wife Yuriko revealed in the "diplomatic telegram from Envoy to Sweden Okamoto Suemasa to Foreign Minister Togo Shigenori" dated April 16, 1945, that Okamoto, who disagreed over the policy of war termination efforts, repeatedly criticized Onodera.<sup>47</sup> In recent years, Okabe Noburu has empirically analyzed Onodera's confidential telegram using vast archival documents from The National Archives (TNA) of the United Kingdom and other sources, revealing that Karl-Heinz Kraemer, a German Wehrmacht intelligence officer, directly informed Onodera on February 14, immediately after the Yalta Conference, that "according to information from Britain, the Soviet Union changed its policy toward Japan at the Big Three Conference [Yalta Conference] and decided to enter the war."<sup>48</sup> On the other hand, Bert Edström has challenged this portrayal of Onodera, critically questioning whether Onodera had actually obtained confirmed information that the "Yalta Secret Agreement" had been reached as of February to March 1945.<sup>49</sup>

Based on this awareness of the issues, this study examines the reasons why Onodera's confidential telegram was not reflected in war termination policies, from the perspective of the Japanese Army's intelligence activities against the Soviet Union as information warfare and the "lineage of intelligence officers." Due to space constraints, detailed discussion of Japan's war

---

<sup>46</sup> Onodera Makoto, "Shogun wa Kataru (Ge)" [The Story of the General (Part 2)], *Kaiko*, no. 424 (April 1986).

<sup>47</sup> Onodera Yuriko, "1945-nen Haru no Stockholm" [Stockholm in the Spring of 1945], *Gunji Shigaku*, vol. 31, nos. 1-2 (September 1995), p. 442.

<sup>48</sup> Okabe Noburu, *Kieta Yaruta Mitsuyaku Kinkyuden: Joho shikan Onodera Makoto no Kodokuna Tataikai* [The lost emergency telegram about the secret Yalta agreement: The lonely fight of the intelligence officer Onodera Makoto] (Shinchosha, 2012), p. 50.

<sup>49</sup> Bert Edström, *Master Spy on a Mission: The Untold Story of Onodera Makoto and Swedish Intelligence 1941-1945* (Stockholm: Eget Förlag, 2021).

termination diplomacy and the actual circumstances of Soviet entry into the war against Japan are omitted.<sup>50</sup>

### *(1) Japan's War Termination Policies*

One of the formidable challenges faced by the Suzuki Kantaro Cabinet, formed in April 1945, was the Soviet notification of non-extension of the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact that occurred on April 5, just before the cabinet's formation. On this day, Soviet People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Vyacheslav M. Molotov explained to Ambassador to the Soviet Union Sato Naotake that neither Operation Barbarossa nor the attack on Pearl Harbor had occurred when the pact was concluded in April 1941. He then stated that "the situation has been basically altered. Germany has attacked the USSR, and Japan, the ally of Germany, is aiding the latter in its war against the USSR. Furthermore, Japan is waging war with the USA and Great Britain, which are the allies of the Soviet Union. In these circumstances the neutrality pact between the USSR and Japan has lost its sense, and the prolongation of that pact has become impossible," thereby notifying the abandonment of the extension.<sup>51</sup>

In response, when reporting to his home country, Sato noted that at least the pact would remain valid until April 25 of the following year. He strongly urged that efforts should be made to break through the situation through diplomatic approaches that would prevent circumstances giving the Soviet Union a pretext for entering the war against Japan and prevent the Soviet Union from immediately taking military action. Foreign Minister Togo likewise stated that while developing diplomacy toward the Soviet Union solely for the purpose of preventing entry into the war would be meaningless, if undertaken before Japan's national strength was exhausted, possibilities remained for war termination efforts based on the perspective of ending the war. What is crucial here is that not only Sato but many leaders of the government and Imperial General Headquarters judged that the validity period of the Japanese-Soviet Neutrality Pact would certainly remain for another year, placing a degree of trust in the Soviet government, including Joseph V. Stalin. Regarding war termination efforts with the Soviet Union, Colonel Tanemura Sako of the 20th Section (War Conduct Section) of the General Staff similarly stated the necessity of "negotiations with the Soviet Union for completing the war against Britain and the United States" with the negotiation limit being prevention of Soviet entry into the war, rather than "negotiations with the Soviet Union as a war termination measure" premised on peace (efforts) with Britain and the United States.<sup>52</sup>

