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## THE INTERWAR JAPANESE INTELLIGENCE ACTIVITIES IN THE BALTIC STATES: 1918–1940

Shingo MASUNAGA

Department of Philosophy, Centre for East Asian Studies (CEAS), University of Turku, 20014 Turun yliopisto, Finland; shingo.masunaga@utu.fi

This article aims to unveil the truths of the interwar Japanese intelligence activities in the Baltic States. Starting from the publication of Yuriko Onodera's memoir 'In the Shore of the Baltic Sea' in 1985, the activities began to catch scholarly attentions. The activities were partially covered in some of the previous academic publications, such as a general picture of Japanese intelligence plan '1932' in Kuromiya & Mamoulia (2016). However, this is the first-ever article to provide a perspective of the activities of the Japanese military attaché office in Riga.

### INTRODUCTION

The conclusion of the First Russo-Japanese War in 1905 did not mean the end of Japanese intelligence activities against Russia, which were even expanded during the post-war period as a rematch was thought to be inevitable.<sup>1</sup>

The Bolshevik revolution in 1917 and the following birth of the Soviet Union in 1922 led the Japanese, especially the Army, to redefine 'Russia' again as the most potential enemy state. From the Japanese perspective, the existence of the Communist nation in the neighbourhood posed a threat to the 'ideological identity' of Japan's capitalist and colonial pursuits within the Imperial system.<sup>2</sup> After the establishment of the official diplomatic relations between Japan and the Soviet Union in 1925, two officers of the Japanese Army (Sadao Araki and Toshiro Obata) were sent to Moscow in order to evaluate the effects of the Soviet first 'Five Years Plan' started in 1928.<sup>3</sup> Despite the 'official' statement of V. L. Kopp

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<sup>1</sup> **May, E. R.** (ed.). *Knowing One's Enemies*. Princeton University Press, New Jersey, 1986, 430.

<sup>2</sup> **Koshiro, Y.** *Imperial Eclipse: Japan's Strategic Thinking about Continental Asia before August 1945*. Cornell University Press, New York, 2013, 16.

<sup>3</sup> **May, E. R.** (ed.). *Knowing One's Enemies*, 430.

on 27th March 1925, the first Soviet Envoy Plenipotentiary to Japan, emphasizing the non-existence of ‘conflicts of interest’ in the bilateral relations<sup>4</sup>, the reality was much harsher. Stalin, who took over political power of the Soviet Union after the death of Lenin in January 1924, stood on ‘realist’ perspective. As of July 1927, he predicted a conflict between the newly arising ‘imperialists’ after WW I including Japan, and ‘socialists’, represented by the Soviet Union.<sup>5</sup> In fact, at around the same time, the Japanese Army’s ‘passive’ political observations against the Soviet Union turned into ‘aggressive’ espionage operations involving its neighbours and the operations consequently led the two nations into ‘espionage war’.

### **MYSTERIOUS DEATH OF NAVAL ATTACHÉ KOYANAGI AND ESTABLISHMENT OF THE JAPANESE MILITARY ATTACHÉ OFFICE IN RIGA**

In March 1929, Colonel Kisaburo Koyanagi, Japanese Naval attaché in Moscow, committed suicide at his office in the Japanese Embassy.<sup>6</sup> The death of Koyanagi had long been shrouded in mystery, however in 2011, Professor Hiroaki Kuromiya of Indiana University found out it was all a Soviet set-up.<sup>7</sup> Koyanagi was previously in mutual contact with the Latvian General Staff. In August 1928, he made secret visits to the Latvian naval bases in Riga, Liepaja, and Ventspils with his assistant officer Ichiro Matsumoto.<sup>8,9</sup> Also, they had a connection with Estonian military attaché in Warsaw.<sup>10</sup> Prior to the events, Estonia and Latvia concluded an agreement on a ‘defence union’ on 1st November 1923 and although this alliance was never brought to life, the Soviets were closely following their

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<sup>4</sup> **Degras, J.** Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy. Volume 2: 1925–1932. Oxford University Press, New York, 1952, 23. Kopp mentioned that the ‘Soviet-Japanese agreement is an instrument of peace’ and the ‘Soviet government has no other intention than to use it to develop economic and cultural relations between the Soviet and Japanese people’.

<sup>5</sup> **Degras, J.** Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy. Volume 2: 1925–1932, 233–235.

<sup>6</sup> **Kuromiya, H.** The mystery of Nomonhan, 1939. – The Journal of Slavic Military Studies, 2011, **24**, 4, 662.

<sup>7</sup> *Ibid.*, 663. Koyanagi invited his Russian language teacher and a ‘doctor’ (both were female) to a house party at his residence. There, he had a heated political debate with the teacher. Even had a brawl with and injured her slightly. According to the Polish intelligence, both women were Soviet OGPU (State Political Directorate) agents. They attempted to steal keys of Koyanagi’s personal safe, but prevented by him thus pretended to be ‘threatened’ and attempted to conceal the crime.

<sup>8</sup> Latvijas Valsts Vēstures Arhīvs, Rīga (LVVA) 2570-1-215, 50.

<sup>9</sup> The three ports were previously reported to Tokyo as good natural ports’ by Sentaro Ueda, representative of the Riga diplomat office (1923–1926), on 21st October 1923 (**Shima, S.** Introduction to Japanese-Latvian relations between the wars: (1) The beginning of diplomatic intercourse. – GAKUEN, 2005, 772, 95).

<sup>10</sup> Rahvusarhiiv, ERA.495.12.119.25. Koyanagi and Matsumoto’s personal information attached as a personal memo. Then Estonian military attaché in Warsaw was Major Ludvig-Karl Jakobsen. Jakobsen filled the position between 1924 and 1930.

moves. They were trying to hamper the Baltic alliance and furthermore to break off its ties with Poland, in order to prevent the creation of a regional military alliance targeted themselves.<sup>11</sup> With hindsight, the Japanese contributions to the Baltic alliance infuriated the Soviets<sup>12</sup> and Koyanagi was victimized to give a warning to the Japanese.

Two years later, in July 1931, Major Taketo Kawamata, the first-ever Japanese military attaché to Latvia, arrived in Riga. The Japanese Army was fully aware of the difficulty in terms of intelligence activities inside the Soviet Union, based on the failure of their naval counterpart. Furthermore, the Army attempted but failed to organize intelligence activities in Latvia, previously by their young officers despatched to Riga to study Russian language. Captain Torashiro Kawabe, who was sent to Riga on the mission between 1926 and 1928, stated in the post-WW II memoir that

There was no such way to conduct the research on the Soviet military (in Riga).<sup>13</sup>

The problems with these ‘language’ learners were that they had certain language skills to access the information required and a lack of military careers to precisely analyse the materials. Thus, Kawamata, who was an experienced officer also specialized in Russian language, was the Army’s solution. The first priority for the Japanese military attaché in Latvia was to exchange the Soviet information with intelligence unit of the Latvian Army.<sup>14</sup> He also established a connection with the Estonian General Staff.<sup>15</sup>

### ‘PLAN 1932’ AND JAPANESE PERCEPTION OF THE BALTIC STATES

Throughout the early 1930s, the Japanese military attaché office in Riga was left behind in terms of the Japanese Army’s intelligence activities in Europe. In 1929, at the conference of Japanese military attaches in Europe held at the attaché office in Berlin, the employment of émigré Russians for the purposes of sabotage

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<sup>11</sup> **Feldmanis, I., Stranga, A.** *The Destiny of the Baltic Entente: 1934–1940.* Latvian Institute of International Affairs, Riga, 1994, 13.