Under these extremely unfavorable circumstances, the Supreme War Leadership Council was held from May 11 to 14. The main agenda of this conference concerned diplomacy toward the Soviet Union after Germany's defeat. Suzuki and others reconfirmed that preventing Soviet entry into the war was an absolute condition of Japan's war conduct, stating that "at present, if

---

<sup>50</sup> For Japan's war termination diplomacy and Soviet entry into the war against Japan, see Hanada Tomoyuki, "Nihon no Shusen to Soren no Tai-Nichi Sansen: Taikoku Kan Gaiko no Shuen" [The Japanese Termination of War and the Soviet Strategic Offensive in Manchuria: The End of Great Powers Diplomacy], *Hogaku Shirin* [Review of law and political sciences], vol. 117, nos. 3-4 (March 2020), pp. 121-149.

<sup>51</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan, ed., *Senji Nisso Koshoshi (Fukkoku-ban) Ge Kan* [History of Japanese-Soviet Wartime Negotiations (Reprint Edition)], vol. 2 (Yumani Shobo, 2006), p. 903.

<sup>52</sup> "Kongo no Tai-'So' Shisaku ni Taisuru Iken" [Opinion on Future Policy toward the Soviet Union], in *Shusen Kosaku no Kiroku (Ge)* [Records of Efforts for the War Termination (vol. 2)], supervised by Eto Jun (Kodansha, 1986), p. 61.

Soviet entry into the war were to occur while Japan is fighting Britain and the United States with the nation's fate at stake, the Empire's fate would be sealed, and regardless of what form the war against Britain and the United States takes, the Empire must make every effort to prevent its entry into the war."<sup>53</sup> Moreover, in addition to the conventional goals of "preventing entry into the war," which mainly reflected the Army's intentions, and "Soviet benevolent neutrality," which mainly reflected the Navy's intentions, they newly agreed on the goal of "having the Soviet Union mediate in a manner favorable to us regarding the termination of the war," and it was decided to begin talks between Japan and the Soviet Union. Furthermore, as measures to advance negotiations with the Soviet Union favorably, abrogation of the Treaty of Portsmouth of 1905 and the Basic Treaty between Japan and the Soviet Union of 1925 was also deliberated. Specifically, it was stated that preparations would be necessary for: a. dissolution of fishing rights; b. opening of the Tsugaru Strait; c. transfer of various railways in Northern Manchuria; d. a Soviet sphere of influence in Inner Mongolia; and e. lease of Port Arthur and Dalian. While stating that "depending on circumstances, it may be unavoidable to transfer the northern half of the Kuril Islands," concessions were sought to maintain Manchukuo's independence as much as possible, such as reserving Korea to Japan while making Southern Manchuria a neutral zone.<sup>54</sup>

Beyond diplomacy toward the Soviet Union, the Suzuki Cabinet's war termination efforts also included initiatives intended to realize peace negotiations with the Allied side through third-country mediation, such as the aforementioned war termination efforts by Okamoto and Swedish Minister to Japan Vidar Bagge, direct Japan-US negotiations by Allen Dulles, head of the Office of Strategic Services (OSS) Switzerland branch, and Minister to Switzerland Kase Toshikazu, and Vatican operations by Bishop Vagnozzi of the Holy See and Pastor Tomizawa Takahiko, consultant to the Japanese legation.<sup>55</sup>

Understanding the relationship between Togo and the Soviet Union is crucial for examining how the Suzuki Cabinet's war termination efforts were structured around diplomacy toward the Soviet Union. In his book *Jidai no Ichimen*, Togo records that from autumn to winter 1944, before assuming the position of Foreign Minister in the Suzuki Cabinet, he studied the defeat histories of various countries at his villa in Karuizawa. He showed particularly strong interest in Russia's and Germany's defeats in World War I, expressing great concern that "if proper handling methods are not achieved when inclining toward defeat, not only political revolution but also social revolution may suddenly erupt."<sup>56</sup> On the other hand, because Togo had been Foreign Minister at the outbreak of war between Japan and the United States, he harbored deep distrust toward the United States, which had presented the *Hull Note*. He feared that the United States viewed "imperial and royal households as relics of the previous century and [misunderstood] that this is the root of imperialism, [and] might make outrageous demands." Thus, Togo appears to have judged that the time had come to handle relations with the Soviet Union from the perspective of ending the war,

---

<sup>53</sup> Ministry of Foreign Affairs, ed., *Nihon no Sentaku: Dainiji Sekai Taisen Shusen Shiroku (Chu Kan)* [(Japanese Choice: War Termination History of World War II (vol. 2)] (Yamate Shobo Shinsha, 1990), p. 450.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 82.

<sup>55</sup> JACAR (Japan Center for Asian Historical Records) Ref. B02033033100, Ministry of Foreign Affairs Records, "Daitoa Senso Kankei Ikken 'Sueden' 'Suisu' 'Bachikan' toni okeru Shusen Kosaku Kankei" [Matters Related to the Greater East Asia War: War Termination Efforts in "Sweden," "Switzerland," "Vatican," etc.], Diplomatic Archives of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan.

<sup>56</sup> Togo Shigenori, *Jidai no Ichimen* [One Aspect of the Era] (Hara Shobo, 1967), p. 315.

going beyond merely preventing entry into the war, aiming to "utilize the military's hopes to lead rapidly to peace."<sup>57</sup>

Indeed, such a diplomatic posture by Togo was also articulated in a postwar interview with Ohno Katsumi, who served as his ministerial secretary, revealing that "Mr. Togo, before joining the cabinet, studied the defeat histories of various countries. And he thought there was no method other than identifying a country with strong power and strong international voice and breaking through the center together with that country."<sup>58</sup> He reportedly stated that "the Soviet Union has not yet entered the war. It is a neutral country, and of course making peace through the Soviet Union means jumping into the Allied side's belly, and it would be best to jump in and break through the center. Moreover, when I was Ambassador to the Soviet Union, I made a considerable impression on Soviet leaders." The last part presumably refers to Togo's diplomatic negotiations with Molotov regarding armistice negotiations for the Nomonhan Incident in September 1939, when he was Ambassador to the Soviet Union. Such war termination efforts through "central breakthrough" to the Soviet Union appear to have formed the foundation of his diplomatic posture.

In contrast to Togo, Sato, stationed in Moscow, sent a "war termination opinion telegram" on June 8, 1945, questioning war termination efforts using the Soviet Union as an intermediary. He soberly analyzed that the likelihood of the Soviet Union prioritizing Japanese-Soviet relations over US-Soviet relations was low, stating that "if this was the case even at that time when they were fiercely fighting the war with Germany and had no choice but to concentrate on maintaining peace in the Far East, why would the Soviet Union bother to consider improving Japanese-Soviet relations, even at the expense of US-Soviet relations, now that Germany has been destroyed?"<sup>59</sup>

## *(2) Military Attaché Onodera's Confidential Telegram*

Recent research has revealed that the content of the "Yalta Secret Agreement" likely reached the Imperial General Headquarters through Onodera several months before it was decided that Japan's war termination efforts would proceed centered on diplomacy toward the Soviet Union. Onodera reportedly learned this information through Brzeskewski, sent a confidential telegram to the Imperial General Headquarters regarding Soviet entry into the war against Japan, and foreseeing Japan's defeat, requested mediation between Japan and the Allied powers through Swedish royal channels.