<sup>12</sup> The trip of Koyanagi and Matsumoto to the Baltic States, despite its confidentiality, was taken up by German newspaper in Latvia. The newspaper reported Koyanagi was confirmed in Kowno, Poland (Riga am Sonntag, 26 August 1928). Thus it seems that the Soviets were fully aware of their trip as well.

<sup>13</sup> **Kawabe, T.** *From Ichigayadai to Ichigayadai: Memoir of the Last Vice Chief of the General Staff.* Jiji Press Co., Ltd., Tokyo, 1962, 52. The Japanese Army had consecutively sent three young officers to Riga between 1924 and 1929, for the language exchange.

<sup>14</sup> **Okabe, N.** *Disappeared Yalta Telegram.* Shinchosha, Tokyo, 2011, 23. Makoto Onodera, the third Japanese military attaché in Riga (1936–1938), recollected in the postwar memoir that he took the Soviet information delivered by diplomatic couriers from Tokyo to the Latvian General Staff.

<sup>15</sup> ERA.495.12.119.30.

and espionage against the Soviet Union was discussed for the first time.<sup>16,17</sup> Lieutenant General Iwane Matsui, a special guest of the conference, also visited Warsaw with his younger brother Lieutenant Colonel Nanao Matsui, Major Kyoji Tominaga, assistant military attaché in Moscow, and Captain Seiichi Terada, to discuss the expansion of the cooperation between the second department of the General Staff, where Iwane Matsui was in charge back then, and the Polish General Staff.<sup>18</sup> Two years later, in October 1932, the General Staff and Japanese military attaché in Moscow issued a special instruction to the military attaches in Paris and Warsaw on subversion against the Soviet Union<sup>19</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.
- (3) To link the anti-Soviet émigré Russian organizations to their comrades within the Soviet Union, incite rebellions in the country, agitate for ‘pacifism’ (defeatism?).

The instruction also noted the expansion of Japanese military intelligence organs in Europe in the following destinations: London, Paris, Berlin, Vienna, Helsinki, Tallinn, Kowno, Warsaw, Bucharest, Istanbul, Ankara, Tehran, and Kabul.<sup>20</sup> As of October 1932, with regard to the Japanese Army’s intelligence in ‘Northern Europe’ including the Baltic States, there were no military attaches stationed in either Helsinki or Tallinn. The former was realized in May 1934<sup>21</sup> and for Estonia, throughout the interwar period, ‘permanent’ military attaché position was never established. However, in October 1934, the Japanese plans were partially unveiled

<sup>16</sup> **Boyd, C.** The Berlin-Tokyo axis and Japanese military initiative. – *Modern Asian Studies*, 1981, **15**, 2, 314–315. The conference was hosted by Major General Arichika Omura, then military attaché in Germany, and managed by Lieutenant General Iwane Matsui, director of military intelligence at the Army General Staff in Tokyo. Thus, it is rational to think that the subversive plans against the Soviet Union were formally authorized by Tokyo.

<sup>17</sup> The Japanese decision was probably based on the success of the assassination of Pyotr Voykov, Soviet plenipotentiary representative to Poland, in 1927 by Boris Koverda, émigré White Russian. The Soviet government severely criticized the Polish government for the support to the émigré Russian organizations (**Degras, J.** *Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy*. Volume 2: 1925–1932).

<sup>18</sup> **Rutkowska, E.** The Impacts of the First Russo-Japanese War on the Bilateral Relationship between Japan and Poland in the Early 20th Century. National Institute for Defense Studies (NIDS), Tokyo, 2006, 161. Rutkowska also found Colonel Gruzien, Polish military attaché in Moscow, reported to the General Staff that the Japanese Army decided to establish a ‘base’ in Poland for gathering the Soviet information.

<sup>19</sup> **Kuromiya, H., Mamoulia, G.** *Eurasian Triangle: Russia, the Caucasus and Japan, 1904–1945*. De Gruyter Open, Berlin, 2016, 136.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, 137: NARA, RG331, Evidentiary Document 2979.

<sup>21</sup> Following the instruction, from November to December 1933, Lieutenant Colonel Tsutomu Ouchi, military attaché in Riga who was a successor of Kawamata since the early 1933, visited Helsinki several times to negotiate the stationing of military attaché with the Finnish General Staff. And, on May 25th 1934, Major Seiichi Terada, the first-ever Japanese military attaché arrived to Helsinki.

by the Riga correspondent of French journal '*Zurnal de Deba*'.<sup>22</sup> Moscow knew the Japanese were planning an espionage offensive against them.

But why did the Japanese Army intend to establish a new intelligence hub in Tallinn instead of using the existing military attaché office in Riga? This question could be addressed from the historical fact that the Japanese Army put emphasis on the intelligence in Estonia, already at the end of the 1910s.

There were actually two Japanese Army officers residing in Tallinn during the Estonian War of Independence (1918–1920). Captain Michitaro Komatsubara, formally accredited to Estonia as the 'Japanese Military Representative' (*Jaapani sõjaväe esindaja*) in June 1919, was in close contacts with Finnish Marshal Mannerheim and Estonian General Johan Laidoner. Thanks to the information provided from the Estonian military, Komatsubara was able to provide detailed analyses on the war and the political situation surrounding the Baltic States and Russia to Tokyo.

In August 1921, Major Toshiro Obata, Japanese military attaché to Russia who was staying temporarily in Berlin due to the intensification of the Russian Civil War, moved to Tallinn<sup>23</sup> and succeeded Komatsubara's mission as the military representative. The collaboration between 1919 and 1922 provided the basis for Japanese to consider Estonia as the most convenient location among the Baltic States to organize their intelligence activities against the Soviet Union.

## TSUTOMU OUCHI AND THE ESTONIAN CONNECTIONS

In 1933, upon the reassignment of Kawamata to the General Staff in Tokyo, Lieutenant Colonel Tsutomu Ouchi was appointed to his successor (see Fig. 1). Upon the arrival to Riga on 29th August, Ouchi immediately travelled to Tallinn with his predecessor Kawamata to make an acquaintance with the General Staff members on 13th September.<sup>24</sup> One of the first priority tasks for Ouchi was to improve relationship with the Estonian General Staff. Ever since the 'political purge' of the Estonian General Staff members in 1934, the cooperation between the Estonian and the Japanese military forces in terms of the Soviet information exchange had been slimmed down.<sup>25</sup> On 4th October 1934, Ouchi visited Tallinn

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<sup>22</sup> Sibīrijas Cīņa, 17 October 1934. The Riga correspondent mentioned the rumour that the Japanese military attaché in Warsaw had a secret meeting with the Polish counterpart. He also noted that the Japanese were actively working with Finns following the visit of 'Akacaki', Japanese industrial magnate, to Helsinki.

<sup>23</sup> Obata's residence in Tallinn was Rüütli tänav 12, as of 1921 (Eesti välisministertuse biograafiline leksikon 1918–1991. Eesti Välisministertium, Tallinn, 2006, 151).

<sup>24</sup> Hommikuleht, 13 September 1933.

<sup>25</sup> Japan Centre for Asian Historical Records (JACAR), 23. Latvia. Ref.: B14090839400. [https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/imageen\\_B14090839400?IS\\_KEY\\_S1=B14090839400&IS\\_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS\\_STYLE=eng&IS\\_TAG\\_S1=InD&](https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/imageen_B14090839400?IS_KEY_S1=B14090839400&IS_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS_STYLE=eng&IS_TAG_S1=InD&) (Access Date and Time: 31 January 2018 17:15 PM). Major Akio Doi of the General Staff summed up Ouchi's reports



**Fig. 1.** Lieutenant Colonel Tsutomu Ouchi (eighth from the left) among foreign military attaches to Latvia (1935). Courtesy of: Latvijas Okupācijas Muzejs (Museum of the Occupation of Latvia).

with an excuse of providing a list of the Japanese Army's rations to the Estonian General Staff, of course his actual intension was to maintain the communication with the Estonian military officials.<sup>26</sup>

One of Ouchi's strengths as a military attaché was his abilities of communication and negotiation. In February 1935, a group of Estonian officers (likely the General Staff members) visited Ouchi in Riga and agreed on the exchange of firearms as a commemoration of the Estonian-Japanese military relations.<sup>27</sup>

Although Riga was excluded from Plan 1932, the Japanese military attaché's office in Riga was partially correlated with the planned operations. Circa 1935, Ouchi hired Nina Shvangiradze, of a Georgian father and Baltic-German mother, as an office secretary. Along with the office works, she was also given the task of information exchange and thanks to her personal ties with émigré Belorussians and Georgians in Latvia, she made a notable contribution to the re-evaluation of the attaché office. Valerija Sיעeniece, Latvian scholar of economics who was the

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on the issue and concluded that the change in Estonian altitude toward the Japanese Army mainly resulted from the purge of General Gustav Jonson of the General Staff who had been acknowledged as one of the most pro-Japanese (being also a hardliner against the Soviet Union) Estonian military officials. It is said that Jonson had a connection with the right-wing movement of the War of Independence veterans thus relegated after the Estonian Presidential order to prohibit members of the military forces to take part in the politics on February 27th 1934.

<sup>26</sup> ERA.495.12.119.27.

<sup>27</sup> JACAR. Exchanging small arms and pistols with the nation of "Estonia". Ref.: C01006736600. [https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/imageen\\_C01006736600?IS\\_KEY\\_S1=C01006736600&IS\\_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS\\_STYLE=eng&IS\\_TAG\\_S1=InD&](https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/imageen_C01006736600?IS_KEY_S1=C01006736600&IS_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS_STYLE=eng&IS_TAG_S1=InD&) (Access Date and Time: 1 February 2018 10:32 AM).

closest friend of Nina, heard of her task as a ‘messenger’. In most cases, Nina exchanged documents with her counterparts at Hotel ‘Rome’ (*Viesnīca Roma*) in the heart of Riga.<sup>28</sup>

Meanwhile, the Soviet intelligence branch in Latvia placed a mole at the hotel bar and kept surveillance on Nina.<sup>29</sup> More importantly than being merely a messenger, she introduced Makoto Onodera, the third Japanese military attaché to Latvia (1936–1938), to an émigré Belorussian. Ezavitov, primary school teacher in Riga who used to be known as a famous Belarussian independence activist. Later, upon the Soviet occupation of Latvia in June 1940, Nina was summoned by Andrey Vyshinsky, the Soviet representative in occupied Latvia, and requested her to become his personal assistant, in other words, his mistress.<sup>30</sup> Instead, she decided to have a sham marriage with a diplomat of the American Legation in Riga and fled to Cairo.<sup>31</sup>

#### MAKOTO ONODERA – THE THIRD MILITARY ATTACHÉ TO LATVIA (1936–1938)

On 14th January 1936, Major Makoto Onodera arrived in Riga to replace Ouchi. Onodera was a Russia expert after Kawamata, who had pursued his career as a researcher at the Army College. He had a strong connection with Toshiro Obata, Principal of the Army College who used to be the Japanese military representative in Estonia in the early 1920s. As of middle 1930s, Obata was leading the ‘Imperial Way Faction’ (*Kodouha*) which literally split the Army into two, along with its counterpart the ‘Control Faction’ (*Toseiha*). The confrontation of the two factions exerted great influence on the Japanese military attaché office in Riga.

Earlier, in 1921, three young officers of the Japanese Army secretly gathered at Hotel Stefany in Baden Baden, Germany. The three majors, Toshiro Obata, Tetsuzan Nagata, and Neiji Okamura, established their intentions on the structural reformation of the Japanese Army.<sup>32</sup> Obata and Nagata had been in Europe for many years<sup>33</sup>, witnessing the realities of the first-ever all-out war, they severely criticized the domain clique system of the Army and obsolescence of the doctrine. By 1932, coming through many transitions, Obata and Nagata became leaders of

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<sup>28</sup> Diena, 15 May 1993.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid. According to Valerija Sieceniece, it was one of music players at the hotel bar.

<sup>30</sup> Diena, 15 May 1993.

<sup>31</sup> **Onodera, Y.** *People on the Shore of the Baltic Sea*. Shinpyoron, Tokyo, 2016, 183. The name of the American diplomat is not confirmed and Nina was not registered as an official spouse of any of the diplomats in Riga, according to the official database of the U.S. Department of State. – Diena, 15 May 1993.

<sup>32</sup> **Kawada, M.** *History of the Japanese Army*. Volume 1. Kodansha, Tokyo, 2014, 60.

<sup>33</sup> Obata volunteered for the Imperial Russian Army during the First World War, and Nagata had been stationed to Germany, Sweden, and Denmark throughout early 1910s.



the two factions. The Imperial Way faction aimed at future war with the Soviet Union and the Control faction, led by Nagata, strongly opposed to Obata's ambitious war plan.<sup>34</sup>

Makoto Onodera was familiar with both Obata and Nagata, however he previously had a clash with Nagata at the Army College. The incident took place in 1933 when Nagata was chief of the second department of the General Staff. Onodera, who at the time worked for both Russian department of the General Staff and the Army College, published a book titled 'References for Study on Military Affairs of Neighbouring States' (*Rinno Gunji Kenkyu no Sankou*), it soon became a best-seller among young officers and Onodera himself earned quite an amount by the publication. Then, General Nagata summoned Onodera and Onodera was reprehended for his 'unbecoming' behaviour as a military officer.<sup>35</sup> On the other hand, General Toshiro Obata 'treasured' Onodera, Obata preferred 'country-born' officers like Onodera who was born in Iwate Prefecture, Tohoku region, far from Tokyo. His personal tendency probably resulted from the confrontation with the Control faction of which the majority of the officers were born in Tokyo or its suburbs.

Between 1935 and 1936, the internal strife of the Japanese Army had escalated to a violent dispute. Starting from the murder of General Tetsuzan Nagata by Lieutenant Colonel Aizawa, sympathizer of the Imperial Way faction, on 12th August 1935, the Imperial Way faction, which was rather weak due to the dismissal of General Mazaki who was a philosophical leader of the faction from the post of the Vice Chief, began to be radical. The 'passionate' young officers believed in the theory of the Imperial Way faction consequently staged a coup d'état on 26th February 1936, but failed to regain an initiative and the faction members faced severe retaliations from the Control faction. It was maybe Obata's decision to send Onodera to Latvia amidst the conflict, one of the Baltic States where Obata was fully aware of the geopolitical influences back in the time he was stationed in Estonia.

In Latvia, Onodera polished his abilities as an intelligence officer. The first priority for him was the exchange of the Soviet information with the Information Department (*Informacija dala*) of the Latvian General Staff. According to Yuriko Onodera, most information was brought by diplomatic couriers to the Japanese Legation in Riga.<sup>36</sup> However, as the Latvian intelligence service was inferior to the Estonian counterpart, the Second Department of the Estonian General Staff (*Sõjavägede Staabi II osakond*) in its organizational scale and intelligence capability, Onodera put more emphasis on the information exchange with the

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<sup>34</sup> **Crozier, A. J.** *The Causes of the Second World War*. Blackwell Publishers Ltd, Oxford, 1997, 200.

<sup>35</sup> **Onodera, M.** *Generals Talk: Major General Makoto Onodera*. Volume 1. Kaikosha, Tokyo, 1985, 6. In the article, Onodera addressed Nagata without using an honorific title ('General' etc.), merely 'Tetsuzan Nagata'.