Critical to this effort was the intelligence network against the Soviet Union in Central and Eastern Europe that Onodera had built as a military attaché. He had cultivated "sincere human relationships"<sup>60</sup> with military attachés in areas surrounding the Soviet Union, including Poland and the Baltic states, a network that included Sugihara Chiune, the diplomat famous for "Visas

---

<sup>57</sup> Ibid., p. 328.

<sup>58</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, ed., *Showa Shi no Tenno 4* [The Japanese Empire in the Showa History, vol. 4] (Chuokoron Shinsha, 2012), p. 284.

<sup>59</sup> "Sato Taishi Shusen Iken Denpo" [Ambassador Sato's War Termination Opinion Telegram], in *Nihon no Sentaku: Dainiji Sekai Taisen Shusen Shiroku (Chu Kan)*, ed. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, p. 635.

<sup>60</sup> Onodera Makoto, "Onodera Makoto Shosho Kaisoroku Sueden Zaikin Kan no Omoide" [Memoirs of Major General Onodera Makoto: Recollections of Time in Sweden], Archives of the Center for Military History, NIDS.

for Life.”<sup>61</sup> According to Okabe, a report prepared by the German Security Police in July 1941 analyzed that “the head of Japan’s ‘East’ section—intelligence against the Soviet Union—is Onodera in Stockholm, with assistant Sugihara Chiune, consul in Königsberg.”<sup>62</sup> It has also been noted that because Onodera maintained a close relationship with King Gustaf V of Sweden and the Crown Princess of the Swedish Royal House at that time was of British origin, he secretly envisioned war termination efforts through King George VI of Britain. Regarding the “Yalta Secret Agreement,” Lieutenant Colonel Hori Eizo, who was a staff officer of the 6th Section of the 2nd Division of the General Staff, also testified that “Stalin’s statement at the Yalta Conference that he would ‘launch an offensive against Japan three months after Germany’s surrender’ was also in the telegram of ‘Bu information’ from Military Attaché Onodera stationed in Sweden, but in reality, this telegram appears to have been suppressed by the Operations Section of the Imperial General Headquarters.”<sup>63</sup>

However, even when examining Japan’s war termination efforts, no clear evidence can be found that the content of Onodera’s confidential telegram was adequately reflected. Assuming the confidential telegram reached the Imperial General Headquarters but was not reflected in war termination policies, three main reasons can be inferred. First is Onodera’s background in the *Kodo-ha* (Imperial Way Faction). Born in Iwate Prefecture in 1897, as someone knowledgeable about Russia and the Soviet Union, he was stationed in Khabarovsk attached to the 29th Infantry Regiment during the Siberian Intervention and had extensive experience as military attaché to the legation in Latvia, staff officer of the China Expeditionary Army, and military attaché to the legations in Estonia and Lithuania, engaging in intelligence activities against the Soviet Union for many years. It is also known that Obata and other central figures in the *Kodo-ha* highly valued Onodera, making him truly part of the “lineage of intelligence officers” of the Japanese Army. On the other hand, because the Control Faction, including Prime Minister Tojo Hideki, dominated the Imperial General Headquarters at that time, there is concern that it may have been perceived as an “inconvenient truth” conveyed by an intelligence officer with traditionally anti-Soviet thinking to the Supreme War Leadership Council that decided on war termination efforts toward the Soviet Union. Second is the difficulty of unifying intentions within the legation in Sweden. Particularly as Okamoto was undertaking Bagge operations through official diplomatic channels, there is concern that Onodera’s war termination efforts may have been misunderstood as acting arbitrarily through a “back channel” and were not adequately reflected.<sup>64</sup> Third is the difficulty of verification including