<sup>36</sup> **Onodera, Y.** *Records of Intelligence Activities of Major General Makoto Onodera: 1935–1946*. Volume 1. Yasukuni Kaiko Archive, Tokyo, 1992, 29.

Estonian intelligence service.<sup>37</sup> The Estonian 2nd department was originally established for the exchange of information with foreign military attaches and human interactions between these attaches and Estonian military officials.<sup>38</sup> In June 1936, at the General Staff headquarters in Pagari Street, Tallinn, Onodera had a chance to have a meeting with Nikolai Reek, Chief of the General Staff (see Fig. 2). Considering the Estonian procedures, it was likely that Onodera applied for the meeting with Reek.

Confidential

20th June 1936

Attn.: Vice Chief of Staff  
From: Military Attaché of the Legation (Legation of Japan) in Latvia

The information about the visit of Chiefs of the Baltic General Staffs to the Soviet Union upon Mayday had already been reported by the handwritten report, however recently, I have heard of the report of Reek (Nikolai Reek) to the Estonian government.

Report from Reek

At the meeting with high-ranking officials of the Soviet military in Moscow, I (Reek) was asked for the opinion about 'Eastern Pact'. (Reek answered) Since Estonia is a small but sovereign state, I strongly believe that no matter how the reactions of Latvia and Lithuania are, Estonia should find the best way for itself.

I am merely a military officer thus should not intervene in politics. However, there is no conflict between Estonia and the Soviet Union and the bilateral non-aggression pact is valid. Thus, I answered that there is also no need for '*Ostpakt*' (for Estonia).<sup>39</sup>

With regard to military conditions of the Soviet Union, their efforts are enormous, yet it is merely a deception. For example, at least four bombers, of which two were the latest model, crashed during the Mayday parade.

And, the majority of the important parts for automobiles and airplanes (of the Soviet military) are imported from overseas, and (the Soviet) cadres do not trust home-made parts.

To sum up, the reality of the Soviet military forces is pitiful and along with the fact the Soviet Union has huge borders, I assume the Soviet Union is 'no threat' to Estonia.

**Fig. 2.** Telegram from the Japanese military attaché in Latvia (Major Makoto Onodera) to the General Staff in Tokyo (20th June 1936), translated from Japanese to English by the author. Based on JACAR, B14090839400, 8.

<sup>37</sup> **Okabe, N.** The God of Intelligence. PHP Institute, Tokyo, 2014, 85; **Okabe, N.** Disappeared Yalta Telegram, 109.

<sup>38</sup> ERA.495.12.119.32. In the letter addressed to foreign military attaches accredited to Estonia, the 2nd department indicated their purposes as follows: 1) exchange of information, and 2) interviews with Estonian military officials.

<sup>39</sup> '*Ostpakt*' refers to the 'Eastern Pact', characterized by a multilateral mutual-aid treaty proposed by the Soviet Union to its Eastern neighbours including the Baltic States in the mid-1930s. After the diplomatic pressure from the Soviet Union, Estonia also agreed on the Pact proposal in summer 1934 (**Radice, L.** The Eastern Pact, 1933–1935: A last attempt at European cooperation. – The Slavonic and East European Review, 1977, **55**, 1, 51).

The information about the Estonian stance on the Eastern Pact provided by Reek was also shared with Envoy Shin Sakuma of the Legation and reported to the MoFA on 13th July 1937, almost a year later since the session between Onodera and Reek.<sup>40</sup> After the meeting with Reek, Onodera began to visit Tallinn once or twice a month to strengthen the tie with Estonians. This policy was continued by his successors and until summer 1940, when the Soviet Union annexed the Baltic States, the Estonian-Japanese cooperation remained.

Also in Riga, Onodera had a personal friendship with Lieutenant Colonel Villem Saarsen, then Estonian military attaché to Latvia. Their story had been taken up in many publications, thus is kept minimal in this article. According to Yuriko Onodera, Saarsen was the first person who approached Onodera to purchase the Soviet information and connected him with the Estonian General Staff.<sup>41</sup>

### REVISED ‘PLAN 1932’?: THE JAPANESE ARMY’S ESPIONAGE OFFENSIVE IN EUROPE

Circa November 1937, Lieutenant Colonel Shigeki Usui, assistant military attaché of the Japanese Army attaché office in Germany, approached Makoto Onodera. Onodera and Usui were schoolmates of the Army cadet school and the college, but Usui had been in Europe already since early 1935.

In her post-war memoir, Yuriko Onodera described the activities of the ‘Manaki Organ’ (*Manaki Kikan*), the Japanese Army’s special agency also known as ‘Berlin Special Agency’ (*Berlin Tokumu Kikan*) whose mission was to organize subversive operations against the Soviet Union. Usui was mentioned as an ‘aide’ of Colonel Manaki, the organ commander.<sup>42</sup> Nevertheless, Manaki arrived to Germany only in early 1938, few months before Yuriko and Makoto Onodera left for Japan. Thus, the so-called ‘Manaki Organ’ was ran by Usui while Onodera was in close cooperation with him between 1937 and 1938.

The ‘Usui Organ’ (*Usui Kikan*), to be precise, was established in early 1935 when Usui arrived in Berlin. According to Hiroshi Oshima, then military attaché to Germany, a hide-out was purchased in Falkensee, in the vicinity of Berlin, and this house was used as a base for printing anti-Soviet brochures by

<sup>40</sup> JACAR. Part E / 2. Estonia / 7. Relations between Estonia and Soviet Union. Ref.: B02030844500. [https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/imageen\\_B02030844500?IS\\_KEY\\_S1=B02030844500&IS\\_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS\\_STYLE=eng&IS\\_TAG\\_S1=InD&](https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/imageen_B02030844500?IS_KEY_S1=B02030844500&IS_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS_STYLE=eng&IS_TAG_S1=InD&) (Access Date and Time: 31 January 2018 13:40PM). The relationship between Onodera and Sakuma is shrouded in mystery, although Yuriko Onodera often mentioned him pleasantly in her memoirs, whereas Makoto Onodera never mentioned him. The United States first succeeded in decrypting the Japanese diplomatic code in 1937, thus Onodera might have been aware of the weakness of the diplomatic code and it was the biggest reason why he hesitated to share the Reek information with Sakuma immediately.

<sup>41</sup> **Onodera, Y.** Records of Intelligence Activities of Major General Makoto Onodera: 1935–1946, 30. Villem Saarsen also left a memoir titled ‘What I saw’ (*See mis ma nägin*), however only two paragraphs were spared for Makoto and Yuriko Onodera. There was nothing about the actual intelligence cooperation.

<sup>42</sup> **Onodera, Y.** Records of Intelligence Activities of Major General Makoto Onodera: 1935–1946, 33.

émigré Russians.<sup>43</sup> This was merely a part of the ‘official history’ of the Usui Organ unveiled at Nurnberg and Tokyo war criminal tribunals in 1946, meanwhile, Onodera and Usui came to agree on organizing a subversive operation at unprecedented scale against the Soviet Union from November 1937. The first priority objectives of the operation was to topple the Soviet regimes of Belarus and Ukraine.<sup>44</sup> This was the first-ever massive Japanese espionage offensive in Europe targeted at the Soviet Union.

It is extremely difficult to assume how the operations were planned on Japanese side, but some sources unveiled earlier attempts of the Japanese Army. On 15th January 1937, Major Yoshihide Kato, Japanese military attaché to Finland visited the headquarters of the State Police (*Valtiollinen poliisi*, or VALPO). Probably given the same order as Onodera received from Tokyo, Kato attempted to expand his intelligence activities in Finland. Seeking for the local help or advice, Kato put several questions to the VALPO officer about the émigré movements in Finland. This officer with unknown name, codenamed ‘E.K.’, mainly discussed with him about the possibility of establishing cooperation with the émigrés in Finland, especially the Ukrainians.<sup>45</sup> The VALPO report indicates the possibility the Japanese Army prepared the operations far before November 1937.

On the other hand, in Riga, unaware of the method of actual espionage operation, Onodera sought help from Nina Shvangiradze, the Georgian-Latvian secretary of the military attaché office, and he was introduced to Ezavitov, a Belarus independence activist.<sup>46</sup> Onodera was introduced to the Belarus organization in Wilno, Poland, but the trips to Wilno had to be abandoned after the protest from ‘Poland’.<sup>47</sup> The outcome of Onodera’s attempts to mobilize the émigrés is unknown, due to the lack of primary sources.

Yuriko Onodera wrote that the biggest ‘surprise’ amidst the operational period was the execution of Tukhachevsky in June 1937.<sup>48</sup> Major General Hiroshi Oshima, then military attaché to Germany, Shigeki Usui, and the aforementioned Yoshihide Kato were on the visit to Onodera’s residence in Riga when the arrest of Tukhachevsky was announced.<sup>49</sup> It is not very likely that the four officers

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<sup>43</sup> Office of United States Chief of Counsel for Prosecution of Axis Criminality. *Nazi Conspiracy and Aggression*. Volume 1, 1946, 842.

<sup>44</sup> **Okabe, N.** Disappeared Yalta Telegram, 110–112.

<sup>45</sup> Kansallisarkisto (National Archives of Finland), Helsinki, 3134-M36, 17. The VALPO officer answered to Kato that the Ukrainian émigré movement in Finland is very small in its scale and not active.

<sup>46</sup> See pages 83–84 of this article.

<sup>47</sup> **Onodera, Y.** Records of Intelligence Activities of Major General Makoto Onodera: 1935–1946, 35. Wilno (current Vilnius, Capital of Lithuania) was a debated ground between Poland and Lithuania back then, moreover the city was a philosophical capital of Belarus nationalism. The complexity of the political circumstance made Onodera’s plan difficult.

<sup>48</sup> **Onodera, Y.** Records of Intelligence Activities of Major General Makoto Onodera: 1935–1946, 36.

<sup>49</sup> **Onodera, Y.** *On the Shore of the Baltic Sea*. Kyodo Tsushin, Tokyo, 1985, 54. The event had been repeatedly mentioned by Yuriko Onodera in her various memoirs between the 1980s and the 1990s. It is unclear whether the Japanese covert operations against the Soviet Union had related to the death of Tukhachevsky.

gathered in Riga by coincidence and the meeting might have had a link with secret operations. Indeed, Onodera himself once carried the bombs from Berlin on his own, which were to be used by an agent to assassinate Stalin.<sup>50</sup>

### INTERNATIONAL SITUATION SURROUNDING THE REVISED JAPANESE 'PLAN 1932'

For most of the great powers including Japan and the Soviet Union, the year 1937 was a turning point for next all-out war. In the Soviet Union, on 23rd January, the trial for the participants of 'Anti-Soviet Trotskyite Centre' began. Among the five defendants, there was Karl Radek.<sup>51</sup> Radek was considered to be a successor of Stalin until the arrest and this was the beginning of the infamous Great Purge. However, in case of Radek, he was not completely an innocent in terms of the suspected treason against Stalin. Mr. Maruyama, who was a correspondent of Asahi Shimbun, Japanese newspaper, in Moscow, mentioned that Radek was looking forward to Japanese invasion of Siberia. Radek told Maruyama that

If the Japanese Army invades Siberia, they will easily reach Lake Baikal due to the lack of military preparations.<sup>52</sup>

German reaction to the deterioration of the Soviet-Japanese relations in the early 1930s was very sluggish. In October 1934, German Ambassador to Japan submitted a report of 'International encirclement' of Japan to *Auswärtiges Amt*, German Foreign Ministry. State Secretary Bureau answered to Dirksen, the Ambassador, that the Ministry did not believe any imminent threats to the Soviet-Japanese relations and instead, Dirksen should direct attention to two points: 1) Any sign of a real danger of a Russo-Japanese war, and 2) the avoidance of any close relations with Japan which might lay us (Germans) open to being suspected of wishing to render assistance against Russia.<sup>53</sup> Despite Dirksen's efforts to restrict relations with the Japanese government, the Chinese government suspected a secret agreement between Germany and Japan.<sup>54</sup>

A year ago, on 16th April 1933, Karakhan, Vice Minister of *Narkomindel*, Soviet Foreign Ministry, severely criticized the Japanese attempts to militarily seize the Chinese Eastern Railway (CER).<sup>55</sup> Amidst the confusion, Eastern line (mainstream)

<sup>50</sup> **Onodera, Y.** Records of Intelligence Activities of Major General Makoto Onodera: 1935–1946, 33.

<sup>51</sup> **Erickson, J.** The Soviet High Command: A Military-Political History 1918–1941. Macmillan & Co., Ltd., London, 1962, 449.

<sup>52</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, 29 January 1972, 19.

<sup>53</sup> U.S. Department of State. Documents on German Foreign Policy 1918–1945: Series C (1933–1937). The Third Reich – First Phase Volume III. United States Government Printing Office, Washington D.C., 1959, 480.

<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, 666. Memorandum by the director of Department 4 of the German Foreign Ministry on the visit of Chinese diplomatic representative to the Ministry.

<sup>55</sup> **Degras, J.** Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy. Volume 3: 1933–1941. Oxford University Press, New York, 1953, 12.

of CER was ‘completely disorganized’ due to systematic attacks by bandits on the trains and railway installations.<sup>56</sup> Series of the incidents consequently led the Soviet Union to abandon CER and sell it to *Manchukuo*, a Japanese puppet state in Northern China.<sup>57</sup>

According to Etsuo Kotani, Japanese assistant military attaché in Moscow who arrived at the end of January 1935, the Soviet attitudes toward Japan and Japanese were ‘very friendly’ in general, due to the conclusion of the sales agreement of CER between the Soviet Union and *Manchukuo* on 21st January.<sup>58</sup> The Soviet friendship with Japan, if not ‘appeasement’, of course did not last long. In July 1935, at the Seventh World Congress of the *Comintern*, the Soviet-led international association of communists, Georgi Dimitrov of the Bulgarian communist party and ‘*Ercoli*’, whose actual name was Palmiro Togliatti, leader of the Italian communist party, jointly called Germany and Japan as ‘warmongers’, calling the unification of China under the communist party to resist Japanese imperialism.<sup>59</sup> Prior to the release of the provocative statement, Ercoli noted the purpose of the congress as follows:

We not only defend the Soviet Union in general. We defend concretely its whole policy and each of its acts.<sup>60</sup>

Thus, it is rational to think the joint statement was representing the actual Soviet thoughts on both newly emerging powers.

Returning to the recollection of Kotani, the Japanese assistant military attaché in Moscow, the atmosphere surrounding the bilateral relations began to deteriorate, yet slowly.<sup>61</sup> By Spring 1936, the Soviet-Japanese relations hit the rock-bottom. On 22nd April 1936, attempting to restore the bilateral tie in the local level, Ambassador Ota in Moscow hosted a banquet for both Soviet and Japanese military representatives. From the Soviet side, Marshal Voroshilov, Marshal Budyonny, and Marshal Yegorov (Chief of the General Staff) participated.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>56</sup> Ibid., 13. As CER existed deep inside Manchukuo, the Soviet Foreign Ministry had no other choice but to allow the transportation of Japanese troops by CER and approve its anti-bandits operations across the railway.