---

<sup>61</sup> For Sugihara’s intelligence activities against the Soviet Union in Central and Eastern Europe, see Shiraishi Masaaki, *Choho no Tensai Sugihara Chiune* [Chiune Sugihara, Genius of Espionage] (Shinchosha, 2011); Simonas Strelcovas, *Dainiji Taisenka Ritoania no Nanmin to Sugihara Chiune* [Refugees in Lithuania and Chiune Sugihara], trans. Akahane Toshiaki (Akashi Shoten, 2020); and many others. Regarding the Jewish refugees rescued by Sugihara, Ilya Altman, co-chair of the Russian Holocaust Research and Education Center, using archival documents from the Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation and other sources, has revealed that the number of people saved by “visas for life” was approximately 2,500. David Wolff, Takao Chizuko, and Ilya Altman, eds., *Sugihara Chiune and the Soviet Union: New Documents, New Perspectives*, Slavic Eurasian Studies no. 35 (Slavic-Eurasian Research Center, Hokkaido University, 2022).

<sup>62</sup> Okabe Noburu, *Dainiji Taisen, Choho Sen Hishi* [Secret History of Intelligence Warfare in World War II] (PHP Kenkyusho, 2021), p. 123.

<sup>63</sup> Hori, *Daihinei Sanbo no Joho Senki*, p. 263.

<sup>64</sup> Okabe, *Kieta Yaruta Mitsuyaku Kinkyuden*, p. 361. In a postwar interview, Ogi Kazuto, assistant naval attaché at the embassy in Germany, who had sympathized with Onodera’s war termination efforts, strongly criticized Okamoto for refusing to issue a visa to Ogi, among other matters.



authentication and handling of wartime intelligence. Even if the Imperial General Headquarters had obtained accurate information, influencing actual war conduct (and its transformation) would have required stable institutions for verifying high accuracy and appropriate persuasiveness, suggesting this could not be resolved merely through the lesson of emphasizing intelligence. Regarding this point, it is necessary to reexamine the historical significance of the major transformation in the role of the Japanese Army's intelligence activities against the Soviet Union from intelligence strategy to the collection and analysis of wartime information.

## Conclusion

The Japanese Army's intelligence activities nearly half a century encompassed of intelligence collection and analysis concerning Russia and the Soviet Union. Particularly during the interwar period, the Japanese Army prioritized information warfare centered on intelligence strategy in confronting the Soviet military, with intelligence activities by the Harbin Special Agency and resident military attachés in areas surrounding the Soviet Union playing central roles. During the Pacific War, the role of intelligence activities against the Soviet Union shifted dramatically from intelligence strategy to the collection and analysis of wartime information. Onodera's confidential telegram incident examined in this study represents an important case study for reconsidering Japan's war termination efforts during the Pacific War, yet it must not be forgotten that it was the culmination of intelligence collection and analysis rooted in the Japanese Army's long history of intelligence activities against the Soviet Union. I hope this study contributes to understanding the challenges of information warfare and the difficulties of handling intelligence during wartime.

Finally, I would like to share an episode regarding Onodera's intelligence activities against the Soviet Union. In early 1944, through retired Lieutenant Colonel Theodor Jakobson, a pro-Japanese Swedish Army officer, he met with a certain elderly gentleman, and he recorded that this elderly gentleman was none other than "Mr. Lindberg, who cooperated with Akashi's intelligence activities against the Russian Empire during the Russo-Japanese War and encouraged the agency's operations both openly and behind the scenes."<sup>65</sup> Onodera then invited Lindberg to his private residence and formally paid his respects as a military attaché. This encounter can truly be said to have been brought about by the "lineage of intelligence officers" of the Japanese Army.

---

<sup>65</sup> Onodera, "Onodera Makoto Shosho Kaisoroku [Memoirs of Major General Onodera Makoto]," Archives of the Center for Military History, NIDS.