<sup>57</sup> On 2nd May 1933, Litvinov, Soviet Foreign Minister suggested Japanese Ambassador Ota in Moscow the purchase of CER by Manchukuo (**Degras, J.** Soviet Documents on Foreign Policy, Volume 3: 1933–1941, 17).

<sup>58</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, 25 January 1972, 21. The agreement was formally signed in Tokyo on 23rd March 1935.

<sup>59</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, 16 February 1971, 21.

<sup>60</sup> **McKenzie, K. E.** The Soviet Union, the Comintern and World Revolution: 1935. – Political Science Quarterly, 1950, **65**, 2, 220.

<sup>61</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, 25 January 1972, 21.

<sup>62</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, 26 January 1972, 21; Tokyo Asahi Shimbun, 14 May 1936, 2. Colonel Hikosaburo Hata, military attaché in Moscow, provoked the Soviet generals with highly political joke (“After returning to Japan, I will give an order to provide cans of Japanese Sake to every soldier on the border, thus the Soviet Army should do the same with vodka. If we have enough alkanols, there shall be no more border conflicts”), Marshal Voroshilov and Marshal Budyonny took it seriously while Marshal Yegorov laughed at it.

Domestically, the Soviet Union around the time was in a total political turmoil. Stalin authorized the right for OGPU<sup>63</sup>, the secret police, to carry out executions in March 1933.<sup>64</sup> NKVD, which stands for ‘People’s Commissariat for Internal Affairs’ (*Narodnyi Komissariat Vnutrennikh Del*), notified the ‘criminal links’ between Yagoda, former NKVD chief, and Marshal Tukhachevsky through the interrogations of the two suspects between 22nd and 25th April 1937.<sup>65</sup> Then, on 11th June 1937, the arrests of eight Soviet generals were suddenly announced.

In the same month, Captain Etsuo Kotani, the Japanese assistant military attaché in Moscow who returned to Japan in April, was invited to the annual meeting of the Diplomatic Association of Japan as a guest speaker on the purge of Tukhachevsky. According to him, the explanation of the Soviet official on the arrest of Tukhachevsky were all a ruse. His analysis of the Tukhachevsky incident was that it would only have a short-term impact on the Soviet military commanding structure.<sup>66</sup> The loss of the great strategist and his followers during the Great Purge was soon forgotten, amidst the upheavals of International politics in late 1930s, but it again emerged as a big problem upon the German invasion of the Soviet Union in Summer 1941.

Around the period, the Soviet surveillance on the Japanese Army officers in Moscow were tight and presumably, due to the severe surveillance of the Soviet secret police, it was impossible to involve any of them with the joint German-Japanese intelligence operations against the Soviet Union.<sup>67</sup>

## ONODERA’S SUCCESSORS AND THE SOVIET OCCUPATION OF THE BALTIC STATES

After Onodera, two Lieutenant Colonels, Tamotsu Takatsuki and Hiroshi Onouchi filled the position. Neither remained in Riga for more than a year hence less information about their ties with Estonians and Latvians is available.

While the activities of the Japanese military attaché office in Riga during Takatsuki’s term in office remains completely mystery, there are bit more details about Onouchi. He arrived in Riga on 29th April 1939, like Onodera, he visited

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<sup>63</sup> OGPU stood for *Ob"edinennoe gosudarstvennoe politicheskoe upravlenie pri SNK SSSR*, or the ‘Joint State Political Directorate’ in English. It was established in 1923, then was incorporated into NKVD in July 1934.

<sup>64</sup> **Conquest, R.** *The Great Terror: Stalin’s Purge of the Thirties.* The Macmillan Company, New York, 1968, 547.

<sup>65</sup> **Main, S. J.** The arrest and ‘Testimony’ of Marshal of the Soviet Union M. N. Tukhachevsky (May-June 1937). – *The Journal of Slavic Military Studies*, 1997, **10**, 1, 152.

<sup>66</sup> JACAR, 18. Recent Soviet Internal Affairs (Considering Tukhachevsky Plot) (Kotani Etsuo, Infantry Captain). Ref.: B02030915600, 15. [https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/imageen\\_B02030915600?IS\\_KEY\\_S1=B02030915600&IS\\_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS\\_STYLE=eng&IS\\_TAG\\_S1=InD&](https://www.jacar.archives.go.jp/aj/meta/imageen_B02030915600?IS_KEY_S1=B02030915600&IS_KIND=SimpleSummary&IS_STYLE=eng&IS_TAG_S1=InD&) (Access Date and Time: 28th January 2017 08:30 AM).

<sup>67</sup> *Yomiuri Shimbun*, 28 January 1972, 21. Hiroshi Onouchi, the last Japanese military attaché in Riga (1939–1940), also noted the Soviet surveillance was really tight when he traveled to Moscow in August 1939 (*Yomiuri Shimbun*, 28 March 1974, 3).

Tallinn twice or three times a month and Kaunas once a month. In the post-war recollection, Onouchi said that he did not want to visit Lithuania 'without a particular reason'.<sup>68</sup> It is unclear whether he intentionally avoided to mention it, but Onouchi experienced a little conflict with the Lithuanian General Staff in summer 1939. During the battle of Khalkhin Gol, border conflict between Japan and the Soviet Union in the Far East between July and August 1939, Lithuanian magazine '*Karys*' published an article about the battle, referring to the article of '*Krasnaja Zvezda*', the official newspaper of the Soviet Army. The Japanese casualties and the loss of the weapons were exaggeratedly counted in the original Soviet article, then Onouchi visited Kaunas and protested to Colonel Kostas Dulksnys, Chief of the intelligence department of the General Staff, about the *Karys* article and left a 'new text' to replace the loser as 'Russians'. Dulksnys promised Onouchi that he would inform certain authorities of the General Staff about the request. General Raštikis, Chief of the General Staff, was informed about this little confrontation, but decided not to replace the words in the *Karys* article and instead end the affair with silence since the Lithuanians were not aware which side actually ruled the battle.<sup>69</sup>

Despite the little trouble with the Lithuanians, Onouchi was on the whole a talented intelligence officer. Just before the outbreak of the German-Polish war on 1st September 1939, Onouchi participated in the political analysis session at the Japanese military attaché office in Warsaw. The other participants were Major General Torashiro Kawabe, military attaché to Germany, and Lieutenant Colonel Masao Ueda, military attaché to Poland. The three officers reached a conclusion that the war between Germany and Poland is inevitable.<sup>70</sup> However, even by the best wisdom of the Japanese Army, the Molotov-Ribbentrop Pact on 23rd August 1939 could not be predicted, furthermore, the fate of the Baltic States.

The roles expected of Onouchi were not only limited to the realm of military intelligence, but he was also a 'middleman' of arms sales. On 30th November 1939, the first day of the Winter War between Finland and the Soviet Union, Onouchi was in Helsinki, arriving from Tallinn by ferry.<sup>71</sup> Just before the outbreak of the war, in summer 1939, the General Staff in Tokyo notified the Finnish officials, through Onouchi, that a semi-official Japanese company is ready to export weapons to Finland. However, the Finnish government was not interested in the offer at the time; further in the war, the Finnish military attaché in Riga approached Onouchi to reconsider the arms exports but it was declined by the Japanese General Staff.<sup>72</sup> Onouchi's visit to Finland on 30th November 1939 was probably linked with this story.

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<sup>68</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, 25 March 1974, 3.

<sup>69</sup> **Raštikis, S.** Fighting for Lithuania. War Memories. Volume 1. Lietuvių dienos, Los Angeles, 1956, 475–476.

<sup>70</sup> Yomiuri Shimbun, 28 March 1974, 3; 1 April 1974, 5.

<sup>71</sup> ERA.495.11.43.14. The arrival of Onouchi in Helsinki was reported to the Estonian General Staff by Aleks (Aleksei) Kurgvel, Estonian military attaché in Finland.

<sup>72</sup> **Momose, H.** Japan's relations with Finland, 1919–1944, as reflected by Japanese source materials. – Slavic Studies, 1973, 17, 27. Momose interviewed Onouchi and acquired the information.



On 16th June 1940, the Soviet Union invaded Estonia and Latvia. The Soviet tanks rolled into the centre of Riga at noon, and the entire city was put under the martial law. Apart from an ‘incident’ in Tallinn, the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States went quietly and smoothly. On 21st June 1940, communication unit (*Sidepataljon*) of the Estonian Army rebelled against the Soviet occupation forces in Raua district, Tallinn. However, this incident did not appear in the telegram of Shigeru Shimada, representative of the Japanese diplomat office in Tallinn, reporting the process of the Soviet occupation of Estonia.

On June 25th 1940, Onouchi payed a visit to Lieutenant Colonel Croxton Sillery Vale, British military attaché in Riga. Vale was concerned about both German and Soviet reinforcements in the Baltic region, ever since the Soviet occupation of the Baltic States, the former sent more troops to East Prussia, and the latter to Lithuania.<sup>73</sup> Earlier, on the 20th, Onouchi visited Lieutenant Colonel Jacques Hoppenot, the French military attaché, to exchange opinions on the political situation surrounding occupied Latvia (see Fig. 3).

Then, between 25th and 27th of July, Onouchi travelled to Stockholm to meet Lieutenant Colonel Toshio Nishimura, then military attaché to Finland and Sweden.<sup>74</sup> There is no official record about their conversation, but it was most



**Fig. 3.** Lieutenant Colonel Tamotsu Takatsuki (Onouchi’s predecessor) with his French counterpart, Jacques Hoppenot (1939). Courtesy of: Latvijas Okupācijas Muzejs (Museum of the Occupation of Latvia).

<sup>73</sup> **Shigemitsu, A.** *Russians in My Memories*. Self-publishing, 1986, 68. Shigemitsu was interpreter at the both occasions.

<sup>74</sup> Riksarkivet Arninge (Swedish National Archives, Arninge) 22-2-98 (980222-9972), 15. Nishimura had resided in Jungfrugatan 23, Stockholm ever since November 21st 1939.

likely about the reassignment of Onouchi himself as a military attaché to Finland, which was then administered by the assistant military attaché of Nishimura. Back on 25th June, Vale, the aforementioned British military attaché in Riga, told Onouchi that the independence of Latvia would last by the end of August.<sup>75</sup> Thus, it makes sense to think that Onouchi sought Nishimura's help about the relocation.

As probably planned, on 24th August, Onouchi was reassigned as a military attaché to Finland and left Riga, first for Stockholm to meet Nishimura on the 26th<sup>76</sup>, then arrived to Helsinki in September.<sup>77</sup> For the exodus from the Soviet-occupied Latvia, Onouchi took one of his informants with him.<sup>78</sup> Here, the Japanese military attaché office in Riga brought down the curtain on its nine-year history.

According to the official Latvian record, the office was closed on August 31st 1940.<sup>79</sup> The Japanese Legation in Riga was also forced to shut by the first week of September, and all the Japanese diplomats departed from Latvia.

#### MICHAL RYBIKOWSKI – THE POLISH AGENT UNDER TWO CODE NAMES

The German and the Soviet invasions of Poland in September 1939 ended with the former's victory. After the defeat, *Dwojka*, the Second Department of the Polish General Staff, attempted to reorganize the basis of the intelligence activities in overseas. Major Michal Rybikowski, former *Dwojka* agent, also fled to Paris and swore allegiance with the Polish government in exile. There, he had received a directive to support the Polish intelligence unit in the Baltic States. Rybikowski flew to Riga and worked as an aide of Colonel Feliks Brzeskwinski, Polish military attaché to Latvia who used to be one of the best friends with Makoto Onodera in early 1930s. He took command of the operation to transfer Polish refugees in the Baltic States to England and France via the Baltic Sea.<sup>80</sup>

Meanwhile, the loss of Polish independence was a catastrophe for the Polish citizens in the Baltic States. It was not only the refugees, but also the diplomats and the moles including Rybikowski who had to acquire new documents, instead of the invalid Polish passport. It was probably Brzeskwinski who introduced

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<sup>75</sup> **Shigemitsu, A.** Russians in My Memories, 68.

<sup>76</sup> Riksarkivet Arninge (Swedish National Archives, Arninge), Stockholm, 22-2-98 (980222-9972), 15. Onouchi took a direct flight from Riga to Stockholm.

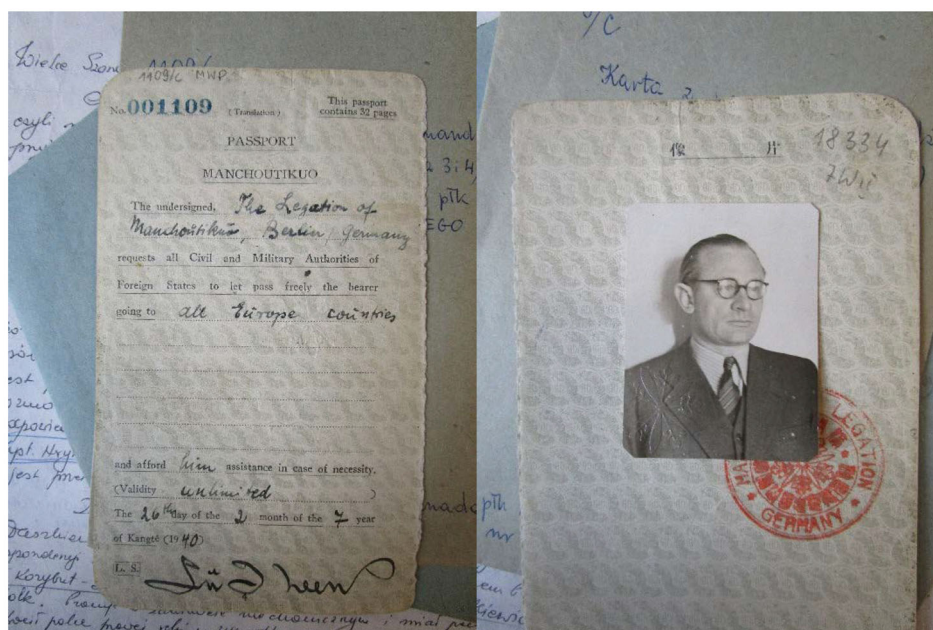
<sup>77</sup> Ulkoministeriönarkisto (Finnish Ministry of Foreign Affairs Archives), Helsinki, FB6-6-0, 96.

<sup>78</sup> Muzeum Wojska Polskiego w Warszawie (Polish Army Museum), Warsaw, 7W2C, Memoir of Michal Rybikowski, 8–9. It was Michal Rybikowski, who was the former informant of the Japanese military attaché office in Riga. On the 26th, Onouchi and him took a flight from Riga to Stockholm. Rybikowski was also hired by the Japanese military attaché office in Stockholm and worked for the office until 1944.

<sup>79</sup> LVVA, 2942-1-1586, 39.

<sup>80</sup> Muzeum Wojska Polskiego w Warszawie (Polish Army Museum), Warsaw, 7W2C, Memoir of Michal Rybikowski, 7.

Rybikowski to Onouchi, then Japanese military attaché in Latvia, and Onouchi arranged the acquisition of the passport of *Manchukuo*, Japanese puppet state in Northern China, for Rybikowski. According to some sources, in Riga, Rybikowski had two code names: 1) ‘Jacobsen’ disguised as an ethnic Latvian businessman, and 2) ‘Peter Iwanov’, émigré Russian of *Manchukuo* nationality (see Fig. 4).<sup>81</sup> After becoming a Manchukuo citizen, Rybikowski, codenamed ‘Peter Iwanov’, was provided a car with a Japanese pennant and officially hired as an informant of the Japanese military attaché office in Riga.<sup>82</sup> Taking the unstable position of Rybikowski into account<sup>83</sup>, the provision of the car was a part of Onouchi’s assistance to secure Rybikowski’s identity, rather than a single-use informant.



**Fig. 4.** *Manchukuo* passport issued to Michal Rybikowski. The issuing authority was the *Manchukuo* Legation in Berlin. Courtesy of: Muzeum Wojska Polskiego w Warszawie (Polish Army Museum).

<sup>81</sup> **Okabe, N.** Disappeared Yalta Telegram, 149: Muzeum Wojska Polskiego w Warszawie (Polish Army Museum), Warsaw, 7W2C, Memoirs of Michal Rybikowski, 8.

<sup>82</sup> Muzeum Wojska Polskiego w Warszawie (Polish Army Museum), Warsaw, 7W2C, Memoirs of Michal Rybikowski, 8.

<sup>83</sup> Rybikowski’s *Manchukuo* passport was soon replaced with that of Japan, in Stockholm, in 1941. The puppet state of *Manchukuo* was recognized only by few states in Europe and the validity of the passport was questionable. And, already in October 1939, the Soviet Union had started the stationing of its troops in Latvia according to the bilateral treaty. Both Onouchi and Rybikowski were probably concerned about the repetition of the Polish partition case in the Baltic States.

## CONCLUSIONS

Internally, the position of military attaché to Latvia had not been seen as an important position among the Japanese Army until 1937 when it began to jointly administer Estonia and Lithuania by the advice of Makoto Onodera, the third military attaché.

Ever since the assignment of Major Taketo Kawamata, the first Japanese military attaché to Latvia, in Summer 1931, four military officers were assigned for the position until summer 1940. Officer's language abilities to provide analyses, the biggest problems before the detachment of the formal military attaché in terms of intelligence, were taken into account. Looking at the educational structure of the Army, both factors did not affect the daily work of any of the five military attachés to Latvia. Rather, the problem was within a commanding structure and a human resource management of the Japanese Army.

At the Japanese Army College (*Rikugun Daigaku*), 23% of the curriculum constituted 'language studies' (either English, French, German, Russian, or Chinese).<sup>84</sup> In comparison, at the Army's Junior School (*Rikugun Younengakkou*), only German, Russian, and French languages were required.<sup>85</sup> Among the five military attaches to Latvia, Kawamata, Ouchi, and Onodera majored in Russian language, whereas Takatsuki was the only German learner. Onouchi's language speciality is yet unconfirmed, but it was most likely Russian as he was reassigned to Finland after the Soviet annexation of Latvia in summer 1940. The biases on the language cliques among the Japanese Army would provide an answer to the mystery of Takatsuki about his dismissal in 1939. As described in the previous chapter, the joint German-Japanese military operations against the Soviet Union probably ceased around October 1938, after Germany requested Poland the cession of the Polish Corridor on 24th October.<sup>86</sup>

And, on 9th February 1939, Onouchi was assigned as a successor of Takatsuki, then the latter returned to Japan on July 8th. It is possible to think that the political circumstance put him in an ambiguous position, no longer needed as a German specialist in Latvia. Furthermore, this would address the question why there were more photos of Takatsuki than of any of his predecessors in the family archive of the Latvian General Gregorijs Kikkuls. Left behind the sudden change of the political situation, he had a plenty of time to participate in the activities with his attaché colleagues.

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<sup>84</sup> **Fujii, H.** Human Source Management of the Japanese Army during Showa Period. Ushio Shobou Kojinsha, Tokyo, 2015, 229.

<sup>85</sup> **Ito, M.** The Rise and Fall of Military Factions. Volume 2. Ushio Shobou Kojinsha, Tokyo, 2016, 166.

<sup>86</sup> **Yamazaki, M.** Blitzkrieg over Poland. Gakken Publishing, Tokyo, 2010, 111.

With regard to the actual ‘effects’ of the intelligence operations, it is hard to conclude since the details, mostly on the consequences, of the operations are missing. But, as ‘directives’ given to the military attaches to Latvia (and the Baltic States since 1937) had seen a number of transitions. The incoherence of the orders not only confused the military attaches, but also increased their workloads. Compared to the major military attaché offices in Europe such as Berlin and Warsaw, where there used to be around 12–15 Japanese officers in average and the equivalent number of the local staffs, the office in Riga had only one Japanese officer and approximately 2–3 local staff, e.g. the aforementioned Nina Shvangiradze who can handle the works related to the intelligence affairs like translation of the documents. Thus, to sum up, the directives based on the Plan 1932, to mobilize the émigré organizations to topple the Soviet regimes in Belarus and Ukraine, exceeded the working capacity of the office. In fact, Makoto Onodera, the most successful Japanese intelligence officer in the interwar Baltic States, had made several attempts but almost all failed for some reason.

The biggest mystery of the secret Japanese operations in the Baltic States was the conspiracy surrounding the death of the Soviet Marshal Tukhachevsky in 1937. However, the execution of Marshal Tukhachevsky on 11th June 1937 did not affect the actual political tide. Etsuo Kotani, the assistant military attaché in Moscow between 1935 and 1937, stated that the death of Tukhachevsky would have only a little effect on operational capability of the Soviet military. He still partially admitted that the incident had slightly ‘slowed down’ the commanding procedure due to the loss of a number of major generals.<sup>87</sup>

Finally, as a conclusion, it seems logical to think that the interwar Japanese military intelligence activities in the Baltic States did not have any effect on the actual political and military tides in the region. The Japanese military attaches were ‘attaches’ who fulfilled their original duties such as exchange of information with the local military intelligence services, but could not meet the high, if not ‘excessive’, demands of the General Staff in Tokyo.

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<sup>87</sup> Osaka Mainichi Shimbun, 3 July 1937.

## JAAPANI LUURETEGEVUS BALTI RIIKIDES AASTAIL 1918–1940

Shingo MASUNAGA

Käesoleva artikli eesmärgiks on selgitada fakte Jaapani sõjalisest luuretegevusest Balti riikides aastail 1918–1940. Alates Jaapani armee esimese ohvitseri saatmisest Eestisse vabadussõja ajal laienes vastav tegevus kogu sõdadevahelisel perioodil.

Jaapani seisukohast vaadatuna oli NSV Liidu süünd maailma esimese sotsialistliku riigiga ideoloogilise vastuseisu alguseks. Diplomaatiliste suhete kehtestamise järel tekkinud kahepoolne sõprus ei kestnud kaua ja juba 1920. aastate lõpul tekkisid riikide vahel konfliktid igas valdkonnas, luuretegevus ei olnud erandiks. Jaapani koostatud Plaan 1932 ennustas sõda NSV Liiduga. Selleks valmistudes otsustati kaasata NSV Liidust emigreerunud venelasi, keda rakendada NSV Liidu vastasel tööl, samuti toetada vabaduspürgimusi NSV Liidu liiduvabariikides. Jaapani luuretegevus jätkus 1930. aastail, ehkki NSV Liit oli jaapanlaste eesmärkidest teadlik ja tegi tugevat vastuluuret.

Ehkki tegemist oli Jaapani kõige ulatuslikuma luuretegevusega, on vastavaid üksikasju eri väljaannetes mainitud ainult lünklikult. Kasutades Balti riikide, Jaapani ja Poola kohta leitud uusi allikaid, on artiklis Jaapani tegevusele antud uus hinnang.